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SUMMARY

The aim of the study was to conceptualise psychological empowerment as perceived in a South African context in terms of the dimensions and contributing factors. The study was conducted by means of quantitative and qualitative methods. The sample included employees from different geographic areas, genders, races, level of education and positions in organisations in different sectors.

Relationships between demographic variables and psychological empowerment were determined. To determine to what extent South Africans are psychologically empowered, according to Spreitzer's (1995) model, means and standard deviations were calculated for the four dimensions (meaning, competence, self-determination and impact) and overall psychological empowerment (PE) and a percentile table was utilised to establish a norm and compare it with a norm established in previous research.

Management practices were found to be significantly related to PE. However, when regression analysis was done, only the practices, motivation, delegation and job and role clarity significantly predicted PE.

Perceptions of empowerment were investigated and it appeared that economic empowerment is emphasised in the media, while the majority of interview respondents seemed to have a balanced or positive view of empowerment as enabling.

The psychological experiences of employees were explored and dimensions of psychological empowerment that are similar to what was found by previous research emerged. Some characteristics were found to be unique given the present context. Dimensions and characteristics that emerged from the study were resilience, sense of competence, sense of achievement, sense of control, sense of meaning, making a difference and empowerment of others. The theoretical frameworks proposed by Menon (2001) and Zimmerman (1995) were investigated, which confirmed the importance of a goal orientation and

pro-active behaviour in psychological empowerment. These theories were evaluated and compared to cognitive theories as suitable frameworks for the study of psychological empowerment.

Contributing factors that emerged from the qualitative study most prominently were opportunity and recognition. Locus of control emerged as a possible intrapersonal factor and it was explored further as a contributing factor. Together with the significant factors from the quantitative survey, these factors were employed to recommend a strategy for the development of psychological empowerment with the dimensions of empowerment as outcomes.

Key terms: Psychological empowerment, meaning, competence, self-determination, impact, sense of control, resilience, sense of achievement, making a difference, empowerment of others, management practices, motivation, delegation of responsibility, job and role clarity, opportunity, recognition, locus of control.

CHAPTER 1

PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT IN CONTEXT

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to provide the background and motivation for the present research. The background sketch outlines the development of the concept, empowerment, in the organisational psychology history and the influence of socio-political changes in South Africa on empowerment conceptions. The motivation for the study and its variables lead to a problem statement. The definition and paradigms that espouse this study are then presented. Research questions and the aims that guided the execution of the study are stated and the research design is briefly outlined. Lastly, an overview of how the study unfolds in following chapters is presented.

1.2 BACKGROUND

Empowerment is not a new concept, although it may not have been named as such in past history. Ivancevich and Matteson (1996) summarised the development of the empowerment concept by highlighting certain historical influences and changes that affected the way employees were managed. During the Industrial Revolution in the 18th century, the emphasis was on strict controls, rigid rules and procedures, which did not leave much room for empowerment as known today. Frederick W. Taylor was the initiator of scientific management in 1886. Together with the need to do work according to scientific principles the need arose to select, train, teach and develop the worker. Henri Fayol, a French industrialist developed a system of management in the early 1900s, but it was his identification of a need to teach management skills that was perhaps the most significant contribution to empowerment at the time. Since 1920 a paradigm shift towards Human Relations theories in management of employees started. The focus gradually changed to organisational behaviour, systems theory, decision-making theory, human resources, and so on. Together with these developments,

practices such as participative management, self managed teams and quality circles have significantly influenced the experience of empowerment. This new concept of human resources management brought about a movement towards development and 'investment in human capital' became a catchphrase. In South Africa human resource development as a subject was very much a product of the dominant academic developments in the United States that spread to Britain and Europe and was generally accepted in the curricula of universities and business schools.

The term 'empowerment' did not only evolve from management theories, but also stemmed from psychology and sociology. Early theories had to do mostly with control over the environment, motivation and mastery versus inferiority or powerlessness. Adler (1928) described the human soul as a complex of moving powers, which strive for the achievement of a single goal: to overcome feelings of inferiority and become master of environmental influences.

White (1959) defined competence as the ability to interact effectively with the environment. Human beings accomplish this through learning by means of trial and error activities. The individual is continually motivated toward more competent interchange with the environment. Such activities with the sole purpose of achieving competence must, therefore, be considered in motivational terms. White termed this motivation as effectance and described the experience it produces as a feeling of efficacy. Harter (1978) expanded on effectance motivation and described it as referring to several facets of the motive: the desire to produce an effect on the environment; the added goal of dealing effectively or competently with the environment; and the resulting feelings of efficacy. She differentiated mastery attempts in separate competence domains or skill areas, namely cognitive, social and physical.

People usually feel that they have freedom of choice to engage in a variety of different behaviours. If a person's behavioural freedom is reduced or threatened with reduction, he or she will become motivated to act against any further loss of freedom and toward the re-establishment of the freedom that had already been

lost or threatened. Brehm (1966) called this hypothetical motivational state in response to the reduction of one's potential options for acting, psychological reactance.

Bandura (1977) hypothesised that expectations of personal efficacy determine whether coping behaviour will be initiated, how much effort will be expended and how long it will last in the face of difficulties. Bandura proposed a model in which expectations of personal efficacy are derived from information about previous performance accomplishments, experience, verbal persuasion and physiological states. According to him, it is the experience of mastery arising from effective performance that has the most positive effect on people's sense of empowerment. Brown (1979) demonstrated that a variety of experiences, the most typical being negative consequences of failure at unsolvable tasks, can undermine subsequent performance. His notion was that expectations of controllability have an effect on feelings of empowerment. These expectations are believed to influence performance through cognitive and emotional effects as well as motivation. This is consistent with Bandura's (1977) social learning view that performance is mediated by self-efficacy expectations.

The self-directed element of empowerment was described by DeCharms (1979) as personal causation, which is the experience (not just a perception) of causing something one's self, of originating one's own actions and controlling elements in one's environment.

According to Kieffer (1984), in order to understand empowerment one must first clarify a conception of possible conditions from which it evolves. One such condition may be a sense of powerlessness stemming from continuous interaction between the person and his or her environment. It combines a sense of generalised distrust, a feeling of lack of resources for social influence, an experience of economic vulnerability and a sense of hopelessness in socio-political struggle and surviving in the socio-economic arena.

Since the seventies sociological notions of empowerment have been fundamental to most of the 'rights' movements in which people campaign for freedom and control of their own circumstances and focus on the empowerment of groups of people (Ivancevich & Matteson, 1996). In the present socio-political climate in South Africa, human rights, the rights of employees and the rights and equal opportunities of groups of people are given extensive consideration and the right to greater influence, better education and better positions is slowly but surely getting its rightful place. Empowerment in the political, social and educational domains has the primary objective of people being given greater influence and in the South African sense giving people opportunities, which they did not have before, and enabling them to have a fair and equal chance of achieving their goals.

Since the introduction of Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) into the South African socio-economic and political vocabulary in the late 1980s, and an escalation in the use of the term after 1994, the concept has become a controversial issue with a different connotation for different groups of people; raising hopes, fears and scepticism from various fields.

According to Renshon (1979), socio-political experiences help shape the general social context in which the individual functions. Beliefs in personal control may arise out of the interaction between needs and experiences of how and to what extent these needs are fulfilled, but the level and variation of beliefs are associated with and influenced by a number of contextual factors. Many of these factors, although reflected in individual beliefs, have to be considered as part of a broader social picture with origins in both historical and contemporary experience, which in turn, result in cultural assumptions. To a large extent individual beliefs are firmly rooted in collective experiences, especially as far as the sense of powerlessness of groups is concerned. Historically a large part of the South African population did not have the opportunities that could be expected in any civilised or developing country. Empowerment as corrective action, therefore, is necessary, but the effects may take longer to manifest, as beliefs and assumptions may take longer to change than what is hoped to

achieve by employing mechanistic changes, such as affirmative action (AA). At the same time these contemporary socio-political changes may have an effect on the previously advantaged community, for example, the feeling of powerlessness caused by diminishing opportunities.

The popularity of employee empowerment as initiative to involve employees in the running of the organisation increased in the 1990s, which some writers call the “empowerment era”. Since then businesses seem to have taken substantial steps toward stimulating the creative and innovative energies of employees in order to improve performance and customer service (Appelbaum, Hébert & Leroux, 1999).

1.3 MOTIVATION FOR THE RESEARCH

1.3.1 Assumptions and misconceptions

Good intentions regarding empowerment initiatives may be hampered by misconceptions, which may also have the potential to limit the benefits of empowerment objectives. A potential danger is that economic benefits for individuals and groups of people enjoy more prominence than the improvement of competence, confidence and performance in general.

An assumption that is generally made is that the goal of empowerment is to correct the injustices of the past. Empowerment as an organisational development strategy can easily be confused with the political or socio-economic meaning of empowerment as BEE presently governs empowerment policies and dominates the business scene in South Africa. The main goal seems to be that more black people participate in the decision-making processes of organisations, while the value and potential of empowerment as a means of enhancing human potential and to develop competence should be equally important. To achieve continuous improvement in the total performance of the organisation and the country, the immediate implementing objective should be to develop potential in order to make full use of the competencies of all the members of the

organisation. Perceptions and misconceptions of empowerment are fuelled by the angle from which the media are presenting it, but it is especially the economic and financial papers that present empowerment mainly from an economic view.

The ideal is that empowerment should ultimately result in the improvement of the performance of the organisation and the socio-economic situation in South Africa. This is only possible if one knows where the country really stands in terms of psychological empowerment. It is important to learn whether employees in general feel that they are empowered in the true sense of the word. It is important for organisations to realise that to achieve empowerment, attention to psychological empowerment is necessary.

1.3.2 The influence of contextual factors

Adler (1928) recognised the influence of the socio-economic environment on people's thinking and behaviour. He contended that an evaluation of individuals could only be made when their context, their environment, is known and warned that erroneous conclusions would be the result if single phenomena are judged. More to the point of empowerment, Conger and Kanungo (1988) identified contextual factors that contribute to the lowering of self-efficacy beliefs in organisational members. Therefore, a perspective of the South African state of psychological empowerment should be investigated by taking in consideration contextual factors. Suggesting that socio-economic factors have implications for the interpretation of the concept, empowerment, may be difficult to investigate. Suggesting that an organisation's empowerment strategies, whether compelled by politics or not, have an effect on experiences of empowerment is more feasible for measurement, although to take the environmental influences into account more completely, both the individual level and the organisational level need to be considered. But whatever the focus, be it economic or psychological, management should be informed and understand the social processes that affect employees' work related attitudes, and contribute by providing a climate that is conducive to empowerment (Mok & Au-Yeung, 2002).

Menon (2001) argued that the true nature of empowerment can be better understood by integrating research from the perspective of the individual employee and by focusing on the effects of various empowering practices (for example, delegation) on the psychological state of the individual employee. In order to realise the expected benefits of empowerment employees must actually experience empowerment and, therefore, it is necessary to determine the psychological state of empowerment. An organisation may comply with structural or legal obligations, but whether an individual employee feels empowered or not depends on a host of factors including the actual behaviour of the manager. Menon's belief is that if empowerment is defined as a cognitive state, it is possible to measure the level of individual psychological empowerment, which in turn permits systematic research involving statistical techniques.

The misconception may now have been created that this study is about those empowered in terms of the Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) Act or AA or the Employment Equity Act. To get a truly South African perspective the influence of the socio-political environment is considered, but the study must represent the demographic characteristics of the population that is currently employed in different sectors in different occupations. This includes the white male who may feel that progression or upward mobility is threatened by labour legislation as much as the black woman who may still experience discrimination and powerlessness. Research results will, however, indicate whether this is the case or not.

1.3.3 Problem statement

The reality brought about by the present socio-economic and political climate is that it has an influence on perceptions about empowerment in general. Organisations are compelled to meet legislative demands and comply by means of employing and positioning people correctly. Empowerment forms part of a strategy in most organisations, but it should be put in its proper perspective. It should be determined what the real experience of empowerment is. It is vital to

determine whether a real sense of empowerment is hampered by the very mechanisms that should promote it. It is necessary to determine all factors that play a role in the experience of empowerment and consider strategic imperatives for the enhancement of psychological empowerment.

1.4 THE CONCEPT: PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment has become one of the most prominent concepts in modern management theory and practice, as well as organisational psychology studies (Whetton & Cameron, 1995). Empowerment *per se* is a concept widely used within organisational science (Blanchard, Carlos & Randolph, 1999; Conger & Kanungo, 1988), while psychological empowerment has its origin in cognitive psychology. Bandura's (1977) theories of psychological change in terms of cognitive processes are grounded in cognitive psychology and Thomas and Velthouse (1990) presented a cognitive model of empowerment. Spreitzer and Quinn (1997) based their findings on empowerment on empirical research in the fields of management and organisational behaviour. Zimmerman (1995) expanded his study from psychological empowerment on an individual level to include organisational or community empowerment, which suggests ties with organisational and community psychology.

Authors and researchers have pointed out an element of empowerment without which all other efforts to empower will not be substantial enough to make a meaningful contribution. Bandura, (1977), Thomas and Velthouse (1990), Blanchard et al. (1999), Spreitzer (1995a; 1996), Spreitzer and Quinn, (1997), Clutterbuck and Kernaghan (1994) and Kinlaw (1995) strived to drive home a notion of empowerment that is not just structural or mechanistic, but includes concepts, such as self-efficacy, experience of mastery, intrinsic task motivation, psychological energy, psychological empowerment, motivational power and competent influence.

1.4.1 Definitions

Definitions of empowerment in general and psychological empowerment in particular vary greatly in the literature. Conger and Kanungo (1988), based on the theory of Bandura (1977), defined empowerment as a process of enhancing feelings of self-efficacy. They conceptualised empowerment in motivational terms, according to which empowerment refers to a process whereby an individual's belief in his or her self-efficacy is enhanced. To empower means either to strengthen this belief or to weaken the belief in personal powerlessness. Thomas and Velthouse (1990) and Spreitzer (1995a; 1995b) defined empowerment in terms of the cognitions, sense of impact, competence, meaningfulness and choice or self-determination. Zimmerman (1995) depicted psychological empowerment as a construct that integrates perceptions of personal control, a proactive approach to life and a critical understanding of the socio-political environment. It, therefore, includes beliefs that goals can be achieved, awareness about resources and factors that hinder or enhance one's efforts to achieve those goals, and efforts to fulfil the goals. Menon (2001) defined psychological empowerment in terms of how power is experienced by the employee. According to him, the three main dimensions of the experience of power underlying the empowerment process are: power as perceived control, power as perceived competence, and power as being energised toward achieving valued goals.

1.4.2 Relevant paradigms

Systemic: The holistic and eco-systemic conception views the world as an open, living system and emphasises the interaction and interdependence of all phenomena, which implies that the individual organism always interacts with its physical and social environment (Capra, 1982).

Emergence: While a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods are used, the quantitative aspects will only be used for descriptive statistics in order to compare it with other findings. The real value of this study will not lie in the

reductionistic or positivistic characteristics of quantitative survey, but rather in the arising of novel and coherent structures, patterns and properties derived from qualitative interpretation (Goldstein, 1999).

Cognitive: Renshon (1979) mentioned individual's assumptive structure including his or her beliefs; Wilson (1979) mentioned the cognitive processing of efficacy information from performance and beliefs; Harrison (1983) talked about changing mindsets; according to Conger and Kanungo (1988), individuals should be provided with self-efficacy information, which has empowering results; Wood and Bandura (1989) suggested the cultivation of people's beliefs in their capabilities; and according to Menon (2001), the psychologically empowered state is a cognitive state characterised by a sense of perceived control, competence, and goal internalisation.

Positive psychology: Positive psychology is the practical and scientific pursuit of optimal human functioning (Lopez & Snyder, 2003); focuses on sources of strength and resilience (Ingram & Snyder, 2006); and is defined by Cheavens, Feldman, Woodward and Snyder (2006) as the attempt to understand the characteristics and processes that contribute to optimal functioning, flourishing and resiliency. Positive psychology emanated from cognitive psychology and is sometimes integrated with cognitive psychotherapies.

Humanistic orientation: People and their attitudes, perceptions, capacities, feelings and goals are of major importance to the organisation (Ivancevich & Matteson, 1996). The liberal humanist paradigm sees knowledge as distinct from power. Power has a negative connotation and is equated with repression. Knowledge is considered powerful as it is a means of liberating oneself and others from power and allows individuals to realise themselves (Edwards & Usher, 1994).

Organisational behaviour: Organisational behaviour is the study of human behaviour, attitudes and performance within an organisational setting. Although it can be seen as an autonomous field, it draws on such disciplines as

psychology and sociology to learn about individual perceptions, values, learning capacities and action (human orientation) while working in groups and within the total organisation. Behaviour is viewed as operating at individual, group and organisational levels. Its major importance is in its applications orientation, which is also the purpose of this study - providing useful answers to questions, which arise in the context of managing organisations exposed to external influences (Ivancevich & Matteson, 1996).

This research was conducted within the field of psychology and more specifically, within the sub-discipline of organisational psychology, while taking in consideration the above paradigms.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The concepts, empowerment and psychological empowerment, were researched in terms of the following questions:

1. To what extent are South Africans psychologically empowered?
2. What management practices contribute to psychological empowerment?
3. What are the general perceptions of empowerment in South Africa?
4. How do South Africans experience empowerment?
5. What factors are perceived to have an effect on empowerment?

1.6 AIMS

The aims of the empirical investigation were as follows:

To determine the state of psychological empowerment in South Africa.

To determine whether there is a relationship between contextual factors and psychological empowerment in South Africa.

To determine what the current perceptions are regarding empowerment in South Africa.

To conceptualise psychological empowerment as experienced in a South African context and to compare these findings with research in other countries.

To determine what (factors, methods, practices) contributes best to psychological empowerment according to how South Africans experience it.

To appraise theoretical frameworks for their appropriateness in terms of psychological empowerment in South African organisations.

To be of value to the field of organisation psychology and relevance to South Africa in the present social, political and economic climate, the final aim is to be able to formulate recommendations.

1.7 DESIGN AND METHOD

The design is rooted in the systemic paradigm. The intent of the research, to obtain a better understanding of empowerment in the South African context, necessitated the consideration of the interaction and interdependence of all phenomena.

A mixed method sequential design was used. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used. The study consisted of a two-phase sequential research project in which the qualitative research questions were explored as a second-phase after a quantitative survey had been done.

Following on a thorough literary research, a quantitative survey was used to obtain a broad numeric picture of the state of psychological empowerment. For

this purpose a tested and validated instrument, the Psychological Empowerment Instrument (PEI), developed and validated by Spreitzer (1995a), was used to measure psychological empowerment (PE). The relationship between management practices and PE was measured by means of a Contextual Factor Survey (CFS) and the PEI. Twelve management practices were selected and their respective relationships with PE were determined. To be able to comment on the representivity of the survey, demographic data were also included in the survey. Gender and race differences were investigated to add to the perspective. Aspects covered in the demographic survey, such as level of education, work level and sectors were also taken into account to determine relationships with the dependent variable, psychological empowerment.

This quantitative survey was followed up with in-depth interviews with a few individuals in a qualitative study. The qualitative phase of the design relied on the emergence of unique, but logical themes, patterns and properties derived from qualitative interpretation. A phenomenological approach was followed to explore the authentic psychological experiences of employees in the present socio-political environment. According to the positive psychology paradigm, this design is an attempt to understand the characteristics and processes that contribute to optimal functioning, which in this case is the psychological experience of empowerment. By means of content analysis, conclusions were drawn regarding what dimensions constitute psychological empowerment in the South African context, what factors contribute to the experience of empowerment, what factors can be distinguished as blocking empowerment, and how aware South Africans are of the empowering resources in their organisations. The role that individual perceptions (cognitions) play in psychological empowerment was also investigated. Other, less obtrusive, methods of qualitative research and sources, such as newspaper and magazine articles, were also explored, analysed and conclusions made. By focusing on the psychological experience of empowerment of South Africans, any emerging phenomena were considered for their importance.

According to the humanistic orientation, people and their attitudes, perceptions, capacities, feelings and goals are of major importance to the organisation. Because the study has as a purpose to contribute to organisational behaviour science, a final analysis of all the findings was then utilised to be able to advocate strategies that will facilitate the development of employees to experience that they are confident and able to make a meaningful contribution in their positions and in terms of the accompanying responsibilities that were delegated to them. To achieve this purpose, the 'objective' data from enquiring into current practices, as well as personal experiences obtained from in-depth interviews, were analysed and inferences and conclusions made with respect to best practices to be able to recommend strategies.

1.8 OVERVIEW

The research methods, findings, conclusions and application are elaborated on in the following chapters:

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter contains the epistemological grounding, historical development, explanation and critical evaluation of existing theories, models and conceptions regarding psychological empowerment. The application of these theories is justified for this particular research context.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE SURVEY OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Previous research on empowerment and the factors that contribute to psychological empowerment are discussed and critically evaluated. Research on contributing factors and antecedents is of special interest.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHOD

The methodology that was used in the study is discussed in general theoretical terms, in order to offer the rationale for its use. How the methodology was used to collect the data and produce results is also explained.

CHAPTER 5: QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research results are presented and data discussed in relation to the dependent variable, psychological empowerment. Research questions are answered in the light of the various analyses and hypotheses tested.

CHAPTER 6: PERCEPTIONS OF EMPOWERMENT

Qualitative research results regarding perceptions of empowerment, based on generating meaning from the data collected in the in-depth interviews and the media, are conveyed.

CHAPTER 7: DIMENSIONS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT

The results of the inductive and deductive data analysis regarding the dimensions of psychological empowerment and characteristics of empowered people are presented with reference to the literature.

CHAPTER 8: ANTECEDENTS OF EMPOWERMENT

The results of the inductive and deductive qualitative analysis of the interview content in terms of contributing factors are presented and discussed with reference to the literature.

CHAPTER 9: INTEGRATION OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION OF EMPOWERMENT STRATEGIES

In this chapter the findings of the quantitative and qualitative surveys are integrated, and the most relevant factors to include in a strategy were concluded. Conclusions drawn from the research are incorporated to advocate strategies and practices that proved to contribute to a positive sense of empowerment.

CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

With the insight gained from the results of the study assumptions are confirmed or changed based on conclusions. The most important findings according to research questions and the aims are summarised. The study is reviewed in terms of the methodologies that were used together with some limitations it presented. Suggestions for future research are made. A summary of the most important conclusions is provided.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the concepts, theories, models and perspectives, relevant to psychological empowerment, as discussed in the literature, are reviewed. According to Berg (2007), concepts do not occur in isolation. Different concepts can be connected to each other through propositions, which are statements about relationships between concepts. Theories consist of defined and interrelated constructs or concepts, therefore, it is necessary to first consider the relevant concepts. The models that researchers proposed as principles that underlie psychological empowerment and that specify hypothesised relations are considered as frame of reference for the research. Somewhat less scientific, but nevertheless worth considering, are some perspectives and assumptions found in the literature that represent different viewpoints (Kerlinger, 1986).

2.2 CONCEPTS

Separate concepts or dimensions that form part of the theory on the subject of psychological empowerment are reviewed here. The concepts are cognitive and abstract propositions as generally accepted and understood by all in the field. Beginning with the negative extremes, powerlessness and learned helplessness, these concepts include aspects of control and choice, power, the separate constructs of psychological empowerment as defined by Spreitzer (1995a; 1995b; 1996), self-efficacy and optimism.

2.2.1 Powerlessness

Kieffer (1984) stated that in order to understand empowerment one must first understand the concept powerlessness. Powerlessness is the perception that an individual has that he or she is not able to determine what happens to him or her

and this feeling is reinforced by factors in the individual's environment. A sense of powerlessness was defined by Kieffer (1984, p. 16) as a "construction of continuous interaction between the person and his/her environment." He described it as a combination of "an attitude of self-blame, a sense of generalised distrust, a feeling of alienation from resources for social influence, an experience of disenfranchisement and economic vulnerability and a sense of hopelessness" in a socio-political context.

Regarding leaders who lack power, Kanter (1979) considered them to be less effective, they tend to lack support and because they feel inferior, they have a need to dominate. The powerless turn to control over others and become critical and domineering. People who feel powerless are likely to become over controlling.

2.2.2 Learned helplessness

Seligman (cited in Hock, 2005) used the term, learned helplessness, and proposed that perceptions of power and control are learned from experience. He based his studies on the belief that when a person's efforts at controlling certain life events fail repeatedly, the person may stop attempting to exercise control altogether. If these failures happen often enough, the person may generalise the perception of lack of control to all situations, even when control may actually be possible. People then tend to give up, admit defeat, become helpless and feel depressed (Hock, 2005; Seligman & Maier, 1967).

Brown (1979) referred to studies in learned helplessness in humans that demonstrated that a variety of experiences, the most typical being adverse consequences of failure at unsolvable tasks, can undermine subsequent performance. Expectations of controllability have an effect on the development of feelings of helplessness. As a result of the experience of uncontrollable events, people come to expect that they cannot affect outcomes through their actions and generalise them to other situations as well. This expectation in turn, is believed to produce negative consequences for performance through the way

people think and feel and it also affects motivation. This is consistent with Bandura's (1977) social learning view that performance is mediated by self-efficacy expectations. From the social learning perspective, however, lowered efficacy expectations may result not only from direct failure experiences but from 'vicarious' experiences as well. This corresponds with the common observation that people develop expectations about how well they will perform on tasks at which they have had no direct experience (Brown, 1979).

What is important about the learned helplessness paradigm is how it affects beliefs and consequent behaviour. Repeated experience with failure leads to erroneous beliefs of incompetence, consequently the individual gives up and becomes passive, even after environmental changes that make success possible, were introduced. Learned helpless individuals, therefore, do not pursue opportunities, do not experience positive outcomes, and if they dwell on these consequences it will result in lowering of their self-esteem (Langer, 1979; Martinko & Gardner, 1982)

Where Argyris (1987) attributed passive and maladaptive organisational behaviour and subsequent failure to properties in the organisation, Martinko and Gardner (1982) focused more on individual attribution. They used a model of organisationally induced helplessness that describes how individuals process information about their organisation. The model points to factors in the environment, together with the person's past success history that lead to attributions for performance. The processing of this information can also be influenced by, for example, locus of control, which influences the attributions that people make about their environment. People attribute performance outcomes to ability, effort, task difficulty or chance. According to Rotter's (1966) theory of locus of control, ability and effort are internal causes because they lie within the person, while task difficulty and chance are external causes controlled by the environment. Once the attribution is made, it influences the person's affective state and expectancies, which in turn, influence behaviour. Affective states that typify learned helplessness are, amongst others, depression, anxiety, stress, frustration and hostility.

2.2.3 Control

Control is one of the root constructs from which the empowerment construct is derived (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). Argyris (1987) described control as a characteristic of most organisations and as something that organisations exercise that affect workers' need for independence. The primary responsibility of leadership is control, direction, coordination of interrelationships and to make certain that workers perform adequately. Therefore, it is expected from individuals to accept control. The leader is assigned formal power to reward and penalise in order that all behaviours are aligned toward the organisation's objectives. The impact of this is that individuals become dependent and subordinate to the leader and have little control over their working environment. Murrell (1985) sketched philosophies based on a rigid set of assumptions that control and discipline were the primary building blocks of management as something of the past and that the focus has shifted to motivation and coordination as forms of control. According to Renshon (1979), each person has a need to have influence over people, events and institutions; a need for personal control.

2.2.4 Locus of control

Rotter (1966) proposed that individuals differ in where they place the responsibility for what happens to them. When people interpret the consequences of their behaviour to be controlled by luck, fate or powerful others, this indicates a belief in what Rotter called an external locus of control. Conversely, he surmised that if people interpret their own behaviour and personality characteristics as responsible for behavioural consequences, they have a belief in an internal locus of control. In childhood development behaviours are learned because they are followed by some form of reinforcement. This reinforcement increases the child's expectancy that a particular behaviour will produce a desired reinforcement. Once this expectancy is established, the removal of reinforcement will cause the expectancy of such a relationship between behaviour and reinforcement to fade. As children grow,

some will have frequent experiences in which their behaviour directly influences reinforcement, while for others, reinforcement will appear to result from actions outside of themselves. Rotter claimed that the totality of a person's specific learning experiences creates in the person a generalised expectancy about whether reinforcement is internally or externally controlled and, according to Hock (2005), either internal or external locus of control becomes an aspect of human personality.

2.2.5 Control and choice

Control and choice are described by some authors in terms of perceptions. Perception was defined by Giorgi (1983) as the process by which one becomes aware of one's environment by interpreting the evidence of the senses. According to Steiner (1979), individuals experience a sense of control when they feel that they, rather than external factors, determine the outcome, while choice has to do with the perception of freedom of choice to decide which of two or more options will be accepted. Steiner speculated that there are three kinds of choice: people experience choice when they seem to control the decision-making process in that they may select an alternative they desire (evaluative choice); they confidently select among available options (discriminative choice); or by processing and evaluating information, they identify an alternative that seems best for them (autonomous choice).

Harvey, Harris and Lightner (1979) also distinguished between the concepts of perceived freedom and perceived control. They too saw perceived freedom as an experience associated with the act of deciding between alternatives. Compared to perceived freedom to choose, perceived control was seen as the ability to gain control over the course that one has chosen.

2.2.6 Power

Power is another root construct from which the empowerment construct is derived (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). Several authors defined power in

organisational terms. Kanter (1981; 1993) defined power as the capacity to mobilise people and resources to get things done, which implies that the one with this kind of power must possess autonomy and certain rights. For this author it means capability or efficacy, rather than domination or control. Having power that is seen as powerful is associated with the ability to act flexibly and accomplish more. People who are regarded as powerful in organisations tend to get more cooperation; their needs are met; their suggestions are transformed into action; and they can get the resources they need to work effectively in their own area. People who lack power are often less effective. Jobs that help people become more powerful, according to Kanter, are jobs in which results are noted and appropriately rewarded. Appelbaum et al. (1999) also described power in terms of the use of various resources to influence the outcome of decision-making processes, the control of access to those processes and a positive sense of self-discipline through participation. Murrell (1985) originally defined a person's power in an organisation in terms of information or knowledge and interpersonal competence, which manifest in the ability to work with people to accomplish tasks. In later years the author advocated for a view of power as empowerment, because it leads towards the creation of power and the decrease of powerlessness.

Apart from responsibility for results and accountability, Kanter (1981; 1993) also mentioned relationships or political alliances as a source of power. Leadership titles and delegation of formal authority do not always automatically secure power, but connections with appropriate networks in informal systems contribute to the attribution of power. The feeling that one has power tends to create effective leadership in which people operate with more flexibility, give more freedom, emphasise more development for the people below them and focus on results rather than procedures. Under such circumstances the powerful seem to earn more power, more voice in decisions and more recognition (Kanter, 1981).

All people have a need for power to some degree (Appelbaum et al., 1999). McClelland (1975) described the need for power or the power motive or power orientations according to the stages in ego-development described initially by

Freud and later by Erikson. There are mainly two dimensions of such a need. It depends on whether the source of power is outside or inside the self. During the first stage of development the source is outside the self, namely the caretaker who provides emotional and physical support, which causes the infant to feel secure and stronger inside. Individuals may continue to draw strength from others, such as a mentor or a motivational leader. If the person becomes dependent on a powerful person, to such an extent that forces outside him or her prescribe what he or she does, the person does not feel empowered. However, this dependency on a source of power gives a sense of strength. McClelland believed that instead of a need for dependency, the goal is rather to feel strong.

As a child grows older he or she develops self-assertiveness and self-control. The aim is to try and gain control. The third developmental stage involves learning that a feeling of power results from controlling others and has impact on others. From the psychological point of view, the goal of power motivation is to feel powerful. Influencing others is only one of many ways of feeling powerful (McClelland, 1975).

The most advanced stage of expressing the power drive is when the self drops out as a source of power and a person sees him or her in the service of a higher power, which moves him or her to try to influence for the benefit of others. Managers of corporations, who are generally high in power motivation, feel and regularly act on behalf of a greater good, for what is good for the organisation. Individuals who never develop past the first two stages will not be competent to deal with a variety of situations. Dependence on an external source of strength and support prevents the development of the self-direction characteristics of the second and third stages (McClelland, 1975).

2.2.7 Meaning

Foulkes (1969) found that meaningful work is not the same for everybody. The basic approach to making work more meaningful was to change routine or dull jobs into more exciting and challenging work. However, for employees who are high in social needs, the work group was more important and the job secondary. In other words they preferred to stick to their routine work where they were used to their co-workers company, where they had the security of the known situation and the satisfaction of belonging to the work group.

Being assigned an explicit label that connotes inferiority relative to another person had an effect on how elderly people perceived their competence (Langer, 1979), but it could also have an effect on how working people perceive the meaningfulness of their work if they compare themselves with others. For example, labels such as subordinate, assistant and lower level, would imply that these employees are engaging in commonly defined less important tasks compared to people with labels, such as managers and professional people. A meaningful job was defined as a job that contains elements of planning, organising and controlling, which are usually the responsibility of managers, while workers are viewed as resources and are consequently assigned to performing the routine work. The entrepreneur who goes into business for himself has a meaningful job because he plans what he wants to do, he organises to do it, he does it, and then he sees how it could be done better (Foulkes, 1969). In other words the entrepreneur has total control over what is done and how it is done, which also refers to the self-determination aspect.

According to Thomas and Velthouse (1990) and Spreitzer (1995a), meaningfulness concerns the value of the task, goal or purpose, the feeling that a vocation is important and there is genuine concern about the job. It can also be described as the opportunity to pursue a worthy goal; that what one is engaged in is worth the time, energy and effort one puts in and that it is something that really matters (Appelbaum et al., 1999). As McClelland (1975) surmised that people who are high in power motivation, feel and regularly act on

behalf of a greater good, it could be translated as the experience of sense of meaning, that they have a goal or purpose (Appelbaum et al., 1999; Spreitzer, 1995a).

2.2.8 Competence-incompetence

White (1959) defined competence as an organism's capacity to interact effectively with its environment. Competence is achieved through accomplishments and learning. Learning takes place by means of activities involving interacting with the environment and which are focused and carried out with persistence. It is motivational as it impels the organism toward more competent interchange with the environment. White used the term, effectance for the concept, the competence that has been achieved and a feeling of efficacy is used to characterise the experience produced by effectance.

Harter (1978) described effectance motivation (that is competence motivation) as referring to several facets of the motive: the organism's desire to produce an effect on the environment; the added goal of dealing effectively or competently with the environment; and the resulting feelings of efficacy. Harter distinguished between separate competence domains or skill areas, namely cognitive, social and physical. White (1959) placed most of his emphasis on successful mastery attempts, while Harter argued that one needs a sufficient degree of failure to get the negative feedback, which clarifies what is competent or successful behaviour. Harter also refined the notion that success leads to intrinsic motivation – a feeling of efficacy produced by the successful task accomplishment itself. She suggested a positive linear relationship between the degree of challenge presented by the mastery situation and the amount of satisfaction derived from tasks successfully solved. However, one attaches a somewhat negative subjective evaluation to one's performance on very difficult tasks, which one may eventually complete successfully, due to the amount of time and effort spent. Tasks beyond one's capability, which cannot be mastered, produce no pleasure.

Langer (1979) described two cases in point where individuals are not incapable in a situation but their actions in that situation bring about a false impression of incompetence. For example, many capable people may deduce that they are incompetent at tasks when put in a situation with an overtly confident individual. An illusion of incompetence is created since the potential success of the confident individual would not actually diminish the success of other individuals if they engaged in the behaviour rather than gave up. However, it is possible that a confident exterior may be a misleading indicator of the person's skill. Another example is familiarity with the task. A person faced with a novel task may conclude incompetence prematurely, because it seems more complicated than what it comes down to. If the person should first familiarise him or herself with the task, he or she may find that it is within their range of competence (Langer, 1979).

When the goal of dealing competently with the environment is achieved a person may feel empowered. Thomas and Velthouse (1990) distinguished competence as a cognition or task assessment which is at the basis of empowerment. Spreitzer (1995a) found that empowered people have a sense of competence, that they are confident about their ability to do their work well, and that they know they can perform.

2.2.9 Self-determination

It is assumed that human beings in most Western cultures have developmental trends towards self-determination, independence, intrinsic reward, security, an awareness of and control over self and a sense of integrity and of self-worth. One of the most important needs of workers is to enlarge those areas of their lives in which their own decisions determine the outcome of their efforts (Argyris, 1987). Self-determination, also termed personal causation by DeCharms (1979), is the experience (not just a perception) of causing something yourself, of originating your own actions and controlling elements in your environment. Self-determination is another dimension of psychological empowerment according to

Spreitzer (1995a; 1995b) and it implies that empowered people are free to choose how to do their work; they are not micro-managed. It is derived from the cognition that Thomas and Velthouse (1990) called "choice." It is when one feels that opportunities are available to select task activities that are personally meaningful and to perform them in ways that seem appropriate. It is the feeling of being free to choose; of being able to use own judgment and act out of own understanding of what the task requires. Deci and Ryan's (1985) self-determination theory focuses on the degree to which human behaviours are self-determined. It is the degree to which people endorse their actions at the highest level of reflection and engage in the action with a full sense of choice. Being empowered, according to Block (1991), means taking risks and taking responsibility for decisions.

2.2.10 Impact

When a person has developed the belief that he or she has personal control, there is also the belief that he or she has impact (Renshon, 1979). According to Thomas and Velthouse (1990) and Spreitzer (1995a; 1995b), empowered people have a sense of impact. They believe they have influence on their work unit and that others listen to their ideas, that they are able to make a difference and accomplish goals and thereby produce an effect in their environment. Impact is, therefore, considered as one of the dimensions of psychological empowerment. Appelbaum et al. (1999) explained it as progress. The feeling of progress involves the sense that the task is moving forward and that one is actually accomplishing something.

2.2.11 Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is a construct derived from social cognitive theory. The theory comprises three reciprocal influences, namely behaviour, cognitions and the environment (Bandura, 1977; Gist & Mitchell, 1992). Conger and Kanungo (1988) based on the theory of Bandura (1977), defined empowerment as a process of enhancing feelings of self-efficacy. They conceptualised

empowerment in motivational terms, according to which empowerment refers to a process whereby an individual's belief in his or her self-efficacy is enhanced. To empower means either to strengthen this belief or to weaken the belief in personal powerlessness.

Self-efficacy, sense of competence and perceptions of control may be closely linked. Self-efficacy is task specific, according to Gist (1987), and has to do with the individual's conviction that he or she can perform a specific task at a specific level of expertise. Self-efficacy is also described as a person's estimate of his or her ability to produce good performance on a specific task (Gist & Mitchell, 1992), while perceived competency could be defined as generalised self-efficacy, the conviction that one can successfully carry out a range of actions (Bandura, 1977).

From the self-efficacy perspective, people's perceptions of their capabilities are affected when they expend a high degree of effort and fail to achieve positive outcomes through their actions. Similar inferences may be drawn from observing others work hard at a task and fail. However, vicarious influence operates through a social comparison process, meaning that the extent to which observed failure will exert an effect depends on comparability of the performer's competence, amount of effort expended by the performer and uncertainty about one's own skill at the task. When people undergo similar experiences or otherwise view a model as similar, it is likely that some degree of competence similarity will be inferred. Other studies showed that modelled failure can enhance performance when conditions exist of perceived superiority to an inefficient model. Perceived superiority may result from subjects' comparisons of their prior successes with the models ineffectiveness or from explicit information that the model is less competent (Brown, 1979).

Behavioural competence does not necessarily ensure high self-efficacy or perceived control. A person may appear to be competent and in control and still suffer from overwhelming feelings of inadequacy and helplessness. In terms of self-efficacy theory, the cognitive processing of efficacy information from

performance is distorted and the belief is that significant life events are beyond personal control. In such cases, perceived control is not in harmony with actual or potential control (Wilson, 1979).

Self-efficacy refers to people's assessments of their effectiveness, competence and causal agency. Motivational theories conceptualise self-efficacy in motivational terms and tend to emphasise the experience of causal agency and to see it as a fundamental human need and a basic element of one's sense of self. For example, White's (1959) theory of effectance motivations, the intrinsic motivation to produce effects on the environment and to make things happen; Harter's (1978) competence motivation; while Adler (cited in Gecas, 1989) coined the term, mastery motivation.

Cognitive theories of self-efficacy, based largely on attribution and social learning theories, place more emphasis on beliefs and perceptions of causality, agency or control and less on the motivations to hold such beliefs, for example, Rotter's (cited in Gecas, 1989) distinction between internal and external locus of control as generalised expectancies that individuals develop in relation to their environment. Particularly relevant here are the self-attributions individuals make with regard to personal control over events that affect them. On the other hand, sociologists such as Marx placed more emphasis on the social structural context for the emergence and maintenance of power, powerlessness and control (Gecas, 1989). Gist and Mitchell (1992) also distinguished between the indicators that people use to construct their beliefs. External cues concern the task itself, for example, interdependence on others and the amount of resources required to complete the task successfully, the complexity of the task and how favourable the task environment is. Other external cues are provided in the interpersonal environment, such as verbal persuasion, feedback and modelling that provide information about correct performance strategies. Internal cues pertaining personal experience are the individual's ability, knowledge and skills, and the effectiveness of performance strategies to utilise these skills are of particular importance. The individual's general physical condition, for example, fitness, health and skill variety as well as personality type also play a role.

2.2.12 Optimism

According to Carver and Scheier (2003), optimism overlaps with the concepts of control and self-efficacy. All of these constructs have strong overtones of expecting desired outcomes to take place. However, there are important differences in the assumptions that are made regarding how the desired outcomes are expected to come about. Self-efficacy would appear to represent a construct in which the self as a causal agent is paramount. If people have high self-efficacy expectancies, they presumably believe that their personal efforts or personal skills are what will determine the outcome. The same is true of the concept of control. When people perceive themselves as in control, they are assuming that the desired outcome will occur through their personal efforts. In contrast, people who are optimistic can be optimistic because they believe they are talented, hard-working, blessed, or a variety of other factors that produce positive outcomes. The question could be asked whether optimists are likely to exert efforts toward attainment of desired goals. The authors are of the opinion that the expectation of good outcomes appears to be held contingent on remaining in pursuit of those good outcomes. It may be the person's efforts that pull off the outcome or it may be that by remaining involved that the person is able to take advantage of breaks that fall his or her way. In either case, the optimist expects the best but also understands the need to be part of the matrix of influences on the outcome. Carver and Scheier (2003) referred to research that pointed out that optimists are quicker to accept the reality of a challenge to their current lives, they appear to engage in more focused, active coping when such efforts are likely to be productive and they are less likely to give up pursuit of their goals.

2.2.13 Empowerment defined

The development of empowerment as concept was discussed in the previous chapter and psychological empowerment was defined. To achieve the aims of the present study, the next objective is to focus on the subject of organisational behaviour and consider relevant definitions of empowerment. Relevance in this

study implies that it must be applicable to the world of work for the results of the study to lead to appropriate strategies.

In the organisational behaviour and management literature authors defined empowerment as follows:

Murrell (1985) and Vogt and Murrell (1990) defined empowerment as a positive use of power to create more power, which has a positive energising effect on the organisation. The action to empower was described as to enable, to allow or to permit, the act of building, developing and increasing power through cooperation, sharing and working together, as opposed to merely redistributing power. Vogt and Murrell (1990) conceived empowerment as both self-initiated and initiated by others.

Conger and Kanungo (1988) defined empowerment as 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.

Empowerment was seen as the sharing of power by leaders with their followers. According to Hellriegel and Slocum (1989), the leader involves subordinates in setting objectives and planning, while spending time with them to get them motivated to serve the purpose of the group in pursuing shared objectives. Bowen and Lawler (1992) defined empowerment as sharing with employees four organisational ingredients, namely information about the organisation's performance, rewards based on the organisation's performance, knowledge that enables employees to understand and contribute to organisational performance, and power to make decisions that influence organisational direction and performance.

Management practices, such as generating autonomy, participation in decision-making, access to resources, encouraging and allowing individuals to take

personal responsibility for improving the way they do their jobs and contribute to the organisation's goals, form part of definitions of empowerment. Clutterbuck and Kernaghan (1994) mentioned management practices and added that people should be allowed to use their faculties, abilities and psychological energy at the maximum level. They saw power that can be given and taken away as a highly conditional form of power that puts people in the position of operating with someone else's permission. This inhibits the development of people's full potential and the development of new levels of personal competence that allow them to use their own discretion and creativity and to feel confident enough about their competence to utilise it in productive and innovative ways. According to Blanchard et al. (1999), although giving people the authority and responsibility to make important business decisions is a key structural aspect of empowerment, the real essence of empowerment comes from releasing the knowledge, experience and motivational power that are already in people. They are in accordance with Kanter (1993) that real value for the organisation lies in increasing the performance capacity of people. Klagge (1998) reached the conclusion that through these actions, employees are endowed with increased power, authority and competencies.

Geroy, Wright and Anderson (1998) saw empowerment as a process embedded in an organisational culture. The process entails providing employees with the necessary guidance and skills, to enable autonomous decision-making (including accountability and the responsibility) for making these decisions within acceptable parameters.

These definitions describe empowerment in terms of acts that result in feelings of empowerment, while the following authors defined empowerment in terms of feelings or beliefs:

Thomas and Velthouse (1990) defined empowerment as increased intrinsic task motivation and developed a model with four cognitions as basis for empowerment, namely a sense of impact, competence, meaningfulness and choice. In 1992 Spreitzer (cited in Spreitzer, 1995b) conducted an independent

study and identified a similar set of dimensions. She used the term self-determination instead of choice (derived from Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory). Together, these four cognitions reflect an active rather than a passive orientation to a work role. Active orientation implies an orientation in which an individual wishes and feels able to shape his or her work role and context. The four dimensions are argued to combine additively to create an overall construct of psychological empowerment. In other words, the lack of any single dimension will deflate, though not completely eliminate the overall degree of experienced empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995a).

Menon (2001) defined empowerment in terms of how power is experienced by the employee, namely power as perceived control, power as perceived competence, and power as being energised toward achieving valued goals. Appelbaum et al. (1999) also defined empowerment in terms of perceptions and proclaimed that empowerment exists in an organisation when lower level employees feel that they are expected to exercise initiative in good faith on behalf of the mission, even if it goes outside the bounds of their normal responsibilities.

Zimmerman (1990) said that empowerment differs on different levels of analysis, for example, at the individual level, empowerment includes participatory behaviour, motivations to exert control, and feelings of efficacy and control, whereas organisational empowerment includes shared leadership, opportunities to develop skills, expansion and effective community influence. Psychological empowerment refers to empowerment at the individual level. Zimmerman (1995) further depicted psychological empowerment as a construct that integrates perceptions of personal control, a proactive approach to life and a critical understanding of the socio-political environment. It, therefore, includes beliefs that goals can be achieved, awareness about resources and factors that hinder or enhance one's efforts to achieve those goals, and efforts to fulfil the goals.

From the above it is clear that empowerment as a verb is often defined in terms of certain actions that form part and parcel of the management of people in the

workplace in order to achieve the goals and objectives of the organisation. These actions have mostly to do with giving power in the form of autonomy, authority, responsibility and accountability, as well as development of competencies. Other actions are motivation, sharing of information, involvement and participation and access to resources, while a rational-emotive or cognitive aspect is also mentioned: enhancement of feelings and beliefs of efficacy, control and meaning or to give a sense of confidence.

2.3 THEORIES AND MODELS

Several researchers studied the concepts of empowerment and their interrelationships and subsequently formulated theories and proposed models. It is clear that many of the separate conceptions of psychological empowerment are based on cognitions and perceptions. The models that researchers proposed as precepts to explain the process and essence of psychological empowerment are reviewed.

2.3.1 Social cognitive theory

The social cognitive theory (SCT) comprises three reciprocal influences, namely behaviour, cognitions and the environment (Bandura, 1977; Gist & Mitchell, 1992). For example, Wood and Bandura (1989) stated that it is the beliefs in one's capabilities that provide the motivation to utilise cognitive resources and to take the necessary action to meet environmental demands. Billek-Sawbney and Reicherter (2004) described social cognitive theory as a triangle with each corner representing a factor: behaviour, cognition and personal factors, and the environment. Behaviour can influence cognition and the environment; personal and cognitive factors may influence behaviour and the environment; and the environment may influence personal and cognitive factors or behaviour in a reciprocal manner.

2.3.2 Cognitions

Thomas and Velthouse (1990) developed a model with four cognitions as basis for empowerment and Spreitzer's (1992) (cited in Spreitzer, 1995b) findings supported it. Quinn and Spreitzer (1997) elaborated on these findings. Their model describes these four dimensions or cognitions as fundamental beliefs and personal orientations that are characteristic of most empowered people:

- Empowered people have a sense of self-determination, which means that they have a sense of choice in embarking on and regulating their actions, they have a sense of autonomy over the initiation and progression of work activities and processes such as making decisions about work methods, pace and effort, and they are not micro-managed.
- Empowered people have a sense of meaning. They feel that their work is important to them and they care about what they are doing. It involves a fit between the requirements of one's work role and one's beliefs, values and behaviours.
- Empowered people have a sense of competence or self-efficacy specific to their work and they have confidence about their ability to perform work activities well and with skill.
- Finally, empowered people have a sense of impact. They believe they have influence on their work unit and that they can influence strategic, administrative or operating outcomes at work and that others listen to their ideas.

The four dimensions combine into an overall construct of psychological empowerment. The dimensions reflect an active rather than passive orientation to one's work role. Empowered individuals do not see their work situation as a given, but rather something that they are able to shape by their actions. These dimensions are not specific management practices, but rather are characteristics that reflect the personal experiences or beliefs that employees have about their

role in the organisation (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997; Spreitzer, De Janasz & Quinn, 1999).

2.3.3 Assumptive beliefs

Renshon (1979) proposed a general model that states that the need for personal control gives rise, as the organism develops, to a series of assumptive beliefs about the nature and operation of the world. These assumptive frameworks arise out of the relative balance between need activation and need-satisfaction experiences. These assumptive beliefs include: beliefs about the nature of the world, whether friendly or hostile; beliefs about the self, whether valuable or not; beliefs about the nature and degree of personal control; beliefs about others, whether and to what extent they can be trusted; and beliefs about location of the self in time and space. He called these basic beliefs assumptive, because in his estimation they do form the epistemological foundation for the numerous belief and attitude systems that characterise positive and negative emotional incidents and evaluative elements attached to them. Since they operate at deep levels of psychic organisation and arise out of early and intense emotional experiences, they would be expected to be highly resistant but not unreceptive to change.

Early preverbal experiences give rise to both the need for personal control and some sense of the degree to which it can be exercised. According to the laws of social learning, the development of beliefs in personal control follow from the accumulation of thousands of micro-experiences. The development and dynamics of these beliefs appear to fluctuate in response to the continuity or discontinuity of life experiences. That is to the extent that later experiences reinforce early experiences, stability of the basic belief structure could be expected; and to the extent that experiences were not reinforced, change would be expected.

2.3.4 The experience of power

Menon (2001) proposed that how power is experienced by the employee is at the root of empowerment. After reviewing of the major approaches to the experience of power in conjunction with the various streams of empowerment research, Menon concluded that, at an individual level, the three main dimensions of the experience of power underlying the empowerment process are: power as perceived control; power as perceived competence; and power as being energised toward achieving valued goals (Menon, 2001).

- Perceived control

A sense of perceived control is vital for feelings of power and, therefore, it must be one of the basic psychological states that constitute the experience of empowerment and the underlying psychological mechanism is the feeling of perceived control experienced by employees. Empowering strategies such as delegation, increased participation, and providing information and resources can lead to a sense of perceived control. Empowered employees feel confident and in control of their environments (Menon, 2001).

- Perceived competence

People tend to avoid situations that they believe would exceed their coping skills, while they get involved in activities that they believe to be within their power to handle. It follows that a sense of competence is essential for psychological enabling (Menon, 2001).

- Goal internalisation

According to Menon's (2001) conclusions, the word, power, can also be used to represent energy and strength. At a psychological level, an important energising element is a goal, particularly a valued cause or meaningful project. If employees are to be directed in the organisational cause, then they need to internalise the goals of the organisation. Menon relied on theories of transformational leadership when he suggested that it is the task of

organisational leadership practices such as visionary and inspirational leadership to transform the beliefs and attitudes of employees in line with the organisation's mission and objectives. Such transformational leadership empowers subordinates to take part or be involved in the process of reforming the organisation. The concept of transformational leadership asserts that leaders empower subordinates by emphasising a higher purpose or worthy cause. According to the leadership literature cited by Menon, critical dimensions of empowerment include significance (the feeling of making a difference both for the organisation and in the greater context of the world), competence (development and learning on the job and increased sense of self-mastery), community (sense of family, interdependence and common purpose), and enjoyment/fun (work as a pleasing, enjoyable experience). Feelings of significance, community, and enjoyment/fun reflect the appeal of ideas and goal internalisation. Leaders formulate and articulate idealised future goals that serve to energise and hence empower subordinates to the extent that these goals are internalised.

Building on these three elements from the perspective of the state of mind of the empowered individual, Menon (2001) defined the psychologically empowered state as a cognitive state characterised by a sense of perceived control, competence and goal internalisation. This integrative approach sees empowerment as a multifaceted construct corresponding to the different dimensions of being psychologically enabled. Perceived control refers to beliefs about autonomy in the scheduling and performance of work, availability of resources, authority and decision-making latitude. Perceived competence denotes self-efficacy and confidence with regard to role demands, meaning that the individual believes that he or she can successfully meet routine task demands as well as any non-routine challenges that might arise in the course of work. The third dimension, goal internalisation, represents the enabling power of ideas such as a valued cause, mission, or a vision for the future. The individual believes and cherishes the goals of the organisation and is ready to act on its behalf (Menon, 2001)

2.3.5 Three-dimensional model of efficacy determinants

After a theoretical review of the antecedent processes and information cues involved in the formation of self-efficacy, Gist and Mitchell (1992) proposed a model of the determinants of self-efficacy that enhances understanding of both complexity and flexibility of the construct.

They distinguished between external and internal determinants. External determinants are primarily under the organisation's control, while internal determinants are primarily under personal control. The experience of competence can be influenced by external and internal information cues. Gist and Mitchell (1992) proposed that two other dimensions should be considered, that is, the variability and the controllability of the causal influence.

In the low variability external determinant category are factors pertaining to the attributes of the task (interdependence and resources) and the complexity of the task (difficulty and uncertainty). Low variability internal determinants refer to assessments of ability as well as stable dispositional attributes (physical condition and personality). The high variability external cues are produced by the task environment (distractions, risk). The high variability internal determinants include current performance strategies and motivation to exert effort which is influenced by goals, priorities, interest and mood.

Greater control may be perceived over highly unpredictable determinants than over determinants low in variability. With exception of spontaneous, luck orientated factors, the high variability internal determinants should correspond with the highest perceived control.

With respect to controllability when making efficacy assessments, individuals also consider whether they exercise control over the determinants. Individuals have, or perceive themselves to have little or no control or influence over external factors, primarily under the control of others in the organisation or environment.

Therefore, perceived control is likely to be higher over internal than external factors.

A second way in which control can vary is based on the time horizon between self-efficacy assessment and performance. Some factors can change immediately, such as effort, while others may be changeable but only after a long period of time, such as ability or physical condition. Therefore, perceived control may be higher over determinants that are immediately variable than over those that are relatively more stable.

Finally, some factors may be relatively uncontrollable by either the organisation or the individual. When control seems low, especially over causes that are likely to lead to poor performance, negative outcomes in the form of learned helplessness or anxiety may occur, while greater personal control leads to higher self-efficacy beliefs (Gist & Mitchell, 1992).

2.3.6 Components of psychological empowerment

Zimmerman (1995) proposed a framework for researching psychological empowerment. The framework includes observable measures relevant to psychological empowerment, which consists of three components, namely intrapersonal, interactional and behavioural components. He thought that a complete picture of psychological empowerment is not possible if information about all three components is not collected. He based his work on the social cognitive theory (SCT), which suggests three reciprocal influences, namely behaviour, cognitions and the environment (Bandura, 1977).

The intrapersonal component refers to how people think of themselves and includes domain-specific perceptions and beliefs about self, for example, self-efficacy in the workplace.

The interactional component refers to an awareness of behavioural options or choices available to make use of in order to achieve goals and an understanding

of the resources needed to achieve a desired goal, knowledge of how to acquire those resources and skills to mobilise the resources.

The behavioural component refers to actions taken to influence outcomes directly, specifically actions that result in having more influence and/or increase competence. This entails pro-active behaviours to improve a present adverse situation and coping with less favourable circumstances and thereby moving away from feelings of powerlessness.

2.3.7 Organisational empowerment

Kanter (cited in Kane-Urrabazo, 2006 and Patric & Laschinger, 2006) developed the Theory of Organisational Empowerment in the 1970's. The premise of the theory is that when opportunities for empowerment are provided, employee attitude improves, and in turn, the organisation will become more effective in achieving its goals. Kanter believed that there are several organisational structures that are important to the growth of employees' empowerment. It is essential that management provides employees with adequate information and resources necessary to do a job, but also an effective support system and the opportunity to learn and grow. When these elements are intact, an increased sense of autonomy and self-worth exists (Kane-Urrabazo, 2006).

According to Kanter's theory, work environments that provide access to information, resources, support and the opportunity to learn and develop are empowering, and enhances employees' power to accomplish work within an organisation. Access to these empowering structures is influenced by formal and informal power systems within the organisation. Formal power refers to job characteristics that contribute to job recognition within the organisation through various actions that are important to the organisation's goals. Informal power refers to the development of effective relationships with peers, superiors and subordinates within the organisation. When employees have access to formal and informal power, they have greater access to information, support and resources required to do their jobs, as well as opportunities to learn and grow.

Access to information means being informed of the organisation's overall goals and values and actively participating in the organisation's decision-making processes. Support refers to problem-solving advice and feedback from colleagues and senior management. Access to resources refers to equipment and supplies in addition to human resources to assist in achieving work objectives. Opportunity refers to professional growth and development opportunities to build on the knowledge and skills required for the job. According to Kanter's theory, when situations are structured so that employees feel empowered, the organisation benefits in terms of improved employee attitudes and increased organisational effectiveness (Patric & Laschinger, 2006).

2.3.8 Conclusion

Perceptions and beliefs form part of Thomas and Velthouse's (1990), Quinn and Spreitzer's (1997), Renshon's (1979), Menon's (2001) and Zimmerman's (1995) models. Perceived competence and perceived control are underlying themes of a majority of empowerment research. For example, Menon (2001) refers to Conger and Kanungo's empowerment strategy in which enhancing self-efficacy beliefs form the cornerstone of empowerment. Thomas and Velthouse's (1990), Spreitzer's (1995a) and Menon's (2001) models reflect the importance of perceived control and perceived competence for psychological empowerment. These theories reflect the motivational construct, which comprises individual cognitions and perceptions and constitutes feelings about capabilities that motivate people to act and take control (Koberg, Senjem & Goodman, 1999).

There is some agreement among these models and theories in the sense that they profess that empowering strategies can lead to a sense of empowerment. The view that empowerment is a process in which there are antecedents that shape empowerment cognitions and, in turn, these cognitions result in certain consequences and behaviours to the benefit of the organisation can also be pointed out. While Gist and Mitchell's (1992) model only depicts the complexity of the determinants of self-efficacy beliefs, Kanter's theory (cited in Kane-Urrabazo, 2006; Patric & Laschinger, 2006) suggested processes that include

determining factors as well as results, which suggests a relational construct. From these models it can be concluded that empowered employees feel confident about their abilities and feel in control of their environments.

Although Gist and Mitchell (1992) only refer to one of the concepts of psychological empowerment in their three-dimensional model of efficacy determinants, namely self-efficacy, it becomes apparent that a study of psychological empowerment is both complex and flexible. According to their model, both external and internal determinants, as well as variability and the controllability of the causal influence have to be considered. Zimmerman suggested interrelationships between observable phenomena, which may change from place to place and time to time. Spreitzer (1995a) suggested that both personality characteristics and management practices predict empowerment and also studied the effects of empowerment. Kanter's theory was referred to as postulating that when opportunities for empowerment are provided and situations are structured in a way that employees feel empowered, it is beneficial in terms of employee attitude and, in turn, organisational effectiveness (Kane-Urrabazo, 2006; Patric & Laschinger, 2006). These theories endorse the systemic paradigm and a mixed method sequential design, in which both quantitative and qualitative methods are used, do justice to the complexity and flexibility of the concept, psychological empowerment.

Considering all the possible influences, it is important not to get side tracked, but stay with the proposed research questions and aims of the research. In order to answer the research question, *To what extent are South Africans psychologically empowered?* the literature was scrutinised for constructs that describe psychological empowerment. For the quantitative phase of the study, the theories and models proposed by Thomas and Velthouse (1990) and Spreitzer (1995a) are relevant. The model developed by Quinn and Spreitzer (1997) with four cognitions as basis for empowerment was used. For the purpose of the quantitative phase of the research, empowerment is defined as a process of enhancing the individual's sense of impact, competence, meaningfulness and self-determination (Bandura, 1977; Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Spreitzer, 1995b).

The social cognitive theory (SCT) that comprises three reciprocal influences, namely behaviour, cognitions and the environment (Bandura, 1977; Gist & Mitchell, 1992) were also considered by Wood and Bandura (1989), Billek-Sawbney and Reicherter (2004). This theory, as well as the theories of Gist and Mitchell (1992), Zimmerman (1995) and Kanter's Theory of Organisational Empowerment (cited in Kane-Urrabazo, 2006; Patric & Laschinger, 2006) are relevant to the questions, *What management practices contribute to psychological empowerment?* and *What factors are perceived to have an effect on empowerment?* The first question was explored in the quantitative phase and the in the qualitative phase all the influences and possible factors were explored.

The question, *How do South Africans experience empowerment?* was explored in the qualitative phase with the theoretical framework in mind that psychological empowerment is viewed from a cognitive perspective. Zimmerman's (1995) framework for researching psychological empowerment was incorporated. The framework includes three components, namely intrapersonal, interactional and behavioural components.

2.4 PERSPECTIVES ON EMPOWERMENT

The models reviewed above portray, at the individual level, cognitions and beliefs and the experience of power while at organisation level, the determinants of empowerment are highlighted. The literature depicts different positions on how empowerment is achieved at the organisational level as well as the individual level.

2.4.1 A developmental perspective

Kieffer (1984) found in his qualitative study a long-term transition from powerlessness to developed skills and insights, which constitutes a fully matured attainment of participatory competence, which constitutes empowerment at the individual level. Kieffer's study was directed at politically marginalised individuals. This conception of empowerment encompasses both cognitive and

behavioural change. Phases of development include periods of intensive engagement and reflection.

The initial phase demands that individuals alter their sense of relation to long established symbols and systems of authority. They achieve a more realistic concept of power and they reorientate themselves in relation to authority during the first phase.

In the advancement phase towards empowerment assistance of an external enabler, such as a mentor, role model or instructor is required. Supportive peer relationships and a critical understanding of social and political relationships are also important in the advancement phase. Among the roles of the external enabler is to provide concrete assistance in defining appropriate actions and to provide emotional support. The environment plays a key role in providing opportunities to collaborate in mutually supportive problem-solving. It fosters the development of potential skills by providing an environment in which risks can be taken, frustrations can be shared, fears can be dispelled and support can be reinforced.

An incorporation phase follows. Through continuous involvement, self-concept, strategic ability and critical understanding are enhanced substantially and obstacles are overcome while a sense of mastery and a sense of competence are gradually incorporated in the individual's sense of being. This phase is also characterised by expansion of technical skill, the development of more abstract capacities, the increasingly self-conscious awareness of self as a visible and effective actor in the community and continuous reflection on one's role and identity.

Those who develop competence are those who succeed in reconstructing their sense of mastery and awareness of self in relation to the socio-political world and able to participate fully in the community. In the final phase, a phase of commitment, participants continue with integrating new personal knowledge and

skill into the reality and structure of their everyday lives. They search for viable and personally meaningful ways of applying their new abilities and insights.

Kieffer (1984) identified themes that are necessary for movement through all the phases of the developmental process, such as the maintenance of the creative force of internal challenge. People must feel the confrontation to respond and become involved. In the organisational sense it could mean that people are appointed in a position and are confronted with the expectation to become involved and perform. Furthermore, the circular relationship of experience and reflection through which actions evoke new understanding provokes new and more effective actions. This generates insight, which in turn, promotes more insightful participation. Kieffer concluded that experience is at the core of empowering learning.

2.4.2 An empowerment orientation

Vogt and Murrell (1990) presented a comparison between the motivational and empowerment orientations. The motivational orientation seems to ask “What can we do to employees so they will contribute in the ways we see as most useful?” while an empowerment orientation asks, “What can we do to facilitate people’s individual and joint contributions to their own and to the organisation’s well-being?” The motivation question comes from a position of control and does not necessarily imply commitment to personal or group development. The empowerment question, on the other hand, recognises the role responsibility of leaders and managers but does not allude to control. Instead, it sets out a commitment to make both personal development and organisation development opportunities part of the process. Empowerment, based on stimulating and not controlling human energy, concentrates efforts on the power that enables each person to be the best he or she is capable of. The empowerment perspective, therefore, suggests that employees are not motivated with an agenda of getting results for the organisation only but also motivated towards achieving goals that enhance individual sense of competence that is also beneficial to the organisation. It is also implied in Kanter’s theory that when opportunities for

empowerment are provided, employee mind-set improves, which results in the organisation becoming more effective in achieving its goals (Kane-Urrabazo, 2006).

2.4.3 The management practice perspective of empowerment

From the organisational science and management practice point of view, certain key terms and concepts are apparent. If empowerment is considered as a relational construct, it becomes the process by which a leader or manager shares his or her power with subordinates. The emphasis is on sharing of authority, such as delegation, decentralisation of decision-making and participative management techniques (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). Bowen and Lawler (1992) defined empowerment in terms of four organisational ingredients that are shared with employees, namely information, rewards, knowledge and power to make decisions that influence organisational direction and performance. Giving employees power and authority to take responsibility and increase accountability is also mentioned by (Blanchard et al., 1999; Geroy et al., 1998; Hellriegel & Slocum, 1989; Klagge, 1998).

Clutterbuck and Kernaghan (1994) used the words encouraging and allowing with respect to personal responsibility for improving performance, contributing to the organisation's goals and utilising own discretion and creativity. At the same time employees feel confident about their competence to utilise it productively and in an innovative way. Blanchard et al. (1999) considered the real essence of empowerment as tapping or releasing knowledge, skills, experience and motivation. The development of competencies and skills is also mentioned by Klagge (1998) and Geroy et al. (1998), while the latter also regard autonomous decision-making as an aspect of empowerment.

The management practices perspective of empowerment focuses on certain actions by managers, such as delegation of responsibility, allowing autonomy, involvement in decision-making and in determining objectives, sharing

information, etcetera (Blanchard et al., 1999; Hellriegel & Slocum, 1989) with ownership and growth as potential benefits (Blanchard et al., 1999).

2.4.4 Relevance of perspectives

The empowerment process can be viewed from different perspectives. These perspectives set the scene for consideration of strategies for empowerment after the most significant contributing factors have been determined.

The developmental perspective implies a focus at the individual level and is relevant to strategies aimed at personal development.

The empowerment orientation recommends a manner according to which leaders and managers should approach their role and responsibility in the empowerment of subordinates. The subtle difference between stimulating instead of controlling and its effects in terms of commitment distinguishes the empowerment orientation.

Where the empowerment orientation focuses on the attitude with which managers approach the facilitation of empowerment, the management practice perspective of empowerment focuses on the behaviour and actions of the manager. Both these perspectives are relevant at the organisational level. The contribution of management practices to the development of psychological empowerment forms part of the present study and a research question was posed to this effect.

2.5 ASSUMPTIONS

Speculations and presumptions that are found in the literature that underlie the general conception of empowerment are reviewed. These assumptions can easily lead to misconceptions if they are considered as separate issues and not explained in relational terms. Therefore, different assumptions are contrasted and discussed. Assumptions that are made regarding a concept, such as

empowerment, often initiate the suppositions that lead to hypotheses, which in turn is the means that transforms guesswork into theories and models.

Assumptions about the political and economic goals for empowerment, with the danger that the benefits for the organisation may be over shadowed, were a motivation for conducting the present study.

2.5.1 Political/social meaning versus human and organisational development

Empowerment as an organisational development strategy can easily be confused with the political/social meaning of empowerment. Empowerment as a means of enhancing human potential and to develop competence should be the main focus. According to Kinlaw (1995), the political and social version of empowerment views empowerment as something that exists in limited fixed quantities; one group can gain power only as another group loses power. This also leads to the perception that power is something that must be given up or given away, as though it is a possession that is only meant for a privileged few. A more healthy approach is that the relative power of everyone should be increased and new power created for the benefit of the organisation. In his opinion, power is something that can be grown, extended and enlarged for the whole organisation.

In an interview, Black Management Forum Managing Director, Jerry Vilakazi (2004) said that Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) should be defined as empowering the majority, as opposed to replacing some white capitalists with a few black ones. Much of the emphasis has been placed on ownership in the drive for BEE, although Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) includes a human resource development category. According to Ndlovu (2004), chairman of Nedcor, ownership is critical, but it is in the understanding that when you own something from a position of knowledge, you are better off than owning something where you have no skill and appreciation of that which you own.

2.5.2 Delegation versus enabling

Those who see empowerment as synonymous with delegation view empowerment as a one-way transaction in which a more superior person permits a less powerful or inferior person to do something or some fixed amounts of power is given or shared by the more powerful with the less powerful. The typical transaction involves a manager giving a subordinate a job to complete with various degrees of freedom and responsibility. This implies that the person who has more autonomy in decision-making should be more empowered than the person who is given clear instructions according to which a task should be executed. Power that can be given and taken away is a conditional form of power that puts people in the position of operating with someone else's permission. This inhibits the development of peoples' full potential and the development of new levels of personal competence (Clutterbuck & Kernaghan, 1994; Hogg, 1993; Kinlaw, 1995; Vogt & Murrell, 1990.)

Conger and Kanungo's (1988) study of both management and psychological literature led them to the conclusion that most management researchers preferred to use empowerment in relational terms; in the sense of delegation rather than in the sense of enabling. According to Clutterbuck and Kernaghan (1994), responsibility alone is not empowerment. People, who do not have the skills and competencies and authority, should not be given responsibility to take control over their work. Development of relevant skills and competencies should, therefore, form part of the total package.

2.5.3 Empowering acts versus psychological state

Empowerment researchers from the sociological tradition focus on the granting, transfer or sharing of power, that is, the act of empowering, such as the delegating discussed above. In contrast, researchers from the psychological tradition focus on the cognitions of the individual being empowered, that is, the internal process or psychological state of the individual. In addition, when empowerment is considered an act, the emphasis is on the employer or others doing the empowering. On the other hand, when it is considered a process or

state, the emphasis is on the employee or the person(s) being empowered (Menon, 2001).

Empowering acts lead to changes in employee perceptions about the workplace. Empowerment as a process describes these changes, the contributing factors, and the mechanism by which cognitions are affected. Empowerment as a state is a cross-sectional measure of certain employee cognitions at a given point in time. For the sake of clarity, researchers on empowerment should explicitly identify how they wish to define empowerment and what perspective they are adopting (Menon, 2001).

Menon (2001) argued that the true nature of empowerment can be better understood by integrating these various streams of research from the perspective of the individual employee and by focusing on the effects of various empowering practices on the psychological state of the individual employee. There are several reasons for this preference. First, the expected benefits of empowerment will be realised only if the employees actually experience empowerment psychologically. An organisation might direct its managers to empower employees by including subordinates in the decision-making process. Yet, whether an individual employee feels empowered or not depends on a host of factors including the actual behaviour of the manager, the presence of other environmental conditions, for example, organisational structure, and individual difference variables such as locus of control. On the contrary, an individual can feel empowered even in the absence of formal empowerment initiatives. Secondly, given the diverse nature of actions that can be construed as 'empowerment' from a research standpoint it is more efficient to focus on the psychological state of the employee. Empowerment initiatives can include management practices, such as delegation of authority and decision-making, participation, sharing of information and employee development. All of these actions are expected to empower employees, resulting in enhanced organisational performance. The common denominator in the above context is the intended effect of these various actions on the individual employee. Therefore, to understand the empowerment process, it is more effectual to study empowerment from the perspective of the individual employee. Lastly, defining

empowerment as a cognitive state lends itself to the development of measures of individual psychological empowerment, which in turn permit systematic research involving statistical techniques.

The present research investigated the psychological state of employees and the effect of management practices on this psychological state was tested. Because both quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews were utilised to study empowerment from the perspective of the individual employee, not only the effect of management practices, but also other possible factors were explored in this research.

2.5.4 Control versus trust

Another misconception about empowerment occurs when managers fear that they will lose control or fail to address the issue of control. When empowerment is introduced without adapting assumptions about the need to control, emphasis will be placed on restrictions and control mechanisms and empowerment will be curbed along the lines of established policies and procedures. The mindset of not allowing too much autonomy or not delegating responsibilities to subordinates before they are ready will remain. The subordinate gets the blame for not being able and chances are missed to develop subordinates to the level of maturity that is required (Kinlaw, 1995).

Quinn and Spreitzer (1997) found different implicit assumptions and perspectives in a Fortune 50 manufacturing company. About half of the executives saw empowerment as a top-down process of delegation and accountability. They named this a mechanistic approach. The other half of the executives saw empowerment as about risk taking, growth, and change and actions with a sense of ownership in the business. For them it means trusting people and tolerating their imperfections. This they labelled as an organic approach. In essence these are assumptions about trust and control. Vogt and Murrell (1990) recognised the role responsibility of leaders and managers but stated that the empowerment orientation does not mean that control is a feature inherent in it.

The management practices, autonomy and trust, were included in the quantitative survey as management practices and their relationship with psychological empowerment was established. Control and trust also constitute aspects inherent in an organisational climate and are addressed when advocating strategies.

2.5.5 Empowered versus self-empowerment

A different assumption is that empowerment is not something that management does to employees, as discussed in paragraph 2.5.3, empowering acts, but something that can be claimed by individuals for themselves as they become more competent and confident in their abilities. It is a mind-set that employees have about their role in the organisation. While management can create a context that is more empowering, employees must choose to be empowered. They must experience it in themselves in terms of making a meaningful contribution and having influence; they must see themselves as having freedom and discretion; they must feel personally connected to the organisation, confident about their abilities, and capable of having an impact on the system in which they function. Organisations should concentrate on how to create empowerment by other means than visible gestures, such as giving employees positions and authority (Kinlaw, 1995; Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997). Thomas and Velthouse (1990) believed that self-empowerment by means of adapted styles of attributing, evaluating and envisioning environmental events could enhance psychological empowerment. Vogt and Murrell (1990) defined empowerment as both self-initiated and initiated by others. It is an interactive process based on a synergistic assumption about power, but it must also be allowed. According to Block (1991), empowerment is a state of mind as well as a result of position, politics and practices. To bring about this state of mind and to feel empowered entails being willing to accept responsibility for one's situation, to have an fundamental purpose, to have a goal or vision of something worthwhile to accomplish and commitment to achieving that purpose.

Although the supposition for the quantitative phase of this research was that management practices contribute to psychological empowerment, in the qualitative phase of the study, an open attitude was maintained, seeking what emerges inductively. By enquiring about perceptions of empowerment, these assumptions, own responsibility versus the organisation's responsibility were likely to surface in the interviews, which alluded to the importance of the developmental perspective and personal development as a strategy.

2.5.6 Generative versus distributive

The assumption that power has to be relinquished by some in order for others to gain power or that no power can be created or used without losing power is a myth according to Vogt and Murrell (1990). This belief, however, may still subsist in the minds of some South Africans in the light of politically induced empowerment. An empowerment culture will need to be inculcated for people to believe that more can be produced in association with each other than what individuals can produce on their own. The 'power struggle' can be empowering only as long as the end result is social growth and organisational, not just individual, gain. Although said in the American context with a primarily individualistic culture, it makes sense to apply it to the South African context: "... the notion of empowerment can serve to re-energise our collective spirit and focus our attention on outperforming our global competitors while looking for better ways to live together" (Vogt & Murrell, 1990, p. 10).

Respondents' tendencies towards either self-centeredness or generating power for others were not intentionally explored in the qualitative phase of this study, but the aim was to see what characteristics emerge.

2.5.7 Dependency versus autonomy

Autonomy is the attitude that one's actions are one's own choices, while dependency is produced when independent decision-making is not encouraged. In a bureaucratic organisation direction is given from above. Top management is

expected to give vision and direction to the organisation. As organisations get larger, the need for coordination and control and consistency increases and the unintended consequence is the creation of dependence. Individuals have a choice and they differ in terms of needs. Some employees have a need for autonomy and independence, while others are less eager to take up the responsibility of independent decision-making and prefer that others do it for them. They have a need for dependence. If employees want to feel a sense of ownership they must confront their own wish for dependency and safety and move in the direction of autonomy (Block, 1991; McClelland, 1975; Schaffer, 1953). This could have an effect on some employees' sense of self-determination, because it would imply that those who have a need for dependence would not have a strong intrinsic need for self-determination as suggested by Deci and Ryan (1985) and accepted by Conger and Kanungo (1988), Thomas and Velthouse (1990) and Spreitzer (1995a). However, self-determination theory distinguishes autonomy from independence and even suggests that one can be autonomously dependent (Ryan & Deci, 2006). Studies revealed that people are more prone to depend upon others who support their autonomy (Ryan, La Guardia, Solky-Butzel, Chirkov & Kim, 2005).

The significance of this could only be found if it surfaced in the qualitative interviews as needs as a moderating factor was not part of this study. A need for dependence might, however, be a characteristic of those who expect from the organisation to provide them with opportunities and provide all the means for empowerment, while those who value autonomy may be pro-active in finding and utilising opportunities for development. The differences in attitudes between those low in psychological empowerment and those high in psychological empowerment were explored.

2.5.8 Conclusion

In this study a research question was posed about what the general perceptions of empowerment are. It was determined whether South Africans see empowerment as political or as human and organisational development. Some

initial perceptions are provided, but further light is shed when the findings of the qualitative research are discussed. The answer to the question about the general perceptions of empowerment in South Africa may clarify some of the misconceptions and assumptions that were discussed.

The rational conclusion should be that development or enabling should precede delegation. In this research the relative contribution to psychological empowerment of each of the concepts, delegation and development had been established empirically.

In the qualitative phase of this study, general perceptions of empowerment were investigated and individuals' perceptions are revealed in later chapters. The assumptions and their relevance, as well as importance for consideration in formulating strategies, were expected to be revealed in the perceptions of individuals during interviews. When integrating the findings of both quantitative and qualitative surveys, suggestions are made that will contribute to empowerment that will benefit individuals, organisations as well as the country.

2.6 CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

In chapter one, the influence of contextual factors was recognised (Adler, 1928) and the effects of various empowering practices on the psychological state of the individual employee (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Menon, 2001) are dealt with in a research question, *What management practices contribute to psychological empowerment?*

A contextual factor survey is included in the quantitative phase of the study in order to determine whether there is a relationship between contextual factors and psychological empowerment. For this reason and to achieve the aim, to formulate recommendations, it is now necessary to contemplate references in the literature to management practices that are conducive to empowerment and strategies for empowerment.

Leadership and management practices were reported as methods to empower. Behaviours associated with leadership, such as inspiring, rewarding, directing and even controlling, modelling, confidence-building and support are aspects of leadership and management that were considered important for empowerment (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Klagge, 1998; Murrell, 1985). Konczak, Stelly, Penney and Trusty (2000) found moderate to large correlations between leader behaviours and psychological empowerment. Kanter (1993) suggested that individual power, such as in leaders, tends to render everyone else powerless and, therefore, leaders should increase the capacity for effectiveness in followers.

Leadership, leader behaviours and management practices have been extensively researched and reported on in the organisational science literature and are, therefore, considered as the most important contextual factor related to empowerment in organisations. The following practices were found in the literature:

2.6.1 Autonomy

The term, autonomy, literally refers to regulation by the self. According to Ryan and Deci (2006), within self-determination theory, autonomy retains its primary meaning of self-governance. Its opposite, heteronomy, refers to regulation from outside the self by forces experienced as external contingencies, such as reward and punishment. Autonomy is, therefore, closely associated with self-determination. A core precept of self-determination theory is that autonomy is a fundamental and a basic psychological need. In an organisational setting autonomy is the extent to which employees are allowed to plan and schedule their work (Joyce & Slocum, 1982).

While lack of appropriate authority or discretion is a factor to be diagnosed and eliminated if employees are to experience empowerment, according to Conger and Kanungo (1988), Nonaka (1988) believed that autonomy begins to be realised when individuals are given the freedom to combine thought and action at

their own discretion. Where restrictions can have a negative effect on human dignity, autonomy has positive consequences. Clutterbuck and Kernaghan (1994), Gecas (1989) and Vogt and Murrell (1990) mentioned actions that contribute to empowerment, such as allowing people to use their faculties and abilities at the maximum level, in other words, autonomy. Autonomy has the effect that it develops people's full potential and competence that enables them to use their own discretion and creativity and to feel confident enough about their competence to utilise it in productive and innovative ways. Allowing employees to make decisions regarding their work, causes them to experience ownership of the job, they feel responsible for it and find the work meaningful (Bowen & Lawler, 1992). Crozier (1964), Geroy et al. (1998), Kanter (1993) and Leana (1987) regarded autonomous decision-making as an aspect of empowerment and that it is beneficial to both employees and organisations. Menon's (2001) definition of psychological empowerment includes a sense of perceived control. Perceived control refers to, among others, a belief about autonomy in the scheduling and performance of work.

Claiming empowerment by choosing autonomy means giving up safety and security. Some will experience ambivalence. There is a part of people, some more than others, that does not want more autonomy, choice or responsibility. They feel safe in a patriarchal climate and they want to be taken care of by management. Being empowered means taking risks and taking responsibility for decisions (Block, 1991).

2.6.2 Delegation of authority

An authoritarian management style and lack of appropriate authority or discretion may render people powerless (Conger & Kanungo, 1988), while delegation of authority is a means of developing competence and confidence (Kinlaw, 1995). When individuals develop greater competence and are able to apply this competence confidently to make a meaningful contribution or exert responsible influence, power has been created. Empowerment should mean that each person is expected to utilise opportunities to exert his or her own competent

influence to the best advantage of a bigger group. Delegation, accountability for outcomes and encouragement of self-directed decision-making go hand in hand with leader behaviours that contribute to psychological empowerment (Konczak et al., 2000). Delegation is also considered as a specific outcome by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) in the development of the competency to empower in managers.

Argyris (1987) found that non-directive leadership permitted employees to feel more 'self-responsible,' while Clutterbuck and Kernaghan (1994) mentioned encouraging and allowing individuals to take personal responsibility. People should not feel that they are operating with someone else's permission as it inhibits the development of peoples' full potential, competence and confidence about their competence. Empowerment requires employees to change their behaviours through taking responsibility for their actions, committing themselves to seeing that their organisation is effective and increasing and developing their skills (Lawler, 1992). Menon's (2001) dimension, sense of perceived control, also refers to beliefs about authority and decision-making latitude.

There seems to be close links between delegation of authority, autonomy and involvement. Autonomy may not be possible without proper delegation and delegation was seen by Leana (1987) as a more complete form of involvement than practicing participative management.

2.6.3 Motivation to achieve

Blanchard et al. (1999) iterated motivation of every person in the company as one of the aspects of empowerment. There are, however, different viewpoints on how motivation is achieved.

Conger and Kanungo (1988) and Wood and Bandura (1989) advocated a cognitive approach to motivation. Conger and Kanungo (1988) said that any managerial practice or organisational strategy that strengthens the self-determination need or self-efficacy belief of employees will make them feel more

powerful. Empowerment means enabling and enabling implies motivating through enhancing personal efficacy. It implies creating conditions for heightening motivation for task accomplishment through the development of a strong sense of personal efficacy by providing efficacy information. In the management of organisations, Wood and Bandura (1989) saw the cultivation of people's beliefs in their capabilities as important encouragement for them to use their talents effectively. People with the same capabilities may perform at different levels, depending on whether their self-beliefs of efficacy enhance or weaken their motivation and efforts.

Social persuasion as motivational approach implies that if people receive realistic encouragements, they will be more likely to exert greater effort and to become successful than if they are troubled by self-doubts. Successful motivators and efficacy builders do more than convey positive appraisals. In addition to raising people's beliefs in their capabilities, they assign tasks to them in ways that bring success and avoid placing them prematurely in situations in which they are likely to fail (Wood & Bandura, 1989). Verbal persuasion may lack specific information about the requirements to perform a task at a certain level and is more empowering if it includes feedback or instruction about abilities (Gist & Mitchell, 1992).

It is necessary to distinguish between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation implies that management does something to employees so they will contribute in the ways that the organisation expect of them, while intrinsic motivation, which is an empowerment orientation, see management's duty as facilitating people's individual and joint contributions to benefit themselves and the organisation (Vogt & Murrell, 1990). The latter recognises the role responsibility of leaders and managers, while Harter (1978) described the motivation to achieve as the individual's desire to produce an effect on the environment (make an impact), together with the goal of dealing effectively with the environment, which would then result in feelings of efficacy. Therefore, according to Harter, success leads to intrinsic motivation – a feeling of efficacy, which is produced by the successful task accomplishment itself. According to

Appelbaum et al. (1999), the manager's role is to realise that in an empowering environment, employees play a much more active role as opposed to a passive role and help to create a work environment where employees take action for intrinsic reasons more than extrinsic reasons. Employees are empowered when they are intrinsically motivated and have internal justification for taking action. Foulkes (1969) suggested that employers increase employees' motivation by providing opportunities for achievement and recognition, more responsibilities, for advancement to better jobs, and for growth in the ability to do things or to learn. When tasks are assigned that challenge employees, they will develop their own drives toward completing these tasks.

The role of goals as powerful motivators of performance is apparent from the literature. Goals provide the motivation to raise and sustain the level of effort needed to reach them, although people must also believe in their capabilities to exercise control over events to accomplish desired goals. Success in attaining challenging sub-goals increases people's belief in their capabilities. Goals provide a sense of purpose and direction, while unrealistic goals and lack of meaningful goals/tasks can be demotivating (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Gist & Mitchell, 1992; Lawler, 1992; Wood & Bandura, 1989).

To conclude, management does have a responsibility with respect to motivation. Leaders and management must motivate by giving verbal feedback and encouragement that will enhance people's belief in their competence. Managers must also set challenging goals, but individuals will only achieve goals if they believe they are able to do so.

2.6.4 Communication and information sharing

Communication may be the process most vital to the success of an organisation in general and for empowerment in particular. It is through communication that employees learn what goals they are to strive for, what is expected of them, find out how to accomplish these goals and get feedback on the achievement of goals. Effective communication ought to benefit employees and the organisation

and is considered to be a key success factor (Klagge, 1998; Orpen, 1997; Zall, Schroeck, Letendre & Douglas, 2001). Communication and information sharing are also leader behaviours that contribute to empowerment as identified by Konczak et al. (2000), Lin (1998) and Mok and Au-Yeung (2002).

According to Blanchard et al. (1999), the first key to empowerment is information sharing. Sharing power must be preceded by, or done in concert with sharing knowledge and information. Employees must have information to be able to direct and manage themselves. People without information cannot possibly act with responsibility and they cannot be expected to take the risk of being accountable in making important decisions. Particularly, they need information to clarify the work group's relationship to the organisational vision, purpose and values. Workers, supervisors and managers from top to bottom of the organisation need to understand the real objectives and functions of the business. According to Nonaka (1988), for employees to act in ways that support organisational effectiveness, they must understand the organisation's mission, purpose and values. They must understand what constitutes organisational performance and what they can do to contribute to the mission and influence performance. Innovation and creativity are promoted when top management's vision is taken into account, while middle management creates and implements concrete concepts in order to bridge the gap between the vision and present reality.

Equally critical is information about how the organisation is performing and financial information, for example, the budget, sales forecasts, cost data, profit and loss data. Without it, employees cannot get the feedback they need to improve and experience a sense of success. This is the type of information that is needed to help experiencing feelings of being competent (Blanchard et al., 1999; Block, 1991; Bowen & Lawler, 1992; Konczak et al., 2000; Lawler, 1992). Managers need to develop information systems that allow them to disseminate valid data regularly and effectively about the organisation and the work unit's past performance and future plans, business results and information about critical events in the organisation. Without an ongoing sense of how they are

doing and what their strategic direction is, it is hard for employees to identify with and contribute to the success of the business (Lawler, 1992). Where there is limited contact with senior management, dissemination of information does not happen and according to Conger and Kanungo (1988), lack of valid information contributes to feelings of powerlessness.

However, quality of information is more important than quantity. The authors Blanchard et al. (1999) and Nonaka (1988) stressed the creation of meaningful information through personal interaction. This is not just valid in terms of top down communication. Each manager must be sure that the employees in his or her work area are heard by people at higher levels in the organisation. Managers often fail to follow up on employee suggestions. Letting subordinates know the final fate of any ideas they submit shows that the organisation took the ideas seriously and provides important feedback and encourages further upward communication (Lawler, 1992).

2.6.5 Involvement

Bowen and Lawler (1992) stated that empowerment is based on the belief that commitment is a result of employee involvement. They proposed three options for the empowerment of employees in service organisations, which consist of different levels of involvement: suggestion involvement, job involvement and high involvement. Involving people not just in accomplishing goals, but actually in setting goals to improve organisational performance is a very powerful mechanism for confirming the vital role people play in an empowered position, according to Blanchard et al. (1999). Asking for and using team member input provides opportunities for employees to show that they have valuable ideas and that they want to be responsible for organisational performance, while members receive confirmation from leaders that they value and will use their ideas, including them as partners in a process of improving performance.

Yukl (1998) sees the involvement of subordinates mainly as a responsibility of the leader. According to Lawler (1992), involvement requires work systems,

policies, procedures, practices and organisational design that allows for information, knowledge, power and rewards to be available at low levels of the organisation. It is possible to expand the amount of power that is available in an organisation by involving more individuals in decision-making. The key to moving power downward in an organisation is a manager who is willing to allow employees to influence a number of the decisions that affect their day-to-day work life.

2.6.6 Participation

Participation is a process in which influence is shared among individuals who are otherwise hierarchical unequal and it fosters a shared commitment to the objectives of an organisation. Participatory management practices result in a balance between the involvement of managers and their subordinates in decision-making or problem-solving endeavours. Many managers, leaders and a number of researchers share the belief that participation as management practice has substantial, positive effects on development of decision-making skills and performance (Clutterbuck & Kernaghan, 1994; Forehand & Gilmer, 1964; Klagge, 1998; Wagner, 1994; Yukl, 1998). Teams that are empowered through participation, make and implement decisions and are held accountable for results; they do not just recommend ideas (Blanchard et al., 1999).

Conger and Kanungo (1988) suggested that participation in programmes, meetings, and decisions that have direct impact on job performance should be considered as a necessary element in management practices. Subordinates are more likely to accept delegated tasks willingly, perform them competently and experience empowerment when they help decide what tasks are to be delegated to them and when. Furthermore, providing opportunities to decide when tasks will be completed, how accountability will be determined, when work will begin, or what methods and resources will be used in task accomplishment, increases employees' empowerment. Such participation should not be manipulative; that is, opportunities for participation should not be provided merely to convince subordinates of decisions already made. Participation should be promoted when

task requirements allow it and when acceptance and personal development can result (Whetten & Cameron, 1995).

Kanter (1993) was of the opinion that too much power on higher levels can induce feelings of powerlessness in lower levels, while Quinn and Spreitzer (1997) proposed that participation in organisational decision-making is important for people to feel empowered. They must feel they are part of a corporate culture that emphasises the value of the organisation's human assets; that employees' ideas are valued and taken seriously. Empowerment through more participation in decisions increases the entire capability for successful accomplishment.

2.6.7 Consideration, warmth and support

James and Jones (1974), as well as Joyce and Slocum (1982), mentioned warmth and support, leader support and nurturance of subordinates and the degree to which supervisors maintain warm and friendly relations as important aspects in the organisational climate, which in turn is conducive to empowerment. Murrell (1985) suggested that providing of support and encouragement is a powerful means of achieving empowerment.

Individuals are more likely to feel competent when they are not experiencing strong aversive arousal states that result from conditions, such as stress, fear, anxiety and depression, which can lower self-efficacy expectations. Empowerment techniques and strategies that provide emotional support for subordinates and that create a supportive climate can, therefore, be effective in strengthening self-efficacy beliefs (Conger & Kanungo, 1988).

Support and supportive relationships within the work environment are argued to shape experienced empowerment positively and are seen as a prerequisite for psychological empowerment, according to Barry (1994), Conger and Kanungo (1988), Corsum and Enz (1999), Kane-Urrabazo (2006), Klagge (1998), Lin (1998) and Quinn and Spreitzer (1997). Zall et al. (2001) maintained that to create a supportive work environment begins with strong leadership and

excellent management. The manager's role is to support and encourage employees to take initiative and risk and put support systems into place that allow employees the opportunity to empower themselves. Employees should be allowed more freedom to try out ideas and mistakes that occur should be regarded as part of the learning process. If this support is missing or weak, employees will worry about seeking permission before acting. They must believe that the company will support them as they learn and grow.

2.6.8 Access to resources

Murrell (1985) coined the term, providing, for the provision of resources necessary for people to get their job done and to feel and act powerfully. Lack of appropriate and/or necessary resources is one of the contextual factors identified by Conger and Kanungo (1988) that contributes to individuals' feelings of personal power in a negative way, while access to resources on lower levels, instead of under the control of managers only, helps to counter a feeling of powerlessness (Kanter, 1993). Proper tools and resources enable employees to contribute at a higher level (Vogt & Murrell, 1990). Bowen and Lawler (1992) suggested that empowered employees are confident that they have all the necessary resources at their command to provide customers with what they need. Beliefs about availability of resources give rise to a sense of perceived control, which is a dimension of being psychologically enabled according to Menon (2001).

2.6.9 Positive feedback

According to Conger and Kanungo (1988), feedback is vital for development. In order to be effective empowerment practices must directly provide information to employees about their personal efficacy. Feedback may include motivational words of encouragement, positive verbal feedback and emotional support. Low self-efficacy may be induced by negative performance appraisals as it influences efficacy perceptions. Positive feedback, therefore, could be a mechanism for enhancing efficacy perceptions.

However, Harter (1978) argued that one needs a sufficient degree of failure to get the negative feedback, which clarifies what is competent or successful behaviour. On the other hand, managers ought to be careful to protect employee self-esteem when failure occurs. In such cases feedback must be specific and based on behaviour, rather than general feedback regarding attitudes.

Martinko and Gardner (1982) suggested periodic feedback to minimise organisational induced helplessness. People do not sufficiently assess environmental cues associated with their successes and they need to be provided with success experiences and feedback based on their performance. Kanter (1993) also urged that feedback and encouragement for learning should occur regularly, such as incorporating it in a performance appraisal system in which managers and subordinates meet to review the individual's performance, suggest areas for improvement, note areas that were outstanding and record any changes in the skills level. This process can boost self-esteem and build people's sense of their own skills and competence.

2.6.10 Modelling

Modelling as a means of influence and learning from the behaviour of others and to develop people's cognitive, social and behavioural competencies are grounded in social learning theory (Brown, 1979; Wood & Bandura, 1989). The feeling of being empowered can come from the explicit experiences of observing similar others who perform successfully on the job. The observation raises observers' beliefs about their own capabilities. Skilful models build self-beliefs by conveying to observers effective strategies for managing different situations. Through the social comparison process, people partly judge their capabilities in comparison with others. A person's sense of direction and efficacy can be influenced by the outcome of another's behaviour in the sense that the experiences of others are looked at to determine the feasibility of personal goals and standards (Brown, 1979; Conger & Kanungo, 1988).

Vicarious influences have social implications, because the experiences of an important model can adversely affect large numbers of people. In case of persons who belong to economically and politically disadvantaged minority groups, witnessing failure by members of the group may have devastating effects on feelings of self-efficacy. Low perceived efficacy in turn may lead people to avoid activities and fail to exert the effort necessary to acquire essential skills. Such vicarious experiences could have all the damaging effects commonly associated with avoidance patterns of behaviour, in which one's potential efficacy is not adequately tested and, therefore, not fully developed (Brown, 1979).

Modelling as a means of setting an example for correct behaviour was mentioned by Conger and Kanungo (1988) and Lawler (1992). A supervisor's exemplary behaviour empower subordinates to believe that they can behave in a similar manner or that they can at least achieve some improvement in their performance. It is important that senior managers model the kind of behaviour that they expect to see demonstrated throughout the organisation. Modelling correct behaviour helps provide people at all levels of the organisation with an example and helps establish a climate and culture in which this behaviour is seen as acceptable and even demanded. One of the most visible things that senior managers do is hold meetings and convene groups. How these meetings are run can be an important symbol of the type of information exchange and decision-making processes that exists at the senior management level (Gist & Mitchell, 1992; Lawler, 1992). Another practical application is during job training when modelling techniques are often used to empower employees (Conger & Kanungo, 1988).

From the above it is clear that supervisors and managers have a responsibility in terms of the type of behaviour that they model. Klagge (1998) obtained the opinions of middle managers who saw one of their roles in empowering employees as modelling. Geroy et al. (1998) sees modelling as a means to provide employees with the guidance and skills necessary to become empowered as part of a strategic performance model.

2.6.11 Rewards

Conger and Kanungo (1988) identified reward systems that are non-contingent, low in incentive value and not based on competence and innovation as detrimental to individuals' beliefs in their efficiency and worth. When organisations do not provide rewards that are valued by employees and when rewards are not offered for employee competence, initiative and persistence in innovative job behaviour, employees' sense of powerlessness increase. The two most critical features of an organisation's reward system are the degree to which it is tied to performance and how it determines the worth of an individual employee (Lawler, 1992).

While some jobs offer high mobility prospects to their occupants together with chances to grow and develop, other positions have little prospect of advancement and skill and mastery do not increase. Opportunities for advancement were regarded by Kanter (1993) as an important part of empowerment.

2.6.12 Human resource training and development

For the enhancement of skills Kanter (1993) suggested that a job analysis should be executed to determine the competencies and content knowledge needed and job descriptions to start the process of creating opportunities for learning and development. Low self-efficacy may indicate that specific training is needed. Research is needed to determine the most useful methods for increasing competency-based efficacy perceptions. Geroy et al. (1998) developed a strategic performance empowerment model designed to optimise employee potential. Within the model, career path development and strategies amongst others, form one of the key variables that must be present to provide employees with the guidance and the skills necessary to become empowered employees.

Conger and Kanungo (1988), Kinlaw (1995) and Klagge (1998) endorsed meaningful education and growth of competence as conditions for

empowerment. Organisations should train and develop their line employees fully by building on their strengths prior to giving them full empowerment. Even delegation and sharing of decision-making are means of developing competence and confidence. When individuals develop greater competence and are able to apply this competence confidently to make a meaningful contribution or exert responsible influence, power has been created. Empowerment should mean that each person is expected to utilise opportunities to exert his or her own competent influence to the best advantage of a bigger group. Menon and Kotze (2005) concluded from their South African study that it is not enough to promote people to senior positions; those promoted should feel competent and worthy of their position, which is a matter greatly influenced by human resource practice with regard to selection and training and development. Skill development and training is seen as an essential leader responsibility in the empowerment process (Klagge, 1998; Konczak et al., 2000; Lin, 1998).

For employees to be empowered to participate in decision-making, be involved, and feel responsible for the results, authors suggested the development of extensive technical knowledge, problem-solving skills, an understanding of business economics, interpersonal skills, analytical skills, organising and planning skills, resource development, to work with others on a common goal, to expand one's social support network, and leadership and management skills. People who are confident about their capabilities and their efficacy are better able to deploy their cognitive resources optimally (Bowen & Lawler, 1992; Lawler, 1992; Wood & Bandura, 1989; Zimmerman, 1995). Gecas (1989) referred to several findings that education increases the sense of mastery and personal control, while Gist (1987) believed that more emphasis should be on relieving debilitating low self-efficacy instead of just on lectures and verbal persuasion, imparting relevant knowledge.

Furthermore, a strong commitment to training and development and managers who realise the value of training are needed. A mandatory training policy may be a necessary step toward building an organisation that has a culture of commitment to training and developing all employees. Unfortunately, in the

absence of such a bureaucratic policy, many managers are willing to sacrifice training in order to increase short-term productivity and profitability. The attitude that managers have toward training is important in establishing a positive organisational climate regarding employee development (Lawler, 1992).

2.6.13 Coaching, mentoring, facilitation and counselling

Barry (1994) wrote about adopting a coaching style with the aim of giving the individual employee a true sense of responsibility and control over his/her job. Similarly Kinlaw (1995), Zimmerman (1995), Klagge (1998), Geroy et al. (1998), Konczak et al. (2000) and Kane-Urrabazo (2006) promoted on-the-job coaching and mentoring as methods that may be included in training for empowerment. According to Kinlaw (1995) empowerment should include alternative ways of developing and for this purpose managers' roles should be changed to include coaching and facilitating. Jack Welch, chairman of General Electric, is reported to be of the opinion that managers must relinquish their old powers and conception of management functions and instead, take on the responsibility for counselling employees and helping them to become autonomous thinkers; in other words, empowering them (Hogg, 1993).

Murrell (1985) suggested mentoring as an empowering process, especially for minorities in organisations. Vogt and Murrell (1990) depicted empowerment as management helping employees to achieve their goals to contribute at a higher level by coaching, teaching and enabling. Kanter (1993) envisioned that managers act as counsellors, help employees decide how to improve their skills and transform an attitude of 'just a job' into a conscious career. This management behaviour will be encouraged if managers got recognition for the development of talent.

According to Kieffer (1984), in advancement towards empowerment the mentoring relationship is central. He described a mentor as one who helps evoke latent strengths, nurtures independent action and supports autonomous experimentation in unpractised skills. While providing concrete aid in helping

define appropriate actions, the mentor also provides emotional support in the maintenance of effort amidst daily frustration and conflict. The role of the mentor is further described as a facilitating relationship. The relationship is useful in order to deal more effectively with the conflict situations that individuals are confronted with in evolving toward competence. Personal stress and strain, which result from the inherent role demands of leadership and changing social roles as a result of empowerment, may be experienced. The demands of developing and maintaining effective problem-solving skills involve dealing with personal issues. Facilitation oriented to such needs will help evoke and maintain involvement while reducing the risks of burnout and frustration. The mentoring role shows most potential in this process.

2.6.14 Trust building

To empower, according to Murrell (1985), requires a lot of trust and confidence. According to Hogg (1993), companies must first focus on trust building. While the procedure of empowering employees is important, it is secondary to the philosophical and attitudinal changes upon which it is based. From top management down to supervisor level there must be a consistent, common understanding and commitment to empowerment. A culture based on trust, respect, cooperation and common goals is necessary.

If it is expected of employees to take the risk of being accountable in making important decision, they must feel they can trust management and the organisational systems. People will be concerned about what will happen if they make a bad decision but make it with good intentions and with their best effort. If people fear the consequences then they will not be willing to take the risk to make business decisions. It is safer not to act and just let someone else make those decisions – hence no empowerment occurs. Sharing information is one of the most effective and simplest ways to enhance trust. If a manager is willing to share the power that information represents, people will realise that they are included and trusted to exert their influence (Blanchard et al., 1999).

Conger and Kanungo (1988) believed that a trusting group atmosphere can be more effective in strengthening self-efficacy beliefs. While trust is the act of believing in someone and having confidence in them, trustworthiness is a result of character and competence. Trust and trustworthiness must be prevalent before empowerment can be achieved (Kane-Urrabazo, 2006).

2.6.15 Role clarity

According to classical organisation theory, every position in a formal organisational structure should have a specified set of tasks or position responsibilities. Such specification of duties or formal definition of role requirements is intended to allow management to hold subordinates accountable for specific performance and to provide guidance and direction for subordinates. If an employee does not know what he or she has the authority to decide, what he is expected to accomplish, and how he will be judged, he will hesitate to make decisions and will have to rely on a trial and error approach in meeting the expectations of his superior. Rizzo, House and Lirtzman (1970) defined a role as a set of expectations about behaviour for a position in a social structure. Expectations define behavioural requirements or limits ascribed to the role by the person filling that position or by others who relate to the role. They serve as standards for evaluating the worth or appropriateness of behaviour and they tend to condition or determine such behaviour. According to Sawyer (1992), the role ambiguity construct includes two distinct yet correlated constructs, namely the extent to which the individual's work goals and responsibilities are clearly communicated and the degree to which the individual understands the processes required to achieve those goals.

Conger and Kanungo (1988) identified lack of role clarity as a context factor leading to potential lowering of self-efficacy belief. Quinn and Spreitzer (1997) suggested clear goals, clear lines of authority, and clear task responsibilities to avoid role ambiguity that is negatively related to empowerment. While employees have autonomy, they are aware of the boundaries of their decision-making discretion. They know what they are responsible for, and what others

have responsibility for achieving. Klagge (1998) found that a focus on expectations, roles, responsibilities and capabilities is considered as some of the key success factors in empowering employees.

2.6.16 Conclusion

Management practices that are conducive to empowerment have been considered and it can be concluded that if these behaviours are actively practiced that psychological empowerment will be realised. However, it does not mean that the focus is on the act of empowering only. When studying psychological empowerment, the focus is on those acts that lead to changes in employee perceptions about the workplace. Empowerment as a process describes these contributing factors and the mechanism by which cognitions are affected. Therefore, in the present study, psychological empowerment as a state was measured to determine employee cognitions (for example, sense of meaning, sense of competence, sense of self-determination and sense of impact), while the contribution of management practices to these cognitions was also determined. It is, therefore, postulated that management practices will have a positive effect on the experience of empowerment.

Management practices should, however, not be considered in isolation. Bowen and Lawler (1992) based their organisational approach on the assumption that most employees can make good decisions if they are properly socialised, trained and informed and internally motivated individuals are capable of self-control and self-direction.

2.7 STRATEGIES FOR EMPOWERMENT

The quantitative phase of this study was only concerned with the relationship between management practices and employees' cognitions. The qualitative phase of the research explored interviewees' perceptions of what factors they perceive as having an effect on their psychological state and that necessitated an exploration of the literature that focused on more than visible gestures.

It was also assumed that empowerment is not something that management does to employees, but something that can be developed in individuals. If employees' state of mind about their role in the organisation seems to be a matter of individual choice for making a meaningful contribution and having influence, organisations should concentrate on how to create empowerment by other means than observable token actions, such as giving employees positions and authority (Kinlaw, 1995; Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997). Thomas and Velthouse (1990) believed that the way employees view their world has an effect on their state of psychological empowerment. Some authors recognised acts of empowerment as well as self-initiated empowerment (Block, 1991; Vogt & Murrell, 1990).

2.7.1 Transformation

Transformation is not a present-day occurrence. It has been taking place for many years as a result of environmental changes as well as new knowledge about initiatives to improve performance. For example, transformation took place in organisations during the 1970s from a control strategy to a commitment strategy that could also have implications for empowerment and how people feel about their jobs. In order to enhance commitment, strategies such as to inform employees about the business, to impart technical and administrative expertise, to encourage participation and to create jobs that involve greater responsibility were implemented. These strategies also promote the development of human skills and individual self-esteem, which are empowering (Walton, 1985). Therefore, much can be learnt from reports in the literature about successful transformations.

The present political, physical and economic environment has an influence on organisations. It is the reality that organisations that do not adapt to environmental changes, will experience difficulty to survive. Organisations have to go through a transformation process when the external environment demands it. In South Africa, political changes required many organisations to transform when acts regarding empowerment, affirmative action and equal employment

were enforced onto them. This resulted in assumptions about empowerment that impoverished the whole scheme of a potentially beneficial goal. There are many examples in the literature of suggested methods and processes for the improvement of empowerment.

- The nature of organisations

Organisational transformation implies that the nature of the organisation must be taken into account. Most large organisations in South Africa are associated with a bureaucracy, which is characterised by restraining standardisation. It is typically divided into departments, staffed by appointed functionaries, organised hierarchically and dependent on a central authority with no or little participation from the subordinates. It is organised according to functions and the division of responsibilities. It is further associated with routine processes and procedures. Empowerment at lower levels is not encouraged, especially when there is complete subordination of lower level employees to the directors and management of the organisation. In modern times, the success of standardisation and predictability obtained from set processes and procedures are sometimes questioned when it is now believed that innovation and better results are produced when autonomy is allowed in regard to the goals of the organisation (Crozier, 1964).

Preston (1978) distinguished between managerial organisations, voluntary non-profit organisations and government organisations. Managerial organisations have specialised functions and their effectiveness is measured in terms of meeting market demands and making a profit. According to this viewpoint, the only social responsibility of business is to increase its profits, especially given the responsibility towards shareholders.

In this study, these organisations are referred to as the private sector. The study also includes non-profit non-government organisations and local government organisations or public sector. In South Africa today, in addition to making a profit or delivering a service, it is also expected from organisations to exercise their

social responsibility by creating jobs and to empower and not just manipulate their environment to control the market, but also responsibly consider their multiple impacts on society.

- Culture and climate change

Appelbaum et al. (1999) concluded from their literature research that one of the success factors required in implementing empowerment programmes or empowerment strategies consists in the strength of an organisation's culture. Transformation, therefore, often entails changing an organisation's culture to ensure a more conducive climate for empowerment.

Where organisational culture has to do with shared assumptions, business environment and values, climate has to do with the general internal organisational environment, determined by the structure and subgroup processes such as leadership, conflict, reward, communication, control, technology, social element, as well as the physical environment. Normally it entails those attributes of a particular organisation that may be concluded from the way the organisation operates and deals with its members and its external environment. Interacting processes, employees and management practices determine climate and climate influences the behaviour of people in the organisation. Some authors emphasise the shared perceptions among a group's members about organisational conditions (Field & Abelson, 1982; Forehand & Gilmer, 1964; James & Jones, 1974; Lin, 1999; Tustin, 1993; Wilson & Wagner, 1979). According to Wilson and Wagner (1997), culture prescribes the climate. Transformation for the purpose of empowerment is, therefore, focused on changing the climate, although inculcating certain values should precede it.

Organisations must make sure they define what empowerment means to them as they start with a clear vision or mission statement. Once this initial step has been achieved, the next crucial step consists of having all members of the organisation buy into this new culture as they internalise the organisation's culture. All members must understand the rationale behind the transformation. They must

identify with the vision, mission and goals and an appropriate set of values. Walton (1985) warned against 'token' changes that never reach a critical mass. All too often management tries a succession of techniques of which the value to the organisation will deteriorate if the top management is not seen to harness the philosophy, values and practices.

It is clear that the main focus of transformation necessary for empowerment should be on changing the organisational climate. Policies, procedures, processes and management practices that affect employee perceptions and behaviours must be the target of transformation for empowerment. Examples of such changes are fostering a participative climate, providing access to information, encouraging creativity and risk taking, giving support, clarification of roles and perhaps widening of managerial span of control where appropriate (Appelbaum et al., 1999).

- Structural features related to empowerment

According to Murrell (1985), structuring is an act of creating the structural factors, which could produce empowerment. Managers and leaders can create structures in which people can become powerful and not alienated. Participation, opportunities to contribute in a creative manner and to be able to use initiative and autonomy are factors that are influenced by structure (Forehand & Gilmer, 1964). According to Walton (1985), important contributing factors to a member's self-esteem are the absence of stratification in work organisations in terms of status symbols and/or steep hierarchical structures and the existence of upward mobility as reflected, for example, by the percentage of employees at any level who could qualify for higher levels. Kanter (1993) distinguished between groups of people in large organisations: managers, professionals and technical personnel are in the middle and they are able to exercise power; at the top are the corporate executives who have control, and far below in status are the clerical and service personnel. They are essentially subordinates and their power and upward mobility in the organisation is limited. In this study, distinction was made between managers, professionals that include specialists and

technical personnel, and lower level personnel that include clerical and support staff.

Span of control describes the number of people reporting directly to any manager. Originally it was believed that one manager cannot effectively manage a large number of subordinates, but lately the move is towards flat structures with fewer layers of management and a broader span of control (Hellriegel, Jackson, Slocum, Staude, Amos, Klopper, Louw, & Oosthuizen, 2004).

James and Jones (1974) referred to the degree of structure imposed upon the position as closeness of supervision. The extent to which superiors actively direct or intervene in the activities of their subordinates has an effect on subordinates who value autonomy (Joyce & Slocum, 1982). A narrow span of control allows for close control of subordinates and is associated with centralised decision-making. Spreitzer (1996) hypothesised that individuals who work for a manager with a wide span of control will report a higher level of empowerment than those who work under a manager with a narrow span of control and found a positive relationship.

Transformation normally occurs as a planned process and an organisational development project normally forms part of it.

2.7.2 Organisational development

Organisational change and development are sometimes needed when management decides that significant changes are necessary to improve effective functioning. Where human resource training and development focus on improving skills and knowledge of individuals, organisational development represents planned attempts to improve overall group and organisational performance (Ivancevich & Matteson, 1996). Where transformation has to do with the total functioning of an organisation and can include re-engineering or restructuring, organisational development is a more people orientated approach and involves a behavioural science strategy for understanding, changing and

developing an organisation's workforce in order to improve its effectiveness (Hellriegel et al., 2004). Quinn and Spreitzer (1997) suggested that neither a purely mechanistic nor a people oriented perspective by itself ensures effective change. Both are essential to sustain employee empowerment.

An organisational development plan should be custom designed for an organisation according to the specific type of organisation in its unique environment and its vision for improvement. Therefore, there is no one plan that will guarantee the intended results for all different organisations. Some techniques and approaches found in the literature are discussed. It does not imply a total plan or a prescribed sequence of events.

2.7.2.1 Alignment with vision, mission and strategic goals

A vision outlines the ideal future that the organisation strives for and it is a source of inspiration. The mission statement describes the organisation's present core function and defines the desired level of performance. Leaders who are able to influence their organisation's destinies are able to articulate a vision of a better future. They communicate their intentions verbally to others who share their vision. It is the leader's task to create a sense of purpose and meaning in the organisation. People should feel that they are contributors of value in their work, that they have distinctive competences and resources and that they have something that is unique and valuable to contribute (Harrison, 1983). When this is achieved employees should have a sense of meaning.

Argyris (1987) used the term, unity of direction. This means that the work goal toward which the employees are striving, the path towards the goal and actions needed to achieve the goal are defined. Work goals should ego-involve the employees to ensure a psychological sense of success. A basic 'given' of a healthy personality is the aspiration for psychological success. Psychological success is achieved when each individual is able to define his or her own goals, in relation to his or her inner needs and the strength of the barriers to be overcome in order to reach these goals. Kanter (1981) suggested that vague

goals should be translated into statements of results, particularly as these can help provide recognition for effective members.

From his research Klagge (1998) concluded that there is a need for clear expectations and organisations should first set the unifying vision for empowerment at the top management level. According to Ettore (1997) and Quinn and Spreitzer (1997), employees must understand top management's vision and strategic direction for the organisation. For empowerment to be effective it must be directly aligned with strategic goals and individual accountability. Employees must have a full understanding of how their actions affect the whole operation in order to be able to act effectively. Given this understanding they will more likely feel they have the capability to act autonomously in their work rather than wait for permission and direction from top management. Education towards empowerment should involve building a common understanding of the company's vision and goals and the approach taken to achieve these (Hogg, 1993).

2.7.2.2 Focus on core values

Neal, Lichtenstein and Banner (1999) studied 18 'visionary' companies. They found that each company's success was due to a focus on core values, not solely on the bottom line. Although the core values of these organisations were based on non-economic beliefs and an empowering culture, they outperformed their comparison companies in economic terms. Like the ability to convey a vision, it is also a question of having values and acting consistently according to them. It is in the creation of value loaded meaning that leadership focuses and channels human energy and motivates them towards achieving goals while upholding the values of the organisation (Harrison, 1983).

2.7.2.3 Survey feedback

Feedback is most commonly obtained by means of questionnaires, but other methods, such as focus groups and interviews can also be utilised. Employee

surveys tap into, for instance, the perceptions employees have about their organisation's empowerment climate. Survey feedback works best as a bridge between the diagnosis of organisational problems and the implementation of additional people-orientated approaches to change (Hellriegel et al., 2004). According to Conger and Kanungo (1988), it is important to identify with a diagnosis conditions within organisations that foster a sense of powerlessness and that strategies and tactics should concentrate on removing them.

Survey feedback can also be used to monitor the effectiveness of change programmes. Together with other indicators, such as statistics on turnover, absenteeism and productivity, periodic employee attitude surveys should be used to ascertain how well a programme is being administered. No programme should be implemented without monitoring its effect, to determine if the time, effort and money are well spent or not. Measures of effectiveness not only show a programme's accomplishments and weaknesses but also help in locating the areas in which further change and improvement are needed. They point out the problems that are of concern to the employees (Foulkes, 1969).

2.7.2.4 *Behaviour change*

Should a diagnosis for instance indicate that an organisation's empowerment efforts are hampered by middle management's behaviours, intervention should focus on behaviour change. By concentrating on altering specific behavioural skills a programme for concrete behavioural improvement can be developed. Because social learning approaches emphasise change in concrete skills, practitioners should describe, in concrete terms, the desired outcomes of a change programme. Change agents must attempt to be clear about what specific capabilities will show that an intervention has achieved its goals. Vaguely defined goals make it difficult to determine whether an intervention has been successful and for individuals to have confidence in their efficacy expectations. Porras, Hargis, Patterson, Maxfield, Roberts and Bies (1982) used social learning theory based on organisational development intervention to help supervisors develop better participative problem-solving skills. Their findings

provide support for the idea that programmes inspired by social learning theory can instil skills that are functional in a wide variety of settings and interactions.

2.7.2.5 *Cognitive processes*

According to Conger and Kanungo (1988), apart from identifying and removing conditions within organisations that foster a sense of powerlessness, members should also be provided with self-efficacy information. The result is that members feel empowered and start acting accordingly. Martinko and Gardner (1982) supported the notion that attribution affects people's sense of helplessness and, therefore, directing unrealistic attributions toward more realistic sources could counter this effect.

According to Harrison (1983), the answers are not always in better management practices and job design, but rather in changing mindsets. He advocated a move away from facts and analytical thinking to vision and intuition and away from preoccupations with purpose and action to a realm of being and harmony. Studies of high-performing individuals in many fields have shown that successful people tend to visualise the results they want and to affirm to themselves that they can accomplish their goals.

Renshon (1979) argued that there is a need within each individual for considerable influence over the people, events and institutions that have a substantial impact on well-being and valued life pursuits. He called this need a need for personal control. Once acquired, this need gives rise to a series of basic assumptive beliefs about the nature of the world and its operations; among the most important of these are individual beliefs in personal control. These beliefs have implications for feelings, thoughts and actions in numerous areas of the social process but especially in those areas with direct personal impact.

Renshon (1979) mentioned that within the social sciences more attention has been paid to early experiences and that it resulted in less knowledge of later life and the contemporary forces that shape life structures and outcomes. Living

through organisational changes and adaptation to new roles are experiences that may reshape the individual's assumptive structure including his or her beliefs in personal control and is worth exploring. Spreitzer (1995a) made it explicit that empowerment is not an enduring personality trait generalisable across situations, but rather a set of cognitions shaped by a work environment. Therefore, empowerment reflects people's perceptions as it is affected daily by a work environment. This implies that in devising strategies, consideration may be given to reshaping cognitions.

Wood and Bandura (1989) said that aspects that influence the management of organisations are the development of people's cognitive, social and behavioural competencies through mastery modelling, the cultivation of people's beliefs in their capabilities so that they will use their talents effectively, and the enhancement of people's motivation through goal systems.

Wood and Bandura (1989) identified sources of self-efficacy beliefs:

Mastery experiences: To gain a resilient sense of efficacy, people must have experience in overcoming obstacles through determination and effort. Some setbacks and difficulties in human pursuits serve a useful purpose in teaching that success usually requires sustained effort. After people become assured of their capabilities through repeated successes, they can manage setbacks and failures without being adversely affected by them.

Modelling: Proficient models build self-beliefs by conveying to observers effective strategies for managing different situations. Through the social comparison process, people partly judge their capabilities in comparison with others. Seeing similar others succeed by sustained effort raises observers' beliefs about their own capabilities.

Social persuasion: If people receive realistic encouragements, they will be more likely to exert greater effort and to become successful than if they are doubting themselves.

Physiological states: When people enhance their physical status and reduce their stress levels, modifying beliefs of efficacy is improved.

Thomas and Velthouse (1990) proposed that instead of a conventional approach of changing the environmental events on which the individual bases his or her task assessments, changing the individual's styles of interpreting these events could be practiced. Interpretive interventions address how individuals construe environmental events and can be changed by making the individual aware of assumptions that are inherent in a style and by teaching individuals to consciously monitor ongoing interpretations and their consequences. According to their model, cognitive behaviour modification techniques or self-empowerment programmes are feasible solutions to help individuals identify and practice styles of attributing, evaluating and envisioning, which would enhance their task assessment and psychological empowerment.

The cognitive orientation represented by the work of Ellis (1996) emphasises the mental rather than the behavioural component of human experiences. Phenomena, such as self-esteem and psychological empowerment are seen as a result of interrelated cognitive processes. These processes are positive (rational) or negative (irrational) autonomous thinking patterns. This pathway involves increasing a person's sense of competence, for example, by correcting faulty perceptions and cognitive distortions of self and world. As such distortions could reduce the level of psychological empowerment, changing the way people think about events that affect their feelings is the focus of intervention (Mruk, 1983).

Peres, Mercante and Nasello (2005) presented a neuroscientific explanation for the way people process stressor events and the tendency to distort negative experiences. The brain does not store memories, but traces of information that are later used to create memories, which do not always express a completely factual picture of the past experience. Psychological dynamics, such as the tendency to give meaning to the experience, can affect the internal dialogue related to the stressful event, which may influence the development of positive or

negative outcomes after adverse events. Among factors that help people cope with stressful events are resilient personalities, social support and religious beliefs. The authors remarked on consistent findings regarding the benefits of beliefs about the ability to cope as reflected in such constructs as coping, self-efficacy, mastery, self-esteem, optimism and hope. How individuals actually cope with situations are subject to how they perceive their capacities to cope and control outcomes.

Peres et al. (2005) suggested that the ability to bounce back in the face of adversity may be related to the internal dialogue and self-interpretation of the event. Internal dialogue of self-pity, helplessness, being a victim of injustice and self-depreciation may enhance negative emotions related to a traumatic memory and keep fostering psychological suffering. People, who cultivate psychological dynamics with internal dialogues that accept faults, face the present and try to positively change it, set long-term goals and work with motivation. Therefore, the belief that one can learn and grow from both positive and negative life experiences and the perception of having capacities to cope and control outcomes, are crucial aspects to focus on.

A method that Peres et al. (2005) described that was used in psychotherapy to help a client change negative internal dialogue may be useful to apply in organisations to change negative thoughts of helplessness and lack of ability, once people were made aware of them. If people are asked to relate an event that they coped with effectively and overcame with positive results, they may generate new interpretations that would facilitate reconstruction of cognitions. The learning they gained from a resilient experience is used to apply to present situations by thinking more positively.

Based on their three-dimensional model of efficacy determinants, Gist and Mitchell (1992) surmised that the degree of change in self-efficacy should be influenced by the initial level of self-efficacy and the variability, locus and controllability of the determinants of self-efficacy. When self-efficacy is an inaccurately low assessment of performance capability, it may result from

incorrect assessments of task or individual influences on performance. Positive information about these determinants, for example, reassurance about task resources or abilities, emphasis on the need for concentration and effort, can lead to increases in self-efficacy.

2.7.2.6 *Personal development programmes*

Human resource training and development was addressed as management practice and is essentially a human resource management function for the purpose of the enhancement of skills needed to comply with job requirements. Functional training refers to the technical requirements of the job, while personal development refers to the sociological challenges associated with employment, for example, self-esteem, assertiveness, conflict management, to name only a few. These personal development programmes may involve both behaviour and cognitive approaches.

Kotze, Mthembu and Kashane (2005) studied the contribution of leadership behaviours, such as delegation and participation on psychological empowerment and came to the conclusion that empowerment initiatives will benefit from training that is aimed at training different racial groups on assertiveness, leadership competencies and practices. Superiors must be trained to involve their subordinates and encourage participation in decision-making. Superiors need to be trained to delegate responsibilities and authority to subordinates.

Kieffer (1984) was involved in empowering previously disadvantaged individuals and contended that they are not merely expected to acquire new practical skills; they have to reconstruct and reorientate deeply engrained personal systems of social relations. They confront these tasks in an environment which historically has enforced their political repression and which they still perceive as being discriminating. Kieffer expressed the opinion that it is unrealistic to presume that the cumulative effects of domination can be reversed in any other than a long-term frame of reference. As such, it would be insensible to think that a short course or workshop in individual empowerment can ever be developed.

Kieffer (1984) further professed that empowerment is not a commodity to be acquired, but a transforming process constructed through action. His developmental model suggests that reflective experience is the only source of growth. Individuals must learn to overcome internalised expectations of helplessness, lack of support and the frustrations of inequities in tactical resources. Kieffer's research led him to believe that there is no substitute for learning through experience. More passive forms of training and instruction may be useful in instances where specific information is required. While one cannot stimulate or teach people to be empowered, empowering learning can be actively facilitated in individuals in their own reality and their critical and constructive examination of their efforts toward changing social and political situations.

Zimmerman (1995) suggested that organisational empowerment includes processes and structures that enhance skills, such as to learn about resource development and management, to work with others on a common goal, to expand one's social support network and to develop leadership, decision-making and problem-solving skills. Empowering processes are those where people create or are given opportunities to control their own destiny and influence the decisions that affect their lives, gain greater access to and control over resources, as well as a critical understanding of the socio-political context in which they function. Processes might also include opportunities to develop and practice skills.

2.7.2.7 Management development

It is apparent that a considerable amount of management education and training is necessary when changes are implemented that affect changes in management style in an organisation in which the climate is not conducive to such changes. The education experience can give managers a way to think about problems and can help them cope better. Training sessions on management style can help the manager recognise the value of changes to his or her role and learn to deal with the problems he or she is experiencing or will experience. It should not, however, be assumed that education and training can change an organisation's

climate. If the intent of the training of first-line and middle management runs counter to the values of top management, it would be unrealistic to expect the training to accomplish much. Training should obviously start at the top, but even if this takes place, that basic climate must be conducive to the intended changes (Foulkes, 1969).

2.7.2.8 *Coaching*

Especially in the case of appointment of new managers, the kind of development needed is not only the formal, classroom type. More important perhaps are informal coaching and counselling. Experienced line managers and internal change agents should coach and counsel newly appointed managers. Informal coaching is extremely important to the success of an empowerment programme (Foulkes, 1969).

2.7.2.9 *Implementing empowerment*

Authors suggested steps by which empowerment should be implemented. Quinn and Spreitzer (1997) proposed the facilitation of the process by means of four levers. The first lever is a clear vision and challenge; second, participation in organisational decision-making; third, discipline and control by means of clear goals, clear lines of authority, and clear task responsibilities; and fourth, social support and a sense of security. Klagge (1998) summarised various prescriptions for implementing empowerment that are presented in the literature, which include doing an organisational assessment; defining an operating vision; deciding when various levels of empowerment will be targeted; employing a bottom-up approach, which accepts the employees' definition of the problems; building collaboration and trust by sharing power and by having good two-way communication; and using both general and specific training to build on employees' strengths.

The literature suggests that empowerment is beneficial to the employees and to the organisation, but takes substantial energy to implement and it may be met

with opposition. The literature also directs that empowerment be implemented over a significant period of time with clear expectations, good communication, full participation, meaningful education and appropriate consultation (Klagge, 1998).

The importance of top management support in overcoming obstacles cannot be overemphasised. Foulkes (1969) found that in the large companies if an intervention was implemented without the president's support, its chances of succeeding were slim. Top management must not only articulate their interest but also support their words with consistent actions.

2.7.3 Total quality management (TQM)

Knouse and Strutton (1996) presented a model of how to manage the performance of salespersons within a TQM-oriented organisation. The model draws on the empowerment, performance evaluation and reward and recognition processes.

Four principles are at the core of most TQM programmes: a customer orientation, employee empowerment, cross-functional team efforts and continuous improvement. Here it is important to remember that an organisation's internal customers are its employees who require certain information and resources to accomplish their job requirements successfully. Top management, therefore, authorises employees to make whatever decisions are necessary to satisfy customer needs. Empowerment also requires that skills training be set in motion throughout the organisation which equips employees with the expertise necessary to successfully execute their autonomous decisions (Knouse & Strutton, 1996).

Empowerment in TQM implies that management should delegate the authority needed to make decisions on the level where problems arise. Employees should be empowered to make immediate decisions and take prompt actions. The delegation of such power signals management's understanding that employees have the ability to solve problems and to create solutions that are satisfactory

(Knouse & Strutton, 1996). As an option to expand power Kanter (1981) suggested that problem-solving task forces and decision-making teams can expand opportunity and also increase power in that they can involve more people in discretionary problem-solving activities that give them visibility and recognition.

Performance evaluation processes should provide information on the effectiveness with which employees perform their responsibilities. It should also identify functional areas where the organisation needs to improve on their skills training processes to enhance the empowerment process. Furthermore, it is stressed that feedback is an integral part of the improvement process (Knouse & Strutton, 1996).

Reward and recognition usually go hand in hand with extrinsic rewards, but Knouse and Strutton (1996) also refer to Deming (1986) who saw the essence of motivation in TQM as pride in workmanship. He believed that employees gain intrinsic satisfaction from a job well done.

2.7.4 Conclusion

There seems to be some agreement in the literature about a general strategy for implementing change and then there are more specific suggestions for empowerment interventions on different levels. The challenge will be to find the strategy with the biggest probability of success in the sense that employees are not only empowered by putting them in a position where they are expected to participate in decision-making and have to perform with responsibility, but that they also experience a sense of confidence in their abilities and competence to exert themselves, while also having pride in their work.

It seems that any empowerment initiatives should be preceded by assessment. The organisational climate should be assessed to determine if it is conducive to empowerment; jobs should be assessed to determine what the job requirements are for the purpose of functional training; and employees should be assessed to determine what their competencies are and what training they need to be able to

fulfil the job requirements. Apart from their functional skills, employees should also be evaluated to determine their psychological state and what the most appropriate intervention is for changing cognitions if necessary. Appropriate interventions should be implemented to address any areas in need of improvement. Empowerment at the individual level implies that managers know their subordinates well enough to be able to identify their empowerment needs and to be constantly involved with them to be able to detect inaccurate attributions and to give feedback on task performance in order to enhance their sense of competence.

2.8 SUMMARY

In this chapter an overview of the relevant concepts, theories, models, perspectives and assumptions about empowerment were presented. For the purpose of the intended quantitative phase of the study, contextual factors, more precisely, management practices that were described in the literature as conducive to empowerment, were reviewed. In order to achieve the aim of formulating recommendations, a broad overview of empowerment perspectives and strategies for empowerment was done.

The literature survey was not restricted to the constructs and models according to the design of the quantitative survey, as it was kept in mind that novel perceptions and factors may emerge from the qualitative interviews and that other models may be better suited to interpret these phenomena.

It was not yet endeavoured to define constructs formally for the purpose of this research. The concepts and management practices that were included in the contextual factor survey are defined as constructs in chapter four that deals with the research method. The definitions will be based on the literature survey. Although relationships are not yet proposed, an initial assumption is that the management practices chosen for the quantitative survey have a positive effect on the experience of empowerment.

In the next chapter previous research on psychological empowerment and its antecedents are discussed and critically evaluated for its relevance. This provides a valuable opportunity for comparing the South African context with research done in other parts of the world. It also provides stimulation for formulating hypotheses and opportunities to contest or support the findings of other researchers.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE SURVEY OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH

3.1 INTRODUCTION

A literature survey was conducted in order to find previous research that might be relevant to this study and this is discussed in this chapter. The main focus in the search for relevant documented research concerned the research question, *What factors are perceived to have an effect on empowerment?* The analysis of the qualitative research interviews allowed for several different factors to emerge. For the sake of comprehensiveness, demographic variables were also considered. Research on contributing factors and antecedents was of special interest, not just to compare own research with, but it might have given further indications of possible strategies for the promotion of psychological empowerment. Influences on psychological empowerment that were found to be significant, such as organisational climate, empowerment initiatives, management practices, leader behaviours and individual characteristics are discussed as antecedents. Relatively few examples of research were found on contributing factors with psychological empowerment as end result. Most researchers studied interrelationships with psychological empowerment not just as an end, but as mediating factor or contributing factor and some discussions on these are included in order to demonstrate the eco-systemic complexity of the concept. Finally, different approaches and implications of research methodology are discussed and evaluated.

3.2 DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

Demographic variables are included in most social scientific empirical studies, not necessarily as main effect, but as moderating effect to demonstrate representativeness or as control variables. However, a small number of studies did propose specific relationships. Gender, race and age are among the individual differences, while position in the organisation, level of education,

organisation types or sectors, work experience or tenure with the organisation are differences specific in the work context that may have a significant influence on perceptions of empowerment.

3.2.1 Gender

Gecas (1989) reviewed the research literature on the development of self-efficacy and how social structure and group processes affect this development. From the review it could be concluded that males have a greater sense of self-efficacy, personal control and mastery than females. However, social development and empowerment of women may have changed earlier assumptions. Koberg et al. (1999) assumed that women may feel less empowered because they typically hold less powerful positions in organisations and hypothesised that men will feel more empowered than women. Among the hospital employees they surveyed, females held a disproportionately larger number of low level positions, while more men than women were supervisors, professionals and in management. They used Spreitzer's (1995a; 1995b) empowerment items and found that, in spite of the disparity in status, perceived empowerment did not differ significantly between men and women.

Following Menon's (2001) definition of the concept, psychological empowerment, as a cognitive state characterised by a sense of perceived control, perceived competence and goal internalisation, Menon and Kotze (2005) made the assumption that if men and women are equal in organisational terms, there should be no differences with respect to these three dimensions of psychological empowerment. Regression analysis revealed no gender differences with respect to perceived control and perceived competence. Both sexes experienced equal feelings of competence with respect to their work roles. However, women reported lower goal internalisation compared to men. This implied that men showed a stronger identification with organisational goals. In the qualitative phase of their study an opinion was expressed that women do not care about goals. The reason given for this was that because there is much emphasis on women empowerment they rely on the fact that they will get posts, but they lack

the drive to work hard to achieve goals. In another South African study by Kotze et al. (2005) in the South African National Defence Force (SANDF), it was found that the factor with the least impact on perceived control is gender.

Boudrias, Gaudreau and Laschinger (2004) tested the invariance of the psychological empowerment construct across genders. They used Spreitzer's (1995b) PEI questionnaire. Their results showed that the psychological empowerment second order construct (combined measure of the four dimensions) could be assumed invariant across male and female nurses. Although they found that Spreitzer's model fits the empowerment experiences of men better than that of women, they maintained that their results do not justify treating men and women differently when studying their cognitions associated with empowerment.

Gender differences were studied in different cultures with different results. For example, Ozaralli (2003) found no significant differences between male and female Turkish superiors with respect to their transformational leadership and empowering behaviours, while Hechanova, Alampay and Franco (2006) found that men reported greater empowerment than women in a Filipino study even when job level and performance were controlled for. Men felt more competent and reported more meaning in their work than women. The authors ascribed it to the possibility that men were given more opportunities for development and responsibilities than females. In a USA study on participation and delegation, Leana (1987) found that delegation was used more often with male subordinates, while participation was used more with female subordinates. Irrespective of culture, if men and women are being treated differently in organisations, and as long as it is an ongoing practice, the assumption that gender differences exist will remain relevant.

Gender differences were also attributed to socialisation. Ryan et al. (2005) assumed that women will be more willing to rely on social support than men because of differences in socialisation. Their study revealed that women

reported significantly higher overall emotional reliance than men, while assertion of autonomy was significantly higher for men than for women.

In a recent study, Young, Vance and Harris (2007) studied gender differences in perception of offensiveness when exposed to disempowering acts. Their assumption was based on social identity theorists' belief that the more shared prominent characteristics there are among individuals or groups, the more likely it is that identification will occur. Their results revealed that female participants reported significantly higher levels of perceived offensiveness than did male participants. There was, however, no significance found for the influence of ethnicity or interaction of gender and ethnicity. This indicated that females may be more adversely affected by negative behaviour than males, which implies that perceptions of empowerment may be more vulnerable in women than in men.

3.2.2 Race and disadvantaged groups

Gist (1987) and Gecas (1989) did reviews on self-efficacy, which is considered an important component embedded in the empowerment construct. Conger and Kanungo (1988), based on the theory of Bandura (1977), defined empowerment as a process of enhancing feelings of self-efficacy. Some of the research reviewed also contained other dimensions of the psychological empowerment construct, such as sense of personal control and self-esteem. Phenomena, such as self-esteem and psychological empowerment are seen as a result of interrelated cognitive processes (Mruk, 1983). With respect to differences in race, Gecas (1989) noted some research that found that white men have a significantly higher sense of personal control than black men, while other studies found little difference in the self-esteem of blacks and whites. The explanation given for these differences is that self-esteem is primarily dependent on one's interpersonal context, whereas self-efficacy is more responsive to social structural influences.

In the past it was generally assumed that members of disadvantaged groups have low self-esteem. However, Gist (1987) referred to a literature review that

concluded that there was no significant difference in self-esteem between members of disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged groups. Rather, it depends on the reference group that individuals use in gathering information. Although society may have discriminated against women and certain minority groups and held them in low esteem, the disadvantaged group members held a more positive view of themselves because they used their own subgroups as referents instead of broader society. Self-efficacy, on the other hand, is task specific and arises primarily from the influences of mastery, modelling and persuasion. If members of disadvantaged groups focus on their own subgroups as referents in order to sustain self-esteem, then these subgroups also could be expected to serve as powerful sources of mastery for self-efficacy. However, an individual who feels highly efficient about his or her social skills when compared to the referent subgroup, may lack self-efficacy in a broader setting, such as in a corporate organisation. When, on top of it, there is also a shortage of role models, self-doubts could become significant internal barriers (Gist, 1987). The term, reference groups, was defined by Thompson and Joseph (2005) as groups that people refer to when evaluating their own qualities, circumstances, attitudes, values and behaviours. This would suggest that race or other demographic characteristics as variables cannot always be assumed to be relevant, but that individuals have their own subjective sense of who they compare themselves with when, for instance, judging their sense of competence.

Race is still expected to have an effect on feelings of empowerment, but there have been research findings that did not support this. Koberg et al. (1999) expected non-white individuals to feel less empowered than whites and proposed it as such. Their hypothesis was not supported and there was no significant difference between whites and non-whites, regardless of organisational position. Their study was done in an American metropolitan area. Young et al. (2007) thought ethnicity to be very influential based on identity theories, but it did not emerge as a factor of influence in their study. Their investigation dealt with differences in perceived offensiveness based on ethnicity and an analysis of perceptions of, as they labelled it, African Americans and European Americans.

Menon and Kotze (2005) conducted a study to assess the state of integration in the SANDF more than a decade after integration efforts were initiated. They employed a selection of established psychological constructs as potential indicators of integration. Psychological empowerment has been recognised as an important indicator of perceived control and influence in the workplace according to Menon's (2001) dimensions of a sense of perceived control, perceived competence and goal internalisation. Goal internalisation represents the energising power that stems from a purposeful cause or an inspiring goal. The assumption was made that, for example, if blacks are fully integrated, they should not differ from other racial groups in terms of perceived control. The study indicated that blacks reported lower perceived control and competence compared to whites. This was seen as a result of fast tracking of blacks to meet the requirements of government's affirmative action goals. Blacks ended up spending less time in a rank and consequently often lacked practical exposure. Asians and coloureds were not significantly different from whites on these two indicators.

Blacks and coloureds reported higher goal internalisation than whites. It was attributed to possible discontent about perceived negation of merit and efficiency for the purpose of affirmative action. Menon and Kotzé (2005) concluded that whites seem to have some misgivings about the forced pace of affirmative action efforts, accompanied by perceptions of quality being compromised for the sake of representation. Their study included a qualitative phase with interviews from which additional information was obtained. They warned that policy makers should be alert to the possibility that the formerly advantaged could, over time, become alienated and disengaged.

The study showed that coloureds and Asians in the SANDF feel more empowered in terms of control, competence and goal internalisation than blacks and whites. The authors speculated whether that could be the result of the middle position that coloureds and Asians occupied in the apartheid era or the result of the combination of that position and the current one, which classifies them as previously disadvantaged together with blacks although they have been

less disadvantaged. It could also be a question of expectations. Blacks perhaps expected more and whites could have been expecting that their superior experience would guarantee them privileged positions (Menon & Kotze, 2005).

3.2.3 Status/ position

It is generally assumed that the status or position of an employee should have a significant relationship with feelings of empowerment and in most studies this was confirmed. Koberg et al. (1999) postulated that status in the hierarchy of a health care organisation will have a positive association with feelings of empowerment. The results revealed that feelings of empowerment increased as the individual's rank in the organisation increased, being higher among upper-level managers, than among physicians, supervisors, professionals and technicians. Whether these differences were significant was not indicated. Menon and Kotze (2005) expected that rank in a military context would be a significant predictor of perceived control and regression analysis confirmed this. Boudrias et al. (2004) analysed Spreitzer's (1995a) PEI and results revealed that the PE structure was different as a function of work status. They refer to Spreitzer's (1995a) finding that impact loaded heavily on PE with a managerial sample. They saw it as indirect evidence suggesting that the impact dimension, which assesses the respondent's perceived influence on his or her department, is sensitive to organisational position. It may be more critical for a manager than for a non-manager to perceive having some influence with his or her department to feel empowered. From these results, Boudrias et al. (2004) suggested two options that could be taken by organisational researchers to measure PE among non-managers. One could conclude that the feeling of impact is not really part of the empowerment experience and choose to remove this dimension from the PE construct or to modify Spreitzer's instrument to assess more adequately the feeling of having some influence at work among non-managers. One possibility would be to replace the referent, department, with work unit, which lower level employees may associate more readily with than department in Spreitzer's original items.

Boudrias et al. (2004) also found that specifically the competence self-assessment contributed more to the overall empowerment construct for part-time nurses than for full-time nurses. They found that full-time nurses scored higher on feelings of competence and perception of impact on Spreitzer's (1995a) PEI than part-time nurses. However, work status seemed to have a relatively small influence on the level as well as on the factor structure of psychological empowerment in their study. The analysis by Ergeneli, Ari and Metin (2007) revealed that among all the demographic variables, position was the only variable to yield a significant direct and positive effect on overall psychological empowerment. The results indicated that when managerial level increased from supervisor to manager, overall psychological empowerment also increased. The same was found for the self-determination and impact dimensions of psychological empowerment, but not for meaning and competence.

3.2.4 Level of education

In different organisations different results were found when the contribution of level of education to empowerment was examined. Gecas's (1989) review of research literature found reference to education as an aspect that increases the sense of mastery and personal control. In empirical studies Ozaralli (2003) found that university graduates expressed a greater sense of self-empowerment compared to primary school and high school graduates in different sectors and Spreitzer (1996) found that in a Fortune 50 organisation, those with more education felt more empowered.

On the other hand, Kotze et al. (2005) found that educational qualification had very little impact on perceived control in the SANDF. Koberg et al. (1999) assumed that better educated people would be more likely to experience feelings of empowerment, particularly competence, meaningfulness and impact. However, their hypothesis that education will have a positive association with feelings of empowerment was not supported. Sarmiento, Laschinger and Iwasiw (2004) found in their study among full-time college nurse educators in a nursing

college in Canada that level of education was not significantly related to empowerment.

3.2.5 Sectors

Two studies were reviewed that found differences in empowerment across different types of service sectors. Ozaralli (2003) found a significant difference between health and banking sectors in terms of empowerment. Employees in the health sector felt they were more empowered compared to employees in the banking sector. Hechanova et al. (2006) used Spreitzer's (1995a) PEI in a study among Filipino service workers. One-way analysis of covariance was conducted to determine whether there were significant differences in the mean ratings for psychological empowerment between service sectors when job level and performance were controlled for. The results confirmed that significant differences did exist between service sectors. Post-hoc pairwise comparisons revealed that psychological empowerment was highest in the banking, food and hotel sectors and lowest among airlines and call centres. The differences appeared to lie in the meaning and impact dimensions. Call centre and airline frontliners reported the lowest scores for impact on their organisations and meaningfulness of their jobs. There were no differences in terms of the level of competence and self-determination across service organisations.

Silver, Randolph and Seibert (2006) explored the experiences of two organisations, one non-profit and one for-profit, efforts to create a culture of empowerment. Both organisations made a strong start and achieved significant change that was reflected in qualitative observations, quantitative measures of empowerment and organisational performance results. The for-profit organisation managed to sustain ongoing change in the direction of greater empowerment, while the non-profit organisation lost focus and eventually dropped the change effort. The authors identified contextual factors related to the different organisations to explain the different outcomes. There were similarities in how the two organisations implemented empowerment, but there were major differences that can be ascribed to the type of organisation. There

were many factors unique to each type of organisation or sector that were also found to influence perceptions of empowerment.

3.2.6 Age

Gecas (1989) reviewed self-efficacy in the sociological and psychological literature. He focused on contemporary social psychological research and theory on self-efficacy and related concepts. He found relatively little research on variations in self-efficacy over the life course because of the difficulty of longitudinal research. Research was usually based on cross-sectional analyses of different age groups. A curvilinear pattern has typically been found with efficacy increasing through childhood and early adulthood, reaching a peak in middle age and gradually declining after age sixty. Gecas referred to the research found in four different sources. However, another source revealed no evidence of decline in personal efficacy in later life. In a large sample of adults ($N = 1212$) with an age range of 36 to 67, this source reported personal efficacy to decrease in early middle age, while it remained stable through the remainder of middle age and increased in the early sixties. No reasons were given for this tendency. It could be that by retirement people experience less demands and are more content with what they have achieved.

Ozaralli (2003) found that age correlates significantly with self-reported empowerment. When age was categorised as 20 to 30, 30 to 40 and above 40, and a one-way analysis of variance was conducted, a significant difference between 20 to 30 and above 40 age groups was found. This finding suggested that as employees age, they feel more empowered.

Ozaralli (2003), McDermott, Laschinger and Shamian (1996) and others studied age in conjunction with work experience and tenure in the organisation,

3.2.7 Experience and tenure

A logical assumption is that experience should contribute to a person's sense of empowerment. As McDermott et al. (1996) discovered significant positive correlations existed between age and years of nursing experience and job-related empowerment and between age and period of experience on their units and access to opportunity. As age increases nurses may perceive that they have more opportunities to obtain recognition and rewards, use their knowledge and skill and gain access to more challenging work. The positive correlation between age and job-related empowerment may suggest that as nurses increase in age and experience, they become more knowledgeable and adept in accessing the sources of power, resources, information, support and opportunity. Koberg et al. (1999) expected that more tenured individuals, who learned through experience, should have feelings of competence and, therefore, are likely to experience feelings of empowerment. Analysis of variance and a comparison of means using Scheffé's multiple comparison technique revealed that feelings of empowerment increased as tenure with the organisation increased. Analysis of covariance revealed a highly significant effect on empowerment. Ozaralli (2003) also found a significant correlation between organisational tenure and empowerment evaluations. Employees whose organisational tenure was seven years or more felt more empowered compared to employees whose tenure was three years or less.

These findings suggest that as employees get more experience with increased tenure, they feel more empowered.

Some studies, however, did not produce the same results. Sarmiento et al. (2004) did not find years of teaching experience and length of employment to be significantly related to empowerment in their study among full-time college nurse educators in a nursing college in Canada. Huang, Shi, Zhang and Cheung (2006) investigated whether participative leadership can produce psychological empowerment, which in turn, leads to organisational commitment in Chinese state-owned enterprises. They found that short-tenure employees were

positively affected with respect to feelings of competence, but that participation did not have a significant impact on competence for long term tenure employees. In their study, however, the organisation underwent a major transformation. They found differences in employees who joined the organisation after transformation (short-tenure) from those who were employed before the transformation (long-tenure) and, therefore, other factors could have been responsible for the difference.

3.2.8 Relevance of demographic variables

With respect to gender differences the South African studies by Kotze and Menon (2005) and Kotze et al. (2005) did not produce support for gender differences, although these studies employed Menon's (2001) model, while most other researchers used Spreitzer's (1995a) model. Most researchers did not find significant differences in empowerment perceptions between men and women apart from the fairly recent Philipino study by Hechanova et al. (2006) and the report of Gecas (1989) on older studies. The study by Ryan et al. (2005) may suggest the differences exist across genders with respect to preferences for the factors relating to empowerment.

According to Zimmerman (1995), psychological empowerment may differ across people, contexts and times. It may be possible that men generally experienced more empowerment in the 1980s and that it has changed in developed countries, but in some cultures today men are still favoured in terms of opportunities for development. Because it seems that more environmental influences are mentioned as reason for differences in perception of empowerment than actual genetic differences, that gender differences should become less important to consider. Female employees should be equally enabled to have a positive sense of empowerment.

The assumption was made that in the present South African context, because of the emphasis on the empowerment of women, that the present study would not

find a significant difference between men and women in their perceptions of empowerment.

The majority of research found differences between race groups in spite of efforts to minimise discrimination and implement affirmative action. Of special interest here is the South African study by Menon and Kotze (2005) that might prove to have some relevance because of the same socio-political environment. They attributed all differences to socio-political factors. Since environmental influences were assumed to be very relevant, it was difficult to predict how different contexts provided by different organisations would affect the perception of empowerment. The finding of Menon and Kotze's (2005) study that blacks still feel less empowered in spite of affirmative action, accentuates the essence of this research, namely that empowerment on a socio-political level does not necessarily lead to psychological empowerment of the individual.

As far as job level is concerned, some research was done with homogeneous groups on the middle level employees and Spreitzer (1995b) suggested that more low level employees should be included in future research. Menon and Kotze's (2005) finding that differences in rank were significant is not surprising for the military context, as rank is essentially a position of power and assures authority more than anything else. It is easily assumed that position in the organisation should have an influence on how people perceive their empowerment, and that more education will mean higher levels of perceived competence, but it will also depend on how the organisational culture values these variables. Gist (1987) differed from the opinion that position in the organisation has anything to do with how people perceive their efficacy, because they do not compare themselves with people outside their reference group.

Reference groups (Gist, 1987) as a variable was not foreseen for the quantitative study, but it was considered that qualitative research interviews could bring out the importance of reference groups for the experience of empowerment. The question could be asked, when lower level employees are asked about their sense of competence, do they compare their competence with their subgroup, in

other words their fellow low level workers, or do they compare themselves with managers and professionals. The logical conclusion would be that they compare themselves with people on their level and that sense of competence may not differ much if compared with the sense of competence of managers and professionals, who in turn compare themselves with people on their level. This argument provided the assumption that there would be no difference between position levels with respect to sense of competence in the present study.

Griggspall and Albrecht's (2003) results suggested that the four dimensions would be better treated as four first order factors, rather than a single higher order construct of empowerment, while Boudrias et al. (2004) found that the impact dimension is more relevant for managers than lower level employees. This may imply that differences between employees in different positions must be viewed in terms of the separate dimensions as first order dependent variables and in the present study, hypotheses concerning position levels were formulated with the dimensions as dependent variables.

Where meaning is concerned, meaningfulness was equated with a job that contains elements of planning, organising and controlling, which are usually the responsibility of managers (Foulkes, 1969). The value of the task, goal or purpose and the feeling that a vocation is important relates more to professionals (Appelbaum et al., 1999; Spreitzer, 1995b; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). The assumption was, therefore, made that managers and professionals would experience a greater sense of meaning than lower level employees.

Being free to choose how to do work as Spreitzer (1995a; 1995b) defined self-determination, is certainly more descriptive of management and professional positions and, therefore, the assumption was made that managers and professionals would perceive a greater sense of self-determination than lower level employees.

Kraimer, Seibert and Liden (1999) results indicated that self-determination is a precursor of impact, which implies that if conditions are not conducive to

experience self-determination, a sense of impact will also be low. Although the study was done in a specific domain and context with a sample of 160 nurses in a community hospital, it may not be the same in other domains. Boudrias et al. (2004) concluded that impact is not part of the experience of lower level employees. It was, therefore, expected that lower level employees would have a significantly lower sense of impact than professionals and managers.

The studies that were reviewed found a positive relationship between age and experience and perceptions of empowerment. Explanations for the tendency, such as that with experience, competencies increase and people are more exposed to resources and opportunities, seem logical and it seem fair to assume that it is unlikely that a different conclusion could be reached as long as age is a factor during a person's productive working years. Therefore, age as a factor was not investigated in the present study. The study by Huang et al. (2006) raised awareness of the possibility that historical events and socio-economic or socio-political environment must be considered when evaluating tenure with the organisation. Tenure with the organisation was not investigated in the quantitative phase of the research, but the effect of socio-economic or socio-political changes were expected to emerge in the qualitative phase of the present study.

Neither Kotze et al. (2005) in a military setting, nor Koberg et al. (1999) in a community hospital setting or Sarmiento et al. (2004) among college nurse educators found significant relationships between level of education and psychological empowerment, while Spreitzer (1996) found a positive relationship in a Fortune 50 company. A Fortune 50 company receives its status as one of the 50 most admired companies in the world by ratings on, amongst others, people management and quality management. Spreitzer's (1996) research targeted middle managers in a Fortune 50 company and, therefore, it can be assumed that education is a highly valued attribute. In a military setting generally education is not as much a requirement for promotion as military courses. In a hospital setting and educational facility everybody more or less has the same education relevant to their profession, while in the more competitive job market,

education may be much more important for the individual to secure a coveted position. That could be the reason why in some organisations more education means more empowered. Therefore, it was assumed that the private sector would value education more than the public sector and that because employees in the non-government non-profit organisation were professionals, it is expected of them to have an academic qualification and that education would not be a factor.

Research on psychological empowerment is most often conducted in single organisations, but differences were found between work units (Spreitzer, 1995b). However, Spreitzer admitted that variance in the social structural variables may have been limited due to the single organisation design and that results may vary across manufacturing, service, non-profit and government entities and, therefore, suggested that data should be collected across different organisations. The studies that were done across different sectors by Ozaralli (2003) and Hechanova et al. (2006) found significant differences between sectors in terms of empowerment in two vastly different countries. Koberg et al.'s (1999) finding that greater amounts of the variance in feelings of empowerment were explained by the group and organisational variables than were explained by the individual variables, would suggest that there are significant differences between organisations. Silver et al. (2006) demonstrated aspects of organisational culture, structure and leadership that differ from organisation to organisation. Zimmerman's (1995) argument that a member in a small entrepreneurial enterprise may differ in terms of empowerment from a middle manager in a large organisation and Spreitzer's (1996) finding that larger work units were related to empowerment, suggests that the size of an organisation may have an effect. It may be more difficult to have an impact on a larger organisation, while larger organisations may provide more meaning to individuals. Therefore, it was assumed that there would be differences in the degree to which employees in different sectors would perceive empowerment.

The contextual factors that are assumed to influence psychological empowerment are not present to the same degree in different organisations. This has important implications for the generalisability of findings.

3.3 ANTECEDENTS OF EMPOWERMENT

A literature survey of contextual factors was included in chapter two for the benefit of the research question, *What management practices contribute to psychological empowerment?* This survey was done from a management practice perspective with the aim to determine which contextual factors, or more specifically, management practices to include in the contextual factor survey in order to determine whether there is a relationship between contextual factors and psychological empowerment.

Although leadership and management practices have been extensively discussed in the management and organisational science literature as factors that bring about empowerment, the literary survey for this chapter focused on previous research that substantiate the notion that contextual factors contribute to psychological empowerment.

Previous research about antecedents is particularly important to review because of the aims to determine whether there is a relationship between contextual factors and psychological empowerment in South Africa and to determine what (factors, methods, practices) contributes best to psychological empowerment according to how South Africans experience it. Furthermore, the research question, *What factors are perceived to have an effect on empowerment*, was posed with the mixed method design in mind. Qualitative research lends itself to a more divergent approach. Therefore, other possible factors had to be considered.

3.3.1 Empowerment climate

In the previous section it was concluded that different organisations would have different effects on the perception of empowerment. In chapter two the discussion of contextual factors contains several references to organisational climate. A number of researchers took this approach and emphasised the importance of an empowerment climate. An empowerment climate was defined in terms of employees' shared perceptions of managerial structures, policies and practices related to empowerment. Climate perceptions are shared by members of the same work unit because of social processes taking place within the unit, for example, goals, strategies, technologies and work environments, which result in a relatively homogeneous experience of their organisation that is distinct from those of other work units. Members of the same work unit share the same manager, who applies policies and shares information in a particular manner, which shape the interpretations of the group. High levels of social interaction within a work group can also lead to a shared view of an organisation that may be unique to the unit. The level of origin for empowerment climate perceptions is the individual and the appropriate level from which to collect data, the level of measurement, is also the individual (Seibert, Silver & Randolph, 2004).

Spreitzer (1996) proposed that a participative unit climate is positively related to psychological empowerment and her results confirmed this. Her study was conducted at middle management level, but the climate scale was assessed by the manager's subordinates, who described the work unit managed by the middle managers' manager. She used subordinate's perceptions because subordinates were part of the same work units as the middle managers. The middle managers' own perceptions of climate were significantly correlated with their subordinates' perceptions of climate.

Seibert et al. (2004) expected perceptions of empowerment climate to be positively related to individual-level perceptions of psychological empowerment, albeit distinct constructs. Spreitzer's (1995a) PEI scale was used to measure individual perceptions of empowerment. In their results empowerment climate

was shown to be empirically distinct from psychological empowerment. A further hypothesis that empowerment climate and psychological empowerment will be positively and significantly related was confirmed.

Mok and Au-Yeung (2002) explored the relationship between organisational climate and empowerment among nursing staff in Hong Kong using a modified version of Litwin and Stringer's organisational climate questionnaire, which comprised six factors: leadership, working harmony, challenge, recognition, teamwork and decision-making and a modified version of Spreitzer's (1995a) PEI. All the factors in the organisational climate scale were significantly related to empowerment. Regression analysis was carried out to determine how well the combination of the independent variables explains the variance in the total psychological empowerment. The results showed that all six derived climate factors accounted for 44% of the variance and were significant at the $p < 0,001$ level.

The above examples serve to demonstrate the importance of an empowering climate. Seibert et al.'s (2004) results led them to suggest that empowerment climate must be considered an important aspect of an organisation's effort to foster employees' experience of psychological empowerment and should, therefore, be considered when empowerment interventions are planned. Their finding showed that it is important for managers interested in empowerment to understand the way employees perceive the organisational structures and practices identified by the empowerment climate, because these perceptions are strongly related to the average level of psychological empowerment reported by work-unit members.

In the above examples different factors were postulated to constitute an empowering climate. Climate was determined by the perceptions of individuals of the structures and leadership behaviours or practices. It may be that certain practices are specifically relevant to certain work environments and that the factors in one work unit may not be relevant to the next. For example, in an educational facility, DeCharms (1979) found that fewer controlling measures by

teachers in a classroom resulted in a climate that encourages self direction and produced higher academic achievement.

Although several researchers studied the effects of organisational climate, they did not use the same dimensions to describe the empowerment climate construct. Some researchers did not distinguish between the components or dimensions of climate and their relative contributions to psychological empowerment, but combined the measures of multiple items into an overall measure of organisational or empowerment climate. Most often the components of an empowerment climate consist of management practices and, therefore, these are described under the relevant sub-sections and the above research will be referred to again.

3.3.2 Management practices

Many theories have been formulated around the benefits and advantages for organisations of certain management practices of which many are based on real life examples and case studies in industrial settings. From a management practice perspective those serve a good purpose. However, from an organisational behaviour science perspective, it is necessary to review empirical research to substantiate the conclusions derived from practical experience.

3.3.2.1 Participation

Empowerment and participation are depicted in the literature as two concepts that go hand in hand. These concepts are written about in community, education health services, management, political literature, but despite a thorough and exhaustive search of the literature, relatively little empirically based research was found regarding the relationship between participation and empowerment in the workplace.

Spreitzer (1996) proposed that a participative unit climate is positively related to psychological empowerment. A participative climate was associated with open

discussion, assessing employee concerns and ideas, flexibility and decentralisation, creative problem-solving processes and human relations, teamwork and cohesion. This participative unit climate was found to be significantly positively related to empowerment.

Huang et al. (2006) investigated whether participative leadership behaviour produces psychological empowerment. The assumption was that Chinese state-owned enterprises may not appreciate participative leadership because they have been exposed to authoritarian and command-based leadership for decades and because of their culture, people tend to take for granted the inequality between the powerful and the powerless. However, the authors took cognisance of more recent studies that revealed that the new generation employees were as receptive to Western management practices as employees in the West. Spreitzer's (1995a) scale was adopted to measure psychological empowerment. They found that participative leadership behaviour was not associated with all four dimensions of psychological empowerment. Participative leadership behaviour was significantly related to the meaning dimension of psychological empowerment, but not with competence, self-determination and impact. That participation may be a practice that is more relevant in Western cultures than Eastern cultures was also speculated on by Mok and Au-Yeung (2002), who found that in a Chinese organisation not much emphasis was put on the importance of participative decision-making.

Bauer and Mulder (2006) did a study with the aim to find out whether the possibility to provide upward feedback to supervisors contributes to employees' feelings of self-determination. As such, upward feedback can be seen as a form of participation. They found that the perceived quality of the upward feedback was related positively and significantly to self-determination. Employees who perceived that upward feedback was a chance for improving their working conditions also perceived more support of autonomy, competence and social relatedness at their workplace.

Other research on participation did not show a direct link between participation and psychological empowerment. For example, Miller and Monge (1986) did a meta-analytic literature review and found that the cognitive models of participation provide the rationale that when employees participate in decision-making, they will then be enlightened about implementing work procedures. These models propose that participation brings high-quality information to decision-making and increases knowledge at times of implementation. A logical assumption would be that enlightenment and increased knowledge spell empowerment. Furthermore, the message employees get when they are consulted is that they are valued as intelligent and competent contributors. Latham, Winters and Locke (1994) hypothesised that subordinate participation in developing task strategies will result in better task strategies and higher self-efficacy than in the case of no participation, however, the hypothesis was not supported. Although participation in strategy formulation did not affect self-efficacy directly, it did have an indirect affect through its effect on task strategies. Using appropriate task strategies facilitated self-efficacy.

3.3.2.2 *Delegation and participation*

It seems that research about delegation and participation is often done jointly and that managers have a choice between delegation and the extent to which they involve subordinates in decision-making.

Kotze et al. (2005) conducted a study in the SANDF to determine whether an employee's experience of his/her supervisor's behaviour with respect to delegation of tasks and stimulation of participative decision-making correlates with Menon's (2001) three components of psychological empowerment (perceived control, perceived competence, perceived goal internalisation). Psychological empowerment was measured with Menon's (2001) scale and perception of delegation and consulting by the immediate supervisor were measured by Yukl's (1998) scale of leadership behaviour. A univariate analysis of co-variance models was computed to determine the extent to which biographical variables and perception about supervisors' behaviour relate to the

perception of empowerment based on perceived control, perceived competence, perceived goal internalisation and perceived empowerment (mean value for three dimensions). In all the models it was clear that leadership behaviour (delegation and participation) plays the most important role in peoples' experience of empowerment.

Two studies by Leana (1987) on delegation and participation were not linked directly to psychological empowerment, but because of the postulated significance of these practices for empowerment, the findings of these studies may shed some light on the behavioural tendencies of managers. In the first study, Leana found that the importance of the decision explained 11% of the variance in managers' selection of joint decision-making over delegation. Managers chose to share rather than delegate decisions that were described as consequential to the organisation. For decisions described as relatively inconsequential, however, managers indicated that they would use delegation. Subordinate information and subordinate goal congruence, respectively explained an additional 5% and 7% of the variance in managers' choices of decision-making processes. Managers indicated that they would relinquish rather than share decision-making authority when the problem scenarios described the subordinate as having sufficient information to make the decision and as sharing organisational goals. In the second study, the manager's perceptions of subordinate competence and trustworthiness were positively related to supervisors' reported use of delegation, while subordinate competence was negatively related to supervisors' reported use of participation. Trustworthiness was not significantly correlated with participation. Delegation was also used more often with older, more experienced, male subordinates, while participation was used more with younger, less experienced and female subordinates. Delegation was significantly correlated with indicators of job performance. Those subordinates who were delegated more decision-making authority also performed better. According to these studies, managers view the relinquishing of control entailed in delegation as important enough to be undertaken only in the presence of a very limited set of circumstances. Moreover, in the correlation study, delegation was related to enhanced

subordinate performance, whereas participation was associated with decreased performance by subordinates.

This implies that delegation should be more positively related to empowerment than participation. It also implies that managers may see competence and trustworthiness as necessary preconditions for delegation and not delegation as a means to create competence and trust.

3.3.2.3 *Delegation*

Konczak et al. (2000) identified delegation as one of six dimensions of leader-empowering behaviours. The hypothesis that the leader-empowering dimensions would be positively related to the level of psychological empowerment was tested. Psychological empowerment was assessed by using Spreitzer's (1995a) PEI. The results indicated moderate to large correlations among all of the scales and the composite measure of psychological empowerment and it was concluded that leader behaviours are related to the psychological experience of empowerment.

During a study involving an empowerment initiative, Leach, Wall and Jackson (2003) found that empowerment by means of delegation of decision-making authority alone was not effective. Apart from managerial authority to take on new areas of decision-making, subordinates also needed information and support to enable them to enact formal changes in their job responsibilities. In other words, the three factors together resulted in actual empowerment. For the experienced employees who already had the knowledge and self-confidence, this translated into being prepared to share their knowledge more readily with others, and particularly with less experienced workers. For the less experienced in turn, actual empowerment led them to feel more able to take action on their own and to draw on the expertise of others when required.

Leach et al. (2003) hypothesised that the empowerment initiative will enhance self-efficacy and intrinsic task motivation overall, but this will be more evident for

novices than for experts. The prediction of a differential effect for novices and experts was supported by the statistically significant interaction between intervention and expertise. There was a large intervention effect for novices but only a slight change for experts. The increase for novices in knowledge was statistically significant, but not for experts. With regard to self-efficacy, the finding offers partial support for the hypothesis. The statistically non-significant intervention effect showed no overall gain in self-efficacy. The interaction effect, however, indicated virtually no change over time for experts but a clear significant increase in self-efficacy scores for novices. For motivation the findings provided no support for the hypothesis.

When Seaborne (2003) studied the relationship between leadership style and the empowerment perceived by employees, no significant differences in individual empowerment for each of three leadership categories were found. A marginal relationship could only be obtained when the influence of the job characteristic, decision authority was controlled. Decision authority had a large impact on perceptions of empowerment and the author concluded that within the specific organisation empowerment was closely linked to decision authority.

3.3.2.4 *Accountability*

Accountability was seen as leader-empowering behaviour by Konczak et al. (2000) and as a dimension of the empowerment climate construct by Seibert et al. (2004). Both studies used Spreitzer's (1995a) PEI scale to measure individual perceptions of empowerment and both studies found a significant positive relationship with psychological empowerment.

Ogden, Glaister and Marginson (2006) hypothesised that changes in managers' perceptions of empowerment are significantly associated with changes in managers' perceptions of accountability. A multi-item instrument was devised to measure managers' perceptions of empowerment and interviews were conducted in order to gain insight into managers' experiences. Findings provided evidence that managers felt more empowered after changes in management

style to greater accountability were made. The managers found a greater degree of accountability acceptable in the context of having more freedom to manage. The results also indicated that while managers acknowledged that workloads had increased and that they were working harder, they reacted proactively to greater accountability by seeking to exercise some influence over the targets that were set and the amount of freedom they had to manage in trying to achieve them. Ogden et al. (2006) found considerable support for a direct association between the constructs of empowerment and accountability. The total number of significant correlations reported suggested that empowerment and accountability are significantly related along several dimensions.

3.3.2.5 *Information sharing*

Spreitzer (1996) hypothesised that six work unit social structural characteristics create a work context that facilitates empowerment. Access to information was one of these characteristics. She hypothesised that individuals who perceive that they have a high degree of access to information would report a higher level of empowerment than those who perceive that they have less access to information. Spreitzer's PEI was used to measure empowerment. The hypothesis was confirmed when it was found that there was a significant positive relationship between access to information and empowerment. Another study on the relationship between social structural characteristics and psychological empowerment, measured with Spreitzer's (1995a) scale, was done by Samad (2007) among employees of a telecommunication firm in Malaysia. Information sharing was one of seven factors included in the study. Information sharing was significantly correlated with psychological empowerment, but when control variables were entered in the regression equation, all social structure variables but information sharing had a positive influence on psychological empowerment. Information sharing did not contribute significantly to psychological empowerment.

Two studies that were reviewed proposed that an empowerment climate was positively related to psychological empowerment. Seibert et al. (2004) used the

three key organisational practices proposed by Blanchard et al. (1999) as dimensions of an empowerment climate construct. The first key was considered to be sharing of information. Mok and Au-Yeung's (2002) organisational climate questionnaire comprised six factors: leadership, working harmony, challenge, recognition, teamwork and decision-making. The leadership scale included the dispensing of job-related organisational information to subordinates. Both studies measured empowerment with Spreitzer's (1995a) PEI scale and both their hypotheses that empowerment climate and psychological empowerment will be positively and significantly related, were confirmed.

Other studies used Spreitzer's (1995a) PEI as measure for empowerment and included information sharing as factor. Konczak et al. (2000) proposed that information sharing is a dimension of empowering leader behaviours that would be positively related to the level of psychological empowerment and their hypothesis was confirmed. Based on reviews of the literature, Matthews, Diaz and Cole (2003), proposed three organisational factors to be conceptually linked to macro-environmental facilitation of empowerment and fluidity in information sharing was one of them. Fluidity in information sharing was defined as occurring when all information concerning the company is accessible to all individuals in the company. Matthews et al. (2003) developed an organisational empowerment scale (OES). The scale was compared with Spreitzer's (1995a) PEI. It was hypothesised that the environmental dimensions would be positively related to increased levels of psychological empowerment. A Pearson's correlation analysis was conducted to determine whether a positive correlation existed between the OES and Spreitzer's PE scale and a significant correlation was found.

Leach et al. (2003) found that in order to achieve actual empowerment, provision of information was necessary when managerial authority to take on decision-making was the main focus of an empowerment initiative.

3.3.2.6 *Social support*

Corsum and Enz (1999) studied the impact of support-based relationships on the level of perceived employee empowerment. Empowerment was measured by using a modified version of Spreitzer's (1995a) scale. Three dimensions of empowerment, meaningfulness, personal influence and self-efficacy, were measured. The supportive relationships included internal organisational relationships with co-workers and management, as well as customer relationships. Supportive relationships within the work environment were expected to positively shape experienced empowerment. The results indicated that significantly positive relationships existed between a supportive organisational environment and dimensions of empowerment. Three independent regression models were done and this revealed that peer helping behaviours had the largest effect on experienced empowerment, but a supportive organisational environment did not significantly predict any of the three empowerment dimensions.

Other studies with psychological empowerment as dependent variable used Spreitzer's (1995a) PEI. Mok and Au-Yeung (2002) found that leadership that was described as supportive was positively related to psychological empowerment. Spreitzer (1996) hypothesised that individuals who perceive that they have a high degree of socio-political support from key organisational constituencies would report a higher level of empowerment than individuals who perceive that they have low support. This hypothesis was confirmed.

Perceived organisational support results from the generalised beliefs of employees that their organisation values their contribution and cares about their well-being. This notion led Patrick and Laschinger (2006) to predict that there is a positive relationship between structural empowerment and perceived organisational support. In this case perceived organisational support was the dependent variable and the independent variable was empowerment structures.

The empowerment structures according to Kanter's (1993) theory of organisational empowerment include access to information, resources, support and the opportunity to learn and develop. Support refers to problem-solving advice and feedback. As Patrick and Laschinger (2006) predicted a significantly positive relationship was found. Structural empowerment accounted for 42% of the variance in perceived organisational support. The strong relationship identified in the study between the support dimension of empowerment and perceived organisational support suggests that when managers receive positive feedback and are recognised with rewards for innovative strategies, they feel valued by the organisation and pleased that their efforts have been recognised. Although positive feedback is included it is not seen as a separate factor, it forms part of the empowerment dimension, support.

McDermott et al. (1996) used Kanter's (1993) Structural Theory of Organisational Behaviour as framework to examine the empowerment perceptions of registered nurses and their commitment to their organisation. A significant and strong positive correlation was found between staff nurses' perceptions of empowerment and their perceptions of their managers' power. If managers have ready access to resources, information, support and opportunity, they are more likely to share their power with their subordinates. The correlation between access to support and perceptions of managerial power was the strongest correlation observed between the Conditions for Work Effectiveness Questionnaire (CWEQ) subscales and the Organisational Description Opinionnaire (ODO). This result suggests that nurses, whose job it was to care, also considered care for the caregiver to be a significant component of empowerment. This emphasises the importance of positive feedback, such as recognising achievement, celebrating successes, fostering pride in one's work and supporting new ideas and innovations. The study's findings suggest that facilitating access to those lines of support is crucial to fostering job-related empowerment. Leach et al. (2003) also found that support was essential to achieve actual empowerment, especially direct support from experts in the field when decision-making authority was delegated as an empowerment initiative.

3.3.2.7 *Trust*

Ergeneli et al. (2007) hypothesised that individuals' cognition- and affect-based trust in their immediate managers affect their overall psychological empowerment perception. Cognition-based trust refers to the reliability, dependability and competence of the manager and affect-based trust to emotional ties, interpersonal interests and support between individuals. The study assessed the psychological empowerment perceptions of bank managers by using Spreitzer's (1995a) scale and an instrument for measuring cognition- and affect-based trust. By taking overall psychological empowerment as dependent variable and cognition and affect-based trust as the independent variables, the results indicated a direct and positive relationship between cognition-based trust and overall psychological empowerment.

When hierarchical regression was done for the separate aspects of psychological empowerment as dependent variables and cognition and affect-based trust as independent variables, direct positive relationships between cognitions-based trust and meaning; between cognition-based trust and competence; and between affect-based trust and impact were found. These were all significant. These findings imply that when belief in the immediate manager's reliability, dependability and competence increases, overall psychological empowerment increases as well. Another important finding is that affect-based trust is a significant predictor of the impact aspect of psychological empowerment. This finding implies that when interests and positive emotional ties between subordinates and their managers increase, the subordinates' belief in their own influence on certain strategic and administrative outcomes in their work unit increases as well. The findings showed no relationship between any kind of trust and the self-determination aspect of psychological empowerment. As self-determination is an individual's sense of having a choice in initiating and regulating actions, people with high self-determination may rely on internal factors rather than trust in the manager, which is an external factor.

Greasley, Bryman, Dainty, Price, Soetanto and King (2005) conducted a study to examine how empowerment was perceived by individuals employed on construction projects. This study was predominantly concerned with employee perceptions and not management practices. A qualitative approach was adopted for the study, employing in-depth interviews. The behaviour of the employees' immediate supervisor was found to have a strong influence on the perception of empowerment especially the extent to which employees were trusted. The employees indicated mainly two ways that empowerment can be achieved, namely through the demonstration of trust and by allowing them to make their own decisions in relation to how they do their work. Trust was demonstrated through the level of monitoring and the less they are monitored the more they feel trusted. A number of employees stated that this trust should not be something that is given away freely, but is something that has to be earned and based upon experience, knowledge, previous actions and training.

3.3.2.8 *Training and development*

Konczak et al. (2000) identified skill development and coaching for innovative performance as a dimension of leader behaviours that promotes empowerment. Psychological empowerment was assessed by using Spreitzer's (1995a) PEI. The results indicated moderate to large correlations among all of the scales and the composite measure of psychological empowerment.

Albertyn (1995) did a study to determine the manner in which an educational intervention can make a contribution to the total empowerment status of women. She used a structured questionnaire to measure empowerment. The empowerment status of women was determined before (pre-test), after completion (post-test) and two months after participating in a training programme (post-post test). Empowerment scores were highest directly after the programme showing a short term effect. This short term improvement was evident in their attitudes and feelings. The skills component relating to growth in confidence in their abilities and pro-activity maintained a longer term effect. The greatest long term effect was related to decision-making ability, problem-solving and group and

community participation. Respondents were not empowered to the same extent in their actions and the effects than in their beliefs. Statistically significant improvements in empowerment displayed that the greatest improvement took place in the long term.

Samad (2007) found that knowledge was positively correlated with psychological empowerment. When control variables were entered together with social structure variables in the regression equation, knowledge was found to have significant and positive relationship with psychological empowerment. This would imply that where knowledge is lacking, training should be provided to increase knowledge. Others saw training as an instrument that aids the empowerment initiative. Ogden et al. (2006) found that where encouragement and training were provided, managers were less likely to experience the demands associated with accountability negatively. Accountability was found to be positively related to experience of empowerment. Silver et al. (2006) found that an important factor in creating empowerment was not explicitly aimed at creating an empowerment strategy *per se*, but rather to focus on leadership development in which the knowledge and practice of empowering others was viewed as an important component. Other findings regarding level of education and psychological empowerment were discussed under demographic variables.

3.3.2.9 *Feedback*

Spreitzer (1995a) found a significant relationship between information about unit performance and psychological empowerment. McDermott et al.'s. (1996) findings led them to conclude that positive feedback forms part of support that is crucial to fostering job-related empowerment. As research on self-efficacy has suggested that task feedback generates positive feelings of efficacy, Kraimer et al. (1999) reasoned that it should also result in positive feelings of competence. Similarly knowledge of results that was obtained by means of feedback helps employees to get a sense of impact. They found that task feedback was positively related to competence and impact.

Drake, Wong and Salter (2007) applied Spreitzer's (1995a) model to examine whether individual performance feedback affects perceptions of impact, competence and self-determination in an experimental setting. All subjects were told that the goal of the firm is to make as high a profit as possible. They measured impact as the strength with which subjects believed their work could affect firm profitability. Competence was measured by whether subjects believed they were good at the task and could do it correctly. Self-determination was measured by subjects' perceptions that they could choose which tasks to work on as well as their effort level. Three distinct levels of information regarding individual performance were examined. Under the lowest level, subjects were not given any information related to how well they did on any specific task. They were only informed of their pay at the end of each work period. Under the second, intermediary level, subjects were informed of their pay at the end of each work period and they were given information detailing how many task items they got correct and incorrect. Under the third level, subjects received information on not only their pay and how many items they got correct and incorrect, but also how much revenue, cost and profit they generated for the firm. They hypothesised that higher levels of feedback regarding individual performance would result in greater perceived impact, competence and self-determination. However, the results indicated that feedback level was significantly correlated with impact only. There was no significant correlation between feedback level and competence and self-determination. It was also found that by simply basing rewards on profitability without providing feedback was not enough to induce an increase in perceived impact on profits, relative to a non-performance-based reward.

3.3.2.10 Autonomy and self-determination

Konczak et al. (2000) investigated self-directed decision-making as a factor related to the level of psychological empowerment, while Seibert et al. (2004) included autonomy and team accountability in their study as dimensions of empowerment climate. Both studies used Spreitzer's (1995a) PEI to measure

the dependent variable, individual perceptions of empowerment. Both found significant positive relationships.

Spreitzer (1996) hypothesised that individuals who work for a manager with a wide span of control would report a higher level of empowerment than those who work for a manager with a narrow span of control. It was found that a wide span of control, as a social structural characteristic, was positively related to empowerment. A wide span of control implies that employees have more freedom to make their own decisions, which promotes autonomy and a sense of self-determination, while a narrow span of control allows for close control of subordinates. Spreitzer's (1995a; 1995b) definition of self-determination includes autonomy and freedom to make decisions about work methods, pace and effort. She concluded that the wider the span of control, the more difficult it is for the manager to make decisions for each subordinate and closely monitor them. Consequently subordinates feel more empowered.

Greasley et al. (2005) conducted interviews in a qualitative study to determine the factors that cause employees to feel empowered. The ability to make decisions that relate to their work was indicated as a manner in which employees would like to be empowered. They felt that given the opportunity to make decisions indicated that they were trusted and allowed them to feel that they were involved in their work. Through appropriate decision-making they also felt that they were recognised as individuals and that their individual talents and experience were valued.

3.3.2.11 *Rewards*

Following Spreitzer's (1995a) finding that rewards were significantly related to psychological empowerment, Drake et al. (2007) examined the influence of two types of rewards on the dimensions of psychological empowerment. Performance-based rewards were predicted to have a positive effect on perceived competence and impact. Based on past research on incentives they predicted that the performance-based reward system will be negatively

associated with self-determination as compared to the flat-wage system. Under a flat-wage system subjects are expected to feel free to choose the amount of effort they put into a task and the pace at which they work. In contrast, under a performance-based reward system subjects were expected to feel compelled to expend greater effort and work at a high pace since their pay will be dependent on it. Contrary to predictions there was no significant correlation between performance-based rewards and impact and a significant negative correlation between performance-based rewards and competence. There was also a significant negative correlation between performance-based rewards and self-determination as was predicted. The findings indicated that for subjects of equal self-esteem and performance, a performance-based reward system resulted in lower overall levels of perceived competence than did a flat-wage system. A potential explanation for this finding is that subjects focused more on the negative aspects of their performance under a performance-based reward scheme than under the flat-wage scheme.

Rewards were identified by Samad (2007) as a social structural characteristic that was important in determining employees' psychological empowerment. The dependent variable, psychological empowerment was measured with Spreitzer's (1995a) scale. A hierarchical regression analysis revealed that rewards were a significant contributor to psychological empowerment.

3.3.2.12 Job and role clarity

Spreitzer (1996) hypothesised that individuals who perceive a high degree of role ambiguity in their work would report a lower level of empowerment than those who perceive less role ambiguity. Empowerment was measured with Spreitzer's (1995a) PEI. The hypothesis was confirmed when it was found that a significant negative relationship existed between role ambiguity and empowerment.

Matthews et al. (2003) included a dynamic structural framework as an organisational factor that they proposed would facilitate empowerment. A dynamic structural framework was conceptually defined as occurring when a

company provides a clear set of adjustable guidelines that assist employee decision-making both procedurally and behaviourally in a growing work environment. Items measuring this factor were included in an organisation empowerment scale (OES). They hypothesised that the environmental dimensions, including dynamic structural framework, would be positively related to increased levels of psychological empowerment as measured by Spreitzer's PE scale. A Pearson's correlation analysis was conducted and a significant correlation was found between the OES and Spreitzer's PE scale.

3.3.2.13 *Access to resources*

Spreitzer (1996) included access to resources as one of six work unit social structural characteristics that she believed would create a work context that facilitates empowerment. She hypothesised that individuals who perceive that they have a high degree of access to resources would report a higher level of empowerment than individuals who perceive that they have less access to resources. However, it was the only social structural characteristic that was not significantly related to psychological empowerment.

Sarmiento et al. (2004) used Kanter's (1993) theory that the combination of formal job characteristics and informal alliances within the organisation influences employees' access to resources of opportunity, information, support and resources that enable them to effectively accomplish work tasks. Perceptions of formal and informal power in the workplace were postulated to be positively related to perceptions of workplace empowerment. Workplace empowerment was measured by the Conditions of Work Effectiveness Questionnaire (CWEQ). This measures employee access to empowerment structures (opportunity, information, support and resources). Access to empowerment structures was, in other words, the measure for workplace empowerment and formal and informal power was postulated to have an influence of workplace empowerment. Formal power has to do with formal positions and informal power has to do with informal networks and alliances.

Sarmiento et al. (2004) found that perceptions of formal and informal power were positively related to their perceived access to empowerment structures. Fifty-one percent of the variance in empowerment was explained by formal and informal power. Both formal and informal power were significant predictors of empowerment. These results support Kanter's (1993) contention that greater access to both formal and informal power influences access to workplace empowerment structures. Access to opportunity was found to be the most empowering aspect in the work environment under investigation, while access to resources was the least empowering.

Patrick and Laschinger (2006) did a study on the relationship between empowerment structures in the organisation and perceptions of organisational support. Empowerment structures were conceptualised according to Kanter's (1993) theory of organisational empowerment and included access to resources. Access to resources refers to equipment and supplies in addition to human resources to assist in achieving work objectives. Middle managers in this study felt they did not have access to the resources they needed to perform the administrative component of their role successfully. As a result, they did not feel they could accomplish their goals. However, a positive relationship between empowerment structures in the organisation and perceptions of organisational support was found. In this study perceived organisational support is the dependent variable and the contextual factors are described as empowerment structures.

3.3.3 Leadership styles

Some researchers investigated the relationship between a specific leadership style and empowerment, while others investigated behaviours as dimensions of leadership. The latter was discussed under management practices.

Researchers, such as Brossoit (2000), Ozaralli (2003) and Samad (2007), investigated transformational leadership in relation to empowerment. The concept, transformational leadership, was described by Avolio and Bass (1990)

as consisting of four dimensions. Idealised influence or charisma means that the leader provides vision and a sense of mission, while instilling pride, faith and respect. Individual consideration, as it denotes, means that the leader treats each follower as an individual and cares for the development of subordinates. Intellectual stimulation means the leader challenges subordinates to think in new ways. Inspiration boils down to a leader who motivates and inspires followers. Ozaralli (2003) argued that transformational behaviours energise and hence empower followers to act by providing an exciting vision for the future rather than through rewards and punishment. Leaders create a more empowering climate in which organisational members are inspired to take actions to enhance the vision. Transformational leaders build subordinates' self-confidence with respect to goal attainment. Leaders who convey high expectations promote the self-efficacy and motivation of subordinates and ultimately establish norms for individual initiative, achievement oriented behaviours and goal-attainment.

Brossoit (2000) and Ozaralli (2003) proposed that transformational leadership behaviours would promote empowerment. They both used versions of the multifactor leadership questionnaire (MLQ) devised by Bass and Avolio (1990) to measure transformational and transactional leadership. Thomas and Velthouse's (1990) conceptualisation of empowerment served as theoretical framework for both studies.

Ozaralli (2003) developed a scale that measured followers' perception of how empowered they feel based on five dimensions, namely meaningfulness, competence, self-determination, impact and goal-internalisation. In the analysis it was found that meaning and goal internalisation were not separate dimensions but loaded on one factor which he called meaningfulness. Impact and self-determination also loaded on one factor. Pearson correlations between all factors were performed and findings indicated that transformational behaviours of leaders had a moderate positive, but significant, correlation with subordinates' self-reported empowerment.

Brossoit (2000) measured the four dimensions of empowerment (meaning, choice, competence and impact) by using an Empowerment Inventory developed by Thomas and Tymon (1993)(cited in Brossoit, 2000). Overall, 17% of the variance in empowerment was accounted for by transformational leadership. The individual direct effects of transformational leadership indicated that transformational leadership had the strongest unique relationship to meaning, significant at the 0,01 level and the weakest unique relationship to competence, significant at the 0,05 level.

Samad (2007) saw transformational leadership as a social structure characteristic. Hierarchical regression analysis revealed that all aspects of social structure, including transformational leadership were important in determining employees' psychological empowerment. The dependent variable, psychological empowerment was measured with Spreitzer's (1995a) scale. Transformational leadership was found to have a significant and positive relationship with psychological empowerment at the 0,05 level.

Seaborne (2003) hypothesised that individuals who perceive their leader to hold a balanced leadership type will report higher levels of empowerment than those individuals who perceive their leader with a moderately balanced or unbalanced leadership type. To measure perceptions of empowerment, an instrument devised by Whetton and Cameron (1995) based on the work of Spreitzer (1995a; 1995b) was used but a fifth aspect of empowerment, trust, was added to the four dimensions described by Spreitzer. Employees who perceive their leaders to hold a balanced leadership type did not report a higher level of empowerment than those who perceived their leaders with a moderately balanced or unbalanced leadership type. However, using a revised leadership categorisation scheme, distinguishing only between balanced and unbalanced, and controlling for demographic differences among employees, as well as removing the covariate of decision authority, the multivariate effect for leadership approached significance ($p = 0,08$) and it was concluded that employees that report to unbalanced leaders versus all others have lower levels of empowerment.

Although specific management practices were not mentioned in the above leadership styles, it can be concluded that dimensions of transformational leadership can be described as motivational. Leaders who convey high expectations promote the self-efficacy and motivation of subordinates, achievement oriented behaviours and goal-attainment. Leaders who care for the development of subordinates will determine what they need to develop, whether it is through delegating special tasks to them or identifying some other means of development. Subordinates who are inspired to take action would most probably be motivated to act autonomously and would be delegated the authority to do so, especially when norms for individual initiative were established.

3.3.4 Individual variables

Individual characteristics were often mentioned in the literature in connection with perceptions of empowerment.

Spreitzer (1995a) proposed that personality characteristics shape empowerment cognitions. Spreitzer found that the personality characteristic, self-esteem, was related to psychological empowerment, but could not get confirmation that locus of control correlates with psychological empowerment. Drake et al. (2007) found a significant correlation between self-esteem and a sense of competence.

The concept, organisation-based-self-esteem, was investigated by Chen and Aryee (2004). This type of self-esteem describes the self-perceived value that individuals have of themselves as organisational members acting within an organisational context. They found that organisation-based-self-esteem fully mediated the delegation-task performance relationship. Their findings also suggest that delegation signals to employees that they are effectual, trusted and competent leading to high levels of self-esteem. Pierce, Gardner, Cummings and Dunham (1989) confirmed the importance of the construct. The construct, organisation-based-self-esteem, was shown to influence factors that include global self-esteem, job performance, intrinsic motivation and satisfaction.

Samad (2007) determined in a study among employees of a firm in Malaysia that self-esteem was important in determining employees' psychological empowerment. The dependent variable, psychological empowerment, was measured with Spreitzer's (1995a) scale. When a regression analysis was done, self-esteem was found to have a significant and positive relationship with psychological empowerment at the 0,05 level, even when control variables were entered.

Resilience is a personality characteristic that should have an effect on feelings of empowerment under difficult circumstances. Simoni, Larrabee, Birkhimer, Mott and Gladden (2004) executed a study with the purpose to describe the influence of three interpretive styles of stress resiliency on psychological empowerment. The interpretive styles were deficiency focusing, necessitating and skill recognition. These interpretive styles are an individual's habitual interpretation of events that influence the four dimensions of empowerment, namely meaning, competence, self-determination and impact, according to the psychological model presented by Thomas and Velthouse (1990). The cognitive model of empowerment holds that individual appraisal influences stress by causing anticipated tasks to appear more or less threatening. Deficiency focusing is the focus on the potential for failure when thinking about the future; necessitating is the demands and requirements the individual creates for him or herself; and skill recognition is the attribution of accomplishments to own talents and skills. A significant positive relationship was found between skill recognition and psychological empowerment and a significant negative relationship between deficiency focusing and psychological empowerment. Regression analysis was done and 24% of the variance was explained by skill recognition (20%) and deficiency focusing (4%). This suggests that employees who believe they are effective and do not imagine their own failure add to their own empowerment. Necessitating was not significantly related to and did not predict empowerment.

Ogden et al. (2006) conducted interviews with managers in order to gain insight into managers' experiences. Interviews revealed that managers' attitudes to empowerment varied. It was clear that those who expressed enthusiasm for

empowerment welcomed the opportunities it offered to manage things differently, while those who expressed reservations tended to emphasise the additional demands empowerment placed on managers. Results of tests for correlations between empowerment and accountability also suggested that managers who experience a greater sense of empowerment, experience greater accountability pressures, but it also indicated that they are positive about motivational effects and self-determination aspect of greater accountability and tend not to experience the negative aspects of greater accountability. Sense of empowerment was positively related to greater accountability, heavier workloads and stress, self-determination and motivation effects, but was negatively correlated with negative consequences of accountability.

These tendencies may be explained as interpretive styles of stress resiliency as defined by Simoni et al. (2004). Managers who experience the stress association with more accountability as an opportunity may demonstrate a skill recognition interpretive style and experience a sense of empowerment, while managers who have reservations and experience negative consequences may demonstrate deficiency focusing and do not experience a sense of empowerment.

3.3.5 Relevance of antecedents

The aim of the literature review was, first of all, to find previous research about contextual factors that contribute to psychological empowerment. Researchers followed different approaches and most studied the effect of a variety of antecedents. Several researchers entertained the idea of an empowerment climate, but had different ideas about what constitutes this climate. Two examples were discussed in terms of an empowering climate. Seibert et al. (2004) used the three key organisational practices, information sharing, autonomy and team accountability proposed by Blanchard et al. (1999) as dimensions of the empowerment climate construct for their study. Mok and Au-Yeung (2002) used a modified version of Litwin and Stringer's organisational climate questionnaire with six factors: leadership, working harmony, challenge,

recognition, teamwork and decision-making. In describing organisation climate, Altmann (2000) realised that any number of organisational characteristics can be hypothesised as comprising a climate conducive to empowerment and will probably be correct in the assumption. This has implications for determining the scope of factors to be included in a survey of contextual influences.

Seibert et al. (2004) expected empowerment climate perceptions to be shared by members of the same work unit. In the quantitative phase of the present study, the luxury of being able to distinguish between work units of large organisations was not possible due to the small numbers of respondents obtained from the different organisations. The importance of the above research for the present study was more in terms of what was perceived as important practices that make up the ideal work climate that contribute to psychological empowerment. The present study endeavoured to find contextual factors, and more specifically, management practices that contribute to psychological empowerment in order to see how it is perceived in organisations in South Africa to be able to present an informed view of the South African perspective. Several organisations in different geographic areas participated in the study. It was assumed that those management practices that show up as predictors of psychological empowerment, if present in any organisation, will cause the climate to be beneficial with respect to empowerment.

In the quantitative phase of the present study the focus was on management practices. In the literature management practices are defined differently by different researchers. For example, support is often hypothesised as a contributing factor, but Corsum and Enz (1999) studied the impact of support-based relationships and described it by means of the characteristics, trust, participativeness and employee and relationship orientations, while trust can also be seen as a separate factor, such as the different perspectives taken by Ergeneli et al. (2007) and Greasley et al. (2005). McDermott et al. (1996) saw lines of support as positive feedback, while Kraimer et al. (1999) studied task feedback as an independent variable. Leader behaviour was mentioned in the literature most often, but some researchers defined leadership in terms of

transformational leadership, based on an existing model, for example, Ozaralli (2003), while Konczak et al. (2000) identified six dimensions, namely delegation of authority, accountability, encouragement of self-directed decision-making, information sharing, skill development and coaching for innovative performance. Delegation and participation, for example, are sometimes referred to as leader behaviours and sometimes as management practices. It was decided to use the term, management practices, in the present research, irrespective of whether it was described in the literature as manager behaviours or leader behaviours.

The benefits of delegation and participation are embroidered on in virtually any book that was ever written about empowerment. The South African Qualifications Authority considers it as essential competencies for managers to master in order to empower subordinates, together with other practices, such as feedback and recognition. Yet, it is difficult to find research that shows a direct link between these behaviours and psychological empowerment. In much of the research on antecedents of psychological empowerment these are not included as constructs. Konczak et al. (2000) included delegation but not participation and did find a relationship with psychological empowerment. Leana (1978) was of the opinion that through delegation subordinates are given autonomy, while with participation the full responsibility of decision-making is not passed on to the subordinate and although the subordinate is allowed to have an input, he or she does not have the autonomy to make a decision. The key, therefore, seems to be autonomy and not in just taking part.

Research regarding perceptions of accountability and the relationship with psychological empowerment was discussed, although it was not included in the present study as a factor. A superior may delegate authority to make decisions, but remain accountable for the results, especially with respect to lower level employees. In a study, such as the present study, to be held accountable may not be applicable to lower level employees. Konczak et al.'s. (2000) and Ogden et al.'s (2006) respondents were managers, while Seibert et al. (2004) conducted their study with engineers. However, the argument is that accountability cannot be experienced if it was not delegated in the first place and, therefore,

accountability can be considered a consequence of delegation and relationships with accountability would also be applicable to delegation. The same goes for self-directed decision-making. The decision-making authority must first be delegated. It may also apply to autonomy. However, with autonomy the difference may be that responsibilities are delegated, but in some organisations strict regulations may apply or the manager may be very authoritarian and prescriptive about how responsibilities are executed. Self-directed decision-making in the LEBQ used by Konczak et al. (2000) is very similar to autonomy as it applies to the present study.

From the experience of Leach et al. (2003), it became clear that management practices cannot be considered in isolation when implementing an empowerment initiative. The study was considered to be of relevance not only to demonstrate the role of management practices in creating empowerment, but also to be considered for the chapter devoted to the advocating of empowerment strategies.

Spreitzer (1995a; 1995b; 1996) did most of her research on psychological empowerment on mid-level employees. Drake et al. (2007) used the model of Spreitzer (1995a) that suggested that performance feedback and performance-based rewards systems positively affect employee feelings of empowerment. With their study, Drake et al. (2007) indicated that predictions validated on surveys of managers were not the same for lower-level workers. However, they used undergraduate students for their study, who were randomly assigned to experimental conditions, while Spreitzer's study was done in a Fortune 50 company. The same factor may, therefore, have different effects in different contexts.

Previous research on management practices only serves as a guideline. For the present research, a choice had to be made about which practices to include as independent variables and how these were to be defined, based on both the theoretical framework presented in chapter two and the previous research that was reviewed. It was decided not to rely on one specific measuring instrument

that was previously researched but rather to devise multiple items from different sources.

Some of the research examples are not directly relevant to answer the research question with respect to which factors contribute to psychological empowerment. For example, the importance of the finding by Bauer and Mulder (2006) that upward feedback contributed to feelings of self-determination for the present study, is not so much in the benefit of upward feedback for psychological empowerment, but as a way of participation and a strategy that could be employed to foster self-determination specifically. The study on trust by Ergeneli et al. (2007) is only partly relevant, because it suggested that trust in one's manager predicts empowerment, while in the present study only one item measured trust in managers. The other items had to do with managers' trust in their subordinates and on promoting trust among co-workers.

The relationship between leadership styles and psychological empowerment was not investigated in the present study. However, it was expected that the qualitative study according to the inductive method may show characteristics of the psychologically empowered individual that can be linked to different theoretical frameworks.

Individual variables were not considered in the quantitative phase of the study, but were included for the sake of the qualitative phase. Self-esteem, locus of control and styles of stress resiliency were expected to be recognisable in the analysis of interviews.

3.4 INTERRELATIONSHIPS

The eco-systemic conception views the world as an open, living system and emphasises the interaction and interdependence of all phenomena, which implies that the individual with his or her characteristics interacts with his or her physical and social environment (Capra, 1982). As explained in paragraph 3.3 above, contributing contextual factors formed an important part of the present

study, but while a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods were used, the quantitative phase had a specific purpose. However, the real value of this study does not lie in the reductionistic or positivistic characteristics of quantitative survey, but rather in the emergence of novel patterns and properties derived from qualitative interpretation (Goldstein, 1999). Given these paradigms, it is important to consider the interrelationships that envelop psychological empowerment.

In the research described below, the researchers made use of nomological networks and social cognitive theory as frameworks. Theoretical frameworks were discussed in chapter two. Zimmerman (1995, p. 587) described a method based on Cronbach and Meehl's (cited in Zimmerman, 1995) nomological network, which assumes that "a construct is, by definition, open-ended and requires the specification of interrelationships among observable phenomena that represent abstract concepts." The social cognitive theory consists of three reciprocal influences, namely behaviour, cognitions and the environment (Bandura, 1977). Research examples of nomological networks and social cognitive theory are discussed below.

3.4.1 Nomological network

A partial nomological network of psychological empowerment was developed by Spreitzer (1995a) consistent with Thomas and Velthouse's (1990) notion of the process of empowerment. This process suggests that the work context and personality characteristics shape empowerment cognitions, which in turn motivate individual behaviour. Two personality characteristics, self-esteem and locus of control were hypothesised to be antecedents of empowerment. She examined the management practices, information sharing and the structure of rewards as antecedents of empowerment. As consequences of empowerment, effectiveness and innovation were specified. As psychological empowerment the four cognitions, meaning, competence, self-determination and impact were measured.

Spreitzer (1995a) found that the personality characteristic, self-esteem was related to psychological empowerment, but not locus of control. She found that the practices, information about unit performance and rewards, were significantly related to psychological empowerment and that psychological empowerment was positively related to managerial effectiveness and to innovative behaviours. All components were measured with quantitative scales.

In the context of a preliminary nomological net Konczak et al. (2000) hypothesised that both empowering leader behaviours and psychological empowerment would lead to attitudinal outcomes. It was proposed that leader behaviours should influence outcome variables, job satisfaction and organisational commitment, through their effect on psychological empowerment. Participants rated the degree to which their managers engaged in empowering behaviours using the LEBQ. They rated their own job satisfaction, organisational commitment and feelings of psychological empowerment.

Moderate to large correlations were found between leader behaviours and psychological empowerment. Both the LEBQ scales and the PE measurement were related to job satisfaction and organisational commitment. Psychological empowerment partially mediated the relationship between each LEBQ dimension and job satisfaction and each LEBQ dimension and organisational commitment.

Based on Spreitzer's (1995a) scale development for psychological empowerment and the work of Conger and Kanungo (1988) and Thomans and Velthouse (1990), Kraimer et al. (1999) examined the construct validity of Spreitzer's four dimensions of empowerment: meaning, competence, self-determination and impact. As antecedents they chose the three key job characteristics according to Hackman and Oldham's (cited in Kraimer et al., 1999) job design, namely task meaningfulness (a combination of task significance, task identity and skill variety), job autonomy and task feedback. To establish convergent validity, Kraimer et al. (1999) expected job meaningfulness to relate positively with empowerment meaning and job autonomy with empowerment self-determination. As research on self-efficacy has suggested that task feedback generates positive

feelings of efficacy, it should also result in positive feelings of competence. Similarly knowledge of results that was obtained by means of feedback helps employees to get a sense of impact. Therefore, as evidence of convergent validity they expected task feedback to be positively related to competence and impact.

Two outcomes, career intentions (commitment to a career) and affective organisational commitment were expected to be differentially related to empowerment dimensions. They expected meaning and competence to be related to career intentions but not organisational commitment. They expected self-determination and impact to be positively related to organisational commitment, but not career intentions.

As expected the results showed that job meaningfulness related positively to empowerment meaning, autonomy related positively to self-determination and feedback to competence and impact. With respect to the outcomes, findings were also as expected, except that competence was negatively related to career intention. Meaning was positively related to career intentions, while self-determination and impact were positively related to organisational commitment.

3.4.2 A social cognitive theory framework

Koberg et al. (1999) suggested a model that incorporates both antecedents and outcomes of feeling empowered and reported on an empirical test of the model in a hospital setting, using the multidimensional PEI developed by Spreitzer (1995a). The social cognitive theory provided a framework for investigating the relative effects of different sets of antecedent factors and whether feeling empowered was differentially related to individual, group and organisational characteristics. They also investigated the effects of empowerment perceptions on the work outcomes of individuals and organisations.

Apart from the PEI to measure perception of empowerment, other instruments were the Group Behaviour Inventory, and scales to measure locus of control, job

satisfaction, productivity/ effectiveness at work and propensity to leave the organisation, their research also included a qualitative phase. They conducted semi-structured follow up interviews with randomly selected employees who completed surveys. They asked them to give examples of the types of behaviours by others that made them feel empowered or disempowered.

The extent to which empowerment perceptions were influenced by characteristics of individuals (level of education, tenure with the organisation, gender, race and locus of control) was investigated. The demographic characteristics and the results were discussed earlier (see sections 3.2.1, 2, 3, 4 and 6). Koberg et al. (1999) found that gender, race and education made no difference with respect to feelings of empowerment, while position and tenure in the organisation did make a difference. The hypothesis that locus of control will have a positive association with feelings of empowerment was not confirmed.

The nature and quality of group behaviour was believed to have an influence on feelings of empowerment. It was suggested that group decision-making and the sharing of responsibilities and open discussion of problems (group effectiveness and worth of group), as well as work units in which members feel trust in each other and in the group (intragroup trust), would enhance members' feelings of self-determination and competency, thereby contributing to feelings of empowerment. It was also proposed that group members would feel empowered in departments or units in which group members influence one another and the leader (mutual influence and approachability). Leader approachability, worth of group and group effectiveness (group) were significantly related to psychological empowerment. No significant effects were found for mutual influence and intragroup trust.

The outcomes that Koberg et al. (1999) proposed were increased job satisfaction, productivity and commitment. They hypothesised that feelings of empowerment will have a positive association with job satisfaction, perceived work productivity/effectiveness, and feelings of empowerment will have a negative association with the propensity to leave the organisation.

They computed the proportions of explained variance and found that more amounts of the variance in feelings of empowerment were explained by the group and organisational variables (34%) than were explained by the individual variables (4%). They also found that psychological empowerment is a significant predictor of job satisfaction, perceived work productivity/effectiveness and propensity to leave the organisation. Feelings of empowerment were negatively related to the propensity to leave.

3.4.3 Relevance of interrelationships

Whereas research about antecedents is important to consider for the aim of determining relationships between contextual factors and psychological empowerment, this type of linear factor–empowerment research was not always done. Some researchers included consequences and others view empowerment as an aspect in complex interrelationships. To achieve the aim, to conceptualise psychological empowerment as experienced in a South African context and to compare these findings with research in other countries, and to make provision for emergence of patterns in the qualitative phase of the present study, research on interrelationships was reviewed.

Considering that environment characteristics that influence psychological empowerment can be found in areas of the job itself, roles, leaders, the bigger organisation and in workgroups (Altmann, 2000), and that individual cognitions are influenced and have influence, and these and other individual characteristics have reciprocal relationships with behaviour (Bandura, 1977), it makes sense to study psychological empowerment according to the principles of a nomological net. Studying a phenomenon while considering all the contributing factors as well as the outcomes is perhaps more purposeful from an academic perspective. However, for the present study, the only outcome that is investigated empirically is the experience of empowerment. The notion that psychological empowerment has positive consequences for the organisation and a broader society serves as motivation for the study. The only consequences relevant to the present study are those observed in the participants, such as behaviours and career progress.

From a developmental and management perspective, however, research is most useful when the positive outcomes are known and it can be applied in practice as in the case of the LEBQ developed by Konczak et al. (2000). The LEBQ was developed primarily for the purpose of prescribing strategies and behaviours for managers striving to develop their empowering skills. The authors were of the opinion that the model provided managers with useful feedback concerning the types of behaviour necessary to empower subordinates. They concluded that from the management perspective, this type of research could help practitioners prioritise their efforts with respect to interventions intended to increase empowerment in the workplace. They have also foreseen that the LEBQ could be used as a practical tool for providing feedback and coaching managers on their leader behaviours associated with empowerment.

Spreitzer (1995a) proposed that because psychological empowerment comprises the motivational cognition of impact or the degree of perceived influence on work outcomes, individuals who are internal will feel more empowered than those who are external in their locus of control. People with an internal locus of control believe they have strong personal control over their life experiences, while those with an external locus of control feel that chance, fate or others determine their decisions and behaviour, as well as successes and failures. In spite of the partial nomological network of Spreitzer (1995a), as well as the study by Kobberg et al. (1999), where a relationship between locus of control and psychological empowerment was not found, a preliminary assumption may be made regarding the relationship for the present study. It could be expected that empowered people may demonstrate tendencies towards an internal locus of control, while those who are less empowered may attribute their failures to external factors.

3.5 IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH ON PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT

Some of the views expressed in the literature need to be considered when research on psychological empowerment is undertaken.

3.5.1 Contextual analysis

Zimmerman (1990) stated that empowerment differs on different levels of analysis, for example, at the individual level empowerment includes participatory behaviour, motivations to exert control and feelings of efficacy and control, whereas organisational empowerment includes shared leadership, opportunities to develop skills, expansion and effective community influence. Psychological empowerment refers to empowerment on the individual level.

The findings of Koberg et al. (1999) support Spreitzer's (1996) suggestion that the social structure of the work unit may ultimately provide the best explanation for understanding empowerment. Another conclusion they arrived at is that their findings are consistent with a social learning perspective, which suggests that the behaviour of individuals is induced by specific situations and that given the same situation, members of different genders and ethnic groups tend to behave in the same manner. Their research is also consistent with a management-centred view of empowerment in that they agree that managers and supervisors can help employees feel empowered.

According to Zimmerman (1990), Spreitzer (1996) and Koberg et al. (1999), psychological empowerment requires a contextual analysis to be fully understood as it represents an interaction between individuals and environments that is culturally and contextually distinct.

3.5.2 Components of psychological empowerment

Although Cronbach and Meehls' (cited in Zimmerman, 1995) notion was that a nomological network can be tested empirically once concrete operation for the constructs in the network is specified, Zimmerman (1995) also concluded that facts and rules used to represent a construct may change over time and depend upon the context in which it is measured. Therefore, open-ended constructs may include observational terms and rules, but may not be fully captured by any one specific operational definition because they take on different forms in different

populations and contexts. The general framework that Zimmerman (1995) proposed has to include observable measures relevant to psychological empowerment and represent such a network. The network that Zimmerman proposed consists of three components, namely intrapersonal, interactional and behavioural. He believed that a complete picture of psychological empowerment is not possible if information about all three components is not collected and, therefore, questions were included in the semi-structured interview questionnaire to obtain information about these components. Assumptions are made that psychologically empowered people have a positive self-perception (intrapersonal component), they are aware of resources they can use in their work environment (interactional component) and they are pro-active and seize opportunities to act on (behavioural component). The network was discussed as a model in chapter two.

Zimmerman (1995) suggested several scales for measuring these components, but also proposed the use of a qualitative approach that may include interviews. Kieffer (1984), for example, used interviews to study participation in a social setting as a competence that can be developed in individuals in order to become more empowered from a state of powerlessness. He concluded that empowerment could be viewed as attainment of an enduring set of commitments and capabilities, which could be referred to as 'participatory competence.' This state of being and ability incorporates three major interconnecting aspects or dimensions: development of positive self-concept or sense of self-competence; construction of more critical or analytical understanding of the surrounding social and political environment; and cultivation of individual and collective resources for social and political action.

3.5.3 Suggestions

Researchers made the following suggestions for future research

- Target group

Spreitzer (1996) argued the importance of middle managers in the empowerment research. Middle managers' work, for example, varies from relatively structured to highly unstructured. Spreitzer's (1995b) research was aimed at middle managers. She suggested that data should be collected from 'rank-and-file' members of the organisation because the variables in the theoretical framework may relate in different ways for workers at lower levels of the organisational hierarchy, because they have less formal power in the organisation, socio-political support and access to resources and information. She further suggested that future research must address the generalisability across levels of the organisational hierarchy, in more demographically diverse samples and in diverse organisational settings, for example, not-for-profit organisations or government bureaucracies. Koberg et al. (1999) and Konczak et al. (2000) did their research in single organisations and suggested different settings and contexts.

- Antecedents

Spreitzer (1995a) suggested that to document discriminant validity further, future research should also identify and empirically examine different antecedents and consequences of each dimension of empowerment. In her research respondents may have been sensitised to empowerment issues. She suggested that additional contextual variables be included because it will facilitate theory development in organisations. Koberg et al. (1999) suggested that because of the apparent importance of group characteristics research must go further to assess what types of groups increase empowerment and why. They also felt that a variety of organisational variables could be tested to show their effects on feelings of empowerment. Konczak et al. (2000) tested six dimensions of leader behaviour, but suggested that future research should explore additional items to assess the dimensions.

3.5.4 Other considerations

Other aspects that need to be considered in researching psychological empowerment are the following:

- Continuous variable

Psychological empowerment is a continuous variable; people can be viewed on a continuum of low to highly empowered, rather than empowered or not empowered (Spreitzer, 1995a).

- Domain specific

Psychological empowerment is not a global construct generalisable across different life situations and roles, but rather specific to a domain (Spreitzer, 1995a). According to Zimmerman (1995), a global or universal measure of psychological empowerment may not be feasible as empowerment may differ across people, contexts and times. Spreitzer and most of the research referred to in the present study focused on the work domain, although some studies were also done in a socio-political domain, for example, Kieffer (1984), as it may also have relevance.

3.5.5 Qualitative research

Qualitative research can add meaning to quantitative research. Researchers' methodological approaches affect how they understand the phenomena they study. Bartunek and Seo (2002) conducted a study to see if it is possible to move beyond the initial understanding of a quantitative study by exploring what might be different if qualitative methodology was used. Quantitative approaches assume that predefined variables have the same meaning across multiple settings. In contrast, qualitative approaches attempt to increase understanding of local perceptions. They concluded that such explorations offer the possibility of stimulating the development of new understandings about the variety and

depth with which organisational members experience important organisational phenomena.

3.6 CONCLUSION

The following conclusions were important to consider in the research:

- Although the most meaningful results may be obtained if the sample is taken from middle management groups, consideration should also be given to lower levels.
- Different contexts should be considered.
- The dimensions of Spreitzer's (1995a) model could be treated as four first order factors, rather than a single higher order construct of empowerment.
- Because empowerment is typical of the interaction between the individuals and their environment, consideration should be given to a variety of antecedents and because organisational variables seem to be the better predictor of PE it is worthwhile to focus on organisational factors.
- The construct, psychological empowerment, cannot be studied comprehensively by means of the measure of the PEI alone as this only gives an indication of the intrapersonal component. A nomological net was suggested that includes antecedents (interactional component) as well as a behavioural component.
- Qualitative approaches should increase understanding of local perceptions.

3.7 SUMMARY

Research based on the psychological empowerment models and theories of Thomas and Velthouse (1990), Kanter (1993), Spreitzer (1995a; 1995b) and Menon (2001) have been reviewed in this chapter. Demographic variables were considered for their importance as factors that may or may not contribute to psychological empowerment. It is generally assumed that men and especially white men will be more empowered than women and black men. However, it seems that gender differences are becoming less of a factor, while there seems to still be differences with respect to race, even if it is not in terms of overall psychological empowerment, but only in terms of some of the dimensions. Although findings with respect to age, experience and education vary, position in the organisation is another variable that cannot be ignored. Differences in organisational cultures in terms of what is valued, impact on individuals' experience of empowerment and remains a factor to contend with.

Antecedents of empowerment were discussed in terms of an empowering climate, management practices, leader behaviours, empowerment initiatives and individual variables. A wide variety of possible predictors of psychological empowerment were found in the literature, but leadership and leader behaviours seem to be considered most often. Whether the contributing factors are dressed up as leadership behaviours, dimensions of organisational climate, intervention strategies or elements in a nomological network, most antecedents that were found to have a significant effect on psychological empowerment can be described as management practices. Practices that featured most prominently are, apart from leadership, information sharing, delegation, accountability and self-directed decision-making, social support and feedback.

The discussion of interrelationship did not bring much new information to the table apart from demonstrating that psychological empowerment should be regarded as a systemic phenomenon.

Important aspects that were deduced from previous research that has implications for the present study were discussed by also putting forward from the literature certain suggestions that were incorporated. The assumptions and conclusions derived from previous research gave a good indication of what to postulate in the next chapter.

The next chapter is devoted to the research design, methods and procedures. The execution of the research process is outlined and a step by step explanation is given of how data were collected, measured and analysed. Hypotheses about demographic variables and the relationship between management practices and psychological empowerment are formulated in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHOD

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the approach followed in the research is described, followed by the methods that were used. The sampling strategy that was originally proposed and the strategy that was followed as a result of difficulties experienced are elaborated upon. The different instruments and methods that were utilised for data collection are described and their inclusion motivated. The procedures followed for data collection, analysis and interpretations are outlined and discussed next. The researcher's role in the process and the potential ethical issues are discussed. The chapter is concluded with comments on the expectations for the results of the study.

4.2 PARADIGMS

The paradigms or basic way of thinking that is acceptable for a research study of a phenomenon such as psychological empowerment in the workplace were set out in chapter one. With the type of research design in mind, involving both quantitative and qualitative methods, certain approaches with regard to techniques and the practical execution of the research study had to be considered. A theoretical framework of suitable approaches is outlined and the relevance for this study indicated.

4.2.1 Phenomenological approach

Schostak (2006) defined phenomenology as a focus upon giving precedence to what appears to consciousness. Giorgi (1983) cited features of the phenomenological approach that are considered as important for proper access to psychological reality and for this study. First, how things appear in life is relevant for the attitude that science should adopt toward that phenomenon.

Second, to put together all one knows about the phenomenon under consideration, especially scientific formulations, and then to experience and describe it as new. Lastly, the meaningful presence of the phenomenon is described only as it is experienced in the consciousness; no existential claim is made for it. About psychological reality, Giorgi said that the problem is not to account for realities but for reality as experienced, which means the reality that reveals its presence in a specific context.

This study is focused on respondents' present experience of their work environment with the aim to develop an understanding by paying attention to employees' subjective perceptions of factors in their work environment. There was no experimentation in an artificial environment. The phenomenological approach fits the cognitive paradigm as the psychologically empowerment phenomenon can be described as a cognitive state characterised by what is perceived as reality.

4.2.2 Convergent and divergent approaches

In the quantitative phase of this study the normal convergent approach was followed in the sense that certain correlations between independent variables and the dependent variable were determined. The qualitative phase lent itself to a more divergent approach. A broad, open, explorative approach was followed. Instead of basing the present study on one specific theory, different theories were considered, for example, Spreitzer's (1995a) model was used for the quantitative research to measure psychological empowerment and all statistical data were converged onto the measures of the dimensions and overall PE, but for the qualitative phase, other theories, such as Menon's (2001) conception, were also incorporated. It also depended on what emerged from the qualitative interview data as the study was done from an emergence paradigm. Keeves and Sowden (1997) stated that although researchers recognise that a conceptual framework is employed to guide an investigation in qualitative and humanistic research, it is loosely structured, but open-ended with respect to the collection of data.

4.2.3 Inductive and deductive approaches

In analysing qualitative data either inductive or deductive approaches could be used. When using an inductive approach, data is analysed without the compulsion of applying knowledge of an existing theoretical framework. This approach allows for data to emerge and to speak for themselves (grounded theory approach).

The deductive approach is more theory driven and based on earlier studies. Categories were first identified according to existing theory and then relevant constructs were searched for in the data (Wakkee, Englis & During, 2007). The research questions that had to be answered provided categories that data had to fit into and to be able to test certain theories, it was necessary to frame some constructs and search for evidence, using a deductive approach. In analysing the data from the interviews, the inductive approach or emergence paradigm was favoured. Category substance and contents were developed as it presented itself.

4.2.4 Scientific approach

A social science approach was followed by studying people's perceptions, capacities, feelings and goals according to the humanistic orientation and organisational behaviour science (Ivancevich & Matteson, 1996).

4.2.5 Practical and applicable

From a developmental and management perspective, research is most useful when the positive outcomes are known and it can be applied in practice. Therefore, it was endeavoured to determine the factors that constitute a work climate that is conducive to optimal human functioning and then to recommend practical and scientific application of the findings, which would comply with the positive psychology paradigm (Lopez & Snyder, 2003) that was discussed in chapter one as a relevant paradigm for this study.

4.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

A mixed method sequential design, which included both quantitative and qualitative methods, was used. The study consisted of a two-phase sequential research project in which qualitative research consisting of in-depth interviews were conducted as a second-phase after a quantitative survey was done.

The main purpose of the quantitative phase was to examine the relationship between the independent variables and psychological empowerment. The quantitative orientation would suggest that one's 'amount' of psychological empowerment can be inferred and measured by means of a psychological instrument, while the influence of certain management practices on psychological empowerment can be determined by means of statistics. However, qualitative methods were used to gain a better understanding of the subjective or emotional experiences regarding empowerment and deductions were made regarding the interrelationships.

Creswell (2003) described different strategies for data collection in sequential models and the one used in the present study complies with a sequential transformative strategy. The sequential transformative strategy is characterised by two distinct data collection phases, one following the other. Unlike other strategies, in this design either quantitative or qualitative methods may be used first and the priority can be given to either phase. In the present study quantitative methods were used first, but priority was given to the qualitative method. The results of the two phases were integrated after the interpretation phase.

Another characteristic of the sequential transformative model is that it has a theoretical perspective to guide the study and its purpose is to employ the methods that will best serve the theoretical perspective. Two phases were used in this study to understand the phenomenon, psychological empowerment, in the South African context better and to be able to advocate strategies that will realise the experience of empowerment better.

The quantitative study served to answer the research question, *To what extent are South Africans psychologically empowered?* and the method of data collection is discussed under 4.5. Psychological empowerment (PE) of the respondents is measured by means of the Psychological Empowerment Instrument (PEI) discussed in section 4.5.2. The quantitative phase also investigated the relationship between specific contextual factors and PE to answer the research question, *What management practices contribute to psychological empowerment?* The contextual factor survey (CFS) is discussed in section 4.5.3. Relationships were tested between demographic variables (that were determined by means of the Demographic Data Questionnaire discussed in section 4.5.1) and PE and contextual factors and PE. The hypotheses that were posed regarding these relationships are discussed in sections 4.7.1 and 4.7.2.

For the qualitative phase, semi-structured interview questions were formulated to further explore research questions, *What are the general perceptions of empowerment in South Africa?; How do South Africans experience empowerment?; and What factors are perceived to have an effect on empowerment?* The method is discussed under 4.5 and the semi-structured interview format is discussed in section 4.5.4. In this phase it was allowed for novel characteristics and relationships regarding the experience of empowerment to emerge, while the interaction and interdependence of all the elements of empowerment were explored according to the systemic paradigm as suggested in chapter one.

The data collection procedure that was followed for the quantitative phase is discussed in section 4.6.1 and for the qualitative phase in section 4.6.2. The data analysis for the quantitative phase is discussed in section 4.8.1 and for the qualitative phase in section 4.8.2.

A visual model of the outline of the mixed method sequential design is presented in Table 4.1. It only serves as an overview of the process to give a clear picture of the progression of the two phases. The detail of the methods and procedures that were followed is discussed in the rest of the chapter. The outline in Table

4.1 indicates where activities for both quantitative and qualitative studies are shared or concurrent and where they are separated or sequential. The references to chapters serve as cross reference to indicate where it is discussed at length in the thesis.

Table 4.1: Mixed method sequential design

PHASE 1 QUANTITATIVE SURVEY	PHASE 2 QUALITATIVE SURVEY
1. Research problem and research questions (Chapter 1)	
2. Literature survey (Chapters 2 & 3)	
3. Define constructs Select/ develop survey questionnaires Identify population Sampling Collect data by means of Demographic questionnaire, PEI, CFS (Appendix A) Test hypotheses Discuss results in comparison with literature (Chapter 5)	Compile semi-structured questions (Appendix B)
4.	Sampling: Select participants Data Collection: Conduct interviews Interview data analysis Media survey and analysis Interpretation and comparison with literature (Chapters 6, 7 & 8)
5. Integration of results and interpretation – Discussion (Chapter 9)	
6. Conclusions and suggest strategies (Chapter 9)	
7. Conclusions and recommendations (Chapter 10)	

4.4 SAMPLING STRATEGY

As the title of the research project, Psychological Empowerment: A South African Perspective, suggests, the sample must be representative of the whole country. Sampling for the quantitative survey was done first and from the respondents, interviewees were selected.

4.4.1 Identifying the population

The population for the research was identified as employees representing diverse organisations and regions in order to ensure generalisability. To be representative of a South-African context, sectors, geographic areas, gender, race, level of education and position were considered. The suggestions of other researchers were kept in mind and it was attempted to obtain the participation of organisations in different sectors, as well as representivity with regard to the other demographic characteristics. According to the suggestion of Spreitzer (1995a), it was attempted to include organisations in the private and public sectors, as well as non-profit, non-government organisations.

4.4.2 Sample size

The rule of thumb is to use as large a sample as possible and this was strived for. A minimum of a 100 respondents could be regarded as sufficient for the statistical techniques planned for this study (Kerlinger, 1986). A guideline for regression analysis is that the ratio of observations to independent variables should not fall below five (Bartlett, Kotrlik & Higgins, 2001).

To determine the number of interviewees there are two criteria according to Seidman (2006). First, one has to consider sufficient numbers to reflect the range of participants and sites that make up the population. Another criterion is saturation of information. A point can be reached in which the interviewer begins to hear the same information repeatedly and recognises that no new information is forthcoming. A sample of participants, who all experience similar structural

and social conditions, give magnitude to the stories of a relatively few participants. Therefore, the process of identifying suitable candidates for interviewing is continued until a point of redundancy or saturation has been reached. An adequate sample refers to the sufficiency and quality of the data obtained according to relevance, completeness and amount of information (Neergaard & Ulhøi, 2007). Keeves and Sowden (1997) suggested that for a detailed, non-statistical analysis, 15 to 20 participants are the maximum amount of evidence that one researcher can work with.

4.4.3 The sample population

After deciding on a population, the next step was to engage in gaining access to organisations. A formal letter was composed for the attention of the management of organisations to request participation. Inclusion of organisations in the study, therefore, largely depended on the willingness of the organisations to participate.

It was planned that once contact had been established and participation from management obtained, management would be requested to identify a suitable contact person, preferably somebody in the human resources (HR) department. The researcher and HR manager would then together decide on the best method for distributing and collecting the questionnaires. Each member would receive a personal letter with a questionnaire with a request to complete it and return it.

In some cases the above procedure was followed and in others, self-addressed envelopes were included with questionnaires that were mailed, but the most popular means proved to be distribution by e-mail, which after completion was sent back directly to the researcher by e-mail. Respondents were asked to indicate their willingness to be interviewed.

Gaining access to organisations proved to be more of a practical problem than expected. The first step was to identify organisations in the different Sectors.

Different approaches were followed:

- A formal letter was addressed to the CEOs of the different Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) requesting assistance with the research.
- An internet search was conducted, for example, the website of Deloitte: The best company to work for. E-mails and letters were written to several companies, followed by telephone contact. Although some interest was initially expressed, after several follow-up calls, participation was denied.
- An article was published in an electronic news letter, Skills Portal. There were a few enquiries, but as soon as they heard it involved the completion of questionnaires, interest dwindled. One small company responded positively.
- Professional associations were contacted and asked to distribute questionnaires to their members and in this manner several questionnaires completed by individuals were returned.
- E-mail addresses of Municipal Managers of each municipality in the country were obtained and letters were distributed. Several municipalities responded with small numbers of completed questionnaires, some from individuals. The highlight of this effort was the participation of one large metropolitan municipality.
- In the end the researcher had to resort to a great extent to convenience sampling by making use of networks in order to get suitable organisations to participate in the quantitative phase.

From the private sector the largest participating organisation was an international manufacturing organisation in the food and beverage sector with its head office in one province and manufacturing locations in different geographic areas. Respondents from this company were on the middle management and professional levels. From a possible sample of eighty respondents that were identified and questionnaires were distributed to, only twenty-one responded. Among them there were one coloured male, one Asian female and one black female. The rest were white males and females. Information about the

company's demographics is not available. The rest of the private sector consisted of a variety of small organisations and individual respondents.

Public sector organisations across the whole country were contacted and questionnaires distributed in an attempt to cover all geographic areas. The responses varied from one to eight per organisation. The greatest contribution came from a metropolitan municipality. Questionnaires were distributed to about two thousand employees and responses were obtained from forty-three respondents. This number consisted of respondents on the lower level, management and professional levels and almost equal amounts of white and coloured employees, but no Asians and only one black female.

The non-government, non-profit sector was composed of two similar welfare organisations in different geographic areas with employees mainly consisting of white female professionals. The Gauteng based organisation also produced one black female professional and two white male managers, while the Western Cape based organisation produced six coloured female professionals, one coloured female administrator and one white male manager. Although they do serve black and coloured communities as well, the original organisations were established to serve the members of a particular denomination with mainly white membership with a European history.

In an attempt to rectify the imbalance in race, the Black Management Forum was approached to distribute questionnaires to their members on middle management level. The organisation did not respond to the request. Individuals were also approached, but they seemed reluctant.

Convenience played a role in selecting candidates for interviewing in the sense that candidates in close proximity were easier to get access to for face to face interviewing. Respondents who indicated willingness to be interviewed were contacted first. Volunteers were very few so the next step was to make use of the e-mail inbox to select candidates randomly that sent questionnaires by e-mail from a local public organisation to request participation. Only those who were

willing were interviewed. This method produced too many candidates from one sector. Two candidates from the private sector, who volunteered, were from the Gauteng Province. They were contacted for e-interviews. When that worked well, more candidates were selected from other provinces. A visit to Kwa-Zulu Natal presented the opportunity to interview one respondent in that province.

To build variation into grounded theory it makes sense to select extreme cases for interviewing in which variation is easily observable (Mäkelä & Turcan, 2007), for example, people who scored low and high on the PEI. Whereas maximum variation is important for delineating differences in quantitative research, in qualitative research common patterns that emerge from great variation are of particular interest (Neergaard & Ulhoi, 2007). When it was found that most candidates had low PE scores, more candidates were selected with scores 6,69 and higher.

4.4.4 Description of the sample

The total sample consisted of 176 respondents from different sectors and different employee levels.

4.4.4.1 Quantitative phase

Gender and race are of particular interest in empowerment research and are considered important variables. The larger part of the sample, 64,8%, was represented by female participants and 35,2% were male participants. Most respondents (75%) were white, followed by coloureds (18,8%) and blacks (5,1%), while only 1,1% of the respondents were Asian.

The respondents covered different levels of organisations and included administrative personnel on lower levels (17,6%), professional and technically qualified people (50%), and managers (32,4%). The job level was determined by a person's job title and a short description of core responsibilities.

All participants had at least a grade 12 education at the time. Of the respondents 13,6% had grade 12, 8,5% a post matric certificate, 44,9% a diploma or a degree and 32,4% were post graduates.

Because an agreement was made with organisations not to name them, as well as for the purpose of distinguishing between sectors, organisations were divided into three broad sectors. Organisations were divided into public sector (40,3%), private sector (31,3%) and non-profit, non-government sector (28,4%).

Province mainly indicated representivity of geographic areas. Most respondents were from Western Cape (53,4%) and Gauteng (26,7%) and small numbers from Kwa-Zulu Natal (7,4%), Free State (4%), Eastern Cape (2,8%), Mpumalanga (2,3%) and Limpopo and North West Province (each 1,7%).

The average age of the respondents was between 40 and 45 years, ranging from 22 to 63.

4.4.4.2 Qualitative phase

Following the guidelines for sampling for qualitative research, a total number of twenty interviews were conducted. Fourteen face-to-face interviews were conducted in the Western Cape and one in Kwa-Zulu Natal, while five e-interviews by means of written responses on the semi-structured questions were conducted with participants in Gauteng (4) and Free State (1). One participant was from one of the non-profit, non-government organisations, six from the private sector and thirteen from the public sector. With regard to gender, eleven female and nine male respondents participated. Thirteen participants were white, four coloured, two black and one Asian. Three participants held positions on the lower level, ten could be described as technical or professional and seven were on supervisor or manager level. Only one participant, a volunteer who did not complete a questionnaire, had less than a grade 12 qualification. Five participants did some studies after matriculation or were still in the process of

getting a qualification, eight had a degree or diploma, while six had a post-graduate qualification (see Appendix C).

4.5 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

Data collection in the quantitative phase refers to the scores obtained by means of questionnaires and which were analysed by means of statistical methods. Data collection in the qualitative phase implies verbal data obtained as examples of cognitions, dimensions, factors, etcetera; excerpts or narrations from the interviews that represent the perception, views, opinions or experiences of the participants.

The instruments described below were utilised for data collection in the quantitative phase and were followed by the qualitative methods. (See Appendix A for the complete questionnaire and Appendix B for the semi-structured questionnaire that was utilised for the interviews.)

4.5.1 Demographic Data Questionnaire

The main purpose of this questionnaire was to reflect to what extent the goal to have a survey that is representative of all the different groups of respondents in South Africa was reached. Although not a major focus, the relationship between demographic factors and psychological empowerment that may play a role in the experience of empowerment in the South African context was considered. Emphasising differences is not seen as relevant to the enhancement of psychological empowerment, but it is hardly conceivable that the unique demographic variables should be excluded. However, because the intent of the research was to obtain a better understanding of empowerment in the South African context it was necessary to determine all factors that play a role in the experience of empowerment.

The name of the organisation gave an indication of the sector in which the organisation fell. Geographic areas could be determined, only for the sake of

representivity and could be indicated by selecting one of the nine provinces of the country. Race was included and is normally considered an important variable, especially in terms of empowerment against the present socio-economic and political background. Asians, blacks, coloureds and whites are the usual main race groups under consideration. Gender (male or female) is another variable that has relevance in the present empowerment policies. The empowerment of women is receiving attention in the present socio-economic and political climate. Age was included as a variable as a matter of general interest for describing the population. Educational level was of particular importance to determine the relationship with sense of competence. Five categories (less than matriculation; matriculation/grade 12; certificate or one or two years post matric; three year diploma or degree; and post graduate) were included. Position or job title as well as core responsibilities were used to distinguish between job levels, namely managers, professional and lower level employees.

A list of methods of development and an open question enquiring about other means of empowerment were utilised to form an impression on what methods are currently used in organisations in South Africa.

4.5.2 Psychological Empowerment Instrument (PEI)

To answer research question 1, *To what extent are South Africans psychologically empowered?* respondents were required to complete a questionnaire developed by Spreitzer (1995a) (see Appendix A). The scale measures the four dimensions of psychological empowerment: meaningfulness, competence, self-determination and impact. The PEI developed by Spreitzer consisted of twelve items - three items per dimension. These are first order constructs and by calculating the average the second order construct, psychological empowerment, referred to in this study as overall PE, is derived.

Spreitzer (1995a) conducted a study to validate the dimensions of psychological empowerment in the workplace, which was discussed in chapter two. Based on Spreitzer's scale, Whetten and Cameron (1995) compiled the Personal

Empowerment Assessment with one additional item per dimension (sixteen items - four per dimension). The PEI used in the present study consists of 16 items with four four-item scales representing the four dimensions of psychological empowerment. The four dimensions or personal orientations were found to be characteristic of most empowered people:

Meaning: Empowered people have a sense of meaning when they feel that their work is important to them; personally meaningful; and they care about what they are doing.

Competence: Empowered people have a sense of competence; they are confident about their ability to do their work well; they have mastered the skills necessary to do their work; and they know they can perform their job requirements.

Self-determination: Empowered people have a sense of self-determination, which means that they have autonomy in determining how they do their work; they have opportunity for independence and freedom of choice in how they do their job; and they have a chance to use personal initiative in carrying out their work.

Impact: Empowered people have a sense of impact; they believe that they have impact on what happens in their departments; they believe that they have a great deal of control and influence over what happens in their departments; and that their opinion counts in departmental decision-making.

These dimensions are not specific management practices, but rather characteristics reflecting personal experiences or beliefs about their role in the organisation. Psychological empowerment is, therefore, defined as a process whereby an individual's belief in his or her worth is enhanced and thereby also enhancing a sense of meaning, a sense of competence, a sense of self-determination and a sense of impact. Empowerment is, therefore, conceptualised as psychological enabling.

Using a seven-point Likert-type scale, the respondents were required to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree that each statement describes how they feel about their work role:

1 = Very strongly disagree; 2 = Strongly disagree; 3 = Disagree; 4 = Neutral; 5 = Agree; 6 = Strongly agree; 7 = Very strongly agree.

Spreitzer (cited in Spreitzer, 1995b) identified these dimensions of empowerment using a thematic analysis of the interdisciplinary literature on empowerment and interviews with individuals on their personal experiences of empowerment in the workplace and developed the PEI. The four dimensions attributed to psychologically empowered people emerged from in-depth interviews in which individuals were asked to describe experiences of empowerment and disempowerment, as well as from the analysis of extensive survey research data.

The validity of the instrument was presented in Spreitzer (1995a). Confirmatory factor analysis suggested that the four dimensions were distinct from one another, while second-order confirmatory factor analysis suggested that the four dimensions combine into an overall measure of psychological empowerment. Test-retest reliability has been shown to be strong and validity estimates for all the items of the dimensions were reported to exceed 0,80.

Other researchers tested the construct validity of scores on Spreitzer's PE scale. Kraimer et al. (1999) did confirmatory factor analysis and found substantial support for Spreitzer's four empowerment dimensions: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact. Griggspall and Albrechts (2003) used exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis and found substantial support for Spreitzer's four dimensions of psychological empowerment. Results did not, however, support Spreitzer's argument for a higher order factor of psychological empowerment with results suggesting the dimensions would be better treated as four first order factors, rather than a single higher order construct of empowerment. Boudrias et al. (2004) did hierarchical confirmatory factor

analysis. They found that the impact dimension did not load strongly on the PE second-order construct.

The inclusion of the impact dimension may cause problems for the measure of PE of lower level employees (Boudrias et al., 2004). It was also indicated that self-determination is a precursor of impact (Kraimer et al., 1999), which could mean that only employees who perceive that they have decision-making power will have a sense of impact. The PEI was not adapted to fit lower level employees, but it was kept in mind when hypotheses were formulated.

Most of the research on psychological empowerment used Spreitzer's (1995a) model up to 2001. Until Menon's (2001) model was developed, it was the only measurement that was validated and reliable. Menon and Kotze (2005) did a South African study using Menon's (2001) model. Other than that, no research reports were found that were done locally based on Spreitzer's (1995a) model.

4.5.3 Contextual Factor Survey (CFS)

To determine whether there is a relationship between contextual factors and psychological empowerment in South Africa and to answer research question 2, *What management practices contribute to psychological empowerment?* the CFS had to be completed. To achieve the aim, to be able to recommend strategies for empowerment, the management practices that contribute significantly to psychological empowerment gave an indication of what practices should receive attention when best practices were advocated. The data obtained from this survey enabled the researcher to formulate recommendations after all findings were integrated.

In determining the scope of information to include in the survey, a comprehensive literature survey was done. From a large number of existing empowerment literature, three critical areas, namely organisational climate, management practices/behaviours, and job description were considered, but a decision was taken to focus on management practices alone. Researchers had many different

ideas about what constitutes organisational climate, but it was concluded in chapter three that most factors that were found to have a significant effect on psychological empowerment can be just as well described as management practices. The literature survey indicated a number of factors that play a role in psychological empowerment and twelve management practices were selected to be included in the survey on the grounds of the frequency with which these factors were mentioned. The results of the qualitative phase give an indication of whether the choice of practices was correct.

The literature was also explored for existing constructs and survey items and where suitable questionnaire items could not be found for management practices, items were developed. Konczak et al. (2000) developed a questionnaire about leader behaviours. The behaviours were found in their study to be positively related to psychological empowerment. Dimensions from The Leader Empowering Behavior Questionnaire (LEBQ) were included.

The items for autonomy and delegation were adapted from the LEBQ by Konczak et al. (2000), although in their definition autonomy is called self-directed decision-making. One item was adapted from the LEBQ for feedback, while the others were developed from the literature. Social support was mentioned by various authors and items were developed. Participation and/or involvement was discussed in various management sources, but not often included in surveys. Items were developed based on these sources. For information sharing, one item was taken from the LEBQ and the other two were developed, based on the literature. Two items for development were taken from the LEBQ and one developed. Rizzo et al. (1970) developed questionnaire measures of role conflict and ambiguity. Some of their items were adapted for job/role clarity. Items for access to resources were adapted from Spreitzer's (1995b) social structural items. Trust, modelling and motivation were often mentioned in the literature but no survey items were found, therefore, items were developed based on literature.

Positive wording was used for all items (Konczak et al., 2000). Reverse-scored items are sometimes introduced to prevent response bias, but it was also found

that by misreading it, distortion of data may result (Idaszak & Drasgow, 1987). Babbie (1983) also warned against potential dangers of fostering a response set, but only if respondents assume that all statements represent the same orientation and when reading quickly may misread some of them. On the other hand it is an advantage if respondents are able to complete a set of questions faster when the same orientation is used. Respondents can also quickly review their answers by comparing their strength of agreement with their earlier responses.

The CFS was developed to determine employee perceptions of their work environment in terms of management practices. These perceptions are descriptively based rather than value based. Each item starts with the phrase, "My manager/management," followed by a description of a manager's behaviour or the prevailing management practice and does not enquire about how satisfied the person is about, for example, the amount of autonomy allowed in the organisation (Altmann, 2000).

Only three items were developed or chosen for each management practice. The reason for this was to keep the questionnaire short and manageable, especially with resistance to completion of questionnaires and survey fatigue in mind. Konczak et al. (2000) also feared that a lengthy questionnaire may result in careless responding. A first draft was developed and it was presented to an academic and two industrial psychologists to review to ensure that the wording was clear and the items unambiguous.

The management behaviours and practices that were found in the literature were not defined consistently the same by the different researchers. The management practices, therefore, had to be defined as constructs for the present study for the purpose of measuring it in the contextual factor survey.

Items were measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = Very strongly disagree; 2 = Strongly disagree; 3 = Disagree; 4 = Neutral; 5 = Agree; 6 = Strongly agree; 7 = Very strongly agree). The CFS consists of 36 items (objective statements)

representing twelve management practices with twelve three-item scales that are proposed as essential behaviours to enhance psychological empowerment.

A seven-point scale has the advantage that greater variance results. A possible disadvantage is that variance of summated rating scales often contains response-set variance. Individuals may have tendencies to use certain types of responses, such as extreme responses, neutral responses, agree responses or disagree responses. Kerlinger (1986) affirmed Nunnally's (1978) opinion that although the researcher should be aware of the possible threat to validity of response-set, the negative effect is often over emphasised.

4.5.3.1 *Definitions*

The constructs were defined as management practices or behaviours that are experienced as empowering by their subordinates.

- *Autonomy*

Autonomy was defined as the practice or behaviour that encourages subordinates to develop their own solutions to problems they encounter in their work; rely on them to make their own decisions about issues that affect how work gets done; and permits them to use their own initiative to decide how to go about doing things at work (Block, 1991; Joyce & Slocum, 1982; Konczak et al., 2000; Spreitzer, 1997).

- *Delegation of responsibility*

Delegation of responsibility was defined for the present study as the practice or behaviour whereby the manager gives the subordinates the authority to make changes necessary to improve things; allows them to take responsibility for the outcome of their work objectives; and authorises them to make decisions that improve work processes and procedures (Konczak et al., 2000; Lawler, 1992).

- Feedback

For the purpose of the present study, feedback was defined as the practice or behaviour whereby the manager gives clear information about employees' performance and efficiency on the job; gives feedback that is aimed at suggestions on how to improve, rather than blaming and criticising; and provides opportunities to discuss results with him or her (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Harter, 1978; Kanter, 1993; Konczak et al., 2000; Martinko & Gardner, 1982).

- Social Support

Social support was defined for the present study as the practice or behaviour that demonstrates willingness to respond to subordinates' concerns on a personal level; availability to provide support and guidance; and support and encouragement to take initiative and risk (Barry, 1994; Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Corsum & Enz, 1999; Kieffer, 1984; Klagge, 1998; Mok & Au-Yeung, 2002; Murrell, 1985; Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997; Zall et al., 2001).

- Participation / Involvement

For the purpose of this study participation and involvement were defined as the practice or behaviour shown as consultation with subordinates when their workgroup is affected by a decision on his or her level; inviting ideas and suggestions from lower levels; and practicing participative management (Clutterbuck & Kernaghan, 1994; Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Klagge, 1998; Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997; Wagner, 1994; Yukl, 1998).

- Information sharing

Information sharing was defined for the purpose of this study as the practice or behaviour demonstrated by sharing information that subordinates need to ensure high quality results; giving them the information they need to make the decisions that are expected of them independently; and imparting strategic information they

need to fulfil their responsibilities (Blanchard et al., 1999; Block, 1991; Bowen & Lawler, 1992; Konczak et al., 2000; Lawler, 1992).

- Development

Development was defined as ensuring that continuous learning and skill development are priorities; the utilising of coaching, mentoring, facilitation and counselling as means to enhance subordinates' competence; and ensuring that opportunities for development of abilities relevant to subordinate's positions are provided (Barry, 1994; Bowen & Lawler, 1992; Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Geroy et al., 1998; Kieffer, 1984; Kinlaw, 1995; Klagge, 1998; Konczak et al., 2000; Lawler, 1992; Vogt & Murrell, 1990; Wood & Bandura, 1989; Zimmerman, 1995).

- Job / Role clarity

For the purpose of this study job and role clarity was defined as the practice or behaviour where the manager is clear about the delegations of subordinates and how much authority they have; lets them know exactly what is expected of them; and is clear about what their responsibilities are (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Rizzo et al., 1970; Klagge, 1998; Spreitzer, 1996).

- Access to resources

Access to resources was defined as the management responsibility to ensure that subordinates have access to the resources they need to do their job well; to enable subordinates to obtain additional resources when they need them to do their job; and to allow them to obtain the resources they need without having to ask permission (Bowen & Lawler, 1992; Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Kanter, 1993; Menon, 2001; Murrell, 1985; Spreitzer, 1995b; Vogt & Murrell, 1990).

- Trust

Trust was defined as the trustworthiness of managers on the one hand to be trusted to share information that enables subordinates to feel safe to take the risk to make decisions, and on the other hand the behaviours that demonstrate confidence in subordinates to execute responsibilities entrusted to them to the best of their ability, as well as promoting trust, respect and cooperation among co-workers (Blanchard et al., 1999; Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Kane-Urrabazo, 2006).

- Modelling

Modelling was defined for the present study as managers who are role models for successful goal accomplishment, are successful and serve as a role model and set an example, maintain high moral values and deserve the respect of subordinates (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Geroy et al., 1998; Gist & Mitchell, 1992; Klagge, 1998; Lawler, 1992; Wood & Bandura, 1989).

- Motivation

The definition for motivation was articulated as managers who motivate their subordinates through enhancing their belief in their competence; continually encourage or motivate subordinates to improve their performance; and set challenging goals and motivate subordinates towards the accomplishment of them (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Gist & Mitchell, 1992; Lawler, 1992; Wood & Bandura, 1989).

4.5.3.2 *Reliability and validity*

Cronbach's Alphas and means and standard deviations were computed for the items of the CFS and the results are presented in chapter five. All alpha reliability coefficients for the item scores on the 12 factors range from 0,84 to 0,95, which are acceptable. It corresponds with the reliability coefficients for

scores on the six-factor LEBQ with a range from 0,82 to 0,90 (Konczak et al., 2000). LEBQ dimensions were used to determine their relationship with psychological empowerment and moderate to large correlations were found. Spreitzer's (1995a) scale for access to organisational resources achieved an acceptable level of reliability of 0,87. It was used to determine whether it facilitates empowerment, but it was not found to be related. Rizzo et al. (1970) reported reliabilities of 0,82 for role conflict and 0,78 for role ambiguity. These scales were used to examine the relationship of role conflict and ambiguity with managerial practices and leader behaviour, satisfaction, anxiety and commitment. Positive correlations were found.

4.5.4 Semi-structured interviews

The following research questions were intended to be answered by means of interviews:

Research question 3, *What are the general perceptions of empowerment in South Africa?*

Research question 4, *How do South Africans experience empowerment?*

Research question 5, *What factors are perceived to have an effect on empowerment?*

Interviewing was used as a data collection method in qualitative research in order to understand the lived experience of the interviewees and the meaning they make of that experience. Interviewing provides access to the context of people's behaviour and thereby provides a way for researchers to understand the meaning of that behaviour. A basic assumption in in-depth interviewing research is that the meaning people make of their experience affects the way they carry out that experience (Seidman, 2006). The process of qualitative research is largely inductive, with the research results based on generating meaning from the data collected in the field (Berg, 2007; Creswell, 2003).

This type of interview involves asking a number of predetermined questions on the topic under investigation. These questions are typically asked of each interviewee in a systematic and consistent order, but the interviewer may also probe beyond the answers to the prepared questions (Berg, 2007; Creswell, 2003).

The aim of the research prescribes the subjects to explore. In considering what is appropriate, Seidman (2006) suggested that interviewers distinguish among public, personal and private aspects of a participant's life. The public aspect is what participants do and in this study only referred to the working life. Personal aspects that were covered in the interview included the participant's beliefs about him or herself, subjective experience of positive and negative events during their career and their feelings about it and personal goals. Subjective experiences outside the workplace were not explored.

Quinn and Spreitzer (1997) asked individuals to describe experiences of empowerment and disempowerment to determine the characteristics of empowered people and identified the four characteristics most empowered people have in common. By using the same point of departure it was anticipated that dimensions would emerge, either novel or similar to Spreitzer's (1995a; 1995b) dimensions (meaning, competence, self-determination and impact). As social life operates within fairly regular patterns (Berg, 2007), the purpose of interviews was to examine patterns and to create a theory relevant to the South African context or to refine existing theories to be relevant.

Semi-structured interviewing was utilised by posing questions that allowed participants to express their views. The semi-structured interview questions were, (see Appendix B for a complete list of questions) first of all, formulated to answer research questions. To find out what the general perceptions of empowerment in South Africa are, interviewees were asked what they think of when they hear the word empowerment. To determine how South Africans experience empowerment they were asked to relate specific positive and negative experiences during their careers, as well as when in general they either

feel good or not so good about themselves. It was also expected that characteristics of empowered people would emerge and the characteristics most empowered people have in common were identified. To find out which factors are perceived to have an effect on empowerment, interviewees were asked about factors that they see as possible obstacles for them to achieve their goals. They were also asked what they would single out as the most important contributing factor(s) to what they have become.

Interviewees were asked to describe their work background and their career opportunities and the intention was initially to obtain context information, but behavioural aspects were also derived from the information, for example, what a person did to get ahead in the organisation.

Apart from the inductive approach to determine dimensions and characteristics, participants' experience of empowerment was also explored against theoretical frameworks in a more deductive manner. Zimmerman (1995) proposed a nomological network that has to include observable measures relevant to psychological empowerment. The network consists of three components, namely intrapersonal, interactional and behavioural, which he believed present a complete picture of psychological empowerment. To find out what the importance of these components were, questions were asked to prompt responses in this regard. From a question about what a person believes about him/herself, information was obtained about the intrapersonal component and also gave an indication of the cognitions that relate to dimensions of empowerment. The interactional component was determined by means of enquiring about awareness of resources that participants can utilise to achieve goals, while the behavioural component emerged from enquiring about what people do to overcome obstacles.

Menon's (2001) theory includes goal internalisation as a dimension of psychological empowerment. Interviewees were, therefore, asked about goals that they may still want to achieve in their careers. It was also found that when

people are allowed to talk about their goals, it is easier for them to relate factors that hamper or boost the achievement of goals.

Probing questions were introduced to draw out more complete information where the researcher was not satisfied that a response gave enough information.

Berg (2007) advocated the use of modern technology, for example, computer assisted interviewing. Exactly the same semi-structured interview questions were used for interviews conducted via e-mail. The so called e-interview method has both advantages and disadvantages. One big advantage is that busy participants and researchers do not have to find a mutually convenient time and place to make the interview possible. Another big advantage of e-interviewing is that the responses are already transcribed and ready for analysis, which saves much time. For a researcher who strives to report on a nationwide perspective, it is impossible to cover the total demographic area to conduct face-to-face interviews. The biggest advantage of e-interviewing in this research was the increase in the number of interviewees that could be covered in different geographic areas.

A disadvantage is that it is easier to put off responding to an e-mailed questionnaire. The ideal is that there should be interaction in which statements are clarified and probing can be done for further information. With e-interviewing there can be a considerable delay in interaction. The interviewees' time and schedule are respected and they are not committed to replying promptly. Another consideration is that it does not have the capacity for observing body language, voice tone and inflection as in face to face communication. A fair amount of emotion can be conveyed and it carries equivalent levels of information richness to face-to-face interaction. The interviewer may verify certain expressions by asking how a person feels (Wakkee et al., 2007). This, however, also depends on the interviewee's ability to express him or herself in writing. Interviewees may have a need to please and be accepted and with more time to answer, they may think more or even try to find 'text book' answers.

Interviewees were asked to 'speak' about their personal experiences and perceptions and not try to give formal and 'correct' answers.

The possibility that the type of interviewee chosen may affect the findings is debatable. If different participants were chosen to interview, entirely dissimilar and perhaps contradictory information might have been collected. Therefore, the validity, reliability and generalisability can be questioned. Because these interviews are about perception on the one hand, it reflects the interviewees understanding of the context and experience at the time of the interviews. Internal consistency can only be determined in follow-up interviews or long interviews in which questions are repeated in different ways. Interviewing different people from the same organisation can help in establishing validity to a certain degree. If certain inconsistencies are found, the interviewee can be asked to clarify the answers that are contradicting in a follow-up interview, telephone call or e-mail (Seidman, 2006).

4.5.5 Alternative sources

According to Berg (2007), qualitative research seeks answers to questions by examining various social settings and the individuals who inhabit these settings. He calls it unobtrusive measures for examining and assessing human traces or evidence of how people behave and think or indications of what may influence their thinking.

To determine what the general orientations towards empowerment are in business and management, newspaper articles and editorials were analysed as additional, alternative sources of information. A general belief is that the mass media has the ability to influence public opinion as radio, television and newspapers present information regarding current events, trends and issues to millions of people. The internet is also fast becoming part of the mass media. The printed media in the form of newspaper articles and editorials were analysed to complete the picture posed in research question 3, *What are the general perceptions of empowerment in South Africa?*

Newspaper and magazine articles are primarily written with the aim to inform the public or a selected section of the public. Cape Business News 2006 and 2007 issues were scanned for indications of how empowerment is envisaged in the world of business, and how it is presented to business people, while the periodical, Management Today was monitored over a period of one year, 2006, to see how the management fraternity is informed regarding empowerment. An internet search on the Media 24 website, news24.com, was done for articles containing the word 'empowerment' for the period 1 Jan 2008 to 30 April 2008. These were scanned to obtain a perspective of how the general public is informed.

4.6 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

4.6.1 Quantitative data

As explained in the sampling strategy, a contact person in each participating organisation was identified and a method for distributing questionnaires was determined by what was convenient to this person. In some cases hard copies were provided to the contact person who distributed and collected them. In most cases a copy was sent by e-mail to the contact person who distributed it on their system. Respondents were asked to send it directly to the researcher. In one case the organisation provided an address list of their regional offices. Where e-mail addresses were provided questionnaires were sent by e-mail, otherwise it was sent by post and addressed envelopes were provided for returning the completed questionnaires. All questionnaires were accompanied with a cover letter, providing information about the aim of the questionnaires and assurance that answers will be treated with confidentiality.

4.6.2 Qualitative data

Interviews were conducted at the respondents' place of work, as well as by means of e-interviews. When arrangements were made for the interviews,

participants were informed about how much time was being asked of them and what the purpose of the interview was. A written consent form was drawn up, which was signed by the interviewee and also by the interviewee's manager if it was deemed necessary.

In the case of face-to-face interviews, an observation was made of the interviewee's work environment. For this there were no definite constructs that were observed, however, indications of the self-confidence of the individual, subordinates or seniors' attitude and respect, etcetera, were noted. This included a description of an individual's demographic data and setting (type of organisation).

At the start of the interview the purpose and procedure of the interview was explained again. It was confirmed that the interviewee did not have an objection to be recorded and transcribed or that written answers be used in the case of e-interviews. It was further explained that the interview is analysed for themes. The interviewee was put at ease about the use of the data explaining that once the data are pooled, no individual can be implicated and that his or her name and the organisation's name will never be mentioned in subsequent publications. Individuals were prompted to articulate as fully as possible, in their own most meaningful terms, a description of their personal experiences.

Berg (2007) suggested that the interviewer become reflexive during the interaction. The interviewer had to find a happy medium between being reflexive and flexible and controlling the process in order to stay focused on the intended information gathering.

4.7 HYPOTHESES

In this research study the dependent variable is psychological empowerment; the extent to which employees perceive their empowerment.

4.7.1 Demographic variables

To determine the extent to which South Africans are psychologically empowered, the population was broken down into the demographics of the country. The differences between genders and races were, therefore, also examined in order to further elaborate on what the South African context mean. The research questions do not address demographic variables directly, although position in the organisation, level of education and sectors could be regarded as factors that have an effect on empowerment.

4.7.1.1 *Gender and race differences*

It was concluded in chapter three that it might have been a reality in the past that white men had more opportunities and consequently experienced more empowerment than women and other races, but that much has changed as a result of affirmative action and empowerment of the previously disadvantaged. Although it was important that all race groups should be equally represented, unfortunately it was not the case. Because of the small numbers of Asians and blacks that participated, it was not feasible to distinguish between race groups, but because the term previously disadvantaged individuals forms such a prominent part in the present socio-political environment and in respect of empowerment, it was decided to draw a distinction between the 'previously advantaged' (whites) and 'previously disadvantaged' (Asians, blacks and coloureds).

After a review of previous research in chapter three, the assumption was made that there should be no difference between men and women and the previously advantaged and previously disadvantaged.

Hypothesis 1a: There is no significant difference in the perception of empowerment between men and women.

Hypothesis 1b: There is no significant difference in the perception of empowerment between the previously advantaged and the previously disadvantaged.

4.7.1.2 Position in the organisation

Following the argument in chapter three that the dimensions should be treated as first order factors, especially when differences between the different levels of employment in organisations are considered, the following assumptions were made:

Where meaning is concerned, the assumption was made that managers and professionals will experience a higher sense of meaning than lower level employees.

Where competence is concerned, it was assumed that there will be no difference in perception of competence between people in different positions in the organisation.

It was concluded that self-determination is more descriptive of management and professional positions and, therefore, the assumption was made that managers and professionals perceive a greater sense of self-determination than lower level employees.

It was also concluded that if conditions are not conducive to the experience of self-determination, a sense of impact will also be low and that impact is not part of the experience of lower level employees. It could, therefore, be accepted that lower level employees will have a significantly lower sense of impact than professionals and managers.

Hypothesis 2a: Managers and professionals have a greater sense of meaning than lower level employees.

Hypothesis 2b: There is no difference in perceptions of competence between managers, professional and lower level employees.

Hypothesis 2c: Managers and professionals have a greater sense of self-determination than lower level employees.

Hypothesis 2d: Managers and professionals have a greater sense of impact than lower level employees.

4.7.1.3 Level of education

A general assumption would be that there is a positive relationship between level of education and perceptions of empowerment, especially a sense of competence.

Seeing that findings regarding the relationship between level of education and feelings of empowerment differ from organisation to organisation it could be assumed that it will differ among sectors as well. The following hypotheses were formulated:

Hypothesis 3a: There is a significant positive relationship between level of education and perception of competence in all sectors.

Hypothesis 3b: There is a significant positive relationship between level of education and psychological empowerment in the private sector.

Hypothesis 3c: There is no significant positive relationship between level of education and psychological empowerment in the public sector.

Hypothesis 3d: There is no significant positive relationship between level of education and psychological empowerment in non-profit non-government organisations.

4.7.1.4 Sectors

The intuitive assumption is that the private sector has more resources for empowerment and is better able to employ highly skilled and efficient people and, therefore, their employees have a greater sense of empowerment than those in the public sector. The participants in the non-profit, non-government organisations are mostly professional women.

Hypothesis 4a: There is no significant difference in perception of empowerment between employees in a non-profit non-government organisation and the public sector.

Hypothesis 4b: Employees in the private sector have a greater sense of empowerment than employees in the public sector.

4.7.2 Contextual factors

The twelve contextual factors or management practices were chosen for the study because it was assumed that they are positively related to psychological empowerment. The research question, *What management practices contribute to psychological empowerment?* was partly answered by determining the relationship between management practices and psychological empowerment, but the best predictors were the more specific answers that were sought.

Hypothesis 5a: Management practices are positively related to the experience of empowerment.

From the literature it was concluded that delegation of authority is more effective in creating a sense of empowerment than participation. It was, therefore, assumed that delegation will be a better predictor of psychological empowerment than participation.

Hypothesis 5b: Delegation contributes more towards psychological empowerment than participation.

4.7.3 Qualitative research

While Seidman (2006) reckoned that hypotheses have no place in qualitative research, Berg (2007) suggested a process of negative case testing. The suggestion was that the researcher should initially assume that the data reveal no patterns or relationships. Then the researcher should state a relationship as not existing and then seek clear evidence based on examples (not less than three) from the data that there is one. This would imply that a deductive approach is used. Based on theory and earlier studies, some assumptions were made about relationships. Instead of formally stating that a relationship does not exist, it was attempted to search for examples that would give an indication of a relationship between locus of control and psychological empowerment, as well as indications of how cognitions, awareness and behaviour relate to psychological empowerment.

4.8 DATA ANALYSIS

4.8.1 Statistical analysis of quantitative data

To answer research question 1, *To what extent are South Africans psychologically empowered?* the following analyses were done:

The scores of the items were summed and averaged to produce scale averages and an individual's psychological empowerment (PE) score was obtained by summing the scores for the dimensions and determining the average. The numerical results obtained from the PEI gave comparable figures of the state of psychological empowerment and for the different dimensions.

4.8.1.1 *Hypotheses regarding demographic variables*

To determine the difference and significance between genders and race, means and standard deviations were first calculated and where there seemed to be a difference a two-tailed *t*-test was performed to determine whether the difference was significant.

Analysis of variance was done to determine whether significant differences exist between the levels of employment and the four dimensions of empowerment, meaning, competence, self-determination and impact. Where significant differences were found, ad hoc Scheffé tests were done to determine the exact nature of the differences.

To test the hypotheses regarding level of education, correlations were calculated between level of education and psychological empowerment for the sectors separately.

Analysis of variance was done to first of all determine if there were significant differences between the perceptions of empowerment in the different sectors. A *post hoc* Scheffé test was then done to determine between which sectors the significant differences occurred.

4.8.1.2 *Psychological empowerment in the South African context*

Analysis of variance was done to determine the standing of the population in terms of the four dimensions of psychological empowerment (meaning, competence, self-determination and impact). To obtain a perspective on how the South African sample compares with the norm provided by Spreitzer and Quinn (2001) percentile scores were calculated.

4.8.1.3 *Hypotheses regarding management practices*

The following was done to answer research question 2, *What management practices contribute to psychological empowerment?*

Means and standard deviations were calculated for the contextual factor survey, which gives an indication of how management practices are perceived in the South African context.

Correlation coefficients were determined to test hypothesis 5a and multiple regression analysis was done to determine the relative contribution of each management practice and test hypothesis 5b.

In order to be able to construe strategies for empowerment from the research findings, it was necessary to test which of the management practices as independent variables have an effect on the dependent variable, psychological empowerment. Analysis of variance and regression analysis were done for this purpose.

4.8.2 Analysis of data obtained from interviews

4.8.2.1 *Method of analysis*

Content analysis was used for the analysis of interview data in order to answer the research questions. To be able to do this the recorded interviews had to be transcribed verbatim and interviews that were conducted in Afrikaans had to be translated. Analysing the content of the e-mail interviews was not different from the transcribed interviews as the same semi-structured interview questions were used. E-mail content was copied and pasted from the outlook express format into a word document that was created for the purpose. A careful, detailed, systematic examination and interpretation of the transcribed material was done in an effort to identify, themes, patterns and meaning relevant to the topic under investigation.

According to qualitative research principles, each word a participant speaks reflects his or her consciousness. The participants' thoughts and beliefs (cognitions) were expressed in their words and these were recorded as fully and as accurately as possible, because by substituting what the participants say with the researcher's paraphrasing or summaries is to substitute the researcher's consciousness for that of the participant. Seidman (2006) stressed the importance of working with the material as a whole by starting the analysis with the complete, verbatim interviews. No parts of the tapes were pre-selected to transcribe and no parts were omitted, because it could lead to premature judgements about what is important and what is not.

The complete verbatim transcripts had to be reduced to what is of most significance and interest by coding the evidence obtained and key words were used for this purpose (Keeves & Sowden, 1997). According to Seidman's (2006) suggestion, the reducing of data was initially done inductively. In analysing the transcripts anything that was thought of as being of interest was marked by selecting key words and highlighting it in a different font colour. The grounded theory approach utilises three methods of coding and this first step is called open coding (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delport, 2002)

A separate document was opened and named 'Themes'. Parts consisting of the highlighted key words were copied and pasted under the headings of the key words indicating a theme. When more than one theme was mentioned in the same passage, it was nevertheless shown under each theme. This was done as initial content analysis, partly to determine in what categories the themes belonged and if a theme was strong enough in terms of frequency to be identified as belonging to one of the main categories. Berg (2007) suggested that a minimum of three occurrences can be considered a pattern and Seidman (2006) contended that an aspect or experience that comes up repeatedly carries more weight. In executing this initial analysis a phenomenological approach was followed. Creswell (2003) described the process as distinguishing significant statements and grouping it together in possible meaning units. In this first stage the meaningful units were themes, which next were grouped into categories.

The conceptual framework served to develop specific research questions, which determine the major categories of the analysis. The main categories in this case were determined by research questions, as well as the theoretical frameworks. Once the criteria for selection for various categories have been established, the next stage is to sort the data accordingly. Themes were analysed and it was decided in which categories they belonged.

4.8.2.2 *Research questions*

The analysis was related to the original research questions. The research questions provided the main categories according to which the analysis was executed.

Research question 3, *What are the general perceptions of empowerment in South Africa?* relates to the interview question that explored what the general perceptions about empowerment are in South Africa by asking participants what the first thing is they think of when they hear the word, empowerment. In this manner the analysis provides the researcher with a means by which to learn about how subjects view their social world and how these views fit into the larger frame of how the social sciences view these issues and interpretations. The deductions were made directly from a specific question and it was not necessary to analyse the content to find the answer. The category here is 'Perceptions' and a document was opened and named as such.

Research question 4, *How do South Africans experience empowerment?* was the main source for the category, dimensions. During the first stage of the analysis, an inductive approach was used to analyse the data that were obtained by asking participants about positive and negative experiences during the course of their careers. Data were analysed for themes as described above and these themes were then reviewed as a next step for expressions that could be categorised as dimensions or characteristics of psychological empowerment. The inductive approach entailed that instead of looking for Spreitzer's (1995a; 1995b) dimensions, the themes were analysed with an open attitude, seeking

what emerged as possible dimensions. A document was opened and named 'Dimensions.' The themes relevant to dimensions or characteristics were then copied and pasted into this document.

The deductive approach was followed to find specific examples for the categories 'Cognitions', 'Awareness' and 'Behaviours' according to the theoretical framework that Zimmerman (1995) proposed and 'Goals' according to Menon's (2001) theory. Relevant parts were copied and pasted into these documents. The excerpts or identifying key words were then organised in matrices in order to be able to make comparisons and interpretations for meaning and meaningful patterns, for example, to compare qualitative findings with quantitative results. For comparisons of participants in terms of the components of empowerment and locus of control, profiles were crafted according to the method suggested by Seidman (2006). It entailed searching for relevant excerpts in the transcripts and combining them according to the components to reveal characteristics of interest. This procedure whereby data are put back together in new ways after open coding is called axial coding (De Vos et al., 2002).

Research question 5, *What factors are perceived to have an effect on empowerment?* provided the category 'Factors', and specific questions were asked to determine what was perceived as factors that influence psychological empowerment, which implies a deductive process. The same process described for dimensions were followed and a document was opened with the name 'Factors.' The themes that could be described as factors were pasted into this document.

4.8.2.3 *Patterns and relationships*

It was found that some themes were related to others or could be regarded as components of the same superordinate theme and these were then organised accordingly. A matrix display was used to summarise the information once integration between quantitative and qualitative results was done and patterns and relationships were indicated. The verbal interview data were laid out in order

to reveal patterns or relationships with the measured higher order construct, psychological empowerment.

4.8.3 Analysis of data obtained from alternative sources

The deductive approach was used when a search was done by analysing articles from the magazine Management Today, Cape Business News and news24.com. Two constructs were used, namely empowerment and management to determine how perceptions are shaped regarding these constructs. Management Today was analysed to see what aspects of management are highlighted and if empowerment of subordinates is regarded as important, for example, by taking note of the frequency with which employee empowerment is the main theme or just mentioned in sub parts of the article. The search criterion was the keyword 'empowerment' for identifying relevant articles.

Cape Business News was scanned for indications of empowerment as seen as a mechanistic approach, meaning that empowerment is described only in terms of BEE or BBEE or whether it is described in terms of the development of employees or both.

News24.com articles containing the word 'empowerment' were scanned to obtain a more general perspective on what the perceptions regarding empowerment are.

4.8.4 Interpretation

Mäkelä and Turcan (2007) advocated presenting propositions (theory suggestions) as explicit sentences sorted out from the body text by some form of emphasis and not embedded in the text. The factors that were found to be contributors to PE in the quantitative phase, as well as the dimensions and factors that emerged from the verbal interview data were summarised after each relevant analysis.

The process of interpretation was done in different phases due to the mixed method sequential design. The conclusions drawn from the quantitative data were discussed in comparison with other research findings to distinguish similarities and dissimilarities with the South African context.

In the content analysis, conceptual clusters emerged to give rise to theory regarding dimensions of psychological empowerment and contextual factors that are relevant to the South African context. Dimensions and factors must be grounded in the data from which they emerge. Deriving meaning from evidence and drawing conclusions were aided by noting frequencies and by asking questions about patterns and relationships and plausibility and by building logical sequences and constructing causal chains (axial coding). Meaning was also derived from a comparison of the findings with information from the literature (Creswell, 2003; Keeves & Sowden, 1997; Seidman, 2006).

The interpretation of the qualitative data was presented as results to answer research questions as follow:

Research question 3: *What are the general perceptions of empowerment in South Africa?* is discussed in chapter six.

Research question 4: *How do South Africans experience empowerment?* is discussed in chapter seven.

Research question 5: *What factors are perceived to have an effect on empowerment?* is discussed in chapter eight.

The patterns that emerged from this step were then considered in light of relevant literature and or theory and possible links to theory or other research were indicated. In order to be able to conclude how existing theories apply to the study of psychological empowerment in South African organisations, findings were compared in terms of cognitive theories and social cognitive theory.

The raw data involves excerpts from media reports and transcribed interviews. The raw data is available on request from the researcher. An example of a transcribed interview is provided in Appendix D.

With the findings from the quantitative statistical data and qualitative verbal data known, the next step in the process was to integrate the findings and conclusions were made. An explanation for the findings was offered. The interpretation was concluded with the meaning that was derived from the analysis in order to achieve the final aim, to be able to recommend strategies for empowerment. Moving from the descriptions of the perceptions, dimensions and factors to conceptualisation, is the third step in coding, namely selective coding (De Vos et al., 2002).

4.9 ADVANCEMENT

The findings on research questions 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 were compared and conclusions drawn in order to be able to suggest strategies for empowerment.

The advocacy knowledge claim as described by Creswell (2003) was utilised in this part of the study. Advocacy was done with the socio-political and economical context in mind. Creswell stated that inquiry needs to be intertwined with politics and political agenda. It was anticipated that the research results would lead the researcher to formulate recommendations for the reform of empowerment strategies and practices that may change the lives of the employees in South Africa for the better. Theoretical perspectives were integrated with the philosophical assumptions that construct a reflection of the issues regarding empowerment, the individuals involved and the changes that are needed (Creswell, 2003). In chapter nine a strategy for empowerment that will result in psychological empowerment is proposed.

4.10 ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER

The researcher investigated South Africans' understanding of the world in which they live and work in terms of empowerment. Creswell (2003) stated that people develop subjective meanings to their experiences. Instead of accepting that psychological empowerment can be described in terms of the four dimensions suggested first in Thomas and Velthouse's (1990) model of intrinsic task motivation and researched by Spreitzer (1995a; 1995b; 1996) and associates, the researcher attempted to determine how South Africans experience it. The position the researcher took was one of a socially constructed knowledge claim. The goal of the research was, therefore, to rely on participants' views of (psychological) empowerment and to make sense of the meanings South African employees have about their world of work (Creswell, 2003).

The researcher tried to understand the context of the participants through visiting their work domain and gathering information personally and making an interpretation of the findings (Creswell, 2003).

4.11 POTENTIAL ETHICAL ISSUES

Ethics concerns the morality of human conduct and in psychological research it refers to the moral consideration and accountability on the part of the researcher throughout the research process. Professional associations place emphasis on the responsibility of the researcher to ensure informed consent to participation and ensuring the privacy of respondents by maintaining confidentiality and anonymity (Edwards & Mauthner, 2002).

Organisations might have felt that they will be exposed if it should come to light that their empowerment efforts are inefficient for employees to experience them as positive. Therefore, it was stated in letters to them that they will only be referred to as an organisation belonging to, for example, the public sector. Organisations that participated received a written guarantee that no information that can compromise them will be made known.

Questionnaire respondents were assured that the information they give will be confidential. All information was pooled and integrated and there is no way any responses can be traced back to them. Subjects participated on a voluntary basis. Subjects were not deceived or subjected to any form of experimentation or life threatening risk at all.

Interviewees were informed regarding the purpose and method to be used and their oral consent was obtained to tape record the interviews. They were given the assurance that neither their names nor their organisations' will be mentioned in any publication. The interview consisted of open-ended questions, therefore, they only imparted information they felt comfortable with. Interviewees were respected and discretion used to protect their sense of worth. However, the purpose of the research is increase of knowledge and interviewees' own words were used in order to demonstrate certain characteristics, but care was taken to protect their anonymity (Edwards & Mauthner, 2002).

4.12 SUMMARY

The theoretical framework of suitable approaches and techniques, as well as the paradigms applicable to analysing data were outlined. In order to facilitate a research project that provides reliable data and answers to research questions that will contribute to the knowledge and understanding of psychological empowerment in the South African context, a two-phase sequential research design was decided on and outlined in this chapter. To produce a comprehensive understanding it was envisaged that a qualitative phase will add value to the quantitative survey data.

Some difficulties were experienced in the sampling process, but for the purpose of the research the aim to obtain a sample that consists of three sectors, namely private, public and non-profit non-government organisations and that also include managers, professionals, as well as lower level employees was accomplished.

The utilities of the instruments that were used to do the quantitative survey, namely a Demographic Data Questionnaire, Psychological Empowerment Instrument, and a Contextual Factor Survey were discussed. The discussion of the instruments incorporated the definitions of the contextual variables included in the study. The data collection procedures for both the quantitative and qualitative phases were explained. The data collection procedure for the qualitative phase consisted of semi-structured interviews and the methods used were explained.

From previous research and suggestions flowing from it, hypotheses were formulated for the quantitative phase of the research. It was indicated what statistical analyses were used to test the hypotheses and also to answer the research questions, to what extent South Africans are psychologically empowered and what management practices contribute to psychological empowerment.

As the analysis of qualitative data consists of content analysis with an inductive approach, some guidelines in this respect were presented as well as the methods and steps that were followed. It was indicated how the data analysis was conducted in the qualitative phase in order to answer the questions about what the general perceptions of empowerment in South Africa are, how South Africans experience empowerment and what factors are perceived to have an effect on empowerment.

The final aspect of analysis, interpretation, together with the final stage of the research project, the integration of the findings of both quantitative and qualitative phases, guided the researcher in conceptualising psychological empowerment as experienced in a South African context. The interpretation and conceptualisation contributed to the formulation of theory and recommendation of practices and strategies for psychological empowerment applicable to the context.

The next step in achieving this aim is the presentation of the results of the quantitative research as well as a discussion of the findings, and this will be reported in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter the approach, methods, strategies and procedures for both quantitative and qualitative research were described. Hypotheses were formulated according to assumptions stemming from research reviewed in the literature. The aim of this chapter is to discuss the results of the quantitative survey. Hypotheses were tested regarding demographic influences and relationships between contextual factors and the dependent variable, psychological empowerment and the results are discussed. Statistical analyses were conducted to answer research question 1, *To what extent are South Africans psychologically empowered?* A comparison is made with an available norm. Multiple regression analysis was done to determine which factors are the best predictors of psychological empowerment and to answer research question 2, *What management practices contribute to psychological empowerment?* The results are compared with previous research and deliberations in the management literature and conclusions are made.

5.2 DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Although the main purpose of the research was not to compare different groups in terms of how psychologically empowered they are, gender differences and differences between the previously advantaged and previously disadvantaged groups are of interest to investigate as it forms part of the present socio-political climate in the country. How employees on different position levels differ in terms of the dimensions of psychological empowerment and how the sectors differ in terms of the relationship between educational level and empowerment, as well as perceptions of empowerment are also explored.

5.2.1 Gender differences

5.2.1.1 Results

Hypothesis 1a: There is no significant difference in the perception of empowerment between men and women.

A *t*-test was done to determine whether significant differences exist between male and female respondents with respect to psychological empowerment. The results reported in Table 5.1 indicate the means on the total PE scores on the PEI, as well as the standard deviations.

Table 5.1: T-test: Gender differences on the PE measure

Gender	Mean	Std dev	<i>n</i>	<i>t</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value
Female	5,62	0,70	114	-0,08	0,93
Male	5,63	0,97	62		

A two-tailed *t*-test indicated that the difference was not significant at the $p < 0,05$ level and the hypothesis is , therefore, supported.

5.2.1.2 Discussion

Research about gender differences was reviewed and studies in different eras and different cultures turned out different results. Gecas (1989) reviewed several research studies and concluded that males have a greater sense of self-efficacy, personal control and mastery than females. This conclusion was made about research done before 1990 and the finding could perhaps be regarded as typical of a pre-nineties era. However, a recent study by Hechanova et al. (2006) found that men felt more competent and reported more meaning in their work than women. This was a study done in the Philippines. If it is typical of a culture, it cannot be said with certainty when it is taken into account that the Filipino culture could be described as a blend of Eastern and Western traditions due to history. With its Asian geography, early Indian, Islamic and Chinese influences by way of

traders, and Spanish and American colonisations, different cultures left their mark on the inhabitants of the Philippines (<http://www.wikipedia.org>).

The research that was reviewed that found no significant differences between genders regarding empowerment related matters were all post-nineties. Koberg et al. (1999) found that although women were in less powerful jobs than men, their perceived empowerment did not differ significantly. Boudrias et al. (2004), concluded that their results did not justify treating men and women differently when studying their cognitions associated with empowerment. Two South African studies that were reviewed did not find conclusive differences between genders. Menon and Kotze (2005) found no gender differences with respect to perceived control and perceived competence. However, women reported lower goal internalisation compared to men. Kotze et al. (2005) found that the factor with the least impact on perceived control was gender. Ozaralli (2003) found no significant gender differences with respect to their leadership and empowering behaviours in a Turkish study. The Turkish culture can be described as diverse as it had both European and Middle East influences. The culture experienced transformation from a religion-driven to a nation state. Although the tendency is towards 'modern' and Western, traditional values are still maintained (<http://www.wikipedia.org>).

The presumption that different cultures may explain differences between genders regarding the perception of self-efficacy was mentioned by Gecas (1989). According to this author, the most common explanation for differences between genders, involves cultural factors, for example, sex-role stereotypes. Cultural conceptions of 'masculinity' and 'femininity' differ in terms of emphasis on action and assertiveness in males and passivity, dependence and conformity in females. Sex-role socialisation results in different conceptions of self-efficacy for boys and girls. Ryan et al. (2005) also attributed gender differences to socialisation when they found men were more inclined to claim autonomy than women.

Gecas (1989) also mentioned structural factors as explanation for gender differences in perceptions of self-efficacy. Structural factors point to power differences between men and women in society and the workplace and the nature of typical male and female roles. However, the author did recognise that cultural conceptions of sex-roles were undergoing considerable redefinition resulting in pressure for change and that the extent of the change depends on how structures of interaction in family and workplace change. According to Kanter (1993), the notion that men are more ambitious, task-oriented and committed than women and that women care more about relationships at work, should be questioned. When women seem to be less motivated or committed, it is probably because their jobs carry less opportunity.

Hechanova et al. (2006) ascribed the difference they found to the possibility that men were given more opportunities for development and responsibilities than females and Leana (1987) found that delegation was used more often with male subordinates, while participation was used more with female subordinates. These are examples of structural factors. Where men and women are treated differently in organisations, genders will have different experiences of empowerment. Zimmerman's (1995) contention that psychological empowerment may differ across people, contexts and times, is evident here.

Studies by Menon and Kotze (1995) and Kotze et al. (1995) were done in the SANDF. A military culture was traditionally male dominated. After the integration of the South African Defence Force and the non-statutory forces in 1994 there were many demands for change of culture. Equal opportunities were emphasised. Although women in uniform and women officers were already well established by 1994, the last domain exclusive to men was the combat zone. It was only after considerable transformation took place that women were allowed to exercise their choice to serve in the combat corps. Although there are still more women in the supporting positions than in combat positions compared to men, it is now a matter of choice and not of exclusion.

The fact that no difference between men and women was found in this study may be an indication that the implementation of equal opportunities in the workplace and the emphasis on empowerment of women may have had a general effect. Traditionally in South Africa socialisation was characterised by men being regarded as the 'head of the family' and prior to 1990 the tendency in organisations was still towards white male domination in management positions. This again points to the importance of contextual factors for empowerment and the perceptions of empowerment in South Africa.

5.2.2 Race differences

5.2.2.1 Results

Hypothesis 1b: There is no significant difference in the perception of empowerment between the previously advantaged and the previously disadvantaged.

A *t*-test was done to determine whether significant differences exist between the previously disadvantaged and the previously advantaged participants with respect to psychological empowerment. The results reported in Table 5.2 indicate the means on the total PE scores on the PEI, as well as the standard deviations.

Table 5.2: T-test: Differences between the previously disadvantaged and the previously advantaged on the PE measure

Race	Means	Std dev	<i>n</i>	<i>t</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value
Previously disadvantaged	5,37	1,08	44	-2,53	0,01
Previously advantaged	5,71	0,67	132		

A two tailed *t*-test was done to establish the significance of the difference between the two means and it was found to be significant at the $p = 0,01$ level.

The hypothesis is, therefore, not supported. Contrary to the expectation, the previously advantaged, in other words, whites, still feel more empowered than other races.

5.2.2.2 *Discussion*

Although researchers in the United States of America expected to find differences in race, their hypotheses were not supported. Koberg et al. (1999) found no significant difference between whites and non-whites and Young et al. (2007) found that ethnicity was not a factor of influence in their study regarding perceived offensiveness in the face of disempowering acts.

In a South African study Menon and Kotze (2005) expected that the integration process in the SANDF would have resulted in no difference between racial groups in terms of perceived control. The study indicated that blacks reported lower perceived control and competence compared to whites, while Asians and coloureds did not differ significantly from whites on these two indicators. The study showed that coloureds and Asians in the SANDF feel more empowered in terms of control, competence and goal internalisation than blacks and whites. Blacks and coloureds reported higher goal internalisation than whites. The authors attributed their findings to the effects of structural factors. They mentioned the effects of especially fast tracking as a mechanism to speed up affirmative action, as well as expectations that were not met.

The assumption was made that all the efforts that were made to eradicate discrimination and provide equal opportunities would result in no difference in empowerment perceptions. However, it seems that race differences are more difficult to address by means of constitutional mechanisms than gender differences.

5.2.3 Position in the organisation

5.2.3.1 Results

In chapters three and four it was suggested that the dimensions of empowerment should be treated as first order factors, especially when differences between the different levels of employment in organisations are considered.

Hypothesis 2a: Managers and professionals have a greater sense of meaning than lower level employees.

Analysis of variance was performed first to determine whether significant differences existed. The results reported in Table 5.3 indicate the means of the scores on sense of meaning on the PEI, as well as the variance. To determine between which position levels the significant differences were, *post hoc* Scheffé tests were done.

Table 5.3: ANOVA: Position – sense of meaning measure

Position	Means	Var	<i>n</i>	<i>F</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value
Lower level	5,47	2,45	31	6,36	0,00
Professionals	6,18	0,50	88		
Managers	6,09	0,85	57		

The means of the sense of meaning measures of managers and professionals were higher than that of lower level employees and the difference between the three groups was significant ($F(2; 173) = 6,36$; significant at the $p = 0,00$ level).

A *post hoc* Scheffé test indicated a significant difference between lower level employees and professionals ($p = 0,00$) and between lower level employees and managers ($p = 0,02$), but the difference between managers and professionals was not significant ($p = 0,84$).

The hypothesis is, therefore, supported. Managers and professionals do have a greater sense of meaning than lower level employees.

Hypothesis 2b: There is no difference in perceptions of competence between managers, professional and lower level employees.

Analysis of variance was performed first to determine whether significant differences existed. The results reported in Table 5.4 indicate the means of the scores on sense of competence on the PEI, as well as the variance.

Table 5.4: ANOVA: Position – Sense of competence measure

Position	Means	Var	n	F-value	p-value
Lower level	5,76	1,56	31	1,88	0,16
Professionals	6,03	0,44	88		
Managers	6,11	0,63	57		

Although there is a difference in the means, the difference between the levels of employment and the sense of competence measure was not significant ($F(2; 173) = 1,88; p = 0,16$). The hypothesis is, therefore, supported. There is no difference in perceptions of competence between the different levels of employment.

Hypothesis 2c: Managers and professionals have a greater sense of self-determination than lower level employees.

Analysis of variance was performed first to determine whether significant differences existed. The results reported in Table 5.5 indicate the means of the scores on sense of self-determination on the PEI, as well as the variance. To determine between which position levels the significant differences are, a post hoc Scheffé test was done.

Table 5.5: ANOVA: Position – Sense of self-determination

Position	Means	Var	N	F-value	p-value
Lower level	5,76	1,56	31	4,58	0,01
Professionals	6,03	0,44	88		
Managers	6,11	0,63	57		

The difference between the sense of self-determination of the different levels of employment was significant ($F(2; 173) = 4,58; p = 0,01$). The scores obtained by managers and professionals were higher than that of lower level employees.

A *post hoc* Scheffé test indicated a significant difference between lower level employees and managers ($p = 0,01$), but no significant difference between lower level employees and professionals ($p = 0,21$) or between professionals and managers ($p = 0,21$). The hypothesis is, therefore, only partly supported. Managers have a significantly greater sense of self-determination than lower level employees.

Hypothesis 2d: Managers and professionals have a greater sense of impact than lower level employees.

Analysis of variance was performed first to determine whether significant differences existed. The results reported in Table 5.6, indicate the means of the scores on sense of impact on the PEI, as well as the variance. To determine between which position levels the significant differences were, a *post hoc* Scheffé test was done.

Table 5.6: ANOVA: Position – Sense of impact

Position	Means	Var	n	F-value	p-value
Lower level	4,16	3,09	31	12,53	0,00
Professionals	5,07	1,19	88		
Managers	5,48	0,81	57		

Although the sense of impact scores were lower than all the others, the perceptions of the lower level employees appear to be lower than that of professionals and professionals also appear to have a lower sense of impact than managers. The difference between the levels was significant ($F(2; 173) = 12,53; p = 0,00$).

A *post hoc* Scheffé test indicated a significant difference between lower level employees and professionals ($p = 0,00$) and lower level employees and managers ($p = 0,00$), but no significant difference between professionals and managers ($p = 0,12$). The hypothesis is, therefore, supported. Managers and professionals have a greater sense of impact than lower level employees.

Generally it seems that professionals and managers feel more empowered than lower level employees. Analysis of variance was also done to determine what the effect of level of employment is on the overall measure of PE and the results are reported in Table 5.7.

Table 5.7: ANOVA: Position – overall PE

Position	Means	Var	<i>n</i>	<i>F</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value
Lower level	5,11	1,39	31	9,57	0,00
Professionals	5,67	0,41	88		
Managers	5,84	0,42	57		

The difference between the positions was significant with respect perceptions of empowerment ($F(2; 173) = 9,57; p = 0,00$).

A *post hoc* Scheffé test indicated a significant difference between lower level employees and professionals ($p = 0,00$) and managers ($p = 0,00$). There was no significant difference between professionals and managers ($p = 0,42$).

The findings were much as expected. It is only with respect to self-determination where it seems that professionals did not differ significantly from either lower

level employees or managers, while managers did, as expected, differ significantly from lower level employees.

5.2.3.2 *Discussion*

Griggspall and Albrecht's (2003) suggestion that the four dimensions would be better treated as four first order factors, rather than a single higher order construct of empowerment, was an influence in the decision to formulate hypotheses with respect to position with the dimensions as dependent variable.

Meaning was associated with the functions of managers (Foulkes, 1969) and the value of the task, goal or purpose, the feeling that a vocation is important, associated with professionals (Appelbaum et al., 1999; Spreitzer, 1995a; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). The assumption was, therefore, made that managers and professionals will experience a greater sense of meaning than lower level employees and in the present study it was found to be accurate.

With respect to competence the hypothesis that there are no differences between the different position levels in an organisation was prompted by the opinion of Gist (1987) that position in the organisation does not solely determine how people perceive their efficacy, because they do not compare themselves with people outside their reference group. However, it was also suggested that an individual may feel efficient about his or her skills when compared to the referent subgroup, but may lack self-efficacy in a broader environment, such as in an organisation. Each job should have a specified set of skills that are required. The logical conclusion would be that if employees compare themselves with people on their position level that their sense of competence may not differ much from managers and professionals, who in turn compare themselves with colleagues on their level. With the finding of the present research, that there is no difference in perception of competence between people in different positions, it can be accepted that employees judge their competence in comparison with equals or job level requirements and not with superiors.

Being free to choose how to do work as Spreitzer (1995b) defined self-determination, is certainly more descriptive of management and professional positions and, therefore, the assumption was made that managers and professionals perceive a greater sense of self-determination than lower level employees, but it seems that it is only true for managers.

According to the classical organisation theory, every position in a formal organisational structure should have a specified set of tasks or responsibilities, which mean that on all levels employees are accountable for specific performances (Rizzo et al., 1970). Boudrias et al. (2004) suggested that while the feeling of impact does not really form part of the empowerment experience of lower level employees, because they do not have as much impact on a department than what managers do, the difference may be less if the referent, 'department' in Spreitzer's (1995a) PEI, was replaced with, for example, work unit, which lower level employees may associate more readily with. In the present study the PEI was not adapted and it was expected that lower level employees would experience a significantly lesser amount of sense of impact than professionals and managers. The fact that this assumption was confirmed, is perhaps an indication that the Boudrias et al.'s (2004) suggestion carries weight.

Kraimer et al.'s (1999) suggestion that conditions for self-determination are necessary to experience a sense of impact, was the basis for assuming that if people do not experience self-determination they would also not experience a sense of impact. In the present study it turned out that professionals did not experience a significantly greater sense of self-determination than lower level employees, but they did experience a significantly greater sense of impact, which may indicate that the dimensions could be treated as separate.

Koberg et al. (1999) found that feelings of empowerment increased as the individual's rank in the organisation increased. Their study included upper-level managers, physicians, supervisors, professionals and technicians. Menon and Kotze (2005) expected that rank in a military context would be a significant

predictor of perceived control and regression analysis confirmed this. A study by Ergeneli et al. (2007) revealed that among all the demographic variables, position was the only variable to yield a significant direct and positive effect on overall psychological empowerment. They found that overall psychological empowerment was positively related to increase in managerial level. The same was found for the self-determination and impact dimensions of psychological empowerment, but not for meaning and competence.

5.2.4 Educational level

5.2.4.1 Results

Although development as a contextual factor is covered later, the demographic questionnaire also enquired about a person's level of education. The correlation between level of education and psychological empowerment (PE) was calculated. There was a significant positive relationship between educational level and PE ($r = 0,23$; $p < 0,05$). However, the assumption was that level of education would have a stronger relationship with perception of competence.

Hypothesis 3a: There is a significant positive relationship between level of education and perception of competence in all sectors.

Contrary to what was expected the positive relationship that existed between level of education and perception of competence was not significant ($r = 0,13$; $p = 0,05$). The conclusion was made that sense of competence was not derived from theoretical knowledge underlying job requirements only.

However, because the evaluation of different findings created the assumption that empowerment perceptions may differ among sectors, the following hypotheses were formulated:

Hypothesis 3b: There is a significant positive relationship between level of education and psychological empowerment in the private sector.

The correlation coefficient was calculated and a positive relationship was found. However, the relationship was not significant. This hypothesis is not supported.

Hypothesis 3c: There is no significant positive relationship between level of education and psychological empowerment in the public sector.

The correlation coefficient was calculated and a positive relationship between level of education and PE in the public sector was found. The relationship was significant. This hypothesis is, therefore, not supported.

Hypothesis 3d: There is no significant positive relationship between level of education and psychological empowerment in non-profit non-government organisations.

The correlation coefficient was calculated and a positive relationship was found. The relationship was not significant. This hypothesis is supported.

Table 5.8 indicates the correlations between level of education and the PE scores of participants in the different sectors.

Table 5.8: Correlations: Educational level – PE according to hypotheses 3b, 3c and 3d

Sector	Correlation	<i>n</i>
Private sector (H3b)	0,14	55
Public sector (H3c)	0,24*	71
Non-gov non-profit organisations (H3d)	0,14	50

* $p < 0,05$

5.2.4.2 Discussion

In different organisations different results were found when the contribution of level of education to empowerment was examined. Gecas (1989) referred to several findings that education increased the sense of mastery and personal

control. Ozaralli (2003) found that university graduates felt a greater sense of self-empowerment compared to primary school and high school graduates in different sectors and Spreitzer (1996) found that in a Fortune 50 organisation, those with more education were more empowered.

Kotze et al. (2005) found that educational qualification had very little impact on perceived control in the SANDF. Koberg et al. (1999) and Sarmiento et al. (2004) found that level of education was not significantly related to empowerment.

Conger and Kanungo (1988), Kinlaw (1995) and Klagge (1998) endorsed meaningful education and growth of competence as conditions for empowerment. The present study did find a significant positive relationship between educational level and psychological empowerment, but there does not seem to be a pattern according to which organisations or sectors differ in terms of this relationship.

Silver et al. (2006) observed and compared empowerment initiatives of a non-profit and a for-profit organisation. The for-profit organisation was more successful in achieving empowerment than the non-profit organisation and amongst other factors, the for-profit organisation was more willing to budget for empowerment initiatives. The assumption was made that the private sector may be more willing to invest in education as every decision is a calculated decision with the effect on profit in mind.

Other than that there was no comparable research found to give an indication of perceptions of the value of education and what the effect is on perceptions of empowerment. This matter is discussed further when the results of the quantitative and qualitative studies are compared. There are different ways of viewing this phenomenon, for example, it may be that the public sector's salary scales are connected to level of education, which gives the educated employees an additional sense of empowerment, while the private sector focuses more on performance with respect to reward. Another look at the population revealed that

in the non-profit non-government organisations all but one were graduates, in the private sector 80% were graduates and in the public sector 62% were graduates. The opinion that the public sector attaches less value to education may be true, but it could also be argued that on the individual level from where the data were obtained, education is seen as an important factor that contributes to empowerment.

5.2.5 Sectors

5.2.5.1 Results

It was suggested in chapter four that there could be a difference in the perceptions of empowerment between the different sectors.

Hypothesis 4a: There is no significant difference in perception of empowerment between employees in a non-profit non-government organisation and the public sector.

Hypothesis 4b: Employees in the private sector has a greater sense of empowerment than employees in the public sector.

Analysis of variance was first done to determine whether differences between the sectors were significant. When a significant difference was found, a *post hoc* Scheffé test was done to determine between which groups the significant differences were.

The results are reported in Table 5.9. The means of the PE scores on the PEI, as well as the variance are indicated.

Table 5.9: ANOVA: Sectors – PE

Position	Means	Var	N	F-value	p-value
Non-gov, non-profit organisations	5,61	0,28	50	4,71	0,00
Private sector	5,88	0,36	55		
Public sector	5,45	1,04	71		

The difference between the sectors with respect to their employees' perceptions of empowerment was significant ($F(2; 173) = 4,71; p = 0,01$).

The *post hoc* Scheffé test indicated no significant difference between non-government non-profit organisations and the private sector ($p = 0,22$) or the public sector ($p = 0,53$). The only significant difference existed between the private sector and the public sector ($p = 0,01$). Therefore, both hypotheses are supported.

5.2.5.2 Discussion

The mere reference to organisational climates that are conducive to empowerment (James & Jones, 1974; Joyce & Slocum, 1982), suggests that organisations may differ with respect to psychological empowerment. However, in this study, the data of different organisations were compounded to form sectors and the argument may not be relevant. Sectors do, however, consist of the same type of organisations.

Studies that found differences in empowerment across different types of service sectors were Ozaralli (2003) and Hechanova et al. (2006). The latter found differences in the meaning and impact dimensions, but not in competence and self-determination. However, they used different categories of sectors and, therefore, it is only important to note that they did find differences in psychological empowerment across sectors.

5.2.6 Methods of empowerment

A list of methods of development and open question enquiring about other means of empowerment was utilised to form an impression on what methods are currently used in organisations in South Africa. The frequency with which methods were indicated was calculated and the percentages are indicated in Table 5.10. In this study the strategies that organisations employ for empowerment form part of the context in which employees function and experience empowerment.

Table 5.10: Options and frequencies of methods of empowerment

Functional Training Course 45,5%	Management Developmental Course 35,2%	Formal Tertiary Education 73,9%	Coaching/ Mentoring 48,3%
In-post Training 57,9%	Part-Time Study at own initiative 38,1%	Soft Skills Management Programme 22,2%	Organisational Development Programme 32,9%

It seemed that the most common means of empowerment is formal tertiary education (73,9%) and the high percentages of graduates reflect this. The value of education was emphasised by Conger and Kanungo (1988), Kinlaw (1995) and Klagge (1998), while Bowen and Lawler (1992) and Lawler (1992) stressed the importance of relevant economic literacy in business.

The next highest percentage was obtained for in-post training and it is understandable as it is the most economic and practical manner of empowering employees. The 48,3% for coaching and mentoring is a good sign as the benefits are widely publicised. Several authors, such as Barry (1994), Geroy et al. (1998), Kane-Urrabazo (2006), Kinlaw (1995), Klagge (1998), Konczak et al. (2000) and Zimmerman (1995) promoted coaching and mentoring as methods for empowerment.

For the enhancement of skills Kanter (1993) suggested that a job analysis should be executed to determine the competencies and content knowledge needed. This may apply to both functional training that addresses the technical requirements of the job and in-post training.

Where functional training and development focus on improving skills and knowledge of individuals, organisational development represents planned attempts to improve overall group and organisational performance (Ivancevich & Matteson, 1996). Where empowerment initiatives are implemented formally, organisational development forms part of the plan. Porras et al. (1982) trained supervisors to develop better participative problem-solving skills as an organisational development intervention. Kotze et al. (2005) suggested that superiors must be trained to delegate responsibilities and authority to subordinates and to involve them in decision-making.

As management practices were considered as an important contextual factor that contributes to empowerment, it follows that management training is necessary when empowerment is strived for. Training sessions on management style can change a company's climate to be conducive to empowerment (Foulkes, 1969).

It seemed that soft skills management programmes are not done often. Gist (1987) believed that more emphasis should be on altering cognitions regarding self-efficacy instead of just on lectures and verbal persuasion, imparting relevant knowledge, which implies that soft skills are essential. Soft skills form part of personal development, which assists employees to cope with the sociological challenges associated with employment, for example, interpersonal skills that managers need to feel empowered in their managerial positions. Kotze et al. (2005) came to the conclusion that empowerment initiatives will benefit from training that is aimed at training different racial groups on assertiveness, leadership competencies and practices.

Relatively few respondents completed the open question (28,4%) enquiring about other means of empowerment that were utilised. The responses are listed in order of frequency:

- Practical experience and exposure
- Networking, interaction and discussions
- Workshops, conferences and seminars
- Self-study
- Reading
- Research
- The opportunity to exercise own initiative
- Professional membership
- Learning from co-workers
- Observing others (modelling)
- Self-empowerment.

The frequency with which practical experience and exposure was mentioned may be an indication of another factor that is a stronger predictor of sense of competence than educational level. Unfortunately a category for years in the present position that would give an indication of experience was not included consistently in the demographic survey. The items, years in the present organisation and years in present position, were included in the questionnaires completed by the employees in the non-government non-profit organisations. In both organisations no significant relationship was found between years of experience and psychological empowerment. The only significant relationship that was found was a negative relationship between years of service in the organisation and perceptions of management behaviour and practices. This gave the impression that people with fewer years of service were more positive about management. It was then decided to drop the item 'years in present organisation' from the questionnaire. The item 'years in present position' was included in 85% of the questionnaires ($n = 149$) and in retrospect, the relationship between years in present position and sense of competence was calculated, but still no significant positive relationship was found ($r = 0,09$; $p < 0,05$).

5.2.7 Other observations

It was not the intention to test the effect of geographical distance between management and employees, but it did become evident where two similar organisations from different geographical areas showed a difference with respect to the relationship between management practices and PE. The one organisation was located in one city, while the other covered a vast rural area. In the city organisation where everybody was in reasonably close proximity to the Head Office and management, all the practices, except access to resources correlated significantly with PE. The organisation that covered the whole of a province and in some cases the employees were literally hundreds of kilometres away from the supervisor, let alone the management, there were no correlations found between management practices and PE.

Differences between organisations with respect to the relationship between management practices and PE were also noted between the largest private sector organisation and the largest public sector organisation. Significant correlations occurred in the public sector organisation with respect to eight of the twelve management practices in descending order: delegation of responsibility, motivation, development, job/role clarity, autonomy, feedback, participation and information sharing. In the private sector organisation the only significant relationship was found between delegation of responsibility and psychological empowerment.

5.2.8 Conclusions

In testing hypotheses regarding demographic variables, It was found that gender differences with respect to psychological empowerment were not significant, while the previously advantaged feel more empowered than the previously disadvantaged. In general managers and professionals have a greater sense of empowerment than lower level employees, however, it is not applicable as far as a sense of competence is concerned. Level of education was found to be positively correlated with PE, but contrary to what was expected the relationship

between level of education and perception of competence was not significant. It was found that the only significant positive relationship between level of education and PE was in the public sector.

It was also expected that the broad sectors will differ with respect to perceptions of empowerment. The only significant difference was found between the private sector and the public sector, with the PE measure of the private sector significantly higher than that of the public sector.

Although the results indicated that the measure of psychological empowerment differs only with respect to race, employee levels and organisation types and not gender, the literature suggests that management practices, socialisation, structural factors and the implementation of certain mechanisms can still influence how different genders and races are treated and that it will have an effect on perceptions of empowerment (Gecas, 1989; Hechanova et al., 2006; Kotze et al., 2005; Leana, 1987; Ryan et al., 2005). Equal opportunity should exist to rectify past inequalities, but merit should not be ignored, otherwise the scale may tip in another direction. If men and women or races are being treated differently in organisations, and as long as it is an ongoing practice, differences in perceptions will remain relevant. However, more should be done to enhance feelings of empowerment among previously disadvantaged groups.

When no significant difference was found with respect to sense of competence between lower level employees and managers and professionals, it was concluded that reference groups may have an influence on how employees perceive their sense of competence as it was suggested in the literature. With the finding of the present research, it can be accepted that employees judge their competence in comparison with equals or job level requirements and not with superiors.

A non-significant relationship between level of education and perception of competence was not expected and the conclusion was made that sense of competence was not derived from education only. However, years of experience

in the present position also did not reveal a significant positive relationship. The findings of the qualitative research shed more light on this phenomenon.

The assumption that the private sector regards education as important and, therefore, educational level will have a positive relationship with PE in the private sector was not correct. With regard to non-profit non-government organisations, the assumption was that employees are mostly professionals and, as it is expected of them to have an academic qualification, it would not make a difference in their perception of competence and according to the results this could be true. It was assumed that education is not valued in the public sector and, therefore, it would not have an effect on experience of empowerment, but the results indicated that education does have an effect on perceptions of empowerment in the public sector.

It was not the intention to evaluate Spreitzer's (1995a) PEI, and more statistical analysis is necessary to do that, but judging from the results it does seem that it is an instrument more suitable for use with managers and professionals than lower level employees, except with respect to the competence dimension.

5.3 STATE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT

Analysis of variance was calculated to indicate how the sample differed in terms of the four dimensions of psychological empowerment to demonstrate the incidence of psychological empowerment in South Africa as one of the aims of this study was to determine the state of psychological empowerment in the country. The results also addressed research question 1, *To what extent are South Africans psychologically empowered?*

5.3.1 Analysis of variance

Table 5.11 shows the mean values and variance obtained from responses from the sample:

Table 5.11: Analysis of variance on the PEI (Score range = 1-7)

PE Dimension	Means	Variance	N
Meaning	6,03	1,01	176
Competence	6,01	0,71	176
Self-Determination	5,43	0,98	176
Impact	5,04	1,58	176

The average on the overall PE scores was 5,63 with a standard deviation of 0,80.

From the above it seems that South Africans have a better sense of meaning and competence than their sense of self-determination and especially a sense of impact. The difference between the means was significant ($F(3; 700) = 37,7; p = 0,00$). It might be a result of the inclusion of lower level employees who have a significantly lower sense of self-determination and impact as was indicated.

5.3.2 Percentile comparisons

To obtain a perspective on how the South African sample compares with similar studies in the United States of America and Asia, Table 5.12 shows the percentile scores for individuals who completed the same PEI across a number of industries in the United States and Asia up to the executive ranks of the organisations (Spreitzer & Quinn, 2001). To compare South African employees' scores with these, the highlighted scores indicate those nearest to the average scores of the sample used in this research.

An average score of 6,03 for meaning, puts this sample above 55% of people in the comparison group;

An average score of 6,01 for competence, puts the sample above 60% of people in the comparison group;

An average score of 5,43 for self-determination puts the sample above 45% of people in the comparison group;

An average score of 5,04 for impact puts the sample above 55% of people in the comparison group; and

An average of 5,63 on overall empowerment puts the sample above 60% of people in the comparison group.

Table 5.12: Percentile scores for PE (USA and Asia)

Percentile	Meaning	Competence	Self-Determination	Impact	PE
Lowest					
5%	3,67	4,33	3,67	2,00	4,17
10%	4,67	4,50	4,33	2,67	4,50
15%	4,80	4,75	4,67	3,00	4,69
20%	5,00	5,00	4,75	3,33	4,83
25%	5,25	5,25	4,85	3,67	5,00
30%	5,33	5,33	5,00	4,00	5,08
35%	5,50	5,51	5,30	4,33	5,19
40%	5,67	5,67	5,33	4,67	5,33
45%	5,75	5,71	5,50	4,82	5,42
50%	5,91	5,75	5,67	5,00	5,50
55%	6,00	5,82	5,72	5,03	5,58
60%	6,11	6,00	5,75	5,33	5,67
65%	6,22	6,25	5,93	5,50	5,81
70%	6,33	6,33	6,00	5,67	5,88
75%	6,50	6,50	6,08	5,78	6,00
80%	6,67	6,67	6,33	6,00	6,08
85%	6,78	6,75	6,38	6,35	6,19
90%	6,89	6,91	6,67	6,50	6,38
95%	7,00	7,00	7,00	7,00	6,58
Highest					

In comparison with the above norm, it seemed that South Africans' sense of self-determination falls short. This is understandable if taken into account that most of Spreitzer and her associates' research were done on middle management level. Spreitzer (1996) preferred to focus on middle managers in her empowerment research. It should be easier for middle managers and higher to

be in a position to determine the outcome of their work and to have a bigger impact than, for example, administrative or support staff.

A percentile scale was compiled to serve as norm for South African studies and is revealed in Table 5.13.

Table 5.13: Percentile scores for PE (South Africa)

Percentile	Meaning	Competence	Self-Determination	Impact	PE
Lowest					
5%	4,25	4,69	3,75	2,50	4,48
10%	5,00	5,00	4,00	3,50	4,75
15%	5,06	5,25	4,50	4,00	4,89
20%	5,25	5,50	4,75	4,25	5,00
25%	5,75	5,75	4,94	4,50	5,19
30%	5,75	5,75	5,00	4,75	5,31
35%	6,00	6,00	5,25	4,75	5,45
40%	6,00	6,00	5,25	5,00	5,50
45%	6,00	6,00	5,44	5,00	5,63
50%	6,25	6,00	5,50	5,25	5,69
55%	6,25	6,25	5,56	5,25	5,81
60%	6,25	6,25	5,75	5,25	5,81
65%	6,50	6,44	6,00	5,69	5,98
70%	6,75	6,50	6,00	5,75	6,06
75%	7,00	6,50	6,25	6,00	6,14
80%		6,75	6,25	6,25	6,31
85%		6,75	6,44	6,25	6,44
90%		7,00	6,75	6,50	6,56
95%			6,75	6,75	6,69
Highest					

Spreitzer and Quinn (2001) provided their percentile scores to serve as norm for individuals to benchmark their level of empowerment for development purposes.

Their observation was that there is some consistency across the profiles. In their case most people score highest on the competence dimension and lowest on the impact dimension. In the present research the consistency seemed to be higher scores on meaning and competency dimensions, less on self-determination and lowest on the impact dimension. The indication is that people feel that their work is meaningful, they feel fairly confident that they have the skills and abilities to do their work, but that their work has limited impact on the larger system.

With respect to the state of psychological empowerment, the conclusion was reached that South Africans have a fairly good sense of meaning and competence, but that sense of self-determination and impact can be enhanced by paying attention to significant contributors of these dimensions.

5.4 CONTEXTUAL FACTOR SURVEY (CFS)

It was the aim of this study to determine what factors contribute best to psychological empowerment and a research question was posed, *What management practices contribute to psychological empowerment?* For this purpose a contextual factor survey was developed. Means and standard deviations were computed on the twelve management practices that were measured with three items each with a score range between one and seven. The item statistics are given in Table 5.14.

Table 5.14: Contextual factor survey: Means and standard deviations

Practice	Item Nr	Mean	Std Dev	N
Autonomy	10	5,28	1,43	176
	15	5,51	1,31	176
	24	5,36	1,38	176
Delegation of responsibility	16	5,14	1,47	176
	25	5,52	1,26	176
	35	5,16	1,49	176
Feedback	5	4,72	1,64	176
	17	5,07	1,54	176
	26	5,01	1,53	176
Social support	1	5,23	1,51	176
	11	5,07	1,48	176
	18	5,02	1,48	176
Participation	12	4,91	1,52	176
	21	4,96	1,51	176
	27	4,74	1,48	176
Information sharing	2	5,13	1,43	176
	28	4,88	1,38	176
	33	4,91	1,44	176
Development	13	4,82	1,64	176
	19	4,47	1,65	176
	30	5,06	1,47	176
Role clarity	6	5,05	1,46	176
	22	4,89	1,56	176
	31	5,34	1,29	176
Access to resources	3	5,22	1,29	176
	29	5,03	1,42	176
	32	4,70	1,48	176
Trust	7	5,69	1,23	176
	23	4,91	1,56	176
	34	5,01	1,61	176
Modelling	4	4,86	1,69	176
	8	4,90	1,66	176
	14	5,14	1,62	176
Motivation	9	4,91	1,60	176
	20	4,68	1,51	176
	36	4,79	1,63	176

The mean values ranged from 4,47 to 5,69 indicating that respondents felt that their managers' behaviours were moderately conducive to empowerment. Standard deviations ranged from 1,23 to 1,69 indicating moderate variability in the ratings, which was probably as a result of diversity in terms of organisations.

5.4.1 Reliability

Cronbach's Alphas have been computed for the scales of the CFS and the results are exhibited in Table 5.15.

Table 5.15: Cronbach's alphas for the scales of the CFS

Management practice	Cronbach's alpha	No of items
Autonomy	.88	3
Delegation of responsibility	.92	3
Feedback	.90	3
Social support	.86	3
Participation	.89	3
Information sharing	.91	3
Development	.84	3
Role clarity	.86	3
Access to resources	.85	3
Trust	.87	3
Modelling	.95	3
Motivation	.89	3

All alpha reliability coefficients for the item scores on the 12 factors ranged from 0,84 to 0,95 which are acceptable (Kerlinger, 1986).

5.4.2 Relationships between contextual factors and psychological empowerment

To determine whether there is a relationship between contextual factors and psychological empowerment in South Africa, the correlation coefficient between each management practice and PE was determined. The following hypotheses were formulated:

Hypothesis 5a: Management practices are positively related to the experience of empowerment.

The correlations between management practices and PE are presented in Table 5.16 in a descending order:

Table 5.16: The correlations between contextual factors and the PE measures

Contextual factors	Correlations
Delegation of Responsibility	0,49**
Autonomy	0,48**
Motivation	0,46**
Job / Role Clarity	0,45**
Trust	0,43**
Social Support	0,42**
Access to Resources	0,41**
Information Sharing	0,40**
Development	0,39**
Feedback	0,39**
Participation / Involvement	0,39**
Modelling	0,37**

** $p < 0,01$

A significant positive relationship was found between each of the management practices and PE. As all the management practices were positively related to PE, the hypothesis is confirmed.

The best research example to compare this study with is the LEBQ developed by Konczak et al. (2000). Whereas the present study refers to the influence of management practices on psychological empowerment, the LEBQ referred to empowering leader behaviours. The dependent variable was in both cases psychological empowerment measured by means of Spreitzer's (1995a) PEI. Konczak et al. (2000) found correlations among all of the leader behaviours and

PE indicating that these behaviours were related to the psychological experience of empowerment. There are similarities between the six factor LEBQ and the twelve factor CFS used in the present study. Similarities and items that were taken or adapted from the LEBQ were discussed in chapter four.

Some of Rizzo et al.'s (1970) questionnaire measures of role conflict and ambiguity were adapted, but as they used it for a different purpose it does not provide a comparison. Items for access to resources were adapted from Spreitzer's (1995b) social structural items. She did not find a relationship with psychological empowerment.

5.4.3 Predictors of psychological empowerment

Arguments in the literature led to the conclusion that delegation of authority is more effective in creating a sense of empowerment than participation. It was, therefore, hypothesised that delegation will be a better predictor of psychological empowerment than participation.

Hypothesis 5b: Delegation contributes more towards psychological empowerment than participation.

Judging from the correlations this could be true, but to determine the best predictor, multiple regression analysis was done.

To determine the relative influence of the management practices and answer research question 2: *What management practices contribute to psychological empowerment?* the different practices were entered into a multiple regression model with the overall PE measure as dependent variable.

A multiple correlation coefficient of $R = 0,57$ was found. The 12 management practices account for about 33% of the total variance of PE ($R^2 = 0,33$). In Table 5.17 the relative contribution of each management practice to the overall model is indicated.

Table 5.17: Multiple regression analysis – Contextual factors

Management Practices	Coefficient (β)	Std Error	p – Value
Autonomy	0,09	0,09	0,32
Delegation	0,24	0,10	0,02*
Feedback	-0,19	0,12	0,11
Social Support	0,06	0,10	0,40
Participation	-0,18	0,11	0,12
Information Sharing	-0,07	0,11	0,55
Development	-0,03	0,10	0,75
Role Clarity	0,19	0,09	0,05*
Access to Resources	0,04	0,09	0,51
Trust	-0,06	0,12	0,62
Modelling	-0,05	0,08	0,54
Motivation	0,29	0,11	0,01**

** $p < 0,01$; * $p < 0,05$

From the above it seems that the only management practices that contributed significantly to psychological empowerment were motivation, delegation and role clarity. Effective delegation of authority ($\beta = 0,24$; $p = 0,02$) was a significant predictor, while participation was not ($\beta = -0,18$; $p = 0,12$). The hypothesis is, therefore, supported. Delegation is a better predictor of PE than participation.

Another aim of this study was to formulate recommendations for the enhancement of psychological empowerment. For the purpose of addressing factors that could enhance a sense of meaning and competence, but especially self-determination and impact, further multiple regression analyses were done with each of the four dimensions of psychological empowerment as dependent variable.

As far as a sense of meaning is concerned, a multiple correlation coefficient of $R = 0,40$ was found and management practices accounted for 16% of the total

variance of a sense of meaning. The significant contributors were feedback ($p = 0,03$) and motivation ($p = 0,01$).

In terms of a sense of competence, a multiple correlation coefficient of 0,31 was found and management practices accounted for 10% of the total variance of how people feel about their competence. The only significant contributor was job and role clarity ($p = 0,01$).

In the case of self-determination, a multiple correlation coefficient of 0,58 was found and management practices accounted for 34% of the total variance of a sense of self-determination. The only significant contributor was autonomy ($p = 0,01$).

A multiple correlation coefficient of 0,60 was found where impact is the dependent variable and management practices accounted for 36% of a sense of impact. The significant contributors were delegation ($p = 0,01$) and motivation ($p = 0,01$).

5.4.4 Discussion

Although all the management practices were significantly related to psychological empowerment, only motivation, delegation and role clarity were significant predictors of psychological empowerment.

- Motivation

In the present study motivation was the strongest predictor of psychological empowerment and it was also a significant predictor of the dimensions, meaning and impact. The relationship between motivation and psychological empowerment was perhaps best illustrated by studies by Brossoit (2000) and Ozaralli (2003), who investigated the relationship between transformational leadership and psychological empowerment. The dimensions of transformational leadership that coincide with the motivational management practices, concern

challenges, motivation and inspiration, promoting self-efficacy and building subordinates' self-confidence. Ozaralli (2003) found a moderate positive correlation between transformational behaviours of leaders and subordinates' self-reported empowerment. Brossoit (2000) found that transformational leadership had the strongest relationship with meaning and the weakest, although significant, relationship with competence. In the present study motivation was also a predictor of the meaning dimension as well as the impact dimensions of psychological empowerment.

In the literature Blanchard et al. (1999) mentioned motivation of employees as one of the aspects of empowerment. Conger and Kanungo (1988) and Wood and Bandura (1989) promoted a cognitive approach to motivation. It boils down to the suggestion that managerial practices that strengthen the self-determination need or self-efficacy belief of employees will produce feelings of being more powerful and, therefore, the cultivation of people's beliefs in their capabilities was seen as motivational.

- Delegation

Kotze et al. (2005) conducted a study in the SANDF and found that delegation and participation played the most important role in peoples' experience of empowerment. They did not distinguish between the two factors. In their study the two practices were combined to form the construct they termed, leadership behaviours. Ogden et al. (2006) found that managers feel more empowered when the management style was towards more accountability, which gave them more freedom to manage. More accountability means that decision-making was delegated to them. This would mean that delegation also means more autonomy. Konczak et al. (2000) found positive correlations between delegation of authority and psychological empowerment.

Delegation was not just a significant contributor to overall psychological empowerment, but together with motivation it was also a significant predictor of the impact dimension of psychological empowerment. The finding that managers

and professionals have a greater sense of impact than lower level employees, maybe because of the fact that delegation is a predictor of impact and because normally managers and professionals would have more responsibility delegated to them than lower level employees.

Lack of authority may cause feelings of powerlessness, according to Conger and Kanungo (1988), while Kinlaw (1995) professed in the literature that delegation of authority is a means of developing competence and confidence, leading to feelings of empowerment. Clutterbuck and Kernaghan (1994) and Lawler (1992) believed that by allowing individuals to take responsibility encourages the development of peoples' full potential and increases their skills, competence and confidence about their competence. Menon's (2001) sense of perceived control also refers to beliefs about authority and decision-making latitude.

Delegation was seen by Leana (1987) as a more complete form of involvement than practicing participative management. Findings that led to this belief indicated that managers tend to delegate only when the task is relatively inconsequential and when they feel that the subordinate has sufficient information, shares organisational goals, is competent, trustworthy and experienced. Other than that, participation was the preferred practice. This finding led to the assumption that those who are considered as competent and trustworthy enough to be delegated to would have a better sense of empowerment and that delegation would contribute more towards psychological empowerment than participation. Delegation in the present study was found to be a significant predictor of psychological empowerment, while participation was not significant. Therefore, managers who are willing to relinquish decision-making authority will be more successful in creating feelings of empowerment than those who share decision-making.

- Job and role clarity

In the present study, job and role clarity was a significant predictor of overall psychological empowerment, as well as a significant predictor of sense of

competence. Spreitzer (1996) found that role ambiguity, which is the opposite of role clarity, was negatively related to empowerment. Quinn and Spreitzer (1997) suggested clear goals, clear lines of authority and clear task responsibilities to avoid role ambiguity. Matthews et al. (2003) found a significant correlation between providing clear guidelines that assists employee decision-making and psychological empowerment. Conger and Kanungo (1988) identified lack of role clarity as a context factor that affects self-efficacy beliefs negatively. Klagge (1998) considered clear expectations, roles, and responsibilities as some of the key success factors in empowering employees.

- Autonomy

Autonomy was found to be a significant predictor of self-determination in the present study, which is not surprising because the term, autonomy, literally refers to self-regulation (Ryan & Deci, 2006). Autonomy is the extent to which employees are allowed to plan and schedule their work (Joyce & Slocum, 1982). Konczak et al. (2000) found positive correlations between leaders emphasising accountability for outcomes, as well as encouragement of self-directed decision-making and psychological empowerment.

Authors in the literature highlighted autonomy as a factor that is necessary for employees to experience empowerment (Blanchard et al., 1999; Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Seibert et al., 2004). Spreitzer (1996) found that a wide span of control, as a social structural characteristic, was positively related to empowerment. A wide span of control was associated with employees being able to make decisions under their domains of responsibility and promoting of self-determination, while a narrow span of control was associated with employees being micro-managed. Spreitzer's (1995a; 1995b) definition of self-determination includes a sense of autonomy over the initiation and progression of work activities and processes, such as making decisions about work methods, pace and effort, and they are not micro-managed.

- Feedback

Feedback was identified in this study as a significant predictor of a sense of meaning, which is surprising as most authors and research results associated feedback with a sense of competence rather than meaning. It was expected, since the feedback items referred to task related feedback, that feedback would be a predictor of a sense of competence or overall psychological empowerment. However, a significant positive correlation was found between feedback and overall psychological empowerment. Kraimer et al. (1999) found that task feedback was positively related to competence and impact. Drake et al.'s (2007) results indicated that feedback level was significantly correlated with impact only and not competence and self-determination as postulated.

In the literature feedback was suggested as means to enhance efficacy perceptions and sense of competence (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Kanter, 1993; Martinko & Gardner, 1982; McDermott et al., 1996).

- Other management practices

All the other management practices were found to be positively correlated with psychological empowerment in the present study. Most of the research that was found in the literature also used Spreitzer's (1995a) scale or variations.

Huang et al. (2006) found that participation was significantly related to the meaning dimension of psychological empowerment, but not significantly correlated with the other three dimensions. Spreitzer (1996) found a significant positive relationship between a participative unit climate and psychological empowerment. Participation and involvement are frequently discussed in the management literature. Blanchard et al. (1999), Bowen and Lawler (1992) and Lawler (1992) believed involvement in decision-making is a mechanism for empowerment. Quinn and Spreitzer (1997) proposed that participation in organisational decision-making is important for people to feel empowered.

Corsum and Enz's (1999) results indicated positive relationships between a supportive organisational environment and dimensions of empowerment, but did not significantly predict any of the empowerment dimensions. Mok and Au-Yeung (2002) found that leadership that is supportive and encouraging forms part of a climate that is conducive to empowerment.

Samad (2007) found that although information sharing was significantly correlated with psychological empowerment, when a hierarchical regression analyses was done, information sharing did not contribute significantly to psychological empowerment, same as in the present study. Information sharing was shown to be important in fostering empowerment as social structural characteristic, as leader behaviour and as empowering climate factor (Koberg et al., 1999; Konczak et al., 2000; Mok & Au-Yeung, 2002; Seibert et al., 2004; Spreitzer, 1996).

Spreitzer (1996) found that access to resources was not related to empowerment, while Menon (2001) found that beliefs about availability of resources give rise to a sense of perceived control, which is a dimension of being psychologically enabled.

Skill development and coaching for innovative performance were leader behaviours that Konczak et al. (2000) found to be positively correlated with psychological empowerment.

Ergeneli et al. (2007) revealed that trust in managers' reliability, dependability and competence accounted for overall psychological empowerment, while affect-based trust is a significant predictor of the impact aspect of psychological empowerment.

5.4.5 Conclusion

From the results it seems that the overall psychological empowerment of employees is enhanced when they are motivated, delegation practices are mastered and employees' roles and responsibilities are clearly defined.

A sense of meaning is enhanced when employees are motivated and when managers give clear information about employees' performance and efficiency on the job, give feedback that is aimed at suggestions on how to improve, rather than blaming and criticising and provide opportunities to discuss results with them.

A sense of competence is enhanced when managers are clear about delegations and how much authority employees have, employees are certain of what is expected of them and they are sure of what their responsibilities are.

A sense of self-determination is enhanced when managers encourage employees to develop their own solutions to problems that they encounter in their work, rely on them to make their own decisions about issues that affect how work gets done and permit employees to use their own initiative to decide how to go about doing things at work.

It seems that in a work situation where managers delegate the authority to make changes necessary to improve things, responsibility for the outcome of work objectives and the authority to make decisions that improve work processes and procedures, a sense of impact is enhanced. A sense of impact is further enhanced when managers motivate employees through enhancing their belief in their competence, continually encourage or motivate subordinates to improve their performance and set challenging goals and motivate employees towards the accomplishment of them.

Although different authors had different opinions of what constitutes the ideal empowerment climate and although the present study was not conducted in one

particular organisation with a specific climate, the level of origin for empowerment climate is the individual and if the individuals are representative, the findings can be generalised (Seibert et al., 2004). Therefore, in conclusion of the findings of the quantitative phase of the present study, it is asserted that although organisations differ, a generic climate conducive to empowerment should include management practices such as motivation, delegation of responsibility and job and role clarity in the South African context. The generalisability of the present findings is debatable, but a focus on these factors cannot be wrong. Further discussion in later chapters, however, take more factors and interrelationships into consideration.

The conclusion that delegation of responsibility was indeed a better predictor of psychological empowerment than participation as suggested in the literature, was reached and, therefore, it was also concluded that managers who mastered the skill of delegation of decision-making authority, will be successful in creating feelings of empowerment in their subordinates. It was also surmised that the frequency with which some management practices are mentioned in the management literature has more to do with other benefits than the achievement of psychological empowerment and that empirical results may be the only indicator of what management practices actually produce psychological empowerment.

5.5 SUMMARY

In this chapter hypotheses about the influence of demographic characteristics and contextual factors were tested.

To answer research question 1, *To what extent are South Africans psychologically empowered?* means and standard deviations were determined for the four dimensions and overall psychological empowerment, but the best way to discuss the state of empowerment in future was to establish how South Africans compare with an existing norm and percentile tables were used for this purpose.

That management practices should have an effect on how people perceive their sense of meaning, competence, self-determination and impact could be expected as it was suggested by other researchers and research results indicated it as such. When the practices were considered on their own, they were all significantly related to psychological empowerment. However, as a group, where their relative contributions to PE were considered, only three practices: motivation, delegation and role clarity had a significant influence. This was the answer to research question 2, *What management practices contribute to psychological empowerment?*

Further regression analysis indicated that feedback and motivation were significant predictors of a sense of meaning; job and role clarity was the only significant contributor to a sense of competence; autonomy was the only significant contributor to a sense of self-determination; and delegation and motivation were significant predictors of a sense of impact.

The findings were discussed in comparison with other findings and the literature, which led to certain conclusions

The findings of the qualitative survey will be discussed in the next three chapters. Other questions remain to be answered, for example, questions about the general perceptions of empowerment in South Africa, how South Africans experience empowerment, and what other factors are perceived to have an effect on empowerment. In chapter nine the findings of the quantitative and qualitative studies are integrated and final conclusions regarding the profile of a psychologically empowered person and the contributing factors are reached.

CHAPTER 6

PERCEPTIONS OF EMPOWERMENT

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter results from the data collected in the qualitative phase from the media and interviewees are conveyed. In the discussion of results it is attempted to resolve research question 3: *What are the general perceptions of empowerment in South Africa?* The media contribute to create a socio-political climate with respect to empowerment and, therefore, the image of empowerment as projected by Cape Business News and Management Today is discussed, as well as a perspective of how the general public is informed and what opinions prevail as projected by News24.com. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and interviewees were asked what the first thing is that comes to mind when they hear the word, empowerment, and this gave a fair indication of what the general perceptions are. The results are discussed with reference to the literature and conclusions are drawn.

6.2 GENERAL PERCEPTIONS CREATED BY THE MEDIA

It was expected that the media would influence perceptions and that the origins of perceptions may be deduced from how the media project empowerment in the present socio-economic and political context. Therefore, to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of what the general perceptions of empowerment in South Africa are, data were collected from newspaper and periodical articles in the business, management and public domains.

Cape Business News 2006 and 2007 issues were scanned for indications of how empowerment is portrayed to interested parties in the business environment, while the periodical, Management Today was monitored over a period of one year, 2006, to see how the managers and business leaders are informed on the subject of management practices regarding empowerment. An internet search

on the Media 24 website, news24.com, was done for articles containing the word 'empowerment' for the period 1 Jan 2008 to 30 April 2008 to get an idea of how the general public is informed and what view points are expressed. (See Appendix E for a list of articles that were reviewed).

6.2.1 A business perspective

For verifying the assumption that the present socio-economic and political climate has an influence on perceptions about empowerment in general, a business newspaper seemed a fitting source to analyse for its contribution to perception formation. For example, the researcher got the impression from earlier articles in newspapers that Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) status is something that is sought after at all cost (Miller, 2003), especially when BEE status is projected as something that is boasted about and is necessary for survival. A more positive stance was presented in the June 2003 issue of Cape Business News (p. 26). An executive director of an insurance group was quoted to have said: "Companies making a valuable contribution towards the country's black economic empowerment objectives can only bode well for a more skilled, representational and dynamic workforce, as well as, importantly, an improved quality of life for many." Reports such as this are in the minority. Statements that suggest that having an empowerment shareholder gives companies a competitive advantage create the impression that transformation is only structural, when the need for development is not suggested as well. However, these were earlier observations and for the present study, articles published during 2006 and 2007 are reviewed.

Articles published in the Cape Business News are primarily written with the aim to keep the business community of the Western Cape informed regarding current business matters. In this part of the qualitative research a deductive approach was followed. Not only were articles scanned to see what they say about empowerment, but the material was also scanned with the aim to find out whether empowerment is seen as a mechanistic approach, meaning that empowerment is described only in terms of economic considerations or whether

it is described in terms of the development of employees or both. Statements of significance are those that highlight the different perceptions. According to Seidman (2006), quantity interacts with quality. The repetition of an aspect of empowerment, for example, economic versus skills development, takes on weight. For example, if the reader reads about economic empowerment 80% of the time, it must create the impression that economic empowerment is what empowerment is all about.

6.2.1.1 *Perceptions portrayed by a business newspaper*

Perceptions derived from business newspaper articles were based on articles that were spotted that contained any reference to empowerment. Articles most often contained information about BEE and of these it was mostly exclusively about the economic side of it. Some articles referred to economic empowerment, but also mentioned skills development or skills transfer, probably because organisations are required in terms of the Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) Act to develop their staff and it forms part of the evaluation criteria for BEE status. A small percentage was about training and development only and other aspects of empowerment, such as the perceptions of small business owners and women empowerment. Over the two year period an increase in the mentioning of skills development was not apparent, but it seems that the news value of BEE transactions is decreasing.

- Economic empowerment

BEE is a socio-economic process that is intended to contribute to the economic transformation of South Africa and to bring about significant increases in the number of black people who manage, own and control the country's economy as well as significant decreases in income inequalities.

Economic empowerment, or more specifically BEE, is of great importance for businesses, because the economic implication of the BEE Act is that businesses that do not comply are not able to get government contracts. With the inclusion

of the preferential procurement category in the BBBEE Act, they are also not regarded as suitable suppliers or service providers to other businesses if they are not considered as compliant. Unlike previous black empowerment initiatives, the BBBEE strategy does not only focus on ownership and management control, which benefited a few, but also on the growth and development of all black citizens and communities. At first companies were evaluated on black ownership and management alone for allocation of tenders. The BBBEE scorecard, according to which companies are evaluated, also includes development of staff, preferential procurement and socio-economic development. Preferential procurement prescribes a preference point system according to which a company is awarded points according to their suppliers' BEE status. A company that does business with BEE companies scores points and contracts are awarded to the tenderer who scores the highest points. In spite of the inclusion of staff development and community development, some articles still only refer to the economic empowerment aspect.

In the issues of Cape Business News articles confirmed that BEE is regarded by businesses as something to comply with in order to be regarded by government, local government and other businesses as a suitable business to do business with or to be contracted as supplier or service provider. To a lesser extent it was hinted at compliance in order to survive. A company's BEE structure may be a factor in "securing contracts". This is far removed from the government intention of ensuring financial benefits for PDIs and the impression is that businesses are vying for their own financial gain or survival. A BEE deal with a black women-led empowerment group was seen as "will serve to further strengthen our standing, both in relation to state interests and in the eyes of our customers".

Deals and transactions were reported on in which there was no mention made of who the beneficiaries are apart from the business. An example is an article that refers to a deal about a financial service company that was reported to have played a "trump card" that "was the formation of empowerment associate" that allowed the company "to participate in some lucrative BEE deals". Another article referred to "strategic relationship positioning for larger BEE transactions".

Apart from references to compliance with BEE requirements, some reports are all about the financial and ownership aspects. An “empowerment boost” may be about shares, stakes, interests and ownership. These also refer to the financial benefits for black staff in terms of shares. In a small number of articles it was possible to see the benefits for PDIs as shareholders when it was reported that dividends were paid out to a company’s employees as beneficiaries of the group’s BEE shareholder initiative.

Sometimes the moral obligation to empower staff was mentioned, but not without the mention that it was a business decision in order to create value for shareholders. For example:

“Previously disadvantaged individuals will own shares through a staff trust.”

“... an imperative business decision together with a moral obligation to empower our staff and management.”

“... creating value for all shareholders.”

In one case a financial resource was mentioned for entrepreneurs that clearly make a distinction between categories of PDIs. A fund for entrepreneurs “exclusively targets black owned as well as black managed and black empowered small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Special focus is given to female entrepreneurs and the minimum target for the fund is to achieve a portfolio mix in which at least 33% of the SMEs funded are women owned.” A black-empowered enterprise is defined in the BBEE Act as a business that is at least 25,1% owned by black persons and where there is substantial management control. Management refers exclusively to executive directors. A black-owned enterprise is defined as a business that is 50,1% owned by black persons and where there is substantial management control. Ownership refers strictly to economic interest and black people must be eligible to receive at least 50,1% of the profits.

- Economic empowerment and skills development

Articles that included references to skills development together with economic empowerment seem to indicate a relationship between development, competent staff and economic growth. Another way to look at it is that compliance with the economic aspect of BBBEE requirements without including the skills development aspect has less chance to succeed than economic empowerment alone. Appointing people in positions just for the sake of the economic benefit of PDIs is not as sustainable as developing them to be able to make a contribution to economic growth. Economic empowerment is augmented by the simultaneous transfer of skills.

Articles that touch on skills development still project the importance of the economic aspect and give the impression that skills development is also for the benefit of the scorecard. For example, a BEE deal was reported with detail about the sale of 25,1% shares to a black business partner, which allows the business to proclaim. “We are proud to again be a legitimate South African business.” “... will definitely help to take the business to a next level.” To emphasise compliance it was added that with BEE content at shareholder level the company’s “broad based BEE scorecard is going to be excellent” ... “already have a considerable percentage of PDI management, a good employment equity plan, together with growing skills development programmes and preferential procurement plan”.

A transport company that was rated high has “extremely experienced, competent staff,” “places a great deal of importance on skills and ensures that all staff are kept up to speed”. However, it does not neglect to say that “30% shares are owned by historically disadvantaged individuals (HDIs) and three out of the six directors on the board are HDIs and that much of (company’s) growth has been as a result of its BEE status”. It seems that the success is attributed more to the structure that secures deals rather than the competent staff.

The interdependence of development of the workforce and BEE compliance was demonstrated in an article regarding the need for competent black engineers to boost the manufacturing sector.

“If the economy is to show steady annual growth, the lack of BEE skills in engineering needs to be urgently addressed, otherwise a vacuum will be created. Students should be encouraged to take up engineering as a career and then be properly trained and mentored until they have the requisite skills to be placed in the market. Until this is done, a combination of a shortage of skills and BEE compliancy will make it difficult for the manufacturing sector to grow.”

The realisation that skills development is needed in combination with economic empowerment was evident. Projects that seemed to have a more genuine purpose of making a difference to people’s lives at grass roots level were depicted, although they are in the minority. For example, a company embarked on a pilot project with a broad-based trout farming venture involving 12 of the farm’s workers. “The intention is to broaden the skills of the workers, enabling them to augment their income while also exposing them to business management training.” The group manager said: “Our keenness to support the project is to help workers in constructive, self-empowering ways that will enhance the quality of their lives.”

None of the above initiatives are of course without the compliance aspect, because empowering workers economically and combining it with development and community development, actually ensure better compliance with the requirements of the BBBEE Act.

- Economic empowerment, employee development, and community development

The intention of government to broaden the country’s economic base and accelerate growth, job creation and poverty eradication was the rationale for the BBBEE drive. Already the additional empowerment aspect, skills development,

has given a more positive impression of economic empowerment, but the inclusion of community empowerment further improved the image of empowerment and the awareness that it goes further than monetary benefits. The impact of the implementation of the BBBEE was visible in some of the articles as mention was made of benefits not just to staff, but also "... contribution to community upliftment programmes ...".

However, such initiatives are still not without mention of the BBBEE scorecard rating and shareholding, which seem to be the topics foremost in the mind of business people. For example:

The company's "plan for empowerment" includes employment equity, skills development and a BEE preferential procurement policy. Also because of "... the sale of 26% share to an empowerment consortium, which includes a grassroots female empowerment organisation and which ensures economic advancement for women, as well as a black investment company". Other BEE initiatives include a cold store "... to create a larger logistics influence back to source ..." and "... a trust fund to benefit the local community". Eventually "equity will be in the hands of this trust acting on behalf of the local community". All of these ensured "a good to excellent rating on the BBBEE scorecard".

- Focus on skills development

A positive relationship between skill development and economic growth was suggested, while lack of skills was reported to exist in the manufacturing sector, the welding industry and the transport sector. While the perception is that in the private sector, training and development are done solely for the benefit of the company, there seems to be commitment from certain institutions to develop needed knowledge and expertise. However, there is also a demand for corporations to help further improve the expertise and skill of their workforce.

From some articles the impression is derived that as far as training and development are concerned, the interests of for-profit organisations are put before the need for empowerment of the greater population.

An article was devoted to training with the title, "How training solves problems". It is more focused on how it helps the company than on the empowerment of individuals, for example, "It, therefore, becomes imperative that a company continually examines all areas of its business and does a gap analysis between where they currently are with regard to competencies, skills and knowledge, and where their markets would like them to be converted to 'approved supplier' status." This refers to quality management.

The tendency to put the interests of companies first was confirmed in the suggestion that companies are unwilling to invest in the development of temporary staff by making use of a resource such as learnerships. Therefore, the efforts of a temporary employment service that gave people an opportunity to graduate with a qualification where they would normally not have such an opportunity was a noteworthy appearance in the otherwise business focused reports.

"Most companies are not prepared to invest in staff with short service." The employment service company "makes it their business to do so and as such invest in what can often be seen as a marginalised population". "The development of temporary workers, as well as critical core skills, are crucial and will become more of a need in the years to come."

Skills shortages have been emphasised as a constraint in the economy and became a focus for role players. Skills development institutions and government bodies, such as the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) have a role to play "to facilitate the development and implementation of appropriate training programmes via training providers", while a welding institute "will dedicate itself to promoting education and training". "We are committed to

raising the level of skill in our industry so that we can become less reliant on importing skills with time.”

Training institutions have a responsibility to contribute to the empowerment of citizens and one institution was reported to be committed to “the development of a workforce to respond to the growth of the economy”. The institution’s focus is not only on vocational training but also on enriching the lives of people living in this area. It focuses on courses that are relevant and addresses the critical skills shortage, while also producing skills that make citizens immediately employable. Although it addresses the skills gap in the market, it also attends to the empowerment of individuals to be well developed that could have an effect on their psychological empowerment.

- Perceptions of business owners

Some articles gave an indication of the perception that small and medium enterprise (SME) owners are sceptical about BEE initiatives and that BEE compliance brought with it additional costs in an economic environment where it is already hard enough to survive. This ‘understanding’ of the dilemma of small businesses was weighed up against the benefits for companies of being BBBEE compliant. However, this is all in aid of BEE advisors who benefit from this dilemma.

“Business people complained that it was hard enough struggling to survive economically without having to pay a BEE consultant and a BEE verification agency to ensure they are BEE compliant.” The benefits of being BBBEE compliant were stated as “it can enable your company to get preferential procurement from government parastatals and the private sector. It also enhances your competitive advantage and ... enhances workforce diversity in your company.” “BBBEE aims to undo the economic damage of apartheid. It is about growth, development and enterprise development – not just about the redistribution of existing wealth. It is not about taking wealth from white people to

give to blacks. It is a growth strategy that targets the South African economy's weakest point: inequality.”

- Women empowerment

Women empowerment did not feature as much as would be expected, but it could be argued that if women were actively seizing opportunities and make it happen for themselves, it would be reported. Such a case was a report about women in construction, a male dominated environment, and it did catch attention. It was reported that “for the first time women have an opportunity to participate in contracts to supply construction materials in the Western Cape. This has been made possible through the formation of a new company, which is a joint venture between select members of South African Women in Construction (SAWiC) with 50% shareholding and two white owned companies with 40% and 10% shareholding.” “The joint venture also focuses on skills transfer and training for the SAWiC members, rather than window dressing at a shareholder level.” “... this approach is critical to ensure real empowerment.”

6.2.1.2 *Discussion*

In chapter one it was alleged that the political or socio-economic meaning of empowerment as BEE presently governs empowerment policies and dominates the business scene in South Africa. It was also alleged that perceptions and misconceptions of empowerment are strongly influenced by how the media are presenting it. If the contents of the articles above are summed up, it can be concluded that the economic benefits of empowerment are highlighted and that empowerment is presented as mainly an economic issue.

The articles portray the concern of businesses with the compliance with BBBEE and with company's rating to secure contracts. However, compliance also includes the need for consideration of PDIs in management positions and skills development. The perception is that empowerment is seen in terms of financial gain and there is not much evidence of other ways and means of empowering

the intended beneficiaries. Legal requirements and companies' eagerness to comply for their own benefit should eventually benefit individuals and communities according to reports. A focus on skills development is seen from an economic perspective in the sense that there is a skills gap that hampers economic growth. However, there are opportunities and other means for investing in people, for example, by means of learnerships that are not fully utilised. It is the perception that legal requirements put a strain on SMEs and that they struggle to comply and that expert consultation would help them see the potential benefits. Women empowerment, although not reported on frequently, was not limited to traditionally female roles.

It was expected that the implementation of the BBBEE Act 53 of 2004 (BEE Act) would bring about more change in the ratio in which skill development is mentioned together with economic empowerment, but it seems that training and development still take a back seat. Broad-based empowerment is a worthwhile goal to strive for and it seems that there is some evidence of a movement towards a more genuine interest in a broader spectrum of economic and efficacy development as opposed to window dressing for the sake of business. This anticipated transformation should contribute more to psychological empowerment on all levels than what the expectations were before when ownership and control were the only objectives, providing that all role players contribute to the broad-based ideal.

The Cape Business News does not just inform about business and the latest transactions and companies' strategic positions, but it also features articles about products and services and different industries and sectors, for example, transport, manufacturing, logistics, property development, etcetera. Education and training as an industry is featured maybe once a year.

There may be some subjectivity in business newspaper articles in the sense that what is portrayed is what is good for business, however, the nature of the newspaper suggests that the content of the articles consists of mostly factual data. Even more so does it imply that space will not be allocated to the 'soft' side

of employee empowerment, for example, whether the fact that they own shares in the company gives them a sense of self-determination and impact. It will rather project the opinions of the CEOs or MDs and what they want the business world to know. It was not expected to find articles by human resources managers about the strategies they follow to empower employees for the enhancement of feelings and beliefs of efficacy and meaning, but it was expected that more would be told about the development of efficacy and competence.

The implications of the manner in which empowerment is portrayed in business newspapers must be considered. Although it may not be the reality, it may be perceived as the reality that empowerment is about strategic positioning in order to survive, compliance in order to get contracts or to be a suitable company for preferential procurement, first of all. Business owners may perceive that they have a moral obligation to give HDI employees management positions and shares in the business, but by doing so they obtain a better BBEE rating and that is good for business. Although the reference to skills development was less prominent, hopefully it was enough to remind business leaders and managers that skills development is not just to get a better score, but also to close the skills gap and improve the productivity of the company. An additional consideration is that skill transfer is intended to empower HDI employees to improve their economic position and make a better contribution to the economy of the country.

Undue emphasis on BEE in business may have the effect that whites may start to feel alienated, while expectations may be created with blacks and if it is not met, it can have negative consequences for how they feel about empowerment.

At present, the main impression derived from the Cape Business News of empowerment is that it entails BEE and that it is all about sustaining a lucrative business.

6.2.2 A management perspective

Management Today 2006 issues Volume 22, numbers 1 to 10 were scanned to see what aspects of management were emphasised, what the trends are and what prominence was given to empowerment of subordinates. Because in this part of the qualitative research a deductive approach was used, attention was not given to themes that may emerge that are related to the dimensions of empowerment or the factors that enhance empowerment, but rather the intention was to find examples of viewpoints on empowerment *per se* to see how empowerment as an aspect of management is viewed and the importance with which it is regarded in relation to other aspects of management.

The magazine covers a wide variety of topics. The topics that seemed to be covered most regularly were leadership, quality management and coaching. Other subjects featured less regularly. However, apart from frequency in terms of topics, the contents did not present specific themes as it presented different and distinct features and ideas, viewpoints and theoretical foundations. The examples that are presented were, therefore, selected more for their potential impact than to present typical examples of what appeared in the periodical.

6.2.2.1 *Perceptions portrayed by a management periodical*

The topics were searched with diligence for any reference to empowerment or some connection with empowerment that is currently such a dominant and critical issue in South Africa. Articles that best related to empowerment described leadership and leader behaviours, women empowerment, development of employees, the benefits of coaching, human resource management, quality and performance management. It was, however, disappointing that there were few direct links to empowerment.

- Leadership

The focus of articles about leadership was on business leadership, the characteristics of leaders and the challenges that contemporary leaders face. The leader responsibility towards followers and empowerment of followers were mentioned to a lesser extent. The need for research to address leadership challenges in the African context was expressed. The articles mostly reflected the opinions of CEOs, academics and professional coaches about what leadership entails.

The challenges and demands that leaders face were highlighted, as well as what separates great leaders from the rest. The differences between the careers of managers in the past and the executives of today were mentioned and what leadership development must be focused on for leaders to meet the modern day challenges, for example:

“Today’s executives encounter many challenges in the form of changes in legislation, technologies, and other external factors in the market place. Today’s leaders have to possess technical and leadership skills and a clear understanding of the environment. Globalisation also introduces a share of challenges. The pace of change engenders the need to stay abreast of developments. The consequences of South Africa’s social history add another level of complexity as businesses integrate various legislative changes introduced to redress previous imbalances in employment, equity holdings and training and development.”

The roles and responsibilities of supervisors and managers were spelled out and it included most of the management practices that were addressed in the present study, such as feedback, proper instructions, delegation, support, motivation, the building of empowered teams, giving recognition and providing opportunities to subordinates.

In a speech at The Global Leaders Africa summit, a former CEO related the following: “However, a leader also needs to see and recognise leadership capability in others and unlock their potential.” When she started her career as a secretary, two colleagues saw her potential and offered her an opportunity. She took it and it changed her career as it allowed her to reach her full potential. In other words, she was empowered.

The characteristics of successful leaders were described mostly in terms of visionary leadership and innovation. The results of a survey, which was conducted online on the Global Leaders Africa summit website and reflected the views of business people regarding leadership in Africa, was reported on in one issue of the magazine. The competency, development and empowerment of people, was considered the most important leadership competency in African business. The notion that leaders are responsible and accountable for developing future leaders was also considered in other articles.

The need for defining leadership, as it applies to our local issues and circumstances versus relying on Western theories, was addressed.

“The challenge remains defining leadership theory and practice that address the local issues, the values and beliefs of followers but also a style that will assist leaders to address the issues that impede Africa’s development. If a model of African leadership is to become a reality, then we will need to identify the kinds of behaviours attached to such practices. To answer questions about the meaning of African leadership requires research.”

- Empowerment of women

An event that highlighted women empowerment was necessary for this aspect of empowerment to receive attention from the media, but it also shows the prominence it is given when a university launches a programme for the empowerment of women.

A founder and CEO of a black women owned company was the main guest speaker at the launch of the University of the Free State programme on Creating Leadership and Personal Capacity in Women. She talked about opportunities, perceptions and the need for a paradigm shift by women themselves. She talked about mentoring and empowerment of women, but also touched on the responsibility to empower others.

Key elements, according to her, that need to be exploited are opportunity, talent, training, resources and recognition, choices and perseverance, but she also addressed a perception. She thinks that women are misunderstood: "Too often, women's search for equality is interpreted as a request for special treatment."

According to her the most critical paradigm shift that needs to be made is for women to realise that they have a responsibility and to stop expecting that opportunities should be created for them. "The onus is now on us to grasp the opportunities available and to turn them into something tangible which goes beyond rhetoric and realises the promise inherent in our newly found democracies. Let us take advantage of the enabling environment created by these democracies to create leadership and personal capacities in women and for women."

At the same event, Dr Matthews Phosa said that "times have changed and with that change we have seen quite a dramatic shift in the role of women in society". He said that previously regarded constraints no longer exist and that women are freed to realise their gifts and potential. "Women now form an integral part of the economy."

- Socio-political

Socio-political aspects of empowerment received far less attention in the issues of this management periodical than in the business newspaper, but it is inevitable that it should emerge in some form or other, especially with regard to important political initiatives, such as BEE and BBEE and now also government's

Accelerated Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (ASGISA). The consequences of BEE and affirmative action came under scrutiny.

For example, an article on affirmative action and BBBEE was factual and about the legal and constitutional basis for legislative and other measures “designed to protect and advance persons or categories of persons previously disadvantaged by unfair discrimination”. The author of the article, a legal advisor on affirmative action and BEE, described the government’s ASGISA intervention as another mechanism to get the BBBEE to move faster and more effectively. The author is of the opinion that these make sound economic and social sense and that corporations in South Africa have a critical role to create truly South African business and to make ASGISA a reality.

Former President F.W. de Klerk was a speaker at an Institute of Directors business update conference and he also referred to the constitutional basis of affirmative action. He addressed skills shortages and saw the main underlying causes of the skills crisis as “it lies in the manner in which necessary affirmative action and BEE policies are being implemented”.

According to him the constitution requirement for representivity in the public service was achieved by dispensing with the services of more than 120 000 experienced white public servants. They were often replaced with people who did not possess the necessary experience and training. “The constitutional requirement for demographic representivity was not balanced against the constitutional requirements for ‘efficient, economic and effective use of resources’ or for ‘good human resource management.’”

The problems that resulted were pointed out: “No incentive for people with skills to remain in companies if they feel that their chances for promotion and advancement will not be considered on the basis of merit; the effect on the skills base in small companies that are negatively affected by BEE preferential procurement policies; and skilled graduates that emigrate as the perception

persists that their race may be a permanent disadvantage in obtaining employment or promotion.”

“One of BEE’s central goals is to redress the imbalances of the past by seeking substantially and equitably transfer and confer the ownership, management and control of South Africa’s financial and economic resources to the majority of its citizens.” He is not against BEE in principle, but is questioning the way it is executed.

Another dilemma resulting from affirmative action that entails the employment of talented black South Africans is related to job hopping. An article discussed the reasons discovered in a research project for black employees to do job hopping. It is expensive to recruit and train black talent and if it is lost after a short period of time, it has costly negative effects.

- Skills and people development

A common denominator in articles about skills and people development is that there is a skills crisis that needs to be addressed. While there are several government initiated bodies in the country that are supposed to address the skills shortage, they are criticised and there are different opinions about how the crisis should be resolved and what models should be used and where responsibilities lie.

Former President F.W. de Klerk addressed the skills crisis at the Institute of Directors business update conference. He mentioned the launching of the Joint Initiative for Priority Skills Acquisition (JIPSA) with the objective to rectify the skills crisis. He saw affirmative action as a underlying cause of the skills crisis and put the question of how the empowerment ideal can be best achieved “in the real world” to business leaders.

He continued by giving his view regarding lasting empowerment: “... you do not empower people simply by transferring property to them or by appointing them to

some or other job for which they are not properly prepared or sufficiently qualified and experienced. Real empowerment means enabling people to acquire the skills, the opportunities and the resources that they will need to add value and compete successfully in a tough and competitive world.” He said that the key is education and training and a dramatic improvement in the education system. He also continued to spell out the responsibilities of business leaders in the economic empowerment process.

People development was depicted in the management articles as something that starts with a strategic intent and people management processes are integrated and aligned to create people capability and capacity. Different aspects of people development were touched on. Knowledge and skills seem to be the key success factors in a people management philosophy, but there is also a realisation that more than technical competence is required.

“Savvy knowledge workers have the additional skills which imply the ability to acquire and transfer knowledge effectively. It involves analysing information and applying specialised expertise to solve problems, generate ideas, teach others or create new products and services.”

Specialists in their respective fields and internationally recognised consultants advocated models that would address developmental needs for success, such as whole mind development, flexibility and a creative edge, personal improvement actions and a holistic approach. Development and management of people were identified as a predicament because of the large proportion of people who has never been involved in the economy and lack business and industrial skills. A consultant of an international consulting group asserted that everything that is taught in business schools or via the SETAs about business management is outdated. The SETAs were criticised for their rigid bureaucratic system and that they put more effort into bureaucratic aspects than they do into the teaching itself and, in terms of rigidity and failure to have an interest in ‘real world’ subjects. The author further asserted that nothing learnt from international management in general and Southeast Asia in particular was incorporated into people

management and programmes generally that could be of value in the search for higher levels of growth. The article harshly criticises the business schools and says that they ignore the fact that the West was no longer the sole source of best practice management techniques and expertise and that many new systems had been created.

- Coaching

Much prominence is given to coaching in the Management Today and articles appear in every issue. The authors of articles are executive coaches and representatives of organisations that provide coaching services. The need for coaches in the present economic climate to assist leaders in facing challenges, as well as benefits of coaching for leader and management development were emphasised.

Coaching as management development tool was advocated strongly to assist executives in facing challenges and demands and was seen as alternative to management training programmes. It was suggested that “once leaders return from a course, only 2% try to do the things learnt on courses. In coaching on the other hand, the coachee is encouraged to develop a personal plan of action which incorporates the team and its desired outcomes.”

The pivotal role that coaching and mentoring play in the development and empowerment of key skills was suggested in different contexts. The importance of coaching and mentoring together with learnerships to ensure that learning translates into applied competence was emphasised.

The need was expressed for research of coaching and mentoring in terms of suitability for empowerment and how effective it is. Benefits that were measured were reported as increased confidence levels, feeling good, focused and believing more in the self, higher morale, enhanced careers, help with the future, clarity of purpose, self-analysis and strengths developed.

- Quality management

Quality of training and the need for training to achieve quality were the only references to empowerment in all of the regular articles on total quality management. Quality training was addressed as a driver of productivity. Quality management is concerned with “measuring of the benefits of training interventions in order to improve efficiency and effectiveness of the public and private sectors”.

The measurable personnel factors for the purpose of quality management in call centres were identified as motivation to help, knowledge, correct decisions and problem-solving. Operator training levels were mentioned as solution to improve service, but the cost-effectiveness of this training seemed to be the main concern.

- Human resource management

Articles that included aspects of human resource management gave recognition to people as an asset and emphasised the development of people’s capability to ensure business growth and survival. The alignment of all people practices, such as performance management and career management, with the organisation’s strategic intent was also discussed.

“Continued organic building and development of people capability and capacity always to be ahead of demand and forever improving customer centric processes are both business growth and survival imperatives that outweigh all other business strategies. World-class organisations are process driven and people capability is built around process to drive high performance and continuous improvement in pursuance of the organisation’s strategic intent. Long range succession planning and an environment that stimulates learning form a vital part of the process. Acquisition and retention processes drive and sustain the flow of people capacity whilst the widening of the skills repertoires and development of skills densities raise people’s overall capability.”

An article that was devoted to the winners of Best Companies to work for, gave another insight into the priorities of companies when it comes to people management. Winning organisations' orientation towards empowerment included, for example, "People development is a significant focus."

Reference was also made to the commitment to black empowerment and the status of winning companies.

- Performance management

Articles about performance relate to factors and dimensions of empowerment and one can see why performance was depicted in the literature as a consequence of empowerment. However, the empowerment aspect was not mentioned. To enhance performance a focus on aspects that are also relevant to empowerment, such as accountability, ensuring that the right resources are in the right place, the capability of building skills, insisting on performance and dealing with consequences was suggested. A performance culture is also related to what was described as an empowering culture, but the connection was not made in the articles.

Reasons for not performing was depicted as low self-confidence, not being adequately trained for the job, poor attitudes or low motivation, the belief that one cannot make a difference, fear of making a mistake and the belief that one lacks the skills, which may also be reasons for not feeling empowered.

The factors that were put forward as playing a role in a person's success at meeting demands are competence, training and skills development, resources in the sense of time, tools, materials assistance from others, as well as the degree of control open to the individual to get on with the task, to manage the situation or solve the problem. Individual characteristics and skills related to performance and the ability to take control were depicted, which suggests that empowerment has to take place.

6.2.2.2 *Discussion*

Articles in the Management Today address generic issues regarding leadership and management and while a wide array of management topics are covered, not many addressed issues regarding empowerment.

The articles in a periodical containing subject specific matter are much richer in content than newspaper articles and the discussion about it is done in a more evaluative manner in order to bring out the profound meaning of how it is perceived in terms of empowerment by the researcher as reader. A general perception is that the Management Today projects the 'educated' opinions of different schools of thinking without any commentary that puts things into perspective. It projects mostly the opinions of Western academics, international consultancy firms, executive coaches and very few are based on research done locally. Not enough connection was made to the South African reality. Many of the articles are actually advertisements for certain management services and promote the models used by the international consultation businesses with roots in Western countries.

The impression is created that these Western viewpoints cannot be ignored if one wants to become a globally competitive nation. However, it was also suggested that South African organisations should adopt Eastern management practices because the same circumstances prevail locally as in a Southeast Asian country, being lack of skills. On the other hand there is an appeal for defining African leadership that is based on the unique African context. Just the same one needs to not adopt the best practices that work in other countries whether these are Western or Eastern countries, but conceptualise own best practice to address the empowerment problems currently experienced.

Prominence was given to leadership. Leadership, especially the visionary leader, and innovation are focus areas, while less attention is given to sound management practices, except for the quality management articles. The reader is left with the impression that the performance of the private sector company

hinges on the CEO, who has to be a visionary leader and that innovation and the competitive advantage of the company are the responsibility of the leader only.

A large part of the focus is on the CEO and not the empowerment of employees that must fill the pipeline of future leaders. This view was prominent in spite of the fact that a survey revealed that the empowerment of people was considered the most important leadership competency in African business today.

Issues addressed in the leadership articles that are of importance for the present study are leadership development and research about leader behaviours necessary for the (South) African context. This should also be applicable to roles and responsibilities as well as characteristics of managers. In spite of the expressed need for development of leaders, the articles did not address this aspect of leadership. If the demands and challenges of a South African leader are taken into account, as well as the characteristics, roles and responsibilities of leaders according to local CEOs, it can be concluded that there are certain aspects of leadership that may be generic. However, it makes sense to conclude that because certain demands are unique to the South African context that it is necessary to determine what African leadership should look like. In light of the survey finding that empowering behaviours are an important leadership competency, the findings of the present study should contribute to this need. Reliance on Western concepts was pointed out as not the preferred situation in more than one context.

Some articles cited the views of opinion makers, which may be influential depending on how much value the reader attaches to the communicator. The opinion of a prominent white South African, such as former President F. W. de Klerk should reflect and/or influence the opinions of other white South Africans. However, he was part of the reform of the country and his views should also be balanced and realistic. The issues he raised, such as that empowerment is a vehicle for redressing the wrongs of the past with the accompanying disadvantages for the previously advantaged population, are what is assumed are in the minds of most white South Africans.

A founder and CEO of a black women owned company should be the perfect role model and the right person to address an audience on the empowerment of women. She spoke from experience and it is clear that she has a genuine concern for the empowerment of women. She delivered a positive message, which is relevant to all people expecting to be empowered. If this message could be conveyed by all role models, it could lead to a change in perception and also in paradigms and expectations, from holding out a hand to seizing opportunities and eventually extending a hand in the empowerment of others.

Aspects that are addressed in many of the articles are that there are skills shortages in South Africa and that training and development are an important part of business strategy and management. Although empowerment is supposed to be integrated and aligned with business goals, apart from a fleeting reference to it, very little attention is devoted to it as a topic of importance. People development seems to be a valued aspect when organisations are evaluated as 'best company to work for' and it was interesting to see that where it concerns employees that it enjoyed more prominence than the BEE status of the company.

Skills development is related to socio-economic and political issues as it is something that is addressed by government as part of BBBEE and because of the skills crisis and the effect it has on the economy. While there is agreement that skills development is of the utmost importance, articles about development seemed to advocate different models. One article went so far as to disparage the educational institutions and authorities in the country, as well as Western influences and advocated an Eastern model instead.

The attention given to an empowerment tool such as coaching is motivated but out of balance with other developmental tools. Coaching and mentoring was seen as a development tool suitable in different contexts, but especially for the development of managers. In all the issues of Management Today articles are published on coaching. Where mentoring is normally seen as the responsibility of managers, coaching seems to be a professional vocation and done by external specialists, thus the 'advertising'. A frequent contributor warned that different

types and styles of coaching are marketed as if they were a solution to all the issues in business and were branded as the answer to all ills in the work place. The author suggested that more research should be done. However, the benefits of coaching and mentoring that were mentioned can be related to empowerment and specifically psychological empowerment.

Quality management articles appear in every issue of Management Today. Quality management is not without the human factor and empowerment is necessary to ensure, for example, quality service to customers and professionals must be motivated to deliver quality products. The human factor is addressed in quality management in the need for performance management and training in quality management systems. However, it seems that more attention is given to the system of measurement, cost-effectiveness, productivity and the bottom line than to the empowerment of personnel to deliver a quality service.

Performance as it was depicted in two articles relates to dimensions and factors of empowerment. What the relationship is, whether performance is an antecedent or consequence of empowerment can only be determined by empirical research, but that the two phenomena share certain qualities became clear. For example, people who take charge can be the same as people who have a sense of control. Taking charge relates to the behavioural component of empowerment. However, in spite of the obvious relationship between performance and empowerment, and the fact that performance management seems to be regarded as an important contributor to the success of a business organisation, the empowerment aspect that gives rise to success and performance is not recognised.

Although empowerment is not addressed directly, many of the articles have indirect interfaces with the concern. It would have had more value if the connection was made to the need for empowerment and development, for example, in the case of the inability of certain incumbents to take charge and deliver. In this management periodical, human resource management is portrayed in a people oriented manner and the development of people seems to

be regarded as important, but still the benefit for the company is not left out of sight. Current legislation and the effects of it on management and economic empowerment also featured, but not as strongly as in the business newspaper.

6.2.3 A general perspective

An internet search was done on the Media 24 website, news24.com, for articles containing the word 'empowerment' for the period 1 Jan 2008 to 30 April 2008. Empowerment in the mass media includes a wider spectrum of applications, for example, economic, women, community, victims and empowerment of HDIs.

6.2.3.1 Perceptions portrayed by the mass media

A look at frequencies with which the opinions and articles appeared revealed that about half the time empowerment had to do with economic empowerment. While the business paper projected BEE in a positive light, negative aspects such as corruption were also mentioned. Affirmative action and equal employment also featured strongly while smaller percentages were about politics, sport, community and victim empowerment.

The website has the additional advantage that it also features contributions from the general public.

- BEE and politics

Apart from the normal BEE transactions that were regarded as news, the benefits for small business development and the contribution to economic empowerment, there were also negative aspects that were reported. The positive side of BEE was portrayed where the benefits are evident, but there were also reports of economic empowerment efforts that did not work out. The worst case scenario, however, is when corruption is associated with important figures that were supposed to be the contributors to positive outcomes.

A positive story is about the progress made on the Gautrain project that had a positive impact on the province's economy and promoted empowerment and small business development. The "... contribution to BEE ..." amounted to R590m in the current financial year.

Negative stories were about an investment by a BEE consortium that did not come to fruition and "newly elected ANC leadership has ordered a forensic audit of all empowerment deals and tenders which were received by its investment company".

There were references to corruption, for example, the corruption trial of a Mpumalanga Economic Empowerment Corporation chief executive who was axed and faces 48 fraud charges.

"Schaik's black empowerment credentials had to be clarified for the potential arms deal, because foreign belief is that BEE is only for black indigenous people."

Negative perceptions of BEE were expressed especially the perception that it only benefits a few, for example:

"Mbeki's vision of BEE and a substantial black business class was widely derided within the ruling ANC alliance as well as outside, for seemingly enriching only a few well-connected oligarchs."

A columnist wrote in an article, "For too long the party resided in Pretoria and in the opulent mansions of the small but filthy-rich black economic empowerment (BEE) crowd living in Emmarentia, Bryanston, Midrand and Morningside. Its policies were decided by white big business and its lickspittle lackeys in BEE schemes."

In the media column writers normally express their opinions, while news events are supposed to be reported objectively according to facts. The opinions of

columnists, therefore, have the potential to fuel perceptions. An example of an opinion with the potential to ignite was that liberation is an all-encompassing process and that to win political control must translate into winning control of everything, including the economy. Instead political liberation has meant "... more shacks, squalor, disease, massive unemployment, gross poverty and lack of education on the one hand, opposed to mushrooming multimillion rand mansions in golf estates, billionaires and several millionaires".

"The new custodians of ANC national policy must swiftly ensure that poverty, inequality and unemployment are tackled with zeal, to the benefit of all the people, and not just the braggart BEE types."

- Training and development

Two articles were about training and development. Although the frequency is low, what gives it magnitude is that the issue was addressed in the state of the nation speech in parliament by the president. It was included in government's "Apex of Priorities" and words such as "a deliberate focus on matters of skills development" were used. But it is also clear that it is not considered a responsibility of government alone, but the private sector as well.

"Work to review the National Human Resource Development Strategy will be completed this year, and the projects that the joint team of government, labour, business and academic institutions organised under the Joint Initiative on priority Skills Acquisition (JIPSA) will be intensified."

"Indeed, we are greatly encouraged by the good response from the private sector as demonstrated through the commitment of the CEO's of 70 of the JSE-listed companies to work with government in addressing the challenge of scarce skills."

Additional interventions in the Further Education and Training (FET) colleges, the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs), resourcing schools and speeding up on-the-job training for professional graduates were promised. Adult

Basic Education and Training (ABET), women empowerment, and youth development and empowerment were also foreseen.

- Women empowerment

Three articles referred to woman empowerment of which two also had to do with the education and development of women. Apart from the reference to women empowerment in the President's state of the nation speech, Premier Edna Molewa was quoted to have said that women would continue to feature prominently in the empowerment agenda of government, especially with regard to business opportunities. She spoke at the occasion of the launch of a provincial chapter of the Progressive Women's Movement in Broederstroom. "Women had called for a skills revolution that would help them play significant roles in the process of economic growth. ABET should cover as many women as possible – especially those in rural areas."

- Affirmative action

Affirmative action and related racial issues as topics surfaced in the opinions of users, members of the public, a report on a public address by the president of the ANC and an incident involving the Forum for Black Journalists. Beliefs of either fairness or unfairness of affirmative action and racial discrimination by different groups were expressed. A white male wrote about fairness and non-aggressive resistance and the negative effect on the economy, while a coloured male used stronger expressions, such as "reverse racism," "pretext of addressing the wrongs of the past" and "double standards". Zuma was approached by members of the public about the status of affirmative action and his vague statements had an underlying message of fairness.

Those who are most affected by affirmative action are white males and it can be understood if a white male expresses his opinion in the press about it. That corrective action is needed was not denied, but it was perceived as unfair, especially as far as the youth is concerned. The feasibility of corrective action

and the results were questioned as there is no evidence that the poor majority benefits from it. The plea in general is for employment equity that is fair, but does not harm the economy.

“Talented young professionals are emigrating or, even worse, are prohibited from contributing properly to the economy. Without a vibrant economy there is no hope of accommodating anyone’s aspirations. But how can fair employment equity and empowerment be applied in the long term without doing further moral and economic damage?”

“The damage is real but the recipients of the benefits are not clearly in evidence. We obviously have a new high middle and wealthy class in the economy but there is double the number of very poor people compared to 1995.”

A coloured man also questioned the “seemingly never-ending constructs called AA and BEE”. “There is nothing more sickening than when an unbecoming few disseminate racial prejudices under the thinly-veiled pretext of ‘redressing the wrongs of the past’.”

ANC President, Jacob Zuma, said at an event that affirmative action was a matter which needed engagement and discussion. When he was questioned about how long it would be enforced for, Zuma said, “For centuries people of a particular nature were disempowered. How long did disempowerment take ... I don’t know. How long will empowerment take? I don’t know.” He said the question was how to handle it in a manner which did not create the perception that others were being disempowered through affirmative action.

The Forum for Black Journalists received coverage when their blacks-only membership policy was found by the Human Rights Commission (HRC) as unconstitutional and the HRC in turn had to defend its viewpoint that it would have no problem with the forum should it amend that part of its constitution relating to membership and open its doors to anyone who subscribed to its

principles. This included being committed to the advancement and empowerment of black journalists.

“... the commission rejects suggestions that it is opposed to the advancement of the disadvantaged through programmes such as BEE and AA.”

6.2.3.2 *Discussion*

The general perception created by the mass media could be seen as negative if it is half the time about economic empowerment, which excludes certain groups, together with the connection with corruption and failures. Dissatisfaction with the current situation was expressed and even blacks are dissatisfied because they perceive that a small number of individuals are favoured. It is only government that paints a positive picture with promises of improvements in education and development with the help of the private sector. Currently there seems to be few success stories to tell in spite of positive predictions of improvement.

Messages in the daily news papers do not only carry objective information about what is happening in the current environment, but are much more subjective where opinions are expressed. They, therefore, also carry messages about what should happen and value judgments about events. Loaded expressions are used that give a completely different connotation to a concept than what the original intention was, for example, the word oligarch. The choice of the word denotes the significant influence of certain wealthy individuals on the life of a nation. The term came into wide circulation to refer to a small group of individuals who acquired tremendous wealth and significant political influence in some post-Soviet republics after the collapse of the Soviet Union (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Business_oligarch).

Daily papers are more focused on the masses and the potential for influencing the masses is greater. A Spanish philosopher, José Ortega y Gasset (cited in Coetzee, 1977) described the masses as those who are focused on the present with a loathing of affluence that can be attributed to an inner lack of security,

which can lead to excessive reaction to perceived threats. The mass-man could be from any social background and the potential to incite the masses through the emphasis on unfair advantages of a privileged few is just as relevant now as in any other particular political era.

6.2.4 Discussion of media perceptions

The content of articles in the media were analysed in order to determine what the potential impact on the perceptions of empowerment is.

Analysis of the Cape Business News led to the conclusion that it creates a perception that economic empowerment is a more relevant current issue than any other form of empowerment. Articles with a training and development focus were not without reference to the economic benefits for companies and critical skills shortages were mentioned as an important factor in the present socio-economic climate with negative consequences for the economy. The subject matter is conveyed in objective, factual terms and the only subjective message is what businesses express to create a favourable impression of themselves in terms of their BEE status in the business world. In general the image of empowerment, as projected by the mass media according to what was monitored by scanning News24.com reports, is not positive. Although different kinds of empowerment were covered, economic and political issues dominated. These media sources do not address the real issues regarding empowerment of employees and citizens and the true meaning of empowerment is not reflected in its messages. Articles in the Management Today are more focused on leadership and management in general, but very little was found that dealt with empowerment as the main topic. The economic aspects and consequences of corrective action were also contemplated but not to the same extent as in the other sources.

The management literature on empowerment, on the other hand, agrees across diverse fields that empowerment should be understood as bestowing employees

with power and authority, and corresponding responsibilities and competencies, for them to feel confident to fulfil a role in their organisations (Klagge, 1998).

Apart from the impression that empowerment refers to economic empowerment only, the political history cannot be separated from this perception and continues to influence the practical application of empowerment and the perceptions that go along with it. Legislation in South Africa, prior to becoming fully democratic, was the cause that whites were advantaged and this situation had to be corrected by legislation. It seems that although this corrective action is accepted as necessary, there are many who are dissatisfied with the manner in which it is managed. There were opinions expressed in the News24.com items that BEE, for instance, only benefits a few, while other opinions were that there are unfair disadvantages for others as a consequence of the way it is managed. The realisation is now that if BEE and affirmative action are not managed properly it can create a new predicament. For example, BEE and affirmative action seem to get the blame for skill shortages and lack of performance and service delivery.

There were references in all three sources to the 'real world' and F.W. de Klerk asked the question how the ideal of empowerment can be achieved. The conclusion can be made that the real world is what happens in organisations, how legislation is interpreted, applied and managed and everything is left to organisations and businesses, which can either just comply or make a difference.

Both former Presidents Mr De Klerk and Mr Mbeki mentioned the launching of the Joint Initiative for Priority Skills Acquisition (JIPSA) with the objective to rectify the skills crisis and both spoke of the responsibility of the private sector in achieving the objectives. Another government intervention, ASGISA, a mechanism to get the BBEE to move faster and more effectively, places responsibility on corporations in South Africa. It seems that much is left to private business to implement and to make it work, while they also have to survive in a competitive market and deal with the challenges of changes brought about by political decisions and keep employers satisfied. No wonder so much emphasis is placed on leadership. Knowledge management and business

education were discussed in the management periodical and these are means that should contribute to address some of the needs in terms of skills shortages and empowerment.

Skills development as important factor in empowerment can be discussed and criticised from many different perspectives and it does not matter how scientific the system or model is and whether it is called knowledge management or business education, the result should be employees who are enabled to fulfil an occupation and feel competent and confident to do so. Knowledge was seldom depicted in the management literature in terms of empowerment as an entity acquired from education only, but rather in accordance with in-post training, experience and feedback in order to create an understanding of job requirements, for example, business principles, (Bowen & Lawler, 1992; Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Gist & Mitchell, 1992; Knouse & Strutton, 1996). Kanter's (1993) suggestion that jobs are reviewed and job analysis is done to determine the competencies and content knowledge needed suggests that the context rather than the scientific model is important to consider. Lack of skills or perception of competence was found by researchers to be an important factor in organisational empowerment (Koberg et al., 1999; Menon, 2001; Spreitzer, 1995a; Zimmerman, 1990).

Another current issue related to empowerment that was highlighted in the media is affirmative action. The management of affirmative action against the political background seemed to have a big influence on perceptions. Corrective action, while maintaining quality and productivity poses a bigger challenge for management and in particular human resource management than what was ever before experienced in the development of the behavioural sciences. A culturally diverse workforce became a reality in the United States because of its population's racial diversity. Although Europe and the East were more homogeneous societies in terms of race, Europe has had incidents of anti-Semitism and has to deal with a fast-growing Muslim minority. There may be no part in the world that never had to deal with politically disenfranchised people. Organisational behaviour principles developed around cultural diversity because

of the potential problems, but also the advantages that diversity brought with it if managed correctly. Increased participation of minority groups in the workforce in the USA was a matter for management to consider in order to remain globally competitive and readiness, preparation and skills development were considerations (Ivancevich & Matteson, 1996). Affirmative action as a tool for empowerment should, therefore, be managed in such a manner that the perception is not created that empowerment is only done in terms of representivity without the necessary preparation and skills development to the detriment of efficiency, because then it is directly contradicting what empowerment professes to do.

With respect to management principles, the impression was created in the *Management Today* that Western viewpoints should be considered if one wants to become a globally competitive nation, while others believe that one should adopt Eastern management practices and realise that the West is no longer the sole source of best practice management techniques and expertise. Whether a Western or Eastern philosophy of management should be adopted does not seem to be relevant as there seems to have been much cross pollination already and it is hard to establish which philosophy originated where. Hall (1989) pointed out that most of the management philosophies that US Managers went to Japan to study, because of their productivity records, actually originated in the USA. The point is that to be competitive in a global market it is necessary to take cognisance of tried and tested practices and empirical studies done in Western as well as Eastern countries, but it was iterated that research is necessary to establish which approach is most applicable to the South African context, which is also the aim of the present study.

All the issues of the *Management Today* cover leadership, quality management and coaching as topics. These topics contain aspects of empowerment, although it was not the main focus. For example, articles on quality management, did not emphasise employee empowerment specifically, articles on coaching did not emphasise the manager's role as coach and mentor and

leadership articles focused more on the innovative qualities of the CEO than on the development of leaders.

The perception that articles on quality management gave rise to was that there is an obsession with measurement in quality management and even though measurable personnel factors included attributes that suggest a need for empowerment, cost-effectiveness seemed to be the main concern. In the management literature the benefits of employee empowerment were stressed and one of the core principles of TQM programmes was presented as employee empowerment (Bowen & Lawler, 1992; Knouse & Strutton, 1996). Empowerment in TQM implies that certain management practices should be executed, for example, delegation of authority needed to make decisions on the level where a service is delivered. Management should have confidence in the abilities of employees to solve problems and to create solutions that are satisfactory, which suggest that they should be empowered. Performance evaluation processes should provide information on the effectiveness with which employees perform their responsibilities and identify areas where improvement is needed. Skills development should address these needs to enhance the empowerment process (Knouse & Strutton, 1996). These aspects were not emphasised in the quality management articles.

The prominence given to coaching in the *Management Today* is not questionable, because in the literature several authors promoted on-the-job coaching and mentoring as methods of empowerment (Barry, 1994; Geroy et al., 1998; Kane-Urrabazo, 2006; Kinlaw, 1995; Klagge, 1998; Konczak et al., 2000; Zimmerman, 1995). The difference is that coaching and mentoring in the literature were seen as the responsibility of managers and not an external coach. Jack Welch, chairman of General Electric, was reported to be of the opinion that managers should take on the responsibility for counselling employees (Hogg, 1993) and Vogt and Murrell (1990) mentioned an example of a company that stressed management's responsibility to empower employees by means of coaching, teaching and enabling. Takeuchi, Osono, and Shimizu (2008)

mentioned that a feature of Toyota's people management policies is the role exemplary employees play as mentors.

The idea created by Management Today leadership articles that leaders should be visionaries is not far removed from the concept of the transformational leadership style. The style was investigated by several researchers. Menon (2001) relied on theories of transformational leadership when he suggested that it is the task of visionary and inspirational leaders to bring the beliefs and attitudes of employees in line with the organisation's mission and objectives. Transformational leaders empower subordinates to be involved in the process of transforming the organisation. Leaders empower subordinates by emphasising a higher purpose or worthy cause. Transformational leaders create a more empowering climate in which organisational members are inspired to take actions to enhance the vision. Brossoit (2000), Ozaralli (2003) and Samad (2007) investigated transformational leadership in relation to empowerment and found that transformational leadership behaviours were significantly related to empowerment. While the leader has to be a visionary, the management literature emphasises innovative self-managed teams (Bass, 1990; Hamel, 2007; Ivancevich & Matteson, 1996; Nonaka, 1988), which require empowerment on team level.

Women empowerment featured in all three media sources. The empowerment of women as a previously disadvantaged group is not just a South African issue. One of the targets that the United Nations member states agreed to achieve by the year 2015 is gender equality and it is one of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The target is to eliminate gender disparities at all levels of education, increasing women's share of wage employment and increasing the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments. Empowerment was explained in terms of power as the ability to make choices, while being disempowered means to be denied choice. Therefore, empowerment refers to the processes by which those who have been denied the ability to make choices acquire such an ability (Kabeer, 2005). In South Africa today women have the same choices as men and have access to the same

education and jobs as men. If there are fewer women in management positions and in parliament, it can also be seen as a choice, maybe because of socialisation more than denial of access. However, there are still a large number of illiterate women, as well as discrimination, which limit their chances of being economically independent and to be able to make those choices and there is still a very legitimate reason for a focus on women empowerment.

The role government plays in women's empowerment became clear in the state of the nation speech of the president, and the role of The Progressive Women's Movement became apparent in the media. What is noteworthy is that the attention to women empowerment was not initially part of the conception of a male dominated ANC movement. The women's movement also originated during the struggle, but was not initially part of the ANC and only later became full members. They earned their membership by showing their strength. Now politicians promise that women will continue to feature prominently in the empowerment agenda of government, especially with regard to business opportunities.

Whether the perception is that government is committed to the empowerment of women and that women expect special treatment, the need for a paradigm shift was expressed and that women should take responsibility for their own empowerment. According to Moglen (1983), women have a choice to either emphasise the importance of empowering women by helping them to see the special values of their 'proper' place and to remain outside of the terrain defined as 'male', or to engage in activities to obtain legitimate power. To gain legitimate power is to be given access to and control of information and the use of economic resources, which was demonstrated by the South African Women in Construction mentioned in the Cape Business News. The struggle is to combat the effect of socialisation: the induced desire for dependence and subordination.

Data in the media may be subjectively coloured where, for example, the opinions of the general public are expressed or a specific political orientation is advocated. However, opinions and perceptions that are freely available to the general public

may be interpreted and accepted or rejected, but in either way affect people's way of thinking. Management Today articles, however, are written for managers and management students. The theories and paradigms of specialists are conveyed and novices without a wider knowledge may be influenced by it, while experienced managers may compare it with the viewpoints and opinions of other authors and their own understanding and then come to an informed conclusion. However, the management periodical does not make a contribution to emphasise the role of managers in empowerment.

The organisational level seems the level most appropriate to fulfil a role to create more positive perceptions regarding empowerment. Business leaders and managers need to be made aware of their role and to create success stories that can be reported other than what their BEE status is.

6.3 GENERAL PERCEPTIONS

In order to disclose what the general perceptions of empowerment in South Africa are and to determine the extent of the presumed contribution of the media to create a socio-political climate with respect to empowerment, the present study included an exploration of individuals' perceptions. The examination into perceptions was included in the qualitative phase of the study by means of semi-structured interviews. General perceptions of what empowerment means was a predetermined category as it was posed as a research question and, therefore, an interview question was formulated for perceptions to transpire.

6.3.1 Interviewees' perceptions

With specifically asking interview candidates what they think of first when they hear the word, empowerment, the supposition was that whatever situation or experience made the biggest impression on the person in terms of empowerment will come to mind first. Some of the candidates were either in Human Resource Management or Training and Development Specialists and as can be expected,

their responses came close to a text book definition instead of a subjective connotation.

“Empowerment to me is firstly equipping people with skills, whether it is decision-making, emotional, functional or technical, to be able to do his or her job according to the competencies expected within the job. Secondly it is allowing that person to take accountability and responsibility according to those skills.”
(Participant 10)

- Socio-political / Generalised to self and others

In chapter one it was suggested that the present socio-economic climate has an influence on perceptions about empowerment in general. That the influence is there became apparent, but it also seemed from the majority of responses that there is a balance between the socio-political meaning and what empowerment means for individual employees. First impressions of empowerment were formed by experiences during times when affirmative action was first implemented, but actions such as giving feedback, moral support and a genuine interest in the person and the person's well-being and the greater good of the organisation were seen as the true meaning of empowerment. Thinking of empowerment took some participants back to the past and the years of segregation when people were held back because of the colour of their skin, contrasted by the present where people are given the opportunity to get ahead. Other terms that described empowerment were upliftment of the previously disadvantaged, legislation and regulations as opposed to the individual's responsibility to seize the opportunities that is provided for their upliftment.

The socio-political connotation was mostly mentioned first and then it was generalised as can be seen from the following account:

“In the Industry that I serve, mainly government and quasi-government, and the company that I work for, affirmative action and equal employment receive a very high priority. My company is acknowledged as a leader in employment equity.

This is very laudable, and indeed necessary; but it has as a consequence that words like 'transformation' and even 'empowerment' start taking on a new meaning.”

“Transformation in the first instance to me means change as envisaged by the EE Act and AA policies, to advance black people. This has a further consequence that words like empowerment is seen in the restricted meaning that it is assigned with Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) and Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) legislation and programmes.”

“Primarily empowerment means to me empowerment to previously disadvantaged groups. A wider understanding of empowerment would then include me, and other WAMs (white Afrikaans speaking males). Might be somewhat cynical, but I hope it is merely objective and not negative.”

“As I see it for myself, whether it is DD being empowered or a black woman being empowered, the process and tools are the same. I understand empowerment to consist endowing me with more power to assure positive growth or changes in my own life. Empowerment would, therefore, not mean giving me the fish, but teaching me how to catch the fish, or if I am really sharp, how to harvest the fish roe.”

“The process would follow some situational analysis or management process: Determine where I stand, in terms of knowledge, experience, skills, etcetera; determine where I want to go; assist me with career planning, etcetera; give me tools to do planning, allow me to perform implementation actions; give me tools to assist with implementation. That's that. I think.” (Participant 7)

- Politically inspired upliftment

The minority of participants saw empowerment as only affirmative action or politically induced and in these cases some made very direct references to race

and gender. The more direct expressions were also somewhat cynical, for example:

“Women! Black elite! Empowerment has become synonymous with women upliftment. It has also become synonymous with the black elite: Tokyo Sexwale, Patrice Motsepe, Cyril Ramaphosa, Saki Macozoma, etc. Whilst there’s talk of broad-based empowerment, the names that usually crop up whenever there are big bucks involved are those of the usual suspects.” (Participant 15)

“To me it is like a political thing if you say empowerment. In South Africa when you talk about empowerment it is when you train the blacks to come and do your job.” (Participant 8)

More indirect references to the political meaning would refer to people who did not have opportunities before rather than to race and gender.

- Free from political content

Most of the responses did not contain any references to politics or affirmative action. Empowerment was associated with responsibility, challenges, ownership and accountability. It was also associated with skills development, learning, opportunity, growth and improvement to peoples lives. Empowerment was also seen as to be enabled to do a job, to be independent, to be useful in the community, to realise own potential and to make a difference and add value to any organisation.

Examples are the following:

“Empowerment to me is when a person is given the necessary tools to empower himself to do a job and to be useful in the community.” (Participant 2)

“I think it is enabling, to empower somebody is to enable the person to be able to help himself or to achieve objectives by himself. That is what empowerment

means to me. Yes also in the work situation empower to be able to do certain things, trust that is put in you.” (Participant 12)

Apart from whether the perceptions are politically influenced or against a training and development background, other themes were found:

- Organisational responsibility

An organisational responsibility was suggested in the sense that empowerment is something that is done unto somebody else. Verbs such as give, help, equip, allow, teach or train, add and enable were used in connection with skills, opportunities and ability to do a job. The word ‘give’ was used most often. Phrases suggesting the responsibility of the organisation were the following:

“equipping people with skills” or “to do their job well”

“allowing that person to take accountability and responsibility”

“give them responsibilities and a mentor,” “feedback and moral support” or “the necessary tools”

“given the opportunity to get ahead,” “to improve” or “to start something” or “a chance”

“to enable the person to be able to help himself”.

In some of the statements it was implied that the organisation gives to those who did not have it before, but it was also made in terms of employees in general.

- Individual’s responsibility

The individual’s responsibility was mentioned almost in the same breath as the organisation’s responsibility. The general opinion was that while something is

given, part of it is own responsibility and sometimes the latter is expressed as an outcome of the first. It was expressed as a process where management practices, such as delegation and feedback, precede empowerment, for example:

“... responsibilities could incrementally be increased until the individual feels confident in him or herself to take up the full responsibility.” (Participant 9)

Phrases such as “to take accountability and responsibility,” “ownership for required outcome,” “to be able to help himself or to achieve objectives by himself” were used.

The individual’s responsibility was emphasised by articulating the futility of one sided empowerment from the part of the organisation when members do not seize opportunities and do something from their side:

“... if the person does not contribute something himself by acquiring knowledge, obtaining theoretical knowledge and to put in effort then that empowerment actually means nothing.” (Participant 18)

- Self-empowerment

Some participants also referred more towards a self-empowerment concept:

“... and then I mean myself, how am I going to empower myself, in other words how am I going to equip myself in a better condition or environment.” (Participant 19)

“For myself also empowerment is to get out of the swamp that I was in myself and to empower myself to be able to do the stuff where I feel I have meaning in somebody’s life.” (Participant 1)

- Discrimination / Political influences

Apart from the direct question regarding first reactions to the concept, empowerment, perceptions of discrimination and political influences also surfaced during interviews. Perceptions of discrimination were voiced as reasons for not achieving goals or factors that have an influence on feelings of empowerment. Where it comes to perceptions of discrimination and its effects, such as blocking of goals, race and gender play an important role and, therefore, the race and gender of the person making the remarks are also important to arrive at the full meaning of the perceptions. Race and gender often are regarded as important factors in perceptions and form an important part of perceptions of empowerment. After all, BEE, affirmative action and equal employment are all about race and gender.

Some of the perceptions are general perceptions as a result of mechanisms such as affirmative action, but some participants also had personal experiences of discrimination. Especially white males perceive that their careers are threatened, their chances are limited and they see the emphasis on affirmative action and employment equity as blocking their progress.

“So what is the point to launch an ambitious career almost knowing that you are not going to get anywhere, because appointments are done to empower previously disadvantaged people or whatever.” (Participant 4)

“I don’t see myself that I will get a prospect any further. If you look how they drew up the organograms and so on, who are favoured and who not. Yes I don’t see a career for myself any further, better than what I am now. I read newspapers. You can see when they advertise a post it already stipulates who is going to get it.” (Participant 8)

Some participants had experienced the effects of affirmative action directly and perceived it as racial discrimination and believed that their career prospects

received a set-back because of it. Some are able to accept affirmative action in principle and as reasonable.

“You know, there was another incident where I applied for a post and I was told that I was by far the preferred candidate, but in the end they decided for the sake of representivity, they must advertise the post again and they found a black man, who I knew and who had suitable qualifications and that was completely to me a reasonable decision and it did not bother me.”

However, she does see it as stumbling block in general for further upward mobilisation.

“In a bureaucratic organisation there are always obstacles in the form of set rules and regulations. I guess it serves a purpose – it ensures that people are treated fairly, it ensures that precedents are not created, for example, the promotion policy and together with it affirmative action. It prevents people to be promoted purely on grounds of suitability and ability.” (Participant 9)

A black man with very good credentials associated empowerment with women upliftment and black elite. One can understand his perception because of his personal experience: “For a period of over two years I was acting executive manager of my organisation. I worked my butt off during that period: coming in very early to work; assisting, supporting; developing; training; delivering... the list goes on and on. My work came first at the expense of everything else, including my family. When the position was due to be filled, political manoeuvring and machination became the order of the day. There were some who wanted their political cronies for the position and some who wanted the best person for the job. There was blood on the floor. Eventually a female person was appointed as a compromise candidate. I was offered the position of chief operating officer – the next best thing short of being the executive manager.” (Participant 15)

Other general perceptions were expressed, for example, seeing discrimination in terms of political background rather than a race issue and some still believe that

people of colour do not get the same opportunities and remuneration than whites for the same responsibilities.

“South African business is still very white in management and most people of colour are not given equal opportunities even with affirmative action in place.”
(Participant 5)

6.3.2 Discussion

The themes that emerged from asking participants what they think of when they hear the word, empowerment, could be considered typical of what can be expected as a result of the present socio-political and economic climate in the country, but may also have been derived from insight and an ability to have a balanced perception of reality in spite of political induced measures.

Although the influence of policies, practices and legislation, as well as political influences regarding appointments were apparent, it seemed that perceptions in general are that empowerment is meant to uplift, train and provide opportunities for people to get ahead, be able to do their jobs well and be an asset in the organisation as well as the community. Those who revealed a predominant political understanding were in the minority, while there was a tendency to give recognition to the political influence, but at the same time see the enabling meaning in the word. The majority of the participants, however, gave accounts of the meaning of the word that has nothing to do with politics.

Structural implementation of socio-political obligations in organisations was perceived as constraints in terms of career progress. White males in general felt that affirmative action and discrimination stood in the way of reaching their full potential. Those participants who reached senior positions because of their occupations and expertise did not mention any discrimination. It seems that white females and coloureds are less affected by these social-political factors. White females are still considered for employment equity. Coloureds experienced less discrimination in the previous political dispensation than blacks

and are now considered in the same category of previously disadvantaged as blacks.

In the media references were often made to certain individuals who benefited from BEE strategies. Tokyo Sexwale was referred to as an “empowerment icon” in an article dealing with property and BEE deals (Miller, 2006). A columnist referred to braggart BEE types and the small but filthy-rich BEE crowd who benefited from empowerment initiatives (Qwelane, 2008). However, only one participant, a black male, echoed this perception by naming individuals whom he associated with empowerment. Other negative perceptions, such as the corruption associated with economic empowerment, were not in the minds of participants.

Kinlaw (1995) mentioned the negative connotations associated with the political and social impressions of empowerment. When empowerment is viewed as something that only some people gain from and is only meant for a privileged few, while others lose, empowerment has a negative association. However, not everybody who mentioned the political aspects was negative about them. The participants were resigned to the fact that the previously disadvantaged should be given opportunities and emphasised the enabling aspect of empowerment more than the socio-political aspect. Most participants appreciated the human and organisational development aspect of empowerment and accepted their responsibility in it. However, it is not clear from the expressions that there is a realisation that the relative power of everyone should be increased and new power created for the benefit of the organisation as Kinlaw (1995) defined it to be.

The influence of the media on the perceptions of the public can be described in the terms of the social psychological concept, social influence. Social influence refers to a change in the judgments, opinions and attitudes of an individual as a result of being exposed to the judgements, opinions and attitudes of other individuals (Van Avermaet, 1988). Exposure to opinions raised in the media, can in other words, result in change in perceptions.

When people have to express a judgement about some aspect of reality in the presence of others, they have two concerns: they want to be right and they want to make a good impression. This could have been a consideration when interviewees answered the question posed to them. Interviewees had to be reminded that they should not try to give a 'correct' answer, but rather say what their impressions are. It was specifically the e-interviews where respondents had time to think and formulate answers, where it seemed as if text book answers were provided to describe empowerment. To determine what is right individuals have two sources of information: what their senses and physical reality indicate according to what they have experienced and what others say. Much of what they have learned about reality, however, is based on information provided by others (Van Avermaet, 1988). Others in this case may also be the media, but it seems as if the respondents spoke from personal experience rather than the influence of the media. If the media had that much influence more respondents would have seen empowerment as economic empowerment of the previously disadvantaged.

The observation was that participants realise that empowerment is a shared responsibility between the organisation that provide opportunities and the individual who makes use of it and become enabled to take on the responsibility for their own growth. However, it was encouraging to learn that the true meaning of empowerment is recognised.

The expectation that empowerment initiatives should come from the organisation versus the notion that it is not something that management does to employees, but something that can be claimed by individuals for themselves was professed by Kinlaw (1995) and Quinn and Spreitzer (1997). While management can create a context that is more empowering, some effort and willingness must come from employees. Vogt and Murrell (1990) defined empowerment as both self-initiated and initiated by others and as an interactive process. According to Block (1991), empowerment is a frame of mind as well as a result of management practices. To experience empowerment entails being willing to accept responsibility. It is, therefore, a dual responsibility taken up in human

resource management processes, by means of skills analysis, career planning, provision of tools, etcetera, but the individual must seize opportunities provided and take ownership and be accountable for own development as some participants indicated.

Fairness was mentioned in a sense that it is acceptable that affirmative action must happen and that it is fair when the decision was considered to be reasonable. These tendencies were explained as perceived fairness in social exchange theory. Fairness is perceived when persons who have made large contributions receive relatively large outcomes or rewards, according to the rule for evaluating fairness: distributive justice or equity. Fairness is not perceived when individuals who made large contributions receive less than what they expected as outcomes as was the case with some participants, who worked hard and then somebody whom they perceived as less deserving got the coveted position. Participant 9, however, perceived the outcome as fair, because the procedure was perceived to be fair, termed in social psychology as procedural justice (Baron & Byrne, 1987). Distributive justice may also be relevant to the white males, but it was not expressed as explicitly. Employees make their own judgements about the relative size of the contributions they made and the outcomes they received. Therefore, one person may see fairness where another perceives unfairness.

Although the majority of the participants did not see the meaning of the word, empowerment, as having to do with politics, some participants did express perceptions of discrimination on the grounds of race and gender as far as constraints are concerned. However, self-serving bias may also be relevant where people tend to attribute good outcomes or results to internal causes, but bad or unfavourable outcomes to external causes, such as discrimination (Baron & Byrne, 1987; Miller & Ross, 1975). There were examples that led to the conclusion that self-serving bias may play a role. For example, Asian females should not be affected by discrimination in the present, therefore, the perception of discrimination might be considered in this light. Other perceptions were expressed that relate to race and gender, for example, that people of colour are

not afforded the same opportunities and remuneration than white men, while white men gets the perception from advertisements that there are not any options open to them. Blacks are normally in the best of positions as far as affirmative action is concerned, but in some cases they also saw that others are favoured, for example, the belief that women are favoured or that political affiliation is the determining factor.

The business section of a Sunday paper in which more than 1000 jobs are advertised was scanned for indications of the above. Phrases such as “committed to diversifying its staff profile in terms of its transformation agenda”, “encourages candidates from previously disadvantaged backgrounds to apply” and “(company) is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer” were found. Certain job categories, for example, engineering positions did not stipulate that to be previously disadvantaged is a requirement. Requirements are mainly qualifications and experience. The Career Junction website, on the other hand, specifically indicate, “This is an employment equity (Affirmative Action) position.”

Although many advertisements do not refer to equity employment or affirmative action, all companies should be committed to the achievement and maintenance of diversity and equity in employment or employees should be representative of the countries’ demographics, according to the relevant Acts.

As was the conclusion with respect to the perceptions that the media may potentially create about the unfairness of corrective actions, the need for proper management of such actions is again seen here. In the face of perceived unfairness, employees may react by following certain strategies to cope with the situation. People may alter their contributions. A white male may decide to put in less effort if he perceives that he is not going to be promoted anyway, while others who put in less may be favoured because of affirmative action. A more drastic strategy may be to withdraw from the situation. There were examples of participants who were prepared to take another job when they perceive that others are favoured. Menon and Kotzé (2005) warned that policy makers should be alert to the possibility that the formerly advantaged could, over time, become

alienated and disengaged. All of these manifestations contribute to a negative picture of empowerment that should be dealt with.

6.4 CONCLUSION

In conclusion some ideas that can be seen as shortcomings in the present situation and that can be addressed by implementing empowerment strategies are the following:

The news media gave far more attention to economic empowerment than any other form of empowerment. News about economic empowerment in the business paper is reported in a positive light and presented as beneficial, but in the mass media it often goes hand in hand with reports of corruption and failure to meet expectations. A more positive view of empowerment should be projected. Success stories should be told and company newsletters may be a suitable medium for this.

Empowerment of employees seems to be advocated to a lesser extent than leadership and innovation, while articles about quality and performance management do not emphasise empowerment enough. The empowerment of future leaders should include competencies related to the development and empowerment of their subordinates, including mentoring and coaching skills. All policies and practices should culminate in an integrated empowerment strategy that enables people to acquire the skills, the opportunities and the resources that they will need to add value and compete successfully in a tough and competitive world.

Although the majority of respondents seemed to have a balanced or positive view of empowerment as enabling, instead of just structural, it is necessary that any type of empowerment initiative should be preceded by a clear understanding of what empowerment entails, how it benefits the organisation and the country as a whole and where responsibilities lie. This will enhance a perception of procedural fairness.

Career planning should have a prominent place in empowerment initiatives. Career paths or any form of career management should be executed in such a manner that it can be perceived as procedurally fair. Special attention should be given to retaining expertise. For people who are affected by policies such as employment equity, provision should be made for keeping employees motivated by means of challenging goals that they can achieve even though they are not promoted. This is also relevant to young black talent to prevent them from job hopping.

The role of organisations was implied in more than one way. Not only are for profit organisations being held responsible to comply in order to empower HDIs financially, but they are also responsible for the development of employees and a further responsibility was identified in terms of the skills crisis. Organisations are now also held responsible to empower in order to fill the skills gap.

6.5 SUMMARY

The research question that was answered in this chapter was, *What are the general perceptions of empowerment in South Africa?* To determine what the orientations towards empowerment is in business and management and the general public, newspaper articles and editorials were analysed as source of information. The potential perceptions that could be formed as a result of the information in the printed media were discussed. The results obtained by means of semi-structured interviews about general perceptions were disclosed and discussed in relation to the literature. Conclusions were reached that may have relevance for empowerment strategies.

In the next chapter the results of the analysis of interview data in terms of the research question, *How do South Africans experience empowerment?* are discussed. The results led to grounded theory about dimensions of psychological empowerment that are pertinent to South Africans.

CHAPTER 7

DIMENSIONS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the results based on generating meaning from the data collected in the semi-structured interviews are conveyed. Following a phenomenological approach, meaning was given to the words and phrases that the interview participants used to express their beliefs, impressions and experiences regarding empowerment. Their words describe how things appear to be in their everyday work lives and according to Giorgi (1983), that is what is relevant for science.

The concept, psychological empowerment, was researched in terms of the research questions proposed in chapter one. The question relevant to dimensions of psychological empowerment and to determine characteristics of empowered people was research question 4, *How do South Africans experience empowerment?* In analysing the verbal interview data, the researcher relied on the data to reveal the dimensions of psychological empowerment according to what participants believe and perceive. Certain attitudes, orientations, values and behavioural tendencies were also revealed as characteristics of empowered people. All theoretical frameworks were put aside temporarily for the inductive part of the qualitative study with no preconceived notion or framework in mind, except that the psychologically empowered state is a cognitive state that may result in behaviour or behavioural preferences.

In order to appraise current theoretical frameworks for their applicability to the study of psychological empowerment in South African organisations, questions were incorporated in the interviews to include the theories of Menon (2001) and Zimmerman (1995).

Menon (2001) believed in the enabling power of a valued cause and the role goals play in psychological empowerment and, therefore, participants were

questioned about their goals. It was attempted to see whether having goals and the association with organisational goals have any relationship with the experience of empowerment.

Zimmerman (1995) proposed a framework for researching psychological empowerment, which consists of three components, namely intrapersonal, interactional and behavioural components. This framework was based on the social cognitive theory (SCT), which suggests three reciprocal influences, namely behaviour, cognitions and the environment (Bandura, 1977). Where theoretical frameworks were used and questions specifically formulated for this purpose, a deductive approach was followed. The results are discussed in terms of theoretical frameworks considered in chapter two.

7.2 DIMENSIONS

Interviewees were asked to relate incidents or events that they experienced as having a positive or negative effect on how they feel about themselves. The question, *How do South Africans experience empowerment?* can partly be answered by this step in the qualitative research.

Interview transcripts were analysed in search of personal experiences and/or beliefs that may emerge as dimensions of psychological empowerment. Significant statements were distinguished and grouped together first as themes and then from the themes those that could be categorised as dimensions of psychological empowerment or characteristics of empowered people were grouped together as dimensions.

The interviews were focused on participants' work domains and what they related in response to the questions were their thoughts, beliefs and actions regarding their capabilities, the meaning of their work, aspirations and outcomes that gave rise to them feeling empowered.

7.2.1 Powerlessness / helplessness

Feelings of powerlessness were particularly evident when a participant mentioned his reliance on others for help a few times, showing dependence for his well-being on external sources. He was asked in what situations he feels good about himself:

“I think when I had a session with somebody, such as the Employee Assistant Programme (EAP) counsellor, for example, or when I went to see my psychologist or psychiatrist or somebody phoned me and asked me how I am, are you OK? Then I feel OK and there is new meaning in my life. I am searching, you will hear I call out for help, I want to be helped, but the help is not coming at this stage. It took 28 years up to this point, now help will come.”
(Participant 1)

He believes that there are good things about him, but “I think I must just get somebody to manage the positive things in me”. He repeated this need for help during the interview.

The only other references in terms of powerlessness were in isolated situations, for example, such as feeling powerless temporarily after having made a mistake:

“A lot of my unhappiness was due to my own perception of powerlessness. I have subsequently started on a learning process to realise that one is never powerless, but that at times your power lies in just dealing with the setback. At that stage I was like a lion who has stepped on a thorn. I know I did it (made a mistake), but there was nothing I could do to fix it, and that hurt like hell.”
(Participant 7)

Feelings of helplessness in the face of severe conditions about which one is unable to do something:

“I feel bad when I’m helpless, for example, being unable to do anything about suffering, abject poverty, rampant disease, etc.” (Participant 15)

Powerlessness was not depicted in the literature as a dimension of psychological empowerment, but rather what it is not. According to Zimmerman (1995), intrapersonal variables that are expected to correlate negatively with psychological empowerment are powerlessness and helplessness. One way of empowerment, according to Conger and Kanungo (1988), is to weaken ones belief in personal powerlessness. Kieffer (1984) was of the opinion that in order to understand empowerment one must first clarify a conception of the condition from which it evolves.

Powerlessness is the perception that an individual has that he or she is not able to determine what happens to him or her and this feeling is reinforced by factors in the individual’s environment. A sense of powerlessness was described by Kieffer (1984) as a sense of hopelessness in a socio-political context. In this study the context is a work environment, however, the reference to poverty and disease is applicable to the participant’s social context that impacts on his work environment as he is in a public service.

The interview examples demonstrate a difference between feelings of helplessness to manage oneself, dealing with temporary feelings of powerlessness and feeling helpless only when unable to deal with external circumstances of concern that fall outside the sphere of influence of individuals. According to explanations in the literature of a sense of helplessness, the feeling of helplessness is caused when people’s efforts at controlling certain life events fail repeatedly and the person may stop attempting to exercise control altogether. If these failures happen often enough, the person may generalise the perception of lack of control to all situations, even when control may actually be possible. Expectations of controllability have an effect on the development of feelings of helplessness. As a result of the experience of uncontrollable events, people come to expect that they cannot affect outcomes through their actions and may generalise them to other situations as well (Brown, 1979; Hock, 2005). However,

where participants generally have a positive sense of competence, it was maybe the expectation to have control over external factors that caused them to feel powerless. When people find that there are factors they cannot do anything about, they may experience feelings of helplessness, but it does not mean that the feelings are generalised to other domains.

On the other hand, a person who feels dependent on support in the work domain in order to feel useful, may be a result of organisationally induced helplessness according to Martinko and Gardner (1982). Their model describes how individuals process information about their organisation. Factors in the environment, together with the person's past success history, lead to attributions for performance. Repeated experience with failure leads to erroneous beliefs of incompetence, consequently the individual gives up and becomes passive. Learned helpless individuals, therefore, do not pursue opportunities, do not experience positive outcomes, and if they dwell on these consequences it will result in lowering of their self-esteem (Langer, 1979; Martinko & Gardner, 1982). Conversely, if a person actively engages by making use of resources and opportunities and makes an effort to achieve goals and thereby improves his or her situation, empowerment is achieved (Zimmerman, 1995).

7.2.2 Resilience

Resilience is generally described as the ability to bounce back after a setback. It can also be seen in a person's flexibility and ability to adapt. There seemed to be different degrees of overcoming difficulties, for example, to overcome by just carrying on without giving up and continue with life as it is and those who experience a setback and deal with it by making some positive changes. There were references to attitudes and reactions on mistakes and failures that helped participants to bounce back and even improve after that. Mistakes were seen as part of a learning process and not something to dwell on. Some participants talked about the ability to adapt to challenges and see barriers as challenges.

An attitude was described in the following manner:

“I try to feel positive about even small failures. Jokingly, I try to live by the Chinese proverb that nothing is wrong or negative, but is a learning process. I don't dwell for a long time on something that I have done wrong or struggled with. That does not help, I try to change it and carry on.” (Participant 19)

A participant experienced growth after a disappointment:

“I sulked for three days and felt very negative and at a personal low. Then one night I suddenly realised and decided never again will somebody turn me down because of a qualification. I there and then decided to do my MA degree, which I actually enjoy very much doing.” (Participant 9)

Simoni et al. (2004) conducted a study on the influence of styles of stress resiliency on psychological empowerment. They found that employees who believe they are effective and do not imagine their own failure add to their own empowerment. Therefore, it makes sense to suggest that people who see failures as learning experiences and problems as challenges and people who believe they are able to overcome any setback, would be psychologically empowered.

Resilient people are normally able to maintain optimism in the face of difficulty. They have the perseverance to overcome stumbling blocks in order to achieve objectives. They do not regard setbacks as a sign to throw in the towel but rather regard problems as challenges to fight even harder (Keeva, 2003).

7.2.3 Competence

Respondents expressed feelings of confidence in their abilities or special qualities they have to do well in their specific jobs. Positive feelings were mostly expressed in terms of confidence in abilities, while lack of confidence was experienced under specific circumstances, for example, when performing a task

that is not part of the job requirement. Some participants expressed some reserve or realism regarding competencies as if they know they are competent but are hesitant to be over confident. Confidence in competence was expressed in terms of specific abilities and skills, qualifications and experience, as well as generalised confidence in abilities. Some participants felt that they were in demand because of their good track record.

Participants also tended to compare themselves favourably with their colleagues or even seniors, for example, people who were supposed to be more efficient than them, being better educated and 'specialists', which added an extra facet to their sense of competence.

"I enjoyed the fact that where other 'specialists' failed I succeeded." (Participant 7) (Single inverted commas were used by participant in e-interview).

One person did not hesitate to pride herself about her abilities in different jobs and in different contexts, while also comparing herself favourably with others. For example, when she was selling educational books: "I was very good at what I did. I was an avid reader and I had a lot of general knowledge and I learnt a lot from reading the Reader's Digest. I was very successful at what I was doing and after three months was the second top representative, nationally and went to Sun City with the winning group. The members of the organisation were very educated people, ex teachers, nurses and at that point in time I think that academically I may have had the lowest qualification. I had vast general knowledge and a natural desire to learn which stood me in good stead." When she was involved in organising French courses, "I was very good at public relations". (Participant 11)

A more generalised expression of competence: "In my business area and in my territory I believe everything is possible. I believe that the most difficult of problems that you toss my way, if I have enough time to work on it I will be able to solve it." (Participant 19)

People feel good about themselves when they feel they can cope with demands. If a person's own image of his or her competence is at stake, it causes temporary feelings of incompetence even if the general feeling is of confidence in own abilities. There seemed to be an identifiable continuum from lack of confidence, confidence to manage specific tasks and a general sense of competence. Competence seems to be something that people strive for and take pride in and it is associated with intrinsic motivation.

According to Harter (1978), tasks beyond one's capability, which cannot be mastered, produce no pleasure. Langer (1979) showed that a false impression of incompetence in certain situations may be possible. For example, a person faced with a novel task may conclude incompetence prematurely.

The distinction between task specific competence and generalised competence was mentioned in the literature. According to Gist (1987) and Gist and Mitchell (1992), self-efficacy is task specific and has to do with the individual's conviction that he or she can perform a specific task at a specific level of expertise and has the ability to produce good performance. Bandura (1977) defined perceived competency as generalised self-efficacy; the conviction that one can successfully carry out a range of actions and Menon (2001) argued that a sense of competence refers to both successfully meeting routine task demands and non-routine challenges that might arise in the course of work.

Gist (1987) suggested that people use their own subgroups as referents when they assess their self-efficacy. Reference groups are groups that people refer to when evaluating their own qualities (Thompson & Joseph, 2005). Individuals have their own subjective sense of who they compare themselves with when, for instance, judging their sense of competence. When participants judged themselves as being more efficient, it increased their sense of competence. If they compared themselves and found themselves to be less efficient, it would have been expected and not worth mentioning.

Thomas and Velthouse (1990) distinguished competence as a cognition or task assessment which is at the basis of empowerment. Spreitzer (1995a; 1995b) found that empowered people are confident about their ability to do their work well and that they know they can perform. Menon (2001) regarded sense of competence essential for psychological enabling.

7.2.4 Achievement of results

Getting to results was described as "... the best good feeling that you can get. If I can say I had a lot of work in front of me and I stuck to my program and I finished it all and I did it well. That is a wonderful feeling." (Participant 19)

Several participants remarked on how particularly good they feel when they achieved something. It could be a task that they were involved in over a long period, or their involvement in special projects that produced results, the initiation and implementation of large projects that set the standard or even a contribution to someone else's achievement, such as when their efforts paid off for someone else. Results themselves, more than the recognitions for good results, were the cause for pride in achievements. Some people described concrete examples of the results that produced these feelings and others showed a general result orientation.

Results seemed to become more noticeable in positions where there is some form of accountability, for example, professionals and management levels. There were several examples of participants highlighting the achievement of results of which the following was most descriptive:

"Something that makes me feel very good is when you finish something. Naturally, because we have such a big back log it is always a major issue when you finish a report, you know it is signed off and it goes to a committee and you know there is progress on the project. So to me it is great joy when I see a project is progressing ... and at the end of the day the big thing is when you get

final approval and you can sign off the building plans, because then you feel you achieved something.” (Participant 4)

Harter (1978) asserted that success leads to intrinsic motivation – a feeling of efficacy produced by the successful task accomplishment itself. She further proposed that the degree of challenge presented by the mastery situation and the amount of satisfaction derived are related. The author described the motivation to achieve as a desire to produce an effect on the environment, together with the goal of dealing effectively with the environment, which would then result in feelings of efficacy. This could indicate that achievement of results may also be related to making an impact. Appelbaum et al. (1999) suggested ‘progress’ as a dimension of psychological empowerment instead of impact and explained it as the feeling that the task is moving forward and that one is actually accomplishing something.

From the interview data it seemed that results lead to a sense of impact, but the ability to produce results is an indication of efficacy. Achieving results may give rise to feelings of competence or it may be described as a characteristic of empowered people to strive for results and only feel satisfied once these were achieved.

7.2.5 Sense of control

Two sub-themes were identified, namely, the control one has over the outcomes of one’s work and the other was more personal in nature, such as control over oneself, one’s future or one’s emotions. Where autonomy is usually a characteristic of a work environment that gives rise to a sense of control, personal control was revealed as a characteristic of the individual and can be exercised at any time and in any context.

Most people seemed to appreciate being left to their own devices to decide how best to perform tasks. Those participants who did not experience autonomy in their work expressed the desire to be able to have an input or to determine the

destiny of a programme. In cases where autonomy also entailed being allowed initiative and the opportunity to be creative, it lent an additional component of self-actualisation to the work experience.

A typical example of a participant, who was in the position to experience autonomy, was the following:

“I enjoyed being left alone to do my own thing, within predetermined boundaries for my work. I was allowed to determine the outcome, a lot of work I did at home, at a pace that I set. To a very large degree I was responsible to determine how I did the work, when I did it, etcetera.” (Participant 7)

According to Argyris (1987), one of the most important needs of employees is to enlarge those areas of their lives in which their own decisions determine the outcome of their efforts. Autonomy is closely associated with self-determination. A core precept of self-determination theory is that autonomy is a fundamental and a basic psychological need (Ryan & Deci, 2006), for example, the need to be in a position to be able to have an input in determining outcomes. According to Kanter (1979), power is accrued when people are able to make unique contributions or use their own discretion or judgment by doing something other than what they have been told.

Autonomy seems to be the same dimension that Spreitzer (1995a; 1995b) termed self-determination and identified as a dimension of psychological empowerment. It implies that empowered people are free to choose how to do their work. It is derived from the cognition that Thomas and Velthouse (1990) called “choice.” It is when one feels one is allowed to decide on task activities that are preferred and to perform them in ways that seem fitting. It is the feeling of being free to choose; of being able to use own judgment and act out of own understanding of what the task requires. In the same fashion Menon (2001) identified perceived control as one of the dimensions of being psychologically enabled. The author described perceived control as beliefs about autonomy in the scheduling and performance of work, authority and decision-making latitude.

A sense of control is essential for feelings of power. The way these authors defined the dimensions, self-determination and perceived control, are similar to what the participants said they want and appreciate and what they experienced as empowering.

The other aspect of a sense of control of a more personal nature was revealed when participants disclosed that they do not feel good when they do not feel in control of a situation. Perceptions of control also meant taking charge of one's life such as doing personal planning. The ability to stay calm, not show frustration or losing one's temper and dealing with negative situations in a mature and objective manner were facets of personal control that seemed to contribute to a sense of control.

An example of an expression of not feeling good about oneself, "... when I feel a bit out of control when I have a lot on my plate and I am running between meetings ...". The participant also considers the fact that "I am quite a controlling individual, so put in action plans around goals," as a resource that she has. (Participant 20)

Control is one of the root constructs from which the empowerment construct is derived (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). Renshon (1979) saw personal control in terms of impact. According to the author, each person has a need to have influence over people, events and institutions; a need for personal control. When a person has developed the belief that he or she has personal control, there is also the belief that he or she has impact. DeCharms (1979) used the term, personal causation, for the experience of making something happen, of initiating one's own actions and controlling the situation.

The dimensions, self-determination (Spreitzer, 1995a) and perceived control (Menon, 2001) did not address personal control or self-control in the same manner as what emerged in the present study. Spreitzer (1995b) distinguished self-determination as control specifically over one's work and work unit. The three-dimensional model of efficacy determinants proposed by Gist and Mitchell

(1992) distinguished between external and internal determinants of self-efficacy. Internal determinants are primarily under personal control. For example, internal determinants include current performance strategies and motivation to exert effort which is influenced by goals, priorities, interest and mood. Individuals may perceive themselves to have little or no control or influence over external factors under the control of others in the organisation or environment. Therefore, perceived control is likely to be higher over internal than external factors. Greater personal control leads to higher self-efficacy beliefs (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). Self-discipline and restraint are added to the dimension and sense of control seems to be a more fitting term to describe the dimension that combines autonomy and personal control.

7.2.6 Meaning

A few sub-themes emerged that seemed to be related to the desire to do meaningful work and experience a sense of meaning. Some expressed it as wanting to be an asset, others talked about adding value, making a contribution, having a purpose or do something fulfilling, while some felt that serving the community is meaningful. These were combined to form the main theme, representing the dimension, a sense of meaning.

At one end of the continuum were those who expressed the desire to add value and be an asset, but they did not seem to have experienced being an asset or have a clear idea what it entails. Adding value was stated as cognition rather than behaviour. People say that they believe that they can add value, but it was not substantiated by examples of what they do to add value. The ability to add value was seen as only possible when functioning on a strategic level.

“I never get to function on a strategic level where I can really add value.”
(Participant 10)

In the same way the need to have a purpose was expressed. Not all participants who mentioned the need to have a purpose in life, could state that they found it in

their work, although some had more clarity about their purpose. Some participants felt that service to the community or other people is meaningful to them. Getting involved in HIV/AIDS programmes in the workplace gave them a sense of meaning and they proclaimed that it was more fulfilling and rewarding than their core function. Service to the community may be vocation specific, but to people who have that inclination, it is meaningful and they think that their work is important. Others saw it as a future objective.

“I am still searching for my purpose in life. My aim is to equip myself to be able to at a later stage be of greater service to my community. But in the mean time I am always willing to support and assist my fellow human being.” (Participant 2)

At the other end of the continuum were those who had many opportunities to make a contribution and add value and they produced positive affects. It was expressed as a confident belief in the self:

“I believe I am good at what I do and can add significant value.” (Participant 20)

To be involved in or being busy with meaningful work was expressed as important and not being busy with meaningful work as not satisfactory. It seems that while most people have career aspirations, some participants prefer to stay in their present specialist field where they felt that they are doing meaningful and fulfilling work that they will have to forfeit when they get promoted.

“I don’t ever want a management position. I want to work with people. I don’t want to manage other workers. I still want to work with the client. That is the most important to me, the best.” (Participant 12)

Savolaine and Granello (2002) reviewed the literature on meaning and purpose in life and found several authors who have proposed models in an attempt to define the specific characteristics of a well person and all these models placed emphasis on meaning and purpose in life. Occupation and vocation were depicted in the literature that was reviewed as areas that are related to meaning

and purpose. Personal satisfaction and personal value were terms used in the definition of the occupational dimension that relate to the construct of meaning. Another potential area of life that the authors found to be important is community involvement. An individual's sense of purpose may be based on his or her role in the community. People may define their importance on the basis of their roles in relation to other people and this was also typical of the participants who saw their roles in terms of working with people as meaningful.

With respect to the examples of participants who did not feel their work is meaningful and who had no prospects of improving their careers, but found meaning in voluntary work, the following extracts from the literature are explanatory. The need for meaning was pronounced by Heine, Proulx and Vohs (2006). They referred to Western existentialists who argued that a key element of the human condition is a never-ending pursuit of meaning. When people's sense of meaning is threatened, they find alternative means to regain meaning. The authors proposed a meaning maintenance model according to which people can reaffirm meaning in domains that are different from the domain in which the threat occurred. This substitution for meaning in one area of life was also remarked on by other authors. According to Kanter (1993), when they are blocked from organisational recognition, people may substitute a variety of forms of social recognition, finding ways to look good in the eyes of some other people.

Meaningfulness concerns the value of the task, goal or purpose, the feeling that a vocation is important and that it is something that really matters. It was also described as the opportunity to pursue a worthy goal and the sense that what one is engaged in is worth the time, energy and effort (Appelbaum et al., 1999; Menon, 2001; Spreitzer, 1995a; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990).

7.2.7 Making a difference

"Enabled to make a difference" was what Participant 3 perceived empowerment to be and another participant also believed that any person on any level can be enabled to make a difference. Making a difference was expressed as an ideal

state, an ambition and a commitment to the outcomes of one's work. The meaning of empowerment was equated with being able to make a difference and making a difference was associated with a challenge. It was felt that the reward for hard work should be the recognition that one is making a difference. It seems that there is an interface with achieving results. However, when a difference is made the results that are achieved are more than just meeting requirements, but rather the results bring about a changed situation for the better. As was the case with adding value, it was also perceived that one must be on a decision-making level to be able to make a difference.

“That was always my ambition to be somebody in life and to make a difference, to be a person. To be a better person. I always feel my work is there in the community to make a difference in the community, even if it is for one person. That makes me feel good.” She was asked to clarify what she meant by “to be somebody in life”. Her reply: “To have an opportunity to be on the decision-making team and to make a difference.” (Participant 6)

Being change orientated, eagerness to get things started and making things happen, driving to achieve outstanding results and being accountable were characteristics associated with making a difference. The empowerment aspect was explained as enabling people to make a difference by creating an environment where people can communicate freely across the organisation, can challenge established views and can be empowered to make a contribution. Even juniors have a desire and can be enabled to make a difference by encouraging them to get involved in various projects, which gives them access to senior people, brainstorming their ideas and getting involved in the activities to make them materialise.

A practical approach to making a difference was suggested: “There is a need, firstly, to voice this need to make a difference, secondly, to establish credibility and then to position oneself as a reliable person who demonstrates initiative. Thereafter, an individual seizes opportunities to make a difference and if it is

done well, then there are more opportunities created – surely empowerment?”
(Participant 20)

Therefore, making a difference for the above participant means a well calculated effort and not just a wish, which also involves the ability to see what changes are needed, innovation in the suggestion of solutions, initiative and an action orientation.

From the behavioural examples that participants described it can be deduced that in the case of professional people, a difference can be made to individual clients, while people in decision-making positions can make a difference with a bigger impact when people's circumstances are improved by changes, or in the community.

In different contexts making a difference may have different meanings, but participants in the present study also strived to make a difference as the ultimate demonstration of their responsibility. Participant 18 expressed his commitment to his organisation and his work, “I am involved in my organisation. I know what is going on in other departments.” He has a goal to create awareness with respect to the eradication of corruption. He, therefore, has a belief that he has the ability and is in the position to make a difference.

To make a difference may be something everybody strives for, but mostly it is people in empowered positions who believe that they are able to and perceive that they can truly say that they are making a difference. Certain behavioural tendencies were mentioned that are necessary to be able to make a differences, while commitment was also expressed. Ablett and Jones (2007) distinguished the commitment ‘to make a difference’ as a personal attitude towards work.

A difference is made through taking action with positive results. For that matter it can be equated with the ‘impact’ dimension.

One person said that he feels good about himself: “When I make changes in any environment that has a positive impact on company and workforce which enables teamwork.” (Participant 16)

According to the leadership literature cited by Menon (2001), critical dimensions of empowerment include significance; the feeling of making a difference both for the organisation and in the greater context of the world. According to Thomas and Velthouse (1990), empowered people have a sense of impact, which they described as the degree to which behaviour is seen as ‘making a difference’ in terms of accomplishing the purpose of the task and producing effects on the task environment. Spreitzer (1995a; 1995b) based her impact dimension of psychological empowerment on this theory. According to her, empowered people believe they have influence on their work unit and that others listen to their ideas, that they are able to make a difference and accomplish goals and thereby produce an effect in their environment.

7.2.8 Empowerment of others

It seems that people who are empowered feel that they are in a position to empower others. Several participants revealed an aspect of themselves that has to do with the desire to empower others. It was expressed as an idealistic goal to become involved in empowerment initiatives in Africa, but the desire to empower can start at a much lower level, such as the empowerment of subordinates. Some participants just related how they motivated colleagues to improve their qualifications. For some it is a passion and for others it is part of a very satisfying vocation “... to see how people grow and develop to be a better employee”. (Participant 13)

A participant saw it as a highlight if she could transfer skills to somebody and when people under her supervision achieved:

“When I got here and the people could not write up journals and I could teach them about journals, that was a highlight. I can’t really make a distinction. For

me it is nice to see how people develop. That to me is a highlight. Yes, when people under me achieve it is wonderful. I know I can do it so it does not bother me. For me it is about when people who did not know something and now can do it. That is wonderful because he has grown in himself. It is not just about work, but if he grow as a person.” (Participant 17)

Another participant gave an account of an experience he had in contributing to someone’s empowerment. His guidance contributed to the appointment of the protégé in a senior position. He exclaimed: “I bask in the knowledge that I ‘empowered’ somebody.” (Participant 15)

Empowering others is more descriptive of behaviour rather than cognition. The examples were of actions that were taken, whether they were part of a job or out of free will.

The emphasis on BEE in the current socio-economic and political environment has the potential to paint a negative picture of empowerment and especially about the empowerment of others. White males may feel threatened by it, for example, a participant had the perception that empowerment means, “...when you train the blacks to come and do your job”. In spite of this remark, this participant also shared his inclination towards the empowerment of others. On the other hand, individuals who achieved career success and are in the position to be able to make a difference, feel that they owe it to others to contribute to their development. A participant felt that he has “... a lot to offer to this and the coming generation” by sharing his knowledge and experience.

No examples were found in the literature where empowerment of others was seen as a characteristic of empowered people, but it was often mentioned as a management responsibility. Kanter (1993) suggested that people high in organisational power would tend to provide opportunities for subordinates to move along with them and find talented subordinates to groom for better things. Brinkerhoff (1979) suggested that managers who themselves feel powerless and uninvolved are unlikely to empower others. A terminally ill professor proclaimed

in his last lecture that enabling the dreams of others provides more satisfaction than fulfilling one's own dreams (Pausch, 2008).

Locally in South Africa support was found for this dimension. A founder and CEO of a black women owned company urged everyone to recognise the importance of mentoring their followers. She talked about mentoring and empowerment of women and said that she believes that if those who follow in our footsteps are not better than us, we have neglected our responsibility. Our successors must be enabled to preserve the growth of our societies and be prepared for the challenges of the 21st century and beyond (Mojela & Phosa, 2006).

A survey conducted online on the Global Leaders Africa summit website during February and March 2006 invited business people interested in the event to record their views on a number of issues related to leadership in Africa. The results showed that developing and empowering people was considered the most important leadership competency in African business today (Havenga, 2006).

7.2.9 Conclusion

To conclude the qualitative findings, the dimensions and characteristics of the psychologically empowered individual are emphasised in a summary. The distinction between cognitions or dimensions and characteristics are indicated in brackets. This distinction is also indicated in chapter nine when all the data are integrated. According to the suggestion of Mäkelä and Turcan (2007), these dimensions and characteristics as propositions or theory suggestions are presented as explicit sentences, sorted out from the body text.

From the above analysis, it is concluded that the following qualities can be attributed to psychologically empowered people:

Empowered people may feel helpless or powerless in some situations, but do not generalise it to those areas of their lives in which they feel confident that they have mastered the skills needed to deal with situations.

Adaptability and resilience:

Resilience is necessary to recover from a hopeless or disappointing situation, while adaptability is the ability to adapt to adverse situations and make the best of it.

- They are confident that they are able to deal with feelings of helplessness or powerlessness (cognition).
- They are confident about their ability to deal with challenges (cognition).
- They do not just have the ability to carry on after a set back, but find ways to overcome it and are determined to make a success (behaviour tendency).
- They have a positive attitude regarding mistakes and failures (attitude).
- They adapt to adverse situations (orientation).

Competence:

- They may experience feelings of incompetence in unfamiliar areas, but do not generalise it (cognition).
- They are confident about their competence in their area of work (cognition). (Task specific)
- They may have a generalised sense of competence. They feel confident that they are able to apply knowledge and skills to other related situations, for example, to find solutions to new challenges (cognition).
- They are realistic about what they can or cannot do (orientation).
- They do not become satisfied with what they know, but keep up with developments (behavioural tendency).

Achievement of results:

- They get a sense of achievement from accomplishments (cognition).
- They are satisfied only when something was accomplished (cognition).
- They are results oriented (orientation).
- They persevere until results were produced (behavioural tendency).

Sense of control:

- They appreciate being able to do their work in their own way and use their own initiative (cognition). (Autonomy)
- They prefer to be in control (orientation).
- They deal with a difficult situation in an objective manner (behavioural tendency – orientation). (Personal control)
- They take control of situations (behavioural tendency).

Sense of meaning:

- They feel that they are an asset to their organisations (cognition).
- They believe that they are able to add value (cognition).
- They believe that they make a contribution (cognition).
- They believe that they have a purpose (cognition).
- They find their work meaningful and fulfilling (cognition).
- They find service to the community meaningful (cognition).
- They are sincere about their work and feel that their work is important (attitude – orientation).

Making a difference:

- They believe that they are able to make a difference in people's lives (cognition).

- They believe that they are able to make a difference on a decision-making level (cognition).
- They are committed to make a difference (attitude).
- They are able to make a difference through the innovative changes they make:
 - They challenge the *status quo* and get involved in improvements.
 - They participate in decision-making and problem-solving to improve situations.
 - They make things happen by identifying needs for improvement and make a contribution.
 - They initiate changes and drive to achieve results (behavioural tendencies).

Empowerment of others:

- They are concerned with the empowerment of others (orientation).
- They get involved in the empowerment of others (behavioural tendency).

7.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

In order to evaluate how existing theories apply to the study of psychological empowerment in South African organisations, the following theories were applied:

The theories and findings of Thomas and Velthouse (1990) and Spreitzer (1995a; 1995b) that psychological empowerment can be described in terms of cognitions or fundamental beliefs and personal orientations that are characteristic of most empowered people were echoed in the inductive part of the present study.

Menon (2001) concluded that the three main dimensions of the experience of power underlying the empowerment process are power as perceived control, power as perceived competence and power as being energised toward achieving valued goals. The dimensions, sense of competence and sense of control were

confirmed in the inductive part of the study, but the dimension, goal internalisation, needed to be explored by means of specific questions and a deductive approach.

Although behavioural tendencies did emerge using the inductive approach, Zimmerman's (1995) theory that psychological empowerment should be studied with reference to three components required the inclusion of additional probing into how people interact with their environment. The intrapersonal component was largely covered by the examination of participants' beliefs and feelings, but while the behavioural component was expressed to some degree through participants' descriptions of events that led to feelings and beliefs of empowerment, the interactional component did not emerge as a significant factor. Specific questions were included in the interviews to explore the three components.

7.3.1 Goal orientation

The assumption according to Menon (2001), was that if people can see their part in the organisation's vision and mission, the work has more meaning for them; they feel their work is important. Participants were asked, "How do you see your position in relationship to the organisation's vision, mission and goals?" The responses to this question were also taken as indications of a sense of meaning in the previous section. Some participants were not able to see the importance of their work, but others expressed positive feelings regarding how their work fits into the organisation's overall goals. They felt that they represent the organisation, that their work contributes to important outcomes and a commitment to the organisation was also expressed. The following account shows that even a support function can be regarded as important.

"I work in support. I think it is very important because without the support leg, your operational leg cannot function. The operations make sure that the objectives are realised. If they do not have the support structure in place to support their operational side then the city's goals will never come to fruition

because there won't be anybody to run those things for them. I feel its very important." (Participant 14)

According to Menon's (2001) conclusions, at a psychological level, an important energising element is a goal, particularly a valued cause or meaningful project. If employees are committed to the organisational cause, it means that they internalised the goals of the organisation. While he identified goal internalisation as a dimension of psychological empowerment, Ozaralli (2003) found that meaning and goal internalisation were not separate dimensions but loaded on one factor which he called meaningfulness. The expressions of participants confirmed that those participants who feel that their work is important portrayed a positive sense of meaning.

As goals were considered by Menon (2001) as an important factor related to psychological empowerment, participants were specifically asked about their goals. Respondents were asked, "Do you have any goals that you still want to achieve in your career?" Therefore, this is not a dimension that emerged. Something that emerged is that there are different types of goals. The answers were quite varied. There were goals in terms of position or career, goals about more satisfying or creative work, goals for the organisation, altruistic goals and then there were alternative goals concerning participants' private lives that have nothing to do with their career or the organisation.

Some goals were vague and some participants seemed uncertain about what they want to achieve. The desire to achieve something in order to get satisfaction and recognition and to leave a mark on life was expressed. Despondency with present circumstances seemed to inhibit the motivation to set goals.

Some career goals were very pertinent about position and participants knew exactly where they want to be.

Participant 16 has high expectations. “I want to become General Manager at the age of 35 and from there move on to Director level after acquiring more skills and exposure within an organisation.”

Several participants stated goals about personally more satisfying work and these goals suggest a relationship with meaning as well.

Participant 15 has an ambition to end his career in academia. “To this extent I want to equip myself with a PhD degree. I believe that guys like me have a lot to offer to this and the coming generation – what with our knowledge and experience particularly of the trajectory of government policy. You may call this leaving a legacy.”

Other participants expressed goals that have more to do with their work and the organisation than with their careers. Organisational goals have to do with improvements in the functioning of the organisation or better circumstances for employees, for example, a training facility:

“What I still want to see here is a properly accredited, well equipped training centre.” (Participant 13)

Altruistic goals are goals not for self but for a bigger purpose and/or for the empowerment of a bigger whole, such as empowerment initiatives in Africa and improvements for the benefit of employees and the organisation as in the next example:

“If I can just create a platform where I can encourage them to speak and also look holistically at the individual and try and make that burden easier for them to carry. It will make it much easier for them and in return I feel they will put in more effort so that production can then grow and people will be happier in the workplace. That is how I see it.” (Participant 2)

Most of the alternative goals were about starting an own business and then there were also some who would like to do something creative such as painting, or writing a book, or making changes in life. From the answers it was difficult to draw clear cut conclusions about how goal oriented people are. Some people do not seem to have definite goals but rather things that they would like to do.

Career ambition may not be related to a need to do meaningful work, because people are prepared to forfeit position for doing the work they find meaningful. People who are more inclined to have goals other than in their present organisation, such as for an own business may be because they have not realised their full potential yet or they feel frustrated because they are prevented from achieving their goals and see it as an alternative or way out. The meaning maintenance model proposed by Heine et al. (2006) may also be relevant here. When people lack a sense of meaning, they may seek to reaffirm it by means of alternatives as a way to regain meaning in domains that are different from the present domain.

Needs may play a role in how people determine their goals. For example, if Maslow's (1968) hierarchy of needs is considered, the needs that are unsatisfied create tension within people that leads them to behave in ways that are aimed at reducing the tension and restoring internal equilibrium. Once a certain need becomes satisfied, it loses its potency as a motivating force. People who have very definite goals about the position they want to achieve, may still have ego or status needs that are not fulfilled. People, who are satisfied with the status they have achieved, may strive for self-actualisation. Self-actualisation is defined as the process of actualisation of potentials, capacities and talents, as fulfilment of a mission or calling. Therefore, it is related to the desire to do meaningful work. Self-actualisation is realised in many different ways since each person is different. Creative impulses and talents are desired and welcomed and enjoyed, meaning that the person who has the opportunity to use his talents and creativity will get satisfaction out of the process of creating. The person, who experiences self-actualisation, should also feel empowered.

Not all authors associated goals with a sense of meaning and accomplishment. Adler (1928) contrasted ambition with meaning by stating that the need for self-satisfaction is responsible for determining the direction a person takes toward being useful, but it does not give the power to achieve. According to him, accomplishments are stimulated by a social feeling and become meaningful only through their social connotation. Odiorne (1991) argued that desires are substitutes for what people want most but cannot have – mastery and competence. People who lack competence also lack self-esteem and become obsessed by desires. A purpose is no substitute for the kind of confidence that comes from proficiency or a sense of personal power, but competence plus motivation to fulfil a purpose is the ultimate. Wood and Bandura (1989) stressed the role of goals in motivation, but added that people must believe in their ability to take charge of events to accomplish their goals. From this point of view it seems that although goals may be instrumental to enhance a sense competence and meaning, a sense of competence must be well established before goals can be set to have the desired effect. The observation was that some participants did not have clear goals, but expressed desires instead. This could, therefore, be because they do not sense that they have the competence to achieve goals.

The theory of Deci and Ryan (1985) may also present an explanation for differences in goals. The authors proposed that people have innate psychological needs for self-determination, competence and interpersonal relatedness. They distinguished between intrinsic and extrinsic needs. Doing meaningful work is an intrinsic need, while recognition and status are extrinsic needs. According to the authors, the intrinsic needs for competence and self-determination motivate an ongoing process of seeking and attempting to conquer optimal challenges. When people are free from the distraction of drives and emotions, they seek situations that interest them and require the use of their creativity and resourcefulness as in more meaningful work or alternative goals. The needs for competence and self-determination keep people seeking persistently for challenges that are suited to their competencies and that are neither too easy nor too difficult. When they find optimal challenges, people work to conquer them. Renshon (1979) also emphasised the need for personal

control and that it gives rise to assumptive beliefs. These assumptive frameworks arise out of the balance between need activation and need-satisfaction experiences, which include beliefs about the self, whether valuable or not.

Goals related to improvements of the organisation, as well as altruistic goals, clearly indicate an aspiration for meaningful work. Organisational goals may also be related to the objective to achieve results or to conquer challenges. Goals for more satisfying work, as well as alternative goals, such as performing art or starting an own business, may also be an indication of a desire to do personally meaningful work. At the same time it may also represent a need for self-actualisation.

7.3.2 Zimmerman's (1995) nomological framework

Zimmerman (1995) proposed a framework for researching psychological empowerment based on Cronbach and Meehl's (cited in Zimmerman, 1995) idea that a construct remains open-ended until interrelationships among observable phenomena that represent abstract concepts have been specified, as well as on the social cognitive theory (SCT), which suggests reciprocal influences (Bandura, 1977). The framework includes observable measures relevant to psychological empowerment, which consists of three components, namely intrapersonal, interactional and behavioural components.

The belief Zimmerman (1995) had that a picture of psychological empowerment is not complete without observing the three components he proposed, led to the decision to include specific questions in the interviews in order to encourage responses with respect to these components. A deductive approach was followed for the use of the framework. The three components are first analysed separately and then the interdependence of the components are examined to determine what the likelihood is that individuals who do not believe that they have the capability to achieve goals and are unaware of resources in their work environment, would take the trouble to find out what it takes to achieve their

goals, or do what it takes to accomplish them. The assumption was that a person who experiences empowerment would not just have positive beliefs, but would also be more action oriented. A further assumption was that career success and achievement could have psychological implications for the sense of empowerment as this would imply personal success or failure (Kanter, 1993).

7.3.2.1 *Intrapersonal component*

The nomological network described by Zimmerman (1995) includes an intrapersonal component, which refers to how people think of themselves and includes domain-specific perceptions and beliefs about self, for example, self-esteem or self-efficacy, competence, ability to exert influence in the workplace, etcetera. The domain of concern in the present study is the work environment.

Some of the research reviewed depicted self-esteem as a dimension of psychological empowerment (Mruk, 1983), while it was labelled in other research as antecedent. Samad (2007) and Spreitzer (1995a) found that self-esteem was related to psychological empowerment, while Drake et al. (2007) found a significant correlation between self-esteem and a sense of competence. Gecas (1989) argued that self-esteem is primarily dependent on one's interpersonal context, whereas self-efficacy is more responsive to social structural influences.

Phenomena, such as self-esteem and psychological empowerment are seen as a result of interrelated cognitive processes. The cognitive orientation emphasises the mental rather than the behavioural component of human experiences. These processes may exemplify positive (rational) or negative (irrational) autonomous thinking patterns. Distortions could reduce the level of psychological empowerment (Ellis 1996; Mruk, 1983).

When people were asked directly, "What do you believe about yourself?" positive beliefs were mostly expressed. Only one person seemed to have not allowed herself to think positively about herself and some responses were neutral, such as that one is never perfect. Most participants expressed positive beliefs about

themselves and because the interview was conducted asking questions about career experiences, the context was set as being work related, most of the expressions were about being competent. Apart from using the question to determine the intrapersonal component, it first of all served to determine cognitions in the inductive phase and as such these expressions indicated a sense of competence.

“I believe that I am intelligent and capable of many things within the range of talents. I am creative and able to apply knowledge to different situations.”
(Participant 9)

Drake et al.'s (2007) finding of a relationship between self-esteem and a sense of competence is particularly evident in the positive thinking patterns that were expressed.

Beliefs about values rather than abilities were also encountered. Several participants believe that they are hard workers and there were those who believe that they are loyal and committed towards their organisations. Values such as reliability, integrity and honesty were expressed.

“I am very loyal towards my employer, the organisation as a whole. Reliable, yes one hundred percent. Integrity, I do not allow myself to be influenced, it does not matter where it comes from.” (Participant 18)

Some respondents gave an indication of realistic beliefs about themselves and others' positive beliefs were tempered by realistic beliefs. Realism seems to be related to feelings of competence, but there was also an example of an unrealistic perception:

“I must just believe that with the help of other people, maybe the time is not right yet, to get to a situation where I will have a wonderful job where I will do wonderful things and I feel I am an asset not just for myself, but for the place where I am going to work.” (Participant 1)

Although optimism has been associated in the literature with resilience, concepts of control and self-efficacy (Peres et al., 2005; Carver & Scheier, 2003), Epstein's (1998) constructive thinking inventory described naïve optimists as positive thinkers to the point of being instinctive, but not very rational. On the other hand, global constructive thinkers are seen as positive thinkers, but with the difference that they temper their optimism with considerations of what is realistic. They neither over nor under evaluate themselves. They have the self-confidence to face the uncertainties and their way of thinking helps them feel good about themselves and take effective action to resolve everyday problems. Therefore, a person who wishes for a wonderful job, sees himself as a good person, but does not employ any constructive thinking in achieving goals, shows naïve optimism, while the more constructive thinkers show realism.

Positive self-statements have been advocated as a means of self-empowerment. However, positive thinking should not be overemphasised at the expense of other critical success factors, such as experience and knowledge. According to De Beer (2006), positive thinking on its own is not a substitute for achieving results. Positive thinking without application of knowledge and skill is nothing but wishful dreaming and subject to disillusionment. He claimed that one of the greatest characteristics of all successful people is that they are forever action oriented. Therefore, to only focus on the cognitive or intrapersonal component may not give the complete picture.

Zimmerman (1995) emphasised the interaction between the belief in the capability to achieve goals, the awareness of what is needed and the actions necessary to accomplish them. Powerlessness and helplessness are expected to correlate negatively with psychological empowerment. A person who constantly refers to "with the help of other people" signifies helplessness.

It seemed from the interviews that when people are confronted with a direct question regarding their beliefs about themselves, they are not willing to express negative beliefs and it may be because of the social tendency to impress. Some people are modest in nature and they would be less eager to admit that they

have positive beliefs about themselves or it may be because of socialisation where 'bragging' about yourself was not 'permitted' or encouraged.

Gecas (1989) argued that a sense of self-efficacy is responsive to social structural influences. Although negative feelings were expressed in the interviews as a result of specific negative experiences or when in general people do not feel good about themselves, no indication was given of self-doubt. For example, feelings that were expressed were disappointment, unhappiness about the manner in which a situation was dealt with, vulnerability, feeling "crap" and feelings of helplessness or powerlessness. According to Zimmerman (1995), the intrapersonal component of psychological empowerment includes perceived control, competence and efficacy. It seems that although perceived control may be temporarily low as a result of circumstances, it may not be generalised, otherwise it would be a case of learned helplessness.

Ellis (1996) believed that irrational beliefs or distortions in the face of adverse experiences, cause people to experience negative feelings. This may have a negative effect on the experience of empowerment. The following examples are of beliefs that can have such negative effect on feelings.

"I can be somewhat hypercritical which might be an indication of bad self-esteem. I have a fairly large need for approval, and thrive when I receive real approval."
(Participant 7)

"I know I am good, but not perfect. I want to be perfect. I want to be admired for it. Also when I have to perform a task in the presence of people who I know is better at it than what I am." (Participant 9)

The distortions here are the beliefs that one "should" be good at everything, or wanting to be perfect, rather than a belief that one is not good at something. The use of the word "hypercritical" also indicates an expectation about the self to be good and that approval 'should' have been extended.

Dunn (1989) asked students to list their strengths and weaknesses and found that they tend to list twice as many positive as negative attributes about themselves. The author argued that allowances must be made for how presenting oneself to others may differ from the manner in which one reflects on perceived self-images. A motivation toward modesty and self-serving bias may play a role. It was concluded that self-reflection is susceptible to error and open to doubt. Dunn (1989) also found that when students were asked to verbalise their strengths and weaknesses in a class discussion, the negative traits still had a positive connotations and concluded that it was because of the public setting and that some self presentational concerns were operating. According to Miller and Ross (1975), evidence was found that contradicted the perception of self-serving causal attributions and supported a rational, decision-making explanation, but concluded that self-serving bias is intuitively appealing and the challenge remains for future researchers to asses the motivation for making attributions. After many authors have argued that causal attributions for success and failure result from the individual's motivation to maintain his or her self-esteem, Larson (1977) found support for the existence of an esteem-based, self-protection motive.

This could mean that by asking respondents what they believe about themselves, the responses may not be a valid reflection of what they believe and that the results of such an enquiry should be regarded with caution.

7.3.2.2 *Interactional component*

The interactional component refers to an awareness of behavioural options or choices available to make use of in order to achieve goals. It includes awareness of factors in the work environment, an understanding of the resources needed to achieve a desired goal, knowledge of how to acquire those resources and skills to mobilise the resources (Zimmerman, 1995).

Respondents were asked: "What resources are you aware of in your organisation that enhances your efforts to achieve your goals?" Most people were aware of

what resources are available to them, but it seems to differ from organisation to organisation, department to department and it also seems to depend on the level and position of the participant in the organisation. Professionals normally have previously obtained tertiary education, but it does not mean that they are not in need of resources to maintain a sense of empowerment. From the interview data it became clear that those participants in professional occupations were aware of their options.

Participants who were not aware of opportunities for development provided by their organisation were in the minority, but it was evident that they could be distinguished from those who were aware in terms of their work environment, for example, participants at a head office had more information about opportunities than their colleagues at a branch office. Some participants who were not aware of opportunities provided by their organisation, found resources outside their organisation when they wanted to pursue goals not related to their present occupation. The reason for this may be found in the perception that resources are not managed properly.

“I think there are programmes and strategies in place. The council provides for it, but I think there is also in terms of the more strategic stuff in terms of human resources, empowerment is not always successful. Yes it is there and I think it must be utilised. If it is applied in the correct manner I don't know. There are people who never go on courses who must go. I think there are sometimes opportunities but it does not get down to the lower levels. But overall I would say there are strategies in place. I just think it should perhaps be managed properly.”
(Participant 4)

Participants in general made good use of opportunities that the organisation provided for further education. Participants were not just aware of what their organisations provide, but also identified development needs and requested them. They were aware of not just the ordinary resources for training and development, but anything that they find helpful not to stagnate, but keep up to

date with job requirements. Some demonstrated a thorough awareness of any conceivable resource that is available.

Kieffer (1984) and Zimmerman (1995) emphasised the role of the interactional component in empowerment. They believed that individuals must learn about their options in a given context in order to be able to exert control over their situation and circumstances. Individuals need to develop a critical awareness of their environment, an understanding of the resources needed to achieve a desired goal, knowledge of how to acquire those resource and skill for managing resources once they are obtained. The interactional component provides the bridge between perceived control and taking action to exert control. In the next section about the behavioural component, the actions participants took will show how they understood the resources available to them.

7.3.2.3 *Behavioural component*

The behavioural component of Zimmerman's (1995) nomological network refers to actions taken to directly influence outcomes, specifically actions that result in having more influence and/or increased competence. This entails pro-active behaviours to improve a present adverse situation and coping with less favourable circumstances and thereby moving away from feelings of powerlessness.

Participants were asked: "What do you do about utilising resources or overcoming obstacles in order to achieve your goals?"

Because most participants have achieved a level where they are already empowered, information about their past endeavours to achieve that level was taken into account. They were asked to give an account of how their careers progressed.

People who felt that they were not making progress in their careers and have not achieved what they wanted to achieve were in the minority. The tendency of

these participants was to spend more energy on volunteer work and part time studies than in furthering their careers. They seemed to be able to be pro-active and do things out of their own, but in the work domain they seemed to be helpless to change their circumstances.

An example is Participant 2:

“People will just come and they will say there is a post or they will put a notification on the notice board that there is a vacancy and then people can apply but nobody will come and say look this is what you need to do, this is where we will send you to hone you or equip you or sharpen up your skills so that maybe one day you can apply for a post as a manager. No such thing.”

“I like assisting people, maybe because of my studies that I am busy with. I am in my third year with my studies doing psychology and theology and my aim is to equip myself to be able to at a later stage be of greater service to my community ...”

“I do my work to the best of my ability. Outside my core function we started a voluntary HIV programme. I am involved in it and that to me is very satisfying. I am a lay counsellor and I am able to help my colleagues and fellow employees.”

External circumstances, such as restructuring of an organisation may temporarily hamper people in their progress and there were examples of participants who perceived lack of control over their environment and felt that they could not really do anything else to make progress but to carry on working hard. The majority of the participants demonstrated that they are willing to do things for themselves in order to get ahead in life and in their careers. Some of the participants did not have the opportunity to go to university or even finish school, but found ways to be educated.

“At that time I had Standard 8 and when I joined the organisation I attended night classes doing my Standard 10. After I did Standard 10 I did secretarial courses

at different colleges and in 1993 I started with my diploma in municipal management and I carried on until I got my MAdmin.” (Participant 6)

Those participants who were fortunate enough to start work with a tertiary education employed other means of meeting challenges, such as self study and attending additional courses or made use of the resources that their organisations provided to further their qualifications. Taking actions on own initiative proved to be positive for some to get noticed and to make progress in their careers. Setting goals or having an idea about what they want to achieve served to guide them to advance their careers and helped participants to systematically set motions in place to get there.

Behaviour does not have to be extra-ordinary to make an impact and ensure advancement. More than one participant proved themselves by just showing that they are willing to get their hands dirty, so to speak, and that got them noticed. They saw the jobs that others did not want to do as opportunities to learn something.

“I was then moved around within the department in different sections dealing with backlogs and so on. I was identified as a trouble shooter at some point you know. Ask HF to come and help that type of thing, you know. And I said no fine, not a problem and I worked through a lot of backlogs in different sections to try and get them up to date. The traffic manager identified a need in his office. He had nobody there reliable enough to be in the office all the time and he asked me to come and help out, and I said no fine, not a problem. It was all learning opportunities for me. I was working there for a while and the director of safety and security then asked me if I was not interested to come and assist him with the project that he was busy with. And I said it sounds interesting I will give it a go. And then we started the department and I assisted him and I was seconded to his section for a while then I applied for a position in the court section. After running the court section and establishing the court section I then applied for the position and I was appointed and two years ago with the level 4 restructuring I

then applied for the admin officer position and that is where I am now.”
(Participant 14)

The behavioural component of psychological empowerment refers to actions taken to influence outcomes. To appreciate the actions that were taken fully, the assumption was made that the outcome is career progress or success, which in turn gives rise to a sense of empowerment. There were also examples to indicate that people who use their initiative and act on it obtain results that are beneficial to them and their organisations. Considering the finding that achieving results and accomplishments is a characteristic of empowered people, it is more important to note that empowered people do not only have a sense of control, they also take action and achieve results, which give them a sense of achievement.

7.3.3 Interrelations

To illustrate the interrelationships between the three components according to Zimmerman (1995), intrapersonal, interactional and behavioural, as well as their relationship with goals, profiles of three participants were compiled. Instead of looking at the appearance of the components in isolation, the profiles bring to light what is compelling in the experiences of the participants (Seidman, 2006) and demonstrate how empowerment could differ across people in the same context and across contexts for the same person. It entailed searching for relevant expressions in the interview data and combining them according to the components for each participant to reveal characteristics regarding self beliefs, awareness of resources and indications of behaviour.

It was necessary to first determine what participants' goals were; otherwise it does not make sense to determine what resources they have and what they do to overcome obstacles to achieve their goals.

The question, “what do you believe about yourself?” was posed to Participant 1 to get at the intrapersonal component, his self-perception. His positive belief is

almost contradicted, because he does not actually believe that he has the ability to manage his own talents and need help with it.

“I believe I am a good person. I believe I care about people. I believe that I could most probably have done better things and could probably have taken better decisions in my life.” He reiterates his belief in some unidentified “good things,” “I believe I am a good person and I believe that the Lord gave me talents that I can use, the ability and I believe that I must just get help, somebody must just help me to manage my talents in the correct manner.”

About goals, he responded:

“Yes I think there are many things that I still want to achieve. I think one of the things that I want to do is, I feel I want to leave my mark on life and that I can achieve something in which I can find satisfaction. I have not experienced satisfaction in the things that I do and I am still looking for recognition.”

He has no clear goals regarding his career, however, regarding voluntary work and community work his goals are clearer.

As a constraint he identified lack of training. The resources he named were more in terms of social support than career progress. When asked whether there are any courses that the organisation offers that he can attend, he answered:

“I would like to do courses, yes, but I don’t know if there is any. As I said my ambition was to work with people.”

In this answer he admitted that he is not aware, but the behaviour component is also absent in that he did not find out.

“I was very frustrated at one stage because I wanted to become an electrician. For years I fought. I wanted to be technical. Until one day someone told me, JB the good Lord made us all different. If God wanted you to be an electrician he

would have made you an electrician. And I think this is stuff that ... let me say again ... I would like to do courses if I know where it is and that can give me insight on how I can use these things practically in my life.”

In some areas of his life Participant 1 is able to be pro-active and do things on his own, but in the work domain he seems to be completely helpless. According to Zimmerman (1995), empowerment may differ across contexts. All indications are there that the participant has no sense of empowerment in his work context, but as far as his involvement with his community activities are concerned, he reveals awareness as well as behaviours becoming to an empowered person.

Participant 1 may be an example of the phenomenon described by Martinko and Gardner (1982) as organisationally induced helplessness. According to the model, factors in the environment together with the person's past success history, lead to attributions for performance. Once the attribution is made, it influences the person's affective state and expectancies, which in turn, influence behaviour. Affective states that typify learned helplessness are, amongst others, depression, anxiety, stress, frustration, and hostility. He expressed a need for recognition. It is possible that his need for recognition was never satisfied in the beginning years of his career and that he gave up trying to get recognition, although he is still yearning for it.

Renshon (1979) proposed that the need for personal control starts in early preverbal experiences. According to the laws of social learning, the development of beliefs in personal control follows in response to life experiences. That is to the extent that later experiences reinforce early experiences, stability of the basic belief structure could be expected. McClelland (1975) described the need for power according to the stages in ego-development described initially by Freud and later by Erikson. During the first stage of development the source of power is outside the self, namely the caretaker who provides emotional and physical support, which causes the infant to feel secure and stronger inside. Individuals may continue to draw strength from others, such as a mentor or a motivational leader. If the person becomes dependent on a powerful person, to such an

extent that forces outside him or her prescribe what he or she does, the person does not feel empowered and the dependency on a source of power continues to give a sense of strength. McClelland believed that instead of a need for dependency, the goal is to feel strong.

The next example, Participant 8, is of a person who did become an electrician. Initially he answered questions in the shortest possible manner and did not elaborate on anything.

What he believes about himself is “That I am honest and if I don’t agree with you that I will tell you so. That I try to do my job to the best of my ability and I don’t believe that I have a lot of enemies.”

On the question whether he had any goals that he wants to achieve he answered: “I think - my own business.” On further probing he disclosed that he does not believe that he will get any further promotions because of affirmative action and he sees it as a major constraint. This could be a realistic observation, but he is prepared to stick his neck out to start his own business.

About opportunities to do developmental courses he said: “I must say there are quite a few courses.” He is also aware of other courses and opportunities, not just for his own benefit, but for employees in general. “So it seems that if you want to study you can get a bursary from the council.”

It was only when he was asked what he thinks contributed most to what he has become that he loosened up and what he related not only gave the indication of his willingness to explore opportunities but also his action orientation.

“I could not go to university. My mother did not have the money. So my first objective when I left school was to find a job quickly. I was lucky and I got a job in the railways. There training was good so I did my apprenticeship there. And from there I had to look where I could get training.”

“I then applied at the municipality. When I arrived here I realised I have been there. There were no opportunities to go and study. There were no universities and technical colleges. And when I got here I saw that I was close to everything. There are things such as evening classes. And then I started going to classes. I started with one subject at a time. I wanted to get to the top.”

“I also saw when I got here that I am the youngest electrician. Years you can't buy. So what could I do to get ahead? What I did, all the jobs the older guys did not want to do I said give it to me, I will try. And later they saw me. Oh, a new post came up – cable fault finding. It was not always the most pleasant of jobs. Nobody knew how to use the instruments. There was not promotion in it at the time, but I saw that the post will become that of a senior electrician. Then I said give me a chance, I will try. Nobody else wanted to. Because you have your work and you have to put in something extra. You have to go and sit and try. One thing led to another and six months to a year later I was not too bad at it. And then the post of senior electrician went open and who could apply for it? None of them could do the job, but I could do it. And then I applied and I got it. So it went on.”

“Later a laboratory opened; a test laboratory. Again it was new machines and equipment. The guys did not want to do it because it is extra work to learn. I said give it to me, I take it. I tested metres with the cable fault finding and my normal work. At the end they made me engineers assistant. At that stage I did traffic lights, cable fault finding, big measure metering and the test laboratory. With the merging I got the principal technician post that I still have.”

According to Zimmerman (1995), psychological empowerment manifests itself in different perceptions, skills and behaviours across people, settings and may fluctuate over time. The participant's belief about himself does not really give an indication of his perception of his competence, but through his actions it is clear that he demonstrated that his perception of personal control is very strong. He had to believe in his abilities to take up challenges that nobody else saw their way open to do.

Another example is Participant 16 who believes, "I am capable of taking on any challenge and making a success of it."

He has a definite aim for his career, "I want to become General Manager at the age of 35 and from there move on to Director level after acquiring more skills and exposure within an organisation."

He sees exposure as the resource and means for getting to where he wants to be.

"I studied at Cape Town Technikon and University of Western Cape. I started my first job at a pharmaceutical company where I got exposed to on the job training and learning where I was for just over 1 year. After that I joined (Company) for a more senior position as Senior Chemist. During my 3 year stay I had the opportunity of standing in as Laboratory Controller to oversee all the chemists which gave me exposure and prepared me for my position at (Company). I then moved to (Company) where I was just under 3 years and this position prepared me for my new role where I will manage 56 staff and a bigger budget in the pharmaceutical industry. I'm a go getter and have set targets for myself to achieve for myself within a time limit."

Getting more and more experience seems to be the wave he rides almost to the point where he could be described as a job hopper. The important aspect here is that Participant 16 has a definite career goal to become a general manager. According to his perception, to gain experience is the most important resource to achieve his goals. His goal motivates him to search for and be aware of job opportunities elsewhere. His actions consist of making use of opportunities to get exposure by moving from one position to another to gain experience, even if it means to move to another organisation in another town. His actions are aimed at achieving his goal.

A survey that was done in South Africa among black managers indicated that the reasons for job hopping are amongst others, a desire to be in control, personal

growth, a need to be constantly challenged and for gaining experience (Cruz, 2006). Participant 16 showed tendencies towards job hopping. He changed jobs for better opportunities and gaining experience in order to progress in his career. He has aspirations to reach the top. It is his way of taking control and taking charge of his career.

The behaviour component demonstrated by participants 8 and 16 is what DeCharms (1979) called personal causation. The participants' actions were self-directed and the cause of how they progress in their careers. Although Spreitzer (1995a) regarded the four dimensions of psychological empowerment (meaning, competence, perceived control and impact) as cognitions, she also maintained that they reflect an active rather than passive orientation to a work role. With active orientation, she meant an orientation in which an individual wishes and feels able to shape his or her work role and context. Although Participant 1 expressed wishes, he does not feel able to shape his work role, while the other participants demonstrated in their actions that they did not just wish to shape their work roles, but felt able to do so and did it. Participant 8 did not just become an electrician, he became a principle technician and it was all his own doing.

Seibert et al. (2004) suggested that proactive people empower themselves and that through their independent choices they establish competence and make an impact regardless of contextual factors or situational constraints and that it would be worthwhile to explore this aspect in future research. It would seem that Participant 8 established his own competence by proactively making use of every opportunity and by achieving success he increased his own sense of competence in the same organisation in which Participant 1 did not manage it. He did not wait for opportunities to be offered to him, he saw a chance and said, "I will try; give it to me, I take it."

Crant (2000) identified personal initiative and role breadth self-efficacy from a literature review as proactive behaviour constructs that lead to proactive behaviours that in turn have job performance, career success and feelings of

personal control as outcomes. Personal initiative was described as a behavioural pattern whereby individuals take an active, self-starting approach to work and go beyond formal job requirements. Role breadth self-efficacy was defined as employees' perceived capability of carrying out a broader and more proactive set of work tasks that extend beyond prescribed technical requirements.

From the above it seems that Participant 1 lacks a sense of empowerment as his positive beliefs are not followed through by the necessary behaviours that would enable him to find and utilise resources. Although Participant 8 does not express positive self beliefs, these were demonstrated in his behaviours. Participant 16 expressed positive beliefs, which were also reflected in his awareness of his particular context and his behaviours.

7.4 DISCUSSION

According to Creswell (2003), in grounded theory, theory is the outcome of the research and the researcher first collects and analyses data before using theory, while in phenomenology, no preconceived notions, expectations or frameworks guide researchers. However, the researcher does make use of an orienting framework. Therefore, in the search for dimensions of empowerment no specific theory was tested, but theory was allowed to emerge. Anfara and Mertz (2006) described theory as a unique way of perceiving reality, an expression of insight into some aspect of nature and a fresh and different perception of an aspect of a phenomenon. They found different opinions in the literature regarding the role of theory in qualitative research. Some authors argued that theory in qualitative research relates to the methodology the researcher chooses, while others believe that theory plays a critical role and that without some basic conceptual framework, the researcher would not be able to decide what data to collect. Theoretical frameworks that were considered in deciding what questions to include in the semi-structured interview were discussed in chapter four.

7.4.1 Dimensions of psychological empowerment

In chapter two, constructs, concepts and theories that underlie psychological empowerment were discussed. Thomas and Velthouse (1990) first defined empowerment in terms of cognitions and considered it to be sufficient for understanding psychological empowerment. Spreitzer's (1995a; 1995b) model with the same cognitions, meaning, competence, self-determination and impact, as basis for empowerment served as theoretical framework that was chosen for the quantitative phase of the present study. Menon's (2001) theory was also discussed as a framework for studying psychological empowerment and included power as perceived control; power as perceived competence; and power as being energised toward achieving valued goals as the three main dimensions of the experience of power at an individual level.

The results of the present study yielded dimensions similar to that of Spreitzer (1995a; 1995b) and Menon (2001). The meaning and competence dimensions featured strongly, but there were also indications that a sense of autonomy form part of empowered people's make up and these are similar to the self-determination dimension according to Spreitzer (1995a; 1995b) and perceived control according to Menon (2001). To have autonomy was expressed in the interviews as relating to the work context, while the perception of control was expressed more in terms of personal control. Because of this sense of personal control, the term sense of control is used in the present study.

The desire and belief that one can make a difference is synonymous with a sense of impact, while there were also indications that it could be associated with a sense of meaning. Although the focus of the present study is on the work context, in the interviews it was not just conveyed in terms of the work context, but also the community. Employees in the public sector, especially, are in the service of the communities and for them making a difference includes the community. According to Spreitzer (1995a), impact is the degree to which an individual can influence strategic, administrative or operating outcomes at work, which implies all levels of employment, although the argument that it was more

relevant on the strategic level than lower levels was pronounced (Boudrias et al., 2004). For Menon (2001) the feeling of making a difference both for the organisation and in the greater context of the world was associated with goal internalisation. Making a difference was expressed as a desire by some participants, but a social worker, for example, was in the position to improve circumstances for her clients by means of her intervention. The belief that making a difference is possible was expressed on management levels, which could give the impression that it is more relevant to certain vocations and positions. However, it was pointed out by a participant that junior employees also have the desire to make a difference, but that management must enable them to do so by creating opportunities for them to identify needs and initiate projects. It means that employees should be enabled to identify specific needs where improvement is necessary, motivate the need to obtain support and set objectives to achieve it and to change things for the better.

Resilience as a dimension may be seen as the bridge between feelings of powerlessness and empowerment. Spreitzer (1995a) made the assumption that empowerment is a continuous variable and that people can be more or less empowered, rather than empowered or not empowered. It can be accepted that people who are employed and capable of fulfilling an occupation, should be empowered, but that their sense of empowerment may vary in degree. It was also concluded that people may feel powerless under certain conditions as a result of set backs. Resilience is not just the ability to carry on after experiencing a difficulty, but the belief in the ability that any set back can be overcome and that previous levels of empowerment can be regained or even exceeded because of the learning experience the failure provided.

Resilience may be regarded as a personality characteristic that contributes to psychological empowerment in the same way Spreitzer (1995a) considered self-esteem to be a personality characteristic and antecedent of psychological empowerment. The purpose of the study was not just to determine dimensions of psychological empowerment, but also characteristics of empowered people.

Achievement of results may be closely related to the sense of competence. However, this dimension is more than just a perception that one is capable. It can be argued that the sense of competence must be in place before one can experience a sense of achievement, but on the other hand, a sense of achievement may strengthen the sense of competence. When a person repeatedly experiences that results have been achieved, it may generalise into a sense of competence, but it seems to be an orientation rather than being capable. People experience a sense of achievement when they have accomplished something such as the completion of a challenging task, but being results oriented provide the motivation to complete tasks. Being results oriented is another characteristic of psychologically empowered people.

Achievement of results is also necessary when it is aspired to make a difference and adds the behavioural component. It is impossible to make a difference if endeavours do not come to fruition. However, it is not seen as equal to making a difference, because results can be achieved without making a difference.

Empowerment of others may be a typical South African dimension in the light of the present socio-economic and political context. There is so much emphasis on empowerment and people who are empowered realise that they can make a contribution to the whole empowerment drive by getting involved in the empowerment of others. Like competence it is not just linked to a position or vocation, but everybody comes into contact with people who are less empowered than what they are. It could also be that it gives them a sense of meaning when they can contribute to others' development. However, it takes a special mature and empowered person to be willing to share knowledge and skills and not to feel threatened that somebody else will come and take their job. In South Africa today it could very well be the ultimate sign of psychological empowerment; the predisposition towards the empowerment of others. It cannot really be described as cognition, but rather a concern that manifests in behaviour. An even higher degree would be a commitment to empowerment of others.

Even so, the empowerment of others may also be seen as contributing to a sense of meaning, adding value or even making a difference in the life of the disempowered. People may find it personally meaningful when they are instrumental in the empowerment of others. In the light of the present South African context and the importance of empowerment, it seems fitting to regard 'the empowerment of others' as a separate characteristic rather than an aspect that forms part of either a sense of meaning or a sense of impact.

Adding value, making a contribution and making a difference are popular phrases in the present socio-economic climate in the country, which if it does not manifest in behaviours it will remain a wish, aspiration or a positive belief without substance. There seems to be a difference in terms of where it stands on a continuum. Making a contribution is within the reach of every employee when a valuable input is made that ensures the effective functioning of the organisation. Adding value is a contribution that improves the effective functioning and making a difference was described in terms of changes that are made to have a positive effect.

If one should look at empowerment as a process, it seems that competence, meaning and perceived control should be established first, and it can be influenced by means of management practices. There seems to be a reciprocal relationship between a sense of competence and achievement of results. The outputs of the empowerment process are the achievement of results and ultimately people are enabled to make a difference. The latter requires active participation from the individual. The organisation can provide the means to enable the individual to achieve and encourage initiative to change and improve things, but it is up to the individual to seize the opportunities to do so.

The dimensions were discussed in terms of needs or desires that participants expressed and in the literature about empowerment, needs were also referred to quite often. For example, Renshon (1979) said that people have a need for personal control, Deci and Ryan (1985) said that people have innate psychological needs for self-determination, competence and interpersonal

relatedness, Argyris (1987) wrote that employees have a need to make their own decisions and determine the outcome of their efforts and Ryan and Deci (2006) maintained that autonomy is a fundamental and a basic psychological need. A need for meaning and a purpose in life was emphasised by Heine et al. (2006) and McClelland (1975) was an authority on need for power. Renshon (1979) suggested that beliefs about the self arise out of the relative balance between need-activation and need-satisfaction experiences. Conger and Kanungo (1988) preferred not to adopt the need theory approach to explain empowerment. In other words it is not assumed that people are empowered when their needs are fulfilled, but the possibility is not ruled out and it certainly seems that way from the manner people expressed themselves in the present study.

According to McClelland (1975), the most advanced stage of expressing the power drive is when the self drops out as a source of power and a person sees him or her in the service of a higher power, which moves him or her to try to influence for the benefit of others. They act on behalf of a greater good, for what is good for the organisation and the country. Individuals who never develop past the stages of dependence on an external source of strength will not be competent to deal with a variety of situations. Dependence prevents the development of the self-direction characteristics. This developmental stage is related to all the dimensions of psychological empowerment, especially making a difference and empowerment of others.

7.4.2 Nomological network

In this chapter Zimmerman's (1995) theoretical framework for a nomological network was utilised as it was the conviction of Zimmerman that psychological empowerment research should include more than just cognitive aspects. Examples of the three components of psychological empowerment were extracted from the interviews to see to what extent the components are observable in qualitative research and to evaluate the usefulness of the framework for the study of psychological empowerment.

It was concluded that the intrapersonal component may be flawed by the social psychological tendencies of self-serving bias and the motivation to protect the self-esteem. The interactional component seems to be particularly relevant to work in communities to empower the disempowered as it was described by Zimmerman (1995) in short as an understanding about the community and related socio-political issues, although it was made clear that options in any context should be learned about. Although the socio-political environment has an influence on the social-structural characteristics of the organisation, especially the public sector, participants indicated that they do their work irrespective of the political structure. The organisational context is influenced by how the organisation interprets political requirements and manages empowerment. In terms of awareness, the organisation's policies should be known to all employees and normally ignorance is not considered an excuse. Awareness, therefore, is not such a prominent component in an organisational context. Awareness of opportunities is expected and it should not be a factor for people not to achieve their goals. Active engagement from the part of the individual is also necessary and this was demonstrated by participants who showed tendencies towards pro-active behaviour. The organisation's role in the empowerment process is to manage empowerment in such a manner that all employees down to the lowest levels are involved and aware of their part in it. However, an employee who passively receives information or does not act on it immediately or ignores it from the start, does not have any goals and because the information is not considered relevant, it does not form part of the person's awareness. It is just as much a part of the behavioural component as the interactional component.

The behavioural component could be deducted more from the accounts participants gave of their progress than from enquiring what people do to overcome obstacles to achieve goals. These were sometimes vague and generic. Questioning to get at the behavioural component should insist on descriptions of behaviour.

As Zimmerman (1995) iterated the interdependency of the components, three examples were taken and analysed. The notion that empowerment differs across people, contexts and times became evident. It was found that two people in similar contexts differed and that a person differed from one context to another.

Goals seemed to be another important component of psychological empowerment. If a person has positive beliefs about him or herself, but has no clear goals, there is no motivation to engage in activities or be on the look out for resources. When a positive belief that certain goals can be achieved is followed by goal setting, a person should become aware of resources that are needed for achieving these goals, but if resources are not readily accessible, the behavioural component is necessary for finding such resources as well as putting actions in place to achieve these goals. With the achievement of each goal, a sense of competence is strengthened and the original self-beliefs are confirmed.

7.5 CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the findings illustrate that dimensions similar to the conceptions of Thomas and Velthouse (1990) and the models of Spreitzer (1995a; 1995b) and Menon (2001) are relevant in the South African context. Although it was believed that dimensions of psychological empowerment would be revealed as beliefs and personal orientations that are characteristic of most empowered people, some characteristics were also divulged in the form of attitudes, values and behavioural tendencies and together they comprise the dimensions of psychologically empowered people in the South African context. The research produced qualities and sub-categories embedded in the dimensions that were unique to the socio-economic and political context. The term 'making a difference' is a term that South Africans may associate better with than 'impact'.

Other conclusions were made that may have to be considered in terms of the dimensions, characteristics, as well as the components of empowerment. Although the interrelationships between dimensions, characteristics, goals and

components were demonstrated, the role of the behavioural component featured prominently, which could be an aspect to consider in the enabling process of empowerment.

Dimensions may be integrated further, for example, achievement of results may fit in with a sense of competence and empowerment of others may fit in with a sense of meaning. Participants had the perception in terms of some of the dimensions that they need to be on a strategic level to be able to fulfil their need to be significant, for example, to be able to add value and to make a difference. With respect to the impact dimension Boudrias et al. (2004) argued that it is more critical for a manager than for a non-manager to perceive having some influence with his or her department to feel empowered. The authors suggested two options for organisational researchers to measure PE among non-managers. One could conclude that the feeling of impact is not really part of the empowerment experience and choose to remove this dimension from the PE construct or to modify the PEI to assess more adequately the feeling of having some influence at work among non-managers. One possibility would be to rephrase statements with which lower level employees may associate more readily. These arguments created awareness that more research is necessary to determine which dimensions or sub-categories of dimensions are applicable to what levels of employment; management and/or profession or lower level employees in support positions. It also became apparent that certain vocations provide better opportunities than others for experiencing meaning. The same perception was not found among participants regarding position and a sense of competence. True to Zimmerman's (1995) notion that empowerment differs across people, contexts and times, it cannot be accepted that all dimensions are invariable across levels of employment. For this reason, the consideration is to keep sub-themes separate until it is established with certainty on what level these are applicable. However, this may demonstrate relationships rather than the suitability for measurement of certain dimensions on certain levels. For example, it could be concluded that persons in management or strategic levels should be psychologically more empowered than people on lower levels.

The behavioural component seemed to be a more significant indicator of psychological empowerment than the intrapersonal and interactional components. Partly because of individual differences with respect to beliefs about self and social psychological tendencies such as the protection of the self-esteem, self-serving bias and modesty interfere with the validity of the component. Another observation was that self perceptions were not just about competencies and perceived control, but also about values. The behavioural component provided a better measure for awareness of resources, because it also demonstrated the willingness to take action and find out what resources are available. The organisation has a responsibility to manage resources and to make them available to employees, as well as informing employees at the individual level, but it still depends on the employee to make use of them.

The emergence of the dimension, achievement of results, is a further indication of the importance of the behavioural component. A sense of achievement would not be possible if results were not achieved due to behaviour. Behaviour seems to be relevant in making a difference as well. A participant mentioned initiative and challenging established views. Crant (2000) identified 'taking charge' as a proactive behavioural construct and defined it as willingness to challenge the *status quo* to bring about constructive change and constructive efforts to effect functional change with respect of how work is executed. It is not denying the belief a person has that he or she is able to effect change, but according to Crant (2000), the actions a person takes to effect change results in feelings of personal control.

7.6 SUMMARY

In this chapter the dimensions of psychological empowerment and characteristics of empowered people as it emerged from the verbal interview data, were reported as results and discussed in comparison with the literature and the theoretical frameworks of Spreitzer (1995a; 1995b) and Menon (2001). Conclusions were drawn regarding what dimensions constitute psychological empowerment in the South African context. The study found dimensions of

psychological empowerment and characteristics of empowered employees that are similar to what was found by leading authors and researchers on the subject, for example, meaning, competence, sense of control and impact, but with some aspects that are unique given the present context. Dimensions and characteristics that emerged from the study were resilience, sense of competence, sense of achievement, sense of control, sense of meaning, making a difference and empowerment of others. Goal orientation was also investigated according to the theoretical framework proposed by Menon (2001) and it was found to have a connection with a sense of meaning. Zimmerman's (1995) nomological network was evaluated by presenting examples of the intrapersonal, interactional and behavioural components and by discussing them. The interdependence of the three components was demonstrated with three profiles as examples and they were discussed. The behavioural component was found to be a better indicator of a sense of empowerment than the intrapersonal and interactional components. Conclusions about the dimensions that may have a bearing on future considerations were made and these will be discussed further in chapter nine.

In the next chapter the results of the enquiry into the antecedents of psychological empowerment will be presented and discussed. Factors inherent in organisations will be distinguished from factors inherent in individuals.

CHAPTER 8

ANTECEDENTS OF EMPOWERMENT

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to present the results obtained from the semi-structured interviews that would serve to answer research question 5: *What factors are perceived to have an effect on empowerment?* Participants were asked specifically what they see as stumbling blocks in achieving their goals and what factors they think contributed most to what they have become to ensure that sufficient data is generated to be able to answer this question. Apart from that the complete transcripts of the interviews were scanned for any expressions relating to factors that could contribute to their empowerment. Factors that came to light in this manner would imply an inductive approach as the experiences of the interviewees were analysed to find out what they perceive as contributing to their empowerment.

8.2 CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

In accordance with the original assumption derived from a literature survey, most of the contributing factors that were found in the present study can be described as contextual factors or management practices. Adler (1928) contended that the socio-economic environment has an effect on people's thinking and behaviour, while Conger and Kanungo (1988) called attention to the influence of contextual factors on the empowerment beliefs of organisational members. True to these conceptions and the expectation of this study, the present South African socio-economic and political context, as well as management practices seemed to have had an influence on what participants perceive to impact on their empowerment. The contextual factors that were found to be foremost in the minds of participants are presented and discussed. The emphasis is on those factors that can be incorporated in strategies for the enhancement of psychological empowerment in organisations.

8.2.1 Opportunity

Opportunity is the theme that came up most often, not just in terms of constraints and contributing factors, but also in terms of the perceptions and attitudes participants had of what empowerment entails, as well as inherent in positive and negative experiences. Lack of opportunities that were mentioned as constraints and that amount to other management practices, for example, training, as well as positive experiences, such as involvement in projects, are discussed under the relevant factors. Opportunity often refers to a variety of prospects, for example, Kanter (1993) equated opportunity to opportunity to learn and grow and to upward mobility, promotion up the hierarchy of an organisation and access to challenge and skills and rewards.

In disclosing their perceptions of empowerment, participants used phrases, such as "... giving people opportunities they did not have before ...", suggesting the socio-economic and political influence. However, it was also expressed in general terms that made it clear that opportunity was closely associated with empowerment.

"The first thing that I think about is to give people who did not have the opportunity before, to give them a chance. To be empowered, to also get a chance to be uplifted." (Participant 17)

"To empower is being afforded the opportunity to realise ones own potential." (Participant 5)

The participants' perceptions of the role opportunity plays in empowerment are regarded as a factor, because it seemed that the empowerment process cannot be set in motion without envisioning what opportunities are appropriate. Authorities on the subject of empowerment recognised the role of opportunity in the process of empowerment (Blanchard et al., 1999; Kanter, 1993; Zimmerman, 1995).

Opportunities were also seen in the light of a typical tendency in the current socio-economic climate, with perceptions that South African business is still favouring white males, while on the other hand, black empowerment ensures opportunities for the previously disadvantaged. Opportunities in the examples below seem to refer to job opportunities or opportunities for promotion.

“While at the (Company) it really felt like people of colour, black people, were not afforded the same opportunities regardless of the work you put in and results you produced. Very often to prove one self as a person of colour one has to put a lot more hours and really perform above average to get anywhere or to be afforded better opportunities.” (Participant 5)

“Another thing that I don’t like that they like to do in the municipality they create posts and then there are already people earmarked to go in the post. So, you don’t really have the opportunity to apply. So I am stuck where I am now. White South African so I stay where I am. I don’t see myself that I will get an opportunity any further. If you look how they drew up the organograms and so on; who are favoured and who not.” (Participant 8)

Opportunities were mostly perceived as the responsibility of the organisation. This was evident in participants’ perceptions of constraints.

“I never had opportunity to attend courses and to get promotions.” (Participant 1)

“If you are not given an opportunity to use the skills that you have acquired.” (Participant 6)

The organisation’s responsibility was iterated by authors. Kane-Urrabazo (2006) and Patric and Laschinger (2006) referred to Kanter’s (1981; 1993) theories on organisational empowerment and concluded that opportunity refers to professional growth and development opportunities to build on the knowledge and skills required for the job. Sarmiento et al. (2004) found that access to

opportunity was the most empowering aspect in the work environment under investigation.

Zimmerman (1995) suggested that empowering processes are those where people create or are given opportunities to control their own destiny and influence the decisions that affect their lives and gain greater access to and control over resources. There was evidence in the interview data that participants realised that although opportunities are provided and available, it depends on the individual to make use of them or create them themselves. The realisation was that the individual also has a responsibility.

“The biggest obstacle that I had in working towards my own goals was an attitude of waiting for someone to give me an opportunity or tools to do what I must do.”

“I was however on many occasions very bitter and angry at some other people who simply seem to get so many more opportunities. In retrospect it is clear that the vast majority of these who got more opportunities simply were on the lookout for the opportunities, and took them while they occurred. The ones who have bypassed me years ago, and even those who do it today are the ones who know where they are going and then look out for opportunities, and where the opportunities are not available simply create them themselves.” (Participant 7)

“Opportunities were there at that time, but you had to seize it.” (Participant 8)

Some participants seized even seemingly insignificant opportunities to prove their capability and it contributed to their growth. Some participants' career progress consisted of looking for opportunities to get exposure and become competent in different areas of their work. Different types of opportunities available to develop were expressed, for example, sharing of information between associates was seen as a mutual learning opportunity. Those who regarded getting involved in all sorts of activities as learning opportunities found that it not only benefited their careers, but also gave them a sense of achievement.

This dual responsibility was pronounced in the literature. In the three-dimensional model of efficacy determinants that Gist and Mitchell (1992) proposed, they distinguished between external and internal determinants. External determinants are primarily under the organisation's control, while internal determinants are primarily under personal control and the experience of competence can be influenced by both. Zimmerman (1990) distinguished between organisational empowerment and empowerment on the individual level. At the individual level, empowerment includes behaviour and motivations to exert control whereas organisational empowerment includes opportunities to develop.

The individual's responsibility may include taking steps, looking for opportunities and exercising choices, such as choosing a career or job opportunity that provide training or to leave a situation where opportunities are not available, such as leaving an organisation when lack of opportunities are perceived.

"I left (Company) mainly due to the lack of opportunity and I also felt very strongly that not everybody was afforded the same opportunity. I joined (Company) as this was a good opportunity." (Participant 5)

According to Kanter (1993), people who do not have many opportunities would tend to have low self-esteem and value their competence as inadequate, lack aspiration, responsibility and commitment to the organisation. McDermott et al. (1996) found a strong correlation between opportunity and commitment, indicating that the opportunity to grow and develop within the organisation strongly determined commitment to the organisation. Feelings of empowerment were found to have a negative association with the propensity to leave the organisation, which is the downside of commitment (Koberg et al., 1999).

Although the concept, opportunity, was emphasised in the interviews as well as in the literature as necessary for empowerment, the concept can hardly stand on its own and is normally expressed in association with other concepts, such as the opportunity to grow and develop. For example, Ivancevich and Matteson (1996) described a model in which job performance is a function of capacity to perform,

opportunity to perform and willingness to perform. Therefore, the opportunity to be empowered is discussed in connection with other management practices that could provide such opportunity.

It is clear, however, that opportunity plays a vital part in empowerment and should be a consideration. The opportunity must be there for people to grow and develop, to show what they are capable of and to experience empowerment. Because opportunity is not a one sided affair and the individual must be willing to look for opportunities and make use of them, perceptions and attitude regarding opportunity are factors to consider and to manage in the process of empowerment. According to Harrison (1983), the answers are not always in better management practices, but rather in changing mindsets.

8.2.2 Feedback and recognition

Recognition was another theme that emerged quite often and in different contexts as it seemed to come in different forms and from different sources, for example, positive feedback from clients and reward for good work from the organisation. Recognition can be considered as positive feedback and positive feedback is the same as recognition for good work or competence, while rewards are also a form of recognition. Although it can be integrated into one process, feedback fulfils an additional purpose for empowerment. Each of these sub-themes will be discussed separately.

Participants experienced the fact that they are not *recognised* for what they do or that their efforts and achievements are not acknowledged as negative. They do not feel validated or appreciated and if not acknowledged, they do not experience a sense of meaning and they feel despondent about their future.

“It is perhaps inherent in me to want recognition; somebody to pat you on the back every now and then and tell you that you are doing well, we are proud of you. And I think if a person does not get it you become kind of depressed. You feel what is the meaning of life; don't I have any value?” (Participant 1)

“Then you often feel you are doing a lot, you put in a lot of effort, but it is not reciprocated with recognition. I think that is something that causes you to be negative. Unfortunately I don’t think I necessarily have prospects here. On the one hand one feels you are with the organisation for some time and no recognition was forth coming. So what is the point to launch an ambitious career?” (Participant 4)

Recognition was described in the literature as an effective management behaviour that shows appreciation to employees for efficient performance, significant achievements and important contributions and it gives employees a sense of worth as each person wants his or her particular value to be recognised (Schostak, 2006; Stein, 1983; Yukl, 1998).

Some of the satisfying experiences participants recalled were as a result of recognition. Examples of recognition were mentioned in terms of a senior taking notice of achievements, being in demand because of good work, winning awards and getting positive feedback from clients.

“What was wonderful about that boss as well was he went away for three months to France and he had an acting director in his place, but when he got back he said to me; you know LS, I could have gone away for another three months and not worried. Everything was going fine and I know you were quite responsible with that and so the recognition that he gave me that was really wonderful for me.” (Participant 11)

Some people find satisfaction in the work itself, but the feeling is enhanced when the effort is recognised.

Participant 11 was asked whether the experience was good because of the recognition, on which she replied:

“No, actually for me the recognition was secondary. I actually got fulfilment out of what I was doing.”

Participant 9 felt good about herself, “When I am able to be creative and do something in my own way, something that I know I am good at. Usually when I am writing. I find satisfaction from it, I enjoy it and when the feedback is positive, if it is recognised it is just an added bonus.”

According to Forsyth (2006), nothing is more motivational than a feeling of achievement, except when achievement is also recognised. The satisfaction the above participants experienced versus the recognition can be distinguished as intrinsic reward versus extrinsic reward. Extrinsic factors concern aspects of a job that form the background or context to the task itself and consist of activities that are externally motivated by rewards. Intrinsic factors cover aspects inherent in the conduct of the job themselves, are intrinsically motivating, meaning that they are rewarding in itself, for example, satisfaction while engaging in a task. Examples of intrinsic job factors are freedom to choose how to undertake the work (autonomy), amount of responsibility and initiative that is allowed, skill requirements and variety (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Snelders, 1996; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990).

Mok and Au-Yeung (2002) explored the relationship between organisational climate and empowerment. Recognition was one of the climate factors that was significantly related to psychological empowerment.

Recognition was also expressed as a need that was not always fulfilled.

“It is perhaps inherent in me to want recognition.” (Participant 1)

“I have a fairly large need for approval...” (Participant 7)

Recognition as a human need was defined in the literature as the need to have one’s self, one’s work and anything else associated with one’s self known and approved by others (Schaffer, 1953).

Reward is another form of recognition. Recognition is absent when a person does not get what he or she felt they deserved. Reward in the form of remuneration and promotion was mentioned as a positive experience and lack of it as negative experiences.

“I think for being recognised for the hard work in establishing city police. The fact that we had a gala evening with the mayor at that time presenting us with certificates of appreciation also signed by the chief of police. I received a special award for my contribution in the establishment of the section. And then also the acknowledgement in 2005 I received a certificate for service excellence by the women’s network forum, identifying me as one of the people who provided good service excellence in admin support. That I feel very good about. I think I got a merit increase that year if I am not mistaken.” (Participant 14)

Reward, which is not in line with the input, seemed to have a particularly negative effect on participants’ perceptions. When promotion was not forthcoming after a period of time in a position, while a more senior position was expected as reward for hard work, a person may not feel appreciated. This was the experience of Participant 4 above even if the effect on financial reward was not mentioned.

Another example was a participant whose appointment was not in line with what she felt she deserved and which also had an implication for her remuneration:

“I am pretty much utilised at where I should be, but my grading is three or four levels below than what I am doing. I put in the appeal, because my grading is lower than where they placed me, but they also drag it out. Letters were given to us in December and they still have not sorted out the grading. I find that very negative. Its like a shadow over my head. I am working very hard and being paid very little. It will make a huge difference in my salary, about 60 – 70%.” (Participant 3)

In some cases participants felt that they already acquired the skills and competence needed for promotion, but other organisational factors, such as

delay in finalising structures in which promotions can be carried out or affirmative action, were the cause for not getting the promotion that was earned. Although a reason could be provided for a reward system that is not based on merit or not fully functional, it was still experienced as negative.

“In a bureaucratic organisation there are always obstacles in the form of set rules and regulations. I guess it serves a purpose – it ensures that people are treated fairly, it ensures that precedents are not created, for example, the promotion policy and together with it affirmative action. It prevents people to be promoted purely on grounds of suitability and ability.” (Participant 9)

In some cases lack of reward was also experienced as unfair treatment that had to some extent an effect on participants’ sense of control and competence. However, loss of financial benefits did not have as much effect as the perception of loss of esteem, which had additional negative feelings as consequence.

“That left me with a loss of pay – as it would have been a promotion and loss of dignity and job satisfaction as I wasn’t exposed to the strategic level of my job anymore. It made me feel humiliated, abused and exposed.” (Participant 10)

Conger and Kanungo (1988) identified reward systems that are non-contingent, low in incentive value and not based on competence and innovation as detrimental to individuals’ beliefs in their efficiency and worth. When organisations do not provide rewards that are valued by employees and when rewards are not offered for employee competence, initiative and persistence in innovative job behaviour, employees’ sense of powerlessness increase. The two most critical features of an organisation’s reward system are the degree to which it is tied to performance and how it determines the worth of an individual employee (Lawler, 1992).

Reward was more often mentioned in connection with negative experiences. It seems that when it is absent it is a factor, but when people are not dissatisfied with their rewards, it is not foremost in their minds. According to Herzberg’s

Two Factor Theory, the opposite to dissatisfaction is not satisfaction, but rather has a neutral effect - no dissatisfaction (Herzberg, 1976; Landy, 1998).

According to Kanter (1981; 1993), if job activities are to help people become more powerful, they must also be visible. With visibility Kanter meant that results are noted and appropriately rewarded. Bowen and Lawler (1992) defined empowerment as sharing with employees four organisational ingredients and rewards based on the organisation's performance was one of them. Rewarding was an aspect of leadership and management that was considered important for empowerment (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Klagge, 1998; Murrell, 1985).

Spreitzer's (1995a) found that rewards were significantly related to psychological empowerment and Samad (2007) found that rewards were a significant contributor of psychological empowerment.

Feedback is appreciated and has value if it helps the recipient to develop. Feedback may be derived from different sources, such as when feedback is given by the manager, clients or recipients of a service. A need for feedback was expressed to be able to make adjustments for improvement:

"I like criticism because I learn from them and if I don't make mistakes how will I learn? I need the feedback. If it was not done according to expectations, just give me feedback." (Participant 6)

From an empowerment perspective, feedback was depicted in the literature as vital as it provides information regarding performance and how it meets goals and standards. In order to be effective, managers must provide information to employees about their personal efficacy. Low self-efficacy may be induced by negative performance appraisals as it influences efficacy perceptions. Positive feedback, therefore, could be a mechanism for enhancing efficacy perceptions (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Kinlaw, 1995).

Negative feedback for the purpose of improvement may cause temporary feelings of incompetence. A participant does not feel good about herself, “When I get negative feedback about skills that I should be good at, for example, feedback about my presentation skills.” She acted on feedback, “I even went and took lessons from a drama teacher to improve my skills when I got feedback that suggested that I lack the ability to vary my tone of voice sufficiently to keep the class awake.” (Participant 9)

Positive feedback builds a sense of competence. A participant’s sense of self-efficacy was raised because of the CEO’s feedback: “I have good general management skills and my CEO has consistently commented about my ability to drive through general business initiatives.” (Participant 20)

While positive feedback is necessary for people to get the message that they are doing well, which builds confidence in their competence, feedback also includes aspects of the employee’s performance that needs improving and it, therefore, contributes to the development of better skills. Feedback may be regarded as negative feedback when it addresses incompetence, but it should be presented and accepted as constructive feedback. If an employee has not succeeded in mastering a task or skill adequately, constructive feedback should address the behaviour about which something can be done and suggestions should be made on how to improve, rather than blaming and criticising the person (Martinko & Gardner, 1982). Harter (1978) argued that some degree of failure is necessary to get feedback that explains the difference between ineffective and competent behaviour. In the process of giving constructive feedback, managers protect employee self-esteem by giving feedback that is specific and based on behaviour that can be adjusted. Positive appraisals may lack specific information about the requirements to perform a task at a certain level and is more empowering if it includes feedback or instruction about abilities in addition to raising people’s beliefs in their capabilities (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). Kanter (1993) suggested that feedback and encouragement should occur regularly to boost self-esteem and build people’s sense of their own skills and competence.

Research findings indicated that feedback leads to a sense of empowerment, particularly a sense of impact (Drake et al., 2007). Kraimer et al. (1999) found that task feedback was positively related to competence and knowledge of results that was obtained by means of feedback helps employees to get a sense of impact.

8.2.3 Support

Gestures of support were extended by management and colleagues to participants on a personal level especially when difficulties were experienced. Work related support and encouragement were mentioned as contributing to a sense of competence and feelings of confidence. This support contributed to participants' feelings of being valued and strengthened them in their endeavours to achieve goals.

Social support by management in the form of caring and showing of interest in employees added to their sense of being valued. Lack of support had the opposite effect. Some participants showed greater dependence on personal support than others.

“Little contact and when the support is not there and the things that were said to me, it makes me feel that I am useless and without value, nothing and nobody ...” (Participant 1)

In other organisations support was experienced on a personal level:

“And another thing that we experience is that when it is not going well with you ... one of the workers said that she felt she is supported much better when her brother was ill than what she was supported in another organisation when her child died. So there is really that caring thing.” (Participant 12)

Support and encouragement from managers were experienced by a participant regarding her efforts to get her education: “I was getting a lot of support from my

previous bosses. They were supporting me a lot. They would go out of their way to help me.” (Participant 6)

It seemed that it is beneficial to employees when managers are supportive, but support by co-workers was also valued. Moral support from colleagues and mutual support among associates were mentioned by some participants as important factors and as part of a support system. Being able to rely on colleagues to provide moral support on a daily basis contributed to making work and employment in a particular organisation a worth while experience.

“When you walk in and you know you have that moral support and you can chat with the people.” (Participant 4)

Work related support from management was experienced by participants when management upheld an open door policy, was available for guidance, supported ideas and was willing to back it up at the highest level. This type of support was regarded as contributing to achievement of goals and career success. If this kind of support is lacking and there is no back-up from management, employees may experience difficulty in achieving their work goals and may not experience a sense of achievement.

“Also with your management, who uphold an open door policy. I think colleagues and good bosses, for want of a better word, who always was good to me in my work and supported me. We could rely on one another.” (Participant 4)

Participant 13 experienced support for her work from her manager as well as the top management of the organisation:

“He is also prepared that when we come with an idea, for example, when we want to implement ABET, he will fight the battle for us from the committee to the council. There is a lot of support for training. We have a good training budget. It is just a mind shift that people still have to make to also realise that training is

important. But my boss, he was a teacher and the CEO also, are very much in favour of training.”

Ducharme and Martin (2000) suggested that social support arises from affective support and instrumental support. Affective support provides the recipient with feelings of being accepted and cared for by co-workers, while instrumental support involves functional assistance in response to specific needs in the execution of work. Both these types of support were experienced by participants. Support was mentioned in terms of moral support from colleagues and managers, support of efforts, while feeling safe in the organisational environment can also be attributed to a supportive climate. Social support, according to Payne (1987), occurs in the form of comfort and emotional security, direct help or practical assistance, problem-solving advice, feedback and information, which can help people to cope with difficulties, solve problems and reach decisions. A supportive organisational climate was described by James and Jones (1974) as well as Joyce and Slocum (1982) as characterised by leader support and nurturance of subordinates and the degree to which supervisors maintain warm and friendly relations as important aspects.

Good quality work experience in a safe environment in the process of becoming competent was deemed as a necessary requirement and a privilege. In situations where employees have to make decisions about other people’s lives, the feeling of safety provided by the support of a team and guidance from a supervisor, were experienced as particularly comforting.

“One gets unbelievably good experience and you are in a reasonable safe environment at least for the period where you obtain the experience.” (Participant 4)

“Fortunately you are not alone. So, luckily it is in a team context and you are part of a process ...”

“And our supervision we get very very very good guidance and you always feel safe you feel that they are behind you. I have the confidence to phone and to say I can’t carry on and then you talk about it. They really walk the distance with you.” (Participant 12)

In the literature a safe work environment in relation to empowerment was described as one in which initiative and risk can be taken, frustrations can be shared, fears can be dispelled and support can be reinforced. Employees should be allowed freedom to try out ideas and mistakes that occur should be regarded as part of the learning process (Kieffer, 1984; Zall et al., 2001).

A safe environment can contribute to a sense of empowerment at a certain level. However, a person who is reluctant to move out of a safe environment may feel empowered in that environment, but in that environment only. Some accounts implied a reluctance to move out of a comfortable position because the skills of that position were mastered, while difficulties at higher levels were foreseen. A participant felt confident about her responsibilities at the level she was functioning, while accountability lied at a higher level.

“In terms of my job, I am at a specific level; low enough not to get the blame at meetings, because there is someone higher than me who can take the blame, but high enough to have authority. In terms of my own objectives, I don’t have ambition to go any higher. The moment I go higher I will have to manage more and I will be out of my specialist field of what I really want to do.” (Participant 13)

Her confidence may be a result of the fact that she feels comfortable and competent on the level that she is and this may change if she has to fulfil a position with more accountability and a different set of skills. People have to stretch beyond their safe work milieu to be able to grow. In the process of exposure they may experience a lack of competence while getting the know-how and become more comfortable and competent and need to be supported during that period.

Zall et al. (2001) maintained the manager's role is to support and encourage employees and to put support systems into place that allow employees the opportunity to empower themselves. Individuals are more likely to feel competent when they are not experiencing stress, fear, anxiety and depression, which can lower self-efficacy expectations. Empowerment techniques and strategies that provide emotional support for subordinates and that create a supportive climate can be effective in strengthening self-efficacy beliefs (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). According to Kanter's (1993) theory about empowerment, work environments that provide an effective support system are empowering and enhance employees' power to accomplish work within an organisation.

There is agreement in the literature that supportive relationships within the work environment positively shape experienced empowerment. Murrell (1985) suggested that providing of support and encouragement is a powerful means of achieving empowerment. Kieffer (1984) maintained that concrete assistance and emotional support by peers are important in the advancement towards empowerment, while a supportive environment fosters the development of potential skills. Support as a prerequisite for psychological empowerment is also mentioned by Barry (1994), Corsum and Enz (1999), Kane-Urrabazo (2006), Klagge (1998), Lin (1998), Quinn and Spreitzer (1997) and Zimmerman (1995).

Several researchers found a relationship between support and empowerment. Mok and Au-Yeung (2002) found that leadership that was described as supportive was positively related to psychological empowerment. McDermott et al. (1996) found that nurses considered care for the caregiver to be a significant component of empowerment and that access to lines of support is crucial to fostering job-related empowerment. Leach et al. (2003) also found that support was essential to achieve actual empowerment, especially direct support from experts in the field when decision-making authority was delegated as an empowerment initiative. Gill and Ganesh (2007) found that despite the constraints their participants faced, their experiences of support were a major source of empowerment.

8.2.4 Development

Development in the form of education, training and personal growth emerged as factors that contributed to a sense of empowerment. Although most organisations provide opportunities for development and the majority of participants made use of such opportunities, lack of opportunity to develop was expressed by some participants. Those participants who felt that they did not have opportunities to go on training courses, saw lack of training and development as a constraint.

Participant 1 referred a few times to the fact that he never had opportunity to attend courses.

“I had no training for instance. Nobody trained me in a direction in which I can say concretely I have a certificate and now I can do something.”

Participant 5 mentioned, “... lack of opportunity to grow and be educated properly and developing the right skills...”, as something that prevented her from achieving her goals.

“I believe for one to be successful in a good career or professional choice one has to be exposed to what options one has and I was not afforded this opportunity.” (Participant 11)

Apart from lack of opportunity to receive training, management of training and development was criticised. Opportunity to study should be a contributing factor, but if it is not managed properly, it could become a stumbling block. Budget constraints or staff shortages were presented as constrictions to provide training or education.

“The council provide for it, but I think there is also in terms of the more strategic stuff in terms of human resources empowerment it is not always successful. Just to name an example, of my colleagues applied for bursaries to study town

planning and the council refused because we are short staffed and we can't afford to lose one or two people for six months of the year because we don't have enough people so the guys don't get the opportunity to empower themselves and eventually plough it back in the council. This is a lose-lose situation for both. So I think the council must sort out certain things, such as staff issues and then people can have the opportunity to study further." (Participant 4)

Most of the participants had some or other qualification or were in the process of obtaining a qualification through part time studies. Those who mentioned education specifically are perhaps those who did not take it for granted and had to put in an extra effort to obtain it or it is yet an unfulfilled dream. There were those who could not afford full time tertiary education, but carried on through other means, such as to make use of bursaries after they started their careers in order to get a qualification, because developing the right skills was considered an important factor for empowerment. Achieving a goal such as graduating filled participants with a sense of achievement and it gave them the confidence to believe that they are capable of taking on responsibilities at a certain level.

"I started in the city council as a clerical assistant. And at that time I had Standard 8 and when I joined the council I attended night classes doing my Standard 10. After I did Standard 10 I did secretarial courses at different colleges and in 1993 I started with my diploma in municipal management and I carried on until I got my MAdmin."

"When I first graduated I felt on top of the world ... because that was my ambition to graduate one day. I have got 12 modules already towards PhD." (Participant 6)

After making use of opportunities through his employment, Participant 15 can say about his appointment, "I am more than deserving of this appointment. I've got the requisite experience; skills honed over a number of years; and a potent qualification from one of South Africa's foremost universities."

Education as condition for empowerment was mentioned by Conger and Kanungo (1988), Kinlaw (1995) and Klagge (1998). Gecas (1989) referred to several findings that education increases the sense of mastery and personal control. Other authors believed that training and skills development can help develop competence. All employees need to know what results are expected of them and they should have the opportunity to be schooled in achieving them (Odiorne, 1991; Zimmerman, 1995).

The management of the training and development function that is focused on optimising performance in jobs is addressed in the literature. Kanter (1993) suggested an organisational responsibility to execute a job analysis to determine the competencies and content knowledge needed and job descriptions to start the process of creating opportunities for learning and development. Geroy et al. (1998) developed an empowerment model designed to optimise employee potential, which includes career path development to provide employees with the guidance and the skills necessary to become empowered employees.

In the overall empowerment effort, a strong commitment to training and development and managers who realise the value of training are needed. Lawler (1992) suggested a mandatory training policy to enforce commitment to training and developing all employees. The implementation of the BBBEE Act should address this issue, but unfortunately managers are still willing to sacrifice training in order to increase short-term productivity and profitability. The commitment of management towards training is important in establishing a positive organisational climate regarding employee development.

Apart from formal skills development, personal growth was mentioned in terms of exposure, empowerment, religion, maturing emotionally and awareness of own behaviours that are not effectual.

Participant 7 referred several times during the interview to his personal growth. "I have subsequently started on a learning process to realise that one is never powerless, but that at times your power lies in just dealing with the setback. I

also have my own targets, goals, behavioural changes that I am working on.” He explored certain HR tools and made use of its feedback to adapt his behaviour.

It seemed that development programmes that provide feedback and create awareness of ineffectual behaviours, help individuals to focus their personal development on the adaptation of those behaviours.

Gist (1987) believed that more emphasis should be on relieving debilitating low self-efficacy instead of just on lectures, imparting relevant knowledge. Other authors pointed out that skills, other than functional skills, are necessary in the empowerment process. Kotze et al. (2005) came to the conclusion that empowerment initiatives will benefit from training that includes aspects of effectual behaviour, such as assertiveness, leadership competencies and practices. Kieffer (1984) advocated that people do not only need to acquire practical skills; they have to learn to overcome internalised expectations of helplessness.

Education and training is seen as a requirement for certain positions and to obtain basic knowledge to do a job and in this sense the importance for empowerment cannot be denied. Personal growth has to do with development of qualities that improve the person as a whole and may contribute to the development of psychological empowerment.

8.2.5 Access to information / Clear guidelines

Access to information, clear guidelines and direction were mentioned as helpful when these were at hand, but frustrating when these were lacking. Lack of clear guidelines and role ambiguity were experienced. People feel that their sense of meaning is affected if they do not have direction. They associated direction with having a purpose and to be an asset.

Participant 1 experienced lack of job clarity:

“I felt that I want to be an asset for the department where if you don’t tell me what I have to do then I am going to sit here all day. It drives me up the wall and I am getting absolutely crazy, because I don’t know what I must do. I mean when you start with a job I believe your employer should tell you, JB, this is your duty, this is what you should do.”

Role ambiguity as a result of a restructuring process was experienced.

“So much things going on. Personally the function you are performing the one day you hear that it is not required to do that function any more and then somebody else comes along and say it is an important function. Then they say they are going to make it obsolete so, ja, we don’t know if we are coming or going.” (Participant 2)

One person spoke spontaneously about access to information and the impelling effect on her feelings. The ineffectiveness of information is a problem for the participant: “I don’t think management are aware of what is going on ... changes that have been made. And they should be feeding it down to us. And maybe it is something that you should write in your report. Everyday people ask what’s the latest about that, what’s the escalation rate, what is the latest about that.” (Participant 3)

The effect the participant experienced was that “it very much undermines every one’s confidence. Not just mine but everyone’s confidence. Ja, your level of confidence is undermined. Because you never know what You are always doubting what you are doing. You are handing something in and you always have a shadow over your head. You ask yourself, should I be doing this, should I check with my colleagues, no one is sure. We have to base everything on legislation or policy or something like that. That really undermines our confidence. Hugely.” (Participant 3)

Communication, specifically access to information and clear guidelines, is an aspect of empowerment that is a key success factor in empowerment (Blanchard et al., 1999; Klagge, 1998; Orpen, 1997).

Other participants had more positive experiences with good guidance from supervisors, which helped to form them to do their work according to certain standards and processes. Although a work situation is preferred where autonomy is allowed, definite guidelines of expected outcomes were regarded as still needed.

“I had good guidance from my supervisors from the beginning. So I think that helped to form me, to do good planning and do your work in a certain manner.”
(Participant 4)

From the above it seems that clear guidelines, direction and good guidance is necessary to create empowerment and sustain it. Access to information and clear guidelines are also prominently described in the literature as contributing to feelings of empowerment. Without guidelines employees will not know what is expected of them (Orpen, 1997). Lawler (1992) suggested that managers need to develop information systems that allow them to disseminate valid data regularly and effectively. According to Conger and Kanungo (1988), lack of valid information contributes to feelings of powerlessness.

Researchers found a relationship between information sharing and psychological empowerment. Spreitzer (1996), Samad (2007) and Konczak et al. (2000) found that there was a significant positive relationship between access to information and empowerment. Seibert et al. (2004) and Mok and Au-Yeung (2002) studied the effect of an empowering organisational climate on psychological empowerment. Information sharing and leadership that included the dispensing of job-related organisational information to subordinates formed part of the climate they proposed. Both studies found that an empowerment climate and psychological empowerment were positively and significantly related. Matthews et al. (2003) used the term fluidity in information sharing and defined it as

occurring when all information concerning the company is accessible to all individuals in the company. A significant correlation was found between fluidity in information sharing and psychological empowerment.

According to classical organisation theory, every position in a formal organisational structure should have a specified set of tasks and responsibilities. A job specification is intended to enable management to hold subordinates accountable for specific outcomes and to provide feedback, guidance and direction for subordinates. If an employee does not know what he is expected to accomplish, he will have to rely on trial and error to find out what is expected. Rizzo et al. (1970) defined a role as a set of expectations about behaviour for a position in an organisational structure. Expectations are the behavioural requirements ascribed to the role by the person filling that position. According to Sawyer (1992), job and role clarity entails the extent to which the individual's work goals and responsibilities are clearly communicated and the degree to which the individual understands the processes required to achieve those goals. Conger and Kanungo (1988) identified lack of role clarity as a context factor leading to potential lowering of self-efficacy belief.

Although some organisations may not ascribe to the classical organisation models and some employees may prefer to decide for themselves how to execute their role, Quinn and Spreitzer (1997) suggested that while employees have autonomy, they must be aware of the boundaries of their decision-making discretion. Clear goals, clear lines of authority, and clear task responsibilities prevent role ambiguity, which is negatively related to empowerment. Klagge (1998) considered expectations, roles, responsibilities and capabilities as some of the key success factors in empowering employees.

Research that investigated the effect of job and role clarity on psychological empowerment was conducted by Spreitzer (1996) who found that a significant negative relationship existed between role ambiguity and empowerment. Matthews et al. (2003) found that a clear set of adjustable guidelines that assist employee decision-making in a work environment facilitates empowerment.

Role and function clarification is important for empowerment in a sense that it prescribes what people are allowed to do, while providing boundaries, but it may also either limit or enhance what people do and what they believe they have the competence to do. Roles do not only determine what people do, but also have a strong influence on how people see themselves. In other words, roles do more than just define the job content; roles influence how important they regard their role to be, influence how they view their responsibilities and determine in general how they feel about themselves, in other words how it affects their sense of meaning (Kinlaw, 1995).

8.2.6 Autonomy, initiative and trust

To have autonomy was expressed as an ideal situation and it was experienced as satisfying. To be able to use own initiative may be closely related to having autonomy. Both autonomy and initiative must be allowed by the organisation and form part of a specific organisational climate. It was also realised that autonomy would not be allowed in the absence of trust and that employees experience that they are trusted when they have autonomy.

A participant referred to another job prospect as the ideal, but lack of autonomy in his present position, , "... but it will also be something that I know that I can decide, I will have an input in determining the destiny of where I want to take a programme to. Presently there is no such thing." (Participant 2)

The opportunity to act autonomously, use initiative and be creative was described as a gratifying experience. Participants appreciated it when they were left alone to do their work in their own way, within predetermined boundaries and managers who do not check on them all the time were paid tribute to. Being allowed to determine outcomes and work tempo, as well as being responsible for deciding how work is done, were generally experienced as empowering.

"I enjoyed being left alone to do my own thing, within predetermined, jointly, boundaries for my work. I was allowed to determine the outcome, a lot of work I

did at home, at a pace that I set. To a very large degree I was responsible to determine how I did the work, when I did it etcetera.” He listed the aspects he prefers as “independent work, providing thought leadership, and definite guidelines of outcomes. Tell me what you want, when and then leave me to do it.” (Participant 7)

Even managers, who are allowed to express themselves in terms of their own unique management style, have a sense of empowerment when they achieve success with it.

“I got here and I started to team-build and there has never been fighting. They stand together and they work. You will also see there are team leaders. I brought it in. We are not departments any more, we are teams. You are the collections team and you are this and that. So I get the chance and when I have funny ideas they leave me alone and I can apply it and it works.” (Participant 17)

Autonomy was defined in the literature in terms of power, empowerment and self-determination. Kanter (1993) described empowerment in terms of actions such as generating autonomy. According to Ryan and Deci (2006), within self-determination theory, autonomy means self-governance or rule by the self. The opposite is regulation by external forces. Simply stated, autonomy is the extent to which employees are allowed to plan and schedule their work (Joyce & Slocum, 1982). According to Nonaka (1988), autonomy begins to be realised when individuals are given the freedom to combine thought and action at their own discretion. Lack of appropriate autonomy was to Conger and Kanungo (1988), a factor to be diagnosed and eliminated if employees are to experience empowerment.

Trust was seen as an essential part of empowerment. When a person feels trusted it is experienced as a positive for self perception and when trust is lacking, it is negative. When the manager does not closely monitor subordinates, they felt that they are trusted. Trusting relationships in the work domain seemed to be regarded as important. When empowerment is seen as “... trust that is put

in you ...” (Participant 12) and when participants feel trusted, they experience it as empowering, whether it is superiors who trust them or clients who put their trust in them.

“I think what makes me feel the best is when my superiors trust me and say they want me to look into this and that and what comes out of it they accept.” (Participant 18)

“Feeling good is often very small in nature where a client trusts me that when he is busy with a big transaction, to involve me and then almost look at me like a child and wait for me to say yes, OK, do this or don’t do that.” (Participant 19)

Initiative can also be equated with autonomy, but it may even go further. With autonomy people may have the freedom to decide how they are going to do their work, while with initiative it may also be a case of deciding what to do to achieve an objective and to do it without having an assigned task. It is about starting something new without guidelines according to which it should be done.

Participant 1 could not relate any experience in his work context that caused him to feel good about himself, but when he used his own initiative in a social setting, that was memorable to him. Participants, who could relate examples of how they used their own initiative in different work situations, got fulfilment out of that.

“I had the ability, my own skill, my own initiative to find a replacement very quickly and see to it that that class was running smoothly. I got fulfilment out of that.” When she was working at a community centre: “I initiated and started like pre-school they were in groups and I on my own studied and found and went for extramural activities classes that was also offered to our coordinator and I started this pre-school idea so the children were not playing they were learning.”

The opportunity to use initiative seems to produce feelings of satisfaction and pride in the ability to do so.

Autonomy and initiative were described in the literature as activities not enforced by the external environment, but rather performed out of interest and enjoyment (Reis, Sheldon, Gable, Roscoe & Ryan, 2000) Payne (1987) distinguished high discretion jobs as loosely defined jobs. Some jobs can be clearly laid down, but leave the person discretion within the boundaries specified. Others may require even a manager to check with a senior before taking any decision that is not strictly a routine task. This would apply to jobs that adhere to standard procedures and legislation, for example, financial institutions.

Where restrictions can have a negative effect on self perception, autonomy has positive consequences, such as releasing creativity and potential (Vogt & Murrell, 1990), enhance self-efficacy (Gecas, 1989), sense of ownership and responsibility and work is experienced as meaningful (Bowen & Lawler, 1992). Allowing autonomy was also mentioned by Crozier (1964), Kanter (1993) and Leana (1987) as beneficial to both employees and organisations. Allowing autonomy contributes to empowerment, because it implies that people's full potential and competence are developed, which enables them to use their own discretion and creativity. They feel confident enough about their competence to utilise it in productive and innovative ways (Clutterbuck & Kernaghan, 1994).

Researchers who found a positive relationship between autonomy and psychological empowerment were Konczak et al. (2000) and Seibert et al. (2004). Greasley et al. (2005) found that autonomy to make decisions was indicated as a manner in which employees would like to be empowered. According to the management practices perspective of empowerment, allowing autonomy is one of the actions that managers take (Blanchard et al., 1999; Hellriegel & Slocum, 1989).

To empower, according to Murrell (1985), requires much trust and confidence. According to Hogg (1993) and Kane-Urrabazo (2006), trust and trustworthiness must be prevalent before empowerment can be achieved. Conger and Kanungo (1988) believed that a trusting work environment can be effective in enhancing self-efficacy beliefs. If it is expected of employees to be accountable they must

feel they can trust management and the organisational systems (Blanchard et al., 1999).

Greasley et al. (2005) found that the behaviour of the employees' immediate supervisor has a strong influence on the perception of empowerment especially the extent to which employees were trusted. Trust was demonstrated through the level of monitoring and the less they are monitored the more they feel trusted.

8.2.7 Manager as mentor

Participants mentioned their mentors and/or managers in different contexts. They expressed appreciation for managers who support them, allow autonomy and provide guidance, but as these intersect with factors already discussed, the focus is on mentoring.

Some participants expressed the need for mentorship and that having a mentor is an advantage as it prepares one for future positions. A positive relationship with a supervisor in the role of mentor was described as him being approachable to discuss problems with any time when there is uncertainty about some aspects of work. Some participants attributed career success to their relationship with their managers as mentors, providing that they respond appropriately to career aspirations.

There seems to be a need for managers and supervisors to act as mentors, but perceptions about roles and expectations seem to differ. The guidance managers and mentors give seemed to be regarded as the most important role.

“And then my relationship with my own boss. I look at him as a mentor. I can take guidance from him when I am not sure of something.” (Participant 14)

“You know, what I believe in is for people to be mentored. My boss is off sick so there is no one acting in his place. But if there was that mentorship that was going on it would not be a problem to say so and so you can act in his place,

because that person would be fully aware of his function. Mentorship is the key.”
(Participant 6)

Mentorship is not utilised in her organisation, although she felt that it would help. “It is necessary. It was once done, but it was a pilot project and they never did it again.”

In another situation a mentor as manager was reported to be beneficial as it prepared the participant to take up responsibilities. The participant was mentored by her senior.

“When I was trying to cross-over from Payroll to HR, my manager, who mentored me, fell sick and I offered to stand in and did a good job which helped me gain experience to take on an HR role.” (Participant 20)

The role of managers as mentors was emphasised by Kinlaw (1995) and Murrell (1985) and counselling, coaching, teaching and enabling were also mentioned by Vogt and Murrell (1990) and Kanter (1993), because of the value for development and empowerment. According to Kieffer (1984), the role of a mentor is central to empowerment. He described the role of the mentor as one who stimulates, encourages and supports the practicing of skills. According to Odiorne (1991), it is important that exemplary performers mentor others in their quest for success.

8.2.8 Exposure and experience

Participants referred to the positive contribution of experience and exposure to their development. An organisation that provides a variety of prospects and a job in which the duties vary and the occupant has more responsibility is valued because of the opportunity it presents for improvement and for gaining experience.

“I wanted to get back into a big organisation, like the public sector, because the work is much more varied and you have far more responsibility than when you work for a private land surveyor. I also like to be able to improve and to gain experience.” (Participant 3)

“During my three year stay I had the opportunity of standing in as Laboratory Controller to oversee all the chemists which gave me exposure and prepared me for my position at (Company).” (Participant 16)

Work experience is regarded as the actual way of learning to do a job.

“Everything is a learning curve, because when you get out of university, then you actually know very little and you actually only start to learn when you start to work. And I have learned a lot and you learn something new every day. I think in general it is a good place to work and one gets unbelievably good experience and you are in a reasonable safe environment at least for the period where you obtain the experience.” (Participant 4)

Some participants realised that if they want to get ahead they have to utilise opportunities to gain experience, do work others hesitate to get involved in and make career shifts. Others valued the experience they got during their careers in a variety of divisions.

“I also saw when I got here that I am the youngest electrician. Years you can't buy. So what could I do to get ahead? What I did, all the jobs the older guys did not want to do I said give it to me I will try.” (Participant 8)

Exposure was seen as a valuable source of development. “Management and top management that see your potential and expose you to new learning to broaden my knowledge and skills band.” (Participant 16)

The value of exposure and experience for empowerment became quite clear. Whereas education and training are important to lay the foundation, experience seemed to be the actual means through which empowerment takes place.

Koberg et al. (1999), McDermott et al. (1996) and Ozaralli (2003) found significant positive correlations between years of experience and job-related empowerment. Sarmiento et al. (2004) did not find years of experience and length of employment to be significantly related to empowerment in their study. In the examples above it seems that it is the quality of the exposure that is important. Participants referred to variation and responsibility, novel experiences, many divisions, short periods but with incrementally more accountability and span of control. Quality exposure could also be the opportunity to participate in projects.

“My involvement in most of the (company) IS projects assisted me in developing very quickly.” (Participant 5)

Kieffer (1984) concluded that experience is at the core of empowering learning, while from a management perspective Blanchard et al. (1999) iterated that the experience of employees should be utilised and enhanced if empowerment is to be effective.

8.2.9 Motivation and challenge

From the interviews, mainly two aspects of motivation emerged that can be related to management behaviour, namely that challenges are instrumental in arousing and maintaining behaviour and encouragement is necessary to sustain motivation to persevere on a predetermined path. The work environment was also seen as a factor that can either be motivating or demotivating.

Motivation is about the arousal of behaviour and the maintenance of behaviour to achieve outcomes. Motivation is a very complex phenomenon and it is difficult to find an all-encompassing theory of how it occurs (Ivancevich & Matteson, 1996),

but in following a phenomenological approach, it was relied upon the interview data to present the theory best suited to the experience of power.

Challenges can be seen as a factor when the job itself or the organisation present challenges for people to exert effort and stretch their capabilities. However, challenges may also come from an external source, such as feedback that instigate actions regarding behaviour or skills that need to be changed.

Participant 9 said that she embarked on further studies and made progress in life as a result of a friend, “She challenged my existence.” Other people were also the source of a challenge for Participant 20. As a factor that contributed to her development she had the following to say: “I must add that working with engineers for almost 5 years really helped me to raise my game as I find they are very well educated and well read and I simply couldn’t shoot from the hip as someone, somewhere would have read up on an aspect of HR and would challenge me. I also improved my financial skills as they always wanted the bottom line. I found this to be incredibly helpful as, in my current job, I don’t find as many challenges from individuals but feel that I am usually one step ahead because of the standards set in the engineering environment.”

Challenges may present themselves in job requirements. Participants found it satisfying and challenging when their work presented new and different challenges, because there are other things that they had to do and skills they had to master that are not part of the usual job requirements. Challenges were associated with excitement of learning new facets of the job and accepting accountability for outcomes, while familiar and routine job characteristics were not experienced as motivating.

“So there is a lot of challenge here and I am not saying I know everything yet, but we are getting there and finding things out and so on.” (Participant 14)

“It was also other things that you have to learn, such as dementia and curatorship. There are other things that you do that are not part of the usual

family services, a lot of challenges and a lot of community projects that I could start and sustainable projects that still carry on.” (Participant 12)

It seemed that challenges are necessary for people to grow and serve as catalyst for the generation of positive results.

Foulkes (1969) suggested that if employers assign tasks that challenge employees, they will develop their own drives toward completing these tasks. To load a task with the work motivators means giving employees opportunities for achievement, for recognition associated with that achievement, for more responsibilities, for advancement to better jobs and for growth. While this implies intrinsic as well as extrinsic motivation, Harter (1978) emphasised that success leads to intrinsic motivation – a feeling of efficacy produced by the successful task accomplishment itself. She proposed that there is a relationship between the degree of challenge presented by the mastery situation and the amount of satisfaction derived from a task successfully solved, suggesting a positive linear relationship.

According to Wood and Bandura (1989), successful motivators do not just raise people’s beliefs in their capabilities, they assign tasks to them in ways that bring success. Managers motivate subordinates by setting challenging goals and then by providing feedback about abilities to enhance personal efficacy beliefs. Challenging employees is an important aspect of transformational leadership (Avolio & Bass, 1990). Brossoit (2000), Ozaralli (2003) and Samad (2007) investigated transformational leadership in relation to empowerment and found positive relationships and that this style of leadership creates an empowering climate.

Interview data suggested that the work environment was experienced as either a motivator or demotivating. The environment as a motivator was described as consisting of employees who are above average and an environment of learning opportunities and excellence, in other words, a challenging environment. It was experienced as motivational in the sense that it inspires people to make use of

resources to build own competence and meet the standards of excellence. A demoralising environment was described as lacking stability and not providing a sense of career opportunities, which affected individuals' progress, their feelings of security and their sense of control.

“Working in an environment where the average employee is above average in marketplace can be scary, but is a great motivator. We have specialists in just about every field, and an environment of learning and excellence exists.”
(Participant 7)

“ ... it might only be because of the frustration with where I am now in the organisation with things not happening. People are demoralised or not motivated.” (Participant 2)

The work environment is generally described in terms of organisational climate. Challenge was one of the six factors that make up an empowering organisational climate that Mok and Au-Yeung (2002) explored. The results showed challenge as a factor that contributed significantly to psychological empowerment. When the environment is perceived as restrictive with regard to career progress and as a result of this they experience that they have no control over their circumstances, people come to expect that they cannot affect outcomes through their actions. This expectation is believed to also affect motivation (Brown, 1979). They doubt their own ability to have control and according to Wood and Bandura (1989), it is the belief in one's capabilities that provides the motivation to utilise cognitive resources and to take the necessary action to meet environmental demands.

An attitude of perceiving problems as challenges was observed among participants who were generally positive about themselves and their abilities.

“No, I see everything as a challenge. Yesterday is gone. We have a problem today, how are we going forward. We never look back. I don't want to know

what happened two years ago. This is our problem now, how are we going forward. There is no time to look back.” (Participant 17)

Gill and Ganesh (2007) found that constraints that were regarded as mental stimulation contributed to feeling empowered.

Encouragement was perceived as a factor that motivated individuals to sustain efforts in order to achieve success. Several participants saw the motivation of employees or subordinates to persevere in their efforts to improve their growth potential as part of their responsibilities.

“We invest in the person, not necessarily money, but time and motivation and inspiration.” (Participant 13)

Encouragement improves the chance that employees will feel confident and exert greater effort (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Gist & Mitchell, 1992; Lawler, 1992; Wood & Bandura, 1989). Social persuasion as motivational approach implies that if people receive realistic encouragements, they will be more likely to exert greater effort and to become successful than if they are troubled by self-doubts (Wood & Bandura, 1989).

8.3 OTHER FACTORS

Other factors that cannot be described as management practices in the sense that managers in general do not have the control over these factors, were mentioned. Managers should, however be aware of these factors and how they affect their subordinates.

8.3.1 Structural reorganisation

Structural reorganisation forms part of organisational development and is normally executed by experts in the field. Although it is a contextual factor, it is not a general management practice.

Participants from an organisation that was undergoing restructuring, expressed negative affect because of changes that influenced their careers. Some participants suffered financial loss because of the delay in putting them on appropriate levels in the hierarchy of the organisation and the changes that are experienced as a result of the reorganisation also cause ambiguity with respect to work roles.

Participant 3 mentioned her dissatisfaction with the delay in sorting out posts a few times. "I have a very negative attitude about my organisation at the moment, because things don't get sorted out, they don't sort out the placement, they don't sort out things. You feel you are not validated in any way." Uncertainty was also expressed about the future, "How do I apply for a post if I don't know where they are placing me? It makes it difficult. Then you apply for a post at this level while you are sitting at that level while you are working closer to the post that you apply for."

Changes were experienced as having an effect on employees' performance with resulting influence on service delivery, which detracted from a sense of esteem in the eyes of the broader public. Although it was realised that changes are necessary to adapt to demands in the external environment, the effect it had on production and employees' motivation and feelings of competence posed the real problem.

"To me that is difficult, because the public judge us only on face value what they can see, but they don't realise that there's things that they don't know of what is happening within the organisation, that in a way it could have been different had the department actually the opportunity to come to full fruition. That has not happened and then there is another change and then they say well, now we are going to change again. Changes have to happen but at least allow it to run its course before you change again and reach a point of normality before you implement the next ... you know, don't just introduce another change. Otherwise we are just riding the roller coaster all the time." (Participant 14)

Structuring was described as the act of creating the structural, as opposed to personal, factors which produce empowerment. Structures are supposed to allow for people to become powerful and not alienated (Murrell, 1985). However, when the rationale for reorganising is done purely for socio-economic reasons without taking in consideration the effect it would have on the sense of empowerment of the employees, it is experienced as demoralising. Employees experienced alienation as a result of centralisation without attention to dissemination of information.

Individuals desire a certain amount of stability and predictability in their lives and especially in such an important part of their lives as the work domain. Change should, therefore, be done in a planned manner while taking into consideration the people affected by the change. Structuring includes ensuring that the structure facilitates the flow of information (Ivancevich & Matteson, 1996). Information sharing was identified as a factor that promotes empowerment and it was also identified as a factor that was experienced as a stumbling block and source of frustration in an organisation that was undergoing restructuring.

Managers should be aware of the effects of organisational change on individuals and should be able to manage it. Managers themselves can suffer the consequences of changes that are not managed properly.

8.3.2 Affirmative action

Affirmative action as a contextual factor is a reality in any organisation, as it is enforced and is inherent in all personnel practices and policies. The policies that have the most influence on peoples perceptions of empowerment are affirmative action and equal employment. White males are mostly affected by it as was apparent from participants' comments.

"I don't see myself that I will get a prospect any further. If you look how they drew up the organograms and so on, who are favoured and who not. You can

see when they advertise a post it already stipulates who is going to get it.”
(Participant 8)

Irrespective of gender and race, people tend to believe that others are favoured. An Asian lady in the private sector still believes that people of colour do not get the same opportunities and pay. A black female does not believe that the employment equity policy is being practiced. A white female accepts affirmative action but she does see it as stumbling block in further upward mobilisation. A black man thinks that women are favoured.

Perceptions regarding empowerment that include perceptions about affirmative action were discussed in chapter six. As a factor the effects of affirmative actions should be managed in a manner that it is perceived as fair, taking into account distributive justice and procedural justice (Baron & Byrne, 1987).

8.3.3 Time

Time was mentioned by respondents as a factor that limits efforts towards excellence and induces feelings of incompetence or lack of control. Time seemed to be a constraint for especially development in terms of studies and self improvement. Getting the time to develop the right skills was specifically mentioned.

“There are so many things in our field that changes and to keep up is impossible. I don’t have enough time to work full time and keep my knowledge up to date.”
(Participant 19)

Participants felt the lack of time causes them to be less efficient. Examples are, finding it difficult to make use of a resource such as the internet because of lack of time, missing deadlines due to more important events, producing work that is not the best, while problems could be solved more efficiently when there is enough time for it. Time was also mentioned as a factor in finding time for relaxing activities.

Time management to be more productive or have a more balanced life is an area of development that can contribute to a sense of empowerment as it seemed that a sense of control and efficacy are negatively affected by a lack of time. While one cannot control what is happening in the external environment, one can gain some control in the workplace by effectively and efficiently managing time.

8.3.4 Faith / religion

Faith was mentioned as contributing factor. Progress in life was attributed to the “good Lord”, faith in a “heavenly Father who leads and guides me”, nuns from whom “I learned a lot.” While success was attributed to faith, dependence on guidance was also expressed. One participant cannot believe in herself if she does not “seek God and pray for guidance in difficult situations. I can feel when I am doing something in my own strength.” Another participant finds solace in “The rituals that form part of Buddhism give me a feeling of safety. I need a faith and divine being.”

According to McClelland (1975), dependency on a source of power gives a sense of strength.

8.3.5 Parents

Parents do not actually fall in the domain of the study, but seeing that it was mentioned quite often, it is included here.

There were parents who were absent and parents who did not give much encouragement or recognition for achievements.

“I wanted my mother to look at my book. I wanted her to take notice open my books and look. She was not the type of mom who opened your books and looked at anything. She never took any interest or even said, oh, you did well.” Talking about opportunities to study, “My parents never ever proposed any help

in this direction.” She said that she grew and matured more from being in a convent with nuns than being at home with her parents. (Participant 11)

Some participants have fond memories of their parents and expressed appreciation for good examples set by parents, which had an influence on work ethic. Values, respect, self-discipline and responsibility were among the attributes that were passed on from parents. However, to work hard was mentioned most often.

“I would say firstly the fact that the environment that I was raised in, inculcated a very strong work ethic in me. My father and my mother were very exemplary of that. That’s where I draw my example from.” (Participant 14)

Socialisation that was demonstrated in one example may be significant. Participant 13 was influenced by her mother. “I must also say my mother, she always worked. My mother was a social worker. And the generation in which she grew up, it was very difficult to go to university and go into the workplace as a woman. And my mother, she just did it. She always ... and it became my motto too ... she taught me that there are no barriers. Everything you want to do, you can do it. There is nothing standing in your way. You must not allow your gender or whatever to hold you back.”

The last example has to do with conceptions of sex-roles, which, according to Gecas (1989), are undergoing considerable redefinition and should have an effect especially on women empowerment. It seemed that interaction in the family does make a considerable contribution to changes in self-conceptions regarding efficacy and personal control. The influence that parents have on work ethic did not seem to be gender or race specific. A male participant referred to the same influence on him and his sister, while a female participant referred to the influence on her and her brother. Gill and Ganesh (2007) established parents as a determining factor of empowerment in their research.

8.3.6 Socio-economic background

It was mentioned before that about half of the participants were not in the position to go to university full time after school. Some of the participants came from humble beginnings but it was also a factor in what they have become.

Participant 6 said that what she has become is a result of poverty. “I would say to be poor. Because you know what when I grew up I grew up from a very poor family. But that was always my ambition to be somebody in life and to make a difference to be a person. To be a better person. And you know it is easy for the other people to talk about poverty. They don't know what poverty is. And I would say that is my strongest point because I know what poverty is. I know how it is to go to bed for a couple of days without having something to eat. That is why I always feel my work is there in the community to make a difference in the community, even if it is for one person. That makes me feel good. The way I grew up.” This was her motivation to make use of all the opportunities the organisation provides to study. (Participant 6)

Others may have had it better, but lack of funds still had an effect on their career choices. They had to opt for occupations and organisations that could provide study opportunities and bursaries. Bursaries were also not readily available to all citizens.

In a study by Gill and Ganesh (2007), some of their participants felt they responded with a determination to succeed and this feeling was empowering because it enabled them to gain control of their situation. In the present study background caused some participants to take action and take control of their circumstances.

There were many poor people in the past and the struggle against poverty has not come to an end yet and it is still something that has to be dealt with for many years to come. It has a large effect on access to education and consequently empowerment as well.

8.4 LOCUS OF CONTROL AS INTERNAL FACTOR

Some participants attributed their successes and failures to their own characteristics and values. The intrapersonal component of psychological empowerment in terms of the characteristics of empowered people was discussed in the previous chapter. However, some participants mentioned internal factors as contributing factors and researchers regarded certain personality characteristics as antecedents of psychological empowerment. Internal factors that were mentioned most often were hard work, focus, professionalism and drive.

“I would say my best gift is that I am a driver and my worst gift is I am a driver.”
(Participant 17)

One of the aims of the qualitative phase of the present study was to determine what factors are perceived to have an effect on empowerment and locus of control as a personality trait emerged to be a factor that could have an effect on psychological empowerment. In the process of analysing and interpreting the interview content it became evident that some participants referred to external factors most of the time, while others referred to internal factors even when asked what factors they perceive to stand in their way of achieving their goals. Still others seemed to deem external factor as constraints but their own abilities as contributing to success.

Participant 5 believes the following stand in her way of progress: “Discrimination, politics, lack of opportunity to grow and be educated properly. Developing the right skills, getting the time to do this as one move toward achieving ones goals.”

However, she attributed her successes to, “My belief and confidence in my God given ability and talent. Having a vision and setting goals. With a vision and realistic goals I am self motivated to have tenacity to make a positive contribution. I am also a very focused person, self starter and I never allow my failures to get the better of me. I learn from my mistakes and move on.”

The factors that stand in her way are external factors, but what she has become is a result of her good qualities. This could also be an example of what is described as self-serving bias.

Participant 7 provided an example of a growth process from external to internal locus of control. "The biggest obstacle that I had in working towards my own goals was an attitude of waiting for someone to give me an opportunity or tools to do what I must do." After some insight in his own attitude and behaviour changes through soft skills training he can now proclaim: "I still sometimes fall back on a 'but they get more' mentality, until I see that they get more because they are better prepared than me."

Locus of control was, therefore, considered as an intrapersonal factor and the deductive approach was used to explore the occurrence of either external or internal locus of control further.

Previous research on the relationship between locus of control and psychological empowerment used quantitative measures. Spreitzer (1995a) and Koberg et al. (1999) proposed locus of control as an antecedent of psychological empowerment, but could not find a relationship. Spreitzer (1995a) used Rotter's (1966) scale, which is based on what people believe regarding life in general. The analysis of the verbal interview data was, therefore, also done according to this perspective. Examples of the degree to which people believe that they, rather than external forces, determine what happens in their lives, were used as indicators.

According to Rotter's (1966) theory of locus of control, ability and effort are internal causes, because they lie within the person. All references to own ability and effort or lack of it are examples of internal locus of control, while, for example, task difficulty, chance and circumstances are examples of external causes controlled by the environment, indicating an external locus of control.

As locus of control is regarded as personality characteristic, it would not be logical to regard, for example, an internal locus of control as a contributing factor

without somehow evaluating the individual in terms of his or her locus of control profile. Therefore, profiles were crafted in terms of the tendency towards either external or internal locus of control of participants and conclusions were drawn. With the integration of the quantitative and qualitative research, these profiles make it easier to determine the relationship between locus of control and the individual's PEI score, which is done in the next chapter.

Respondents do not normally have the knowledge to refer directly to locus of control, but it can be inferred from their responses. Some short profiles are given of participants to demonstrate their tendencies to interpret the consequences of their behaviour to be controlled by either external or internal factors.

Participant 2 has not progressed as he would have liked. The things that he perceived to have prohibited him are all external. "If you are not in the right circle, chances might pass you by. In my 26 years in the organisation I feel that I could have been a supervisor, manager, senior, what ever, if the right people have just allowed you to because individuals throughout the organisation over the years if you are not part of their circle of friends, opportunities don't get offered to you. When I started out in the organisation, I wanted to do metre reading and they said to me that I must come in as a labourer entry level. Which I did and I became a motor vehicle driver but there, there I was blocked because they did not want to let me go. "

He attributed his personal growth to his parents, "they laid the foundation that formed my life".

This participant frequently referred to powerful others, "they", which is indicative of an external locus of control.

Participant 3 felt despondent about her circumstances. She believes that organisational factors, such as a restructuring process, prevent her from setting goals, "It is hard to set a goal in this environment. Looking at this environment now and the restructuring not sorted out, posts not advertised. It is actually

impossible to set yourself a goal.” She seemed to be a passive recipient of her circumstances, for example, “I wanted to be a draughtsman. I wanted to do architectural draughting really. Our parents did not have the money to support us after we finished school. I can’t remember how I got to hear about the surveyor general’s office, but I went for an interview and I got the job, I think more because I was encouraged to take it and they promised me that I will get to do draughting and I was signed up to go to tech. And as soon as you were trained then they won’t let you draught anymore.” There is a difference between what she would like to do and is actually doing, but she seems to feel that it is not something that she has control over. She seems to be uncertain about what factors were involved in her life. “I was brought up in a very neutral environment ... unemotional background.” She had no encouragement from her parents. “There is nothing that I can say, my parents would say, oh, you did well at school; that is good. But nothing I can say that made a huge impact on my life.”

She only referred to external factors. She does not feel in control of all the changes that are happening in her environment to such an extent that she is unable to think of future goals. The deduction of an external locus of control is in line with the perception that she is unable to have an effect on her circumstances.

Participant 16 described the progress of his career and gave credit to the exposure he had, but added, “I’m a go getter and have set targets for myself to achieve for myself within a time limit”, which indicates an internal locus of control.

Resources in his organisation that enhance his efforts to achieve his goals were also attributed to, “Management and top management that see your potential and expose you to new learning to broaden my knowledge and skills band.”

He gives credit to exposure, but also sees his own responsibility, but when he was asked what factors contributed to what he has become, the response was only a tribute to himself: “I am an achiever who takes on obstacles no matter what the size.”

Yet, there is also some vague reference to external factors when he was asked about a negative experience: "You are capable of delivering results and taking on more responsibility but current company didn't acknowledge that and that is why I had to move on for career growth." However when asked what factors he is aware of that hinder his efforts to achieve his goals, it was completely internal again, "I want to focus on too many things by myself and take ownership and need to work more on giving more ownership to my subordinates."

He shows more tendencies towards internal locus of control and he takes responsibility for both lack of achievement and successes.

Participant 19 related feeling good to his internal motivation: "I feel very good about myself when my tempo of work is good, then I feel even better and that contributes to further positive thinking. I psych myself and I try to do that often. I am just like any person, some days I don't feel energetic and I feel down and then I psych myself up and then I feel good about everything I do." He clarified "psych myself up" as thinking in terms of objectives to be reached.

Negatives are seen in terms of "small failures" and are dealt with by seeing his own behaviour as a factor and taking responsibility for it. "When I catch myself that I wasted an hour because I started approaching a task or assignment in the wrong way, I try to get over it as soon as possible by saying to myself I learned something in the process."

Stumbling blocks are seen as both external and internal: "There are external factors, such as 'schlep' from the revenue service, the registration offices, that has incapable people that has a very negative effect on our work progress. These are factors that we can't always control. Internal factors by myself is myself. I would like to add an extra six hours to each day to do extra reading. I am my own biggest stumbling block because I don't have enough time to work full time and keep my knowledge up to date."

Contributing to his success according to him is hard work and focus. “You must concentrate and you must keep your eye on the ball. The moment you don’t keep your eye on the ball, nothing works. Not the smallest or easiest task that you are busy with. It will fail if you don’t keep your eye on the ball. So if you don’t stay focused every moment of the day when you are busy with your job, then you will make mistakes.”

External factors that he referred to are factors that he cannot control. He shows more tendencies towards internal locus of control.

Participant 20 provided a good example of internal locus of control.

She mentioned the possibility of a promotion to group HR director and when she was asked how she felt about it, she replied: “That I’ve worked hard and deserve the promotion.”

She feels good about herself, “Most of the time. I self-affirm and read a fair amount of ‘positive’ stuff and also do visualisations. I feel great when I’ve accomplished something and got it off the pile!”

Even when asked about when in general she feels not so good about herself, her response was indicative of an internal locus of control: “When my energy levels are low. Also when I feel a bit ‘out of control’ when I have a lot on my plate and I am running between meetings – although sometimes this is energising. I don’t like to miss deadlines or to produce stuff that isn’t my best – then I can feel a bit less good about myself.”

Her goals were explored and factors that stand in her way of achieving them on which she responded: “I believe the only things that stand in the way of achieving goals are myself.”

Resources are most often seen in terms of external resources, but for her this is also something that she herself is responsible for, “I visualise and use self-

affirmations from a thought perspective and I am quite a controlling individual so put in action plans around goals.”

When she was asked about contributing factors to what she has become, the tendency towards attributing her success to her own personality characteristics and behaviour is still prominent. “Being a very driven person with a strong focus and high work ethic, I set very high standards and deliver against these and this has resulted in my gaining a good reputation for professional delivery.” She, however, also gave credit to co-workers that in the past challenged her.

This participant showed predominantly tendencies towards internal locus of control.

Whetton and Cameron (1995) referred to research that was done on locus of control. It was found that people who interpret information about change as if they are in control of it, and who perceive themselves to be in charge of their own performance and able to control outcomes related to that performance, are more likely to be effective in their endeavours.

Where people see their lack of progress as a result of external factors, but contribute their successes to their own abilities, the question does arise whether it is due to locus of control or self-serving bias. If you ask people what stands in their way of achieving their goals, it is more than likely that you will get answers in terms of external factors. According to attribution theory, this is what people tend to do. A self-serving bias occurs when people attribute their successes to internal or personal factors, but attribute their failures to situational factors beyond their control and deny responsibility for it. This tendency is also known as defensive attribution and regarded as a common human tendency (Miller & Ross, 1975).

Some participants seemed to fluctuate between external and internal locus of control. Whetton and Cameron (1995) also referred to research findings indicating that locus of control can shift over time. Hock (2005) concluded that

the dimension of internal-external locus of control has been generally accepted as a relatively stable aspect of human personality. Personality is the unique pattern of traits and behaviours that characterise the individual, but people continue to change throughout their lives. Adjustments through the life cycle are made when demands necessitate them. Certain broad traits may crystallise into established patterns that represent the individual's personality (Carson, Butcher & Coleman, 1988). Hock (2005) believes that a person's locus of control can change under certain circumstances and personal development was mentioned in an interview as having been instrumental in change in attitude regarding opportunities. It is possible that where awareness is created about the ineffectiveness of an external locus of control, that thinking and behaviour may be changed. The personality trait will always be there and it will always be the natural tendency or preferred way of responding to situations, such as blaming mistakes on external factors, but the awareness may serve as a reminder of a more constructive attitude. Reverting back to the negative attitude was mentioned.

Some participants referred to their reliance on religion and the question arose where religion fits in with locus of control. Many religious people believe that it is desirable and proper at all times to place their fate in God's hands. According to Rotter's theory, that would indicate an external locus of control. In a discussion of Rotter's theory on locus of control, Hock (2005) cited a study by Welton, Adkins, Ingle and Dixon (1996) about locus of control and religion. They used various locus of control scales and subscales. Subjects were assessed on their degree of internal locus of control, perceived control by powerful others, belief in chance and belief in God control. The advantages associated with an internal locus of control were also found in the subjects scoring high on the God control dimension. The authors contended that if a person has an external locus of control as measured by Rotter's scale, but the external power is perceived as a strong faith in a supreme being, they will be less subject to the typical problems associated with externals, namely powerlessness, depression, low achievement and low motivation for change.

Implicit in Rotter's concept of locus of control is the assumption that internals are better adjusted and more effective in life. A conclusion that was made regarding all the research that was done on locus of control, was that people are handicapped by an external locus of control, while it was found that in the American culture internal locus of control was associated with most successful people (Whetton & Cameron, 1995). Although most of the research confirms this assumption, Rotter cautioned in his later writings that everyone, especially internals, must be attentive to the environment around them. If a person sets out to change a situation that is not changeable, frustration, disappointment and depression are the potential outcomes. When forces outside of the individual are actually in control of behavioural consequences, the most realistic and healthy approach to take is probably one of an external orientation (Hock, 2005).

8.5 SUMMARY OF FACTORS

Organisational factors that can be associated with feelings of empowerment that emerged from the interview data are listed below. The list of factors are integrated with the factors that were identified as contributors to psychological empowerment in the quantitative phase in the next chapter and form the basis for recommending strategies.

Opportunities:

- Perceptions and attitudes regarding opportunities are important factors to consider in the empowerment process.
- Organisations have a responsibility to provide opportunities to those who are in need of empowerment and for growth in order to enable them to become competent.
- Individuals have to be on the look out for opportunities and seize opportunities.

Feedback and recognition:

- Recognition is a need that everybody has. Recognition causes people to feel validated and helps to increase confidence in competence. Employees get the message that they are doing well and it motivates them to keep on doing well and that is what is empowering.
- Reward in the form of remuneration and promotion is another form of recognition. Recognition is absent when people do not get what they feel they deserve.
- Satisfaction derived from the job itself provides intrinsic reward, while recognition is the extrinsic reward, closely associated with satisfaction.
- Feedback often includes recognition but it also includes aspects of the employee's performance that needs improving and it, therefore, contributes to the development of better skills.

Support:

- Affective support is provided by managers and colleagues in the form of moral support, encouragement, caring and taking an interest.
- Instrumental support or work related support is provided by managers and management by means of providing back-up, resources and guidance.
- A safe work environment is valued and it ensures that employees feel confident, especially for gaining experience. Feeling safe should not be over emphasised, because it can prevent people from experiencing challenge to stretch and grow by taking on more responsibility.

Development:

- Education is valued and the perception exists that it should open doors to positions.
- Training and development are regarded as opportunities that enable employees to become competent and make a contribution.
- Personal growth enhances mastery and perceptions of self-efficacy.

Access to information and clear guidelines:

- Access to information they need to do their work well, helps people to feel confident about their competence.
- Clear guidelines let people know what is expected of them. Lack of information and guidelines causes people to experience ambiguity and feel insecure.

Autonomy, initiative and trust:

- Autonomy is prevalent when employees are allowed to do work in their own manner. It not only gives people a sense of empowerment, but feelings of enjoyment are associated with the work environment.
- Initiative is presumed to be allowed in the same sense as autonomy. Initiative is often associated with creativity and job satisfaction.
- Trust is necessary for allowing autonomy and trust in people contributes to their feelings of worth.

Manager as mentor:

- The manager is appreciated for providing guidance that results in a sense of competence.
- The manager as mentor contributes to employees' development and ability to take up more responsibility.

Exposure and experience:

- Exposure to a variety of work experiences is an effective means of development.
- Education gives a basis but real competence to do a job well comes from on the job experience.
- The value of experience is in the type and quality of exposure that lead to empowerment.

Motivation and challenge:

- Challenges are necessary for people to stretch their capabilities, learn new skills and grow. Challenges were seen as a component of motivation as they caused people to take action and sustain activities until results were accomplished.
- Motivation in the form of verbal persuasion and encouragement motivates employees to persevere.
- The work environment can be perceived as motivating if it presents stimulation, challenge and opportunity.

There was some overlap in the themes, for example, opportunity as factor seemed from the data to have the most effect on participants' perceptions of what they need to feel empowered, while it is inclusive of a variety of other factors as well. In each of the above factors a lack may be experienced as a constraint. For example, training is a factor that contributes to a sense of empowerment, but if it is lacking or inadequate, it is a constraint.

Other factors:

Factors that have their origin outside the organisation, but must still be managed are discrimination and political factors. They are normally addressed in formal policy. The worse effect they have is in people's perception of career prospects.

Restructuring and change are specific to some organisations and may be relevant to a certain point in time, but they do have an effect during the period of implementation and where they are allowed to drag on without proper management, they become a demoralising factor. Change must be managed not to have a negative effect on development of empowerment, especially where it creates uncertainty regarding the future.

Time is a factor that affects employees in demanding jobs and proper time management should have a positive effect on sense of control, sense of competence and the utilisation of development opportunities.

Factors external to the organisation that do not form part of the study, but which were mentioned by participants are the influence of parents and background.

Locus of control:

Although there are some consistencies with regard to predominantly external or internal locus of control, it would appear that development causes people to move between external and internal. In general people seem to make both

external and internal attributes and it is easy to confuse with the attribution tendency called self-serving bias.

A tendency was found that empowered people might give recognition to others or give credit to other factors for their achievements.

8.6 DISCUSSION

Factors that were distinguished by participants as having had an influence on their psychological empowerment were found to go beyond the work environment and some have been established during childhood by parents, schools and religion. However, contributing factors relevant to the present study are those that take effect after formal education when the person starts to work in an environment that provides opportunities for experience. External factors, such as the socio-political environment, impact on organisations and in turn impact on employees. Factors are not always observed in reality as clearly demarcated categories or distinguishable from one another. One factor may be a facet or component of another. The discussion addresses relationships between factors. All these factors need to be managed in an empowerment strategy that will be dealt with in the next chapter.

8.6.1 Contextual factors

Gill and Ganesh (2007) were able to identify and trace a grounded form of empowerment that was evident in the responses of their participants as they talked about the constraints they faced. The down side of each contributing factor can also be a constraint if the employee experiences a lack of it. Conger and Kanungo (1988) suggested the identification of conditions that foster powerlessness and that removing them should contribute to promoting empowerment. In the present study it is not as much factors that can be removed, but rather have to be put in place for empowerment to take place. The findings of the present study seem to resemble the empowerment structures and

suggestions according to specialists in the field, such as Blanchard et al. (1999), Kanter (1993), Conger and Kanungo (1988), Zimmerman (1995).

Opportunity as a theme emerged frequently as a factor that is conducive to empowerment, giving it magnitude. However, opportunity cannot stand alone as a factor and is mostly used in relation to opportunities to learn and develop as in Kanter's (1993) theory. Apart from the opportunity to attend training courses and to learn and develop, exposure was seen as opportunity to develop and achieve competence. Participants also felt that they need opportunities to utilise their skills, to show their competence and to act in decision-making capacity in order to feel that they are making a contribution. To be promoted into a decision-making position with accompanying rewards was also mentioned. An opportunity to participate in a project contributed to development and provided a sense of meaning and achievement, while the opportunity to use initiative provided a chance for self expression that is satisfactory and strengthens a sense of competence. Opportunity to do challenging work was associated with intrinsic motivation. These are the same factors that Kanter (1993) equated opportunities for empowerment with.

Recognition forms part of a process that is preceded by being afforded the opportunity to fulfil a role or task. Recognition is hardly possible if the individual did not have an opportunity or made use of an opportunity and proved him or herself in order to get the recognition. Foulkes (1969) talked about motivational opportunities, which are opportunities for achievement and recognition by being assigned tasks that challenge subordinates.

Recognition is included in feedback. Feedback must include appreciation for a job well done and an expression of confidence in the abilities of the employee. Martinko and Gardner (1982) suggested periodic feedback that includes recognition for successes to prevent people from feeling that their efforts do not account for anything and causing organisational induced helplessness. People need to be provided with success experiences and feedback based on their performance to enhance a sense of competence. Kanter (1993) recommended

that feedback and encouragement for learning should include recognition for areas that were outstanding, as well as areas for improvement. This process can boost self-esteem and build people's sense of their own skills and competence.

Reward and recognition usually go hand in hand with extrinsic rewards, but Deming (cited in Knouse & Strutton, 1996) saw the essence of motivation in Total Quality Management as pride in workmanship. He believed that employees gain intrinsic satisfaction from a job well done. According to Appelbaum et al. (1999), the manager's role is to help create a work environment where employees take action for intrinsic reasons more than extrinsic reasons since employees are empowered when they are intrinsically motivated. When people are dependent on recognition for the sake of recognition as an external reward, it is not empowering anymore. Kanter (1993) found that some employees could become praise addicted through the emotional-symbolic nature of rewards when praise and thanks are exchanged for compliance.

Feedback for empowerment includes information that employees need to adapt their behaviour to be able to perform in a way that meets goals and standards (Kinlaw, 1995). Should the employee at first not be successful at mastering a new task or skill, a supporting manager will give constructive feedback, while encouragement and assurance are given, providing a safe environment to persevere until a sense of competence is achieved. This implies a relationship between support and feedback. Constructive feedback addresses the behaviour about which something can be done and make suggestions on how to improve. A safe environment allows for mistakes by treating it as a learning experience. According to Kinlaw (1995), empowered people request feedback and give feedback more regularly.

It is impossible to fill the role of manager or mentor and be responsible for the development of competence without giving feedback. If feedback should include information about how their contribution served to add value or make a difference, it is empowering, because it contributes to a sense of competence, meaning and impact.

It seemed that people at all levels may prefer autonomy within the parameters of a certain amount of guidelines, while others prefer to have very specific guidelines. There are different degrees to what extent people need their jobs to be described and too many prescriptive guidelines may stifle autonomy and people's need for self-determination. Payne (1987) distinguished between jobs that need to be prescriptive and those that can be left to the employee's discretion. The balance between the degree of clarity in the role and the amount of discretion allocated to it is important, for between them they determine the perception or degree of control the person has over his or her environment. It can be assumed that once competence is established with good guidelines and feedback and employees know what is expected of them, it is easier to work independently and achieve the expected results if left alone to their own devices. Lack of autonomy was seen as a constraint, but Kanter (1993) identified tendencies among low level employees to be dependent and to be reluctant to make decisions even if responsibility was delegated to them. They see themselves as having not much to offer and their non-autonomous jobs do not give them the chance to develop their talents.

Control is a central concept in empowerment. Authors posited that persons are motivated to seek control and that the possession of control is associated with empowerment. As an important aspect of work, this will translate into the sense that people are given opportunities to use their own initiative in the execution of their work, are allowed to make decisions in their work and are able to influence certain outcomes (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Greenberger & Strasser, 1986).

Role and function clarification is important for empowerment in a sense that it prescribes what people are allowed to do while, at the same time, providing boundaries, but it may also either limit or enhance what people do and what they believe they have the competence to do. Roles do not only determine what people do, but also have a strong influence on how people see themselves. In other words, roles do more than just define the job content; roles influence how important they regard their role to be, influence how they view their

responsibilities and determine in general how they feel about themselves, in other words how it affects their sense of meaning (Kinlaw, 1995; Menon, 2001).

Sharing of information and role clarity are normally seen as two separate factors. Sharing of information was distinguished by Blanchard et al. (1999) as a key element of empowerment and also as one of the most effective and simplest ways to enhance trust. When managers are willing to share information they gain the trust of their people, who feel included and trusted by management and it will fulfil the need people have for direction. This study presented an example of an employee whose confidence in her competence was undermined by the neglect of her management to impart information that was important for her to execute her responsibilities. Although she knows what is expected of her some vital information in terms of policies that she had to take into consideration was not forthcoming. Information sharing implied by Blanchard et al. (1999) had a much broader meaning than what was the experience in this study, but it can also not be described in terms of job or role clarity alone.

Initiative can be equated with autonomy, but where autonomy is allowed people may have the freedom to decide how they are going to do their work, while with initiative it may also be a case of deciding what to do to achieve an objective and what actions to take in a case of a problem to provide a solution. Initiative and autonomy have a connection with opportunity in the sense that employees experience that they are given the opportunity to use own initiative in the execution of their work, are allowed to make decisions in their work and are able to influence certain outcomes and they experience it as empowering (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Greenberger & Strasser, 1986).

Trust can be regarded as a separate factor. In the present study it was described in the sense that people feel competent when they are trusted. In the literature perceptions of trust formed part of support-based relationships (Corsum & Enz, 1999), as well as perceptions of empowerment when employees were monitored less, with the result that they felt trusted (Greasley et al., 2005). When

people are trusted to do their work in their own way without being closely monitored, they are allowed autonomy.

Blanchard et al. (1999) emphasised the role of motivation in the empowerment process. There are, however, many different viewpoints on how motivation is achieved. According to Forsyth (2006), people are motivated by achievement, recognition, the work itself, advancement and growth. A feeling of achievement that is also recognised, was found in the present study to be important for intrinsic motivation.

In the present study the sub-themes that emerged were challenges in the job and environment and encouragement. Realistic encouragement was seen by Wood and Bandura (1989) as a method that is likely to motivate employees to exert greater effort and to become successful. They further believed that successful motivators do more than building a positive sense of efficacy by giving positive feedback, but also raise people's beliefs in their capabilities by assigning tasks to them. However, in their suggestion was a word of caution in the sense that success should be the aim and placing employees in a position in which they are likely to fail should be avoided. People can develop a sense of futility through their experience of failure (Brown, 1979) and repeated experience with failure leads to erroneous beliefs of incompetence (Langer, 1979), while Harter (1978) argued that one needs some degree of failure to get feedback, which clarifies what is competent or successful behaviour. Another viewpoint was presented by Appelbaum et al. (1999), who asserted that empowerment exists in an organisation when employees feel that they are expected to exercise initiative in good faith on behalf of the mission and mistakes that occur as a result of taking initiative are not punished. Zall et al. (2001) maintained that in a supportive work environment the manager's role is to encourage employees to take initiative and they are allowed freedom to try out ideas and mistakes that occur should be regarded as part of the learning process. Providing a challenge should, therefore, take this into consideration.

Challenges seemed to be powerful motivators in the work environment as well as inherent in jobs and prospects, such as a promotion, were seen as a challenge. Participants experienced a lack of motivation when their future in the organisation seemed unclear. It is deduced that if they had a well defined career path that exhibits what their future career opportunities are, they would be more motivated.

Lack of opportunities for training and development was experienced by some participants, while the majority seemed to have had sufficient opportunities and seized opportunities to get suitable qualifications. South Africa currently has a need for suitably qualified employees and the important role organisations play in empowerment through education was recognised. In his State of the Nation Speech (2008, February, 8) at the occasion of the penultimate Joint Sitting of the third Parliament, the president announced a deliberate focus on matters of skills development (<http://www.news24.com>). It seems that the general environment is conducive to empowerment by means of education and it largely depends on the individual to seize opportunities.

All of the above factors and the manner in which they interact provide a challenge for an empowerment strategy, which encompasses all the contributing management practices into a balanced strategy.

8.6.2 Locus of control

In comparing the profiles of participants according to the attributions they make regarding the factors that have an effect on their success, indications were found that some people tend to have an external locus of control while others are more inclined towards an internal locus of control. The literature suggested that people who achieved more success take responsibility for their behaviour rather than blaming it on their circumstances and the same was observed in the analysis of the interview data. However, there were too many cases where locus of control could not be clearly distinguished because of tendencies in both directions. It was concluded that it could be as a result of how interview questions were posed. The main purpose was to distinguish factors involved in the development

of psychological empowerment and participants were expected to mention constraints as well as contributing factors, which may have guided participants towards thinking in terms of external factors. Investigation into locus of control using a qualitative method requires careful consideration and a well planned interview schedule. Nevertheless, using a qualitative method seems to have the potential to create a better understanding of peoples' tendencies with respect to their beliefs regarding their successes and failures.

The researcher posed the interview questions with the aim to infer the factors that are blocking psychological empowerment and that is how participants interpreted them; hence more external factors were given as constraints. The question regarding contributing factors left more scope for all kinds of factors and the way these questions were put left the door open for self-serving bias to contaminate the findings.

According to Hock (2005), those who are externally oriented often will become more internal when their profession places them in positions of greater authority and responsibility, which suggests a relationship with autonomy and a sense of self-determination. People who are highly internally oriented may shift toward a more external focus during times of extreme stress and uncertainty or a sense of lack of control. It would also be possible for individuals to learn to be more internal, if given the opportunity. It is suggested that locus of control is something that in the development of people may change from external to internal, especially where people are made aware of certain behavioural tendencies and set objectives to change it and an example to that effect did present itself.

From the present study it seemed that successful people give recognition to other peoples' contribution to their successes, which is contrary to the concept that internals will take responsibility for their own behaviour, while in case of self serving bias, credit for success will also be ascribed to own performance abilities. This may be a possible reason why previous research has not been able to find a positive relation between internal locus of control and psychological

empowerment. A further reason may be the influence of self serving bias. The tendency to give recognition and the tendency towards self serving bias are among the considerations that should be taken into account when locus of control is studied.

In the present South African context the disadvantages of the previous dispensation are often used as excuse by people for their lack of success. It seems that it may be more a case of personal characteristics, be it resilience or locus of control that cause some people to excel in spite of deprived backgrounds.

8.7 SUMMARY

In this chapter the contextual factors that emerged from the interview data were discussed in accordance with what was found in the literature. Some other factors that cannot be described as management practices in the ordinary sense were discussed briefly. Conclusions were made regarding contributing factors and constraints relevant to the development of psychological empowerment. Locus of control as an individual characteristic was explored as it appeared in the data collected from the interviews and some participant profiles were compared and discussed as examples. The qualitative method for determining locus of control and possible reasons for not finding a relationship with psychological empowerment were discussed.

In the next chapter the results of the quantitative and qualitative research phases are integrated and discussed in terms of demographic variables, perceptions and dimensions of psychological empowerment and contextual factors and locus of control as antecedents of empowerment. Conclusions are made and strategies that address the findings are put forward as recommendations to achieve empowerment in organisations.

CHAPTER 9

INTEGRATION OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION OF EMPOWERMENT STRATEGIES

9.1 INTRODUCTION

In the current socio-economic and political environment much emphasis is placed on the need for empowerment. By putting perceptions of empowerment in their proper perspective and weighing them up against environmental demands on organisations, the conclusions of the present study should contribute to the employment of strategies that not only bring about empowerment, but a real sense of empowerment. Dimensions and contributing factors that play a role in the experience of empowerment relevant to the current South African context were determined and in this chapter these are considered for the recommendation of strategic imperatives for the enhancement of psychological empowerment.

In chapter five the results of the quantitative research were presented and in chapters six, seven and eight the findings that emerged from the interview data with respect to perceptions, dimensions and factors were presented and discussed. Chapter five gave an indication of the state of psychological empowerment and it was concluded that the dimensions that need the most intervention are a sense of self-determination and a sense of impact. Twelve management practices were examined in terms of their contribution to psychological empowerment and the factors that efforts should be focused on were determined. Being clear on what the general perceptions of empowerment are, economic versus enabling, as the results in chapter six indicated, has implications for the orientation of perceptions needed for intervention. Chapter seven contributed to a more comprehensive picture of the psychological empowered individual and chapter eight provided insights into understanding contributing factors. Some of the contributing factors of the quantitative phase were confirmed, but some new perspectives became evident. By integrating the

findings, it is possible to give a description of dimensions of empowerment and the characteristics of empowered people in South Africa, which do have some unique qualities but also have similarities with what is described in the literature. The factors that are relevant to the present study and call for further consideration are the contextual factors that are managed within organisations and especially those factors that have a psychological effect and enhance perceptions of empowerment, such as when a person feels appreciated and validated.

In this chapter the findings of the quantitative and qualitative research phases are integrated. The combination of the quantitative and qualitative information was further explored in certain instances, for example, locus of control, by considering the PEI scores in relation to what emerged from the participants' expressions. A conclusion was reached about what the focus should be of empowerment strategies in order to create a sense of empowerment with employees. Recommendations are made regarding strategies that should be implemented in organisations, representing the 'real world' in South Africa, where the intentions of government in terms of empowerment are carried out.

9.2 DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

Some demographic variables were investigated in the quantitative phase of the research, but were not specifically focused on in the qualitative phase. However, some aspects regarding differences in perception emerged during the qualitative phase, which serve as either explanation for differences or lack of differences or confirmation of differences in perception.

9.2.1 Gender differences

In the quantitative phase no significant difference in the perception of empowerment between men and women was found, neither did the qualitative phase reveal any observable difference.

The influence of parents was mentioned by participants during the qualitative interviews, which suggests that socialisation could have an effect on perceptions of empowerment. A specific example is the influence of a mother on her daughter in the sense that she taught her that her gender is not a barrier. It also seemed that the influence that parents have on work ethic is not gender specific and male and female participants were influenced in the same manner by their parents in terms of their orientation towards hard work. Gender was referred to in perceptions regarding empowerment. Another influence is the practice of Employment Equity policies. White males indicated that they feel that their opportunities are limited by affirmative action, but at the time of the quantitative survey, males did not perceive themselves as less empowered than females.

The tendency towards employment equity and equal opportunities should contribute to the redefining of sex-roles and eventually rule out perceptions about differences all together (Gecas, 1989). It was not found that the media gave undue coverage to women empowerment, except for high profile attention, such as the president's State of the Nation speech.

9.2.2 Race differences

Contrary to the expectation, the previously advantaged, in other words, whites, still feel more empowered than other races. Because of the small numbers of black and Asian participants, they were grouped together with coloureds as previously disadvantaged and that is also how it is regarded in the application of black economic empowerment (BEE), affirmative action (AA) and equal employment (EE) legislation.

When a comparison was made between participants in terms of their PEI scores, the observation was made that those who mentioned racial discrimination on the grounds of colour were those with low and average scores. Participants who have achieved career success did not feel threatened by EE and AA policies, but were confident about their abilities and their sense of control and were among the top scorers. Some white males have the perception that, because of their

gender and race, opportunities for promotion are limited, as well as the possibility to find other employment. PEI scores were not always in accordance with, for example, the sense of competence and sense of control that was demonstrated in the qualitative interviews. For example, a person who took charge of his career up to the position that he currently fills and a person with good qualifications and who showed a positive belief in his abilities has below average PEI scores, which gives an indication that it could be possible that their sense of empowerment is affected negatively by the perception that their careers are stunted by affirmative action.

9.2.3 Position in the organisation

The quantitative results confirmed the hypothesis that managers and professionals have a greater sense of meaning than lower level employees. A *post hoc* Scheffé test indicated a significant difference between lower level employees and professionals and between lower level employees and managers, but the difference between managers and professionals was not significant.

The tendency to believe that one's ability to add value is a function of position in the organisation was revealed in the interviews. It seemed that people believe that for them to be able to add value or make a difference, they need to be on a strategic level, where their inputs matter. Vocation or certain professions also seemed to provide the opportunity to do meaningful work.

The assumption was made that people compare themselves with others on their job level in terms of sense of competence and, therefore, it was hypothesised that there is no difference in perceptions of competence between managers, professional and lower level employees. The results in the quantitative research confirmed this proposition.

The assumption was based on a suggestion by Gist (1987) that people use their own subgroups as referents when they assess their self-efficacy. It seemed from

the qualitative interviews that individuals have their own subjective sense of who they compare themselves with when they judge their competence and that this may vary across different contexts. There were examples of participants who compared themselves with people who were supposed to be more efficient than them. When they judged themselves as being more efficient than those on a more advanced level, it increased their sense of competence.

It was hypothesised that managers and professionals have a greater sense of self-determination than lower level employees. This hypothesis was only partly confirmed, because it turned out that a significant difference between lower level employees and managers does exist, but no significant difference between lower level employees and professionals or between professionals and managers was found.

In the qualitative interviews lack of autonomy was expressed by a person on a clerical level, but the opportunity to use own initiative was also mentioned by a personal assistant. No lack of autonomy was expressed by any of the participants on professional and management levels.

The hypothesis that managers and professionals have a greater sense of impact than lower level employees was supported.

In the interviews making a difference was associated with the opportunity to be in a decision-making position, but people in professional positions felt that they could make a difference on a smaller scale through their work, for example, for individuals. No participants on the lower levels felt that they could make a difference.

Generally it seemed that professionals and managers feel more empowered than lower level employees. A *post hoc* Scheffé test indicated a significant difference between lower level employees and professionals and managers. There was no significant difference between professionals and managers.

Only three of the interviewees were employed on lower levels, while the greater majority were either professionals or managers on different levels. When participants were ordered on a continuum according to their PEI scales (see Appendix C) two of the lower level employees fell in the bottom 25% on the percentile scale, while one fell in the top 25%, although her score was the lowest in that group.

9.2.4 Educational level

A significant positive relationship between educational level and PE was found, but contrary to what was expected the positive relationship that existed between level of education and perception of competence was not significant.

It was not possible to arrive at conclusions regarding the relationship between level of education and sense of empowerment in the qualitative study. Only one participant has less than a matriculation certificate and he was not willing to complete a questionnaire, while all other participants varied from being in the process of obtaining a qualification up to post graduate qualifications.

It was concluded that sense of competence was not derived from theoretical knowledge underlying job requirements only and this will be discussed when education as contributing factor is discussed.

Differences regarding the relationship between level of education and psychological empowerment in the different sectors were also investigated and the only significant relationship was found in the public sector. It was initially assumed that the private sector provides more resources and that this aspect would be influential and contributes to a positive relationship. However, it was revealed in the interviews that participants had opportunities to obtain qualifications in the public sector as well as in the private sector. Some professions require an academic qualification and in most cases professionals obtained their educational level before they entered the job market and this is specifically relevant to the non-profit non-government organisation where all

employees are more or less on the same level. The conclusion is that where a qualification is a requirement, there is no relationship, but where it is optional, people feel more empowered with a qualification compared to their colleagues without a qualification.

9.2.5 Sectors

It was assumed that there could be a difference in the perceptions of empowerment between the different sectors, because it was assumed that the private sector has more resources for empowerment and is better able to employ highly skilled people. The participants in the non-profit, non-government organisations were mostly professional women, but it was expected that they would not have a profusion of funds and resources available for development.

The only significant difference existed between the private sector and the public sector with employees in the private sector having a greater sense of empowerment than employees in the public sector.

When interview participants were compared in terms of their PEI scores, the only noteworthy observation is that the four people with the lowest scores are from the public sector and the two people with the highest scores are from the private sector. However, judging from the content of the interviews, the participants with the lowest scores were more negative in terms of their perceptions and regarding their organisations in general than participants in the top 25% on the percentile scale. According to the Social Cognitive Theory, behaviour, cognition and personal factors, as well as the environment contribute to perceptions of empowerment. Comparisons with regard to intrapersonal, interactional and behavioural components, as well as locus of control gave further indications of how they compare.

9.2.6 Methods of empowerment

The most common means of empowerment was indicated as formal tertiary education (73,9%) and this was also reflected in the profiles of the interview participants. In an open question survey respondents were asked about other means of empowerment that they utilised and practical experience and exposure were listed most frequently. A calculation of the relationship between years in present position and sense of competence produced no significant positive relationship.

In the interviews participants referred to experience and exposure in a positive sense and it was determined as a factor that contributes to a sense of empowerment. From the interview examples it was apparent that it is not necessarily tenure with the organisation that is important, but rather the quality of the exposure. For example, a person with 28 years in the same organisation did not make much progress and he portrayed a sense of helplessness, while other participants referred to opportunities for exposure to a variety of functions and responsibilities as positive for their development.

9.3 PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT

Psychological empowerment was explored in terms of the quantitative measure of the state of psychological empowerment in South Africa. In the qualitative study the aim was to conceptualise psychological empowerment as experienced in a South African context and to compare these findings with research in other countries.

9.3.1 The state of psychological empowerment

Spreitzer's (1995a) PEI was used in the quantitative research to answer research question 1, *To what extent are South Africans psychologically empowered?* and the aim was to determine the state of psychological empowerment in South Africa. The scale measures the four dimensions of psychological empowerment:

meaningfulness, competence, self-determination and impact. These are first order constructs and by calculating the average the second order construct, psychological empowerment, referred to in this study as overall PE, is derived.

To get a perspective on to what extent South Africans are psychologically empowered, the sample was compared with the percentile scores of similar studies in the United States of America and Asia, compiled by Spreitzer and Quinn (2001). An average of 5,63 on overall empowerment puts the sample above 60% of people in the comparison group.

9.3.2 Dimensions of psychological empowerment

The research question relevant to the qualitative search for dimensions of psychological empowerment and to determine characteristics of empowered people was research question 4, *How do South Africans experience empowerment?*

For the purpose of integration, the dimensions that Spreitzer (1995a) proposed (meaning, competence, self-determination and impact) and that were used to measure psychological empowerment in the quantitative study are discussed first followed by the description as it emerged from the verbal interview data. These dimensions refer to the cognitions proposed by Thomas and Velthouse (1990) and Spreitzer (1995a) and also represent the intrapersonal component proposed by Zimmerman (1995). Menon (2001) also proposed cognitions, as well as goal internalisation, which describe how important employees perceive their contribution to be. Although the relationship between the dimensions that emerged from the qualitative interview data and those dimensions proposed by the authors above were obvious, the South African sample produced some unique sub-themes. Dimensions unique to the South African context emerged and apart from cognitions, the qualitative interviews also revealed certain attitudes, orientations, values and behavioural tendencies as characteristics of empowered people. Behaviours were included in Zimmerman's (1995) nomological network as a component of psychological empowered people.

References to the characteristics of empowered people that do not form part of the above mentioned models were found in the literature and these were discussed in chapter seven.

9.3.2.1 *Meaning*

According to the PEI, empowered people have a sense of meaning when they feel that their work is important to them; personally meaningful; and they care about what they are doing. An average score of 6,03 for meaning was obtained, which puts the South African sample above 55% of people in the comparison group in the USA and Asia.

According to the qualitative study, empowered people have a sense of meaning. It was expressed as a confident belief in the self, "I believe I am good at what I do and can add significant value." They feel that they are an asset to their organisations and that they make a contribution. People who believe that they have a purpose and through their work they are fulfilling a purpose, feel empowered; they find their work meaningful and fulfilling. Empowered people are sincere about their work and they feel that their work is important, not just for themselves, but as part of the goals of the organisation. Some participants find service to the community meaningful. Service to the community is not applicable to all occupations, but everybody in a service related job may feel that their particular service is meaningful to others and then they experience their work as meaningful.

9.3.2.2 *Competence*

According to the PEI, empowered people have a sense of competence; they are confident about their ability to do their work well; they have mastered the skills necessary to do their work; and they know they can perform their job requirements. An average score of 6,01 for competence was obtained, which puts the sample above 60% of people in the comparison group in the USA and Asia.

According to the qualitative study, empowered people have a sense of competence. They may experience feelings of incompetence in unfamiliar areas, but do not generalise it. Although they are confident about their abilities, they are realistic about what they can or cannot do. They do not become satisfied with what they know, but realise that they must keep up with developments. It can be expected that most empowered people are confident about their competence in their area of work (Task specific), but psychologically empowered people have a generalised sense of competence. They feel confident that they are able to apply knowledge and skills to other related situations, for example, to find solutions to new challenges as in the following expression: "I believe that the most difficult of problems that you toss my way, if I have enough time to work on it I will be able to solve it."

While the dimension of the PEI is more task specific, based on the individual's sense of competence regarding his or her job description, the qualitative study revealed tendencies towards a generalised belief in being competent.

9.3.2.3 Self-determination

According to the PEI, empowered people have a sense of self-determination, which means that they have autonomy in determining how they do their job; they have opportunity for independence and freedom of choice in how they do their job; and they have a chance to use personal initiative in carrying out their work. An average score of 5,43 for self-determination was obtained, which puts the sample above 45% of people in the comparison group in the USA and Asia.

According to the qualitative study, the dimension emerged as two aspects, namely autonomy and personal control. The autonomy component is the same as self-determination above, because it was found that employees appreciate being able to do their work in their own way and to be able to use their own initiative. They are clearly distinguished from employees at lower levels who are dependent on specific guidelines.

An aspect that is not addressed in the PEI is personal control. Empowered people feel they have control over situations such as work flow and that they are in control and able to deal with difficult situations and people in an objective manner. Personal control was also demonstrated by a behavioural characteristic such as doing personal planning. For example, "I am quite a controlling individual, so put in action plans around goals."

In analysing interview data for factors that influence a sense of empowerment, the use of autonomy and initiative emerged. Autonomy and initiative are usually described in terms of what the organisation allows, but the ability to use initiative may be a characteristic of empowered people. Not everyone who is allowed a degree of freedom make use of the opportunity to utilise creativity and initiative to come up with unique solutions to problems and derive a sense of competence and achievement from it.

9.3.2.4 *Impact*

According to the PEI, empowered people have a sense of impact; they believe that they have impact on what happens in their departments; they believe that they have a great deal of control and influence over what happens in their departments; and that their opinion counts in departmental decision-making. An average score of 5,04 was obtained for impact, which puts the sample above 55% of people in the comparison group in the USA and Asia.

In the qualitative study, the term, making a difference, was expressed in more or less the same fashion as impact in the PEI. Empowered people feel that they are able to make a difference in their work environment, in other peoples' lives and on decision-making level. They believe that they are able to make a difference through the actions they take and in a position with responsibilities. A feeling was expressed about an upcoming promotion, "Challenged and excited about the difference I can make." Making a difference was depicted as behaviours such as challenging the *status quo* and getting involved in improvements, followed by participation in decision-making and problem-solving

to improve situations. Psychologically empowered people make things happen by identifying needs for improvement and making a contribution; they initiate changes and drive to achieve results. In the qualitative phase of the study it was found that making a difference goes beyond the boundaries of the work context and making a difference in the community is a phrase that was expressed in the interviews and it is often heard in the present South African context. It became clear from the media analysis that there is pressure on South African organisations to contribute in terms of empowerment, not just by empowering employees but also to play an active role in the upliftment of communities, and, therefore, there is much scope to make a difference. It means that employees should be enabled to identify specific needs where improvement is necessary, motivate the need to obtain support and set objectives to achieve it and to change things for the better.

9.3.2.5 *Powerlessness*

Powerlessness provides a representation of what is not psychological empowerment and gives an indication of what to move away from in order to create feelings of empowerment. It was found in the qualitative study that some participants reveal the general characteristics of empowered people, but may experience powerlessness in certain situations, while others seem to feel helpless to improve their situation in the work context. According to Zimmerman (1995), powerlessness and helplessness are intrapersonal variables that are expected to correlate negatively with psychological empowerment.

9.3.2.6 *Adaptability and resilience*

Adaptability and resilience are characteristics of empowered people and it provides the vehicle for moving away from powerlessness. It was revealed in the qualitative study as attitudes towards mistakes and failures and seeing problems as challenges. There were some indications of the capacity to persevere, "... is there a secret ingredient in one's life that tells you not to give up, you may not give up?" Incidents were related where actions were taken after setbacks that

resulted in growth and improved the situation for participants. Simoni et al. (2004) found that employees who believe they are effective and do not imagine their own failure add to their own empowerment.

9.3.2.7 *Achievement of results*

Achievement of results was not just expressed as a belief that results can be achieved, in other words cognition, but also the satisfaction and intrinsic motivation that results from achievement. It is the product of behaviour and, therefore, incorporates the behavioural component of psychological empowerment. Intrinsic motivation and a feeling of efficacy was said to result from successfully completing a challenging task (Harter, 1978). It was expressed as, "That is the best good feeling that you can get. If I can say I had a lot of work in front of me and I stuck to my programme and I finished it all and I did it well."

9.3.2.8 *Empowerment of others*

The inclination towards empowerment of others may provide a sense of meaning, but it also represents the behavioural component of psychological empowerment. It has special relevance for the present socio-economic and political climate of the country. Kanter (1993) identified it as a characteristic of people high in organisational power and Brinkerhoff (1979) suggested that managers who themselves feel powerless and uninvolved are unlikely to empower others. The tendency towards empowerment of others was found in the qualitative study among managers, leaders and people in training and development positions, but also among lower level positions. To see people develop was seen as a highlight, for example, "... when people under me achieve it is wonderful. For me it is about when people who did not know something and now can do it."

9.3.2.9 *Goal orientation*

Goal orientation was included in the qualitative interviews because of Menon's (2001) notion that if people can see their part in the organisation's vision and mission, the work is more meaningful to them. For example, a participant saw himself as representing the employer. "My job is to ensure effective, efficient and accelerated service delivery." This aspect was taken as indication of a sense of meaning in the previous section. Some participants expressed their goals in indefinite terms and they did not have positive experiences and achievements to relate either. An example of a vague goal is, "I think one of the things that I want to do is, I feel I want to leave my mark on life and that I can achieve something in which I can find satisfaction". 'Something' was not substantiated, while another participant stated a definite goal: "I want to become GM at the age of 35 and from there move on to Director level after acquiring more skills and exposure within an organisation." It was found that a goal oriented person experiences more meaning and achievement of success as long as it is translated into activities and becomes part of the behavioural component. According to Menon (2001), a goal is an important energising element, particularly a valued cause or meaningful project.

9.3.2.10 *A pro-active approach to life*

A pro-active approach to life was accentuated when the interrelationships of the three components proposed by Zimmerman (1995) were analysed. The behavioural component seemed to contribute to a greater extent to psychological empowerment than the intrapersonal (cognition) and interactional components. A pro-active approach also seemed to play an important role in the achievement of results and in making a difference. Some participants showed behaviours that can be described by what DeCharms (1979) called personal causation. The participants' actions were self-directed and the cause of how they progressed in their careers. For example, a participant said, "I am quite a controlling individual so put in action plans around goals." Although Spreitzer (1995a) presented the four dimensions of psychological empowerment (meaning, competence,

perceived control and impact) as cognitions, she also referred to an active rather than passive orientation to a work role. In the qualitative study the active orientation was revealed as not just a wish or belief in the ability to shape career progress, but it was actually done.

When participants were compared in terms of their PEI scores, the conclusion was that people with average and high PEI scores put in a more focused effort to qualify themselves and get the necessary experience to accelerate their progress in their careers than people with low PEI scores. People who did make use of resources and who did make an effort to get ahead, were successful and it did result in their empowerment.

9.3.3 In conclusion

From the quantitative results it seemed that South Africans have a better sense of meaning and competence than their sense of self-determination and especially a sense of impact. A sense of competence, especially task specific competence, was well articulated in the qualitative interviews. A strong need for meaningful and purposeful work was expressed, but it seemed that the need was not always fulfilled in the work domain and that some employees searched for expression of the need in voluntary work. Some aspects of meaningful work, such as adding value, were perceived to be out of reach of employees on lower levels. The experience of autonomy was expressed by participants who find satisfaction from it. However, experiences of competence and meaning were expressed more frequently than autonomy. Making a difference was expressed more as an ideal state and a wish than a reality. It seemed that it was perceived to be only meant for people in certain positions.

The dimensions that surfaced from the qualitative interview data are very similar to those described by Spreitzer (1995a) and which was utilised to determine the state of psychological empowerment in the South African context. The fact that the above dimensions were determined by Thomas and Velthouse (1990) as well as Spreitzer (1995a) and also surfaced in the present study, allows the

researcher to be confident in the results. However, by using a qualitative method to determine dimensions, different aspects of the dimensions were uncovered.

The integration of cognitions, according to the model used in the quantitative study, as well as the cognitions characteristics and behaviours that were found in the qualitative study are summarised in Table 9.1. The summary should make the distinction between cognitions, characteristics and behaviours, as the researcher interpreted it, clearer.

Table 9.1 Cognitions, characteristics and behaviours

COGNITIONS	CHARACTERISTICS	BEHAVIOURS
Sense of competence Sense of achievement	Realistic Results orientated	Achieve results Feedback seeking Seize opportunities to get exposure
Self-determination Sense of Control	Adaptable and resilient Initiative Independent Internal locus of control Action orientated	Pro-active behaviour Take control Use initiative
Sense of Meaning Beliefs about ability to make a contribution and to add value, such as empowerment of others	Altruistic Goal oriented Conscientious Sincere Need for purpose	Set meaningful goals Achieve goals
Impact Belief that one is able to make a difference	Pro-active Innovative Change orientated Self-confident	Pro-active behaviours Challenge status quo Participate in change initiatives Identify needs for change Create and initiate changes and solutions

9.4 CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

It was the aim of this study to determine what factors contribute best to psychological empowerment and research question 2, *What management practices contribute to psychological empowerment?* was posed. For this purpose a contextual factor survey was developed and relationships with

psychological empowerment were calculated. A significant positive relationship was found between each of the twelve management practices and PE. However, multiple regression analysis distinguished those practices that best predicted psychological empowerment and it was found that the only management practices that contributed significantly to the total score for psychological empowerment were motivation, delegation and role clarity. These factors also predicted individual dimensions. In addition feedback and autonomy were found to predict individual dimensions. Autonomy was found to be a significant predictor of self-determination and feedback was identified as a significant predictor of a sense of meaning. The importance of these factors was also supported by the qualitative phase. During the latter additional factors emerged as important.

Triangulation of method, in the sense that results from quantitative and qualitative results are combined, ensures the reliability of the observation (De Vos et al., 2002). The following factors were included in the CFS because of reports in the literature and the findings in the present study support previous research in the literature. The motivation for their inclusion was discussed in the literature surveys (chapters two and three) as well as in chapter four. Although not all factors were found to be significant predictors of psychological empowerment, they were all significantly related to PE.

9.4.1 Motivation

The definition for motivation in the CFS was articulated as managers who motivate their subordinates through enhancing their belief in their competence; continually encourage or motivate subordinates to improve their performance; and set challenging goals and motivate subordinates towards the accomplishment of it.

Motivation was also found to be a significant predictor of a sense of meaning and sense of impact.

In the qualitative study, challenges were found to be motivating and necessary for people to stretch their capabilities, learn new skills and grow. Challenges were seen as a component of motivation as they triggered actions that led to results.

Motivation in the form of verbal persuasion and encouragement seemed to be particularly relevant where employees embarked on further education and training in order to encourage them to continue and persevere.

9.4.2 Delegation of responsibility

For the CFS delegation of responsibility was defined as the practice or behaviour whereby the manager gives the subordinates the authority to make changes necessary to improve things; allows them to take responsibility for the outcome of their work objectives; and authorises them to make decisions that improve work processes and procedures.

Delegation of responsibility was also found to be a significant predictor of a sense of impact.

Delegation of responsibility was not mentioned as such as a management practice in the qualitative interviews, but opportunities to take on responsibilities and show what employees are capable of were identified as a factor that contributes to empowerment. Allowing a person to be accountable and take responsibility according to his or her skills and giving responsibility to an individual to take on challenges so that he or she can take ownership and be accountable for required outcomes were understood as what it means to empower.

9.4.3 Job and role clarity

For the purpose of the CFS job and role clarity was defined as the practice or behaviour where the manager is clear about the delegations of subordinates and

how much authority they have; lets them know exactly what is expected of them; and is clear about what their responsibilities are.

Job and role clarity was also the only significant predictor of sense of competence.

In the qualitative interviews it was found that the lack of access to the specific information and guidelines employees need to be able to do their work well, caused lack of confidence in their competence and feeling insecure. Clear guidelines and guidance let people know what is expected of them to perform well and was perceived as contributing to being able to perform efficiently.

9.4.4 Feedback

Feedback was found to be a significant predictor of a sense of meaning.

For the purpose of the CFS, feedback was defined as the practice or behaviour whereby the manager gives clear information about employees' performance and efficiency on the job; gives feedback that is aimed at suggestions on how to improve, rather than blaming and criticising; and provides opportunities to discuss results with him or her.

In the qualitative interviews feedback included aspects of the employee's performance that need improving and they, therefore, contribute to the development of better skills. However, feedback often included recognition, or positive feedback, which was mentioned most often of all the factors. This would relate to the feedback about efficacy in the CFS definition. It causes people to feel validated and helps to increase confidence in competence. Employees get the message that they are doing well and it motivates them to keep on doing well and that is what is empowering. When people feel validated it would increase their sense of meaning.

9.4.5 Autonomy

Autonomy was found to be the only significant predictor of a sense of self-determination, which makes good sense as self-determination and autonomy were considered to be closely associated (Ryan & Deci, 2006)

Autonomy was defined for the CFS as the practice or behaviour that encourages subordinates to develop their own solutions to problems they encounter in their work; rely on them to make their own decisions about issues that affect how work gets done; and permits them to use their own initiative to decide how to go about doing things at work.

In the qualitative interviews autonomy was found to be prevalent when employees are allowed to do work in their own manner. It not only gives people a sense of empowerment, but feelings of enjoyment were associated with the work environment. Initiative was presumed to be allowed in the same sense as autonomy.

9.4.6 Access to information and clear guidelines

In the CFS information sharing and job and role clarity were regarded as two separate management practices. For the purpose of the quantitative study information sharing was defined as the practice or behaviour demonstrated by sharing information that subordinates need to ensure high quality results; giving them the information they need to independently make the decisions that are expected of them; and imparting strategic information they need to fulfil their responsibilities. Job and role clarity has more to do with the responsibilities of a specific position and does not include strategic information.

The effects of a lack of information that was needed to experience confidence in competence were expressed quite clearly in the qualitative study. For example, although a participant understood what her responsibilities entailed, she needed information to execute her task with confidence. At lower levels clear guidelines

specific to the task were expected, while ambiguity regarding the importance or necessity of tasks caused confusion. Guidance from supervisors was regarded as a positive contributor to efficient performance. Even in professional vocations, where higher levels of responsibility and accountability are applicable because of possible consequences of decisions, guidance from seniors was highly regarded.

9.4.7 Development

Development was defined for the CFS as ensuring that continuous learning and skill development are priorities; the utilising of coaching, mentoring, facilitation and counselling as means to enhance subordinates' competence; and ensuring that opportunities for development of abilities relevant to subordinate's positions are provided.

Development as a category includes education, training and development and personal growth, which enhances a sense of competence. Education and training are valued and the perception exists that they should open doors to positions, which enable employees to make a contribution. Opportunities to be educated and trained were expressed in the interviews as an important factor.

9.4.8 The manager as mentor

The manager as mentor was valued in terms of guidance, but it also supports the development factor above.

9.4.9 Support

Social support was defined for inclusion in the CFS as the practice or behaviour that demonstrates willingness to respond to subordinates' concerns on a personal level; availability to provide support and guidance; and support and encouragement to take initiative and risks.

Support in the interviews was demonstrated, not just in terms of managers providing back-up and encouragement, but also emotional support to counter stress. Colleagues can also provide the latter.

Feeling safe was found to be valued and it ensures that employees feel confident, especially for gaining experience. Feeling safe is related to social support.

9.4.10 Trust

Trust was defined as the trustworthiness of managers on the one hand to be trusted to share information that enables subordinates to feel safe to take the risk to make decisions, and on the other hand the behaviours that demonstrate confidence in subordinates to execute responsibilities entrusted to them to the best of their ability, as well as promoting trust, respect and cooperation among co-workers.

From the qualitative study it was revealed that trust in people contributes to their feelings of worth, but employees also need to trust that they have the correct information to enable them to do their work with confidence. Trust was combined with autonomy in the qualitative study, because it was reasoned that people have to be trusted to be allowed autonomy.

Factors such as support and trust can be defined in different ways and may take different forms in different contexts. It was found in the literature that different authors and researchers attached different meanings to these two factors and sometimes it was included in other dimensions. What is important is that both trust and support were found to be necessary elements in an organisational climate that is conducive to empowerment.

9.4.11 Opportunity

Opportunity is a factor that emerged in the qualitative part of the study that was not included in the CFS, but was well represented in the literature. The frequency with which opportunity was mentioned in the qualitative interviews led the researcher to believe that it plays a vital part in empowerment and opportunities should be available for all developing employees. The need for opportunity was expressed in terms of growth in order to become competent; to get training and be educated; to get exposure; to participate in decision-making, projects, new and challenging work experiences in order to learn and get noticed; and to take on responsibilities and show capability. The role of opportunity in empowerment was emphasised in the literature, especially by Kanter (1993). However, these opportunities also form part of other contributing factors. The importance of opportunity as a factor lies in the perception that opportunities are needed for employees to acquire a sense of empowerment and that it may differ for people at different stages of their empowerment.

The perception of responsibility adds another facet to the concept, opportunity. The general framework that Zimmerman (1995) proposed and which was used in chapter seven, proposed that psychologically empowered people have a positive self-perception, they are aware of resources they can use in their work environment and they are pro-active and seize opportunities to act on. The organisational responsibility became evident in participants' perceptions of what empowerment entails, but there was also the realisation that the willingness must exist on the individual level to take action and seize opportunities. Kanter (1993) gave an example of a high flier, who was willing to take on nearly any extra task that would advance his career and it was a characteristic that was observed among some of the participants in the qualitative study. These participants had the willingness to invest themselves heavily in work and concerned themselves with learning and getting exposure in areas that would be useful to them on their journey upward.

Participation and involvement emerged as opportunities to gain exposure. This is different from what is understood in participative management.

9.4.12 Experience

Experience was seen as an effective means of development. A resource towards empowerment was described as, "Management and top management that see your potential and expose you to new learning to broaden my knowledge and skills band." Education gives a basis but real competence to do a job well comes from exposure and experience. According to a participant, "...when you get out of university, then you actually know very little and you actually only start to learn when you start to work". Experience is not related to tenure in the organisation, but its value is in the type and quality of exposure that leads to empowerment.

9.4.13 Recognition and Reward

Recognition was mentioned as positive feedback under feedback in paragraph 9.4.4 above. Reward in the form of remuneration and promotion is another form of recognition. Recognition is absent when a person does not get what he or she felt they deserved. A participant who felt that he deserved a promotion said, "Then you often feel you are doing a lot, you put in a lot of effort, but it is not reciprocated with recognition."

Recognition was expressed as a need and according to the literature it is a need that everybody has (Schaffer, 1953). Intrinsic motivation was found to be closely related to recognition as the satisfaction derived from a job well done is enhanced when it is also recognised.

9.4.14 Other factors

The qualitative phase of the research shed light on possibilities of factors that influenced PE scores. After conducting interviews it was realised that certain

external factors could have an influence on low PE score, for example, the restructuring process in the public sector organisation caused participants to feel negative about the management of the organisation, but it also affected how they feel about themselves. Lack of clearly identified career ladders and paths causes uncertainty about career development, about what career moves will be beneficial and what jobs constitute a career path. Especially where restructuring is drawn out and uncertainty prevails about what positions will become available to apply for and what the criteria will be, also taking into consideration positions reserved for EE and AA. A clear career path could signify a path of achievement and has psychological implications as movement along hierarchy implies personal success or failure (Kanter, 1993).

9.4.15 Locus of control

Locus of control was investigated only in the qualitative phase as a personality factor that may have an influence on the perception of empowerment after tendencies towards an internal locus of control emerged. The qualitative method provided the opportunity to review the data in relation to the literature and evaluate the appropriateness of theoretical frameworks. It was concluded that interactional and behavioural examples are also indicators of locus of control. Spreitzer (1995a) suggested that the lack of support for her hypothesis may be a result of measurement limitations. Zimmerman (1995) believed that a complete picture of psychological empowerment is not possible if information about all three components was not collected and this may be relevant to locus of control as well in so far as a relationship with psychological empowerment is determined.

The analysis of the verbal interview data was done by deducing participants' tendencies towards external or internal locus of control from what they believe to be constraints and what they see as contributing factors. Although the interview questions predisposed participants towards giving external factors as responsible for their lack of success with goal achievement, it was possible to observe differences in tendencies among them. More signs of external locus of control were observed among participants who were not confident about their career

prospects and have not reached levels of authority in their organisations, while more tendencies towards an internal locus of control were observed among participants who achieved success in terms of their careers and revealed a positive sense of empowerment. Both tendencies were observed in those who were still in a process of development

The locus of control profiles of five participants were discussed in chapter eight. These participants were selected for comparison according to their PEI scores, covering low and high scoring participants. Participants 2 and 3, for example, were more inclined towards interpreting the consequences of their behaviour to external factors and can be considered as having an external locus of control, while Participants 16, 19 and 20 more consistently interpreted their own behaviour and personality characteristics as responsible for behavioural consequences and meet the characteristics of internal locus of control. These two groups seemed to be at opposite ends of the continuum in terms of locus of control and were also at opposite ends in terms of their PEI scores. When these tendencies were compared with respect to participants' PEI scores, some concurrence could be detected. People with low PEI scores in general attributed lack of achievement of goals to external factors, as well as for their successes. Less occasions of external locus of control is observed with people with high PEI scores. The larger part of the participants portrayed characteristics of both. Some closer to the external tendency attribute lack of progress to external factors and successes to internal as well as external factors. Although those who more often showed an internal locus of control take responsibility for their failures half the time, they are also willing to give credit for their successes to others and it is concluded that it may be a characteristic of a person with a strong sense of empowerment to give credit where it is deserved.

A middle group in terms of locus of control as well as status and position in the organisation appeared to be in a development stage and it appeared as if people move between external and internal. In general participants seemed to make both external and internal attributes and it is easy to confuse with the attribution tendency called self-serving bias. It is suggested that locus of control is

something that in the development of people may change from external to internal, especially where people are made aware of certain behavioural tendencies and set objectives to change it.

Thomas and Velthouse (1990) saw a link between a sense of impact and locus of control, because of the perceived control over the environment, but argued that it involves both the belief that a person's behaviour could have an impact on the environment and the belief that one could perform the relevant behaviour competently. Whereas these beliefs define psychological empowerment, behaviours can also give an indication of these perceptions and locus of control. Rotter (1966) took note of studies that determined certain behaviours of people with an internal locus of control. According to a summary he made of research findings, people with an internal locus of control are more likely to be attentive to aspects of the environment that provide useful information for the future. This relates to the awareness or interactional component suggested by Zimmerman (1995). Participants from the present study, who showed a tendency towards an internal locus of control, were aware of opportunities for exposure and development that they could make use of to take control of their careers.

The second tendency that was identified by Rotter (1966) is that internals engage in actions to improve their environment, which can be related to the behavioural component. Other tendencies are placing greater emphasis on striving for achievement and being more inclined to develop their own skills, asking more questions and remembering more information than people with an external locus of control. Achievement of results was identified in the present study as dimension of psychological empowerment and several examples surfaced regarding development of skills. These also contribute to awareness or the interactional component. These similarities could possibly also be an indication of a relationship between internal locus of control and psychological empowerment.

It was further observed that those who are more inclined towards an internal locus of control are those who have achieved higher ranking positions than those

who are more inclined towards an external locus of control. The hypotheses that managers and professionals have a greater sense of meaning, self-determination and impact than lower level employees were supported and in general professionals and managers felt more empowered than lower level employees according to the results of the quantitative phase of the present study. As both internal locus of control and psychological empowerment seem to be a consequence of position in the organisation, it could indicate a relationship between them.

Although the indications were there that participants low in psychological empowerment made more external attributions, while people with a strong sense of empowerment took responsibility for their behaviour rather than blaming it on their circumstances, there were too many cases where locus of control could not be clearly distinguished, because of tendencies in both directions to suggest a direct relationship conclusively.

As locus of control is regarded as a personality characteristic, it is concluded that, apart from being a contributing factor, an internal locus of control is also a characteristic of psychological empowered people.

9.5 CONCLUSION

Zimmerman (1995) contended that empowerment is a multilevel construct in which each level of analysis is interdependent with the others. The construct integrates perceptions of self, a pro-active approach to life and a critical understanding of the socio-political environment. In chapter six the perceptions participants have of what empowerment means was investigated and although it was expected that the over emphasis in the media on BEE, which forms an important part of the current socio-political environment, would have a significant influence and although the influence was evident, it was revealed that most participants have a perception similar to what Conger and Kanungo (1988) discussed, that is, the enabling of employees. Their definition was expressed as a process of enhancing feelings of self-efficacy. Conger and Kanungo (1988) as

well as Zimmerman (1995) recognised the role of the organisation and contextual factors in enhancing empowerment, while Zimmerman (1990) distinguished between organisational empowerment and empowerment on the individual level. For example, at the individual level, empowerment includes behaviour, motivations to exert control, and feelings of efficacy and control, whereas organisational empowerment includes opportunities to develop. Therefore, the perception of empowerment was expressed in terms of organisational empowerment, while psychological empowerment refers to empowerment on the individual level. Participants' experiences and beliefs about opportunities and their behaviours regarding opportunities have to do with psychological empowerment.

By integrating the results obtained from both quantitative and qualitative studies regarding dimensions of psychological empowerment and factors that contribute to psychological empowerment the findings of the present study are validated and substantiated. Recommendations based on these findings should guarantee success to a great extent.

When recommendations are made for the enhancement of psychological empowerment, the expected outcomes should be recorded as the dimensions that were determined by previous researchers and confirmed in this research. Characteristics and behaviours that were found to contribute to the profile of a psychologically empowered people should also be kept in mind as outcomes. Management practices and factors that strategies for empowerment should focus on are those that were found to predict psychological empowerment as well as those that emerged prominently from the qualitative research.

A sense of meaning, which includes a perception with employees that their work is important, that they are able to make a contribution and add value and that they have a purpose, should be an important focus, given the conclusion that all people have a need for meaning. Motivation with the focus on setting challenging goals that inspire employees towards the accomplishment of them, should contribute to a sense of meaning. Feedback about results and

recognition for an employee's contribution should also contribute to a sense of value.

Competence that not just applies to task specific efficacy, but also enables employees to feel confident that they are able to apply knowledge and skills to other related situations, for example, to find solutions to new challenges, should be regarded as the ideal end state. However, before this ideal state can be achieved, employees should first experience task specific competence. Job and role clarity that provide all the guidelines and information employees need to be able to perform their work with confidence is an important practice to set employees on a path of confidence in abilities. Feedback and recognition reinforce a sense of competence and emphasise the value employees contribute through their work. Exposure to different situations should contribute to a more generalised sense of competence.

Self-determination is experienced when employees feel enabled to work autonomously and are allowed to use initiative. Delegation of responsibility is the practice that should allow for autonomy and the use of initiative.

Employees deserve to experience being enabled to make a difference through the positive changes they make. However, they need to have the opportunity to participate in projects that give them the exposure to master problem-solving skills and contribute to solutions. They should be allowed to challenge the *status quo* and be involved in change initiatives. The drive to achieve results is an aspect of personal development that could be advantageous in this regard. Managers can contribute to a sense of impact by means of effective delegation and motivation by means of challenging goals.

The opportunity to be empowered has interconnections with other management practices, but it should be the foundation for all endeavours to bring about empowerment.

Achievement of results should be emphasised in practices, such as creating opportunities for employees to achieve according to their abilities. Challenging goals, support and encouragement to persevere should be beneficial for instilling the motivation to achieve. While this also provides the opportunity to get feedback and recognition, it also promotes a climate of achievement.

Skills development should involve all the dimensions and characteristics of empowered employees. Task specific competence should not be the only focus. If people are to be enabled to act autonomously, make a contribution, add value and make a difference, more than just functional training is necessary. Characteristics, such as goal orientation and pro-active behaviour should be inculcated.

The empowerment of subordinates can be enhanced by development of managers in the skills of delegation, motivation, giving feedback and recognition, giving clear guidelines, mentorship, giving support and building trusting relationships.

Other factors that were found to have an influence on psychological empowerment are incorporated in the strategy where applicable to augment the process.

9.6 SUGGESTED STRATEGIES

To be of value to the field of organisation psychology and relevance to South Africa in the present socio-economic and political climate, the final aim of the present study was to be able to formulate recommendations towards an empowerment strategy. For this purpose, the findings of the present study form the basis, but insights derived from the literature are also incorporated.

Strategies for empowerment should be employed on multiple levels. It should be implied in the organisations vision, mission and goals, in its policies and practices and in the values that determine the climate. Management on all levels should

understand and live its philosophy and their attitude and demeanour should support the objectives of empowerment, while employees should understand their role and responsibilities regarding empowerment. Because of the significant role behaviour seems to play in empowerment, a cognitive-behaviour approach is suggested.

9.6.1 Transformation

Socio-economic and political changes in the environment may necessitate organisations to transform as is the case in the present South African context. Transformation should not just entail mechanistic and structural changes but should be managed in such a way that employees are not left in limbo without a sense of security. Where transformation has to do with the overall functioning and structure of an organisation and may include re-organisation, an organisational development process is a more people orientated approach and involves a behavioural science strategy that may include change management programmes (Ivancevich & Matteson, 1996).

Critical success factors for transformation for empowerment, according to conclusions that were made from the present study as well as the literature regarding transformation for empowerment (Ettorre, 1997; Harrison, 1983; Ivancevich & Matteson, 1996; Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997; Walton, 1985) are:

- Organisational changes must be well planned.
- Transformation for empowerment must be well defined and information regarding changes must be communicated.
- Employees must understand top management's vision and strategic direction for the organisation in any transformation effort.
- All members must understand the rationale behind the transformation and it must be perceived as fair.
- All members should have a clear understanding of what empowerment entails and what the benefits are.

- All policies and practices should culminate in an integrated empowerment strategy that enables people to acquire the skills, the guidance, the support, the opportunities and the resources that they will need to add value.
- Organisational restructuring that involves career paths must be implemented without delay to minimise the negative effect on employees and career management.
- Top management must be seen to harness the philosophy, values and practices.
- Employees must be involved in efforts to make a difference.
- A positive organisational climate should be created first, which also entails that negative perceptions and attitudes of employees towards empowerment should be changed.

With respect to initiating empowerment as an organisational development strategy, there is a need for clear expectations and understanding of the intentions with reform. Career planning should have a prominent place in empowerment initiatives. Career paths or any form of career management should be executed in such a manner that it can be perceived as procedurally fair.

9.6.2 Organisational climate

As transformation often entails changing an organisation's culture to ensure a more conducive climate for empowerment, the values associated with empowerment must be determined and inculcated. Policies, procedures, processes and management practices that affect employee perceptions and behaviours must be the target for change and empowerment programmes. Aspects that were identified in this study that should be considered as part of a favourable climate and that were found by other researchers to form part of an empowerment climate are motivation, delegation of responsibilities and autonomy, job and role clarity, feedback and recognition, information sharing, leadership and challenges. Leadership included support and the dispensing of

job-related organisational information to subordinates (Mok & Au-Yeung, 2002; Seibert et al., 2004; Spreitzer, 1996).

Once the initial planning has been done and the rationale for changes has been defined and communicated, the next crucial step consists in having all members of the organisation buy into the intended changes. One way of ensuring this is to involve them in determining the values of the organisation. They must identify with the climate, the values and the goals of empowerment.

9.6.3 Organisational development

An organisational development project normally forms part of the planned process. Organisational development represents planned attempts to improve overall group and organisational performance. Training and socio-emotional support for dealing with the change should be provided (Ivancevich & Matteson, 1996). Organisational development has as objective continuous improvement by changing and developing an organisation's workforce in order to improve its effectiveness (Hellriegel et al., 2004).

9.6.4 Alignment with vision, mission and goals

Transformation and organisational development involves alignment with vision, mission and strategic goals. By articulating a vision that outlines the ideal future that is a source of inspiration, stating a mission that describes the organisation's core function and defines the desired level of performance, defining goals toward which the employees can strive and actions needed to achieve the goals, management create a sense of purpose and meaning in the organisation. When employees internalise the organisation's goals, they should feel that they are contributors of value in their work (Menon, 2001) and they should have a sense of meaning. Kanter (1981) suggested that goals should be translated into statements of results. This would contribute to employees' experience of achievement of results. Apart from the motivational aspect that was found to be a major influence on a sense of empowerment, it enhances the bases for giving

feedback and recognition that strengthens people's sense of meaning, sense of competence and sense of impact.

Clear goals should lead to clear expectations (Klagge, 1998) and this should be cascaded down to all levels to ensure job and role clarity. According to Ettore (1997) and Quinn and Spreitzer (1997), employees must have a full understanding of how their actions affect the organisation in order to be able to act effectively. With a clear understanding, they will more likely feel they have the capability to act autonomously in their work, providing they are kept informed about aspects that they need to know to be effective. Each person should at least know how his or her job contributes to the goals and objectives of the organisation and how they fit in order to become aware of the importance of the contribution. This approach should take care of a sense of competence, meaning, self-determination, impact and achievement.

9.6.5 Change management

Irrespective of what the objectives and planned outcomes of an empowerment intervention or change initiative are, authors suggested that it must go hand in hand with social support and a sense of security, trust building, and two-way communication (Hogg, 1993; Klagge, 1998; Murrell, 1985; Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997).

- Communication

Communication may be directed through the organisational newsletter in a style and format that everybody understands, rather than formal documentation. Communications regarding empowerment should be aimed at changing mindsets, communicating the rationale and clarifying aspects of policies to ascertain that no misconceptions exist. Empowerment must be seen as beneficial for employees and that practices are fair. In chapter six it was suggested that a more positive view of empowerment should be projected by telling success stories. It is necessary to instil positive perceptions of what

empowerment entails in order to prepare employees for changes required for empowerment endeavours. Two-way communication may be encouraged by asking employees for suggestions. Suggestions must be recognised and responded to. Employees must feel that they are making a contribution and that their suggestions are valued.

- Survey feedback

Survey feedback that determines the perceptions employees have about their organisation's empowerment climate may be utilised to determine what organisational development programmes should focus on. It may serve as diagnosis or to determine values that most employees associate with. Conger and Kanungo (1988) suggested that conditions within organisations that foster a sense of powerlessness should be identified and that strategies and practices should give attention to these.

Survey feedback can also be used to monitor and assess the effectiveness of change programmes. No programme should be implemented without monitoring its effect (Foulkes, 1969).

The CFS was developed for the purpose of determining the relevant management practices and prescribing strategies for the enhancement of perceptions of empowerment, but similar surveys could also assess the behaviours of managers and then utilise the feedback to develop the empowering skills of managers.

- Management development

Seeing that a major part of the focus is on management practices, it is apparent that a considerable amount of management education and training is necessary. Training sessions on management style can help the manager to recognise the value of changes to his or her role and to learn to deal with the problems he or

she is experiencing or will experience. Training should start at the top (Foulkes, 1969).

Managers need to be developed in the knowledge and practice of empowering others, such as the skills related to motivate subordinates, delegate responsibilities and authority effectively, give constructive feedback and to recognise performance. It was concluded that competencies related to the development and empowerment of subordinates include mentoring and coaching skills and that the manager as mentor plays an important role in the empowerment of others. All managers should be trained in mentoring skills. Mentoring skills include empowering behaviours such as to clarify expectations, giving constructive feedback and recognition and setting of goals (Klasen & Clutterbuck, 2002).

- Leadership development

Some authors believe that an empowering climate can be created through providing managers with training and development courses in management and a leadership style that are conducive to empowerment (Foulkes, 1969). Several researchers investigated transformational leadership in relation to empowerment and found positive correlations (Brossoit, 2000; Ozaralli, 2003; Samad, 2007). Transformational behaviours motivate and hence empower followers to act by providing an exciting vision for the future. Leaders create a more empowering climate in which organisational members are inspired to take actions to enhance the vision. Transformational leaders build subordinates' self-confidence with respect to goal attainment. Leaders who convey high expectations promote the self-efficacy and motivation of subordinates and ultimately establish norms for individual initiative, achievement oriented behaviours and goal-attainment. Individual consideration, as it denotes, means that the leader treats each follower as an individual and cares for the development of subordinates. This would help in managing opportunities as the manager will make it his or her business to determine what opportunities each subordinate needs to develop and grow.

Managers may struggle with the dependency – autonomy dichotomy in the sense that they have to decide when to give clear guidelines and when to allow autonomy. The fact that both autonomy and job clarity are significant contributors to empowerment may present an uncertainty about how much discretion is enough or how detailed or flexible guidelines should be without causing ambiguity. Both the individualised consideration component of transformational leadership and situational leadership style might be useful, because individuals differ in terms of needs. While most employees would appreciate autonomy, some individuals are more dependent. It does not mean that this dependence must be sustained. Through a process of enabling and situational leadership dependent individuals may be coached, mentored and counselled until they are ready for responsibility and independent decision-making.

Situational leadership was created to develop individuals to their highest level of performance through effective one-on-one leadership. It is based upon creating a match between an individual's development level on a specific goal or task and the leadership style that the leader applies. For example, a subordinate low in competence and low in commitment would need coaching, directing and support, while a subordinate high in competence and commitment would need delegation of responsibilities and authority, as well as autonomy (Blanchard et al., 1999).

The goal of situational leadership is to provide an environment that permits an individual to move along the development continuum from low competence to high competence and commitment. The leader uses a leadership style that is appropriate to the individual's development level at each stage of development on a specific goal or task. In other words the individual may be fully developed in his or her technical field involving routine tasks, but did not have sufficient exposure to unusual occurrences and problems (Blanchard et al., 1999).

- Coaching

In the case of newly appointed or inexperienced managers, informal coaching and counselling could be helpful. Experienced line managers and internal change agents should coach and counsel newly appointed managers. Informal coaching is extremely important to the success of an empowerment programme (Foulkes, 1969). The coachee experiences support, while some guidance is provided and progressively more autonomy is encouraged. The manager is exposed to situations while feeling safe to deal with challenges.

- Managers' frame of mind

If managers feel their own position is threatened by giving subordinates more responsibility, they will resent the changes. If they are expected to delegate work they feel responsible for, supervisors may be unsure of their own role or they may resist changes because they disagree with the approach. Managers may feel that employees are not capable or trustworthy to handle additional responsibilities. They may fear that mistakes will be made and that they will be held accountable. This could become a self-fulfilling prophecy. The values of increased autonomy and more responsibility for employees may run counter to the values and habits managers developed over a number of years and it is difficult to adapt to new values (Foulkes, 1969).

Management and leadership development should address fears and uncertainties. An external change agent with expert knowledge could be utilised to affect attitude change.

- Change in managers' behaviours

Should a survey indicate that managers' behaviours do not contribute to the empowerment of employees, intervention should focus on behaviour change. By concentrating on altering specific behavioural skills a programme for concrete behavioural improvement can be developed. The findings of the present study

suggest that managers should be able to delegate effectively, motivate subordinates by setting challenging goals, clearly communicate what is expected from subordinates without being too directive and inhibiting autonomy and the use of initiative and to give feedback and recognition.

During a study involving an empowerment initiative, Leach et al. (2003) found that empowerment by means of delegation of decision-making authority alone was not effective. Apart from managerial authority to take on new areas of decision-making, subordinates also needed information and support to enable them to enact formal changes in their job responsibilities. In other words, the three factors together resulted in actual empowerment. Enabling is important and it may include opportunities to take on more responsibility incrementally in a safe environment while constructive feedback and recognition are given.

Managers' performance evaluation should be based on these skills and on their willingness to do mentoring and empowering. Managers who empower their subordinates and develop talent should be given recognition and be appropriately rewarded (Kanter, 1993).

- Employees' frame of mind (Cognitions)

Frame of mind refers to the perceptions employees have of empowerment and their responsibility regarding empowerment. For empowerment to be effective, the mind-set that employees have about their role in the organisation is important. While management can create a context that is more empowering, employees must choose to be empowered. Cognitions also refer to feelings, beliefs and perceptions according to Spreitzer's (1995a) model and the intrapersonal component according to Zimmerman's (1995) model. For psychological empowerment to be a reality, employees must believe that they are competent and able to make a meaningful contribution, have influence and they must see themselves as having freedom of choice. Creating this mind-set may be necessary before attempting empowerment by means of gestures, such as giving employees positions and authority (Kinlaw, 1995; Quinn & Spreitzer,

1997). To bring about this state of mind and to feel empowered entails being willing to accept responsibility for one's situation, to have a goal or vision of something worthwhile to accomplish and commitment to achieving that purpose, to be aware of opportunities and to make use of it. Kieffer (1984) advocated that people do not only need to acquire practical skills; they have to reconstruct and reorientate deeply engrained personal systems of social relations.

Empowerment also requires that skills development be set in motion throughout the organisation which equips employees with the expertise necessary to execute their autonomous decisions successfully (Knouse & Strutton, 1996). Zimmerman (1995) suggested that organisational empowerment includes processes and structures that allow for the development and practice of skills, such as decision-making and problem-solving skills. Once these skills have a positive effect on a generalised sense of competence and it is established, employees' belief in their ability to contribute and make a difference may increase.

Several authors described cognitive processes that are effective in changing mindsets to enhance perceptions of empowerment and it was discussed in chapter two. It is suggested that cognitive processes that address the way people think, feel and make attributions that may augment perceptions of empowerment are incorporated in a self-empowerment programme.

Processes that could be included are:

Changing individuals' styles of interpreting.

Interpretive interventions address how individuals construe environmental events and can be changed by making the individual aware of assumptions that are inherent in a style and by teaching individuals to monitor ongoing interpretations and their consequences consciously (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). Directing unrealistic attributions toward more realistic sources, could counter attributions that affect people's sense of helplessness (Martinko & Gardner, 1982) or

awareness could be created of attributions that are not effectual or constructive, such as external locus of control and self-serving bias.

Cultivating positive beliefs

The cultivation of beliefs in people's capabilities will facilitate the more effective use of their talents (Wood & Bandura, 1989). According to Harrison (1983), people must believe that they have distinctive competences and resources and that they have something that is unique and valuable to contribute and this is something that should be developed. Teaching employees to visualise the results they want and to affirm to themselves that they can accomplish their goals should contribute to positive beliefs.

Reconstruction of cognitions

Correcting faulty perceptions and cognitive distortions (negative irrational) of self and the world will contribute to self-empowerment (Ellis, 1996; Mruk, 1983). For example, a person who believes that he or she should be perfect in every way may experience a lack of competence. A more constructive way of thinking should encourage employees to identify the weakness that realistically something can be done about and to determine goals in order to change limitations into competencies. By helping employees to change negative thoughts of helplessness and lack of ability and to generate new interpretations that would facilitate reconstruction of cognitions, a sense of empowerment is strengthened (Peres et al., 2005). The technique was described in chapter two.

A self-empowerment programme that consists of cognitive processes should facilitate sense of empowerment.

- Behaviours

Spreitzer (1995a) and Zimmerman (1995) recognised the active orientation in the overall experience of psychological empowerment and Seibert et al. (2004)

realised that proactive people essentially empower themselves by making their own independent choices, by establishing competence and by making an impact regardless of contextual influences or situational constraints. The action orientation of empowered individuals was also established in the present study.

Problem-solving and decision-making skills

Zimmerman (1995) suggested decision-making and problem-solving skills that would help people to be able to take control of problem situations and not feel powerless to do something about it. The ability to deal with constraints in a constructive manner would be empowering. According to Kemp (2007), of all the competencies required to become better at meeting challenges and becoming a peak performer who achieve results, the most important skill is problem-solving. To be a good problem solver requires a belief in own ability to cope with and solve problems. When people have such self-confidence it results in behaviours which facilitate problem-solving, such as initiative, assertiveness and taking charge of situation instead of shying away. This would have a positive effect on sense of competence, control and impact. Abilities that are needed are analytical skills, sound inductive and deductive reasoning ability and knowledge of problem-solving principles (Kemp, 2007).

Goal setting

Teaching effective goal setting entails that employees learn to see constraints as challenges that can be addressed by setting goals. Employees are taught to take control of their lives by setting goals not only with respect to constraints, but also in managing their own development. By encouraging them to be goal orientated employees become aware of opportunities or look for opportunities or even create opportunities. They learn to control their own destiny. Goal setting follows on the steps of problem-solving and decision-making and ensures that the solutions that were decided on are executed and results are achieved. In the qualitative study it became evident that those participants who had clear career goals, did more to achieve their goals, even if it meant changing jobs.

Resilience

Wood and Bandura (1989) proposed mastery experiences to gain a resilient sense of efficacy. Employees may be trained in techniques to develop resilience. It could include both cognitive and behaviour skills. It was found in the present study that resilience was possible for people who had a positive attitude with regard to mistakes. By changing the way one thinks about setbacks and making use of problem-solving skills, people get experience in overcoming obstacles through determination and effort. After people become assured of their capabilities through repeated successes, they can manage setbacks and failures without being adversely affected by them.

Dealing with constraints

Some participants in the present study dealt with constraints, while others seemed to be disheartened by it. Identifying constraints and then dealing with these as a problem to be solved would help employees not to be affected by constraints. Lack of opportunity to attend courses or to be educated were mentioned, but participants dealt with it by attending classes after hours, part time studies or self study. Some participants gained experience by seizing opportunities to do work that others shrunk from. Autonomy, initiative and trust are factors that may be regarded as coming from the manager, but one participant stated that it is up to the individual to establish credibility, reliability or trustworthiness by demonstrating initiative, but also obtaining buy in for initiatives by articulating and motivating the cause. Lack of motivation from the manager can be substituted by self-motivation by means of self-affirmations, visualisation and by setting challenging goals for one self. A mentor can be instrumental in helping employees deal with constraints by facilitating their problem-solving and decision-making skills.

9.6.6 Opportunity management

When an opportunity orientation is adopted, managers and employees should be aware of every conceivable opportunity that may contribute to the development and growth of employees. Opportunities that were identified in the present qualitative study and suggestions to address these are discussed below.

- Opportunities to be enabled

Starting at entrance level, employees should be considered individually for their potential and development needs. Tasks should be allocated in which they can receive in-post training and practice skills. Efficiency in delegation practices is necessary.

A next step is the establishment of constructive feedback and encouragement for learning in the form of a performance appraisal system in which the manager and the subordinate meet to review the individual's performance, suggest areas for improvement and note areas that were outstanding. The manager acts as mentor, helps the employees with guidance and helps them to decide how to improve skills that are not yet to standard. This process includes recognition for achieving competences, strengthens feelings of efficacy and builds people's sense of their own skills and competence.

Feedback is an integral part of skill improvement (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Knouse & Strutton, 1996). Performance evaluation processes should provide feedback on the effectiveness with which employees perform their responsibilities as well as how the performance contributes to the effectiveness of the department to create a sense of meaning. In this way, the subordinate's attitude is transformed from just doing a job into a conscious meaningful career (Kanter, 1993).

To enhance a sense of self-efficacy feedback should include information that gives the individual a more thorough understanding of the task complexity, as

well as information that improves the individual's understanding of behavioural, analytical or psychological performance strategies or effort expenditure required for task performance. In-post training should improve the individual's abilities or understanding of how to use abilities successfully in performing the task. Information and training in these areas should insure job and role clarity (Gist & Mitchell, 1992).

- Opportunities for development

Kanter (1993) suggested that jobs are reviewed and a job analysis be done to determine the competencies and content knowledge needed. Job descriptions form the basis to start the process of providing opportunities for skills development. With a job description, beginners know what is expected of them and performance reviews and feedback are based on these expectations. Skills development should be outcomes based and should address the specific skills required by the job. All training and development is designed to increase skills and competences required for advancement.

The opportunity to receive training and development should be provided to all employees at all levels. Training and development should be managed in such a way that employees at all levels are aware of it and know how to access the opportunity to be trained and educated.

Functional training refers to the technical requirements of the job, which should be provided for the enhancement of the task specific skills needed. Personal development such as programmes that will assist employees with coping with the sociological challenges associated with employment, for example, self-esteem, assertiveness, conflict management, etcetera and generic skills that equip employees to cope with non-routine demands should contribute to generalised sense of competence. Self-empowerment skills involving behaviour and cognitive approaches were addressed.

- Opportunities to get exposure

Kanter (1993) found that moving around, especially upward movement, is beneficial in the sense that it provides exposure and visibility. Getting a broad view of the organisation through moving around seemed to be an advantage and a desired requirement for promotion to management levels. Exposure to different job demands and challenges help shape employees to become confident in their ability to apply skills to a variety of situations. The present study showed that education alone is not enough to boost a sense of competence, but that the quality of experience contributes to the development of a sense of competence.

- Opportunities to participate

Employees should get opportunities to participate in decision-making, projects and new and challenging work experiences to learn and be noticed. Involving people not just in accomplishing goals, but actually in suggesting goals to improve organisational performance is a mechanism for employees to feel that they are making a contribution or are part of a team that are making a difference. The perception that it is only the privilege of managers on strategic levels to add value and make a difference will be addressed in this manner. This confirms to employees that they are playing a vital role. Asking for and using team member input provides opportunities for employees to show that they have valuable ideas and that they want to be responsible for organisational performance, while members receive confirmation from leaders that they value their contributions (Blanchard et al., 1999). A sense of achievement and a sense of meaning are created in this manner.

A performance appraisal system, which feeds information into a central personnel decision-making system, will also ensure that performance is noticed, recognised and rewarded (Kanter, 1993). The development of a fair and well-planned system for providing incentives and rewards will ensure that employees

continue to make valuable contributions, but the primary objective is to create a sense of empowerment.

- Opportunities to take on responsibilities

Opportunities to take on responsibilities and show what they are capable of contribute to a sense of empowerment. Delegation and autonomy provide opportunities to contribute in a creative manner and to be able to use initiative and autonomy and thereby opportunities for achievement and recognition are provided. Delegation of responsibility should take into account the abilities of the employee and should be preceded by development of the necessary skills for taking on the responsibilities. Delegation for the purpose of empowerment should be supplemented by mentoring and support to enable the employee to achieve success in the completion of delegated tasks. Foulkes (1969) suggested the increase of employees' motivational opportunities by assigning challenging tasks that motivate them towards achievement. They will develop their own drives toward completing these tasks and achieving results. Challenging tasks give employees a chance of achievement, for recognition associated with that achievement, for more responsibilities, for advancement to better jobs, and for growth in the ability to do things or to learn. According to Wood and Bandura (1989), people's beliefs in their capabilities are raised when challenging tasks are assigned to them and by providing feedback about abilities to enhance personal efficacy beliefs. A sense of self-determination is also enhanced by delegation and autonomy.

- Career Management

Opportunity refers to expectations and future prospects. Kanter (1993) equated opportunity to upward mobility, promotion up the hierarchy of an organisation, in other words, career paths. A method such as fast tracking is an exceptional way of providing opportunity. People who are fast tracked normally are given career reviews more often and placed in positions that would maximise their exposure. It was found in the present study that those who aspire to get ahead concerned

themselves with learning those things that would be useful to them on their journey upward. A career planning process is a concrete form to provide opportunity. It must be coupled not just with rising status and authority, but with increased autonomy and achievement opportunities. A promotion is a valued and significant form of recognition as it recognises the individual's efforts. Promotion often means more autonomy, independence and growth that are brought about by the challenging learning opportunities that go hand in hand with a position on a higher level (Kanter, 1993). However, expectations that cannot be met should not be created. Flatter organisations decrease the number of hierarchical levels and positions people can aspire for. The principles that guide fast tracking should be applied to all employees and everybody should get the same opportunities. How they respond and perform would determine how they are rewarded with appropriate appointments.

In the current socio-economic and political climate employees, especially white males may feel that they are stuck and their upward mobility is stunted by AA and EE policies. They may find themselves to be longer than the average number of years in a position with few opportunities and although they are working harder, they experience a decline in job satisfaction and are looking for alternatives. This may be the situation for people with seniority who had been valued performers in the past. The challenge for contemporary organisations involves simultaneously opening opportunities for the previously disadvantaged and also reducing the emphasis on mobility for the previously advantaged, substituting other rewards and values and making them real through organisational design (Kanter, 1993). Another dilemma resulting from affirmative action that entails the employment of talented black South Africans, is related to job hopping. It is expensive to recruit and train black talent and if it is lost after a short period of time, it has costly negative effects.

Kanter (1993) recognised the fact that while some jobs offer high mobility prospects to their occupants together with chances to grow and develop, other positions have little prospects of advancement. While skills and competency development required for progression should be implemented, challenges should

be provided for those who are stuck in a low mobility situation. Some occupations, for example, clerical positions may also be characterised by low promotion rates, short ladders and low ceilings in the job category. The problems created by affirmative action for all categories of employees mentioned above, could be prevented by not valuing mobility more than job substance, considering alternatives to career competitiveness as a value and making real the rewards and recognition that should come with technical competence itself. People should be informed about the limitations of their careers to prevent frustration with the reality of opportunities (Kanter, 1993). These are phenomena that should be managed in order to retain much needed skills.

Opportunity can be broadened in other ways than just upward mobility, for example, enhancement of skills, new challenges backed up with recognition.

Strategies that are suggested could include the following:

Assignments where advantage is taken of existing skills and experience while allowing the employee to develop new ones. It would preferably be a lateral move that mixes old and new responsibilities (Digue, 2006). Examples may be participation in projects where they can make a contribution with their technical skills, for example, implementing a quality management system, working with organisational development experts on projects for continuous improvement, internal auditing, quality circles, etcetera. Organisations have a social responsibility and they may be involved in projects regarding community development. This will give them a sense of meaning and making a difference. In the present study people got involved in voluntary HIV/AIDS programmes in the workplace.

Similarly, novices may acquire a sense of meaning and impact when they are put in project teams mentioned above together with experienced and skilled employees. They learn from the more experienced employees, but they also have an opportunity to make a contribution and gain experience in the safe environment and experience making a difference.

Mentoring colleagues is a personally fulfilling way to share experience and plough back into the organisation the investment in an employee (Digue, 2006). It was found in the present study that empowered people find it meaningful to be involved in the empowerment of others. Placing experienced employees into mentoring, teaching and other knowledge sharing roles provides new meaning to the employee with limited upward career options while the competence of less experienced employees are enhanced.

The assumption may be that more senior employees are educated and have been trained already and that others need training more. However, to prevent seniors from stagnating and feeling unappreciated, a training and development plan for them may include refresher courses, development of new skills and introductions to new ideas or technology that expand their perspectives and increase their interests (Digue, 2006). This may even stimulate them to make lateral moves within the organisation.

Kieffer (1984) believed that there is no substitute for learning through experience. Instead of leaving it to young talented employees to make career changes in order to gain experience and move up the career ladder faster, they could be retained by exposing them to different work experiences by moving them around, while assigning them to a mentor who can actively facilitate them in their own critical and constructive examination of their efforts toward empowerment.

- Individual responsibility

Lastly, the responsibility of the individual to make use of opportunities must be emphasised. Employees should be conditioned to identify career goals, be aware of opportunities and to set objectives to achieve them by teaching them to do their own career and development planning. Employees should be encouraged to look at opportunities or possibilities rather than focus on the limitations of a position. Looking for opportunities produces better results than waiting for it to happen according to what was found in the qualitative study. In the experience of a business leader, the recipe for success is to focus energy

and passion on the responsibilities of the job occupied in the present (Fiorina, 2006).

For many this recipe has paid off. Consistent hard work, making a contribution, adding value while achieving results and making a difference will get one noticed and although it may take longer than the guy who has the fast tracking opportunity, nothing will ever make up for experience.

9.7 SUMMARY

In this chapter the results of the quantitative and qualitative studies were integrated. The dimensions that emerged from the qualitative study were compared with the dimensions that were used in the quantitative study. A synthesis of theories and methods was made to come to a conclusion regarding what dimensions and characteristics constitute a psychologically empowered individual. Contextual factors that best predicted psychological empowerment in the quantitative study and contributing factors that were found in the qualitative study were compared. Locus of control as personality trait was investigated in the qualitative study and it was considered as a factor that contributes to a sense of empowerment, as well as a characteristic of empowered people. The most important contextual factors were distinguished by way of triangulation for the purpose of devoting attention to these when advocating empowerment strategies with the dimensions of psychological empowerment as outcomes. These factors and outcomes formed the basis for strategies for empowerment that were suggested.

The general framework for the study was based on the social cognitive theory (SCT), which suggests three reciprocal influences, namely behaviour, cognitions and the environment (Bandura, 1977). It was found that to facilitate the understanding of psychological empowerment in the present South African context and the factors that contribute to it, all three reciprocal influences must be considered. Suggested interventions and implementation of a transformation are based on a cognitive-behaviour approach. If taken seriously the suggested

strategies for empowerment can make a difference in the way empowerment is managed in the business and other sectors in the country. If it can enhance the pursuit to empower to include enabling and psychological empowered individuals who make a contribution to not just the economy, but also the quality of life in communities, the study will have achieved its aim.

To conclude the study the assumptions that were discussed in chapter two and aims proposed in chapter one are revisited in the next chapter. Lastly, the limitations of the present study are specified and suggestions with regard to future research are made.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 INTRODUCTION

The present study was embarked on with certain assumptions in mind. These assumptions were discussed in chapter two. It is now possible with the insight gained from the results of the study to either change or confirm what was assumed by means of conclusions. The most important findings according to the research questions and the aims that were proposed in chapter one are summarised and the relevant chapters indicated where they were addressed. The study is reviewed in terms of the methodologies that were used together with some limitations it presented. Suggestions for future research are made.

10.2 CONCLUSIONS REGARDING ASSUMPTIONS

Some assumptions were discussed in chapter two and these are revisited to conclude how the present study shed light on them.

10.2.1 Political/social meaning versus human and organisational development

The assumption was that empowerment as an organisational development strategy can easily be confused with the socio-economic and political meaning of empowerment. Although empowerment as a means of enhancing human potential and to develop competence should be the main focus, the media give very little attention to this aspect. It was found that the image that the media portray regarding empowerment lean towards the economic meaning, but although it seemed to have an effect on perceptions, the majority of participants' responses revealed that the human and organisational development aspect is understood.

10.2.2 Delegation versus enabling

The assumption was that empowerment is seen as synonymous with delegation. This tendency to associate delegation with empowerment was found in the management literature, however, it was also stressed in the literature and findings that empowerment by means of delegation of decision-making authority alone was not effective (Leach et al., 2003). The finding in the quantitative study that delegation of responsibility is a significant contributor to psychological empowerment, as well as to a sense of impact specifically, distinguishes this management practice as important in any empowerment endeavour. Perceptions of empowerment were found in the qualitative part of the present study to be more towards enabling. Enabling was suggested as forming part of the delegation practice in the section about suggested strategy.

10.2.3 Empowering acts versus psychological state

Empowerment researchers from the sociological tradition focus on the granting, transfer or sharing of power, that is, the act of empowering, such as delegation discussed above. In contrast, researchers from the psychological tradition focus on the cognitions.

In the design of the present research study, empowering acts were assumed to be the predictors of the psychological state. It was, therefore, distinguished as contextual factors that contribute to psychological empowerment. Apart from establishing the relationship, it was established in the present study that expressions regarding cognitions alone do not always give an accurate indication of the psychological state, but that the behaviour component of psychological empowerment also contributes to deduce what people believe about their abilities. Zimmerman's (1995) nomological network approach of studying psychological empowerment by including three components, based on the social cognitive theory (SCT) that comprises three reciprocal influences, namely behaviour, cognitions and the environment (Bandura, 1977) was found in this

study to be valid. Therefore, empowering acts are seen as antecedents of a psychological state and not as separate entities to be studied in isolation.

10.2.4 Control versus trust

A misconception about empowerment was suggested in the sense that managers may fear that they will lose control or fail to address the issue of control when empowerment is implemented. Managers' attitudes towards empowerment and relinquishing power did not form part of the present study. Respondents' perceptions about management practices and behaviours did form part of the quantitative study and it was found that the practices autonomy, delegation and trust were perceived by respondents as conducive to empowerment. In the qualitative phase of the study, participants who felt that they are trusted, were at advanced levels in their careers and considered themselves to be trustworthy. Trust should be closely related to delegation of responsibility and autonomy. This is consistent with Leana's (1987) finding that managers would relinquish decision-making authority when the subordinate is competent and trustworthy and that the manager's perceptions of subordinate competence and trustworthiness were positively related to supervisors' reported use of delegation. While trust is the act of believing in someone and having confidence in them, trustworthiness is a result of character and competence. The premise of the suggested strategies was to address the mindset of managers in this regard.

10.2.5 Empowered versus self-empowerment

Regarding the assumption that empowerment is not something that management does to empower employees, but something that can be claimed by individuals as they become more competent and confident in their abilities, was found to have merit. The assumption is true in the sense that promising evidence was found in the qualitative study of self-empowered individuals and perceptions of empowerment that indicates a dual responsibility. However, it is felt that at this stage the majority of employees, especially at lower levels still need opportunities

to be empowered. Although there is still a need for empowerment to be done to employees by managers by means of management practices, it does not mean that at the same time the inclination towards self-empowerment should not be cultivated as was discussed in the strategies concerning employees.

10.2.6 Generative versus distributive

The assumption was that power has to be relinquished by some in order for others to gain power or that no power can be created or used without losing power. This belief was hinted at in the media and may still subsist in the minds of some South Africans in the light of politically induced empowerment. The only indication to this assumption was when policies, such as AA and EE were seen as a threat to some in the qualitative study, while the contrary was also found when a tendency towards empowerment of others was revealed. This is a characteristic of empowered people that needs to be developed in all South Africans.

10.3 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The main findings are summarised according to research questions and the aims of the study:

10.3.1 To what extent are South Africans psychologically empowered?

It was a research question as well as an aim of the study to determine the state of psychological empowerment in South Africa. The state of psychological empowerment was determined by means of the PEI and results were reported in chapter five.

Leading up to the state of psychological empowerment according to the PEI scores of the total sample, some comparisons were drawn according to the demographic variables of the sample. It was found that gender differences with respect to PE were not significant in the South African context, but that the

previously advantaged still feel more empowered than the previously disadvantaged. As was expected, managers and professionals have a greater sense of empowerment than lower level employees in terms of a sense of meaning, self-determination and impact, but it is not applicable as far as a sense of competence is concerned. The PE measure of the private sector was significantly higher than that of the public sector, but the non-profit non-government sector did not differ significantly from the private and public sectors.

In the present research the respondents seemed to rate their sense of meaning and competence consistently higher than their sense of self-determination and scores were lowest on the impact dimension. The indication is that people feel that their work is meaningful, they feel fairly confident that they have the skills and abilities to do their work, but not everybody experiences a sense of self-determination and feels that their work has limited impact on the larger system.

10.3.2 What management practices contribute to psychological empowerment?

It was also an aim of the study to determine whether there is a relationship between contextual factors and psychological empowerment in South Africa. By means of the CFS and PEI it was determined that the twelve management practices contained in the CFS were all significantly correlated with psychological empowerment. However, as a group, where their relative contributions to PE were considered, only three practices: motivation, delegation and role clarity were found to be significant contributors.

Further regression analysis indicated that feedback and motivation were significant predictors of a sense of meaning; job and role clarity was the only significant contributor to a sense of competence; autonomy was the only significant contributor to a sense of self-determination; and delegation and motivation were significant predictors of a sense of impact. These results were discussed in chapter five.

10.3.3 What are the general perceptions of empowerment in South Africa?

With the aim to determine what the current perceptions are regarding empowerment in South Africa the media were analysed. The news media gave far more attention to economic empowerment than any other form of empowerment. To determine the general perceptions qualitative interviews were conducted and the results showed that the majority of respondents had a balanced or positive view of empowerment as enabling, instead of just structural. The results were discussed in chapter six.

10.3.4 How do South Africans experience empowerment?

An aim of the study was to conceptualise psychological empowerment as experienced in a South African context and to compare these findings with research in other countries. The aim was achieved by means of the qualitative interviews and the results were discussed in chapter seven.

The dimensions that surfaced from the qualitative interview data are very similar to the conceptions of Thomas and Velthouse (1990) and those that were found by Spreitzer (1995a) and Menon (2001). Most participants revealed a sense of competence, but while task specific competence was expressed by most, some also felt competent to apply their skills to different situations. All participants expressed a strong need for meaningful and purposeful work. Expressions such as wanting to be an asset, adding value, making a contribution, having a purpose or do something fulfilling were used, while some felt that serving the community is meaningful. These were combined to form the main theme, a sense of meaning. Most participants felt that their need was fulfilled in the work domain, however the ability to add value was an aspect that employees on lower levels did not always experience. Experiences of competence and meaning were expressed more frequently than a sense of control. Two sub-themes were identified, namely, the control derived from the freedom to make decisions regarding the outcomes of one's work (autonomy) and personal control, such as control over oneself, ones future or one's emotions. Where autonomy is associated with the work

environment, personal control was revealed as a characteristic of the individual and can be exercised at any time and in any context. The dimension was termed a sense of control instead of self-determination. The term 'making a difference' is a term that South Africans may associate better with than 'impact'. The belief that one can make a difference was expressed by participants on senior levels and for participants on lower levels it was expressed as a desire.

However, the qualitative interviews revealed a broader range of characteristics than what was described in the Spreitzer (1995a; 1995b) studies. The present study showed that feelings of powerlessness can be present when participants feel helpless to improve their situation, but that empowered people may also feel helpless in specific situations. Resilience seemed to be the bridge between feeling helpless and feeling empowered. Different degrees of overcoming difficulties were identified, for example, to overcome by just carrying on without giving up at one end of the continuum and dealing with setbacks by making some positive changes that result in growth at the other end.

Apart from the dimensions described previously, achievement of results seemed to be a powerful aspect of empowerment. It was concluded that psychologically empowered people are results orientated. Another tendency that emerged was that several participants revealed that they find meaning in the empowerment of others.

The interrelationships between cognitions, goals, awareness of resources and behaviours were investigated and the behavioural component emerged as a prominent feature. Goal and action orientations and pro-active behaviour were further characteristics that seemed to be associated with empowered individuals. It was, therefore, concluded that not just the beliefs of empowered people are indications of their characteristics, but that certain personal orientations, attitudes, values and behavioural tendencies may also define a psychological empowered individual in the South African context.

10.3.5 What factors are perceived to have an effect on empowerment?

The above research question and the aim, to determine what (factors, methods, practices) contributes best to psychological empowerment, according to how South Africans experience it, were inferred from verbal interview data and the results were reported and discussed in chapter eight.

Most of the contributing factors that were found in the present study can be described as contextual factors or management practices. Opportunity is the theme that came up most often and was expressed in terms of constraints and contributing factors. Lack of opportunities was mentioned as a constraint that amounts to other management practices and positive experiences were related, such as involvement in projects. It was concluded that opportunities must be managed if empowerment is the objective. Recognition was another theme that emerged quite often. Participants feel validated and appreciated when their efforts and achievements are acknowledged; they experience a sense of meaning. Reward was identified as another form of recognition. Recognition may form part of formal feedback. Feedback about abilities has value if it helps the recipient to develop and feel competent.

Support was experienced as gestures by management and colleagues on a personal level, while work related support and encouragement was mentioned as contributing to a sense of competence and feelings of confidence. Support was reported to strengthen participants in their endeavours to achieve goals.

Development in the form of education, training and personal growth emerged as a factor that contributed to a sense of empowerment, although it was seen as only part of the process. The positive contribution of experience and exposure was regarded as necessary part of development. Variation in work experiences and progressively more responsibility were mentioned as opportunities for improvement and to gain experience. Apart from formal skills development, personal growth was mentioned in terms of exposure, empowerment, religion, maturing emotionally and awareness of own behaviours that are not effectual.

Access to information, clear guidelines and direction were mentioned as helpful in the execution of job responsibilities. Participants felt that their sense of meaning is affected if they do not have direction, they do not feel confident when they are uncertain of what is expected and that their sense of competence is increased with good guidelines.

To be allowed autonomy and initiative was expressed as an ideal situation and it was experienced as satisfying. Both autonomy and initiative would not be allowed in the absence of trust. Participants experienced that they are trusted when they have autonomy.

Participants mentioned their managers as contributing to their feelings of empowerment. Some participants expressed the need for mentorship and that having a mentor is an advantage as it prepares one for future positions.

Motivation was mentioned in the sense that challenges are instrumental in arousing and maintaining behaviour and encouragement is necessary to sustain motivation to persevere on a predetermined path.

10.3.6 The appropriateness of theoretical frameworks for research in psychological empowerment in South African organisations

An aim of the study was to appraise theoretical frameworks for their appropriateness in terms of psychological empowerment in South African organisations.

The theoretical framework proposed by Spreitzer (1995a; 1995b) was used in the quantitative phase to assess psychological empowerment and was discussed in chapter five, as well as in chapter nine. For the qualitative phase it was assumed that the psychologically empowered state is a cognitive state that may result in behaviour or behavioural preferences. The theoretical frameworks of Spreitzer (1995a; 1995b), Menon (2001) and Zimmerman (1995) were evaluated and discussed in chapter seven. Zimmerman's (1995) theoretical framework for a

nomological network was utilised as it was the conviction of Zimmerman that psychological empowerment research should include more than just cognitive aspects. The framework was appraised to see to what extent the components are observable in qualitative research and to evaluate the usefulness of the framework for the study of psychological empowerment. It was concluded that the intrapersonal component may be affected by the social psychological tendencies of self-serving bias and the motivation to protect the self-esteem. It was further concluded that the interactional component may be more relevant to work in communities and that awareness is not such a prominent component in an organisational context. Awareness of opportunities is expected and active engagement from the part of the individual is also necessary. It is, therefore, as much a part of the behavioural component as of the interactional component. It was concluded that pro-active behaviour gives a very good indication of what people believe about themselves and how they take control of their circumstances and that it contributes more towards the experience of psychological empowerment than cognitions alone.

It was concluded that more statistical analysis is necessary to determine the appropriateness of measuring the dimensions, self-determination and impact on lower levels of employment. Judging from the results it does seem that Spreitzer's (1995a) PEI is more suitable for use with managers and professionals than lower level employees, except with respect to the competence dimension.

By analysing and interpreting verbal interview data, dimensions, characteristics and behaviours of psychologically empowered people were determined and discussed in chapter seven and was integrated with quantitative results, which were discussed in chapter five of the present study, and previous research findings in chapter nine.

10.3.7 Recommendation of strategies for empowerment

To be of value to the field of organisation psychology and relevance to South Africa in the present social, political and economic climate, the final aim was to be able to recommend strategies for empowerment.

To be able to make recommendations, all data and findings regarding dimensions and factors were integrated in chapter nine. Recommendations were formulated that address the dimensions of psychological empowerment, as well as the characteristics and behaviours of psychologically empowered individuals as outcomes and incorporated those management practices that were found to be conducive to psychological empowerment.

The research succeeded in the aim to advocate a focus on not just mechanistic strategies for empowerment, but to concentrate strategies on intrinsic motivation or psychological empowerment. The results of the study contribute to the knowledge base regarding psychological empowerment, but specifically regarding the South African context.

10.4 METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The methods that were used in the present study are reviewed in terms of advantages and disadvantages. The limitations of the present study are discussed and recommendations for future research are made.

10.4.1 Conclusions regarding methods used

Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were employed. Where the quantitative approach is the traditional method that is utilised in social sciences and a considerable body of knowledge already exists, guidelines with respect to qualitative methods are not rigid and open to creativity and new developments. It was considered by Elliott, Fischer and Rennie (1999) as a rapidly evolving rich research method.

Berg (2007) advocated the use of modern technology and the demands of the present study were met by making use of semi-structured interviewing via e-mail. The advantages of using the e-interview method by far surpassed the disadvantages. Exactly the same semi-structured interview questions were used but much time was saved and it was much more convenient not to have to make an arrangement that suit all role players' schedules. Another big advantage and time saver was that the responses were already transcribed and ready for analysis, which saved much time. For a researcher who strives to report on a nationwide perspective, it is possible to cover the total demographic area. The biggest advantage of e-interviewing in this research was the increase in the number of interviewees that could be covered cost-effectively in different geographic areas.

The interaction, in which statements were clarified and probing for further information, was not problematic, because as replies were read and reflected on, clarification was requested where necessary. The interviewee's ability to express him or herself in writing is of the essence. It was found that some interviewees may have had a need to please and be accepted and with more time to answer, they may think more or even try to find 'text book' answers. One interviewee in particular supplied very lengthy answers, but this in itself is better than the short, generic answers that were also received.

During the process of transcribing the face-to-face interviews it was discovered that certain information was not clear and it had to be followed up by telephone calls or e-mail, while the e-interviews were conducted posing only a few questions at a time, which made it easier to clarify previous comments while the process was still ongoing.

Berg (2007) cautioned that individuals who volunteer to take part in an interview usually have a reason for doing so. Four participants volunteered. Two were face-to-face interviews and two e-interviews. The two face-to-face and one e-interview showed similarity in that they imparted far more private information than any of the other participants. The two face-to-face interviews were difficult to

control, because they were very talkative and did not always stick to the scheduled questions. The advantage that volunteers present is that they do not have to be probed. They disclose freely, but in that lay the disadvantage as well, because they imparted far more information than what was needed. This disadvantage was only because the research was limited to a work related domain, but if research is done across all domains, this would not be a problem.

The similarities that were found by other researchers in different contexts may be an indication of validity. The mixed method design that includes both quantitative and qualitative methods, together with comparing findings in the literature, provided the opportunity for triangulation. The contradictions in statements in the interview data were originally a cause for concern, until it was realised that different contexts may have been the reason for it.

10.4.2 Limitations of the study

As with any survey study, the measurements obtained from the questionnaires used in the quantitative phase of the study, were subject to response styles. The positive relationship between the predictor variable, management practices and the dependent variable, psychological empowerment might be partially ascribed to response tendencies towards high, neutral or low ratings. Where respondents were required to rate their managers' management practices, their favourable or unfavourable impression of a single attribute, might have affected the ratings. A respondent, who favours his or her manager, might be generous on all aspects of management behaviours, while a respondent who dislikes his or her manager might negatively evaluate all behaviours. Another group seemed to be hesitant to assign extreme ratings and limit their ratings to the centre of the scale. This tendency was found in a public sector organisation where neutral ratings were assigned to a greater extent than in other organisations. The study coincided with this organisation's restructuring process. The restructuring has been dragging on for a number of years and caused widespread de-motivation and negative attitudes towards management in general. Therefore, these

participants' responses may not reflect their feelings of empowerment and perceptions of the management practices under normal conditions.

The low return rate limits the generalisability of the findings especially in certain race groups. Small numbers of respondents had to be included from different organisations to make up an adequate number of respondents because of the unwillingness of corporate organisations to participate in the study. To solve the problem, three broad categories were used, namely private sector, public sector and non-government non-profit organisations. For example, two non-government non-profit organisations participated. They differed with respect to geographic characteristics and also with respect to relationships between management practices and psychological empowerment, but together they form part of one sector and produced statistics that are not distinctive of either. However, it is assumed that because a variety of organisations and geographic areas were covered that the relationships between management practices and psychological empowerment can be generalised to other organisations in the South African context. It is perhaps more desirable than focusing on one type of organisation in one geographic area only.

The qualitative study contributed to a better understanding of the concept, psychological empowerment and concepts could be studied in more depth. Qualitative methods are effective for determining the profiles of individuals, but for testing causal relationships between variables the methods are not as effective as quantitative methods. Behavioural and cognitive tendencies can be interpreted in different ways and it was found that other phenomena may emerge than what was intended with deductive approaches, for example, self-serving bias instead of locus of control.

It was found that some of the participants gave generic answers that do not contribute much to the study and more thought should be put into how questions are posed to get to the intended results. The guidelines were that no attempt should be made initially to start analysing and all interviews were transcribed

before analysis started. Inadequacies in the question strategy were only discovered while analysing and interpreting the verbal interview data.

10.4.3 Suggestions for future research

Suggestions for future research involve either a continuation of the present study or the improvement on present methods as a result of lessons learnt.

Twelve separate management practices were used as independent variables in the quantitative phase of the present study, while other studies combined organisational factors into an organisational climate. The management practices that were found to be significant contributors of psychological empowerment, delegation of responsibility, role clarity and motivation, together with the factors that emerged most prominently in the qualitative phase, opportunity and recognition, can be included in future studies in an investigation of an empowering climate.

A survey that includes the above mentioned management practices could be developed and validated. This could be administered to subordinates, together with a psychological empowerment survey, with the purpose of giving feedback to managers about their empowering behaviours for their development.

It would be beneficial if in future research organisational manipulations, such as interventions to improve a sense of empowerment, can be utilised in order to explain better the degree to which situational changes can reproduce motivational changes in employees. For example, a development programme for managers in the empowering behaviours that were found to produce psychological empowerment could be designed, which could be followed up with surveys to determine if it had a positive effect on their subordinates. For this purpose a pre-test post-test design followed by a longitudinal study to find out if it has a lasting effect are suggested. The effect of the suggested strategies outlined in paragraph 9.6 could also be evaluated.

Questionnaires that include the interactional and behavioural components, as well as characteristics of empowered people can be developed to get a more comprehensive picture of the state of empowerment. Especially, the relationship of pro-active behaviour with psychological empowerment should be investigated. The importance of the behavioural component in organisations became apparent in the qualitative study and it was found that the observation of behaviour, more than cognitions and the interactional component give an indication of empowerment. However, it must be kept in mind that the three components together describe empowerment, especially in community settings. The development of a survey for individuals that measures cognitions, characteristics and behaviours that are empowering in order to promote self-empowerment can contribute to the development of psychological empowerment. It will create awareness with individuals regarding where they stand on a continuum or in relation to a norm with respect to the components and it will indicate what needs to be developed. It can be instrumental in self-empowerment programmes.

Other researchers questioned whether the impact dimension in Spreitzer's (1995a; 1995b) models is applicable to lower level employees (Boudrias et al., 2004) and participants in the present study felt that they need to be on a decision-making level in order to be able to add value and make a difference. This created awareness that more research is necessary to determine which dimensions or sub-categories of dimensions are applicable to what levels of employment. Questionnaires could be made user friendly with instructions on what categories of the dimension are applicable to what levels of employment. However, it was ascertained that people on lower levels can experience a sense of meaning and impact if management allows them to participate and gives them feedback regarding how their efforts contribute to the achievement of organisational goals. Therefore, the manner in what statements are made with respect to the meaning and impact dimensions should be considered carefully for questionnaires on lower levels. It was also concluded that it should be accepted that employees on lower levels do experience empowerment to a lesser degree than managers and professionals. The purpose of a survey of psychological empowerment should, therefore, be clear. The PEI is seldom applied in isolation

and according to social cognitive theory it should always be applied against an environmental background, considering also personal factors.

It was found that some aspects of the dimensions were expressed as a need, for example, the need to have a purpose. These needs as well as goal categories and their relationship with needs and dimensions of psychological empowerment could be investigated in more detail, for example, what the relationship is between the fulfilment of certain needs and psychological empowerment.

With regard to improvement on the qualitative research method, it is suggested that a pilot study should be done first and that one should go through the whole process of transcribing, analysing and interpreting to determine inadequacies in the way questions are posed. The need for a pilot study was recognised in the present study and was suggested by other researchers in the past as well. Interviewers should insist on responses to questions regarding the behavioural component that consist of descriptions of behaviour, for example, by relating the actions that were taken in a particular incident, instead of accepting general statements.

10.5 A FINAL CONCLUSION

It was suggested that organisations and their management can make a huge contribution towards the perceptions regarding empowerment. Furthermore, the manner in which organisations approach empowerment can make a vast difference for employees in terms of how they experience empowerment. In suggesting strategies, the focus was on those factors and management practices that were found to contribute to psychological empowerment. It is important that the management of organisations accepts responsibility for the empowerment of their employees. However, employees should also realise that empowerment is something that they can claim for themselves and take responsibility for by being goal orientated and pro-active. There is a great need for empowerment on all levels in the present South African context and the empowerment of others should be a purpose and a goal that every citizen strives for.

10.6 SUMMARY

The present study presented an understanding of the concept, psychological empowerment, which enabled the researcher to get clarity on certain assumptions. In this chapter, what could be concluded from the study regarding assumptions that were made in chapter two, were discussed. The main findings that were intentionally explored by means of research questions and aims were summarised. Advantages and disadvantages of the methodology pertaining to the present study were reviewed, limitations were pointed out and suggestions for future research were made.

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APPENDIX A: QUANTITATIVE QUESTIONNAIRES

Dear Respondent

PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT RESEARCH

This survey forms part of a doctoral thesis. The purpose of the research is to get a better understanding of psychological empowerment in the South African context.

The purpose of the

- DEMOGRAPHIC DATA QUESTIONNAIRE (pp 2-3) is to make sure that the survey is representative of all the different groups of respondents in South Africa;
- PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT INSTRUMENT (PEI) (pp 4-5) is to determine to what extent employees in South Africa are psychologically empowered; and
- CONTEXTUAL FACTOR SURVEY (pp 6-8) is to determine the influence of the general context in which you experience empowerment.

You are invited to participate in this survey.

Please answer ALL the questions as best you can. Try to be as honest and accurate as you can, based on your experience. Don't select a response just because it seems to be the right thing to say. Do your best to judge your current situation truthfully. The closer your answers are to your true appraisal of these dimensions, the more useful and accurate the results will be. Your opinion is very important, as it will contribute to the abovementioned purpose.

Your answers will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. To ensure this – DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME ANYWHERE ON THE QUESTIONNAIRE. Only aggregate data will be reported on.

My contact details are the following:

Cell: 082 829 6799; Tell: (021) 945-4042

E-mail: ansie@mfourie.com

NB! If you think that you can contribute by sharing your feelings regarding empowerment with me in a one-to-one interview for the purpose of qualitative research, please contact me at the above numbers.

Thank you for your participation and co-operation in this study.

Ansie Fourie

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

RESPONDENT NR:

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1. NAME OF ORGANISATION:

2. PROVINCE:

Gauteng	Limpopo	North West
Western Cape	Eastern Cape	Northern Cape
Free State	KwaZulu Natal	Mpumalanga

3. RACE:

ASIAN	BLACK	COLOURED	WHITE
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4. GENDER:

MALE	FEMALE
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5. AGE:

20 – 25 years	26 – 30 years	31 – 35 years	36 – 40 years	41 – 45 years	46 – 50 years	51 yrs or older
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6. EDUCATIONAL LEVEL:

Less than Matric (NQF Level 3 or less)	
Matric/ Grade 12 (NQF Level 4)	
Certificate (one to two years post matric) (NQF Level 5)	
Diploma / Degree (three years post matric) (NQF Level 6)	
Post Graduate (NQF Level 7+)	

7. YOUR POSITION / JOB TITLE:

8. What are your core responsibilities?

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.....

.....

RESPONDENT NR:

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PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT INSTRUMENT (PEI) (Spreitzer, 1995a)

(Gretchen Spreitzer is associate professor of management and organisation at the Stephen M. Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan. Her research has been widely published. Written permission was obtained to use her instrument).

Listed below are a number of self-orientations that people may have with regard to their work role. Using the following scale, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree that each statement describes how you feel about your work role by marking the appropriate block with an **X**.

VS = Very Strongly

S = Strongly

VS Disagree	1		Agree	5
S Disagree	2	Neutral 4	S Agree	6
Disagree	3		VS Agree	7

1. I am confident about my ability to do my job.

VS Disagree 1	S Disagree 2	Disagree 3	Neutral 4	Agree 5	S Agree 6	VS Agree 7
------------------	-----------------	---------------	--------------	------------	--------------	---------------

2. The work that I do is important to me.

VS Disagree 1	S Disagree 2	Disagree 3	Neutral 4	Agree 5	S Agree 6	VS Agree 7
------------------	-----------------	---------------	--------------	------------	--------------	---------------

3. I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job.

VS Disagree 1	S Disagree 2	Disagree 3	Neutral 4	Agree 5	S Agree 6	VS Agree 7
------------------	-----------------	---------------	--------------	------------	--------------	---------------

4. My impact on what happens in my department is large.

VS Disagree 1	S Disagree 2	Disagree 3	Neutral 4	Agree 5	S Agree 6	VS Agree 7
------------------	-----------------	---------------	--------------	------------	--------------	---------------

5. My job activities are personally meaningful to me.

VS Disagree 1	S Disagree 2	Disagree 3	Neutral 4	Agree 5	S Agree 6	VS Agree 7
------------------	-----------------	---------------	--------------	------------	--------------	---------------

6. I have a great deal of control over what happens in my department.

VS Disagree 1	S Disagree 2	Disagree 3	Neutral 4	Agree 5	S Agree 6	VS Agree 7
------------------	-----------------	---------------	--------------	------------	--------------	---------------

7. I can decide on my own how to go about doing my own work.

VS Disagree 1	S Disagree 2	Disagree 3	Neutral 4	Agree 5	S Agree 6	VS Agree 7
------------------	-----------------	---------------	--------------	------------	--------------	---------------

8. I have considerable opportunity for independence and freedom in how I do my job.

VS Disagree 1	S Disagree 2	Disagree 3	Neutral 4	Agree 5	S Agree 6	VS Agree 7
------------------	-----------------	---------------	--------------	------------	--------------	---------------

9. I have mastered the skills necessary for my job.

VS Disagree 1	S Disagree 2	Disagree 3	Neutral 4	Agree 5	S Agree 6	VS Agree 7
------------------	-----------------	---------------	--------------	------------	--------------	---------------

10. The work I do is meaningful to me.

VS Disagree 1	S Disagree 2	Disagree 3	Neutral 4	Agree 5	S Agree 6	VS Agree 7
------------------	-----------------	---------------	--------------	------------	--------------	---------------

11. I have significant influence over what happens in my department.

VS Disagree 1	S Disagree 2	Disagree 3	Neutral 4	Agree 5	S Agree 6	VS Agree 7
------------------	-----------------	---------------	--------------	------------	--------------	---------------

12. I am self-assured about my capabilities to perform my work activities.

VS Disagree 1	S Disagree 2	Disagree 3	Neutral 4	Agree 5	S Agree 6	VS Agree 7
------------------	-----------------	---------------	--------------	------------	--------------	---------------

13. I really care about what I do on my job.

VS Disagree 1	S Disagree 2	Disagree 3	Neutral 4	Agree 5	S Agree 6	VS Agree 7
------------------	-----------------	---------------	--------------	------------	--------------	---------------

14. My job is well within the scope of my abilities.

VS Disagree 1	S Disagree 2	Disagree 3	Neutral 4	Agree 5	S Agree 6	VS Agree 7
------------------	-----------------	---------------	--------------	------------	--------------	---------------

15. My opinion counts in departmental decision-making.

VS Disagree 1	S Disagree 2	Disagree 3	Neutral 4	Agree 5	S Agree 6	VS Agree 7
------------------	-----------------	---------------	--------------	------------	--------------	---------------

16. I have a chance to use personal initiative in carrying out my work.

VS Disagree 1	S Disagree 2	Disagree 3	Neutral 4	Agree 5	S Agree 6	VS Agree 7
------------------	-----------------	---------------	--------------	------------	--------------	---------------

RESPONDENT NR:

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CONTEXTUAL FACTOR SURVEY

The following survey is designed to help form a view of your organisation and the context in which you function. There are no right or wrong responses. The survey is primarily for research purposes; your name will not ever be attached to your responses.

Listed below are a number of statements regarding your work context and the position you hold in the organisation. It consists of management behaviours and practices. Describe your present work situation as objectively as you can by using the following scale to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each. Please mark the appropriate block with an **X**.

VSD = Very Strongly Disagree = 1

Agree = A = 5

SD = Strongly Disagree = 2

Strongly Agree = SA = 6

D = Disagree = 3

VSA = Very Strongly Agree = 7

N = Neutral = 4

The following statements describe your **MANAGER / MANAGEMENT**. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

My manager / Management ...		VSD	SD	D	N	A	SA	VSA
1	is willing to respond to my concerns on a personal level.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2	shares information that I need to ensure high quality results.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3	ensures that I have access to the resources I need to do my job well.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4	is a role model for successful goal accomplishment.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5	gives clear information about my performance and efficiency on the job.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6	is clear about my delegations and how much authority I have.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7	has confidence in me to execute responsibilities entrusted to me to the best of my ability.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	is successful and serves as a role model for me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9	motivates me through enhancing my belief in my competence.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10	encourages me to develop my own solutions to problems I encounter in my work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

My manager / Management ...		VSD	SD	D	N	A	SA	VSA
11	is available to provide support and guidance to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12	consults with me when my workgroup is affected by a decision on his/her level.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13	ensures that continuous learning and skill development are priorities in our department.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14	sets an example, maintain high moral values and deserves the respect of subordinates.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15	relies on me to make my own decisions about issues that affect how work gets done.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16	gives me the authority to make changes necessary to improve things.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17	gives feedback that is aimed at suggestions on how to improve, rather than blaming and criticising.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18	supports and encourages me to take initiative and risk.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19	utilises methods, such as Coaching, Mentoring, Facilitation and Counselling as means to enhance my competence.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20	continually encourages or motivates subordinates to improve their performance.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21	is open for ideas and suggestions from lower levels.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22	lets me know exactly what is expected of me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23	can be trusted to share information that enables me to feel safe to take the risk to make decisions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24	permits me to use my own initiative to decide how to go about doing things at work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25	allows me to take responsibility for the outcome of my work objectives.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26	provides opportunities to discuss my results with him/her.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27	practices participative management.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28	gives me the information I need to independently make the decisions that are expected of me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

My manager / Management...		VSD	SD	D	N	A	SA	VSA
29	enables me to obtain additional resources when I need them to do my job.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30	I have opportunities to develop my own special abilities relevant to my position.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
31	is clear about what my responsibilities are.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
32	allows me to obtain the resources I need without having to ask permission.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
33	imparts strategic information I need to fulfil my responsibilities.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
34	promotes trust, respect and cooperation among co-workers.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
35	authorises me to make decisions that improve work processes and procedures.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
36	sets challenging goals and motivate me towards the accomplishment of it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

THE END

APPENDIX B: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

1. When you hear the word 'empowerment' what do you think? What comes to mind first?
2. Tell me shortly how your career progressed since you left school up to now.
3. Tell me about an event, something that happened during your career that you experienced as particularly satisfying; that made you feel good about yourself.
4. Tell me about an event that happened (career related) that you experienced as negative.
5. When in general do you feel good about yourself?
6. When in general do you feel not so good about yourself?
7. What do you believe / don't believe of yourself?
8. Do you have any goals that you still want to achieve in your career? What are they?
9. What factors are you aware of that hinder your efforts to achieve your goals?
10. What resources are you aware of in your organisation that enhances your efforts to achieve your goals?
11. What do you do about utilising resources or overcoming obstacles in order to achieve your goals?
12. What strategies does your organisation utilise to enhance employees' competence?
13. How do you see your position in relationship to the organisation's vision, mission and goals?

14. What would you single out as the most important contributing factor to what you have become?

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEWEES: GENERAL PROFILE

Nr	PE	SECTOR	OCCUPATION	LEVEL	RACE	GENDER
1		Public	Clerk Customer Support	L	White	Male
2	2,88	Public	Clerk	L	Coloured	Male
3	3,63	Public	Surveyor	P	White	Female
4	4,94	Public	Town Planner	P	White	Male
5	4,94	Private	Business Analyst	P	Asian	Female
6	5,56	Public	Service Improvement Prac	P	Black	Female
7	5,63	Private	Manager (Consultant)	M	White	Male
8	5,81	Public	Principal Technician	P	White	Male
9	6,00	Public	OD Consultant	P	White	Female
10	6,13	Private	Learning and Development	P	White	Female
11	6,19	Public	Personal Assistant HR	L	Coloured	Female
12	6,44	NGO	Social Worker	P	White	Female
13	6,69	Public	Personnel Practitioner	M	White	Female
14	6,69	Public	Admin Officer	M	Coloured	Female
15	6,69	Public	Chief Operating Officer	M	Black	Male
16	6,69	Private	Quality Controller	P	Coloured	Male
17	6,75	Public	Snr Accountant	M	White	Female
18	6,81	Public	Project Manager	M	White	Male
19	6,81	Private	Accountant	P	White	Male
20	6,94	Private	Divisional HR Director	M	White	Female
		1 NGO 6 Private 13 Public		3 Low 10 Prof 7 Man	1 Asian 2 Black 4 Coloured 13 White	9 Male 11 Female

APPENDIX D: EXAMPLE: TRANSCRIBED SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

E-INTERVIEW DIVISIONAL DIRECTOR: HR (ORG096)

Company insurance brokers.

1. When you hear the word 'empowerment' what do you think? What comes to mind first?

Helping people to be the best they can be.

2. Tell me shortly how your career progressed since you left school up to now.

Phew!

Secretarial / PA background. Then - Payroll Manager. Payroll was brought in-house and I was trained. Enjoyed people contact and started studying HR. Did 3 yr IPM Diploma. Top Student.

Worked in Payroll for 3 years. Bugged for cross-over into HR and was mentored by Snr HRM who got sick and I stepped in for him.

Studied B.Tech.

Personnel Officer, promoted to Snr Personnel Officer, promoted to HR Manager at large (Company).

HR Manager at (Company) for 3 yrs

HR Manager at Consulting Engineers. Promoted to HR Director after 18 months. Worked there for 4 ½ yrs.

Studied for B.Com (Hons) in HR.

HR Divisional Director at (Company). In the process of being appointed as Group HR Director (acting in position). Been with (Company) almost two years.

All studies part time.

(Action orientation)

3. Tell me about an event, something that happened during your career that you experienced as particularly satisfying; that made you feel good about yourself.

When I was trying to 'cross-over' from Payroll to HR, my manager (mentor) fell sick and I **offered to stand in** and did a good job which helped me gain **experience** to take on an HR role.

(Pro-active)

4. Tell me about an event that happened (career related) to you personally that you experienced as negative. How did you feel and how did you react?

I had a manager who I did not respect and I did most of the work. Eventually, I spoke to his boss and said I was resigning and they said they had already decided to fire him which they did and I got his job.

5. How do you feel about the prospect of being appointed as Group HR Director?

That I've worked hard and deserve the promotion. **Challenged** and excited about the **difference I can make**.
(Internal locus of control)

6. When in general do you feel good about yourself?

Most of the time, I self-affirm and read a fair amount of 'positive' stuff and also do visualisations etc. I feel great when I've **accomplished something** and 'got it off the pile'!

7. When in general do you feel not so good about yourself?

When my energy levels are low. Also when I feel a bit **'out of control'** when I have a lot on my plate and I am running between meetings – although sometimes this is energising. I don't like to miss deadlines or to produce stuff that isn't my best – then I can feel a bit less good about myself.

8. What do you believe / don't believe of yourself?

I believe in myself. I believe I am good at what I do and can **add significant value**. I don't believe I am that good a networker and don't do politics so well.

You mentioned that you believe that you are excited about the difference that you can make and that you believe that you can add value, please elaborate on the expression, making a difference.

We've been spending a whole lot of time in developing our culture and values and the whole concept of 'making a difference' has come up time and again – not just at a senior level. In fact, what I find most interesting is that most of our younger, motivated staff want to do just that 'make a difference'. Of course, it is often difficult to identify just how people can do that. In fact, we're well entrenched in a programme to identify behaviours that will drive high performance at both organisational and individual level (with Saville Consulting who are the organisational psychologists we're working with). I guess, from a **behavioural perspective** it is about being **change orientated**, impatient to get things started, being good at making things happen, driving to **achieve** outstanding **results** and being accountable. My own view, is that we can enable people to make a difference by creating an environment where people can communicate freely (across the organisation), can **challenge established views** and can be empowered to make a contribution. Certainly, in our bright young talent initiative, we are encouraging our younger, less senior people to get involved in various projects which gives them access to senior people in the business and where they can brainstorm their ideas and, if they are good, then they can get involved in projects to make them happen – 'make a difference'.

On a personal level, what I find is that there are a lot of people who are willing to let individuals 'make a difference' but there is a need to firstly to voice this need,

secondly to establish credibility and then to position oneself as a reliable person who demonstrates *initiative*. Thereafter, an individual *seizes opportunities to 'make a difference'* and if it is done well, then there are more opportunities created – surely empowerment?

9. To be appointed as Group HR Director, was it a goal that you set out to achieve? Do you have any goals that you still want to achieve in your career? What are they?

Yes I did set out for this goal. I have a goal to succession plan someone into my position within 3 years max and then I want to do something different. Perhaps not in HR. I would like more time for myself and to do something *more indulgent* – like write a book, so I am do one of two things – either take steps to move into an operational role (I have good general management skills and my CEO has consistently commented about my ability to drive through general business initiatives) or I might consult back on a less stressful basis and do a bit of both. I don't stress around goals and trust quite a bit to the universe to provide some guidance.

Career goals; alternative goals – self-actualisation
Feedback from manager – recognition of skills

You said “I don't stress around goals” and I understand that. The following questions also have to do with your personal goals, so they may sound more relevant to somebody who do stress around goals. Just go with your general manner of doing if there should be a goal that you really would like to achieve ...

10. The goals you mentioned, are you aware of factors that stand in your way of achieving them?

I believe the only things that stand in the way of achieving goals are myself. (*Internal locus of control*).

11. What resources do you have or do you make use of to achieve personal goals?

I visualise and use self-affirmations from a thought perspective and I am quite a *controlling* individual so put in *action plans* around goals. (*Cognitive plus proactive behaviour*)

12. What do you normally do to overcome obstacles?

Depends what the obstacle is. I am usually fairly non-emotional so will try to unpack the obstacle and view, *objectively*, what the probable solution might be. For example, I had resistance to employing our graduate trainees on a permanent basis. They had been on a one year contract. The business was reluctant to change this as they weren't sure if they would work out in the long term and wanted to be in a position to pick and choose. I set out the IR implications of 'picking and choosing', I set out the business case for permanent

employment – we are in a skill shortage, reviewed the selection process, tightened up, and – by presenting a well articulated and strong motivation – I obtained buy in. I am also not averse to lobbying in powerful places prior to an important decision. *(Pro-active)*

13. Can you tell me something about your organisation's strategies to enhance employees' competence?

I have a training manager and officer dedicated to the T&D function. We fund studies. We budget 3% of payroll on training and development. I have an OD specialist focusing on leadership and performance. We have drawn up a skill matrix dealing with skills, knowledge and behaviours. We are just about to roll out a values, culture and competency exercise across the org to be able to identify existing and potential talent and create a formal talent review leading to leadership pipeline. Generic jobs are profiled for skills and competencies and we use a psychometric tool to measure person / job fit. Our performance management tool links measurable outcomes against identified competency. To drive high performance our model is, firstly, architecture – job profiles, grading, performance contracts. Second, competencies – task focus to behavioural focus as we move up the leadership pyramid; and lastly reward high performance and extinguish poor performance measured in balanced scorecard and 360 degree appraisals – still to be rolled out.

(Interactional component)

14. What would you single out as the most important contributing factor(s) to what you have become?

Being a very *driven* person with a strong *focus* and high *work ethic*. I set very high *standards* and deliver against these and this has resulted in my gaining a *good reputation* for *professional delivery*. I must add that working with engineers for almost 5 years really helped me to raise my game as I find they are very well educated and well read and I simply couldn't shoot from the hip as someone, somewhere would have read up on an aspect of HR and would challenge me. I also *improved* my financial *skills* as they always wanted the bottom line. I found this to be incredibly helpful as, in my current job, I don't find as many *challenges* from individuals but feel that I am usually *one step ahead* because of the standards set in the engineering environment.

(pro-active – internal locus of control – give credit)

APPENDIX E: LIST OF ARTICLES USED IN QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

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