chapter = 2

contceptual framework
The researcher, based on the study of literature on empowerment and survey on understanding of empowerment by the industry professionals, developed a conceptual framework. The concepts were translated into reality and the dimensions of empowerment were identified. Also the relationships between the different dimensions and the boundaries of those dimensions are mentioned in this chapter.

**Framework**

"The formula for competitive success resets with empowered, dynamic efforts. Approaches that facilitate involvement from all the levels of the organization can make a difference".

W. Alan Randolph

Modern man has transformed himself into a commodity; he experiences his life energy as an investment with which he should make the highest profit, considering his position and the situation on the personality market. He is alienated from himself, his fellow men and from nature.

Modern man's main aim is the profitable exchange of his skills, knowledge, and of himself, his 'personality package' with others who are equally intent on a fair and profitable exchange. Life has no real goal except the one to move, no principle except the one to exchange, no satisfaction except the one to consume (Enrich Fromm, 1949). Having this in mind the researcher was interested in search of a process that gives the employees more power and autonomy and to make decisions within their control limits. In search of how well the managers and the employees can manage themselves the concept of empowerment came in the mind of the researcher.

Excellence can be created through quality which itself happens through people. In the global context, workers and managers have to practice cooperation and outside the company. Increase in involvement and
commitment is necessary for peak performance. Self-directed teams perform at peak levels and empowerment therefore is essential in this respect.

As per Diana Tracy, an US based empowered specialist, “empowerment basically is a good sound relationship. What we have seen so far is the autocratic form of power and the employee is powerless. But, real power to an organization comes form empowering people”.

Empowerment is relatively a new topic of academic interest. Though there are similar theories under the names of motivation delegation, employee participation, the concept of empowerment is a recent one. It is much wider in scope than motivation, employee participation and commitment. It involves the transformation of the individuals. In the process of empowerment every effort is made to hold in mind the person as person in the organizations. Support is given to the individuals, who foster the well being of the organizations.

Empowerment is a trust-based process of assigning authority to make decisions within one’s area of operation without having to get approval from higher ups. People are not only given authority but also the resources.

Diana Tracy says the following needs have to be met if employees are to be empowered.

- Clearly defined responsibilities.
- Delegation of authority.
- Clearly defined performance standards.
- Training and development.
- Access to information needed to take decisions.
- Feedback from management on performance.
- Recognition of achievement.
- Establishment of trust.
- Permission to make mistakes and Respect.
Empowerment contributes to greater productivity the most when worker’s knowledge is important to the work, when machines used are in the work are worker-controlled, and when work-methods are not inherently prescribed.

The logical development of the topic can be got in the next chapter, based on the analysis of following dimensions that contribute to in refining the process of empowerment:

- Working climate and culture
- Empowering leadership
- Power and politics
- Training and Development
- Quality of work life

**Definition of Empowerment**

Bandura (1977, 1986), support the concept of empowerment as a motivational construct. According to expectancy theory, an individual’s motivation to increase his or her effort in a given task will depend on two types of expectations i.e. their effort will result in desired level of performance and that their performance will produce desired outcomes. Therefore empowerment would enhance motivation for better performance.

Tannenbaum and Allport (1956) and Vroom (1964) emphasize the need for flexibility of management style. They discovered that subordinates prefer autonomy and self-control, and respond more positively to participative leadership in terms of both satisfaction and performance than subordinates who do not have such preferences. The outcome of autonomy (freedom of decision making in work area), self-control and participative leadership are better response and performance.
Bradley and Taylor (1972) - "Whilst there is significant debate amongst marketers about the principle of empowerment, one aspect which produces greatest agreement is that marketing managers should be given discretion in two key areas: the management of their teams and the interface with their customers. The marketing managers should release themselves from the routine tasks and focus their attention to task of dealing with customers".

Lawler (1974) - found that the need to control was not common to all people. His studies clearly showed that some people prefer self-direction and self-control. This is an important finding which reinforces the fact that not all individuals are likely to respond in the same way to empowerment.

McClelland (1975) suggests that the practicing of empowering subordinates is a principal component of managerial and organizational effectiveness.

The experiences in team building within the organizations within the organizations (Beckhard, 1969) suggest that empowerment techniques play a crucial role in group development and maintenance.

Kanter (1983) studied improving organizational capability and concluded that the infallibility of management, the certainty of management tasks, and the predictability of management careers have declined, but the potential of the rest of the work force for contributing to the solution of organizational problem has increased. They feel that this occurs as a result of shift of the focus on employees for their development.

Randolph (1995), states that empowerment is a process of recognizing and releasing into the organization the power that people have in their wealth of useful knowledge and internal motivation simple terms it is the authority to make decisions within one's areas of responsibility without first having to get approval from someone else.
Empowerment means granting latitude of action for how the work is done to those who do the work. The employee will often know something about the work and how it can best be done that no one else knows. It uses knowledge to optimize productivity and work excellence.

The basis for the belief that (Joseph Eby Ruin, 1998) empowerment is a valid approach for improving company effectiveness is that people who are nearest to the problem are best able to judge its solution, provided they have a policy, procedure or organizational framework within which to make decisions.

**Empowerment and Motivation**
In the research survey conducted, the researcher found that empowerment is used in much broader range of context and that the use of the term is interpreted and understood through a wide range of metaphors. Susan E. Murphy and Ellen A. Ensher (1999) say that empowerment comes from the concept called motivation.

Maslow (1954) recognized the need for self-actualization. The self-efficacy theory of Bandura (1977) clearly supports the concept of empowerment as a motivational construct. In the fiercely competitive global business environment the crucial differentiating factor for any company is nurturing and retaining the best performing employees. Motivating star employees needs to be carefully planned taking the work environment into account.

As motivation is interpreted to empowerment, Psychologist's study tells us that all humans have four basic needs: the need to feel comfortable, the need to be understood, the need to feel welcome and the need to feel important.
Thomas and Velthouse (1990) believe that empowerment provides a label for a non-traditional paradigm of motivation. They believe that the bases of intrinsic task motivation are:

- Sense of impact
- Competence
- Meaningfulness and
- Choice

Alpander (1991) suggested that the empowerment process is built on the concept that managers can affect performance by influencing employee motivation through work related outcomes. He points out that motivation theory indicates that individuals have a multitude of needs in varying degree of intensity. These needs or activators create a state of equilibrium within the person. Effective managers and organizations emphasize the diagnosis of needs and not the changing of the individuals themselves. In a study of a number of organizations Alpander found that the need to control as the strongest determinant of intrinsic motivation. Other motivators were self worth, compensation packages, security, recognition and belongingness.

An empowered employee should be capable of understanding both the external and internal environment, and should be equipped with the necessary competencies to act; as and when required without being told to do so. From the marketing professionals view point (Mark Eppler 2001), it is easier to meet a need than it is to create one as motivation was interpreted as empowerment in the past. This requires an ideological shift to the individualist approach. That is, a shift of the control function to within the employee rather than from without, and does not require the employee to wait for orders.
Empowerment and Power

Today organizations consist of employees of varied backgrounds, whose value systems, ways of thinking and acting are all different. The idea of empowerment is central to the Human Resource Function. Conger and Kanungo (1988) were amongst the first academics to investigate the topic of empowerment. They found that empowerment is often used as relational construct i.e. as the giving of power. Empowerment should not be about espousal and design of systems alone, but instead should lead to processes, which contribute to power equalization with in the organization.

Every society has within it some minority groups that feel incapable of controlling their own destiny. Similarly, most work organizations have a number of employees who believe that they are dependent on others and that their own efforts will have little impact on performance. This powerlessness contributes to the frustrating experience of LOW SELF-EFFICACY—the conviction among people that they cannot successfully perform their jobs or make meaningful contributions. In the West, the idea of workers’ self-management has always been the Cinderella of Industrial Relations theory. Empowerment is closely related to social power.

Dr. Ratnam V G (2002) briefs that his leader was a cool person, and never parks blames on his people. He was directed to discuss with his leader and decide on their annual targets and the secret of his success: Delegate. The lesson he learned was to delegate and empower the individuals. The more you trust them the more they perform. As the business grows, one will definitively need the wholehearted cooperation and commitment of the team members to sustain the growth and expand further.

Sabina (1994) discusses that sharing of power as one of the seven keys namely securing balance, generating passion, sharing power, inspiring love, voicing truth, trusting inner knowing and honoring the mystery to conscious
leadership called empowerment the most controversial and sensitive issue that has become a widely used term in companies throughout the world. The author also predicts that in true sense, on sharing of power, we will have to go a long way.

Empowerment and Delegation
A difference between delegation and empowerment has to be brought out. Some feel that there are other contemporary labels for empowerment. Some management gurus talk about participative management, participative decision-making or delegation. What they are referring is empowerment, granted that the underlying process is similar.

The degree of empowerment very much correlates with the intensity or level of delegating power, mandate, authority, capacity, function or a simple task.

There should be three goals in every manager's mind when the tasks are delegated. First, getting the job done, second, developing them and enriching their job content and third, finding an opportunity to assess their competence and commitment.

In a nutshell, one can say that delegation is a process in which a superior gives decision-making authority to a subordinate. Delegation gives non-managerial employees more than simply a say or voice in decisions. The dynamics of delegating empowers the employees to make their own judgments without the need for further referrals to their superiors.

Some of the exceptions in the policies can be made use by the lower-level staff. By giving them the judgment skills or training programmes required one should be able to use his level of power efficiently and effectively.

Traditional managers usually tell people what to do and when to do it, whereas new-style managers are more inclined to ask questions to get
people to solve problems and make decisions on their own. This process is overall helped by introducing the concept of empowerment.

Empowerment is any process that provides greater autonomy to employees through the sharing of relevant information and the provision of control over factors affecting job performance. Tannenbaum and Allport (1956) give more importance to management’s style towards flexibility than control. They discovered that subordinates prefer autonomy and self-control rather than control by the management. Both the participation and satisfaction of employees increases when they have the freedom of decision making in their work area. Luthans (2001), states that though empowerment is similar to traditional delegated authority and it comes from social power. He defines empowerment as the authority to make decisions within one’s area of operations without having to get approval from any one else. The author felt that empowerment is delegation of authority with control over resources.

It can be understood that empowerment comes by gaining some power. In a growing number of today’s organization’s, power is shifting out of the offices of manager’s jobs – information handling – can now be easily performed by anyone operating a computer.

Many of today’s workers are not being “managed” in the traditional, authoritarian styles that have been used by managers of generations in the past. Instead, power is often shared by a group of workers empowered to make decisions themselves.

Block (1990) states that as managers become more powerful and they nurture those below them by becoming a role model for how one wants them to function. He also describes empowerment as a state of mind and a culture that values initiative, absolute honesty and achievement. He believes that a cultural transition is possible provided that leadership behaviour changes.
The author also describes that empowerment would mean a process of moving organizations and individuals from a bureaucratic cycle to an entrepreneurial cycle. He believes that operating in bureaucratic culture increases the tendency to experience ourselves as vulnerable, losing control and being helpless. He suggests that a shift from one cycle i.e. bureaucratic to another entrepreneurial is feasible but requires a fundamental shift in the way managers think and operate.

**Empowerment and Leadership**

Barry (1991) confirms that the impact of empowerment has obvious implications for the role of managers. He writes that the employees are no longer required to command and control individuals, but need to know how to coach and support them to realize optimum performance and job satisfaction.

Empowerment has a strong link with leadership style which provides the freedom of decision-making, allows the individuals to perform better and get better job satisfaction. The management style has a direct influence on the leadership style.

Manz (1992) expresses that at the heart of any empowerment, effort should be an emphasis on self-leadership. He believes that self-leadership is the missing link in managerial effectiveness and that what empowered organizations really do is to create the conditions for each individual’s self-leadership system to be developed and unleashed.

The author agrees with Block (1990), and writes that in terms of influential leaders, there has been a recent shift away from powerful leaders to those who are able to empower their followers. Perhaps, effective leaders should be judged more on their ability to tap the leadership potential within each person.
Alcorn (1992) also believes this to be the key. He discusses the concept of dynamic followership and maintains that, leaders who perceive followers as dynamic are more likely to believe that their staff are willing and capable of acting on their own and doing far more than their traditional job descriptions prescribe. Escaping from style of control and micro-management, they empower their staff to make front-line decisions. The workplace atmosphere is charged with high levels of energy and trust rather than mediocrity and mistrust.

Yukl (1994) while examining the heroic leadership impact on followers, tries to show the research support which indicates that the leadership in executive teams at different levels in the organization (Barnes and Kriger, 1986) can be the force behind empowerment.

Many Companies have reduced employee dependence on superiors and placed more emphasis on individual control over the work that needs to be done. This particular process has been labeled as empowerment because it transfers direction from an external source (normally the immediate supervisor) to an internal source (the individual’s own desire to do well).

The researcher has taken empowerment, as her topic to come out with and make sure that empowerment is - the only source that can encourage employees to be creative and to take risks. The general belief is that these are the key components that can give a firm a competitive edge in a fast-changing environment.

The process which is discussed (Gomez-Mejia, Balkin and Cardy, 2002) entails providing workers with the skills and authority to make decisions that would traditionally be made by managers because, the ultimate goal of empowerment is to bring about enthusiasm, committed people and who has internal locus of control.
This conceptual framework or model covers a wide variety of skills, required to bring about greater devolution of authority and responsibility.

The following paragraphs deal with

❖ What is empowerment?
❖ Why empowerment?
❖ Trends, pressures, benefits, implications and dangers
❖ Its impact on organisational culture
❖ Training Needs.

Experience shows that a long-term commitment is needed to bring about empowerment in all levels of an organization. The researcher advocates that all training models should be reviewed and refreshed after three to six months to ensure that skills and improvements have been readily assimilated into the workplace.

What is empowerment?
Empowerment is the term used to describe a philosophy for running a business, which permits an organization’s employees, the authority and responsibility for those decisions, which affect their jobs. This frequently involves devolving responsibility down through the organizational hierarchy to those individuals who have the relevant understanding to make the best decisions.

It is a term, which is also applied to the process of employee participation in improving working practices and the organization’s performance.

Why empowerment?
Empowerment is a process, which has evolved in response to trends towards a greater degree of responsibility and involvement amongst employees in the running of their organizations. This trend has emerged as organizations have
recognized the capacity of their employees to improve and enhance business performance when they are informed and involved, when their skills and experience are recognized, and when they are encouraged to be creative, to innovate and to take risks.

On further examining empowerment, authors have expressed that empowerment means every one is expected to accept responsibility for getting his or her job done as well as helping others to accomplish their work and no one is forced to say that this is not my job. Thus, one can conclude that by providing opportunities to be responsible, truly empowers people.

**Approaches to Empowerment**

Five broad approaches to empowerment have been suggested by (Newstrom and Keith Davis, 1995): By giving proper training, coaching, and guided experience employees can be helped to achieve *job mastery*. The second approach can be to allow more *control* by giving them discretion over job performance and then holding them accountable for their outcomes.

Providing successful *role models* through allowing them to observe peers who already perform successfully on the job. Giving praise, encouragement, and verbal feedback designed to raise self-confidence, which is called as social *reinforcement and persuasion*. Providing *emotional support* can do a reduction of stress and anxiety. This can also be done through better role definition, task assistance and honest caring.

When managers use these approaches, employees begin believing that they are competent and valued, that their job have meaning and impact, and that they have opportunities to use their talents. In effect, when they have been legitimately empowered, it is more likely that their efforts will pay off in the kind of performance that the organization values.
Process of Empowerment

Though there are varied perspectives on how to use empowerment, the researcher has framed a method in proceeding the process of empowerment. There could be six stages in the process of empowerment identified by the researcher. They are

1. Identifying the status of powerlessness.
2. Preparing to communicate the responsibilities.
3. Providing confidence, self-efficacy and information.
5. Indicating the commitment level by providing training and
6. Appreciating with rewards.

In applying this process, management should make attempt to tailor this according to the individual’s attitudes. The practice of confidence building and active rewarding and supportive environment are more relevant in conjunction with demanding tasks.
Finally, appealing and challenging goals must be set for the effective implementation of empowerment in public companies. If goals are not perceived to be challenging and appealing, then it is difficult to empower employees especially in the public sectors.

**The benefits of empowerment**

Delegation of employees through empowerment and encouragement of employee involvement in decision-making brings about a greater sense of commitment by employees to their organization. Empowerment benefits the organization itself by creating an environment, which encourages:

- Proactively
- Problem-solving
- Challenge
- Innovation
- Continuous improvement
- Optimum utilization of employees
- A higher degree of employee motivation
- Enhanced business performance.

For employees, empowerment provides:

- A greater sense of self-worth
- A higher degree of involvement and participation
- A learning environment
- Opportunities for personal growth and development
- A greater sense of achievement.

**Implications of empowerment**

Empowering employees to take up the responsibility and decisions for factors affecting their jobs has profound implications for an organization, in terms of its structures and relationships. It implies a transfer of power and control
from one group of individuals to another, which may mean that line managers – often those at the middle-level must relinquish their authority. Empowerment implies a trust, both in one’s own ability and that of others.

The middle level managers are the people who frequently feel that they are least powerful within an organisation. They frequently perceive themselves as sandwiched between senior management who create company policy and the workforce who may resist the changes, which senior managers wish to make.

Giving up power and control can cause middle managers to feel increasingly insecure and anxious about their positions. It takes courage to learn that devolving power does not mean a loss of control: by giving up power managers can gain control. Through various studies one can infer that empowerment works best in organizations, which are non-hierarchical.

Indeed the process of empowerment itself often leads organizations to create flatter organizations structures where teamwork and matrix are encouraged. In this way organizations become closer to their customers, speed of decision-making and productivity in the marketplace is increased, and organizations become more proactive towards their customers.

Hatch (1992) feels that, late Sam Walton, the founder of highly successful Wal Mart stores in the USA, took the opposite view and was well known for his empowering approach towards his store managers. He believed in facilitating managers to generate ideas i.e. innovation and take action. Do it. Try it. Fix it. It is not a bad approach, and it works. This is possible for the today’s companies especially for the public sectors.
Threat and Dangers

The threat or danger of introducing empowerment to an organization, unless the process is properly managed, is that it will be seen as threat and cause confusion as traditional roles and responsibilities are challenged.

To be successful the companies should:
• Plan the stages of devolving responsibility
• Actively manage the change process
• Provide training and support to both the empowerer and the empowered.

Lee Fielder (2001) points out that empowerment are the hardest thing to do because it means 'giving up control'. This study argues that the bilateral nature of labour-management relations is being obfuscated today by a Unitarian management project.

The important area where the workmen will find it difficult to change is concerned with quality. For almost five decades, the quality of goods produced was nobody’s concern and whatever was produced was sold without any consideration for the customer, his needs, or his satisfaction.

Now that goods of better quality are available at lower prices, employers will initiate measures to provide facilities to improve the skills of workmen through empowerment through this they are aware of quality standards.

In these days of economic downturn, companies feel more pressure than ever before to keep employees motivated and productive because most of them are doing more work than before with fewer resources at their disposal.

Democracy in the business organization and the workplace in particular has to have an organic evolution and not through a motivation plan from above. Organizations of Industrial relations including the union and collective
bargaining can be the best via media for bringing in new organizations that are genuinely imbued with a participative and cooperative character.

With changes in the manufacturing sector taking place continuously, experienced workers as well as those who are desirous of acquiring newer skills are aplenty.

As time goes on, the workmen will be inclined to accept change, which had so far been frowned upon. This will motivate the workers and in turn to empower to acquire newer skills and help them to remain in employment, and to in tune with the technological developments taking place in the world.

**Empowerment in India**

The managing director of a company, when asked about empowerment, had told that how he can give power to another when he himself has taken 20 years to acquire it and that he is enjoying it for the last ten years. This tells us that empowerment is a painful process in India. The attitude of the captains of industry in India towards empowerment is evident from the findings of this study that India has a long way to go in the matter of empowerment.

The discipline of HRM has been influenced rather heavily by concepts in organizational behaviour, organization development and psychology in general. The contribution to HRM literature from sociologists, economists and legal academics has got somewhat undermined or can be said to be not quite in fashion. Especially some British scholars have argued that the term HRM itself carries a strategic connotation as it is a distinctive approach to employment management aimed to develop a strategic advantage, and the use of the term strategic HRM, they argue, is superfluous.
Views on Empowerment by Industry Professionals

Chatterji B, General Manager, Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), defined empowerment as the means of making a person able to perform to his/her maximum effectiveness.

Captain Chander K, Executive Director-Marketing, Bharat Earth Movers Limited, defined empowerment as confirming power to subordinates for quick and smooth functioning.

Aneja A P, General Manager, HAL, defined empowerment as feeling of an individual that he has full authority to take/suggest measures for achieving overall improvement in the area of his work and that there is continuous encouragement from the superiors in this direction.

Ravishankar P, Deputy General Manager, Bharat Electronics, defined empowerment as provision of sufficient freedom to independently take decision and act upon it and having acquired the powers, the willingness to use these at one's level.

Ragunathan S., Additional General Manager (Customer Services), HAL, defined empowerment as the process of sharing authority or power with subordinate and enabling them to exercise it.

Pant S., Additional General Manager (Manufacturing), HAL, defined empowerment as the feeling of responsibility and authority given to an employee by the organization, which facilitates in the fulfillment of individual's task. The views expressed by management practitioners are similar to the definitions of empowerment expressed by management writers, thinkers and researchers.