



Research Paper

Identifying barriers to the optimal implementation of educational evaluation in National Gas Company of Iran: a qualitative study

Omid Oshaghi¹ , Mitra Ezati² , Keyvan Salehi³ 

1- Msc of Educational Management Field, Department of Educational Management and Planning, Faculty of Psychology and Education, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran

2- Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Management and Planning, Faculty of Psychology and Education, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran

3- Assistant Professor, Department of educational methods and programs, Division of Research and Evaluation, Faculty of Psychology and Education, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran

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Abstract

The current research was conducted with the aim of identifying barriers to optimal implementation of educational evaluation in National Gas Company of Iran and providing solutions for its improvement. Therefore, using the capacity of qualitative research approach and focus group method, the barriers of the studied phenomenon were identified. The data was collected by using the Purposive sampling method (criterion type) and focus interview with 4 focus groups (including 20 people) among the employees of the training and equipping of human resources unit of National Gas Company of Iran and the data was analyzed by using thematic analysis method. Data analysis resulted in the identification of 138 conceptual propositions, 21 basic themes and 5 main themes including "individual barriers", "organizational barriers", "educational barriers", "managerial barriers" and "environmental barriers". According to the findings of the research, it is necessary to pay attention to the identified barriers in order to optimally implementation of the educational evaluation process in the National Gas Company of Iran; therefore, at the end, solutions were presented in order to reduce the effect of barriers on the optimal implementation of the educational evaluation process and its improvement.

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Corresponding Author: Omid Oshaghi	https://dorl.net/dor/20.1001.1.27169820.1402.5.2.4.4	
Email: omid.oshaghi@ut.ac.ir	Creative Commons: CC BY 4.0	

Extended abstract

Introduction

Today, due to technological advances and rapid changes in the environment of organizations (Pfoser et al, 2020), the professional development of human resources is considered one of the most important factors in adapting and facing these rapid changes (Rama Devi & Shaik, 2020), in creating a competitive advantage and value creating for organizations (Ashofteh & Orangian, 2021). In this regard, training is one of the main strategies for the professional development of the organization's human resources (Nguyen, 2020); because training is a systematic process of changing the professional behavior and level of competencies (knowledge, ability and skills) of the organization's employees (Urbancová et al, 2021), which affects the performance of the employees and will ultimately ensure the success of the organization (Sahinidis & Bouris, 2018). Effective training courses can be influent in gaining experience and improving the performance of people, and guaranteeing the survival and perfection of the organization by including strategic progress (Bazgir et al, 2020). The current economic recession has reduced the amount of budget allocated to training and development of human resources; therefore, organizations should always design and implement effective training courses in order to strengthen and expand the knowledge, attitude and skills of employees in order to improve, provide innovative ideas and provide quality services. Therefore, it is necessary for organizations to ensure the effectiveness of training courses in order to achieve their goals by providing the necessary grounds for continuous improvement of training courses (Taheri, 2016). One of the basic measures in providing effective training courses is the optimal implementation of the evaluation process of training courses. The most common definition of educational evaluation considers it as a process to examine education in order to determine whether the educational objectives have been realized in an effective and efficient way. (Sahni, 2020). The optimal implementation of the educational evaluation process, as one of the basic methods of quality assurance, makes it possible to guarantee the quality of education by identifying the weak points of the educational program and laying the groundwork to fix them (Tarazi et al, 2020). Creating the necessary conditions for the continuous improvement of training courses, preventing the deviation of training courses and fixing its defects, and helping to answer to superior authorities and suppliers of the costs of training courses are some of the reasons for the necessity of identifying obstacles to the optimal implementation of the training evaluation process (Taheri, 2016). Thus, in the present research, we have tried to answer the question: "What are the obstacles to the optimal implementation of the educational evaluation process in the National Gas Company of Iran?"

Theoretical framework

Educational evaluation is a regular process of forming a value judgment about the quality of the educational program, making decisions regarding the improvement and modification of the educational program during future planning (Al-Mughairi, 2018). The purpose of educational evaluation is to provide appropriate information for decision-making; in other words, the results of the educational evaluation provide a set of appropriate information for making decisions regarding the continuation, change or termination of the educational program (Sadeghi et al, 2018). In this regard, there are several models each of which considers specific aspects of evaluation. Some models have focused their attention on evaluating learner behavior, educational materials or related methods. Another group of models emphasizes the importance of the role of evaluation in educational planning and tries to improve educational planning by using multiple models, and another group of models also emphasizes the importance of gathering information for decision-making (Taherkhani & Hamidi, 2020).



In relation to the subject of the research, Tarazi et al, (2020) in a research with the aim of identifying the criteria and components affecting the evaluation of the effectiveness of in-service training courses for the employees of Refah Karkaran Bank, considers the factors affecting the process of evaluating the effectiveness of the said courses include individual factors (emotions, awareness and cognition, behavior, physical changes and usefulness), group (emotions in the group, awareness and cognition in the group, behavior in the group and usefulness in the group), organizational (financial, efficiency, processes and resources) and social (customer, community development and business ethics). Urbancová et al, (2021) in research entitled "Effective educational evaluation: the role of influencing factors on evaluating the effectiveness of employee training" concluded that educational evaluation methods (self-evaluation and direct evaluation by supervisors and colleagues), feedback to employees, the size of the organization, and human and financial resources affect the process of evaluating the effectiveness of employee training. Al-Mughairi, (2018) also in his research entitled "Evaluation of training and development of employees: case study: a national oil and gas industry" states that the obstacles of the educational evaluation process include people without evaluation qualifications, use of inappropriate evaluation methods, low and limited cooperation of the managers of the organization and the lack of financial resources.

Methodology

The current research is practical in terms of purpose and nature, and from the point of view of data collection, it is based on the qualitative research approach and the focus group method. The field of research was Iran National Gas Company (headquarters companies and operational areas), and in this field, the participants included all the employees of the training and manpower training unit of Iran National Gas Company. The selection of the participants was based on the purposeful sampling method of the criterion type among the employees of the training and equipping of human resources unit of National Gas Company of Iran. The data was collected using the focal interview technique, and after completing 4 focal interviews, the level of data saturation was reached. In order to analyze the data, the theme analysis method was used.

Research findings

After conducting 4 focal interviews (including 20 people) with the employees of the Human Resources Training and Equipping Unit of Iran National Gas Company and analyzing the resulting data, 21 basic themes and 5 main themes were extracted, which include: individual barriers (insufficient participation of the organization's employees, lack of specialized knowledge in the organization's employees, lack of required skills in the organization's employees, insufficient knowledge and awareness of the organization's employees about the requirements of the educational evaluation process and incorrect implementation of the requirements of the educational evaluation process by the organization's employees), Organizational barriers (problems in the processes of the organization's human resources planning unit, problems in the processes of the organization's human resources training and equipping unit, problems related to organizational culture, problems related to the organization's human resources, limited credits and required budget, low interaction and cooperation of different units of the organization and lack of efficient and effective motivational systems in the organization), educational barriers (weakness of training course instructors and less and limited use of new and appropriate methods, models and indicators), managerial barriers (insufficient participation of managers, heads and supervisors of the organization, lack of required skills in managers, heads and supervisors of the organization, negative attitude of managers, heads and supervisors of the organization, low and limited

support of managers, heads and supervisors of the organization, and incorrect implementation of the requirements of the evaluation process educational by the managers, heads and supervisors of the organization), and environmental barriers (lack of necessary and appropriate infrastructure and lack of mechanisms facilitating the educational evaluation process).

Conclusion

The present research was conducted with the aim of identifying obstacles to the optimal implementation of educational evaluation in the National Gas Company of Iran and providing solutions for its improvement. The results of this research are consistent with the findings of researchers such as Tarazi et al, (2020), Urbancová et al, (2021) and Al-Mughairi (2018). In explaining the findings of the research, it can be said that individual barriers, organizational barriers, educational barriers, managerial barriers and environmental barriers have caused the process of educational evaluation in Iran's National Gas Company not to be carried out optimally, and the expected results are not obtained from the training courses; therefore, it is necessary to think about improving the existing situation and thereby improve the quality of the educational evaluation process and consequently, the quality of training courses and their effectiveness, and in this way strengthen the skills and abilities of employees to perform their job duties and responsibilities. For this purpose, according to the findings, solutions have been identified to reduce the effects of obstacles and improve the educational evaluation process in the National Gas Company of Iran, such as including the index of the active participation of the organization's employees in the educational evaluation process in the annual performance evaluation form of the organization's employees in order to motivate the organization's employees to participate actively in the process of educational evaluation and etc. According to the results obtained from this research, it is suggested that in future researches, the obstacles of the educational evaluation process and providing improvement solutions in other organizations should be taken into consideration and compared with the results of the current research. Also, in future researches, the effect of each of these obstacles identified in the current research can be investigated separately on the process of educational evaluation. And finally, future researchers can conduct research similar to the current research in certain time intervals when the organization takes corrective measures, so that continuous monitoring can be done in this field.