

Empowerment perceptions of educational managers from previously disadvantaged primary and high schools: an explorative study

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The perceptions of educational managers from previously disadvantaged primary and high schools in the Nelson Mandela Metropole regarding the issue of empowerment are outlined and the perceptions of educational managers in terms of various aspects of empowerment at different levels reflected. A literature study, including an internet-based search, and empirical research were undertaken. In the empirical study, a self-administered questionnaire was distributed to 135 educational managers in the Nelson Mandela Metropole. To investigate the relationship between the independent and dependent variables, 12 null hypotheses were tested by means of statistical methods such as analysis of variance and correlation coefficients. The empirical results revealed highly significant relationships or differences between the variables. It is recommended that empowerment should be carefully managed and not used as a quick-fix solution to solve the problems in education. Empowerment should filter down through the school system from department level to the level of individual learner. Practical guidelines are provided and educational policy implications highlighted for implementation of empowerment in schools.

Key words: disadvantaged schools; education; empowerment; managers

Introduction

Hawkins (2004:2) postulates that empowerment, a buzzword in corporate and educational circles, is essential for learners, teachers, school managers and support staff. It can only have a lasting effect if it is transacted, not as a conflict of control and demand, but rather as a sharing of tools between trustworthy and responsible stakeholders. Michele and Browne (2000:89) concur that empowerment "is the foundation stone upon which radical reform can be built". The task of management at all levels in the education system is to create and sustain conditions under which teachers and learners are able to achieve learning. The question arises: To what extent is empowerment being filtered down through the educational hierarchy? The literature (Enderlin-Lampe, 2002; Page & Czuba, 1999; Sandy, 2004) emphasises that there has been a growing international trend towards decentralisation of school management, with calls for more autonomy for schools. Hurley Management Consultants (2004:1) are of the opinion that empowerment can only succeed in an environment where the desire for empowerment is greater than the desire for power. Empowerment has been over-promised too many times and using it as a 'quick-fix' does not solve any problems in the educational sector. The successful implementation of empowerment mechanisms is a process, not a single event. Palmleaders (2004:1) further states that many new projects in schools include a hive of activities, but the change is at a superficial level. Empowerment is a process that facilitates deep fundamental change at the core of the school system. Steyn (2001:147) concurs that for schools to manage the changes that arise from socio-economic, political and technological development, they need to fully utilise their human resources potential. Recent conceptions of school leadership exemplify a move away from the authoritarian models of decision-making towards more collegial

views on roles between the principal and staff. Murray-Archie (2004:1) is also of the opinion that, traditionally, education and government administrators have made decisions that affect how teachers work and students learn. Principals have been the key to implementing school change. The hierarchical chain of command in schools is often seen as a social injustice, which hampers the effective implementation of empowerment.

We set out to examine the empowerment perceptions of educational managers in primary and high schools. These perceptions were analysed on five different levels: key values and assumptions of empowerment; empowerment in the education sector in general; empowerment of educational managers themselves; empowerment of teachers and staff, and empowerment of learners. All these aspects of empowerment were viewed from an educational-manager perspective. A theoretical overview of empowerment is provided, followed by an exposition of the research methodology and the research results are highlighted and main conclusions and recommendations outlined.

Objectives

The main objective was to investigate the perceptions of educational managers regarding the various aspects of empowerment. To achieve this, the following secondary goals were identified:

- To conceptualise the understanding of real empowerment;
- to outline the nature of empowerment in education;
- to empirically investigate the perceptions of educational managers in primary and high schools regarding empowerment;
- to provide guidelines to educational authorities for implementing empowerment practices; and
- to assist educational practitioners in developing empowerment-related competencies and skills.

Empowerment: literature overview

Concept clarification

Page and Czuba (1999:1) attest that, all too often, empowerment merely shifts management responsibility to willing workers, who then work in a frustratingly ambiguous environment. Schermerhorn, Hunt and Osborn (1997:298) refer to empowerment as "the process by which managers help others to acquire and use the power needed to make decisions affecting themselves and their work." According to Robbins, Odendaal and Roodt (2003:274), empowerment is a multi-dimensional concept consisting of three broad facets: subjective aspect (psychological) — development of self-efficacy, motivation, entitlement and self-confidence; objective aspect (opportunity) — exposure to exercise leadership, decision-making, job enrichment and more challenges; and training and development facet (competence) — growing of knowledge, skills and experience. For the purposes of this study, empowerment was regarded as the delegation of authority, responsibility and discretion to educational stakeholders for them to decide on how to achieve educational objectives.

Following is an analysis of the empowerment perceptions of educational managers along five dimensions.

Key values and assumptions

Kydd, Crawford and Riches (1997:22) argue that empowerment differs from motivation in that

it places some responsibility on the individual for creating his or her own conditions for growth and setting goals and targets. Central to the concept of empowerment, are the following key values and assumptions:

- each person is unique and worthy of respect;
- individuals are responsible for their own behaviour and actions;
- new situations contain opportunities for learning and growth;
- mistakes are learning experiences, not failures;
- only oneself can activate the potential for creativity and growth;
- all persons can do more than they are currently doing;
- one's own fear is the major limiter for personal growth; and
- growth and development never end.

Short and Greer (1997:135) and HighBeam Research (2004:1) build on these values and assumptions by identifying the dimensions of empowerment in education (Table 1).

Table 1 Dimensions of empowerment in education

Dimension	Description
1. Decision-making	Participation of educators in critical decisions that directly affect their work.
2. Professional growth	Perceptions that the working environment provides opportunities to grow and develop professionally.
3. Status	Perceptions that one has professional respect and admiration from colleagues and the community.
4. Self-efficacy	Perceptions that one has the skills and ability to facilitate learning by developing effective programmes.
5. Autonomy	Perceptions that one can control certain aspects of one's work life — freedom to make certain decisions.
6. Impact	Perceptions that one has an effect and influence on learners and the school environment — doing something worthwhile.

Although empowerment is a complex construct, it can be identified and recognised if these dimensions are present. These dimensions could be grouped into two broad categories: enabling experiences and allowing the individual to display existing competencies and learn new ones.

Based on this reasoning, the following three null hypotheses were formulated and empirically tested:

- H₀₁: There is no relationship between the empowerment of school managers and key values and assumptions regarding empowerment.
- H₀₂: There is no relationship between teacher empowerment and key values and assumptions regarding empowerment as perceived by educational managers.
- H₀₃: There is no relationship between learner empowerment and key values and assumptions regarding empowerment as perceived by educational managers.

Empowerment in education

According to Short (2004:1), education should be seen as an activity directed at self-empowerment, attempting to bring influences to bear that will imbue the person's character, attitude, abilities and capacities with a sense of personal meaning. Irwin (1996:13) states that

"empowered educators are persons who believe in themselves and their capacity to act — they support the self-actualisation of all persons in their schools, classrooms and communities." Educational systems often neglect human concerns, displaying no respect for the dignity, worth and uniqueness of a person's existence as a human being (Higgs, 2002:148). Zapp (2004:1) and Michele and Browne (2000:89) emphasise that the empowerment process in schools should focus on areas such as structuring processes; building trusting environments; stimulating risk-taking and innovation; creative problem-solving; access to knowledge, power structures and decision-making processes; and providing recognition and praise. For the purposes of this project, empowerment along the education hierarchy, as perceived by educational managers, was analysed on the following three levels, namely, educational managers, teachers, and learners.

Empowerment of educational managers

According to Shindorf, Graham and Messner (2004:1), school leaders need to decide whether they will approach empowerment issues using a top-down or whole-school decision-making model and whether or not they will include teachers as full partners in the decision-making process. In this regard, Gershon and Straub (2004:1) postulate four components of empowerment methodology for educational managers:

- self-awareness (discover what is important and meaningful);
- vision crafting (translate new insight into comprehensive vision);
- mental clearing (assist to heal and transform when stepping into new territory); and
- manifestation (learn to manifest the vision).

The leadership style of the educational manager and the ability and willingness to share power will strongly influence both staff and learner empowerment. To investigate the relationship between the empowerment of educational managers and teacher and learner empowerment, the following two null hypotheses were formulated:

H₀₄: There is no relationship between teacher empowerment and the empowerment of school managers.

H₀₅: There is no relationship between learner empowerment and the empowerment of school managers.

Empowerment of teachers and staff

Scott (2004:1) testifies that at the bottom of the educational pecking order, classroom teachers are institutionally controlled by all other players, namely, administrators, curriculum specialists, parents and learners. Steyn (2001:146) postulates that staff empowerment has become a managerial buzzword, evoking images of positive commitment and participation in the workplace or school. Staff empowerment is based on the fact that people feel good about and proud of what they are doing. Staff empowerment is, however, often confused with task allocation. Figure 1 shows two dimensions to create four different strategies, namely, importance of the activity and completeness of authority and responsibility.

From this empowerment quadrant, the ideal situation means entrusting staff with the necessary power to decide and act upon a task considered to be important. Dumping implies giving staff meaningless tasks to do and not allowing them to make decisions (managers still retain meaningful activities). The double-dumping strategy entails the allocation of insignificant tasks, while still requiring staff to report back for final approval. In the development quadrant, managers assign important tasks to staff members, but require them to bring the in-

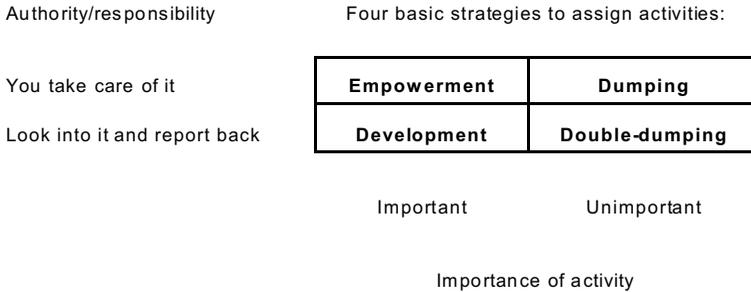


Figure 1 Staff empowerment matrix (Steyn, 2001:154)

formation and decision back for review or approval.

Short and Geer (1997:141) and Enderlin-Lampe (2002:1) further highlight the following important aspects of teacher empowerment:

- creating an interactive working environment;
- informed staff;
- identifying and resolving specific operating problems;
- positive organisational commitment and shared purpose among members; and
- increasing self control and recognising the contributions of members.

Essential elements of building a trusting teaching environment are

- encouraging openness;
- facilitating effective communication; and
- modelling a sense of understanding.

Weiss (1993:60) identifies three general reasons for empowering teachers and staff:

- improved school performance (better policies and more innovative fresh ideas);
- teacher professionalism (convey a message that teachers are worthy of respect as professionals); and
- social justice (symbolic value that represents democracy in action).

To investigate the relationship between teacher and learner empowerment, the following null hypothesis was formulated:

H₀: There is no relationship between learner empowerment and teacher empowerment as perceived by educational managers.

Empowerment of learners

Irwin (1996:87) emphasises the recent shift in educational circles from considering learners as objects, to responding to them as subjects who can manage their own lives. A suitable environment should be created in which authority is shared with learners by allowing them to determine their own goals, progress and achievement. A negotiated curriculum should be established between management, staff and students. Caring as an educational ideal should be fostered — one needs to step out of one's own reality to feel or empathise with learners. Table 2 highlights the characteristics of empowered learners.

Table 2 clearly shows that empowerment in schools should be filtered right down to the

Table 2 Characteristics of empowered learners

Number	Empowered learners are ...
1.	Involved in tasks requiring analysing skills.
2.	Careful listeners.
3.	Encouraged to respond to each other.
4.	Exposed to open-ended questions.
5.	Authentic and critical.
6.	Honest about socio-cultural contexts and biases.
7.	Allowed to generate own topics for assignments.
8.	Encouraged to use self-evaluation and reflection.
9.	Life-long learners.

level of the learner. Learners who are able to initiate and carry out new ideas by their involvement in decision-making should take more responsibility for their learning.

Demographic profile of respondents

Several specific organisational characteristics served as data classification independent variables in this study. These included age; gender; type of school; managerial position; number of years in current position; and highest educational level. However, only those independent variables that showed significant relationships with the dependent variables (empowerment perceptions) are reported. The descriptive results are shown in Table 4. Based on this reasoning, the following six null hypotheses were formulated:

- H0₇: There is no relationship between the number of years in current position of respondents and key values and assumptions regarding empowerment.
- H0₈: There is no relationship between the gender of respondents and the empowerment of school managers.
- H0₉: There is no relationship between the type of school in which respondents are employed and the empowerment of teachers as perceived by educational managers.
- H0₁₀: There is no relationship between the type of school in which respondents are employed and the empowerment of learners as perceived by educational managers.
- H0₁₁: There is no relationship between the highest level of education of respondents and the empowerment of teachers as perceived by educational managers.
- H0₁₂: There is no relationship between the highest level of education of respondents and the empowerment of learners as perceived by educational managers.

Methodology

An empirical study was undertaken.

Research approach

The quantitative research method was used in this research project. This was a form of conclusive research which involved a large representative sample and structured data collection procedures. Quantitative research approaches used were exploratory research (an area that had not

been studied, in order to develop initial ideas) and descriptive research (describing empowerment perceptions of educational managers).

The sample

For the purposes of this project the population was regarded as all educational managers of previously disadvantaged schools in the Nelson Mandela Metropole. The reason for the selection of this sample was to investigate the extent and level of empowerment at these previously disadvantaged schools, as compared to schools in more affluent, developed areas. A non-probability sampling procedure was used and a convenient sample was drawn, purely on the basis of availability and accessibility. Twenty-seven schools were selected and five educational managers at each school were interviewed or completed a questionnaire (total sample size of 135). Permission to visit schools was obtained from the Department of Education and the principals of selected schools. Educational managers included principals, vice-principals and departmental heads.

The questionnaire

Self-administered questionnaires were used. The questionnaire was divided into three sections:

- Section A dealt with empowerment perceptions of educational managers and consisted of four subsections, namely, perceptions regarding key values and assumptions about empowerment; empowerment of school managers; teacher empowerment and learner empowerment. A total of 21 variables/statements were used. The ordinal scale used was a five-point Likert-type scale.
- Section B investigated the personal viewpoints of respondents regarding empowerment. A nominal scale of measurement was used, consisting of five dichotomous statements related to general empowerment practices.
- Section C provided classification data (demographic characteristics) of respondents and contained a nominal scale of measurement, using six categorical variables.

Pilot study

In order to pre-test the questionnaire, it was given to five educational managers and several academics in the field of management, education and statistics. After processing and analysing the data from this pilot study, the questionnaire was refined and some minor changes were made regarding wording, sequence and layout.

Data collection

A literature search formed the secondary data collection. Primary data were collected by means of a survey through self-administered questionnaires. A total of 135 questionnaires were completed by school managers at 27 schools (five per individual school). After permission was obtained and the purpose of the study explained, the questionnaires were delivered to the respective schools for completion by the designated school managers.

Data processing and analysis

The returned questionnaires were inspected to determine their acceptability, edited where necessary, and coded. The data were transferred to a spreadsheet. A statistical computer package, SPSS-PC, was used to process the results. Techniques used during data analysis

included descriptive statistics (e.g. mean and standard deviation), frequency distributions, factor analysis, correlation coefficients, and analysis of variance.

Results

Descriptive statistics

Table 3 provides an overview of the most important and notable descriptive statistics for Section A (empowerment perceptions) of the questionnaire.

Table 3 Descriptive statistics for empowerment perceptions (Section A)

Factor/Variable	Mean	Median	Mode	SD	Variance	Skewness
A1	4.39	5.00	5.00	0.92	0.86	-1.87
A2	3.72	4.00	4.00	1.08	1.18	-0.82
A3	3.83	4.00	4.00	1.11	1.28	-1.07
A4	3.30	3.00	3.00	0.97	0.94	-0.23

Perceptions of educational managers regarding:

A1 = Key values and assumptions about empowerment

A2 = Empowerment of school managers

A3 = Teacher empowerment

A4 = Learner empowerment

In analysing the measures of central tendency for the key values and assumptions about empowerment (A1), it appears that most values clustered around point five of the scale (strongly agree). Measures of dispersion, by means of low standard deviation and variance scores, indicated that respondents tended not to vary much regarding the key values and assumptions of empowerment. For the perceptions regarding the empowerment of school managers (A2) and teacher empowerment (A3), the mean, median and mode values clustered around point four of the scale (agree slightly). Respondents tended to vary in their perceptions regarding these variables and therefore the higher measures of dispersion. Perceptions about learner empowerment (A4) obtained the lowest measures of central tendency (point three), indicating that respondents were neutral towards these variables and did not vary much in their opinions about these variables or statements. The frequency distribution results of most of these variables tended to be negatively skewed (ranging from neutral to strongly agree).

The frequency distribution results for Section B of the questionnaire (personal viewpoints of respondents regarding empowerment), although not reported here, revealed that most respondents (between 80% and 94%) tended to agree with the five variables/statements. It therefore appeared that most respondents personally agreed that these aspects of empowerment were being implemented in their respective schools. Table 4 provides the frequency distribution results for Section C of the questionnaire.

Table 4 provides an outline of the demographic characteristics of the respondents. It should be noted that some of the categories were regrouped for purposes of analysis. As the results are clear and mostly self explanatory, an in-depth discussion thereof falls beyond the scope of this article.

Reliability and validity of the measuring instrument

External validity was ensured by means of a proper and sound sampling procedure. Clear guidance was given regarding the place, time and conditions in which the research was to be

Table 4 Frequency distribution results for Section C of the questionnaire: a respondent profile (Classification data)

Characteristic	Category	Number	Percentage (%)
Age	20–40	28	21
	41–60	103	76
	61–70	4	3
Gender	Male	79	59
	Female	56	41
Type of school	Primary	77	57
	Secondary	58	43
Managerial position	Principal	32	24
	Vice-Principal	34	25
	Head of Department	69	51
Years in current position	0–5	29	22
	6–10	45	33
	11–20	37	27
	21 +	24	18
Highest education level	3–4 years degree	63	47
	Honours	23	17
	Masters/Doctoral	10	7
	Diploma	39	29

conducted. Internal validity of the instrument's scores was ensured through both face and content validity. Expert judgement and a pilot study were undertaken to assist in this regard. Internal consistency reliability was ensured by means of a factor analysis. The SPSS statistical software package was used to conduct the factor analysis. Factors were extracted using Principal Component Analysis with Direct Oblimin rotation to allow for inter-correlations between the factors. To confirm that all variables loaded on a single factor and to explain the percentage of variance Cronbach's alpha was calculated (Table 5). The varimax rotation of factors, for the 21 empowerment perception variables, was conducted to determine the individual factor loadings, but is not reported here.

Table 5 Cronbach's alpha for Section A of the questionnaire: empowerment perceptions of educational managers

Items/Variables	Factor	Cronbach's alpha	% of variance
1–5	Key values and assumptions	0.66	8.90
6–10	Empowerment of school managers	0.80	16.33
11–16	Teacher empowerment	0.79	22.85
17–21	Learner empowerment	0.85	14.60

The reliability coefficients of Cronbach's alpha for the various factors were above 0.7, except for key values and assumptions, which were above 0.6. According to Hair, Anderson, Tatham and Black (1998:118), Cronbach's alpha value may be decreased to 0.6 in exploratory research. It can, therefore, be concluded that all factors were internally reliable. The highest percentage of variance was indicated by the teacher empowerment factor.

Correlation

An inter-item correlation exercise was conducted to determine the correlation between the variables constituting each factor. All the variables in each factor showed positive relationships with each other (ranging from the strongest positive r value of 0.6791 to the lowest positive r value of 0.0920). A positive correlation coefficient (r value) indicated a strong or positive relationship among the variables. No negative r values were reported.

ANOVA

The purpose of this analysis was to investigate the relationship between the independent and dependent variables and to test the stated hypotheses. Table 6 provides an outline of the variables used in this analysis. Inferential statistics were used to make inferences about the population using sample data to make decisions regarding various hypotheses. Different analysis of variance exercises were conducted to test the stated hypotheses. Only those ANOVA results that showed significant relationships between the independent and dependent variables are reported and those that exhibited no significant relationships are excluded from this discussion.

Table 6 Analysis of variance results for the independent and dependent variables

Independent variable	Dependent variable	F	p	H0
Key values and assumptions regarding empowerment	School manager empowerment	7.721	0.000	H0 ₁
	Teacher empowerment	4.080	0.004	H0 ₂
	Leamer empowerment	4.227	0.001	H0 ₃
Empowerment of school managers	Teacher empowerment	8.201	0.000	H0 ₄
	Leamer empowerment	12.511	0.000	H0 ₅
Teacher empowerment	Leamer empowerment	10.652	0.000	H0 ₆
Classification data:				
Years in current position	Key values and assumptions	4.683	0.004	H0 ₇
Gender	School manager empowerment	9.818	0.002	H0 ₈
Type of school	Teacher empowerment	7.053	0.009	H0 ₉
	Leamer empowerment	12.148	0.001	H0 ₁₀
Highest education	Teacher empowerment	4.327	0.006	H0 ₁₁
	Leamer empowerment	5.147	0.002	H0 ₁₂

The ANOVA results clearly indicated the relationships between the independent and dependent variables. The null hypotheses (H0₁ to H0₁₂) could, in all cases, be rejected at the 0.01 level and the alternative hypotheses accepted. H0₁ to H0₃ fell within the rejection region ($p < 0.01$ and large F values), which indicated that there was a significant relationship (difference) between key values and assumptions regarding empowerment and the empowerment of school managers, teacher and learner empowerment (H₁ to H₃ accepted). The larger F values of 8.201 and 12.511 and p values of 0.000 indicated a highly significant relationship between the empowerment of school managers (independent variable) and teacher and learner empowerment (dependent variables). H0₄ and H0₅ could therefore be rejected and the alternative hypotheses (H₄ and H₅) accepted. The null hypothesis, H0₆, was rejected at 0.01 level (p value

was 0.000 and F 10.652). There was a highly significant relationship between teacher empowerment and learner empowerment (H_6 accepted). H_{0_7} to $H_{0_{12}}$ could also be rejected, based on the F values and p values of less than 0.01, indicating that there was a highly significant relationship between the classification data variables (independent variables) and four independent variables (key values and assumptions, school manager, teacher and learner empowerment). Alternative hypotheses, H_7 to H_{12} , could therefore be accepted.

Conclusions and recommendations

It appears that if not properly managed and used only as a quick-fix solution empowerment is doomed, as it creates hopes and aspirations that are difficult to fulfil. Recent conceptions of school leadership exemplify a move away from authoritarian models of decision-making towards more democratic schools that allow primary stakeholders a greater say in fundamental educational issues. Empowerment should filter through the school system: from the Department of Education down to educational managers to teachers and, finally, to learners. The following conclusions and recommendations could be drawn, based on the analysis of variance of the independent and dependent variables:

- Without valuing and embracing the key values and assumptions of empowerment, empowerment cannot filter through to educational managers, teachers and learners. These key values and assumptions should form the basis of all activities in the school.
- Educational managers differed in how they perceived teacher and learner empowerment. For empowerment to be successfully implemented, it should start at management level and then be filtered down to teachers and learners. The importance of empowerment at lower levels in the school should be recognised and reflected in educational policies and practices.
- It is important for teachers to recognise and accept the importance of empowerment down to the level of the individual learner. As teachers are the ones finally dealing with learners, they should not hamper learner empowerment, but rather create an environment conducive to empowering learners.
- Educational managers with different years of service differed in their perceptions about the key values and assumptions regarding empowerment. It is therefore important that newly appointed educational managers adopt key values and assumptions about empowerment at an early stage of their careers in order to ensure that they will lead by example.
- Gender differences exist regarding perceptions about the empowerment of school managers. Educational policies dealing with empowerment should therefore be gender sensitive.
- The environment and background of previously disadvantaged schools could have influenced the perceptions of school managers regarding empowerment. The Department of Education and other education authorities should therefore approach teacher and learner empowerment differently in primary and high schools. An umbrella-approach could be counter-productive, whilst a customised approach for primary and secondary schools, respectively, could be of more value.
- Educational managers with different levels of education differed in their perceptions regarding teacher and learner empowerment. It is suggested that the principles and values of empowerment be built into the curricula of educational courses offered at higher education institutions.

Table 7 provides general guidelines and recommendations for implementing empowerment in schools.

Table 7 General guidelines and recommendations for implementing empowerment at schools

1. As empowerment is a multi-faceted concept, the psychological, opportunistic and training and development aspects should be built into all educational empowerment practices and activities.
2. Educational managers need to decide whether they will approach empowerment issues using a top-down or whole-school decision-making model and whether they will include teachers and learners as full partners in the decision-making process.
3. Empowerment cannot be successfully filtered down through the educational hierarchy unless the underlying key values and assumptions thereof are not valued by and regarded as important by all stakeholders in the education sector.
4. Educational managers should have full control over their work; be exposed to creative problem-solving; be rewarded for competence and innovation; be given more challenging tasks; and continue to upgrade their knowledge/skills.
5. Teachers should be invested with the right to: participate in determining school goals/policies; use their judgement about curricula content and instruction; and have autonomy to control their work life.
6. The extent to which educational managers are being empowered will have a direct impact on the empowerment of teachers and learners. Educational managers should therefore not be a stumbling block in the empowerment of others in the school hierarchy.
7. Learner empowerment will be directly influenced by the extent to which teachers are empowered in the classroom and the value they place on empowerment.
8. Educational policies should foster a life-long learning environment in which learners can determine their own goals, progress and achievement.
9. Power-hungry educational managers should be identified and exposed as such to ensure that deep fundamental change at the core of the school system, and not superficial changes, is implemented.
10. As it will take time to correct the imbalances in the education sector, Government and Department of Education should put specific measures in place aimed at empowering previously disadvantaged schools significantly.

The following extract serves as an appropriate conclusion to this article:

School managers who transform schools into more participative and empowering organisations undergo a profound shift in their roles and relationship with staff ... aimed at the effective application of understanding, enabling, and encouraging staff members with a view [to] constant improvement in all processes ..." (Steyn, 2001:164).

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