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EMPOWERMENT IN THE GREEK PUBLIC SECTOR: EVIDENCE FROM TOP MANAGEMENT EXECUTIVES

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Abstract

"Empowerment takes more than a minute..." - K. Blanchard

The present paper examines empowerment as a resource based view strategy for the development of Greek public sector. Empowered organizations are expected to become the norm in the postmodern age, to gain commercial advantages and to be in a position to create and maintain a sustainable competitive advantage. However, it is widely believed that traditional command and control structures disempower organizational members, especially in the public sector. Within this context, our research uses the well-known Whetten and Cameron (1995) questionnaire for empowerment on a survey conducted among top management executives serving in four major Greek public sector organizations. Principal component factor analysis within a sample of 165 top-management public sector executives reveals the five empowerment dimensions, namely meaning, self-efficacy, self-determination, trust and personal control. After the discussion of the findings, a number of tactics and policies about the enhancement of executives' empowerment conclude the paper.

Keywords: empowerment, Greece, public sector, top management executives

JEL Classification: H83, M12, M54

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1 INTRODUCTION

Workforce empowerment tends to be one of the most important managerial issues in the present decade as it is considered central to an effective strategy development (Whetten & Cameron, 2005). Senge *et al.*, (1999, p.11) by introducing the term "*...age of empowerment...*" claim that empowering has become a key rhetoric during the last decades of the twentieth century. However, little consensus has been agreed upon its definition (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). In this respect, empowerment constitutes an end and an internally defined mean of achieving goals and influencing other valued outcomes in many ways (Blanchard *et al.*, 1996). Thus, scientists with different research background use empowerment in a variety of contexts and intentions.

Employee empowerment, as a management approach, has been introduced since the 1990's, in both private and public sector organizations, with the aim to improve performance, responsiveness, and innovation. As far as empowerment in the public sector is concerned, it is argued that the weaknesses of governments' machinery are not due to lazy or incompetent public employees, but due to the rigid and predetermined governmental rules and regulations that discourage employees' innovation and creativity (Carroll, 1995; Gore, 1993; Kettl, 1994; Thompson, 2000). Peters (1996, p.51) concludes that in countries where new public management reforms have been undertaken (i.e. United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and France), "*...more empowered workers should be willing to work harder, share more ideas with management, and treat their clients more humanely since they are themselves being treated better...*".

Within this context, our study is based on Spreitzer's definition, where empowerment is approached from a psychological perspective as "*...an active (rather than a passive) orientation in which an individual wishes and feels able to shape his or her work role and context...*" (1995, p.1444). In the first part of the paper we trace empowerment insights out of a literature review. Moreover we examine empowerment as a resource based view strategy for the development of Greek public sector by studying a sample of 165 top-management executives from four major public state organizations. In the second part of the paper we propose a number of tactics and policies about the enhancement of executives' empowerment, taking into consideration the special characteristics of Greek economic environment.

2 TRACING EMPOWERMENT INSIGHTS

Empowerment refers to the process of increasing the ability of individuals or groups to make choices and transform those choices into preferred actions and outcomes (Langton & Robbins, 2006). Rappoport (1984) points out that it is easy to define empowerment by its absence rather than defining it in action. The concept, although widely used, can be characterized as highly elusive and vague, as there is little, if no, consensus in its exact definition (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). This may be due to the fact that the term is used across a great range of disciplines (i.e. psychology, philosophy, sociology, education, economics, community development etc.), each one of them bringing different interpretation.

In the management field, emerged two distinct theoretical perspectives, a managerial and a psychological one (Fernandez & Moldogaziev, 2010, p.24). Though completely different approaches, both perspectives suggest that for employees to be empowered and have an ownership mentality, there must be a clear definition of the values and mission of the

organization; the organization must help employees gain the relevant skills; employees need to be supported in their decision making and not criticized when they try to do something extraordinary; and employees need to be recognized for their efforts (Langton & Robbins, 2006).

The managerial perspective is based to the fact that the key element in the concept of empowerment is power, i.e. the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the verb *empower* as *to invest legally or formally with power: to authorize, license*. Consequently, the managerial perspective views employee empowerment as a construct that explains how people with power (i.e. managers) in an organization share power, authority, information, and rewards with those who do not have power (personnel) (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Bowen & Lawler, 1992, 1995; Kanter, 1979) to improve organizational outcomes. In more details, managers are learning how to give up control, and employees are learning how to take responsibility for their work and make appropriate decisions (Langton and Robbins, 2006). This point of view, led many scholars to note that managers should distinguish between being *in* authority and being *an* authority (Stewart, 1994).

On the other hand, the psychological perspective, introduced in the late 1980's, considers employee empowerment as a motivational construct increasing task motivation (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990) and fostering feelings of self-efficacy (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). In a more detailed definition, empowerment is asserted to *be 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 organizational practices and informal techniques of providing efficacy information* (Conger & Kanungo, 1988, p. 474). As stated in Fernandez & Moldogaziev's study (2011), this motivational process consists of five stages: a) conditions leading to a psychological state of powerlessness, b) the implementation of empowerment strategies and techniques, c) the removal of conditions leading to powerlessness and the transmission of information that enhances self-efficacy, d) a feeling of empowerment as a result of receiving and processing this information, and e) the behavioral effects of empowerment (i.e. greater effort and persistence). In the same line of argument, Thomas & Velthouse (1990) concluded that empowerment is *a heightened level of intrinsic task motivation or internalized commitment to a task*. The authors also introduced a model according to which, an employee makes personal assessments of four aspects of a task: impact, competence, meaningfulness, and choice (Fernandez and Moldogaziev, 2010, p.25). Spreitzer (1995, p.1444) examines empowerment as *an active (rather than a passive) orientation in which an individual wishes and feels able to shape his or her work role and context*. The author, likewise Conger & Kanungo (1988) and Thomas & Velthouse (1990), also considers empowerment as a motivational construct and acknowledges four procedures: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact. Another definition framed by Carlzon (1987) suggests that empowerment is *freeing someone from rigorous control by instructions, policies and orders, and giving that person freedom to take responsibility for his/her ideas, decisions, and actions*. According to Johnson (1993, p.32) empowerment is the *realization and actualization of potential and opportunity just waiting to be unleashed*, while other scholars see empowerment as the way of persuading employees to be fully responsible for their own job satisfaction (Senge *et al.*, 1999). Finally, another worth mentioning attempt in defining the field of employee empowerment is that of Bowen & Lawler (1992, 1995) who defined empowerment as *an approach to service delivery*, unveiling four determinants: information, rewards, knowledge, and power. Although Bowen and Lawler have pointed out the role of power in the process of empowerment, they emphasized that programs focused only on power tend to be insufficient for realizing the

benefits of empowerment. Finally, the psychological perspective considers employee empowerment as a *humanistic device to improve the quality of working life for ordinary employees* (Denham Lincoln *et al.*, 2002, p.271).

Within this context, Quinn & Spreitzer (1997), in their research on the characteristics of empowered people (through both in-depth interviews and survey analysis), found four characteristics that most empowered people have in common, a) a sense of self-determination (this means that they are free to choose how to do their work; they are not micromanaged), b) a sense of meaning (they feel that their work is important to them; they care about what they are doing), c) a sense of competence (this means that they are confident about their ability to do their work well; they know they can perform), and d) a sense of impact (this means that people believe they can have influence on their work unit; others listen to their ideas).

If organizations adopt the management process of employees' empowerment they can achieve many effective outcomes. Numerous studies have shown that empowerment may improve organizational effectiveness and productivity (Kirkman & Rosen, 1999; Lawler *et al.*, 1992, 1995; Nielsen & Pedersen, 2003; Spreitzer, 1995); promote the innovation of the personnel (Spreitzer, 1995); reinforce employees' job satisfaction (Kirkman & Rosen, 1999; Lawler *et al.*, 1992, 1995) along with organizational commitment (Guthrie, 2001; Kirkman & Rosen, 1999; Lawler *et al.*, 1992, 1995) and job involvement (Coye & Belohlav, 1995). According to Bowen & Lawler (1992), a benefit of empowerment is that employees will feel better about their jobs and themselves; and this will result to reduced turnover, less absenteeism, and fewer union organizing drives. Within this context, Zemke & Schaaf, (1989), noted that empowerment is a common theme running through many of the most effective service businesses, such as American Airlines, Marriott, American Express, and Federal Express.

However, the implementation of empowerment policies may also entail some disadvantages, since empowerment might impose extra financial and production costs on organizations (Bowen & Lawler, 1995). Further, the paper suggests that a number of problems can arise when organizations decide they want to empower employees: a) some managers do not want empowered employees, because this can take away some of their own base of power, b) some employees have little or no interest in being empowered, and c) empowerment does not work the same way in every workplace.

3 AIM AND METHODOLOGY

The aim of the present study was firstly, to investigate public sector top-management executives' empowerment and, secondly, to propose a number of practices and policies regarding the effective management of empowerment in the public sector field.

The research was conducted in four major Greek public sector organizations, in close cooperation with their administrations and the University of Macedonia, the second semester of 2011. The four organizations operate in the fields of electricity (38% of the sample), telecommunications (29% of the sample), public fixed-route transportations (24% of the sample) and water supply (9% of the sample) respectively. Overall, these organizations employ more than 48.000 people in Greece and are considered as the "Achilles' heel" of the local economic environment. We chose to examine their top-management executives because on the one hand, they are acknowledged as firms' major decision makers (Calori *et*

al., 1994) and on the other hand, their personal characteristics affect strategic decision processes (Peterson *et al.*, 2003) and strategic actions that have implications for firm performance (Nadkarni & Narayanan, 2007).

In more detail, their human resources departments proposed 353 top-management executives to participate in the research as key informants (i.e. in charge of or involved with their organizations' strategic management implementation). Overall, a total of 165 top-management executives replied to the structured questionnaire (74% male and 26% female; response rate 46.74%). The first month we organized a relevant workshop to explain the rationale and significance of the research, along with its goals, supporting objectives and expected results. The next month, we conducted a pilot test to examine the research functionality. Consequently, we send a presentation of our research to all top-management executives along with guidelines for the questionnaire. All through the research period, we provided full support (i.e. personal meetings, phone or e-mail) to the participants. Table 1 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the participants in our research.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the sample

	Age	Working Experience (years)
N	165	165
Mean	49,02	23,11
Median	50,00	23,00
Std. Deviation	4,725	4,328
Variance	22,329	18,732
Minimum	38	13
Maximum	58	33
	Frequency	Percent
Gender Men	110	66,7
Women	55	33,3
Total	165	100,0
	Frequency	Percent
Education BSc	53	32,1
MSc	87	52,7
PhD	25	15,2
Total	165	100,0

Regarding the measurement of empowerment, we used the well known questionnaire for empowerment developed by Whetten and Cameron (1995). The questionnaire consists of four empowerment dimensions suggested by Spreitzer's (1995) empirical study and another one suggested by Mishra (1992). Thus, it captures five dimensions of empowerment, namely *self-efficacy*, *self-determination*, *personal control*, *meaning* and *trust*. In more detail: a) *Self-efficacy* (competence), which suggests that employees possess a sense of confidence as well as a personal mastery regarding their capabilities; b) *Self-determination* (choice), which suggests that employees feel free to initiate tasks, make independent decisions and try out their ideas; c) *Personal Control* (impact), which suggests that employees believe that they

have the ability to cause a change or produce an outcome in the desired direction, despite the obstacles their external environment, imposes on them, d) *Meaning* (value), which suggests that employees value the purpose, the goals, and the mission of their work. Hence, they are committed, involved, excited and persistent in chasing preferred goals, e) *Trust* (security), which suggests that employees possess a sense of security within their job environment.

4 RESULTS

Principal component factor analysis revealed five dimensions that characterize Greek top-management executives' empowerment. The five dimensions have eigenvalues greater than 1 and explain 66.57% of total variance. In more detail: 1) *Trust* (F1, variance 16.04%): employees want a cooperative, honest and common understanding environment, where they feel confident towards a fair and equal treatment. 2) *Personal control* (F2, variance 13.59%): employees believe they can make a difference, have an impact, and achieve a desired result. 3) *Self-determination* (F3, variance 13.35%): employees experience freedom, discretion, and choice. 4) *Self-efficacy* (F4, variance 12.02%): employees feel capable, confident, and competent about their job. 5) *Meaning* (F5, variance 11.57%): employees sense the value, the purpose and the mission of the activities in which they are engaged.

High reliability also characterizes the five factors. The Cronbach coefficient alpha is 0,91 for the trust factor, 0,82 for the personal factor, 0,81 for the self-determination factor, 0,71 for the self-efficacy factor, and 0,75 for the meaning factor respectively. Mean values for each factor indicate that top-management executives gave greater score to *trust* (mean & SD=6.29 ± .65), *self-efficacy* (mean & SD=5.86 ± .79) and *personal control* (mean & SD=5.23 ± .73) than to *self-determination* (mean & SD =3,17 ± .78) and *meaning* (mean & SD=1.89 ± .69). Table 1 summarizes the results.

Table 2: Empowerment Factor analysis results

Questions	Factors				
	Trust	Personal control	Self-determination	Self-efficacy	Meaning
5	.95				
15	.87				
10	.86				
20	.84				
4		.92			
9		.82			
14		.74			
19		.73			
2			.92		
17			.79		
12			.78		
7			.75		
3				.91	
8				.87	
18				.67	
13				.53	
1					.83
16					.75
6					.73
11					.69
Eigenvalue	3.21	2.72	2.67	2.40	2.31
Variance (%)	16.04	13.59	13.35	12.02	11.57
Cronbach a	.91	.82	.81	.71	.75
Mean & SD	6.29 ± .65	5.23 ± .73	3.17 ± .78	5.86 ± .79	1.89 ± .69

Finally, the correlations among the five factors that capture the dimensions of empowerment in the Greek public sector are in general low degree ($0.017 < r < 0.099^*$, $*p < 0.05$) (Table 3).

Table 3: Factors correlation

	1	2	3	4	5
Trust		-.099*	.025	-.089*	.075
Personal control			-.009	.049	.052
Self-determination				-.002	.017
Self-efficacy					-.066
Meaning					
<i>Note: *$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$</i>					

5 DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Empowering prescriptions

Based on the international literature which suggests that empowerment can enhance decision making, motivation, performance and productivity (e.g, Brymer, 1991; Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Sashkin, 1984, Thomas & Velthouse, 1990; Zimmerman, 1995); and the

above findings, which support Whetten & Cameron's (1995) research; the present paper proposes a number of different management prescriptions that may foster the above five dimensions of top-management executives' empowerment. Moreover, we argue that these prescriptions may facilitate the way public organizations work and also may lead to improved productivity and business performance. In more details:

Trust: The high level of *trust* (6.29/7) indicates the need for a consolidation and development strategy in public sector organizations, where managing directors (who represent the organization as a whole) should take advantage of the high level of trust between top-management executives and their job status. Trust has been defined as the willingness of a trustor to be vulnerable to the actions of a trustee based on positive expectations about the trustee's characteristics, behaviors, and intentions (Mayer, *et al.*, 1995). In this respect, when employees trust their colleagues their supervisors and feel secure in their job, they would be prepared to grant them influence over important issues by, for example, disclosing sensitive or personal information (Mayer & Davis, 1999 ; Schoorman, *et al.*, 2007). Therefore, trust as a sense of job security was expected to be rated high in the present survey, as the Greek state provides the right conditions for such an outcome, having legally established the permanency of any kind of public servant job position. Based on the above insights, trust may be advanced through three empowering prescriptions that public organizations may use: 1) modeling of successful behaviors, 2) provision of continuous support, and 3) creation of confidence. In particular:

- 1) Public state organizations by modeling successful behaviors such as past success and experiences of different organizations and people (e.g. managers, leaders, charismatic people, famous organizations, nations' culture etc), empower top-management executives' perceptions about a) their ability to carry out their managerial assignment and b) their capability to successfully deal with tasks and roles present in their organizational context. In addition, modeling of successful behaviors also provides a vigorous motion for others to believe that they can succeed, too. Respectively, in their turn, top-management executives may serve as a role model, emphasize examples of past successes, and demonstrate people who have succeeded in e.g. academic, social or business disciplines, empowering in parallel middle and low level managers.
- 2) The provision of continuous emotional and technical support encourages, approves and reassures tom-management executives' empowerment. Managing directors, therefore, representing as a whole the organizations, in order to empower their managers, may personally try to open communication channels, eulogize their efforts, try to explain and justify their feelings and the way they think, offer regular and fair feedback about their abilities and finally assist them to deal with uncertainties.
- 3) Creation/cultivation of confidence mainly refers to employees' feelings about the trustworthiness of their supervisors and their organizational honorableness. In the same pattern, Martinko & Gardner (1982) suggest, individuals who posses confidence in being able to succeed and being happier with their work opposite those who fear that they may fail. Moreover, individuals under trust are free to experiment, to learn and to contribute without fear of retribution. Consequently organizations, in order to empower *trust* in their employees, should care about the minimization of employees' uncertainty, insecurity, and ambiguity feelings. In this framework, for instance, they may observe top-management executives' relationships and transactions within their external (i.e. market demand, new technology, and social discrimination) and internal environment (i.e. intra and interrelations among employees in different organizational levels).

Personal control: The high mean of *personal control* (5.23/7) also denotes the need for taking advantage of the important role of top management executives in their companies. More specifically, Greek public sector is well-known for nonproductive organizations and, in parallel, for the overprotected behavior of state towards its companies. This reality affects in a great deal the overall behavior of management executives and can turn to a weapon if employees exploit their power, or as a "death spiral" situation in case employees are not motivated to use their power, or they use it for other purposes, like self-assertion. Based on the above insights, *personal control* may be advanced through three empowering prescriptions that public organizations may use: 1) encouragement of initiatives, 2) cultivation of innovative attitude, 3) modeling of successful behaviors (*referred also previously*). In more detail:

- 1) Encouragement of initiatives mainly refers to employees' motivation to perform their tasks in their own entrepreneurial will. Initiatives within an organization must be supported on multiple levels and by multiple interventions. In the ideal case, they would involve a highly supportive organizational culture, advanced training and developmental experiences that heighten one's sense of competence and involvement in goal setting or, especially, in the means to achieve goals, job designs that are highly meaningful to employees (Locke, 1999).
- 2) Cultivation of innovative attitude refers to organization's strategy to support and promote the growth of innovative environments among organizational levels. Nowadays organizations, operating at the frontiers of knowledge and technology in business, forming various types of formal networks, need to be aware of the importance of employee perceptions and feelings as well as the value of their technological skills, and must develop innovative attitudes and strategies (Jacobs & Everett, 1988; Locke, 1999). In this respect, we argue that informal networks can help organizations by compensating for weaknesses in formal communication, fostering in parallel innovative attitude (Locke, 1999). The informal network comprises spontaneous, emergent patterns resulting from individual choices. Moreover, informal networks may be applied in the context of brainstorming sessions and knowledge-focused meetings helping top-management executives to unfold their innovative talents.

Self-determination: The relevant moderate mean of *self-determination* (3.17/7), indicates that Greek public organizations should move towards improving employees' competencies in meetings job requirements. Under an epistemological prism, self-determination refers to individuals' freedom to initiate their own behavioral courses of action (Deci & Ryan, 1985). However, in the context of the present survey and according to Whetten & Cameron's (1995) research, self-determination seems to acquire the extra characteristics of "job-fit" factor, which defines the adequacy of employees to complete the job tasks they are hired for, or a factor which defines the capability of employees to fit in the specific requirements each job entail. In this framework, it has to be noted that Greeks, in general, indicate a high educational level, as the average of young people who decide to attend university lessons is far beyond the corresponding number met in other European Union countries. Thus, most employees possess a remarkable record of degrees and qualifications, yet without taking advantage of them in the "real" job market. In this respect, a strategic direction towards filling knowledge gaps and in parallel exploiting employees qualifications, may lead to improvement of self-determination dimension. Based on the above insights, *self-determination* may be advanced if the public state companies make use of the three empowering prescriptions: 1) confidence creation (*referred also previously*), 2) job involvement and 3) leadership cultivation. In more detail:

- 1) Increased job involvement may lead to improved self-determination and can be perceived as the extent to which employees participate and get involved in everyday's tasks. Lawler (1969; 1986) defines involvement/participation in terms of four dimensions: power, information, knowledge, and rewards. The degree of participation varies based on the extent to which power, information, knowledge, and rewards are shared by employees at lower levels of the organization. Lawler (1986) described also three levels of participative management in terms of the degree of participation: parallel suggestion involvement, which includes interventions such as survey feedback and quality circles; job involvement, which includes job design and work-teams and high-involvement intervention, which is plant-wide or organization-wide participation intervention (Anderson *et al.*, 2001). In this respect, we argue that job involvement may act as a strong motivation for improving employee's competencies, so that they fit in specific job requirements.
- 2) Leadership cultivation may lead to improved self-determination through increased job involvement, job commitment and self-empowerment. In this framework, we argue that organizations should form an environment that shapes leaders through continuous training and job commitment measures. Those measures might be knowledge-based training programs that aim at identifying employees' inadequacies and at "healing" them by creating virtual situations with hands-on experiences, leaving enough space for employees to foster their core competencies and enhance their leadership profile.

Self-efficacy: The high mean of *self-efficacy* (5.86/7) denotes the need for developing a strategy where public state companies should effectively utilize top-management executives' autonomy to perform their tasks the way they prefer to. Moreover, confidence is reflected in self-efficacy and is perceived as the belief or degree of confidence that someone has the ability to successfully perform a task (Locke, 2009). Bandura (1997) and a subsequent analysis by Judge & Bono (2001) point out the central role of self-efficacy in causing high performance through its impact on motivation. Stajkovic & Luthans (1998) also noted that self - efficacy enhances focus, direction, persistence, and intensity of action. In this framework it seems that without self- efficacy only a fraction of everyday actions can take place. Self - efficacy can be conceived as a factor that enhances experimentation and swiftness because both behaviors will only occur when employees are sufficiently confident they can move quickly and successfully (Locke, 2009). Based on the above insights, *self-efficacy* may be advanced through three empowering prescriptions that public companies may use: 1) the fostering of personal mastery experiences, 2) the modeling of successful behaviors (*referred also previously*), and 3) the provision of information. In more detail:

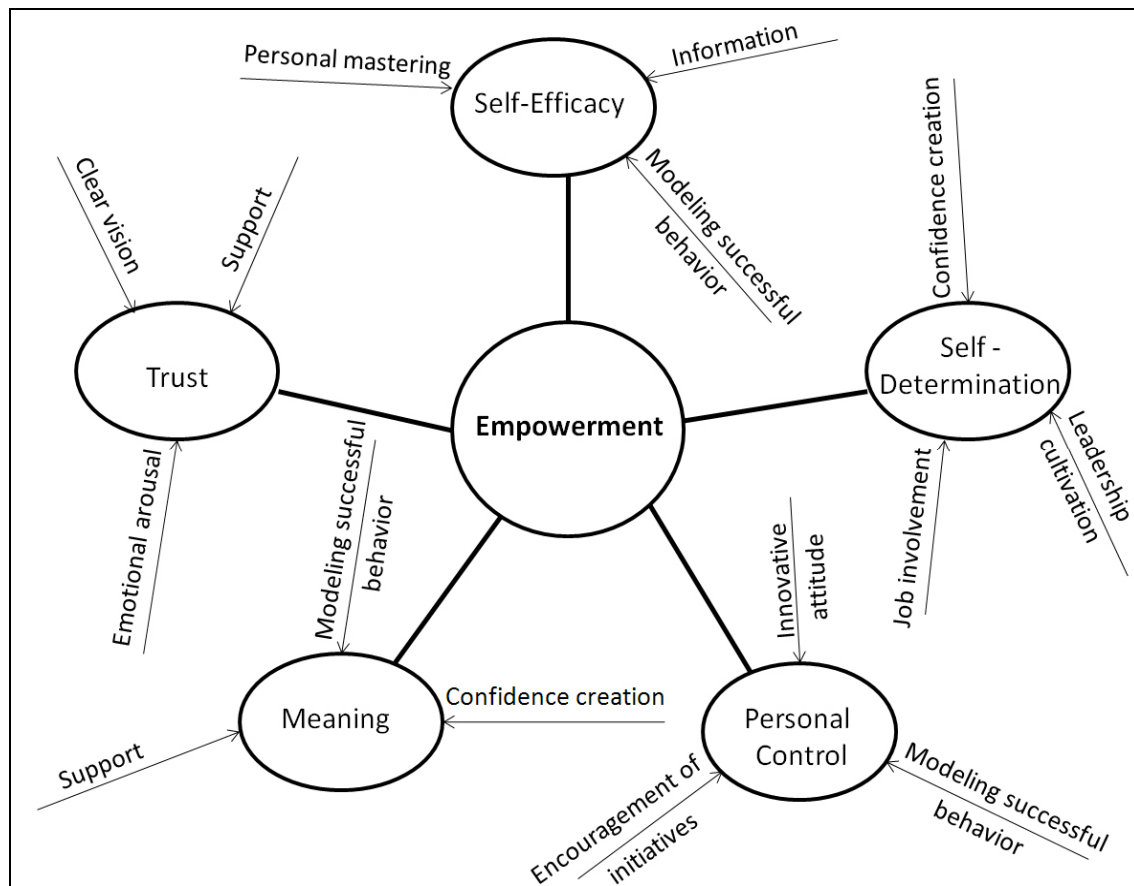
- 1) Fostering personal mastery experiences can help top-management executives to effectively complete a duty or resolve a problem. These eventually lead executives to the achievement of their desirable goals and the development of their self-efficacy. Managing directors or organizations in general, can empower executives' *self-efficacy* by discussing and forming with them the methods to accomplish sequentially more difficult tasks which, in turn, lead them finally to achieving their core goals (small-win tactics). Organizations should also recognize that personal mastery may a) increase employees' freedom to explore new ideas, b) bear up their learning by mistakes, c) improve their critical thinking. Overall, increasing feelings of personal mastery and self-efficacy help sustaining interest in the task, while also facilitate progress towards goal attainment (Anderson *et. al.*, 2001).
- 2) The provision of, uninterruptedly, formal and informal information regarding executives' necessities to complete their everyday managerial tasks may significantly

increase executives' *self-efficacy*. In this respect, organizations formed on the basis of information diffusion may 'offer' them a sense of empowerment. Consequently, executives may be more liable to work efficiently, creatively, and in harmony with managing director's guidance. Additionally, they will also be able to communicate and share information about the needs and the ways to improve their tasks.

Meaning: As last, the comparatively low mean value of *meaning* (1.89/7) calls for an effective turnaround strategy for the motivation of employees to sense the value, the purpose and the mission of the activities in which they are engaged. From our own experience, it becomes quite clear that Greek public sector constitutes one of the most rigid structures in country. Bureaucracy, old management beliefs, inflexibility and ineffective organizational structures caused deep warps in the way organizations and employees think. In this framework, taking also into consideration the job market difficulties in the last 40 years, Greek citizens perceived working in public sector companies as a rescue board in competing with everyday's battles. This reality seems to have distorted the real meaning of working in public sector and altered the beliefs and motivations of at least three generations. As a sequence, Greek public organizations got eventually overcrowded with employees who considered their job as a life vest with satisfactory salary and job security, rather than a field of creation and evolution. In this respect, the sense of value and mission were unknown concepts, sometimes even for a whole career life. Based on the above insights, *meaning* may be advanced through three empowering prescriptions that public companies may use: 1) clear vision, 2) provision of emotional and technical support (*referred also previously*), and 3) arousal of positive emotions. In more detail:

- 1) The articulation of a clear vision and goals may create an organizational environment where organization and employees are aware of where business is going and how they can contribute to its path. Hence, we argue that public organizations should focus on the establishment of a commonly accepted vision of the organization, by means of organizational commitment strategies. Those strategies, for example, might follow the routes of lifelong training, cultivation of improved relations among employees and use of training programs that provide future perspectives for the organization.
- 2) The arousal of positive emotions may replace top-management executives' negative emotions such as fear and anxiety, with positive emotions such as excitement, passion, or anticipation. Thus, it makes their working environment more attractive. Towards this direction, organizations may use discussion groups that will reveal employees' feelings and make them talk about their fears for the future. In parallel, organizations can use psychologically-driven methods to raise the moral of employees and make them feel important for their organization.

Figure 1: The proposed empowering prescriptions



5.2 Empowerment policies

As mentioned in the preceding analysis, employee empowerment is a complex management tool that, when applied properly, can be effective in improving performance, productivity and job satisfaction (Sashkin, 1984); and thus, it may become a powerful source within an organization. Certain strategic policies could be applied in order to reinforce the empowerment of the employees in different types of organizations.

To begin with, it is supported that the majority of employees are capable of making good decisions when properly socialized, trained and informed (Bowen & Lawler, 1992, 1995). Consequently, organizations' first aim should be to provide the proper information about the goals and the performance required. Secondly, organizations should introduce a system of rewards based on the performance and the progress towards the predetermined objectives. In addition, a knowledge focused management, providing the personnel with the appropriate training and knowledge programs relating to their work positions, should also be of critical importance; while, providing the opportunity and the discretion to the employees to change the work processes would also have a positive impact on their commitment and involvement in the organization's goals and make them feel more confident of their abilities. All the pre-mentioned practices are concluded to be positively correlated with employees' performance (Bowen & Lawler, 1992, 1995; Fernandez & Moldogaziev, 2010). Further, according to Rose-Asch (2001) organizations should involve the employees in the decision-making process and in the planning process, as it would make them feel directly related to the enterprise (organizational committed).

5.3 Limitations

Several limitations regarding this research are worth highlighting as these limitations would be the points to consider in future research of similar interest. The main limitation stems from the selection of the sample. Instead of only examining few major public organizations alone, it is recommended that the investigation needs to be expanded to other Greek public and private organizations. This would certainly give variation to the findings and the study can be further classified and compared based on organizations' size, scope and location. Further, this study focused on top-management executives but the participation of employees at the operational level might give different perspectives to the research. Input from employees would certainly provide insights and valuable information as to how their psychological empowerment influences their emotional and cognitive behavior in the workplace. Additionally, another limitation mainly refers to the possible occurrence of the Hawthorne effect (Franke & Kaul, 1978). That is, the process where human subjects of a research change their behavior, simply because they are being studied. Finally, there are no such earlier studies in order to evaluate the research findings through time.

6. CONCLUSION

The analysis of this survey highlights the significance of empowerment management in public sector organizations. Top-management executives' empowerment is crucial for their personal and mental development. Hence governments must realize their role to empowerment's procedure and be familiar with the strategies of empowerment in order to apply them to public sector companies. In this respect, organizations with administrative problems and unmotivated executives may have a chance to change the situation in the future, as they play the role of "handbrake" in the Greek national economy.

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