

AUTHORITY DELEGATION IN ORGANIZATION: LESSONS FROM 7TH CENTURY – EARLY ISLAMIC ERA

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Abstract

Authority delegation is an essential element in management. Organizations need to be cautious in the matter, as the decisions may determine its survival. It is not uncommon to see organizations taking a longer time to fill a position of authority; and in some cases the positions can remain unfilled as no one was deemed fit to hold the position. Delegation of authority requires meticulous consideration of all factors taking into account the complexity of circumstances faced by organizations. This article attempts to look at authority delegation as practiced in 7th century – early Islamic era with a special reference during the time Prophet Muhammad (SAW). Based on the *sīrah*, it was found that even though Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was the spiritual and political leader of the Muslim society, authority delegation was commonly practiced in various circumstances during his era.

Keywords: Authority, delegation, management, power, Early Islamic Era

Introduction

Organizations consist of people who hold different types of roles and responsibilities at various levels of positions. In this article, the organization is discussed as two levels i.e. the management, and employees; although the actual levels may be more complex. The management refers to the top managers and the board of directors, whereas the employees are all others who work in the organization. Each role and responsibility denotes different level of importance in the organization. People need certain level of authority to enable them to carry out their duties effectively. As management and employees are interdependent entities, they need synergistic cooperation to be able to perform their task effectively and successfully. Managers will not be able to carry out all their strategies and plans without the assistance and support from employees. Likewise, employees cannot effectively perform their tasks without guidance from the management. Hence, it necessitates organizations to practiced elegation of authority to selected qualified employees. Apart from fulfilling the needs of the organization, delegation of authority would motivate the employees to work harder to achieve a higher standard. On the other hand, delegation of authority to the wrong individual could lead to detrimental consequences. As such, it is imperative that all necessary measures are carefully considered, depending on the different level of importance.

Literature Review

Delegation or distribution of authority has been one of the topics under the discussion of leadership. Its definition and overall concept has been deliberated by many including Hellriegel et.al¹ and Dessler.² As their writing are easily found and widely suggested as modern references, delegation, their discussion is not in any way related to any way divine or religious elements, hence it is purely temporal business activity. The question of delegation is actually not merely discussed under the purview of modern Western management discipline. It has also been touched under the banner of a rather newly emerging branch of academic discipline, Islamic management. It is suggested under this discipline that any personal action undertaken by a manager is no longer considered as merely temporal but should be viewed as something associated with afterlife affairs.

A review of literatures shows that there are only few writings dealt with the concept of delegation from the Islamic point of view, in which more often than not only discuss the matter in general. It should be noted though that a number of articles for instances are noteworthy such as Abdus Satar Abbasi et.al,³ Mohammad Yousaf Jamil⁴

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¹ Hellriegel. Don, Jackson Susan. E, and Slocum John W. Jr (2004), *Management, A Competency-Based Approach*, 10th edition, USA: Thomson Learning.

² Dessler Gary (2004), *Management, Principles and Practices for Tomorrow's Leaders*, 3rd edition, USA: Pearson Education Inc.

³ Abdus Sattar Abbasi, Kashif Ur Rehman and Amna Bibi (2010), "Islamic Management Model", *African Journal of Business Management*, vol. 4(9), pp. 1873-1882.

⁴ Muhammad Yousaf Jamil (2015), "Islamic Perspective of Leadership: A Role Model for Today's CEOs", *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization*, Vol. 5, pp. 24-45.

and, Syed Mohammad Ather and Farid Ahammad Sobhani.⁵ Abbasi et.al discussed about the Islamic leadership, covering its elements and approaches. Claiming that the leadership is important and the appointed leader must follow the religious instruction from Allah and the prophet. Eventually, the writers have outlined what and how managers should perform their responsibility. In other article, Syed Mohammad Ather et.al have attempted to find out the basic guidelines laid down by Islam for managerial leadership. Throughout the article the writers have pointed out the operational principles of managerial leadership, managerial grid theory, leadership continuum, team building- team spirit and qualities of a managerial leader from the Islam perspective.

Although many aspects of leadership have been elaborated by Abbasi et.al and Syed Mohammad Ather et.al, they are all did not in any way directly mention about delegation. Such a practice may however, be understandably embedded in participatory and systems approaches, by which Abbasi et.al suggested that managers implement. Meanwhile, Syed Mohammad Ather et.al argued the spirit of delegation may also be manifested when managers practice certain Islamic aspects of *shura* (negotiation and employees consultation) which ultimately may strength their intra organizational bond.

Muhammad Yousaf Jamil in his writing, discussed key attributes needed by effective leaders from Islamic perspective and how these attributes can be made part of the practical lives of today's leaders. Along the flow of the paper, he addressed the examples taken from Quranic verses, the life of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and some of the modern renowned businesses. In his work, delegation is briefly touched under the theme of team work, one of the outlined attributes that managers need to have. He then argues that Prophet has allotted his companions the roles like revelation writers, education and diplomats based on their discrete proficiency and tendency.

Apart from the above writers, it is perhaps worth to note a work by Mohd Azmir Mohd Nizah et.al,⁶ who surveyed few examples from Prophet's life aspects- which the pattern similarly found here- in his article. The prophet, according to the writers, is the "perfect creation of mankind" who is not merely a messenger of god but also a most comprehensive and dynamic, from religious leader to political and military. Eventually, some aspects in his personal sides which shows his creativity in diplomacy, conflict resolution and international affairs, have been selected and discussed. Interestingly, the article also slightly mentions about the event when Prophets sent envoys to neighbouring kingdoms- during the early years of Islam- signalling that there is an emerging power starts to grow. Although the writers refers the event as delegation to neighbouring Monarchs- presumably sending delegates- the word does not however accurately resemble the meaning of "delegation" used in this article.

Probably, Suhaili⁷ is the only author who has explained specifically on the matter of delegation. In his article which was written in Malay, he discusses briefly among other the concept of delegation, the types of authority and how the delegation can be effectively put into practice. The writer however did not refer much on the examples which are chained directly to Prophet Muhammad (SAW). Hence, it is clear that this is the gap that this article will fit in.

In short, the above writers have elaborated significantly on the Islamic leadership covering a wide scope of it. Only one of them, nonetheless have specifically dealt with the subject and the mentioned article has quite different direction to that of this current one.

The Concept of Power and Authority

Generally, authority in organization can be divided into two categories, namely; line, and staff authority.⁸ Line authority is the authority held by line managers such as the president, marketing manager and production manager. They are the people who perform organizational basic tasks such as productions and sales. They can give direct orders through the chain of command. Staff authority is held by staff managers or human resource managers. This authority is usually comprised of providing advices and opinions. Staff managers do not have the right to delegate authority exceeding the boundary of their department. To illustrate the point, the human resource manager can only give opinion to the production manager regarding the characteristics of a good worker but does not have the right to determine who should be appointed; whereas production manager can instruct the human resource department to appoint suitable individual to work in his/her department.

⁵ Syed Mohammad Ather, Farid Ahammad Sobhani (2007) "Managerial Leadership: An Islamic Perspective", *IJUC Studies*, vol 4, pp.7-24.

⁶ Mohd Azmir Mohd Nizah, Muhammad Mustaqim Mohd Zarif, Paimah Atoma and Hisham Muhammad Taky Eldin Kandil (2013), Political Creativity among Religious Leaders: The Case of Muhammad, *World Applied Sciences Journal*, 24 (2). Pp. 270-275.

⁷ Suhaili Sarif (2003), "Konsep Penurunan Autoriti (*Delegation*) Menurut Perspektif Islam" *Jurnal Syariah*, Vol 11 (2). pp 51-60.

⁸ Dessler Gary (2004), *op.cit*, p. 140.

Nevertheless, it is critical to comprehend the notion of power, in order to better understand the concept of authority. Both terms are frequently paired together or used interchangeably. Merriam-Webster dictionary listed various definitions of power which include; the ability to act or produce an effect, and the possession of control, authority, or influence over others.⁹ Power can be derived from various sources and is not limited or determined by the formal organizational structure. As such, there are various types of power. The most commonly used typologies for describing the bases of power was provided by French and Raven which include; legitimate power, reward power, coercive power, expert power and, referent power.¹⁰ People derive legitimate power from the positions they hold in the organization. Legitimate power is narrow in scope because it can only be applied to acts that are defined as legitimate by everyone involved.¹¹ Meanwhile, reward power is the result from an individual's belief that another person has the ability to provide him or her with desired outcomes. An employee's compliance to a certain procedures and codes, and performance of specific duties is the result of the expectation that it will result in rewards.

The power is limited by the person's actual ability to provide the desired outcomes.¹² However, in some situation employees may consider the rewards as insufficient or unsatisfactory. In this case, other types of power play significant role such as coercive power. Coercive power exists when a person believes another person has the ability to punish him or her. Coercive power is usually considered a negative form of power. In an organization, coercive power is usually held by individuals that have legitimate power. Legitimate power ensures that others accept that an individual has the power to reward and coerce. Nonetheless, in many situations, anyone with significant level of influence does have the power to reward and coerce. Similar to reward power, coercive power can be derived from both informal and formal sources.¹³

Expert power arises from the individual who possess specialized or technical knowledge that is valuable to the organization. Expert power is limited by the degree to which this expertise is irreplaceable. An individual can gain power by becoming the only person in the unit who knows a certain product. However, if others learn to use the product, the individual power will be diminished.¹⁴ People are said to have referent power when others are attracted to them, or desire to be associated with them. Referent power is the most resilient type of power because it is difficult to lose once it has been achieved.¹⁵ An individual with referent power is able to motivate others to act in specific ways, without the need to have coercive or reward power. In fact, the individual's pleasure or displeasure is considered reward and punishment in itself.

Based on the discussion above, it can be understood that power exists in multiple circumstances and in various forms. In contrast, authority can only exist in a specific setting and within specific structure. One of the definitions of authority is the power held by an individual in an organization. It is the right to make decisions and give orders.¹⁶ Normally, superior personnel would have the power to make decisions and inform the employees what needs to be done.¹⁷ Another definition is the right and power to rule, decide, administer and handle something.¹⁸ Authority is derived from the position held by an individual in the chain of command in an organization. It starts from the highest hierarchy, who is the principal of the organization or the shareholder or owner of the company, who then appoints the board of directors responsible to safeguard his/her interests. The appointed board of directors would then delegate their authority to the president or the chief executive officer to lead the company in the day to day matters and operations.¹⁹ In the existence of clear responsibility and sufficient authority, managers and employees would be able to carry out their respective tasks efficiently and effectively.

The Delegation of Authority

As previously stated, authority is necessary to accomplish certain tasks. In addition, obedience from employees is also crucial to ensure the organization's goals are achieved. Islam provides relief to the leaders by ordaining

⁹ "Power." Merriam-Webster.com. Accessed August 24, 2017. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/power>

¹⁰ John R. P. French, Jr., and Bertram Raven (1959), "The bases of social power," In D. Cartwright, (ed), *Studies in social power*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Institute for Social Research, pp.160-167.

¹¹ Michael A. Hitt, C. Chet Miller, and Adrienne Colella (2006), *Organizational behavior: A strategic approach*, John Wiley & Sons, Inc. New Jersey, p.453

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid, p.454

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 455

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ "Authority." Merriam-Webster.com. Accessed August 24, 2017. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/authority>.

¹⁷ Hellriegel. Don, Jackson Susan. E and Slocum John W. Jr (2004), *Management, A Competency-Based Approach*, 10th edition, USA: Thomson Learning, p. 302. Please also refer Thomson. P and McHugh D. (2003), *Work Organizations*, London: Global Publishing.

¹⁸ "Authority." Yourdictionary.com. Accessed August 24, 2017. <http://www.yourdictionary.com/authority>.

¹⁹ Dessler Gary (2004), *Management, Principles and Practices for Tomorrow's Leaders*, 3rdedition, USA: Pearson Education Inc., p. 140.

employees to obey their respective leaders. The goals of the organization are shared goals, which necessitate collective actions, as opposed to working towards achieving the goal of an individual. Systematic and effective authority delegation practices would facilitate the process to achieve organizational objectives and lessen internal conflict. Delegation of authority refers to the process of giving authority to a person or group to make decisions and take action in a particular situation.

Hence, by entrusting employees with sufficient authority, the management is able concentrate on more strategic and important issues. It has been argued that among the benefits of authority delegation are as below:²⁰

1. Delegation of authority contributes to an efficient organization. The management team is able to focus on strategies over matters that can be solved by other employees. In fact, the management's involvement in certain operational matters may sometimes disrupt the running of the business, especially when they have little understanding on how things work at the operational level.
2. Decision can be made faster without the need to constantly refer to the management. It can even improve the quality of the outcome when authority is handed to employees that are deemed experts. With the fierce competition in the global market, fast decisions are essential. Delaying in decisions on matters that are well within the expertise of certain employees could lead to missed opportunities.
3. Delegation of authority is a means to provide training to employees on organizational management. In fact, on the job training for employees is a more efficient method of transferring skills and knowledge compared to the didactic classroom style in-house training courses provided by employers.

Authority and Power from the Islamic Perspective

The importance of aspect of authority and power has been emphasized in Islam. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said:

All of you are shepherds and all of you will be asked about your wards. The ruler is a shepherd and shall be asked about his wards. The man is a shepherd of his family and will be asked about his ward.....²¹

In Islam, everyone has the same right and status. Islam does not differentiate between men except from the perspective of *Taqwa*.²² Allah (SWT) says in the holy Qur'an:

O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise (each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah (SWT) is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah (SWT) has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things).

(Al-Hujurat (49): 13)

Based on the concept of equity, power in the hands of man is not absolute. It cannot be used just to fulfill one's desire. Absolute power can only belong to Allah (SWT). He is the Inventor and the Owner of all things in this world. This fact is mentioned in the holy Qur'an:

He to whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth: no son has He begotten, nor has He a partner in His dominion: it is He who created all things, and ordered them in due proportions.

(Al-Furqan (25): 2)

The role of man on the face of the earth is to become the *khalifah* (vicegerent) of Allah (SWT) to administer and prosper the earth. It has been stated in the holy Qur'an:

Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: "I will create a vicegerent on earth." They said: "Wilt Thou place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood? Whilst we do celebrate Thy praises and glorify Thy holy (name)?" He said: "I know what ye know not.

(Al-Baqarah (2): 30)

In order to govern and prosper the earth, all roles and responsibilities must be managed properly. Employees must be given adequate authority to be able to perform the task effectively. Authority comes with responsibility and accountability. Often, greater authority means greater responsibility. Hence, as the top management have greater responsibility as compared to their employees, they also possess greater authority.²³

²⁰ Naceur Jabnoun (1994), *Islam and Management*, Kuala Lumpur: Institut Kajian Dasar, p. 100.

²¹ Şahîh Bukhârî, Kitab al-'Itq, Bab al-'Abd Ra'in fi mal sayyidih, Hadith no. 2371.

²² *Taqwa* is usually translated as god-fearing, piety, and righteousness.

²³ Naceur Jabnoun (1994), *op.cit*, p. 98.

Ultimately, the most important responsibility of an individual is to save himself or herself and those under his or her care from the punishment of hellfire. Allah (SWT) says in the Qur'an:

O ye who believe! Save yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is Men and Stones, over which are (appointed) angels stern (and) severe, who flinch not (from executing) the Commands they receive from Allah (SWT), but do (precisely) what they are commanded.

(Al-Tahrīm (66):6)

Authority does not represent pride, and should not be treated as a prize. In essence, authority is an *amanah* (trust) which will be accounted for in the Hereafter. Allah (SWT) said in the holy Qur'an:

O ye that believe! Betray not the trust of Allah (SWT) and the Messenger, nor misappropriate knowingly things entrusted to you.

(Al-Anfāl (8): 27)

Great responsibility requires strong commitment and leadership capabilities. Islam particularly emphasizes on capabilities and competence of a leader. Authority and power should only be entrusted to those who are qualified. In this regard Abū Dhar (RA)²⁴ narrated that he had persuaded Prophet Muhammad (SAW) to appoint him as a holder of a position. He said, "O Prophet of Allah, appoint me." The Prophet answered, "Verily it is a trust which would become a humiliation and regret in the Hereafter."²⁵ Prophet Muhammad (SAW) rejected Abū Dhar's request as he knew Abū Dhar's limit in capabilities and competence.

Based on the hadiths and verses from the holy Qur'an mentioned, it is clear that authority and power in Islam is considered a burden, and not a privilege for a leader. The burden is acknowledged. Hence, Islam orders the ummah to obey the appointed leaders. Allah (SWT) says in the holy Qur'an:

O ye who believe! Obey Allah (SWT), and obey the Messenger, and those charged with authority among you. If ye differ in anything among yourselves, refer it to Allah (SWT) and His Messenger, if ye do believe in Allah (SWT) and the Last Day: That is best, and most suitable for final determination.

(Al-Nisā' (4): 59)

While the obedience to leaders is not absolute, obedience to Allah (SWT) and the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) is unconditional. Obedience is required as long as leaders do not deviate from the *shariah*. More importantly, when the management appoints an employee to bear a responsibility, the employee must also be equipped with adequate authority to ensure the success of the mission. Abu Hurairah (R.A) narrated, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said, "Those who obey me, verily they obey Allah (SWT) and those who disobey me disobey Allah (SWT). And those who obey the leaders appointed by me, obey me and those who disobey my leaders have disobeyed me."²⁶

Prophet Muhammad (SAW) Practices of Authority Delegation

In the city of Madinah, there was no one who occupied a higher position of authority other than Prophet Muhammad (SAW), politically and spiritually. In the case of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) we posit that his power encompasses all types of power. As the prophet of Allah as well as the ruler of the first Islamic state he commands total obedience from all Muslims and the people of Madinah and afterward the whole Arab peninsula. Verses from the Qur'an in which Allah (SWT) stated his position among the people guaranteed his legitimacy. Allah (SWT) said:

Muhammad is the Messenger of Allāh; and those with him are forceful against the disbelievers, merciful among themselves.

(Al-Fath (48): 29)

He also has the power to reward actions and persons. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was known as someone who rewarded people for fulfilling their tasks. In Musnad Ahmad, it was recorded, "When 'Abdullah bin Anis return from a battle in which he killed Khalid bin Sufyan bin Nabih, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) gifted him a staff and said to him, "it will be the sign between you and me in the day of resurrection". After that, 'Abdullah bin Anis was never apart from the staff and was buried together with it when he died". Prophet Muhammad (SAW) also possessed coercive power whereby he has the power to punish. In a hadith, it was recorded:

²⁴ RadhiyAllahu 'anhu (peace be upon him).

²⁵ Ahmad Ibn Hanbal (1994), *Musnad al-Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal*, Hadith Abī Dhar al-Ghifari. Hadith no. 21002, Beirut: Dār Ihyā' al-Turath al- 'Arabī, p. 219

²⁶ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Kitab al-Imārah, Bab Wujubi Ṭā'ati al-Umarā' Fī Ghayri Ma'siah, Wa Tahrīmiha fī al-Ma'siah, Hadith no. 1835.

Abu Huraira reported that a person from amongst the Muslims came to Prophet Muhammad (SAW) while he was in the mosque. He called him saying: O, Allah's Messenger. I have committed adultery. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) turned away from him, the person (again) came round facing Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and said to him (Prophet Muhammad): Allah's Messenger, I have committed adultery. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) turned away until the person did that four times, and as he testified four times against his own self, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) called him and said: Are you mad? He said: No. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) (again) said: Are you married? He said: Yes. Thereupon Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said: Take him and stone him.²⁷

Even though Prophet Muhammad (SAW) had the power to deliver punishment, in many instances he chose to forgive when he had the option to do so. After the conquest of Mecca, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) gathered the dwellers of city and ask them, "What do you think I will do to you?" the people answered, "Kindness, because you are an honorable kin and an honorable nephew". Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said, "I say to you as Joseph (AS) said to his brothers, there are no worries to you today. Go, you are free".²⁸ Prophet Muhammad (SAW) also hold reference power as he was the living guide and example for the people. It was narrated:

When the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) had finished with matter regarding the treaty of Hudaibiah between the Muslim and the idolaters, he got up and ordered the companions to slaughter and shave (tahallul), "none of them stood up until the Prophet repeated his commandment three times, however they remained motionless. Then the Prophet entered his tent and went to his wife Umm Salamah and said, "What should I do? They do not want to do what I want them to do. Umm Salamah then said to the prophet: "Slaughter the sacrificial animals without giving any instructions, then pick the barber and shave your hair. The Prophet came out of the tent and proceeded to do that. When the companions watched it, then they do it immediately."²⁹

Prophet Muhammad (SAW) is not someone who kept all authorities to himself. He delegates as required. It should be pointed out that Prophet Muhammad's (SAW) delegation was based on his wisdom, and not merely due to his incompetence on a particular matter. A very important example of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was during the battle of *Ahzāb* (confederates). After the end of the siege by the confederate forces, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was commanded by Allah (SWT) to go to the people of Banu Qurayza³⁰ seeking retribution on their treasonous and treacherous actions during the siege. A number of people including a few of his companions among the *ansār*³¹ pleaded with him to give mercy to the people of Banu Qurayza. He later asked them would they be satisfied if he delegates the authority of deciding the fate of the people of Banu Qurayza to someone among them. When they answered yes, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) appointed one of the most prominent leaders of the *ansār*, Sa'ad Bin Mu'ādh (R.A) to be the judge. It was Sa'ad bin Mu'ādh (R.A) who ruled that the people of Banu Qurayza are to be judged by the law of their own scripture, the *Torah*. Based on the Jewish law as prescribed in the *Torah* the men were killed, the women and children were taken as war captives, and their properties were confiscated. The event was recorded in a hadith:

Narrated by Abu Said Al-Khudri: Some people (i.e. the Jews of Bani bin Quraiza) agreed to accept the verdict of Sa'ad bin Mu'ādh so the Prophet sent for him (i.e. Sa'ad bin Mu'ādh). He came riding a donkey, and when he approached the Mosque, the Prophet said, "Get up for the best amongst you." or said, "Get up for your chief." Then the Prophet said, "O Sa'ad! These people have agreed to accept your verdict." Saad said, "I judge that their warriors should be killed and their children and women should be taken as captives." The Prophet said, "You have given a judgment similar to Allah's Judgment (or the King's judgment)".³²

In this instance, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was in total control of the situation and no one was to argue if he himself decided the fate of Banu Qurayzah. Having said that, he still chose to delegate the authority to someone else. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) demonstrated that although it was his right to decide, in certain situations delegation of the right was appropriate. It is interesting to note that authority delegation practices during his time

²⁷ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Kitāb al-Ḥudūd, Bab Man i' tarāfā 'ala nafsihi bi al-Zina, Ḥadīth no. 1691.

²⁸ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (1994), *Zād al-Ma'ād Fi Ḥadya Khair al-'Ibād*, Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risālah, Vol. 3, p. 359.

²⁹ Musnad Imam Ahmad, Ḥadīth no. 18812.

³⁰ Banu Qurayza was one of the Jewish tribes in Medina. The other tribes were Banu Nadhir and Banu Qainuqa'.

³¹ *Ansār* is Arabic for the "helpers" referring to the companions of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) from the people of Madinah or Yathrib as it was known at the time. They had sworn themselves to protect and help, *nasr* in Arabic. Meanwhile, companions of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) who came to Madinah from Makkah were known as the *muhajirun*, the "emigrants".

³² Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī, Kitāb Manāqib al-Anṣār, Bab Manāqib Sa'adi bin Mu'ādz Raḍiallahu 'Anhu, ḥadīth no.3804.

was well-documented in numerous *sīrahs* as recorded by various scholars even though as a Prophet of Allah (SWT), Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was an absolute ruler with absolute authority among his followers. Nonetheless, delegation of authority was performed diligently by Prophet Muhammad (SAW). There were various aspects that can be derived from his delegation of authority practices. Amongst them are:

1. Give the right job to the right person

It is imperative that the task needed to be done must be given to the rightful person. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) had sent one of his companions Mu'ādh ibn Jabal to the people of Yemen. Mu'ādh was selected by Prophet Muhammad (SAW) as he possesses the desired qualities and was therefore the right person to be sent. Ḥafṣ bin 'Umar narrates:

Some companions of Mu'ādh ibn Jabal said: When the Apostle of Allah (SAW) intended to send Mu'ādh ibn Jabal to the Yemen, he asked: How will you judge when the occasion of deciding a case arises? He replied: I shall judge in accordance with Allah's Book. He asked: (What will you do) if you do not find any guidance in Allah's Book? He replied: (I shall act) in accordance with the Sunnah of the Apostle of Allah (SAW). He asked: (What will you do) if you do not find any guidance in the Sunnah of the Apostle of Allah (SAW) and in Allah's Book? He replied: I shall do my best to form an opinion and I shall spare no effort. The Apostle of Allah (SAW) then patted him on the breast and said: Praise be to Allah, Who has helped the messenger of the Apostle of Allah to find something which pleases the Apostle of Allah (SAW).³³

In other instances, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) appointed a *muraqib al-suq* (market supervisor) to supervise and monitor businesses and traders operations and ensure proper dealings and accurate measurement in transactions such as the appointment of Sa'id bin Sa'id bin al-'As in Makkah and 'Umar bin al-Khattab in Madinah³⁴.

2. Ensure thorough understanding

The appointed person should have clear understanding on the tasks given in order to achieve the expected outcome. Employees must be given clear information and guidance on how to perform the task given and to avoid mistake and confusion. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) always gives clear instruction on what need to be done on what not to commit. Each time Prophet Muhammad (SAW) sent a leader to a place he would give him detail advices and instructions. The following hadith shows how Prophet Muhammad (SAW) guide and give instruction to a leader;

It has been reported from Sulaymān b. Buraid through his father that when the Prophet (SAW) appointed anyone as leader of an army or detachment he would especially exhort him to fear Allah (SWT) and to be good to the Muslims who were with him. He would say: Fight in the name of Allah (SWT) and in the way of Allah (SWT). Fight against those who disbelieve in Allah (SWT). Make a holy war; do not embezzle the spoils; do not break your pledge; and do not mutilate (the dead) bodies; do not kill the children. When you meet your enemies who are polytheists, invite them to three courses of action. If they respond to any one of these, you also accept it and withhold yourself from doing them any harm. Invite them to (accept) Islam; if they respond to you, accept it from them and desist from fighting against them. Then invite them to migrate from their lands to the land of Muhajirun and inform them that, if they do so, they shall have all the privileges and obligations of the Muhajirun. If they refuse to migrate, tell them that they will have the status of Bedouin Muslims and will be subjected to the Commands of Allah (SWT) like other Muslims, but they will not get any share from the spoils of war or *Fai*³⁵ except when they actually fight with the Muslims (against the disbelievers). If they refuse to accept Islam, demand from them the *Jizya*³⁶. If they agree to pay, accept it from them and hold off your hands. If they refuse to pay the tax, seek Allah (SWT)'s help and fight them. When you lay siege to a fort and the besieged appeal to you for protection in the name of Allah (SWT) and His Prophet, do not accord to them the guarantee of Allah (SWT) and His Prophet, but accord to them your own guarantee and the guarantee of your companions for it is a lesser sin that the security given by you or your companions be disregarded than that the security granted in the name of Allah (SWT) and His Prophet be violated. When you besiege a fort and the besieged want you to let them out in accordance with Allah (SWT)'s Command, do not let them come out

³³ Sunan Abī Daud, Kitāb al-Aqḍiyah, Bab Ijtihād al-Ra'y fi al-Qaḍā', Hadith no. 3119

³⁴ Ibn 'Abd al-Bar (1992), *al-Istī'āb fi Ma'rifaṭi al-Aṣḥāb*, Beirut, Dār al-Jayl, Vol. 2, p.621. See also

Abī al-'Abas Ahmad al-Qalqashand (n.d), *Subh al-a'sha fi šinā'ati al-Inshā'*, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, Vol. 5, p. 452.

³⁵ *Fai* is the wealth which the non-Muslims surrender without armed conflict.

³⁶ Tax as a sort of compensation to the Muslim society on the part of the unbelievers, living in the protection of the Islamic State for not participating in the military service and enjoying the covenant of protection.

in accordance with His Command, but do so at your (own) command, for you do not know whether or not you will be able to carry out Allah (SWT)'s behest with regard to them.³⁷

3. Encourage involvement of employees in the decision making

The leaders or managers should encourage involvement from employees in the decision-making process. It would stimulate subordinates' readiness in performing the required task. It was known that Prophet Muhammad (SAW) would seek the companions' opinion in various matters. 'Aisha narrated:

After the slanderers had given a forged statement against her, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) called 'Ali bin Abi Talib and Usama bin Zaid when the Divine Inspiration was delayed. He wanted to ask them and consult them about the question of divorcing me. Usama gave his evidence that was based on what he knew about my innocence, but 'Ali said, "Allah has not put restrictions on you and there are many women other than her. Furthermore you may ask the slave girl who will tell you the truth." So the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) asked Barira (my slave girl), "Have you seen anything that may arouse your suspicion?" She replied, "I have not seen anything more than that she is a little girl who sleeps, leaving the dough of her family (unguarded) that the domestic goats come and eat it." Then Prophet Muhammad (SAW) stood on the pulpit and said, "O Muslims! Who will help me against the man who has harmed me by slandering my wife? By Allah, I know nothing about my family except good." The narrator added: Then Prophet Muhammad (SAW) mentioned the innocence of 'Aisha.³⁸

During the battle of al-Ahẓāb the Muslims were under great threat from the allied army. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) asked the companions to give their views to the situation. Salmān said:

O Messenger of Allah! When siege was laid upon us in Persia, we used to dig trenches to defend ourselves. It was really an unprecedented wise plan. The Messenger of Allah (SAW) hurriedly gave orders to implement the plan. Forty yards was allocated to each group of ten to dig. Sahl bin Sa'd said: We were in the company of the Messenger of Allah (SAW), the men used to dig and we evacuate the earth on our backs.³⁹

4. Provide adequate training

When there is lack of training, a subordinate is deemed incapable of carrying out the stipulated task. It is therefore important to provide sufficient training before assigning employees with more responsibilities. The companions of the prophet (SAW) were also his apprentices. The training of the companions begun during the Makkah period where the Muslims faced great trials and tribulation. Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān, 'Alī were the closest to the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). Abū Bakr (RA) in particular, was his closest companion and best apprentice. He was chosen to accompany Prophet Muhammad (SAW) during the Emigration to Madinah. He was appointed by to lead the Muslims in prayers and pilgrimage when Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was still living amongst the Muslims, proving Prophet Muhammad's confidence and recognition of his capabilities.⁴⁰ 'A'isha reported:

When the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) came to my house, he said: Ask Abu Bakr to lead people in prayer. 'A'isha narrated: I said, Messenger of Allah, Abu Bakr is a man of tenderly feelings; as he recites the Qur'an, he cannot help shedding tears: so better command anyone else to lead the prayer. By Allah, there is nothing disturbing in it for me but the idea that the people may not take evil omen with regard to one who is the first to occupy the place of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). I tried to dissuade him (Prophet Muhammad (SAW) twice or thrice (from appointing my father as an Imam in prayer), but he ordered Abu Bakr to lead the people in prayer and said: You women are like those (who had) surrounded Yusuf.⁴¹

5. Accountability to the outcomes

An employee must be held accountable with the final outcomes of the appointed task. Accountability ensures those tasks are carried out diligently. If the employee succeed in performing the given task, due credit must be given. However, if the subordinate in any way fails to perform the task, he/she must be held responsible and the manager has to take the necessary measures. Abu Huraira narrated:

It is narrated on the authority of Abu Huraira that the Prophet (SAW) happened to pass by a heap of eatables (corn). He thrust his hand in that (heap) and his fingers were moistened. He

³⁷ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Kitāb al-Jihād wa al-Siyar, Bab Ta'mir al-Imām al-Umarā' 'ala al-Bu'ūth, Wa waṣiyyatihi iyyāhum bi Ādāb al-Ghuzwi Wa Ghairiha, Hadith no. 1731.

³⁸ al-Bukhārī, Kitāb al-'Itiṣām bi al-Kitāb wa al-Sunnah, Bab Qawl Allahu Ta'āla waamruhum shūra bainahum, Hadith no. 7369.

³⁹ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Rahman al-Mubārakfurī (1995), *al-Raḥīq al-Makhtūm*, Riyadh: Maktabah Dar al-Salam, p. 312.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Kitāb al-Ṣolah, Bab Istikhlāf al-Imām Iza 'Araḍa Lahu 'Uzr Min Maraḍ Wa Safar Waghairihima Min Yuṣṣalli bi al-Nās, Hadith no. 418.

said to the owner of that heap of eatables (corn): What is this? He replied: Prophet (SAW), these have been drenched by rainfall. He (Prophet (SAW)) remarked: Why did you not place this (the drenched part of the heap) over other eatables so that the people could see it? He who deceives is not of me (is not my follower).⁴²

During the time of the Prophet (SAW), in one mission, Khālīd bin Al-Walīd was the head of 350 horsemen of *anṣār*, *muhajirun* and Banī Salīm. They were dispatched to the habitation of Banī Khuzaymah bedouins to invite them to accept Islam. He was instructed to carry out his mission with peace and goodwill. There, the people were not articulate enough to communicate their intentions. It led Khālīd to assume that the people of Banī Khuzaymah were hostile to the invitation. In the end, Khālīd ordered his men to kill them and take the others as captives. He even had in mind to kill the captives but some of the companions were opposed to his plan.

News of bloodshed reached Prophet Muhammad (SAW). He was deeply grieved and raised his hands towards the heaven, uttering these words: "O Allah! I am innocent of what Khālīd has done," twice. He immediately sent ‘Alī to make every possible reparation to the tribes who had been wronged. After a careful inquiry, ‘Alī paid the blood-money to all those who suffered loss. The remaining portion was also distributed amongst the members of the tribe in order to alleviate their suffering. Khālīd, due to his irrational behaviour, had a row with ‘Abdur Rahman bin ‘Awf. Hearing this, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) got angry, and ordered Khālīd to stop that altercation adding that his Companions (meaning ‘Abdur Rahman bin ‘Awf) were too high in rank to be involved in such arguments.⁴³

6. Leader shoulder the ultimate responsibility

The rightful holder of the authority is the leader. As such, the leader must ultimately bear the responsibility of the outcome. Although the subordinate is given the authority, in essence the subordinate task is to represent the leader in carrying out the task.

After the triumph in the Battle of Badr, the Muslims acquired a number of prisoners. Prisoners of war constituted a problem awaiting resolution because it was a new phenomenon in the history of Islam. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) consulted Abū Bakr and ‘Umar bin Al-Khattāb as to what he should do the prisoners. Abū Bakr suggested that he should ransom them, explaining this by saying: "They are after all our relatives, and this money would give us strength against the disbelievers, moreover, Allah (SWT) could guide them to Islam." ‘Umar advised killing them, saying, "They are the leaders of *Kufr* (disbelief)." Prophet Muhammad (SAW) preferred Abū Bakr's suggestion over ‘Umar's. The following day, ‘Umar called on Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and Abū Bakr to see them weeping. He showed extreme astonishment and inquired about the situation so that he might weep if it was worth weeping for, or else he would feign weeping. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) informed that an *āyah*⁴⁴ of the Qur’an had been revealed rebuking them for taking ransom from the captives rather than slaying them.⁴⁵ Allah (SWT) says in the Holy Qur’an:

It is not befitting for an apostle that he should have prisoners of war until he hath thoroughly subdued the land. Ye look for the temporal goods of this world; but Allah (SWT) looked to the Hereafter: And Allah (SWT) is Exalted in might, Wise. Had it not been for a previous ordainment from Allah (SWT), a severe penalty would have reached you for the (ransom) that ye took.

(Al-Anfāl (8): 67-68)

Conclusion

In order for us to further understand authority delegation as practiced by Prophet Muhammad (SAW), it is essential to ponder on the types of authorities did Prophet Muhammad (SAW) reasons for delegating authorities, the person chosen to shoulder the burden the authorities, and timing chosen to delegate authority. Muslims believe that Prophet Muhammad is the best example in worship and deeds. Hence, he is also the best example of how successful delegations of authority are practiced. In essence, *sīrah* of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) clearly demonstrated that Prophet Muhammad (SAW) delegated authority to the right person, for the right task, and at the right moment. Organization is a dynamic and progressive body with numerous components. It will run smoothly when all components move and act in harmony and synergy. The management and/or leaders will not

⁴² Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Kitāb al-Īmān, Bab Qawl al-Nabī ṣalla allhu ‘Alaihi Wasallam: Man Ghashannā Fa laisa Minnā, Hadīth no. 102.

⁴³ Ibid, p 400. Please also refer Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī, Kitāb al-Maghāzī, Bab Ba’atha al-Nabī S.A.W Khālīd bin al-Walīd Ila Banī Jazīmah, Hadīth no. 3994.

⁴⁴ Āyah is commonly translated as “verse” in English. However, some argued that it contains deeper meaning which includes the guidance and signs of Allah SWT. Alim.org defines it as “a sign which leads or directs one to something important. An individual verse in the Quran.” Refer “Āyah.” Alim.org. Accessed August 25, 2017. <http://www.alim.org/library/references/dictionary/a>.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 230

be able to progress without the support and assistance from their employees. Hence, the practices of sound authority delegation cannot be under-estimated. Good and effective authority delegation is an essential practice for all managers and leaders. Hence, management and leaders need to acquire best practices in authority delegation such as appointment of the right person for the right task and ensuring that employees understand what is required of them. Sound practices of authority delegation would increase motivation, improve productivity and lessen discontentment. A deeper understanding on the process of authority delegation would ultimately bring about an efficient organization, which is able to withstand greater challenges in the future.

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