

THE CONSTRUCTION AND EVALUATION OF A SCALE OF EMPLOYEE EMPOWERMENT

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to construct and evaluate a scale of employee empowerment that may benefit organisational transformation. An Employee Empowerment Questionnaire consisting of 90 items was developed and administered to 164 respondents within a large metropolitan council. The study indicated that the Employee Empowerment Questionnaire is highly reliable ($r_{xx}=0,982$) and sensitive to group differences.

OPSOMMING

Die doel van die studie was om 'n skaal van werknembermagtigingsvraelys vir organisasie-transformasiedoeleindes te konstrueer en te evalueer. 'n Werknembermagtigingsvraelys, bestaande uit 90 items is ontwikkel en toegepas op 164 respondente in 'n plaaslike owerheid. Die studie het aangedui dat die Werknembermagtigingsvraelys hoogs betroubaar ($r_{xx}=0,982$) en sensitief vir groepsverskille is.

One of the critical issues confronting managers in the process of transforming organisations, is employee empowerment (Robbins, 2001). Empowerment is an organisational strategy that gives workers greater responsibility for decision-making and increased involvement in controlling work processes (Schreuder & Theron, 1997). The empowerment trend emerged as organisations recognised their employees' capacity to improve and enhance organisational performance through being informed and involved; through the recognition of their skills and experience and being encouraged to be creative, innovative and to take risks (Cooks, 1993; Lepree, 1995; Losey, 1995). As such, empowerment has a democratising function as it addresses the redistribution of authority and accountability in the organisation. Most often it entails the granting of greater decision-making power to front-line employees which enables them to improve the way work is done or to customise the process for customers (Heil, Bennis & Stephens, 2000).

Empowerment is both difficult to define and measure (Scott & Jaffe, 1992) and even more so to implement (Semler, 1994). As far as the definition of empowerment is concerned, Bekker and Crous (1998) addressed the understanding of empowerment by clarifying the role and contribution of empowerment in organisations and how empowerment differs from concepts such as employee involvement and participation.

In their search for a definition of empowerment, Bekker and Crous (1998) identified three main streams of thinking. Firstly, they highlighted an organisational empowerment perspective (an 'objective' dimension), comprising aspects such as team-work, information sharing and decision making on an organisational level. Secondly, they identified definitions focusing on the individual empowerment perspective (a 'subjective' dimension) with discussions relating to aspects such as motivation, followership, organisational commitment, locus of control and entitlement. The third stream of thinking incorporated a training and development perspective (a 'competence' dimension). As a result, empowerment is seen to be multi-dimensional

in nature, achieved through the interaction of the aforementioned dimensions – organisational, individual and development competence – which manifests at individual, intra and inter-group levels (Cook, 1993).

As regards the implementation of empowerment, Scott and Jaffe (1992) were of the opinion that emphasis should be placed on the subjective dimension of empowerment, and as such *the level of empowerment as perceived by employees should therefore be assessed prior to taking any action for implementation*. Shared general employee perceptions can be expressed as the empowerment climate (Saal & Knight, 1988). For a comprehensive definition on climate, Tustin (1993) referred to Woodman and King (1997, p. 818) who stated the following: "Climate is reality-based and thus capable of being shared in the sense that observers or participants may agree upon the climate of an organisation or group, although this consensus may be constrained by individual differences in perception". Barnes (1990) referred to the view of Payne and Mansefield (1973) who were of the opinion that the concept of climate may provide a conceptual link between organisational and individual dimensions.

As regards the structure of the climate for empowerment as construct, Scott and Jaffe (1992) mentioned that in working with organisations to improve the climate of empowerment, the following qualities were listed repeatedly: clarity of purpose, morale, fairness, recognition, team-work, participation, communication and a healthy environment.

The context of the present study: A local government environment.

The mindset within the traditional bureaucracy, according to Brown and Brown (1994), is almost entirely foreign to ideas of empowerment. Empowerment rejects a mindset of highly controlled, scarcely involved, authoritarian culture of rules and procedures, and the presumption that "management knows best". These mindsets may cripple an organisation such as a local government that has indicated a movement away from bureaucracy (traditionally associated with government institutions) toward becoming a participative and customer-driven organisation (Egoli 2002 document, 2000).

With the implementation of the Unicity model of local government within the Greater Johannesburg metropole, whereby five independent councils will be merged into a single local authority, it has become increasingly important that local government employees be empowered to make the necessary decisions, increase service delivery and add value to the organisation (Egoli 2002 document, 2000).

At first, local government management was of the opinion that it would not be possible for a local government to empower its employees. As motivation, they stated that government institutions such as local authorities and the Unicity, which supply statutory services, require customer-interfacing staff be consistent in the application of specified rules. The need for such rules is fuelled by the fear that exercising discretion in the provision of public services can be risky and may lead to anomalies. As a result, rules drift as initiatives become embedded as new practices. According to Eccles (1993) such procedural requirements inhibit empowerment in practice, but this should not discourage management, since employees must then be empowered to carry out the closely specified tasks with maximum responsiveness to given signals.

For the envisaged Unicity to be successful, management must enthrone employees to adhere to a mission and set of strategies which address the needs and provide value-for-money services to the community they serve, which may lead to empowerment. Every employee requires a clear grasp of the mission of the organisation and an understanding where his or her job fits into the broader organisational strategy (Potter, 1994).

According to Eccles (1993) empowerment is effective when a powerful management is so confident of its grip on the organisation, that it can devolve power in order to hasten the implementation of its overall policies. Individuals need to be valued for who they are, and not merely as instruments. Employees at every level need to act decisively and provide their energies, initiatives and intelligence to benefit of the organisation (Nixon, 1994).

It is perhaps within this context that the broad motives for forming a Unicity need to be outlined. The driving force behind the move to a Unicity was informed by a broad vision of a city capable of meeting its inhabitants' (customers) basic needs, growing the economy, creating jobs and becoming more competitive.

In order to achieve the objectives of the Unicity model, local government needs to create a climate conducive to empowerment. The first step in such a process would be to determine local government employees' perceptions of empowerment, in order to identify possible areas of concern. These need to be addressed so as to ensure successful organisational transformation (Scott & Jaffe, 1992). The measuring of empowerment perceptions can assist in applying the correct intervention to lead an organisation, such as local government, through a transitional period.

The primary purpose of this study was the construction and evaluation of an empowerment scale. Since the possibility of sub-climates of empowerment exists (Payne, 1995), a secondary aim was to compare groups with different biographical backgrounds in respect of age, gender, language, length of service, qualifications and remuneration. In this regard the following research hypotheses were formulated:

Hypothesis 1

Female employees will perceive themselves as being less empowered than their male counterparts.

The rationale for this hypothesis rests on the assumption that

males are still in advantaged positions in local government organisations, even though this probably occurs to a lesser extent today.

Hypothesis 2

Older employees will perceive themselves as being less empowered than their younger counterparts.

The rationale for this hypothesis rests on the assumption that older employees tend to stick to tried and trusted ideas. Furthermore, younger workers have not been exposed to the same restrictive conditions the older workers experienced in the past.

Hypothesis 3

Africans or Black employees will perceive themselves as being more empowered than white or Asian employees.

The rationale for this hypothesis rests on the assumption that for decades, South Africa was characterised by racial inequality as far as empowerment is concerned. However, due to the political changes and new legislation with regard to affirmative action South Africa can no longer be characterised by racial inequality.

Hypothesis 4

Employees with a longer service in local authorities will perceive themselves as being less empowered than employees with shorter service records.

The rationale for this hypothesis rests on the assumption that employees with a greater length of service experienced the restrictive conditions which held under the previous regime.

Hypothesis 5

Employees with formal tertiary qualifications will perceive themselves as being more empowered than employees with matric qualifications or lower.

The rationale for this hypothesis rests on the assumption that employees with higher academic qualifications are more likely to focus their time and efforts on developing their intellectual potential in the workplace than those with lesser qualifications.

Hypothesis 6

Employees earning a high salary will perceive themselves as being more empowered than employees earning a lower salary.

The rationale for this hypothesis rests on the findings of Exley (1993, p.5), namely that employees higher up in the organisation have greater power to effect change than do employees lower down in the hierarchy.

METHOD

Sample

The organisation from which the sample was drawn is a local authority. The organisation consists of a metropolitan council and four metropolitan local councils, which are in the process of merging into a single local authority, to be known as the Unicity.

The test sample consisted of 164 randomly selected employees. The sample was drawn from all functions and cultural groups within the organisation. It consisted of 75 males and 74 females and 15 of unknown gender, the majority of the respondents were in the 31 - 40 year age group and have been in service for more than 10 years. The group comprised both genders and 7,39 % possessed a qualification of Standard 10 or higher, with 41,46 % Afrikaans speaking, 22,56 % English speaking and 25% other mother tongues. The majority of the group earned between R 4 266-00 and R 8 034-00 per month.

TABLE 1
BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION OF RESPONDENTS

	N	Percentage
1. GENDER		
Male	75	45,73 %
Female	74	45,12 %
Unknown	15	9,14 %
2. AGE		
<30	38	23,17 %
31 – 40	54	32,92 %
40+	53	32,31 %
Unknown	19	11,58 %
3. LENGTH OF SERVICE		
<5	36	21,95 %
5 – 10	42	25,61 %
>10	70	42,68 %
Unknown	16	9,75 %
4. QUALIFICATIONS		
Std6 – std8	28	17,07 %
Matric	61	37,19 %
Diploma	26	15,85 %
Degree, Honours or Master's	35	21,34 %
Unknown	14	8,53 %
5. MOTHER TONGUE		
Afrikaans	68	41,46 %
English	37	22,56 %
Other	41	25,00 %
Unknown	18	10,97 %
6. REMUNERATION		
<R4230	49	29,87 %
R4266 – R8034	61	37,19 %
>R9155	36	21,95 %
Unknown	18	10,97 %

Note N = 164

Measuring instruments

Scott and Jaffe (1992) developed a questionnaire consisting of 35 items based on the following qualities or dimensions: Clarity of purpose, morale, fairness, recognition, teamwork, participation, communication and healthy environment. These qualities were

used as a source during the compilation of the Employee Empowerment Questionnaire (EEQ). Since the metric properties of Scott and Jaffe's instrument were inadequate, a more comprehensive questionnaire was developed, incorporating each of the abovementioned qualities.

For the purpose of this study, 90 items were formulated. The questionnaire was specifically designed to determine employees' perception of empowerment. Each item in the questionnaire uses a seven-point response scale – a format which is appropriate, in that it allows for a wide range of responses, ranging from very unfavourable to extremely favourable. All the questions and instructions were presented in both English and Afrikaans. The Employee Empowerment Questionnaire consists of three sections: an instruction section, a biographical information section and the questionnaire as such.

Procedure

Three hundred copies of the EEQ were sent to pre-selected individuals who assisted with the administration. The questionnaires were completed by the research participants at a specific location and time. One hundred and sixty four completed questionnaires were returned, yielding a response rate of 54,6%. The outstanding questionnaires were not returned. This can be attributed to the fact that the organisation is currently experiencing a transformation period and that the employees perceived the questionnaire as an evaluation of their ability which might influence their position in the new organisation.

RESULTS

In order to determine the factor structure of the Employee Empowerment Questionnaire (EEQ) the 90 items were intercorrelated and subjected to a principal factor analysis: In order to determine the dimensionality of the vector space of items, the items were intercorrelated and the eigenvalues of the unreduced intercorrelation matrix calculated. It was found that 19 eigenvalues were greater than unity, accordingly 19 factors were postulated (Kaiser, 1961). The 19 factors were extracted and rotated to simple structure by means of the Direct Oblimin rotation. The intercorrelation matrix, eigenvalues and factor matrix are not reproduced here because of limited space.

TABLE 2
MATRIX OF INTERCORRELATIONS OF THE SUBTESTS OF THE EEQ

Sub-test	Sub-test1	Sub-test2	Sub-test3	Sub-test4	Sub-test5	Sub-test6	Sub-test7	Sub-test8	Sub-test9	Sub-test10	Sub-test11	Sub-test12	Sub-test13	Sub-test14	Sub-test15	Sub-test16	Sub-test17	Sub-test18	Sub-test19
1	1.000	0,759	0,696	0,730	0,814	0,653	0,658	0,631	0,343	0,255	0,625	0,730	0,091	0,111	0,313	-0,026	0,460	-0,066	0,599
2	0,759	1.000	0,755	0,725	0,725	0,643	0,624	0,698	0,410	0,223	0,588	0,694	0,115	0,193	0,212	-0,032	0,470	-0,016	0,511
3	0,696	0,755	1.000	0,680	0,715	0,722	0,651	0,621	0,373	0,178	0,592	0,687	0,082	0,171	0,202	-0,058	0,642	-0,077	0,483
4	0,730	0,725	0,680	1.000	0,701	0,659	0,697	0,646	0,384	0,241	0,620	0,670	0,017	0,038	0,242	0,015	0,413	0,001	0,416
5	0,814	0,725	0,715	0,701	1.000	0,711	0,690	0,622	0,372	0,340	0,625	0,775	0,150	0,075	0,237	0,005	0,427	0,010	0,532
6	0,653	0,643	0,722	0,659	0,711	1.000	0,621	0,477	0,293	0,167	0,637	0,693	-0,065	0,076	0,284	-0,028	0,447	-0,058	0,424
7	0,658	0,624	0,651	0,697	0,690	0,621	1.000	0,480	0,276	0,159	0,492	0,661	-0,113	0,133	0,214	0,053	0,464	0,059	0,422
8	0,631	0,698	0,621	0,646	0,622	0,477	0,480	1.000	0,471	0,208	0,521	0,547	0,233	0,118	0,172	0,035	0,377	-0,135	0,418
9	0,343	0,410	0,373	0,384	0,372	0,293	0,276	0,471	1.000	0,279	0,299	0,363	0,170	0,069	0,094	0,054	0,244	-0,161	0,247
10	0,255	0,223	0,178	0,241	0,340	0,167	0,159	0,208	0,279	1.000	0,248	0,216	0,140	0,145	0,017	-0,144	0,111	0,083	0,146
11	0,625	0,588	0,592	0,620	0,625	0,637	0,492	0,521	0,299	0,248	1.000	0,522	-0,064	0,032	0,197	-0,046	0,289	-0,065	0,330
12	0,730	0,694	0,687	0,670	0,775	0,693	0,661	0,547	0,363	0,216	0,522	1.000	0,010	0,065	0,271	-0,032	0,466	-0,032	0,512
13	0,091	0,115	0,082	0,017	0,150	-0,065	-0,113	0,233	0,170	0,140	-0,064	0,010	1.000	0,008	-0,011	0,125	0,057	-0,006	0,091
14	0,111	0,193	0,171	0,038	0,075	0,076	0,133	0,118	0,069	0,145	0,032	0,065	0,008	1.000	-0,032	0,066	0,124	-0,001	0,002
15	0,313	0,212	0,202	0,242	0,237	0,284	0,214	0,172	0,094	0,017	0,197	0,271	-0,011	-0,032	1.000	-0,020	0,061	-0,096	0,154
16	-0,026	-0,032	-0,058	0,015	0,005	-0,028	0,053	0,035	0,054	-0,144	-0,046	-0,032	0,125	0,066	-0,020	1.000	0,070	0,082	0,065
17	0,460	0,470	0,642	0,413	0,427	0,447	0,464	0,377	0,244	0,111	0,289	0,466	0,057	0,124	0,061	0,070	1.000	0,032	0,322
18	-0,066	-0,016	-0,077	0,001	0,010	-0,058	0,059	-0,135	-0,161	0,083	-0,065	-0,032	-0,006	-0,001	-0,096	0,082	0,032	1.000	0,030
19	0,599	0,511	0,483	0,416	0,532	0,424	0,422	0,418	0,247	0,146	0,330	0,512	0,091	0,002	0,154	0,065	0,322	0,030	1.000

To counteract the effect of differential skewness of items, subscores were computed in respect of each of the factors by adding all the items with high loadings on a factor. The subscores were then intercorrelated and subjected to factor analysis. The matrix of intercorrelations of the subscores is given in Table 2, and the eigenvalues of this matrix in Table 3.

TABLE 3
EIGENVALUES OF THE SUBTESTS OF THE EEQ

ROOT	EIGENVALUE
1	7,991
2	1,382
3	1,226
4	1,149
5	1,052
6	0,897
7	0,821
8	0,692
9	0,673
10	0,600
11	0,480
12	0,442
13	0,316
14	0,292
15	0,259
16	0,222
17	0,207
18	0,173
19	0,124
TRACE	19,000

From an inspection of Table 2 it is clear that most of the subtests correlated highly with one another, however, there are also a number that correlated lowly with the rest. This probably implies a single factor structure, with some poor items included in the set.

Table 3 indicates five eigenvalues greater than unity, suggesting five factors. Accordingly, five factors were extracted and rotated to simple structure by means of a Direct Oblimin rotation. The rotated factor matrix is given in Table 4.

TABLE 4
ROTATED FACTOR MATRIX OF THE SUBTESTS OF THE EEQ

	Factor I	Factor II	Factor III	Factor IV	Factor V	h ² _j
Subtest1	<u>0,891</u>	0,053	0,101	0,017	0,042	0,807
Subtest2	<u>0,728</u>	0,018	0,119	-0,090	-0,204	0,747
Subtest3	<u>0,635</u>	-0,089	-0,050	-0,155	<u>-0,488</u>	0,866
Subtest4	<u>0,795</u>	0,054	-0,007	-0,032	-0,059	0,693
Subtest5	<u>0,889</u>	0,149	0,124	0,120	0,033	0,836
Subtest6	<u>0,775</u>	-0,013	-0,213	-0,050	-0,124	0,695
Subtest7	<u>0,764</u>	-0,053	-0,156	0,170	-0,170	0,665
Subtest8	<u>0,557</u>	0,029	<u>0,337</u>	-0,295	-0,131	0,689
Subtest9	0,264	0,156	0,253	-0,252	-0,138	0,335
Subtest10	0,109	<u>0,842</u>	0,093	0,176	-0,090	0,779
Subtest11	<u>0,668</u>	0,139	-0,135	-0,137	-0,012	0,552
Subtest12	<u>0,823</u>	0,014	-0,023	0,046	-0,056	0,699
Subtest13	-0,049	0,072	<u>0,598</u>	-0,052	0,004	0,358
Subtest14	-0,026	0,063	0,012	-0,000	-0,282	0,085
Subtest15	<u>0,367</u>	-0,028	-0,045	-0,082	0,176	0,143
Subtest16	0,007	-0,195	0,219	0,114	-0,026	0,108
Subtest17	<u>0,354</u>	-0,146	0,006	0,052	<u>-0,512</u>	0,502
Subtest18	0,037	0,058	-0,009	<u>0,491</u>	-0,012	0,232
Subtest19	<u>0,600</u>	-0,034	0,176	0,123	0,026	0,389

From an inspection of Table 4 it is clear that only the first factor is properly determined, with 11 high loadings. The other factors are all poorly determined. It is therefore clear that only one factor underlies the intercorrelation matrix. Next, a single scale was formed by including all the items with high loadings on the first factor. This scale, with 84 items, was subjected to item analysis. The item statistics are given in Table 5.

TABLE 5
ITEM STATISTICS OF SCALE 1 OF THE EEQ

Item	r _{gxs_g}	r _{gx}	s _g	\bar{X}_g
B1	0,908	0,614	1,480	3,278
B2	1,030	0,644	1,599	4,059
B3	0,988	0,607	1,626	4,491
B4	1,085	0,699	1,551	3,473
B5	1,007	0,600	1,678	4,219
B6	0,991	0,641	1,546	3,568
B7	0,864	0,592	1,460	3,278
B8	1,176	0,657	1,792	4,166
B9	0,971	0,596	1,630	3,763
B10	1,210	0,673	1,798	3,325
B11	1,050	0,710	1,479	2,568
B12	0,911	0,608	1,497	3,213
B13	0,986	0,630	1,565	3,296
B14	0,871	0,632	1,377	3,041
B15	0,961	0,665	1,446	2,568
B16	1,066	0,713	1,494	2,670
B17	0,996	0,571	1,743	4,095
B18	0,852	0,559	1,523	3,669
B19	1,122	0,722	1,555	3,692
B20	0,914	0,619	1,476	3,503
B21	0,956	0,610	1,568	3,219
B22	0,970	0,664	1,460	2,746
B23	0,740	0,526	1,406	3,107
B24	1,032	0,669	1,542	3,166
B25	1,141	0,691	1,650	3,059
B26	1,082	0,709	1,527	3,118
B27	0,937	0,681	1,376	3,893
B28	0,832	0,576	1,444	3,609
B29	0,821	0,557	1,474	3,888
B31	1,107	0,712	1,555	3,154
B33	1,165	0,744	1,566	3,450
B34	1,038	0,592	1,753	3,533
B35	0,652	0,436	1,495	5,148
B36	0,994	0,654	1,520	3,722
B38	1,133	0,713	1,590	3,888
B40	0,999	0,627	1,592	4,562
B41	0,965	0,629	1,534	3,929
B42	0,898	0,577	1,556	4,053
B43	0,977	0,627	1,558	2,976
B44	1,129	0,741	1,524	3,538
B45	1,128	0,720	1,566	3,515
B46	1,040	0,693	1,500	3,462
B47	0,997	0,635	1,570	3,533
B48	0,570	0,334	1,709	3,970
B49	0,928	0,626	1,482	3,586
B50	1,007	0,745	1,351	3,142
B51	0,417	0,262	1,595	3,249
B52	0,693	0,467	1,486	3,675
B54	1,000	0,648	1,542	3,302
B55	0,969	0,605	1,600	3,609
B56	1,048	0,746	1,405	3,373
B57	0,785	0,594	1,322	2,550
B58	1,001	0,610	1,641	3,284
B59	0,736	0,528	1,395	3,781
B60	0,995	0,668	1,490	2,929
B61	0,984	0,626	1,572	3,420
B62	0,963	0,715	1,346	3,124
B63	0,785	0,580	1,354	2,154
B64	1,158	0,720	1,607	3,462
B65	0,950	0,627	1,516	3,391
B66	0,874	0,627	1,393	3,657
B67	0,972	0,657	1,480	2,621
B68	0,996	0,647	1,539	2,846
B70	0,982	0,681	1,441	2,680
B71	1,165	0,782	1,489	3,237
B72	0,961	0,684	1,405	3,331
B73	0,754	0,562	1,342	3,195
B74	0,885	0,562	1,576	3,633
B75	0,907	0,601	1,509	3,396
B76	0,622	0,339	1,833	3,491

B77	1,115	0,731	1,524	3,521
B78	1,090	0,737	1,478	3,408
B79	0,985	0,689	1,430	3,047
B80	1,010	0,710	1,423	3,473
B81	0,904	0,589	1,536	3,391
B82	1,091	0,720	1,515	3,450
B83	0,962	0,726	1,325	2,675
B84	1,087	0,652	1,666	3,485
B85	1,207	0,683	1,768	3,781
B86	1,137	0,755	1,506	3,296
B87	0,989	0,656	1,508	3,485
B88	1,148	0,794	1,445	3,355
B89	1,076	0,761	1,414	2,988
B90	1,011	0,751	1,347	3,030

rgxsg = Index of reliability of item g.
 rgx = Correlation of item g with total score
 sg = Standard deviation of item g.
 (g = Mean of item g)

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF ITEM STATISTICS

	Mean of items	SD of items	r_{gx}	$r_{gx}S_g$
Mean	3,415	1,523	0,640	0,972
Standard Deviation	0,475	0,111	0,094	0,145

Cronbach alpha = 0,982
 Number of items = 84
 Mean of scale = 286,876
 SD of scale = 81,611

From an inspection of Table 5 it is clear that all the items functioned very well and that not a single item was rejected. The reliability of the scale estimated by means of Cronbach's coefficient alpha is 0,982, which is very high indeed. A single score of empowerment can therefore be used.

A secondary objective of the study was to determine whether or not there are group differences in terms of empowerment. Accordingly, groups were formed in terms of gender, age, language, length of service, academic qualification and remuneration.

Due to the fact that a single score was involved and that the number of groups varied from two to five, the differences were tested by means of Student's t-test (for two groups) and ANOVA, followed by Scheffé's post-hoc multiple comparisons, in the case of more than two groupings. Only the results in respect of gender and language proved to be statistically significant. The results of the t-test in respect of gender, are given in Table 6.

TABLE 6
STUDENT'S T-TEST: COMPARISON OF THE MEANS OF THE GENDER GROUPINGS IN RESPECT OF EMPOWERMENT

Variable	\bar{X}_t	t	df	p
Empowerment	34,7750	2,640	147	0,009

From an inspection of Table 6 it is clear that males perceive themselves as being more empowered than females, $t(147) = 2,640$; $p = 0,009$.

From the ANOVA it is clear that the various language groups differ statistically significantly from one another, $F(2,143) = 9,930$; $p < 0,001$. The results of the post-hoc multiple comparisons are given in Table 7.

TABLE 7
SCHEFFÉ'S MULTIPLE COMPARISONS: COMPARISON OF THE MEANS OF THE VARIOUS LANGUAGE GROUPINGS IN RESPECT OF EMPOWERMENT

Variable	Means of groups			Groups		
	English (1)	Afrikaans(2)	African (3)	1/2	1/3	2/3
Empowerment	243,94	287,51	322,21	0,025*	0,081*	0,001*

* = Statistically significant

From Table 7 it is clear that the English language grouping felt least empowered, compared to the Afrikaans and African language groupings. The African group felt most empowered.

DISCUSSION

Empowerment has been discussed and debated at great length, but not in respect of measurement. Perhaps this is due to the fact that no single, commonly understood and accepted definition of empowerment has been developed thus far.

The concept of empowerment relates to issues such as participation, involvement, communication etc., in organisations with the view to achieving a competitive advantage. However, no substantive research has been done on the development and validation of such a construct in order to allow organisations such as a local government institutions to determine employees' perceptions of empowerment. Establishing the perceptions of employees is a vital component in determining, evaluating and addressing areas of concern to the mutual benefit of the employee and the organisation.

The purpose of this study was to construct and evaluate a scale of employee empowerment that may assist organisational transformation.

The Employee Empowerment Questionnaire was constructed and yielded one scale with a reliability of 0,982 i.r.o. 84 items, according to Cronbach alpha. A single score of empowerment can therefore be used.

The results of this study indicate that the Employee Empowerment Questionnaire is highly reliable and sensitive to group differences. It appears that the mean item rating is 3,415 on a 7-point scale, which means that there is room for upward mobility in terms of empowerment.

A secondary objective of the study was to establish whether or not there are statistically significant differences in the means of various groupings formed in terms of gender, age, language, length of service, academic qualifications and remuneration with regard to empowerment. Gender and language yielded a statistically significant difference with regard to empowerment, whereas age, length of service, academic qualifications and remuneration did not.

It is clear that male employees perceive themselves as being more empowered than female employees and that the English language grouping felt least empowered in comparison to the Afrikaans and African language groupings. The African group felt most empowered.

It is evident from the results of the questionnaire that local government should concentrate its efforts (with regard to empowerment) on focusing and increasing the level of empowerment of female and English-speaking employees.

There may be limitations in the development of the questionnaire in the sense that other qualities might not have

been incorporated, as the dimensions used were limited to those of Scott and Jaffe (1992), whose comprehensive list of empowerment dimensions suited the purpose of this study.

The study may have certain implications for employer and employees alike, which might be of value to the organisation as a whole. Schoeman (1990) claims that successful organisations concern themselves with empowerment and ensure that employees are given optimal opportunity to succeed. The employer can focus his attention on addressing empowerment imbalances in order to foster a climate conducive to empowerment, whilst employees will benefit from being empowered and knowing that they are contributing to and succeeding with the implementation of the broad vision of the organisation.

A number of additional research possibilities present themselves for further investigation, for example, the extent to which empowerment relates to other organisational variables, such as job satisfaction and intention to quit. An investigation of how employees perceive empowerment on different organisational levels, such as executive, managerial and supervisory levels would also be significant.

Since employees are obliged to seek and implement ways of improving their performance, use their skills and participate in the formulation of solutions, the main emphasis in the workplace should be on creating a climate of empowerment which is conducive to transforming an organisation such as local government into a highly involved, participative organisation.

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