

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE STUDY: EMPOWERMENT

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the concept of employee empowerment and how employee empowerment fits into an organisation. It is divided into two sections. The first section considers the employee as an individual and the concepts used to describe an empowered employee. The second section examines the organisation and considers the basic requirements necessary for an organisation to follow the principles of employee empowerment. Limitations as well as the implementation and measurement of employee empowerment will also be looked at. This chapter will conclude with the researcher's input on the synthesis between employee empowerment and the empowered organisation (see Figure 2.1).

When developing a scale and indicators, describing and identifying a theoretical framework is part of the research process. The research design provides a framework, but the theoretical framework provides the researcher with the data required to further the research. The aim of this chapter is to investigate employee empowerment as a concept.

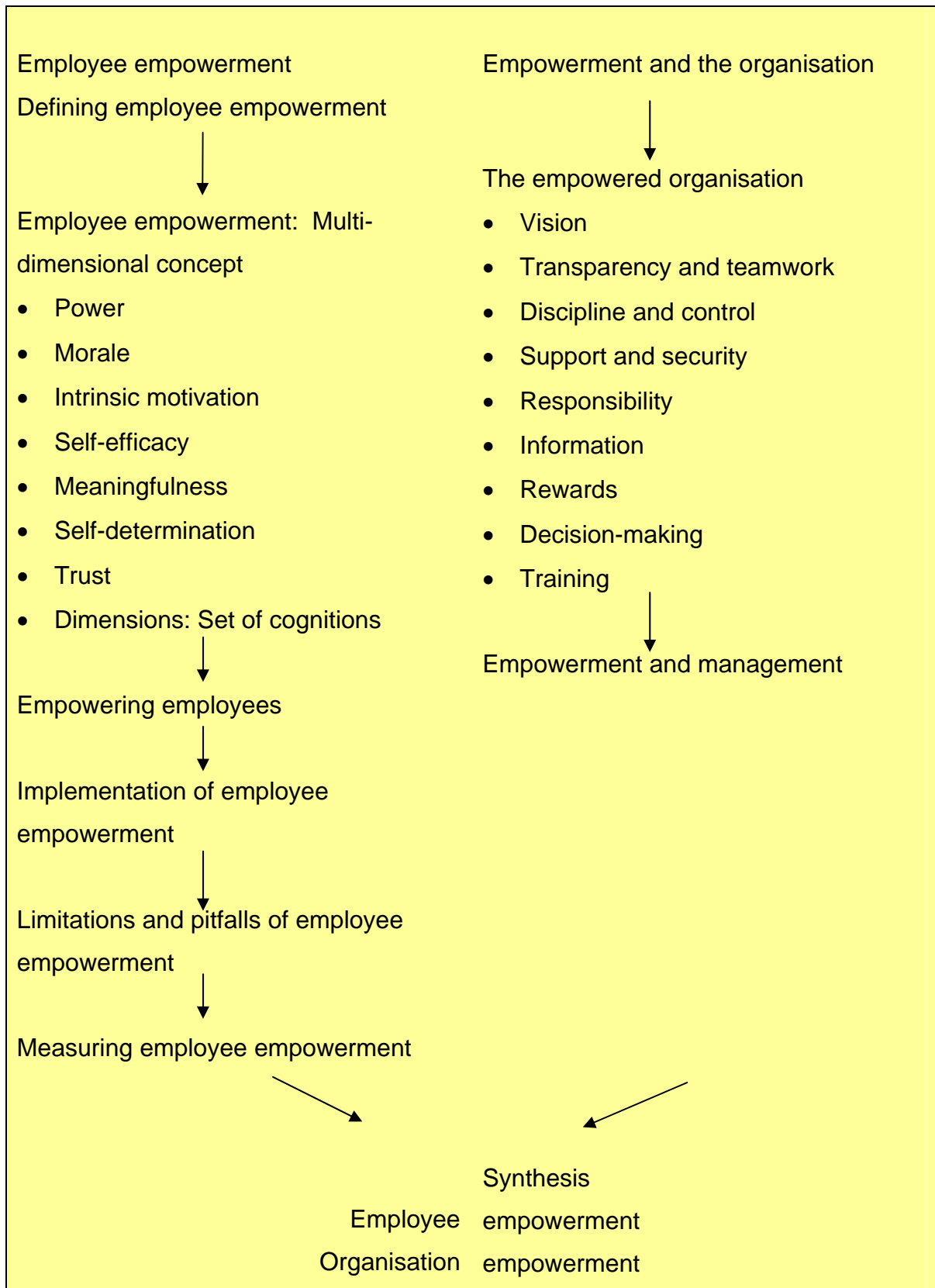
A theoretical framework places the research topic in perspective. It identifies alternative theories and broadens the knowledge base of the research topic. Central concepts can also be identified. This study may be seen as developmental research. According to Green (1999:32), developmental research has three phases: analysis, development and evaluation. The analysis phase involves looking at existing research. The developmental phase involves gathering data and designing the study on the basis of the objectives. The evaluation phase involves assessing outcomes and redesigning if necessary. Because this study is developmental research, in which the aim is to develop a scale and indicators, it is necessary to start by investigating the literature on employee empowerment. Following this phase, the research methodology will be

planned and data will be gathered. The data will be evaluated for outcomes that are beneficial to organisations and employees.

Researchers such as Conger and Kanungo (1988); Quinn and Spreitzer (1997); and Thomas and Velthouse (1990) have done considerable groundwork on employee empowerment. These names crop up repeatedly in the course of reading on this subject. While they may be regarded as old sources, the researcher felt it necessary to include them for the validity of this research. They are seen as the “founders” of employee empowerment and their research can be seen as the foundation of studies in this area.

The first section of this chapter looks at employee empowerment. From the initial literature survey, seven dimensions were identified. Another set of dimensions were added by Thomas and Velthouse (1990). Spreitzer, Kizilos and Nasan (1997) conducted further research on this set of dimensions, which will also be included. To be able to empower employees, organisations must know what the limitations are and how to measure employee empowerment. The second section will look at the organisation and how empowerment fits in. Nine dimensions were identified from the literature. Management plays an important role in employee empowerment as it should be promoted by management. This chapter will also look at management’s role in this process. All of above are outlined in Figure 2.1.

## EMPOWERMENT



**Figure 2.1: Chapter 2: Empowerment**

## **2.2 EMPLOYEE EMPOWERMENT**

### **2.2.1 Defining employee empowerment**

Widespread interest in empowerment comes at a time when global competition and organisational change have stimulated a need for employees who can take initiative, embrace risk, stimulate innovation and cope with high understanding (Spreitzer, 1995:1448). Empowerment has become almost sacred. Most organisations automatically subscribe to the rhetoric of empowerment (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997:42). Empowerment means making people feel valued by involving them in decisions, asking them to participate in the planning process, praising them and continually providing adequate training and support. It is giving employees the opportunity to contribute to the company's overall success. "When you allow your employees to think independently and assist the company, they will respond with increased work effort and greater efficiency" (Lawson, 2001:8).

Frans (1993:314) defines empowerment as: Perceptions of self-concept that are positive and satisfying to the individual's sense of self-validation and self-esteem. Empowerment has also been defined as: The critical awareness of one's place in the world as related to the larger system. The knowledge and skills to influence events. The propensity to act, the ability to initiate effective action on behalf of self and others. The sense of a collective identity; individuals share the goals, resources and aspirations of meaningful social systems of which they are a functional part. Empowerment is a process of enhancing feelings of self-efficacy among organisational members through the identification of conditions that foster powerlessness and through their removal by both formal organisational practices and informal techniques of providing efficacy information (Conger & Kanungo, 1988:474). Empowered personnel have responsibility, a sense of ownership, satisfaction in their accomplishments, power over what and how things are done, recognition for their ideas and the knowledge that they are important to the organisation (Turney, 1993:30).

Furthermore, employees must learn to take initiative, be creative and accept responsibility for their actions. They need to be "empowered" – or so a growing

consensus indicates. While management can create a context that is more empowering, employees must choose to be empowered. Empowered people empower themselves. Organisational characteristics can increase the likelihood of this happening (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997:38). Empowerment is recognising and releasing into the organisation the power that people already have in their wealth of useful knowledge and internal motivation. Release the power within people to achieve astonishing results. People have power that resides in their knowledge, experience and internal motivation (Randolph, 2000b:95). Empowerment is a matter of degree rather than an absolute within a given individual's job or a given group's task (Ford & Fotler, 1995:22).

It is clear from this that employee empowerment is a concept with dual meaning. First, employee empowerment may be seen as encouraging an individual to perform as best as he/she can, and to allow this for the benefit of the organisation. The organisation must consciously practise the policy of empowerment. Certain decisions must be made and put into practice at all levels. Employees must also be "open" to empowerment. They must participate and have the courage to use all their personal resources. Empowerment does not happen in one day, but over time. In addition, it does not happen without any pitfalls, but must nevertheless be the ultimate goal. Empowerment is in the best interests of the organisation and for the benefit of the employees. It is also clear that empowerment looks at more than one aspect of the individual. As seen in Figure 2.1, employee empowerment is regarded as a multi-dimensional concept in this study. Power, morale, intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, meaningfulness, self-determination and trust are the dimensions that will be discussed. This study focuses on the organisation and the employee. It will not benefit an employee to be empowered when working for an organisation that does not promote and follow the principles of employee empowerment. The organisation needs to support employees, both for its own benefit and for the benefit of the employee.

Employee empowerment should be regarded as a humanistic process – adopting the values and practising the behaviours of enlightened self-interest so that personal and organisational goals may be aligned in a way that promotes growth, learning and fulfilment. This definition suggests that communication is necessary

to achieve an alignment of values and actions between those acting in an empowering manner and those being empowered. Alignment implies that empowered individuals are not entitled to do anything they feel like without regard for the organisational context or goals of others (Frymier, Shulman & Houser, 1996:182).

According to the researcher, it is impossible to separate the employee and the organisation when dealing with employee empowerment. It is essential that the employee is empowered and the organisation follows empowerment principles at the same time. It is a process of action. As already mentioned, communication is very important in achieving employee empowerment. The communication must reach the employee, the employee must accept empowerment and try and achieve the empowerment goals.

It is essential for higher-level thinking to permeate the organisation from the bottom-up. Empowerment unifies thinking with doing. In the workplace the term "empowerment" carries two different meanings, which are often confused. First it is the process by which management delivers power to employees, and secondly the process by which an employee assumes power (Badenhorst, 1999:24).

It is clear, then, that empowerment is a multidimensional concept. To fully understand empowerment, all these different dimensions must be understood within the frame of empowerment.

### **2.2.2 Employee empowerment: A multidimensional concept**

Empowerment is multifaceted and its essence cannot be captured by a single concept. The following concepts will be discussed as dimensions of employee empowerment: power, morale, intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, meaningfulness, self-determination and trust. The aim is to set out the basic elements which make up the concept 'empowerment'.

### **2.2.2.1 Power**

Power is a function of the dependence and/or interdependence of actors. Power arises when the performance outcomes of an individual or subunits are contingent not simply on their own behaviour but on what others do and/or how others respond. The relative power of one actor over another is a product of the dependence of the one on the other. Bases of power are identified as legal, coercive, remunerative, normative and knowledge expertise (Conger & Kanungo, 1988:472). Empowered personnel have responsibility, a sense of ownership, satisfaction in accomplishments, and power over what and how things are important to the organisation (Turney, 1993:30). Previously hierarchical structures led to increased control on regulations. Information was controlled very closely, as knowledge was power. Power was perceived as a measure of individual worth. Now changes in company environment need new management styles (Badenhorst, 1999:2). To empower means to give power. Power means authority, and can mean authorisation. Power can be used to describe capacity, as in the self-efficacy definition. It also means energy, as to empower means to energise. It involves broad contrasts, and emphasis on commitment to the task itself is important. It makes work meaningful (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990:667). Empowerment is the process by which a leader or manager shares his/her power with subordinates. Power is possession of formal authority or control over organisational resources – sharing authority. Empowerment implies the granting of power, and so the delegation of authority. It also involves the decentralisation of decision-making, since power is central to the empowerment notion. Individuals are certain to have a need for power where power promotes an internal urge to influence and control other people. Individual's power needs are met when they perceive that they have power or when they believe they can adequately cope with events, situations and/or the people they confront. Power in a motivational sense refers to an intrinsic need for self-determination or a belief in self-efficacy. Power has its base within an actor's motivational disposition (Conger & Kanungo, 1988:473). As already mentioned, empowerment implies the delegation of authority. It is therefore important to clarify this concept.

Delegation can easily be confused with power. Delegation is, however, not empowerment. To give authority, training and resources to make decisions within defined boundaries is to gain power and potential to both grow and strengthen the company. It is a state of mind where there is confidence, courage and zeal among people united together in a common effort (Weiss, 2001:4). Because of this, delegation is not a dimension of employee empowerment, but it has to do with power and the sharing of power.

It is clear that the traditional concept of power within an organisation has changed. The selective sharing of information and keeping employees within specific boundaries is not seen as power anymore. But encouraging people to be more than their job-description, believing in people's abilities, sharing with subordinates and involving employees in decisions is to give power and empower. Not to fear to do the above is also to empower oneself.

#### **2.2.2.2      Morale**

Morale is an important foundation for increasing the productivity of the workforce through motivation and empowerment. By building and maintaining morale, along with adopting a programme of applying motivation techniques, you can personally benefit in addition to helping the company. The following must be undertaken to build morale: communicate fully, respond to problems immediately, give praise and recognition, and set an example. Employees must get involved, [and] ... must rotate their responsibilities (Weiss, 2001:3). In order to empower your employees to develop a sense of competence and confidence, praise them for their performance, encourage them to take risks and acknowledge accomplishments, no matter how small. When your employees know they are doing a good job they will want to repeat the process over and over again. They are also more willing and are eager to help the company grow (Lawson, 2001:8).

Morale seems to be the stepping-stone towards intrinsic motivation. It is important to help your employees to develop and believe in themselves. They must be praised for work well done in order to build morale. When morale has been built,



employees are eager to grow and help the company grow. High morale leads to motivation.

Morale is then a crucial aspect of employee empowerment, it leads to motivation.

### 2.2.2.3 Intrinsic motivation

Empowerment is fundamentally a motivational process of an individual's experience of feeling enabled (Corsun & Enz, 1999:207). Principles of motivation are to build on ego, listen actively, focus on the problem at hand, reinforce your position and set firm goals. The major means of motivating an employee :

- Compliance: Reward
- Identification: Positive self-image
- Internalisation: Make it their own

(Weiss, 2001:5)

#### ➤ **Compliance: Reward**

Many people try to get others to comply by offering a reward in return for a desired behaviour. It seems the most direct way but there are other ways with more satisfying and longer lasting effects.

#### ➤ **Identification: Positive self-image**

When a person adopts a behaviour associated with others he/she is practising identification. The behaviour provides a worthwhile sense of identity and positive self-image.

#### ➤ **Internalisation: Make it their own**

A stronger sense of motivation results from a person adopting the values and beliefs of a group. When employees have made these values and beliefs their own, they become the source of their own motivation.

Intrinsic task motivation involves positively valued experiences that individuals derive directly from a task that produce motivational satisfaction. Task

assessments are presumed to be the proximal cause of intrinsic task motivation; satisfaction occurs within the person and refers to the task itself, rather than to the context of the task or to the rewards or punishments motivated by others. A *task* refers to a set of activities directed towards a purpose. The term *task* includes both activities and purpose (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990:668).

Generally, intrinsic task motivation contributes to innovative behaviours. Because empowered individuals believe they are autonomous and have an impact, they are likely to be creative as they feel less constrained than others by technical or rule bound aspects of work. Because empowered people feel self-efficacy, they are likely to be innovative and expect success (Spreitzer, 1995:1449).

To enhance intrinsic motivation, the environment must be changed as well as the manner in which employees interpret their surroundings. Intrinsic motivation is also associated with satisfaction, mental health, better performance, greater conceptual learning, higher self-esteem and lower burn-out (Gagne, Senécal & Koestner, 1997:1236).

This dimension of empowerment also plays an important role. It shows how an employee, through doing his/her job, can enhance empowerment. An employee must feel that he/she can do the job on hand and more. By doing the job the employee will feel satisfied and enabled. The organisation must reinforce the employee to use initiative, be innovative and not be pushed to a halt because of strict, rigid rules and boundaries. Therefore the employee will be motivated and do his/her best for the organisation and the organisation will benefit from the employee's intrinsic motivation. Again it is a dual benefit for both the employee and the organisation.

#### **2.2.2.4 Self-efficacy**

Increasing self-efficacy stems from beliefs about one's ability to produce and regulate events in one's life. Developing group consciousness creates a sense of fate and a belief in the collective basis of change within a group or community. Reducing self-blame encourages fewer destructive feelings and creates more a

sense of being capable of changing difficult situations. Assuming personal responsibility counters some of the potentially negative results of reducing self-blame. This then helps people feel that they are investing in developing situations and assuming personal responsibility for future change (Letsebe, 1998:6). It is a process of increasing personal, interpersonal or political power so that individuals can take action to improve their lives (Gutierrez, Glen Maye & Delois, 1995:254).

In an empowered organisation, employees feel responsible beyond the limits of their own job, since they feel responsible for making the whole organisation work more efficiently (Badenhorst, 1999:15). Any managerial strategy or technique that strengthens this need for self-determination or belief in self-efficacy by employees will make them feel more powerful (Mahlloney & McMillan, 1994:177). To empower them is to enable them; enabling them is the motivation behind enhancing self-efficacy. Empowerment is a motivational construct, meaning to enable rather than simply to delegate. It implies creating conditions for heightening motivation and for task accomplishment, through the development of a strong sense of personal self-efficacy (Conger & Kanungo, 1988:473). Another aspect of enabling is feeling “able” to perform work competently, referred to as self-efficacy. Feelings of self-efficacy are rooted in the individual’s belief that he or she is capable of performing activities with skill and success (Corsun & Enz, 1999:208).

The researcher is of the opinion that “feeling able” and taking responsibility are crucial aspects when dealing with empowerment. People must feel that they can do their jobs, that they know how to do their jobs, that other people think they can and that they want to. But, furthermore, they must be able to take on the responsibilities that go with the job. By doing this they will develop feelings of self-efficacy.

It is important for organisations to invest in maintaining as well as developing their human resources. The human resource is to a large extent the engine of the organisation. The present wellbeing of an employee has a direct impact on the wellbeing of the company. It is therefore important to look after each employee’s wellbeing (Naidoo & Jano, 2003:113).

An employee who feels good about him/herself will have increased motivation that will benefit the organisation. A better functioning employee is good for the organisation in every sense.

Looking at the underlying motivational process of an individual, empowerment is a motivational phenomenon that is related to self-efficacy and the expectancy theory. The expectancy theory states that an individual's motivation increases his/her effort in a given task, depending on two types of expectancies:

- ⇒ **Outcome expectation:** Effort will result in a desired level of performance.
- ⇒ **Self-efficacy:** Performance will produce desired outcomes if individuals are empowered and their personal self-efficacy expectations are strengthened. Outcome expectations are not necessarily affected as it is based on a "can do" attitude. Efficacy beliefs must be reinforced regardless of positive or negative results. Negative results will result in a "next time, do better" attitude (Bandura, 1986).

If an employee has self-efficacy, crisis situations and problems won't be as overwhelming. Their belief in the self will help them to tackle the problem and sort it out. Although mistakes may be made, they will see these as a challenge and opportunity to learn more.

To give power is to empower. Following from this, the level of empowerment granted to an individual will be the degree to which that individual has personal influence or choice regarding his/her own behaviour. Personal influence is experienced when an employee believes he or she can affect organisation results through self-determined behaviour (Conger & Kanungo, 1988:474).

#### **2.2.2.5 Meaningfulness**

This aspect of empowerment means that employees find meaningfulness in their work, or believe in and care about what they do. An empowered person views the goals and objectives associated with his/her work activity as consequential. The

three aspects – personal influence, self-efficacy and meaningfulness – are some of the critical components of an empowered worker. This view of empowerment is limited to the work domain. Individuals can have varying degrees of empowerment, from more to less, from being somewhat empowered to not empowered at all (Corsun & Enz, 1999:209).

Activities infused with meaning create a sense of purpose, a passion or a mission for people. They provide a source of energy and enthusiasm, rather than draining energy and enthusiasm from people. Merely getting paid, or helping an organisation to earn money, or just doing a job does not create a sense of meaning for most people. Individuals empowered with a sense of meaning have also been found to be more innovative, upwardly influential, and personally effective than those with low meaning scores (Whetten, Cameron & Woods, 2000:412).

Meaning is crucial to people in any situation, and even more in a work situation. The work or what that job offers might have different meanings for different people. But that meaning is what makes people come to work and give their best, striving to be empowered.

#### **2.2.2.6 Self-determination**

Empowered people also have a sense of self-determination. While self-efficacy refers to a sense of competence, self-determination refers to feelings of having a choice in initiating and regulating one's own actions (Whetten, *et al.* 2000:410). People feel self-determined when they can voluntarily and intentionally involve themselves in tasks, rather than being forced or prohibited from involvement. Their actions are a consequence of personal freedom and autonomy. Empowered individuals have a sense of responsibility for, and ownership of, their activities (Zimmerman, 1990:170). Self-determination is associated most directly with having choices about the methods used to accomplish a task, the amount of effort to be expected, the pace of the work and the time frame in which it is to be accomplished. Empowered individuals have a feeling of ownership for tasks because they can determine how they are accomplished, when they are

accomplished and how soon they are completed. Having a choice is the critical component of self-determination (Whetten, et al. 2000:411).

Employees have a choice as to do the job and should take responsibility for their jobs. So whatever way it might go employees are usually willing to take on this responsibility because they have been trusted to do their jobs to the best of their ability. Some form of freedom should be incorporated to give employees the opportunity to use the best of their abilities and skills.

#### **2.2.2.7 Trust**

Empowered people have a sense of trust. They are confident that they will be treated fairly and equitably. They have an assurance that when they are in subordinate situations, those in power will not take advantage of them. They believe that principles of justice will guide the behaviour of those who control resources. Even though trust implies being in a position of vulnerability, empowered individuals have faith that no harm will come to them (Whetten, et al. 2000:413). A feeling that the behaviour of others is consistent and reliable, that information can be held in confidence and that promises will be kept is all a part of developing a sense of empowerment in people (Herriot & Pemberton, 1995).

The idea that employees who trust those in power must be naïve does arise. But when employees are empowered the assumption can be made that the organisation supports the empowerment in some form or other. The organisation will thus be in a situation of trust and doing what they can for the mutual benefit of the company and the employees.

#### **2.2.2.8 Dimensions: Set of cognitions**

Thomas and Velthouse (1990) have used the cognitive model to describe the empowerment process in an individual. According to these authors, employee empowerment is manifested in a set of four cognitions, reflecting an individual's orientation towards his/her work role: meaning, competence, self-determination and impact. Although some of these cognitions have been discussed earlier in the

chapter, Thomas and Velthouse (1990) have identified these cognitions as a set and it must be portrayed as such. They explain these cognitions as follows:

- **Meaning:** The value of a work goal or purpose, judged in relation to the individual's own ideas or standards. It is the fit between work roles and beliefs, values and behaviours.
- **Competence:** An individual's belief in his/her own capability to perform activities with skill; this belief is focused on efficacy specific to a work role.
- **Self-determination:** Competence is the mastery of behaviour, the sense of having a choice in initiating and regulating actions. It reflects autonomy in workplace.
- **Impact:** This is the degree to which individuals can influence strategic, administrative and operating outcomes.

Thomas and Velthouse (1990).

These are the cognitive components of intrinsic task motivation. Feelings of intrinsic task motivation are rewarding in themselves. The four aspects of empowerment listed above are presumed to be a proximal cause of intrinsic task motivation and satisfaction and form a multi-dimensional construct of empowerment according to Gagne, et al. (1997:1224).

Above authors reinforce the fact that empowerment is much more than a single concept. It is impossible to look at empowerment without taking into consideration all the different dimensions. Each dimension gives a better indication of empowerment, specifically employee empowerment. It shows the importance and purpose of work for an individual. Work is not just for financial gain, but is also functional to an individual. It gives people purpose in life, confidence and even self-esteem. The individual must believe in him- or herself and the importance of what he/she does in terms of the bigger organisation. Employees must also believe and work towards what the organisation wants.

Spreitzer, et al. (1997:680-686) build on Thomas and Velthouse's (1990) four dimensions of behaviour, towards three affective key anticipated outcomes:

- effectiveness
- work satisfaction
- job-related strain.

The interrelationship between the four dimensions and three keys is outlined below.

Although the four types of cognitions are discussed, it is once again from a different perspective. Each one is compared to the three affective outcomes.

⇒ **Meaning**

There is a strong link between meaning, effectiveness and work satisfaction – the degree to which an individual perceives work is personally meaningful. Low levels of meaning can be linked to apathy and lower levels of work satisfaction. This results from the perception that one's work does not fulfil one's desired work values. Such value fulfilment is consistent with the meaning dimension of empowerment. There is no relationship between meaning and job-related strain.

⇒ **Competence**

Self-efficacy has a powerful direct effect on performance. Self-efficacy is positively related to future task performance. It is also related to motivating behaviour, effort, persistence and all aspects of motivation which influence job performance. The employee feels more competent at work and more satisfied about work. The more competent the employee, the less job-related strain he/she experiences.

⇒ **Self-determination**

Knowledge and information about work can help the employee to schedule and plan, identify obstacles and achieve optimal job performance. Self-determination is a key component of intrinsic motivation, which in turn is a critical determinant of satisfaction. Increasing predictability through enhanced personal control leads to reduction in job-strain experienced.



⇒ **Impact**

Beliefs can have an impact on a system that influences the organisation. The employee will feel more effective. The lack of opportunity or learned helplessness can hinder the ability to recognise opportunities.

Empowerment is not a single concept and should not be seen in that way. It is impossible to work with only one aspect of empowerment; each aspect affects the next. There is a relationship amongst these aspects, and they work together, complimenting each other, to form the complex concept of empowerment.

Social work through the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) serves the corporate world. The EAP is an intervention that is designed to assist “troubled” employees in the workplace when personal problems affect their work. Employee empowerment is one step ahead. Empowerment aims to equip employees with skills and knowledge before problems arise. The goal of social work is not only intervention, but also prevention.

Now that it is clear what empowerment is, the question of how to empower people, and specifically employees, arises.

### **2.2.3 Empowering employees**

Looking at all the different dimensions of empowerment, it is essential to take into consideration how employees must be empowered.

In a competitive environment, increasingly dependent on knowledge and information, the strongest organisations will be those that effectively use the talents of all the players on the team. The key role of top management is the creation of an environment in which employees can achieve their potential as they help move the organisation towards its goals. The key to empowerment is effective leadership. You lead best by serving the needs of your people. You don't do their jobs for them, but you enable them to learn and progress on the job. (Dess & Picken, 2000:22). Effective leadership requires that internal processes

and practices are consistent with the broader goals of the organisation. Effective leaders have learned how to leverage their investment in internal information by:

1. Sharing information and ideas across the organisation.
2. Encouraging and cultivating informal sources of information.
3. Utilising technology to facilitate both the gathering and sharing of information.

Dess and Picken (2000:20-23).

It is impossible for unempowered people to empower others. Change begins at the top. Programmes start at the top and work down (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997:46). Managerial effectiveness is generally defined as the degree to which a manager fulfils or exceeds work role expectations. By definition, empowered managers see themselves as competent and able to influence their jobs and work environment in meaningful ways. They are likely to proactively execute their job responsibility by, for instance, anticipating problems and acting independently, and hence are likely to be seen as effective (Dess & Picken, 2000:18).

Empowered middle managers are different from disempowered middle managers. Empowered middle managers see themselves as more effective and valued by those they work with. They also see themselves as innovative and have less fear of injury. They are transformational in their leadership ability. Co-workers see them as charismatic (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997:43).

Leadership and supervision practices that are empowering express confidence in subordinates, accompanied by high performance expectations. Fostering opportunities for subordinates to participate in decision-making and providing autonomy from bureaucratic constraint-setting are inspirational and/ or meaningful goals. Reward systems that emphasise innovative, unusual performance and high incentive values, foster a greater sense of self-efficacy. Jobs that provide task variety, personal relevance, appropriate autonomy and control, low levels of established routine and rules and high advance prospects, are more likely to empower subordinates (Conger & Kanungo, 1988:478).

From the above it is clear that management must set the pace. They must put empowerment principles in place. Managers who believe in hierarchical structures, exert strong controls, and fear the loss of power, won't be the right managers to set a standard for empowerment. Managers must be able to visualise that empowered employees will be beneficial to the organisation, and that, if the organisation is healthy, all employees will have security and a future.

Johnson and Redmond (1998:176) argue that empowerment is a state of mind. An employee with an empowered state of mind experiences feelings of control over how the job should be performed and is aware of the context in which the work is performed. There is accountability for personal work output and shared responsibility for organisational performance. Equity is built into the rewards based on individual and collective performance. Employees need the ability, authority and opportunity to become empowered and to operate in this way. Organisations require empowered employees who are committed to organisational goals.

Whetten, et al. (2000:493) suggests that, in order to deploy human resources through empowerment, managers need to define objectives, plan and then move into the management of their task force.

- Tell employees why things are required and what needs doing.
- Coach them so that people are competent to do their jobs.
- Consult at the relevant level so that people understand what they are doing and that they are doing it in a way that meets your needs.
- Delegate authority according to the level of responsibility.
- Monitor and review what is being done – if necessary repeating the cycle of tell, coach, consult and delegate again.
- Communicate the work of the team to the “outside”.

Badenhorst (1999:22) believes that we as human beings have reached a new level in our evolution, demanding fuller self-expression, self-determination and contribution to our world society. Secondly, world problems, organisations and

business problems have become incredibly complex, making management systems that separate functions of management and workers obsolete. There is a place, a vital role, for each human being. The concept of empowerment is based upon the belief that employees need the organisation as much as the organisation needs them, and that leaders understand that employees are the most valuable assets in the firm.

Each employee in an organisation plays a vital role in reaching the goals of the organisation. Every employee has to work towards these goals. The organisation must use the ability, skills and knowledge of all employees, however. Empowerment principles assist employees as well as the organisation to reach individual goals and organisational goals.

According to Quinn and Spreitzer (1997:44), the following points are important when an organisation wants to empower its employees:

- In-depth personal evaluation and cognitive reforming. Individuals visualise themselves and their environment through different lenses. Make a map with new approaches to old problems and new patterns of action. Employees must have a greater trust in themselves and learn to rely on their intuition.
- If these new patterns don't work, carry on and learn from these mistakes. Remain flexible and adaptable. Personal growth leads to self-confidence.
- Employees will feel highly integrated and committed to the organisation. Individuals motivate others, and can encourage others to their highest levels of effort.
- Rewards can be built in. Roles can be re-defined. Mistakes can be made. If these mistakes are punished, empowerment may regress.

Employee empowerment is not the perfect solution. It does not imply that the organisation will be perfect and the employees will all be empowered. It demands

changes that result in considerable differences in the organisational structure from what employees are used to. The challenge is to be brave enough to risk changing and being open to a mind shift. Mistakes will be made, but these must be seen as part of the learning curve, and each mistake something to be learned from. Having these changes in the organisation means you need individuals that are able and willing to change. Not only for the organisation, but also for themselves.

Randolph (2000a:30) suggests an empowerment plan. It is divided into three sections, and specifies what must be done in each section. The sections look like this:

- Share information.
  - Share company performance information.
  - Help people understand the business.
  - Build trust through sharing sensitive information.
  - Create self-monitoring possibilities.
  
- Create autonomy through structure.
  - Create a clear vision and clarify the little pictures.
  - Clarify goals and roles collaboratively.
  - Create new decision-making rules that support empowerment.
  - Establish new empowering performance management processes.
  - Use heavy doses of training.
  
- Let teams become the hierarchy.
  - Provide direction and training for new skills.
  - Provide encouragement and support for change.
  - Gradually have managers let go of control.
  - Work through the leadership vacuum stage.
  - Acknowledge the fear factor.

Randolph (2000a:30) reminds the reader that empowerment is not magic; it consists of a few simple steps and a lot of persistence.

The researcher is of the opinion that, to have an environment at work that is open and that encourages the sharing of knowledge and information, makes employees feel trusted. Employees will communicate their needs clearly. Although structure is important, it must be applied in such a way that it is clear to all concerned. It must be implemented in clear terms and smaller tasks that can be reached. Employees must know what to do and what is expected of them. Training and support are crucial components when empowering employees. Although there are still managers and structure involved, control in the negative sense is taken away. The aim of empowerment is not to control others, but to encourage others. Empowerment is an ongoing process.

Self-esteem and the locus of control are antecedents of empowerment. Generally those with feelings of self-worth and individuals that hold themselves in high self-esteem are likely to extend their feelings of self-worth to the work situation. A specific sense of competence in seeing themselves as valued resources and as having talents worth contributing, is the attribute most likely to assure an active orientation with regard to work and work units. Locus of control explains the degree to which people believe that they, rather than external forces, determine what happens in their lives. They will feel capable of shaping their work and work environment, and so feel empowered. They see themselves as causal agents rather than as being externally controlled by organisational forces (Spreitzer, 1995:1446).

Empowerment seems to be easy to implement. All one needs to do is to follow all the necessary criteria, and all the employees in the organisation will be empowered and the organisation will be successful. But how does an organisation implement employee empowerment?

#### **2.2.4 Implementation of employee empowerment**

When implementing empowerment it is important to give control without losing control. Managers are sometimes at a loss as to how to implement empowerment.

Various factors are required for the implementation to be successful:

- Structure
- Strategy
- Environment
- Technology
- Culture.

(Houtzagers, 1999).

⊕❖ The organisation must not be seen as a hierarchy with different departments, each with a different goal, operating as units on their own. The organisation must be seen as a structure with different functions, working together to achieve the same end result.

⊕❖ Employee empowerment does not just happen. Assessment of both employees and the organisation is important to determine the levels of employee empowerment. Therefore a measuring instrument is crucial. After this assessment, a strategy should be planned according to the results and the end goal. This strategy is very important in achieving employee empowerment.

⊕❖ An organisation must have an environment of trust, openness, communication and honesty. The environment must be of such a nature that it enhances employee empowerment. It should not be seen as a threat to anyone.

⊕❖ Technology can make the process easier. Technology should be seen as an investment and as a tool to make everything in the organisation easier and more accessible. Having internet facilities makes communication between departments possible. Different departments can now also work together, towards the same goal.

- ⊕❖ The culture of sharing power, building the organisation, working together, performing for the sake of the organisation and individuals within the organisation, should be enhanced.

If these factors exist within the organisation, there will be a 'healthy culture' that opens employees up to the idea of employee empowerment.

Organisations must know who they want to empower. Therefore the organisation must map the desired skills and competence levels of the workforce and compare these with the actual situation. Organisations must conduct in-depth investigations to implement various techniques and thereby create a setting for the empowerment of the workforce. This increases competitive advantage, innovation and effectiveness (Badenhorst, 1999:40).

The following are prescribed for organisations implementing empowerment:

- 📦❖ Doing an organisational assessment.
- 📦❖ Defining an operating vision.
- 📦❖ Deciding when various levels of empowerment will be allocated.
- 📦❖ Employing a bottom-up approach, which accepts the employees' interpretation of the problems.
- 📦❖ Building collaboration and trust by sharing power and by having good two-way communication.
- 📦❖ Using both general and specific training to build on employees' strengths.
- 📦❖ Following the advice of others who are already experienced at implementing empowerment.

(Ransom, 1994:323; Spencer & Loomba, 1995:45; Anschutz, 1996:3).

Following these prescriptions requires planning on all levels of the organisation. Planning is crucial to empowerment. The organisation must follow the principles of empowerment and needs to plan how and when empowerment is going to happen. It is an ongoing process.



The decision to empower will affect everybody in the organisation and it must also include everybody in the organisation. The company must rely on its employees and vice versa. The organisation must know its employees in order to be able to use them in the correct manner that will be to the advantage of the organisation and to the employee. The organisation must be clear about the empowerment process and the operationalisation of it. That is why planning is so important.

The implementation of an empowered workforce is not a “ready made” process and requires a commitment of time, energy and resources. To be effective and successful, an organisation needs to design and implement state-of-the-art management support systems and must have the capacity for continuous learning and innovations, to ensure the continued performance of the empowered workforce (Paton & Jelking, 1994:35-41).

The implementation of empowerment must be seen as a philosophy and not as a technique. It is not a set of methodologies or skills. It can be seen as a fundamental orientation towards how work should be accomplished. Empowerment is a perceptual frame which helps differentiate the empowerment strategy from the myriad initiatives which precede or coincide with it.

Managers must understand the powerful hold of organisational culture. Managers must have a clear sense of how much and how quickly they are willing to let go and share. The same applies to individuals and teams in the organisation (Ford & Fotler, 1995:28).

All players must understand empowerment. How it is going to benefit the organisation, how it is going to fit in and how it is going to be done. It cannot be decided, planned and implemented overnight. It is a process of changing old ideas and implementing new ways of thinking and doing.

Empowerment requires new types of behaviour. There must be a paradigm shift; knowledge and skills must be understood. A shared sense of what empowerment will look like once it has been implemented must be developed. Everybody must participate in training. There must be time to fully understand the ongoing

process, tolerate mistakes and provide opportunities. It must also be measurable. Failure must be embraced as a learning opportunity. Set standards for the treatment of failures. There must be patience and the realisation that this is not a 'quick fix' (Ford & Fotler, 1995:29).

Ford and Fotler (1995) have developed an "Employee empowerment grid" (see Figure 2.2) to help people gain a better perspective of employee empowerment. It includes the varying strategies for empowerment and how to implement these.

The grid gives a different perspective on employee empowerment. It gives the reader a view on how employees can be empowered through focusing on work content and work context. Looking closely at the grid, the dimensions of employee empowerment can be identified.

According to Ford and Fotler (1995), there are two dimensions to a job: content and context. Content are the tasks and procedures required to be able to carry out a job. Context is why organisations need the job done, and how each job fits in with the overall mission.

Organisational structure, rewards, mission, goals and objectives can be seen as job context. Management maintains authority, final power and decision-making. Empowerment must be in terms of content and context. It is more involved in job content and will increase context at a later stage. Ford and Fotler (1995) suggest the following strategies to implement empowerment:

**A. (No discretion)**

- Traditional assembly line type.
- Highly routine and repetitive.
- Job designed by someone other than worker.
- No decision making with job content and context.

**B. (Task setting)**

- Essence of many empowerment programmes used today.

- Worker is given a great deal of the decision responsibility for job content but little context.
- Worker is empowered to make decisions about the best way to accomplish the task. Management defines mission; workers must achieve this as best as they can, and improve on it if possible.
- Workers give higher quality work because they feel enriched and satisfied.
- It motivates them but they have no control over organisational structures and reward systems.

**C. (Participatory empowerment)**

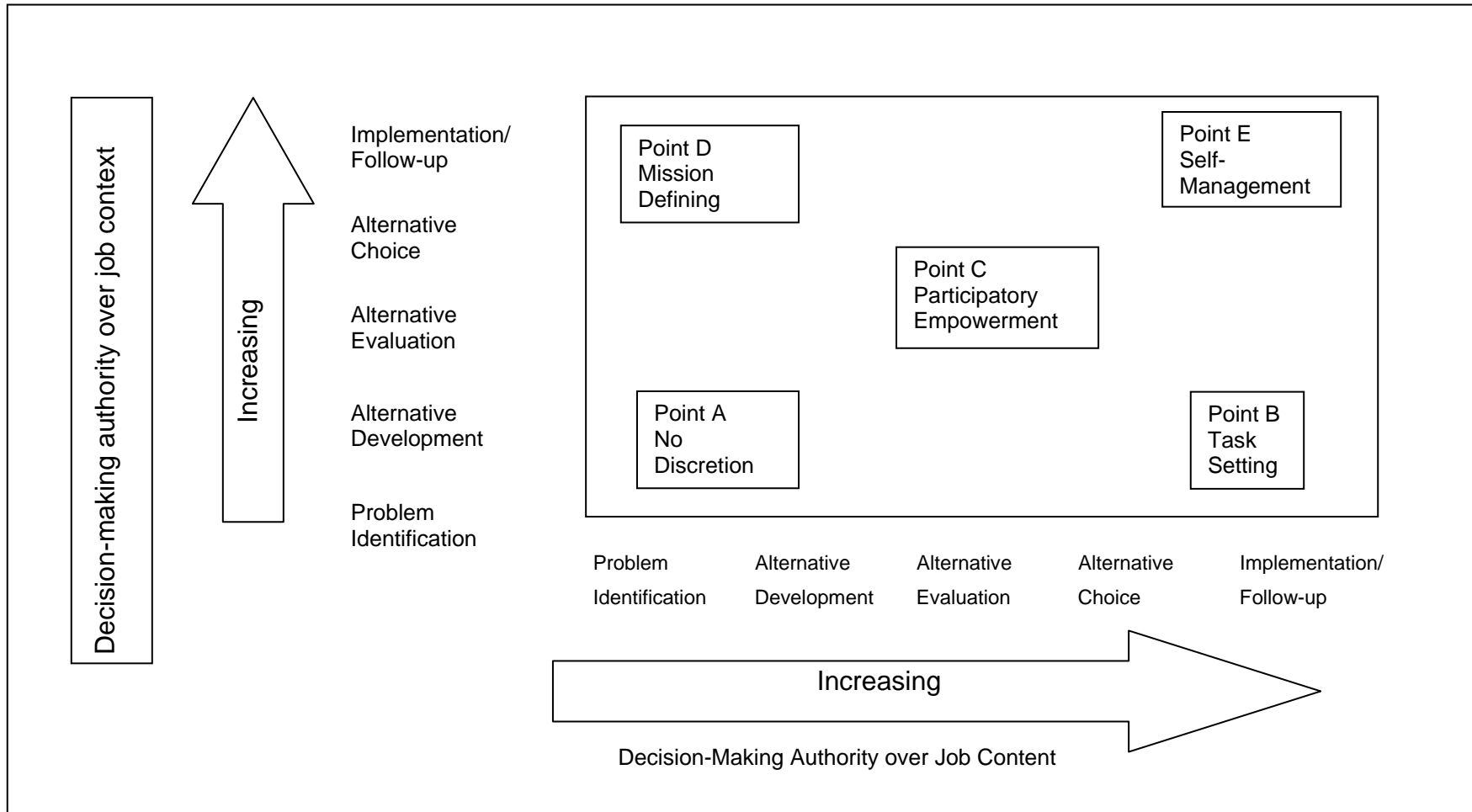
- Autonomous work groups given some decision-making involvement in both content and context.
- Usually it involves problem identification, alternative searches, and recommending alternatives in job content and in job context to some extent.
- There is higher job satisfaction and productivity.

**D. (Mission defining)**

- Unusual situation – workers empowered on job context, but not content. Unionised maintenance.
- Decisions dependent on company; disempowered workforce could be more productive.
- Decision to outsource can alter mission of unit.

**E. (Self-management)**

- Both content and context must be there.
- Must have faith in employees.
- Empowerment will contribute to organisational effectiveness.
- Workers are ready and willing.



**Figure 2.2: Employee Empowerment Grid**

(Ford & Fotler, 1995:24)

**D. (Mission defining)**

- ~~-Unusual situation — workers empowered on job context, but not content.~~
- ~~Unionised maintenance.~~
- ~~-Decisions dependent on company; disempowered workforce could be more productive.~~
- ~~-Decision to outsource can alter mission of unit.~~

**E. (Self-management)**

- ~~-Both content and context must be there.~~
- ~~-Must have faith in employees.~~
- ~~-Empowerment will contribute to organisational effectiveness.~~
- ~~-Workers are ready and willing.~~

The process begins by assigning decisions related to job content. It then moves gradually through the various decision-making stages, from problem identification to implementation and follow-up. Later, once employees and managers have both become comfortable with empowerment in job content, there is an increase in levels of empowerment in job context. This could be done by increasing the level of decision-making authority from problem identification through implementation and follow-up. This approach first focuses on the job content, and the empowered employees would later become involved in job context as well. At each step management could determine what difficulties had arisen. These should be addressed as they arise. The decision as to whether individuals or teams are ready to move to the next stage of decision involvement and responsibility must then be made.

Unfortunately there are certain limitations and pitfalls, even in employee empowerment. It is essential to be aware of these.

**2.2.5 Limitations and pitfalls of employee empowerment**

According to Spreitzer (1995:1444) certain assumptions about empowerment are misleading:

- It is not an enduring personality trait, generalisable across situations, but rather a set of cognitions shaped by a work environment.
- Empowerment is a continuous variable; people should be viewed as more or less empowered rather than empowered or not.
- Empowerment is not a global construct generalisable across different life situations and roles, but rather specific to the work domain.
- Employees misunderstand empowerment. Many of them feel that empowerment means they will be given free reign to do as they please and the freedom to make all the key decisions about their jobs. They fail to grasp that empowerment means sharing risks and responsibilities as the price for freedom to act, pride in their work and ownership of their job. People have a history of exposure to command-and-control thinking. People feel one person must make the final decision. People want to get empowered in a command-control organisation.

According to the researcher, clearly traditional thinking does not work in the case of empowerment. Employees, employers and organisations have to go through a paradigm shift from traditional thinking, and be open to change. The realisation must be there that empowerment is a process and not something you become all of a sudden.

- Empowerment is something managers do to their people. Corsun and Enz (1999:208) are of the opinion that bureaucratic context and authoritarian management encourage powerlessness by fostering dependency, the denial of self-expression, negative forms of manipulation and less meaningful organisational goals. If there is a dependency on other people for outcomes, this can lead to powerlessness. Changes can bring powerlessness such as financial emergencies, loss of key personnel, labour problems, significant technological changes and merger activity, as well as major changes in organisational strategy, rapid growth, new products and new teams. All these events induce significant alterations in organisational structures, communication links, power and authority relations and the organisational goals, strategies and tactics. There is uncertainty when new guidelines are

sought and rules and goals are not clear. The transition period is a period of disorientation (Conger & Kanungo, 1988:477).

It is necessary that an organisation and its employees are already empowered when the above changes occur. These changes will then be much easier to cope with, and everybody will be able to take responsibility and act on their decisions, especially when it is needed most.

- Often empowerment programmes that emphasise all the elements still do not achieve the desired results. Employees are still hesitant about taking risks and initiative. Senior management designs the empowerment programme and announces it. You are not empowered if you don't act accordingly. Employees are enthusiastic and want to be empowered, but nothing happens. Management concludes then that employees want to be told what to do (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997:42). Empowerment also tends to fail when it starts with a big introduction that breaks down when the going gets hard. Employees sit tight and don't change; they just wait for the next idea. They are scared to make the changes and are not sure whether it will be successful as a result of their years in a hierarchical culture. They cannot imagine radical change to team culture. It must not be a programme but a process (Randolph, 2000b:99).

According to the researcher, a mind shift from the top down and vice versa is important. Employees and employers stuck in "old" thinking are not likely candidates for empowerment. All parties involved must be willing to change, work towards the goal of empowerment and keep on working at it. Empowerment must not be seen as some course you go on, so that you are empowered on your return. It must be seen as something you do and keep on doing to improve yourself as an employee and for the benefit of the bigger organisation.

- Management does not trust employees. Further discouragement is the reinforcing of organisational structures and control systems that either intentionally or unintentionally send the message that they really do not trust people. These structures and control systems create pressures for conformity

rather than encouraging employee initiative and risk taking (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997:42).

If people don't feel trusted it might reinforce their impression that they are already not trusted, so why put in an effort at all. They feel that they cannot contribute because there is no space or availability for what they can offer. Employees can become demotivated and passive.

Further major barriers according to Quinn and Spreitzer (1997:42) are:

- **Bureaucratic culture**

A bureaucratic culture emphasises the maintenance of the status quo through a strong tradition of top-down directives. There is a lack of a credible vision for the future and a lack of management support for real change. This culture is often reinforced with a reward system that emphasises the status quo.

- **Multi-level conflict**

The organisation creates conflict between functions. Employees work against each other for personal gain. Employees protect themselves rather than doing the right thing in the organisation.

- **Personal and time constraint**

Because of downsizing and layoffs, one person is doing the work of two or three people. Employees start complaining about stressful conditions. Employee's battle to be initiative.

None of the barriers outlined above is deliberately created by the organisation. These are natural consequences of organisational processes. To empower people, managers must lower these barriers. Managers must be willing to relinquish control, thereby releasing the potential of their people. They must trust that employees will do the right thing when given the chance (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997:40-45).



Change and openness to change must exist between employers and employees to make empowerment work. The old procedures and way of thinking must be changed. A leap of faith towards new ideas and thinking is expected.

- Empowerment survives in an organisation if everybody supports it. The problem is at the top. A lack of willingness to trust employees. On the other side there are problem employees with low morale, low efficiency and poor motivation (Vogt & Murrell, 1990). The employee's capability is aligned with the work he/she is asked to perform. The investment in employee learning must be seen as an investment and not a cost (Burdett, 1999). Caudron (1995:28) contends that nothing is more disempowering than being stopped in one's tracks because one lacks the resources necessary to do a good job. Conversely, access to organisational resources enhances an employee's sense of self-efficiency and control over environmental contingencies.

The researcher is of the opinion that employees must be given responsibility, freedom within certain boundaries, trust and the resources to be empowered. Ongoing training and skills development on different levels are also important. The organisation as an entity, management and the employees on all levels must support and participate in the empowerment programme and empowerment efforts.

- Bowen and Lawler (1995:73) and Gist and Mitchell (1992:183) are of the opinion that it is easier to "tap locally" – to get things done internally rather than to outsource. Rather empower your own employees and use them than contract in outside expertise.

Without a supportive structure and a sharing of enabling values, previous reinforcement pressures will continue to mould people and their feelings (Florin & Wandersman, 1990:41). Without a supportive structure, any attempt to change will be quickly blocked either for structural reasons or because of a lack of support at both the inter- and intrapersonal levels. With a supportive structure and enabling shared values in place, changes in information, responsibility and active belief can set in the empowerment process in motion.

- Employee empowerment may be less appropriate where the basic business strategy emphasises low cost, high value operations; the tie to the consumer is short term. Technology is simple and routine. The business environment is highly predictable; employees have low growth needs, low social needs and are generally weak in personal skills (Ford & Fotler, 1995:27).

All of the above show directly or indirectly what pitfalls there can be with empowerment. It shows how easily it can fail if there is insufficient knowledge about empowerment as a concept. It is also important to know how to measure employee empowerment.

### **2.2.6 Measuring empowerment**

According to Leslie, Holzald and Holland (1998:217), there are six areas to look at when measuring empowerment:

1. Power or control over one's own work environment.
2. Perceptions that job outcomes are contingent on interactive relationships among staff.
3. A sense of being valued by the organisation.
4. Seeing authority as shared.
5. Understanding aspects of delegation of decisions.
6. Perceptions of self-efficacy in relation to work.

The researcher is of the opinion that power can also be used in a negative sense. Employees should not see it as a control tool, but rather as something that is shared with them to make their work more meaningful and to improve the organisation. Being valued by the organisation is crucial and will make the employee want to do even better.

-Leslie, Holzhalb and Holland (1998) have developed a scale (see Figure 2.3). This scale is divided into different sections:

- Empowerment and personal work orientation. (The items are the individual's perceptions of self-efficacy in relation to work performance and being valued by the organisation.)
- Empowerment and control of the work environment. (The items are perceptions of power or control over one's own resources and an understanding of major aspects of delegation and decision-making.)
- Empowerment and work relationships. (Conceptualisation of and understanding that work outcomes are contingent on interactive relationships of staff and a view of the need for shared authority.)

## WORKER EMPOWERMENT SCALE (WES)

<b>STATEMENT</b>
I feel confident in making decisions about my workload.
I am in charge of my work situation.
I know how to get what I need to get the job done.
There is nothing I can do to control my workload.
When something goes wrong on the job, there is little I can do.
I have lots of control over my work.
I can usually figure out how to deal with my supervisor when there is a problem.
I find that if I ask my supervisor for help, it is usually provided.
No matter what I do, my work problems do not improve.
If I need help, it is usually hard to get others to help.
It does not pay to try hard because things seldom turn out right anyway.
I am confident my co-workers and I will be able to work together.
I think I am able to say what I want to say to my supervisor.
I have a belief that I can change the work situation for the better.
I can assist my co-workers in improving their performance.
I can count on my supervisor to help with the work situation.
I am not allowed to make decisions in my work situation.
The simplest decisions must always be checked before I go ahead.
I believe that my work efforts, good or bad, are largely unnoticed.
My innovative ideas are received well by my superiors.
I keep my ideas to myself because they would be ignored anyway.
I could do a better job, but no one would notice.
I often wonder what I should be doing in my work situation.
I am often unsure what others expect of me in my work situation.

**Figure 2.3: Worker Empowerment Scale (WES)**

(Leslie, Holzald & Holland, 1998:217)

Thomas and Velthouse (1990) conceptualised corporate empowerment as consistency of impact, choice, competence and meaningfulness. The scale consists of 30 Likert-type items and utilises a zero (never) to four (very often) format. It is a multi-dimensional scale resulting in factors being correlated (Frymier, et al. 1996:185).

## LEARNER EMPOWERMENT INSTRUMENT

1. I feel confident that I can adequately perform my duties. CO
2. I have the power to make a difference in how things are done in my class. IM
3. The class is consistent with my values. ME
4. My participation is important to the success of the class. IM
5. My instructor makes me feel inadequate. CO
6. I actively participate in all the tasks required of my class. IM
7. I typically do more work than is required by the syllabus. CH
8. I am overwhelmed by all the work my class requires. CO
9. I work hard for class because I want to, not because I have to. ME
10. I have a choice in the methods I can use to perform my work. CH
11. The tasks required in my class are personally meaningful. ME
12. I like to talk about what I'm doing in my class with friends or family. ME
13. I feel intimidated by what is required of me in my class. CO
14. I can have an impact on the way things are run in my class. IM
15. My instructor allows flexibility in the way I perform my tasks. CH
16. I look forward to going to my class. IM
17. My instructor believes that he or she must control how I do my work. CH
18. Expressing my own attitudes and ideas is rewarded in my class. CH
19. I agree with the standards I must meet in my class. ME
20. I possess the necessary skills to perform successfully in class. CO
21. My success in this class is under my control. IM
22. My instructor thinks he or she is always right. CH
23. I find my class to be exciting and energising. CO
24. I have a high level of autonomy in accomplishing my work. CH
25. I find my class interesting. ME
26. I can be creative in the way I perform the tasks required in my class. CH
27. The tasks required in my class are valuable to me. ME
28. Potential employers value the tasks required in my class. IM
29. I agree with the meaning my instructor has for what good performance on class work is. ME
30. I am able to perform the necessary activities to succeed in my class. CO

ME = meaningfulness, CO = competence, IM = impact, CH = choice.

Items are responded to in a Likert-type scale with a 0 = never and 4 = very often format.

### **Figure 2.4 Learner Empowerment Instrument**

(Frymier, Shulman & Houser, 1996:187).

A separate scale (see Figure 2.5) was used to measure each of the four dimensions of empowerment; items were adapted from previous research. The following criteria were used to select appropriate scales:

1. Scales had to focus on a single dimension. It was essential not to bridge two or more dimensions, a feature critical for discriminants validity.
2. They had to use or be adaptable to a common format for ease of administration (the seven-point Likert scale).
3. The scale had to focus on the individual's experience of a dimension rather than on the description of a work environment that resulted in that experience. For instance, some measures of self-determination ask whether a job permits independence rather than whether the jobholder experiences a sense of independence (Spreitzer, 1995:1445).

<b>Texts of items which measure empowerment</b>
<p><b>Meaning</b>            The work I do is very important to me (meaning 1).            My job activities are personally meaningful to me (meaning 2).            The work I do is meaningful to me (meaning 3).</p>
<p><b>Competence</b>            I am confident about my ability to do my job (competence 1).            I am self-assured about my capabilities to perform my work activities (competence 2).            I have mastered the skills necessary for my job (competence 3).</p>
<p><b>Self-determination</b>            I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job (self-determination 1).            I can decide on my own how to go about doing my work (self-determination 2).            I have considerable opportunities for independence and freedom in how I do my job (self-determination 3).</p>
<p><b>Impact</b>            My impact on what happens in my department is large (impact 1).            I have a great deal of control over what happens in my department (impact 2).            I have significant influence over what happens in my department (impact 3).</p>

**Figure 2.5 Measuring empowerment**  
(Spreitzer, 1995:1464)

Whetten, *et al.* (2000:396) have developed a personal empowerment assessment (see Figure 2.6). This instrument helps identify the extent to which a person is empowered in his/her own work. They should respond to the items based on their own jobs. The items listed describe different orientations people can have with respect to their work roles.

### RATING SCALE

1 = Very strongly disagree  
4 = Neutral  
7 = Very strongly agree

2 = Strongly disagree  
5 = Agree

3 = Disagree  
6 = Strongly agree

		<b>Assessment</b>	
		<b>Pre-</b>	<b>Post-</b>
1.	The work that I do is very important to me	----	----
2.	I am confident about my ability to work	----	----
3.	I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my work	----	----
4.	I have a large impact on what happens in my group	----	----
5.	I trust my co-workers to be completely honest with me	----	----
6.	My work is important to me personally	----	----
7.	My work is well within the scope of my abilities	----	----
8.	I can decide how to go about doing my own work	----	----
9.	I have a great deal of control over what is done in my group	----	----
10.	I trust my colleagues to share important information with me	----	----
11.	I care about what I do in my work	----	----
12.	I am confident about my capabilities to perform my work	----	----
13.	I have considerable opportunities for independence and freedom in how I do my work	----	----
14.	I have significant influence over what happens in my department	----	----
15.	I trust my co-workers to keep the promises they make	----	----
16.	The work I do is meaningful to me	----	----
17.	I have mastered the skills necessary to do my work	----	----
18.	I have a chance to use personal initiative when carrying out my work	----	----
19.	My opinion counts in departmental decision-making	----	----
20.	I believe that my colleagues care about me and how I am	----	----

**Figure 2.6 Personal Empowered Assessment**

(Whetten, Cameron & Woods, 2000:396)

As has been illustrated, different scales exist for measuring certain aspects of empowerment. From the literature study, it is clear that empowerment has more than one meaning. To develop a scale that properly measures all the different aspects of employee empowerment will be a challenge.

According to the researcher, different scales are available within the empowerment spectrum. But a single scale is needed that measures all the different dimensions of employee empowerment.

**2.3 EMPOWERMENT AND THE ORGANISATION**

The researcher is of the opinion that empowerment within the organisation must be understood. It is also necessary to understand the organisation, how it is structured, whether it promotes employee empowerment, and to what extent. Mallak and Kurstedt (1996:10) believe that empowerment should be integrated into an organisation's culture in a progressive manner. Employee empowerment is more than a management buzzword and a textbook definition. It is a new way of managing organisations towards a more complex and competitive future (Badenhorst, 1999:16). Ackerson and Harrison (2000:238) are also of the opinion that empowerment is not only an individual psychological construct; it is also an organisational, political, sociological, economical and spiritual construct. Empowerment works best when employees need their organisation as much as the organisation needs them (Johnson, 1993:47).

Employees are key stakeholders in any organisation. They are institutional resources contributing directly to the success or the failure of a corporation. One's sense of identity is affected by one's ability to satisfy needs for recognition or achievement, or to experience independence within the framework of the organisation's work processes and social system. Organisations can actively support or destroy an individual's sense of worth, but negative results are likely to backfire on the organisation (Burack, Burack, Miller & Morgan, 1994:143).



Randolph (2000b:96) looks at the old style of management as well as the new style that promotes a culture of empowerment (see Figure 2.7).

External Commitment	Internal commitment
<p>(Old style of command and control/ hierarchical)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define tasks for employees at the level below.</li> <li>• Specify the behaviours required to perform those tasks.</li> <li>• Define performance goals for employees.</li> <li>• Specify the priority of employee goals.</li> </ul>	<p>(Consistent working culture of empowerment)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individuals define their own tasks in the context of the company's vision and objectives, which are set by management.</li> <li>• Individuals determine the behaviours and actions required to perform their tasks.</li> <li>• Managers and employees jointly define performance goals for individuals.</li> <li>• Employees and managers specify the priority of individual goals and how they relate to company goals.</li> </ul>

**Figure 2.7: Hierarchical culture vs. Empowerment culture**

(Randolph, 2000b:96)

A new paradigm and management reflect newer work and life roles for millions of workers. These organisations are fashioning new(er) employment relationships that support corporate performance and economic requirements, while they aggressively seek to meet their member's needs as well (Burack, et al. 1994:144).

Empowering is more than just "giving more power". It requires that the organisation redistribute information and rewards. Employees must clearly understand the goals, objectives and priorities of the organisation and be

knowledgeable about its internal procedures and processes (Dess & Picken, 2000:23). Empowerment in organisations is broader than the traditional concepts of delegation, decentralisation and participatory management as the responsibility for the decision-making process is stretched to a specific area (Ford & Fotler, 1995:22).

Change from old thinking to new thinking, old styles to new styles, is crucial. Organisations cannot afford not to change. Employees are not there just to do the “job”. They must know more about the organisation and – how it operates and what role they play as an employee, within the bigger picture.

As the strategic emphasis shifts from the efficient management of mass markets and tangible assets to innovation and the effective utilisation of knowledge and human capital resources, organisations and their leaders must also change. To compete in the information age, firms must increasingly rely on the knowledge, skills, experience and judgement of all their people. The entire organisation, collectively, must create and assimilate new knowledge, encourage innovation and learn to compete in new ways in an ever-changing competitive environment (Dess & Picken, 2000:19).

### **2.3.1 The empowered organisation**

The question of what the empowered organisation looks like now arises. Different authors have different views, but most authors agree on the following dimensions: vision, transparency and teamwork, discipline and control, support and security, responsibility, information, rewards, decision-making and training.

- **Vision**

There must be a clear vision and challenge. Employees must be familiar with top management’s vision and strategy, and be in a position to act accordingly (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997:45). Employees must know the company’s vision. Milestones must be seen as a means to an end. The vision must also be measurable (Randolph, 2000b:21). Leadership must be shown through establishing a vision for the company, and coaching and empowering people to

work towards it (Weiss, 2001:5). Every organisation has a strategic vision, whether explicit or implicit. This vision must be clear, compelling and communicated to everybody in the organisation. This will give employees a shared sense of direction and purpose. An effective strategic vision is multifaceted, addressing needs and concerns of everybody in the organisation. A clear vision is proactive. There must be room for flexibility in developing strategic options. Vision offers multiple perspectives and encourages commitment (Dess & Picken, 2000:21).

Having a vision shows what the organisation stands for, but the employees also then understand what they are working towards. It is a guideline for everybody in the organisation. For any person to know where they stand and where they are going will serve to relieve stress as employees don't have to worry about the "unknown devil".

- **Transparency and teamwork**

Employees must feel part of a corporate culture. They must feel proud and committed to the company. They must work together in unity with other people to solve problems (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997:45). All employees must be involved in order to attain organisation goals (Cronjé, 1996:42). There must be access to information concerning the strategic goals and changes occurring in the organisation's external environment. Employees must be allowed to see the big picture. This big picture is usually communicated through vision and mission statements (Bowen & Lawler, 1995:75).

Team-based organisations are replacing traditional hierarchical organisations (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997:39). Dependency on hierarchy must be downsized into teams. Individuals are scared to be held accountable. Team members share everything; there is no vacuum and no fear, and individuals are therefore able to learn in teams (Randolph, 2000a:22). This in turn creates a sense of ownership (Weiss, 2001:5). Decision-making processes should be decentralised into designed teams to a considerable extent (Lawler, 1994:70).

To have appropriate teams, managers must know exactly what the mission is and transmit it in suitable form to each team. Knowing and understanding the vision means that the teams can function independently. The manager or leader is also responsible for fitting the team into the bigger organisation (Whetten, et al. 2000:96).

Teams create a shared responsibility, ownership and motivation. Through teams, the processes at work are better supported. Each worker will carry someone else in difficult times and vice versa. From the team's perspective, risks don't seem so overwhelming and there is a shared sense of responsibility. Teams also work more effectively if the organisation is transparent about what they want, what they plan and where they are heading. They must take ownership for their work and their team.

- **Discipline and control**

The organisation must provide clear goals, clear lines of authority and clear task responsibility. The employees must have autonomy in the organisation but they must also be aware of their boundaries. Employees must know what they are responsible for (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997:46).

No employee can have total free reign as this will create chaos. Boundaries should be set, although not laid in stone. Each person still has responsibilities, but also has the freedom to explore new opportunities within the organisation. Having a mission statement in place and managers to set the way, gives employees enough scope to determine what the boundaries are. The discipline code must also be more a "learn from mistakes" than a "punish" attitude.

- **Support and security**

It is better to reinforce employees than to punish them. As they learn they will grow (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997:46). Climate in the organisation provides a frame of reference through which individuals make sense of organisational life. It shapes behaviour and moulds activities. In participative climates the acknowledgement, creation and liberation of employees is valued. Such a

climate recognises the critical value of human capital to the success of an organisation. In addition, the importance of the employee's creativity and initiative for organisational responsiveness in a competitive external environment is recognised (Spreitzer, 1996:489). A team environment must be created to help staff cross boundaries (Cronjé, 1996:42).

Working in teams and having discipline and control leads to support and security. The company supports its employees and gives them the necessary freedom to explore their creativity, be innovative and have initiative. Using this support, the employees must be able to take this challenge and explore possible solutions to a problem, for example.

- **Responsibility**

Employees must make decisions according to their skills. They should be able to think for themselves and do more than what is expected of them. Employees should help each other to achieve goals (Randolph, 2000a:21). Employees must be given the responsibility and authority to implement the company's vision. Employees must not be unsure about what is expected of them. Every role in the organisation must have a clear set of responsibilities in order for management to provide appropriate guidance and direction. If employees don't know what is expected of them they will hesitate to act, and so feel unable to make a difference (Spreitzer, 1996:487). Boundaries must be clear for employees to feel confident about decisions rather than fearful. They will feel competent when they understand their role in the organisation (Cronjé, 1996:43). An important concept of empowerment is to delegate responsibility to the lowest level in the organisation (Lawler, 1994:70).

Giving someone responsibility conveys that message that one thinks they can handle it and are equipped enough to have that kind of responsibility. A person – in this case the employee – will want to live up to that responsibility, showing that they can really do what is expected of them. Having certain responsibilities also gives someone something to work for. At the end of the day the employee knows it was their responsibility and they have or have not achieved or coped with it. So it is also a challenge.

- **Information**

To be an empowering organisation, information must be made available to more people at more levels, through more devices. Without information you can be certain that people will not extend themselves to take responsibility or vent their creative energies. Information creates a sense of meaning and purpose. Employees can now appropriately align with the organisation's mission. Employees need to know how well their work unit performs (Quinn and Spreitzer, 1997:47).

Information must be communicated through every layer in the organisation (Cronjé, 1996:42; Kanter, 1986:5). By sharing information employees know how they are doing and how the company is performing (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997:39). Sharing information raises trust and creates a sense of ownership (Randolph, 2000a:21). Internal and external information should be shared (Dess & Picken, 2000:20).

Knowing what is going on in an organisation helps employees to know where they are heading and what they are working towards. They will feel appreciated and trusted because information is shared with them. They will also know where they fit into the bigger picture and why their tasks are important.

- **Rewards**

Individual contributions to the organisation must be recognised. This is regarded as important for empowerment. Personal competencies must be recognised and reinforced. Incentives must be provided to individuals (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997:48). Employees must be compensated for increased responsibility and accountability (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997:39). If employees are unsure about their performance they may become apprehensive. Offer praise and acknowledge their accomplishments, even if these appear small. Employees will then be willing to try new tasks and challenges. The result is

motivated employees who are eager to help the company grow (Lawson, 2001:8).

Being rewarded for doing something shows appreciation and acknowledgement. The reward system must be of such a nature that quality of work is sustained. Work is not done just for reward but for the benefit of the employee and the organisation.

- **Decision-making**

Employees should be involved in the decision-making process. Previously senior management made all the decisions that affected lower levels. Now employees should be involved in decision-making that relates to them. Not all these decisions need to be followed, but employees should feel they contributed as this counteracts feeling of maltreatment and negativity. Employees may become lethargic and passive if they don't have a chance to make certain decisions (Lawson, 2001:8).

If employees take part in the decision-making process they will feel part of the bigger picture. Not everybody will be able to give the correct input or an input that will make a difference. Nevertheless, the fact that input will come from different levels in the company could be advantageous. Working on the ground sometimes leads to insights that the decision-makers don't have or haven't experienced. The decision-makers can then formulate this in such a way that is applicable. All employees will feel cohesiveness with the organisation. The organisation must, however, be careful not to let the employees go through this process and then not use their input at all. The employees may feel they have been misused, and that what they say is of no consequence.

- **Training**

One of the most critical factors in dealing with the implementation of an empowerment system is the training. Training is recognised as one of the barriers to the empowered workforce. Employees must have the information necessary to learn (Benson & Wolf, 1994:80). Continual training and support must be available. It will make the employees feel confident in their abilities.

The training must be properly conducted. If employees are not well trained they may feel intimidated and frustrated, and so lose interest (Lawson, 2001:8). Implementing this continual improvement sets realistic goals (Weiss, 2001:5). Training employees to become empowered can be done through coaching, modelling and career path development. Coaching involves setting up environments in which individuals feel able to make decisions through the development of self-confidence and belief in oneself and others. Modelling is part of skills-based training. Career path development is the recognition of accomplishments, increases in the level of responsibility, and opportunities for advancement (Miller, 1997:65).

All of the factors outlined above – vision, transparency and teamwork, discipline and control, support and security, responsibility, information, rewards, decision-making and training – should be in place in an organisation to be able to empower its employees. This is not something that happens overnight, but is instead a process. Everybody has to go through a paradigm shift and be open to new and different ways of doing things. It is a process that has to be implemented from the top down, as well as from the bottom up. There might be problems along the way because empowerment is so different from traditional thinking, but the process should not be terminated. Changes or adaptations can be made, as required. Gagne, et al. (1997:1225) goes further to argue there should be six job dimensions involved in an organisation striving for employee empowerment. Both the employees and the organisation can use the six dimensions as a reference to determine whether employee empowerment has been obtained:

- a) **Skill variety:** The opportunity to use many skills and talents at work.
- b) **Task identity:** The opportunity to identify a whole piece of work.
- c) **Task significance:** The recognition that a job has impact on others.
- d) **Autonomy support:** The opportunity for freedom, independence and discretion.
- e) **Job feedback:** The information about one's performance obtained from job activities.
- f) **Feedback from agents:** The information about one's performance obtained from supervisors and co-workers.



How does empowerment in the organisation affect management? Are the managers empowered or do they need to be empowered?

### **2.3.2 Empowerment and management**

Many of the attempts to move towards an empowered workforce flounder because they require too much from both the organisation and existing managers (Woods, 1997:29). Organisations are not homogeneous: some areas may be fully empowered while others may retain completely hierarchical control. Very often there is a hierarchical split of empowerment – thus the top team may well be fully empowered, as indeed may parts of the shop floor, whereas those at a sticky level of first line supervision may see themselves as at the beginning of the dialogue stage of development (Whetten, et al. 2000:491).

Empowerment is not obtained through the acquisition of money or status or skills, but rather through a change in subjectivity. It is a process by which employees are freed of bureaucratic constraints and given control of their work in order to make decisions with their own judgement. Empowered managers take personal responsibility for the organisation's success and for maintaining a rigorous policy of congruence between inner experience and outward action (Agre, 1995:168). Empowerment focuses on ways that managers can design a working practice to energise and provide a positive atmosphere of encouragement. In an atmosphere such as this, people accomplish tasks because they want to and not because they are offered a carrot on a stick (Whetten, et al. 2000:399).

Empowerment means giving up control and letting others make decisions, set goals, accomplish results and receive rewards. The manager moves from the captain's cabin to the hellman's platform – the manager has to learn to steer, a less high profile role. It means that other people will probably get credit for success. Managers with high needs for power and control face a challenge when they are expected to sacrifice their needs for someone else's gain (Whetten, et al. 2000:400).

Leaders have to learn how to learn. Being disorganised means learning how to choose. People participating in the learning process can better relate to one another (Burack, et al. 1994:149). Leaders must be able to listen effectively, be accessible and provide opportunities (Dess & Picken, 2000:20). A high degree of participative management and the decentralisation of hierarchical power structures creates a large degree of autonomy throughout the organisation. Finally, the development of effective work groups should be established. All these ways are based on the concept of employee empowerment (Whetten, et al. 2000:400).

Managers must be willing to relinquish control, to risk releasing the potential of their people and to trust that employees will do the right thing if given the chance (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997:41). Many managers are reluctant to relinquish control to employees because they know they will still be held accountable for outcomes (Randolph, 2000a:28).

If a manager is empowered it won't be about his own ambitions but about the team progressing. Those managers have done the same thing for years and now they must change, and drastically too. The first step will be to have a paradigm shift from the old hierarchical controls to the controls that are now in place. Managers must be able to trust and delegate. They must be able to deal with mistakes and any other problems that might arise from these new ways of working. Managers must be more open-minded than ever before.

Help from management can come in many forms, including making sure that the worker has the required abilities for the job. It is the task of management to provide necessary training, secure needed resources and encourage co-operation and support from other work units. A key question is how much help a manager should provide. In response, the level of involvement should vary according to how much subordinates need to perform a specific task, how much they expect in general, and how much support is available to them from other organisational sources (Whetten, et al. 2000:289).

Companies have new rules and structures to create autonomy as they now recognise the need to reduce dependence on the hierarchy. The hierarchy should

be replaced by teams – empowered teams, not participative teams. The teams need a strong leader, capable of providing guidance, encouragement and support in order to help them through any difficulties. A leadership vacuum stage can develop when motivation is lost, following a letdown after the initial excitement and if there is a lack of competence (Randolph, 2000a:19). There must therefore be emphasis on strategic shifts. From the efficient management of mass markets and tangible assets to innovation and the effective utilisation of knowledge and human capital resources, organisations and leaders must change (Dess & Picken, 2000:18).

According to Whetten, et al. (2000:416), the following guidelines will foster employee empowerment by means of effective management:

- **Fostering personal mastery**

Managers must help employees experience personal mastery over certain challenges and problems. Managers can help workers feel more empowered, thereby helping them develop the belief that they can succeed.

- **Modelling: Demonstrate/model correct behaviour**

People must think a task is “do-able”. They must believe that the job is within their capabilities and that success is possible.

- **Providing social and emotional support**

Managers should praise, encourage, express approval, back employees and reassure them. Managers must be responsible and supportive.

- **Creating personal enthusiasm**

Negative emotions such as fear, anxiety and irritability must be replaced. The work environment must be fun and attractive. The purpose behind work must be clear. Managers must be clear about vision and mission.

- **Providing information**

This is a crucial power tool available to managers. Sharing information with workers makes them feel that they want to help. Collaborating with

management is important to obtain all the information required to carry out assignments.

- **Providing resources**

Providing resources to accomplish a task makes managers more resource providers than commanders. Workers must also go for the necessary training. It is not realistic to think that everyone can have everything.

- **Organising teams**

Teams make their own decisions and share information. There are problem-solving responsibilities for different teams.

- **Creating confidence**

Employees must feel trusted. Negative feelings in the workplace only contribute to insecurity at work.

The guidelines above help to develop leadership skills, which enable team members to be aware of the concerns and fears of other people, to recognise issues, to anticipate problems and to solve them (Cronjé, 1996:43).

## **2.4 SYNTHESIS**

This chapter concludes with a synthesis of employee empowerment and organisational empowerment in order to set the framework for this research, as seen by the researcher.

### **2.4.1 Employee empowerment**

Empowerment is not something that happens overnight or with one single programme. It is an active and ongoing process. It can and should happen on a formal and informal level. Empowerment is not something people either have or don't have. Certain employees will be considerably empowered, while others are less empowered and still others not at all. The same applies to different levels in

the organisation. Each employee in the organisation is important because he/she is a part of the bigger picture.

The researcher is of the opinion that employee empowerment is much more than it appears to be. Employee empowerment cannot be understood without looking at all the different dimensions. The different dimensions are interrelated and overlapping.

Giving an employee power in the empowerment sense does not mean giving control, but giving the employee self-determination – a “can cope” attitude. The employee must be motivated, confident and have the necessary courage in the working environment. Motivating employees become involved in what is happening in the organisation, and keeps them committed. Employees won't feel forgotten and lost. It gives them a sense of power. To have this kind of power an employee must believe in himself/herself and have a positive morale. The researcher feels that if this happens, the employee will gain work satisfaction and be positive about his/her work. This in turn will motivate him/her. In the employee empowerment sense it will be task orientated. It must be intrinsic motivation, coming from within. The employee will have a higher self-esteem, will want to give his/her best, and will feel enabled and satisfied. The researcher agrees that self-efficiency is vitally important. The employee must believe in his/her own abilities and capabilities, take action to improve his/her performance and be responsible. By taking on responsibility through being empowered, employees will have a sense of ownership. Feeling enabled is crucial. If the employee feels that way, the work will have meaning. It might be different for different people but it will have a purpose. Employees will be passionate about their work, and that will lead to them giving their best.

The employees will feel that they have a choice in regulating their own actions, and that they have not been forced. This will give them ownership of their work, and lead to self-determination. The researcher regards trust as the organisation trusting the employees to do their job, using their skills and knowledge to do their best for the company. The employees will feel respected by the organisation.

That in turn gives employees the opportunity to give something back to the organisation.

Although the researcher is of the opinion that the different dimensions are interrelated, these do not have to follow the same sequence. One dimension might be more applicable to some employees than others.

The researcher also believes that responsibility is very important. It might not be a dimension on its own, but it will be applicable to all the dimensions. The employees are given certain choices and opportunities within the organisation. They have the choice to take on these opportunities, but they must also take on the associated responsibility. The employee and the organisation must know it is an ongoing process with certain problems, but is beneficial to both parties.

The pitfalls of working with empowerment must never be ignored. Support for empowerment must come from everybody. As it is such an involved concept, it will take time to be understood and used to everybody's advantage. Employees are granted freedom, but with certain boundaries and responsibilities. Employees must never feel forgotten or think that assumptions are being made about them. The organisation must not expect the worst from its employees, but rather give them opportunities to stay involved.

#### **2.4.2 Organisational empowerment**

In order for empowerment to work, there must be synergy between the organisation and the employees. They need each other. Previous management styles and hierarchical structures need to change. The organisation must see the employees as an asset on their balance sheet. The organisation must rely on the employee's skills, knowledge, experience and judgement. The organisation must change to compete in new ways in an ever-changing environment. The organisation must be geared to help empower its employees and not just to redistribute power. The policy, values, culture and incentive schemes of the organisation must be of such a nature that it reinforces empowerment principles and does not contradict them.

The researcher agrees that vision is important. Everybody must know what they are working towards. In order to be transparent, every employee should know where he or she fits into the bigger picture, and there will be clarity about the vision. Although the focus is more on teamwork and structural change, there are still certain boundaries, controls and discipline. Nevertheless, these should be of such a nature that employees can take initiative and make decisions when necessary. There must be room to learn from mistakes.

The organisation must support its employees and give them the necessary security they need to work to their full potential. The employees must also take this responsibility seriously and work towards the goals of the organisation. The researcher agrees that rewards are positive and should be in place. The reward structure must be of such a nature that it really looks at work well done rather than simply judging in terms of quantity, for example. The employees must take pride in the work they get rewarded for.

It cannot be expected that people who have not been empowered will know what to do. Empowerment programmes should be initiated as well as training. Through training the vision of the organisation can be communicated, which enables employees to improve their skills and knowledge base. The training must be of such a nature that it is for the benefit of the organisation and the employees, and will work towards empowerment. Training must be ongoing.

The researcher believes that changing bureaucratic styles and management is very difficult. In a way status and power are removed. These are replaced, but not in a traditional management style. People are now working towards goals and are rewarded as a team, not as individuals. There are more flat structures which don't grant power to one person. – But people who are empowered gain intrinsic task motivation, self-efficacy, responsibility and so forth. A person then has more skills to assist him/her in a work situation. The organisation benefits, and so does each employee. Managers should be chosen carefully. They must be real team players. Managers must be able to see the full process and how to get to end

results. In this process managers must use their teams, –and must create a positive work space.

## **2.5 CONCLUSION**

It is clear from this chapter that empowerment and, even more, employee empowerment, is not a simple one-word concept. It has multiple dimensions that need to be understood. There are certain ways of implementing empowerment and measuring it. In order to have empowered employees, the organisation should also enhance empowerment. An empowered organisation has certain criteria that must be upheld. Old structures need to be changed and managers need to undergo a paradigm shift from the old hierarchical system to the empowered organisation and employees. If everybody in an organisation supports empowerment, it will create challenges. Meeting these challenges enables the organisation to change to the empowerment paradigm. Employees will be motivated to be empowered or they will be “left” behind. Employees are forced to view the organisation in a different light, and the organisation is forced to respect all employees and not expect the worst from them.

Social work as a profession has the opportunity to make its mark in the corporate world: to be able to create programmes to empower employees and to assist the organisation to reinforce those programmes. Not only will organisations reap better profits, but employees will have a greater sense of wellbeing.