Tele-working and its effect on human resource efficiency

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ABSTRACT
One of the phenomena in information era is Tele-working project the government announced the regulation to organizations and bureaus in few last years. Tele-working includes some advantages and disadvantages; economization as its advantages and no specific border between working and personal life leads to emergence of some family problems as its disadvantages. Human resource is the basic part of any organization and in fact, efficiency of human resource directly effect on efficiency and effectiveness of any organization. This means, tele-working surely effects on efficiency and effectiveness of human resource and organization indeed. However, it should be considered that a tele-worker has to have skills such as discipline, working conscience, computer knowledge and English language ability in order to positively effect on efficiency otherwise, the negative effect not only does not increase efficiency but also it decreases it. In the present article, tele-working (a method in which a job done in a place other than office), tele-workers' characteristics, jobs appropriate for tele-working (jobs without any client), advantage and disadvantages of tele-working defined and its effects on efficiency of human resource studied finally. If the conditions and infrastructures provided, tele-working surely effects on increase in efficiency but the author assumes the intelligent transfer more efficient regarding the goals government follows from presentation of this project.

INTRODUCTION

Development of information technology leads to vast evolutions in socioeconomic fields that are developing increasingly along with remarkable effects on people's personal and social life. Recently, the government announced a regulation about tele-working to governmental organizations with the purpose of reduction in expenditures, working organizations, urban traffic, economization in fuel and finally in megacities population.

In fact, the government following great goals in form of this project but let us see how the human resource would be with the existence of this project since human resource is the base and foundation of any organization success.

What is Tele-working?:

Jack Nilles said that there is no need to work in future but the work will come toward people. He names this form of working in far distance as ”tele-working". [1]

Although tele-working discussed in recent years but there is not any global definition for it yet like: remote workers, working at home, tele commuting and tele-working which all may have the same meaning. [2]

Generally, tele-working is a method to work outside of the office through IT, computer, mobile, fax, etc. which leads to flexibility in time and location of working. [3]

Tele-working means accomplishing the assigned tasks without the qualified employee's physical presence in his office along with observing the rules and within specific period of times. [4]

Tele-working types:
- Multi-location tele-working in which the employee moving between the employer's location and other locations frequently.
- Home-working in which the tele-worker working just at home and has one employer.
- Free tele-working in which the tele-worker doing the jobs at home but for more than one employers.

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Mobile tele-working in which the tele-worker spending his working time in different locations like sales representatives.

Tele-working in unoriginal location in which tasks done far from employer but in a location under his possession. [5]

In the present article and in the government regulations, the second type (home-working) is the case.

Who is a tele-worker?:
- A tele-worker is a person working at home and should have the following characteristics:
  - Disciplined and regular rest time.
  - Capable to work independently.
  - Conscientious in working.
  - Has high occupational skill and information.
  - Powerful in time management.
  - Ensure his employer.
  - Avoid overworking. [6]

Those governmental employees working in line with tele-working project and according to the specified rules and regulations. [4]

Advantages of tele-working:
- They are divided into three individual, organizational and socioeconomic advantages.

Individual advantages:
- Time and location restrictions removed.
- Commuting costs reduced and less time wasted.
- Job selection right extended due to removal of location and nationality restriction. [7]
  - Potentially, tele-working leads to economization in fuel, working space, reduction in pollutants, increase in efficiency and even may lead to use job opportunities or human resource skills abroad to do the tasks. Tele-working is beneficial for both employer and employees. [6]

Organizational advantages:
- Organizations will have more time to respond to emergency and immediate needs.
- Employees' absence will decrease.
- Overcrowd will decrease.
- Organization power to select work force optimally will increase.
- There is no need for large administrative organizations anymore. [7]
  - Keeping special employees, increase in returned capital, decrease in administrative services, decrease in employees' illness, possibility of using international capacities, decrease in extra costs, organizational flexibility, better and more servicing. [6]

Socioeconomic advantages:
- Decrease in urban traffic.
- Working opportunities for handicapped.
- Increase in human resource range.
- Decrease in megacities population. [7]
  - Decrease in air pollution, a tool to find employee appropriately, flexibility in recruiting employees, decrease in demand for lands of buildings or renting, improvement in life quality, economic reform and decrease in employees' absence. [6]

Advantages of tele-working in Iran:
- Increase in occupational opportunities for skilled work force: regarding low wages in Iran, many European countries tending to make use of Iranian experts.
- Suitable working opportunity for women. [7]

Disadvantages of tele-working:
Individual obstacles:
- Lack of appropriate facilities, decrease in social communications, decrease in occupational communications, tough working conditions, necessity to know English, necessity to have technical abilities to use and maintain the equipments, tele-workers' concern about no job promotion and development.
Organizational obstacles:
   Information security, lack of appropriate and necessary hardware facilities, managers' resistance, supervision problems, foundation and implementation costs, availability of the employees at emergencies, conflict between organizational culture and needed flexibility for tele-working. [6]
   Unfamiliarity of managers about advantages and applications of tele-working, instable and erratic communicational lines, relatively high cost for installation of hardware facilities, inefficiency and little knowledge of IT employees. [7]

Socioeconomic obstacles:
   Preparation of technical and legal basics, preparation of socio-cultural basics.

Major problem of tele-working in Iran:
   - Imbalance between job and home and lack of a specific border between working at home and personal life leads to negative effects on couples' relations.
   - Working at home interrupted by friends and neighbors, and tele-workers do not have a specific border between working life and personal life. It seems that determine a specific border between working and family is one of the success factors in tele-working. [8]
   - According to their traditional beliefs, most of the Iranian families believe that men have to go out of the house to get Halal income and work in a place other than home. Some families believe that working at home is not suitable for men. [9]

Appropriate jobs for tele-working:
   - Researches and studies
   - Computer-based jobs
   - Writing and translation
   - Designing and computation in engineering sciences
   - Generally many servicing jobs that can be done remotely. [7]
   - It is clear that all jobs are not suitable for tele-working. The first step to determine if a job is appropriate for tele-working or not is to analyze and evaluate it from all points of view. Those intellectual jobs that do not need external feedback for reward are suitable for tele-working. There are some characteristics in common for the jobs accomplished remote from the original location successfully: assessable output, less need of face-to-face communication, minimum physical requirements and no repeated need of file and archive. Therefore, there exist many different proceedings to present tele-workers a prospect of goals. [10]

Inappropriate jobs for tele-working:
   - Practical and executive jobs
   - Where influence on and penetrate in people is important
   - When permanent and intensive supervision on job needed
   - When occurrence possibility of emergency events is high
   - Those jobs need direct and face-to-face relationship to clients [7]

Problems of tele-working for Iranian organizations:
   - Unfamiliarity of managers with ICT
   - Instability and insecurity of communicational lines
   - Relatively high costs of hardware installation
   - Communications high costs
   - Inefficiency and little knowledge of ICT employees
   - Weakness in foreign language
   - Lack of rules and regulations for tele-working [7]

Tele-working challenges:
   Lack of appropriate supervision system on employees, social isolation, preparing desirable cultural fields, extra costs for tele-working facilities and distrust employees are of major tele-working challenges.
   Challenges of tele-working implementation system include little knowledge of employees about IT, high costs of communications, lack of tele-management experience and lack of rules and regulations for tele-working. [10]
What is efficiency?:
Most of managers do not know real meanings of efficiency, to what extent efficiency is vital for their organization, and to what extent they can improve it, how evaluate or analyze it and what factors influence on it. [11]

Japan efficiency center defines efficiency as maximization of using physical resources, human resource and other factors scientifically, which leads to decrease in production costs, markets extension, increase in employment and rising of life level of all people. [12]

The resulted change in yield amount for used resources called efficiency. [13]

US quality and efficiency center defines efficiency in form of the following equation:
Interest = efficiency * price resumption] 14]

The role of human resource:
Work force face with new kind of challenges from the viewpoint of configuration and change in occupational skills and managers struggle to even such challenges; therefore, they direct organizational rules and policies in a way to make the best use of opportunities emerged out of such changes and encounter the existing threats. In this case, one of the attempts is innovation of the term "human resource development" which means organizing learning experiences in a specific time in order to increase and reform of doing method of the job. [15]

Nowadays, human resource development and ….. with efficiency is one of the prominent discussions in human resource management. Human resource management considering education and development vastly and assumed that individuals are the most valuable resources of the organization and human resource development is a long-term process. [16]

One of the major challenges is cultural problems among managers and employees, and lack of skilled workforce in national and organizational level. Employees' cultural problems is they feel tele-working weakens their occupational security; since working at home causes decrease or disconnection of face-to-face relationship in office and with managers and decision-makers that may hinder their promotion or stability of their job. [17]

Effective factors on human resource efficiency:
The most important factors effecting on human resource efficiency are as following:
- Employees' perception about their job and organization
- The job nature
- Operation staffs' professional information
- Working culture
- Employees' equanimity and physical calmness
- Encouragement to work efficiently
- Employees' motivation and satisfaction of working
- Individuals' cooperation
- Discipline in working and time management
- Employees' participation in decision making
- Effective and efficient management
- Readiness of educational equipments
- Innovation and creativity and environment for creativities to grow
- Appropriate background and experience to do occupational tasks  [13]

Tele-working and efficiency:
As Hasan Talebi, university professor and member of Iran informatics high council said that removing or decreasing the employees' presence in organizations leads to economization in energy, administrative space, and increase in organization profitability. Also, it increases tele-workers' satisfaction remarkably in a way they can do the jobs electronically at home with more freedom, higher motivation and without any stress. [17]

From the viewpoint of individual efficiency, when one exits from an organizational control, tries to increase his function through "managerial intelligence" and does his best through planning in order to improve his working with the least cost within the least time, since working time in tele-working defined floatingly, he can choose the most suitable time. Moreover, tele-worker's self-confidence and the efficiency of organization increased and energy wasting, tensions and conflicts in the organization decreased. Therefore, managers can seize the opportunities to plan for optimal use of human resources. [18]

Deputy of communication minister announced that according to a done survey, tele-working led to 46% increase in presence at home, 71% decrease in air pollution, 69% increase in efficiency and 76% increase in life quality. [19]
Discussion and conclusion:

As mentioned in this article, tele-working has advantages and disadvantages, but in fact, there are serious defects in administrative system of Iran against implementation of this project since most of the employees are not sensitive about time wasting and the very presence at office force them to do office jobs. In addition, some employees believe that there are not paid well and they need to have a second job that the second job becomes more important in tele-working conditions and the employees justify their irresponsibility by claims like internet disconnection, equipment break down, etc. that are hard to reject by a manager. So, how this case have to be supervised?

Unfortunately, disarrangement as one of our people weaknesses, cause they postpone a job and finally ask for help from family members who do not have sufficient proficiency and deliver a snugly low quality task.

Computer companies, which have to prepare the necessary infrastructures, are not perfectly prepared. [20] As cited in this regulation, every organization should pay the employee current fee of working at home; of course, the payment of working at home is more than that of in office, but how it is calculated?

On the other side, some tele-workers melt in their work up to the degree that forget their home and family and spend from family time for their work, which leads to family problems.

Consequently, it seems that the first step is to be prepared culturally and provide the necessary infrastructures. Moreover, it is vital to notice that not everyone is able to tele-work and a person should select for this task that is disciplined, accurate and conscientious with the ability of time management in the case tele-working leads to efficiency of human resources. However, the author considers intelligent transfer more efficient than tele-working; in this regard, those parts that require face-to-face communication separated from those do not and transfer the first parts to other cities. It seems this method fulfill all advantages of tele-working considered by government.

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