

# Managers and workers

[Business](#), [Work](#)



Empowerment is a very broad concept which is applied in various fields. Luttell and Quiroz (2007: 2) agree the concept is used by different institutions. Thus, one universal definition is not applicable to the many areas of endeavor which employ the concept. In this paper it is applied to the “work” environment between employers and workers. Thus it deserves a unique approach. However, it is important to start with a basic understanding of empowerment. Thomas and Velthouse (1990: 667) write that empowerment means to give power to.

Power, however, has several meanings. .. authority, authorization. Power also may ... however power also means energy. Thus to empower can mean to energize. The definition of empowerment above means that the work force that is being empowered is hitherto inactive. In other words, they wait for the managers to tell them what to do. They do not have initiative and in some cases, they may know what to do but they are not allowed to initiate any action on their own without such initiative originating from the manager.

In many organizations where empowerment is set aside, absolute power is in the hands of the managers (superiors). Empowerment is liberation from the “autocracy of managers” which Cloke & Goldsmith (2002: 5) rightly refer to. Furthermore, Page and Czuba (1999: 3) write that, ... empowerment is a multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives. It is a process that fosters power (that is, the capacity to implement) in people, for use in their own lives, their communities, and in their society, by acting on issues that they define as important

.... Empowerment is multi-dimensional, social, and a process. In this definition there are three different concepts. Empowerment is applied in

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various fields; it involves people and takes stages to accomplish. Empowerment: All the controversy about it. Workplace empowerment is a tenuous issue. Some managers are not willing to embrace it because it may not serve their interests. Members of the workforce may see it as a way of liberation. In more culturally inclined areas, employees may be used to the idea of taking orders from the managers without doing anything on their own.

Thus getting used to empowerment in the workplace for these people will be a slow transition indeed. Hales (2000: 501-519) aptly captures this situation when he writes that empowerment in today's modern world is riddled with ambiguity, inconsistency and contradictory interpretations. Furthermore it is interpreted in different ways. Authorities in critical theory like Freire (1970: 58) and Giroux (1981: 28) point out that empowerment enables employees to acquire more control over issues that concern them.

Critical theory takes a view from the stand of the oppressed. The exercise of power can be very brutal and oppressive in some cases especially from Weber's (1946: 54) description of power. Weber (1946: 54) writes that power is the ability to make others do what we want them to do irrespective of their own wishes, desires and interests. In a workplace where orders and directions come from above present a scenario of oppression. In most cases they might be disgruntled by do not have a chance to express their grievances.

Empowerment is a chance to let the steam out. Do workers and management view empowerment differently? Empowerment is a very popular idea in today's world yet there are contradictions in practice.

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However, Potterfield (1999: 1) writes that it is difficult to find work places where the potentials of workers are fully developed and enabled in line with the ideals of empowerment. This observationsuggests a conflict. If empowerment is perceived to bring a world of good to the work place, why don't some managers apply the concept?

Definitely they have a different perception of empowerment which differs from the widely accepted variety. Probably empowerment (in its true form as we know it) put them in an uncomfortable position. In the study, “Empowerment in the “ New Workplace”: A Qualitative study of Meaning and Experience,” Mandefrot (2003: 1) assesses the meaning and experience of workers who participated in workplace empowerment programs. According to Mandefrot (2003: 4), the study is pertinent because the concept (empowerment) is misunderstood. The study comes up with a lot of interesting findings.

One of the respondents to the study sees empowerment as double dissonance, interplay between the manager and self. It is the ability to fit in to the picture while being torn in two by these extremes. Another respondent to the study who is a manager with a major bank feels very resentful about empowerment because it has a lot of promise, yet unable to deliver any. Although in empowerment there is a lot of talk about giving and getting power, this manager states that none of these happen in reality. Thus, this is the irony about empowerment.

Mandefrot (2003: 6) concludes that empowerment among employees means living with a pull from two forces- managers and employees. Many employees are willing to do away with this confusing and return to the <https://assignbuster.com/managers-and-workers-research-paper-samples/>

direction of managers which is aptly captured by Cloke & Goldsmith (2002: 5) when they state Many employees actually prefer being told what to do by autocratic managers and are willing to accept being treated like children in exchange for irresponsibility and reduced stress. They are willing to blindly obey hierarchical authority and keep silent before their superiors in exchange for job security.

It is easier by far to be an unthinking drone who obeys orders from above than a self-managing team member who is responsible for results. Many other studies have found respondents disenfranchised with empowerment. In the study by Edwards and Collinson (2002: 286-287) the respondents pointed out that empowerment is all about top management not employees at the lower end of the ladder. Similarly, another study by Harley (1990) lends credence to this finding when he writes that empowerment is more of a myth. It may exist on paper but certainly not in practice.

However, in the study, “ Top management leadership, employee empowerment, job satisfaction, and customer satisfaction in TQM organizations: an empirical study|” Ugboro and Obeng (2001: 247-272) find a positive correlation between top management leadership, employee empowerment, job satisfaction, and customer satisfaction. Furthermore, Huang and Wang (2005: 93-104) believe in the promise of workplace empowerment and urge nurse administrators to manage the empowerment of nurses better so that nurses can realize their potential. This will eventually lead to job satisfaction.

In survey of 81 employees Thorlakson and Murray (1996: 67-83) sought to establish the efficacy of empowerment as a promising solution. Results from <https://assignbuster.com/managers-and-workers-research-paper-samples/>

the study provided little support for empowerment as a positive force. From the presentation above, it is clear that workers and managers view empowerment differently. Spreitzer (1999) holds that some managers have a confused notion of empowerment; they see it as a “quick fix” and expect it to work immediately. However, empowerment is a gradual cultural change process which takes a long time to achieve.

Managers are not the only ones who have a wrong perception of empowerment. Spreitzer (1999: 7) goes further to explain how this happens. Employees may not often understand what empowerment means. Their managers may tell them that they are empowered but fail to establish and identify the specific ways by which they are empowered. Conclusion Empowerment is a complex concept that is applied in various fields. Thus, it is perceived by different professionals by their experiences. Workers and managers perceive empowerment differently because they are different groups with their own goals and aspirations.

Empowerment is a divisive force in the work place because it sets both groups (workers and manager) up against each other. In most cases, empowerment has failed to deliver the promises which it advocates. It may look good on paper but, it is a different story in practice. Evidence is provided by the different studies analyzed in preceding sections. In most cases empowerment may not be acclaimed as a success story in the work place, but a few studies give a positive recommendation of the concept.

Furthermore, the different perception of empowerment in various work places point to the fact that the concept may be more suited in certain situations. For example in the study about nurses stated above, it was <https://assignbuster.com/managers-and-workers-research-paper-samples/>

recommended that more needed to be done to harness the benefits of empowerment. In a field like nursing on the spot decisions are necessary because delay can be dangerous. References Cloke, K. & Goldsmith, J. (2002) *The End of Management and the Rise of Organizational Democracy*. San-Francisco: Jossey-Bass p. 5 Edwards, P. and Collinson, M. (2002). “ Empowerment and Managerial Labor Strategies.

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