A SURVEY OF MANAGERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS EMPLOYEE EMPOWERMENT IN SELECTED OIL COMPANIES IN KENYA

NDUNGU GRACE W.

A MANAGEMENT RESEARCH PROJECT SUMITTED FOR THE AWARD OF MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (MBA) DEGREE, FACULTY OF COMMERCE, UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
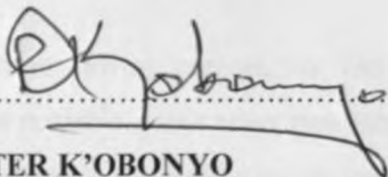
DECLARATION

This research project is my own original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other college, institution or university other than the University of Nairobi for an academic credit

Signed.......................................Date...28/2/05.............

NDUNGU GRACE

This project has been submitted for examination with my approval as University Supervisor

Signed.......................................Date...02/03/05

PROFESSOR PETER K'OBONYO

DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION
FACULTY OF COMMERCE
UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

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DEDICATION

FOR MY CHILDREN MICHEAL & KIRSTEN
YOU MEAN THE WORLD TO ME

ABSTRACT

Human Resource planning and development is dynamic and continues to face challenges with the changing times. In order for organizations to be able to cope with these changes, they must be flexible and respond to the evolutions that are part and parcel of everyday life.

Organizations seek to maximize profits while minimizing costs, not only in raw materials but in their personnel as well. A useful model for building a self sufficient workforce centers on some of these questions: how well are the employees trained to cope with continuous changes? How willing is the organization to relinquish power and share it among employees? How well is teamwork developed within the organization? what opportunities exist in these organizations for self growth? How well are the employees committed to the organizations goals and objectives? How does employee decision making affect the organization's day to day running?

This research set out to survey the attitudes of managers towards employee empowerment in the face of recent and on going retrenchment which in effect translates to more work for fewer staff. The study used the survey design. The research was to determine the attitude of managers towards employees' empowerment in the oil industry in Kenya. The five leading oil companies were chosen for this research.

The population of the study consisted of departmental oil managers of the leading oil companies, i.e. Mobil Oil Kenya, Kenol/Kobil Kenya, Caltex Kenya Ltd, Shell/BP Kenya Ltd and Total Kenya Ltd. Primary data was obtained using a structured questionnaire administered through the drop- and- pick-later- method. The questionnaire was divided into sections according to the research questions. There were 30 respondents which translated to 88% response rate. The data was analyzed using narrative frequencies and tables. The main findings were as follows:

Majority of the respondents felt positively towards empowering their employees. In addition, employees' ideas have the potential to unleash innovation and profitability for the organization.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

This chapter covers the background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study and the importance of the study.

Working organizations and working relationships are dynamic; they refuse to stay put or stand still. Managers must change the style of their management. They must keep in tune with changes outside management, changes in people's ideas and expectations and changes in the environment within which managers manage. At the same time, they must learn about, recognize and understand changes in management. Some of these are direct responses to environmental changes; others represent new ideas, theories, policies and practices generated by managers within the management process.

The need to change the way organizations and the people in them conduct business has never been greater. This is because of the escalating development of global markets, increasingly rapid changes in work technologies, shifting work force and customer demographics which includes an increased emphasis on quality and flexibility in products and services. Any company that cannot produce at lower costs with better quality and at a faster pace than its global competitors may soon be out of business.

An organization is nothing without its human resource. People still remain the one most important asset for any organization. When one thinks of the millions of organizations that provide us with goods and services, how often

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does one think that they depend on people to make them operate? Without the productive effort of its workers, materials and resources would be of no use. It therefore follows that, if the people in charge of resources should be empowered for the utilization of resources and materials to be maximized.

In particular, the oil industry actually forms a great part in this country's developing economy. Kenya's energy requirements depend largely on this industry and it therefore means that the employees need to be fully committed to their jobs and be accountable for what they do. Based on the recent shift in the job market that has been curbed by retrenchments and lay-offs, employee production and dedication to the job is majorly a function of the way they are treated by the employer. In many organizations, there exists little or no opportunity of employee empowerment, not even the freedom to make the most basic of decisions. Kenyan industrialists cannot afford to ignore the rising need for the concept of empowerment as it is here with us and it is here to stay.

Empowerment is a concept that gained immense popularity in the 1990s and looks set to continue as a popular organizational initiative in the twenty-first century. It is a managerial ideology in its own right as well as being used with other initiatives and strategies such as Business Process Re-engineering (BPR), Total Quality Management (TQM), and the learning organization. It is strongly associated with culture change initiatives, delayering, and restructuring. It usually involves devolving power and responsibilities to teams at the work place or customer level (Arkin, 1995)

Most companies today have their main focus on satisfying final customers. In her article, 'An overview of Employee Empowerment: Do's and Don'ts', Fragoso (1999), says that companies must overemphasize the time and

resources devoted to "polishing" employees. This "polishing" of employees is the main guide for a successful employee empowerment program. By polishing she means the whole process that employees must go through prior to becoming effective and efficient decision makers. Organizations now have to adapt to strategies that free their roles more effectively. Top managers have to shift their burden of day-to-day organizational operation, discipline, planning and management of resources to "empowered" employees, both individually and teams.

When the above is done, every outstanding customer service will be provided, giving organizations in the end more satisfied customers who are receiving courteous and effective service, employees who also feel more fulfilled with the psychological and possible monetary results and finally senior management who will smile from ear to ear after seeing the bottom line.

In recent years, several changing factors have led to the need of management to change the way they conduct business. Organizations now operate in a tougher, more competitive and highly dynamic environment than ever before. Empowerment is the recognition that employees do have skills and can be trusted and therefore authority can be passed down the hierarchy to them.

This study, therefore, sets out to establish the various attitudes that managers in the oil industry in Kenya have toward employee empowerment. This is justified on the ground that attitudes largely determine behavior or action. Thus, only when managers have favorable attitudes towards empowerment will they empower their employees.

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1.2 Need for empowerment

There are several key factors which are essential in the research on the need for empowerment and they include; the need to develop a self managing work force which will exercise self direction and control, the involvement of other members of staff in the decision making process. Due to the changing system of organizational leadership, most companies are under pressure to attain flexibility and accountability towards its workforce and the need to motivate employees and channel their energies towards the maximization of the organizations business results

1.3 An overview of the oil industry in Kenya

Kenya is a country of 28.2 million people according to the last census held in the year 2000 and measures 58,400 square miles. At present, petroleum products account for about one fifth of all energy consumption in Kenya including the traditional energy sources, fuel wood and charcoal. But the position of petroleum products in modern consumption in pre-eminent; they combine two thirds, while hydroelectric and geothermal sources make up the remaining third. Coal's contribution is almost negligible.

However, at certain times this petroleum consumption can climb up to 80% as evidenced during the recent severe drought in 1999/2000. The country's electricity reliance shifted from 82% hydro to 81% fossil fuels through the setting up of emergence power generators. The country saw its fossil fuel increase by an unprecedented 30% in the period.

The transport sector is the largest consumer of petroleum products at approximately 60% of total production of approximately 2.6 million tons per

year. Manufacturing (16%), commercial establishments (11%), household use (9%) made up of Liquid Petroleum Gas and agriculture (4%).

Kenya is not a producer of petroleum products. It imports mainly from the Persian Gulf area most of it as crude oil with refined petroleum products (mainly from the Mediterranean market) accounting as yet for a small but rising share, of the total import. The crude is refined at the country's only refinery Kenya Petroleum Refineries Limited (KPRL). KPRL production is about 2.01million tons per year at the port city of Mombasa and is transported inland by pipeline, road and rail.

There is some upstream exploration activity mainly in the extreme north of the country and offshore of Mombasa coastline. To date, no commercially viable oil or gas deposits have been discovered.

The major multinationals Shell/BP (who acquired Agip in 2001), Caltex, Mobil, Total, Fina Elf together account for 83% of the retail market sector, the balance about 16% going to Kenol/Kobil and 1% to new entrants (Petroleum Institute of East Africa).

1.4 Statement of the problem

The recent shift in Kenya's economy has seen massive retrenchments being carried out due to high costs and poor economic performance. In the light of these changes, most organizations are left with a skeleton staff to run the day-to-day operations of the business. These employees are charged with the responsibilities of having to make important decisions about the work system for their companies. (Daily Nation 24th January 2003)

Whereas views of workers have taken center stage of many researches on participative management, a good deal less is known about the views of the managers. Their views are necessary because managers influence the attitude of the workforce. (Kimutai, 1993)

Blunt (1978) has observed, "the public sector in Africa is likely to experience increasing hostility battles for position and inflexibility between the less educated but experienced elderly managers and the upcoming young and educated managers. Such unfortunate developments could be avoided if more participatory forms of management were introduced.

Gilberg (1988) has reported that managers view participation as an aid to management rather than as a desirable objective in its own right.

McConkey (1980) found among younger, better-educated managers a more progressive attitude to participation. In a study carried out by Samiee (1982), found out that majority of managers agreed that if the product line work is divided into work stations and workers are permitted to participate in management, they would work hard and long to improve productivity.

These same employees are also having problems concerning remuneration, work place harassment, poor working conditions and misrepresentation of their rights as employees to basic pay packages and proper medical facilities. The recent attitude of employees manifested in go-slows and strikes are an indication that all is not right in the work place.

The available literature demonstrates clearly the emphasis being placed on employee empowerment in many organizations worldwide. Indeed, empowerment is frequently listed as one of the best human resource

practices and is strongly associated with organizational competitiveness and profitability (Pfeffer, 1994). This implies that organizations that ignore employee empowerment are at a great risk of substandard performance in the long run.

Previous studies (e.g. Pfeffer, 1994) have also shown that employee empowerment is a function of management attitude towards the concept. Given this and the increasing popularity of empowerment, it would be important to establish the attitudes of the Kenyan managers towards the practice, particularly in the light of the employee grievances reported in the print media (Daily Nation 24th January, 2003). The importance of this need is underscored by lack of a systematic study on the subject in Kenya. It is this gap in knowledge that the proposed study seeks to fill. In other words, the proposed study is intended to answer the question: What is the attitude of Kenyan managers towards employee empowerment?

1.5 Objective of the study

To determine the attitudes of managers towards employee empowerment in the five major oil companies with headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya.

1.6 Importance of the study

The results of the study will provide information to the oil companies on how employee empowerment is generally regarded in the industry. This will also encourage further research in empowerment in the oil and other industries and could further be used by trade unions in negotiating for employee involvement in the company decision-making.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In the past few years the concept of employee empowerment has become a popular management topic that has received a fair share of press coverage. Empowerment encourages individual team members to participate in making decisions that affect their work directly.

2.1 Defining Empowerment

Different scholars have defined the term empowerment in various ways:

"It is a change management tool which helps organizations create an environment where every individual can use his or her abilities and energies to satisfy customers."(Cook and Macaulays, 1997:55)

"The essence of Empowerment can be described as the enlargement of employees' jobs giving them the responsibility and "authority to make decisions about their work without supervisory approval" while creating value for the ultimate customers (Boone and Kurtz, 1998:14)

Employee empowerment in its all embracing nature, skirts over issues of how employees use their abilities and whether there are boundaries to responsibilities, the degree and type of power employees enjoy; power relations between employees, managers, individuals, teams, customers and the context of empowerment. Both Wilkinson (1998) and Lashley (1997)

have commented on the importance of empowerment as is influenced by historical, economic, social and political factors, and in attempting a definition the context in which it is practiced must be considered.

Wilkinson (1998:40) defines empowerment as a *managerially led* initiative: "Unlike industrial democracy, there is no notion of workers having a right to say, it is employers who decide whether and how to empower employees. While there is a wide range of programs and initiatives which are titled empowerment, and which vary as to the extent of power which employees actually exercise, most are purposefully designed not give workers a very significant role in decision making, but rather to secure an enhanced employee contribution to the organization. Empowerment takes place within context of a strict management agenda."

2.2 Historical Perspective of Empowerment

Empowerment is believed to have originated in the 1800s when it was noticed that the lifestyles of the people of the East and those of the West were quite different. In the East, people were highly independent, stubborn, self-confident, strong willed, worked hard, and most had little or nor formal education. They would not tolerate abusive work environments that were common in the west. During the 1950s gold rush, these diverse work systems collided. The Chinese brought empowerment leadership styles to California in America while command –and – control leadership came from the west to the east. The Chinese were so efficient that laws were passed that made it illegal for them to seek jobs or enter into o businesses that Americans wanted. The Chinese then entered businesses that Americans did not want such as laundry services and also reopened goldmines that had been abandoned by the Americans and made them profitable. Even under

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restricted conditions, Chinese organization methods could out produce the American worker. (Frolich, 1999)

Empowered leadership worked because the leaders wanted to get the job done and secondly they had to overcome their own social prejudice related to social class so that it did not influence decisions. When leaders ask the workers for information or advice they increase the intensity of motivation. Opportunity to rise through the ranks is motivating and inspiring both to those directly involved and those who are observing.

In recent years, there has been an enormous growth in the popularity of various employee involvement (EI) schemes under the umbrella of empowerment. As Foy (1994:18) points out "empowerment of people is as important today as involving them in decision making was in the 1980s and getting them to participate was in the 1970s.

It is important to consider not only the economic and industrial context, but also the social and political context of empowerment and as Foy suggests the historical context as well. In differentiating employee involvement (EI) from empowerment, it is clear that EI initiatives are support mechanisms for other managerial strategies such as total quality management (TQM), business process re-engineering (BPR), high performance work systems and the learning organization (Arkin, 1995:35)

In her literature review of employee empowerment, Linda Honold (1997:202) implicitly acknowledges the above definition by seeing empowerment as control of one's work, autonomy on the job, variations of teamwork, and pay systems that link pay with performance. She also indicates "to be successful, each organization must create and define

empowerment for itself." Empowerment must address the needs and culture of each unique entity. She further divides empowerment into five groupings: leadership, the individual empowered state, collaborative work, structural or procedural change, and the multidimensional perspective that encompasses all the four categories.

2.3   The manager's role in creating an empowering context

In Honold's (1997) first category, the leader must set the context and cultural climate for the implementation of empowerment schemes. If by implementation power is to be delegated, employees need the requisite training, development and support mechanisms and processes (such as team building) to enable this to happen. As an initiative, this conforms strongly to Wilkinson's (1998) concept to empowerment –that is being **managerially led.**

2.4   The individual perspective of empowerment

Honold (1997:204) reminds us "that if power is not taken by those it is bestowed upon then, there is no empowerment." In other words, individual employees must feel that it is a worthwhile process for them; for example, it may give them a sense of satisfaction and of gaining influence over events. Menon (1995) surveyed 311 employees in a company and found that greater job autonomy and meaningfulness of the job led to greater perceived control and greater empowerment. He found that the greater the empowerment of employees the greater was their motivation to work. This also led to less job stress and increased employee commitment to organizational goals.

2.5   Empowerment through collaborative work

The individual usually has to work with others, and the element of empowerment through collaborative efforts has to be acknowledged, such as through quality circles or work teams. This means developing the ability of employees to work together and cooperate, using this sharing process to empower themselves further (Rothstein, 1995).

2.6 Empowerment through structural and procedural change

This is concerned with the nuts and bolts of the empowerment process, associated for example with TQM systems. Ward (1993:4) believes that such systems have three crucial components these are; Firstly, clarity and consistency of the organization's overall production and development goals, which includes an alignment of all systems and management and employee levels towards those goals; secondly, ongoing evaluation and development of the professional needs of the employees, with preparation for a greater sense of process ownership and accountability; and finally, assurance of congruence between corporate goals, management goals and the goals of the organization's employees.

2.7 Multi-dimensional perspectives on management

Honold's (1997:206) final category shows that one approach is sufficient for empowerment to be effective. Others believe that combining education, leading, mentoring and supporting, providing and structuring is more likely to enable empowerment systems to be successful. Human resource systems should also be fully supportive of these components, providing a contextual framework within which empowerment process can relate to the vision, goals and aims of the organization, through Human resource development,

reward systems and employee relations systems combined with adequate feedback measures.

Chris Argyris (1998:102-103) on the topic of empowerment in the Harvard Business Review on Managing people says that "no vision, no strategy can be achieved without able and empowered employees." The essence of empowerment can be described as the enlargement of employee's jobs giving them the responsibility and "authority to make decisions about their work without supervisory approval" while creating value for their ultimate customers. (Boone and Kurtz, 1998:48) Alan Randolph (1996) summarizes the context of empowerment by saying that it consists of a set of values, attitudes and behaviors different from those that guided the organization in the past. In his view, empowerment is not just "giving people the power to make decisions." At its most practical level, empowerment is recognizing and releasing into the organization the power that people already have in their wealth of useful knowledge and internal motivation.

2.8 The Process of Empowerment

Empowerment is a process that consists of several facets, namely information sharing, autonomy, and teams becoming a hierarchy.

2.8.1 Information sharing

The first critical key is information sharing. "People without information cannot act responsibly" (Blanchard, Carlos & Randolph, 1996:34). "If information shared is zero, nothing happens to redistribute... (it), and empowerment wick be zero" (Bowen and Lawler, 1995:74). "Communication and information are the lifeblood of empowerment" (Ginnodo, 1997:12). People need information to know how they and the

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company are doing, and if their actions are making a difference. Without information, people cannot act responsibility; informed, they are almost compelled to act with responsibility.

Alan Randolph (1996) in his article 'Navigating the journey to empowerment,' adds that a very powerful benefit of information sharing is raising the level of trust in the organization. This is because employees are now entrusted with sensitive information about their organization. Other benefits of information sharing include: facilitates successful completion of tasks because they all have the necessary information they require, enables sharing of the company performance information, helps the employees understand the business.

2.8.2   Creation of autonomy through structure

This involves the minimization of certain structures to enable employees operate autonomously. The need for more structure diminishes as people become more comfortable with the new culture. This minimization is aimed at achieving: Goal setting, creation of clear organizational visions, know their decision making rules, performance appraisal becomes easier training need identification (Ginnodo, 1997:12).

2.8.3   Teams become the hierarchy

Teams are an integral part of empowerment. Understanding the change process that accompanies team development provides a foundation for managing the transition. The key elements of team development are continuous training, leadership vacuum and fear (Alan Randoph, 1997).

Continuous training When teams are created and called upon to make important management decisions, many otherwise skillful people are often at a loss as to how to function as part of a responsible, high performing

management team. As companies move towards the final steps to empowerment, they will need to reduce dependence on hierarchies (Alan Randolph, 1997).

The leadership vacuum the most intriguing aspect of the empowerment process occurs when teams begin replacing the hierarchy. During the developmental stages toward empowered teams, both managers and employees experience a period of disillusionment. During this stage, teams sense a lack of competence and lose motivation to continue to work towards empowerment – a tremendous letdown after the excitement shared at the outset of their journey. Teams need a strong leader, capable of proving guidance, encouragement, and support, to help them over their difficulty. Unfortunately, at this juncture managers are often just as disoriented as employees; this phenomenon is labeled "the leadership vacuum." Since neither managers nor employees have had any experience with empowerment yet, it is unreasonable to expect anyone to know immediately how to deal with it (Alan Randolph, 1997).

The fear factor the leadership vacuum also points out the high level of manager fear inherent in empowerment. Whenever managers find themselves in the uncomfortable position of not knowing what to do, they tend to fall back on their bureaucratic mentality.

Teams have the advantage of participation; therefore more ideas can be generated. They also have autonomy over their decisions and are able to influence others in the teams and take responsibility for their own success (Alan Randolph).

2.9 Benefits of Empowerment

Various studies have shown the benefits of empowerment some of which include, increased employee job satisfaction, the manager is relieved off

making all the decisions for the employees, reduced absenteeism, increased education and training, reduced employee turnover, employees are likely to improve their work behavior and attitudes if they participate in decision making, improved business relationships with other departments, and less conflict between managers and employees.

2.10 Challenges to Empowerment

There are some obstacles to successfully adopting employee empowerment. These include a contradiction in what employers and managers want from empowerment and what they are prepared to allow to workforce in terms of empowerment and control. Most organizations in Kenya are still highly structured around functions and employ descending degrees of authority. (Scully, 1993:453) There are bound to be clashes due to overlapping responsibilities.

Management faces a dilemma in terms of how much power to extend to the work force while harnessing their creative energies without undermining their position. Influence of cultural values can also be an impediment to the empowerment process. This, for example, could explain why quality circles work well in Japan where all workers are considered equal and yet flopped in Spain. Cultural differences amongst a work force create challenges. (Argris)

Another impediment to empowerment is the fact that information sharing has not been achieved as, in most cases, a lot of communication barriers exist. Empowerment sometimes means giving up control and letting others make decisions, set goals, accomplish results and receive awards. Managers are expected to sacrifice their needs for power and control for others gain (Beardwell and Holden, 1992:638)

Employees also have fears and doubts leading to unwillingness to accept new responsibilities and resisting change. Middle level management is considered as a stumbling block to what goes up and down and lower levels of management in any organization. Also, employees may resist empowerment.

2.11 Empowerment and attitudes

David, (1983) defines attitude as beliefs about specific object, people or situations. One could for example have an attitude about how much freedom manifests itself in a specific work environment. Being associated with specific objects or situations, attitudes predispose the individual to exhibit certain behavior toward the object or situation. In this case, therefore, the attitude that managers in oil companies have towards empowerment will affect their behavior with respect to issues concerning empowerment.

Attitude is a learned predisposition to respond to an object in a constantly favorable or unfavorable way. Attitudes have been viewed as a kind of motive, a reflection of underlying values and /or variables that intervene between a stimulus and a response; subjective evaluations; self-descriptions; predictions of behavior or enduring cognitive structures (Eiser, et al 1988). When employees feel empowered, they have more positive attitudes in terms of work/job satisfaction (Spreitzer, Kizilos & Nason, 1997) and organizational commitment (Liden et al., 2000). In addition, Sparrowe (1994) found that when lower level hospitality employees felt empowered, they had more pay satisfaction, more promotion satisfaction, and less propensity to turn over. Similarly, Koberg et al. (1999) found that empowerment perceptions were associated with increased work satisfaction and reduced propensity to leave the organization. Empowered employees also reported less job strain (Spreitzer et al., 1997)

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Empowerment also affects performance – more specifically, managerial effectiveness and innovative behavior (Spreitzer, 1995), and work unit performance (Seibert, Silver, & Randolph, 2004). All in all, the findings suggest a great deal of positive potential for attitudinal empowerment in a work context.

Empowerment infuses individuals with the deep sense of meaning or purpose necessary to risk greatness. The feelings or attitudes of competence that empowerment affords gives people the confidence to take on difficult tasks. The self determination helps people to feel in control of their destiny, facilitating the potential for risk taking. Through empowerment, individuals experience the purpose and efficacy to allow them to persevere. It can also facilitate a sense of real hope in the future that things will get better and buffer survivors from the debilitating effects of downsizing (Brockner et al.,)

The main concerns of employee empowerment for instance, autonomy, the capacity to design one's own work processes and making key decisions have been widely employed in reconstructing employee attitudes. Along with new ways of doing work, regulation of identity with the intention of increasing commitment or satisfaction has been another target in empowerment activities. Organizational behavior research has shown that management practices give rise to particular job attitudes on the part of employees. For example, participation in decision making that is enhanced by teamwork is argued to have a significant positive effect on job satisfaction and commitment of employees (Sarata, 1984; Boshoff & Mels, 1995)

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CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

A descriptive research design was used in this study. This method is preferred because only departmental managers were being interviewed and thus the whole population of these managers was considered sufficient for the research.

3.2 Population

The population of this study consisted of departmental managers of the five major oil companies in Kenya, namely: Mobil Oil Kenya, Kenol/Kobil Kenya, Caltex Kenya Ltd., Shell/BP Kenya Ltd, and Total Kenya Ltd. These are the leading oil companies in Kenya based on their market share, that is, Shell/Bp, Caltex, Mobil, Total and Fina Elf together account for 83% of the market, 16% going to Kenol/Kobil and 1 % to new entrants. (Petroleum Institute of East Africa, 2002)

3.3 Sample Size

For the purposes of this study, a sample of 33 departmental managers was selected. This was the number of all the heads of departments of the five oil companies. This sample size is above the recommended minimum of 30 according to the rule of large samples.

3.4 Data Collection

The study used primary data was e collected using a structured questionnaire containing both closed and open-ended questions. The closed ended questions were put on a likert type scale. Additionally, open-ended questions were used to explain responses to some of the closed ended questions. The method used to administer the questionnaire was drop and pick later.

3.5 Data analysis

Data was first edited for completeness and consistency. The data was then analyzed using descriptive statistics, namely means, standard deviations, frequencies and percentages. The results of the analysis are presented in tables and bar charts where appropriate. Chi-square statistic for the independent samples was also used to test for the difference between local and multinational firms with respect to the use of training for empowering employees.

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CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research findings and analysis. Responses were received from 30 of the oil company managers. This represents an 88% response rate and covered the relevant areas that are involved in employee empowerment.

4.2 Profile of the Companies

83.3% of the participating companies were subsidiaries of multinational oil companies operating in Kenya, while 16.7% of the respondents were locally incorporated. 54.2% of the participating companies have been in operation for close to a hundred years. All the companies have been in operation for over forty years which means that they are all mature companies which could be expected to have established policies relating to the management of the human resource function. Furthermore, these companies (because of their age) are likely to be at the forefront in adoption of leading edge innovations relating to employee participate in organizational management.

4.3 Management profile

The survey sought top managers' opinions and attitudes towards employee empowerment. The respondent's educational profile is as follows;

Table 1: Educational Profile of respondents

Highest Educational Level	Percentage of Respondents
Secondary / High school	6.7%
Diploma	3.3%
Professional	10.0%
Undergraduate Degree	20.0%
Postgraduate Degree	60.0%

Majority of respondents are very well educated with 80% of them holding one or more degrees. This proportion, taken together with those holding professional qualifications account for 90% of all persons holding managerial positions in oil companies.

4.4 Length of service

The period respondents have served in managerial positions ranges from under five years to over twenty years as shown:

Table 2: Length of service in management position

Length of service	Percentage of respondents
1-5 years	63.3%
6-10 years	20.0%
11-15 years	10.0%
Over 20 years	6.7%

83.3% of the respondents have served in management positions for a period ranging from 10 years or less. Of this proportion, 63.3% have served for a period ranging from 1 to 5 years.

Only a small percentage of respondents (16.7%) have been with the same company in a management position for a period longer than 10 years.

4.5 Distribution of Respondents by Age

The survey also considered the age categories of managers surveyed. It was found that slightly over 80% of managers are aged between 31 and 45 years. Those aged less than 31 and above 45 years account for 6.7% of the respondents. The detailed are presented in table 3.

Table 3: Age composition of respondents

Age category of manager (years)	Percentage in this category
26-30 years	6.7%
31-35 years	36.7%
36-40 years	26.7%
41-45 years	20.0%
Over 45year	10.0%

4.6 Specific management indicators to employee empowerment

The respondents indicated varying responses for their attitudes towards employee participation in management and empowerment. This study found a general trend for managers' support for this style of management. The findings by different aspects of participation/empowerment are presented below focus.

4.6.1 Decision making by employees

A high proportion (93.3%) of managers feels positively towards empowering their employees by involving them in the decision-making framework of the organization.

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4.6.2 Training of employees

The study found that 90% of the respondents felt that employees should be given training opportunities as a means of empowering them. Only 10% of respondents do not have an opinion on this aspect of empowerment.

4.6.3 Respondents' attitude towards idea generation/mining, autonomy of employees and mentoring

This study considered managers' attitudes to these issues. The results are summarized in table 4.

Table 4: Respondents' attitude towards idea generation/mining, autonomy and mentoring

Empowerment issue	Percentage of managers in favor
Idea generation / mining	76.6%
Autonomy of employees to deal with customers	66.7%
Mentoring / coaching	83.4%

The summary in table 4 shows that majority of managers (83.4%) are comfortable with and do support the mentoring of their employees. This is ranked first among the three issues of empowerment considered 76.6% of respondents indicated that they attach value to a process of idea generation and mining from their employees. A comparatively lower percentage of managers (66.7) supported a system that could see employees take full autonomy for matters relating to customers. In fact, a third of the managers surveyed opposed any move to give employees responsibility and autonomy over customers.

4.6.4 Management attitude to employee career advancement

One of the aspirations of any employee is to move up the organizational pyramid and participate in the relation of the strategic vision of the company. To this end, many employees invest large sums of money to undertake courses and other training opportunities. While many organizations support these initiatives (and in many cases have their own schemes of training), some companies are apathetic or downright opposed to them. This study found that 90% of the respondents actively encourage access to career advancement opportunities for their employees.

This high proportion indicates managers' belief that when employees have access to career advancement opportunities they will be better workers. This in turn leads to employees who are empowered and supports the view that managers in the oil industry are positively predisposed to employee professional development and empowerment.

4.7   Indicators of a shift towards employee empowerment model

Certain steps demonstrate the extent to which managers have gone in creating an environment conducive to employee empowerment (as opposed to mere talk). This survey considered the following issues: the extent to which managers personally attend to staff appraisals and discuss performance (performance appraisal management); the extent to which managers entrust employees with important responsibilities; and whether managers share ideas and knowledge with staff.

The following table summarizes the extent to which respondents agree (and therefore support) these issues:

Table 5: Summary of issues supporting employee empowerment

Issue	Percentage of respondents
Personal staff appraisal	73.3%
Manager entrusts employees with important responsibilities	86.7%
Manager shares ideas /knowledge with staff	93.3%

The greatest percentage of respondents (93.3%) indicates that they share ideas and knowledge with staff. This issue ranks first in the indicators of employee empowerment. An equally large proportion of respondents (86.7%) indicated that they are comfortable with entrusting their employees with important responsibilities while slightly less than three quarters of those surveyed personally attend to staff appraisals and discussed performance with their employees. These high proportions indicate that the respondents in this survey have taken proactive steps to promote the empowerment of their employees. All these managers supported the view that employee commitment to goals and objectives is desirable.

4.8 Employee access to information

Managerial practices that promote employee empowerment recognize that information is power. Companies that seek to empower their employees will take steps to arm them with far more information than they have typically made accessible in the past. Moving away from the traditional model where information was the preserve of top managers, the new model avoids information symmetry to create an environment in which power shifts to the employee.

The other indicators of empowerment received minimal support. The results are shown in table 6.

Table 6: Employee access to information

Level of agreement	Percentage of respondents
Disagree	6.7%
Neither agree nor disagree	23.3%
Agree/ strongly agree	70.0%

The results shown in table 6 revealed that a third of the respondents do not support the idea of employees having access to information. This goes to buttress the old adage "information is power". These managers, while supporting other mechanisms that create room for a more participative culture, appear to shy away from sharing information with their employees.

However, a high percentage of the respondents (70.0%) showed they would make it possible for their employees to have access to most departmental information.

4.9   Type of company and employee participation.

As shown in table 7, there does not seem to be any significant difference between local companies of multinationals in empowering employees to take responsibility for decision making. This is because the percentage of the local companies that agree with the statement that employees should be given the mandate to make decisions that affect the organization is equal to that of the foreign companies (60% = 60%). Also, that local companies are just as likely to allow their employees to take responsibility for decision making as subsidiaries of the multinational companies.

Table 7: employee responsibility for decision-making

Company type	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
Local companies	60%	40%	100%
Subsidiary of Multinational	60%	40%	100%

Thus, the two types of companies have similar approach to the empowerment strategy of letting employees take responsibility for their own decisions.

4.10   Type of Company and Employee Empowerment through training.

There is a wide disparity and symmetrical difference between local companies and subsidiaries of multinationals with respect to the training of employees for empowerment as shown in table 8.

Table 8: support for employee training for empowerment

Type of company	Agree	Strongly agree
Local companies	11.8%	30%
Subsidiaries	88.2%	70%

Subsidiaries of multinational companies are eight times as likely (for agree level) and almost twice as likely as are local companies to empower their employees through training. Thus, there is a significant difference in the way these two types of companies regard training.

Chi-square statistic was used to test for differences between these two types of companies. The results are presented in table 9.

Table 9: chi-square test for independence between local and foreign firms

X2 Value	Degrees of freedom	P-value for significance
2.174	2	0.337

The chi-square test results are not significant at P< 0.05, suggesting that there is no difference between multinational and local companies with respect to empowerment of employees through training. Similarly, local companies are less likely to follow up on ideas developed by staff compared to subsidiaries of multinationals. The results are summarized in table 10.

Table 10: Follow up on ideas developed by employees

Company type	Agree	Strongly agree
Local	21.1%	0.00%
Subsidiaries	78.9%	100.0%

The results show local companies are much less likely to nurture ideas from employees compared to subsidiaries of multinationals. This could be due to a less open and less participative style of management practiced by managers of local companies.

4.11 Relationship between managers' education on attitude to employee empowerment

The survey explored the relationship between manager's level of education and their attitudes towards employee empowerment. The results are summarized in table 11.

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Table 11: Relationship between level of managers' education and employee empowerment

Highest level of education	Employee decision making	Training	Autonomy
Secondary/high school	11%	11.8%	11.1%
Diplomas and certificates	17%	11.8%	25.4%
Undergraduate degree	22%	23.5%	11.1%
Post graduate/masters degree	50%	52.9%	52.4%

Table 11 shows a strong relationship between the education level of the respondent and their attitude to aspects of employee empowerment. It is clear that the less educated a manager is, the less likely he or she is to create structures that promote participative management. In fact, managers with advanced education (postgraduate degrees) are five times as likely to support employee empowerment as are holders of secondary school level qualifications. Education, then, is a key input to the management process that creates space for employee empowerment.

Managers with less education are likely to feel threatened by the removal of structures that have for a long time shielded them from their employees and have created barriers to democracy and participative management in the organizations. These managers feel inadequate to encounter what they perceive as the threat of young, educated junior employees.

4.12 Mentoring attitudes to employee empowerment

The survey also revealed that less educated managers are least likely to take on the mentoring process in the organization. The results are shown below.

Table 12: Relationship between Level of Education and attitudes towards mentoring

Level of education of respondent	% Extent of support for mentoring	Rank
Secondary school	5.9%	3
Diploma	0.00%	4
Professional	0.00%	4
Undergraduate	29.4%	2
Postgraduate	64.7%	1

Managers with postgraduate and undergraduate qualifications are more likely to support mentoring than those with qualifications below undergraduate (94.1%>5.9%).

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

"The customer game is ultimately won or lost on the front lines – where the customer comes in contact with any member of the firm. The front line team is the firm in the customer's eyes" (Tom Peters)

The customer's importance to the success of the business has received prominent attention from management thinkers in recent times. The way customers are treated in their first contact with the firm will count positively or negatively to the overall image of the company. Employees who are happy and satisfied with their work will represent their company well while those who are dissatisfied will cast a negative image on their employer and drive away customers. This is the reason why empowerment of employees in organizations has become a buzzword with several combinations of empowerment tools being undertaken in many companies.

The study surveyed manager's attitudes towards employee empowerment in selected oil companies in Kenya out of the recognition that such employees will be self directed and more in control of their work activities It is also hoped that they will be more productive in the organization's decision-making process and that they will be more motivated to channel their energies towards the maximization of the organization's business objectives

The study used primary data collected using structured questionnaire (appendix 2) containing both closed and open-ended questions. Data was then edited for completeness and consistency, entered into a data entry system and analyzed using the popular SPSS software.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS

It was found that majority of the respondents (i.e. managers) are very well educated (90% holding one or more degrees of professional qualifications) In terms of length of service, respondents showed a high degree of mobility with close to two-thirds of those surveyed having served in a management position for a relatively short time – less than five years. This short period would possibly inhibit the formation of a more settled and distinctive attitude regarding employee empowerment.

5.2.1 ATTITUDE TO EMPOWERMENT

A high proportion of managers (93.3%) felt positively towards empowering their employees by using involvement techniques in the decision-making framework of the organization. Training was considered the most important mode of empowerment.

5.2.2 ATTITUDE TOWARDS IDEA GENERATION/MINING, AUTONOMY AND MENTORING

It has been found by leading companies that employee's ideas have the potential to unleash innovation and profitability for the organization. As a result of this discovery, many companies have put in place proactive systems to tap into the idea base of their employees through the creation of work

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teams and quality circles (Toyota and 3M have been at the forefront of this innovation). These systems have improved the profile of employees (who often share in the direct benefits of their innovative ideas) and increasing their empowerment levels. Thus, the proactive system of idea generation and mining supports employee empowerment.

Situations that allow employees to exercise autonomy in their dealing with customers enable employees to take responsibility for their actions to attract customers (or drive them away). Customer relationship management is thus shifted from being management responsibility to specific employee responsibility.

Mentoring (a system where the manager coaches subordinates to assume responsibility for decision-making), is a powerful way of ensuring an empowered workforce. By nourishing an environment that breeds new leaders, mentoring acts as a powerful empowerment tool. The study found that respondents are generally in favor of the mentoring process. Additionally, teamwork was considered important in fostering participative management (75% of respondents favored this mode) and promoting employee empowerment.

However, there was a significant difference in the way managers consider mentoring as an empowerment tool with respect to their educational qualifications. Managers with high educational attainments (undergraduate degree and above) are more likely to promote the mentoring process as opposed to those with lowest qualifications (94.1% for degree holders as compared to only 5.9% for those without a degree).

5.3   LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Response bias is always a major challenge in studies of this type mainly because respondents would generally like to be perceived as opposing progressive trends in employee empowerment, it is possible that the results contain some elements of 'untruths', generally known as response bias.

The sampling frame used in obtaining the respondents for this survey (only five oil companies) had the effect of limiting the extent of useful information. If more companies had been selected (not just those based in Nairobi) it is likely that useful additional insights would have been obtained and added to the richness of this investigation. It would have been interesting to include the results of upcountry managers' views on employee empowerment.

Finally, the subjective definition and understanding of some of the terms related to employee empowerment would have introduced some subjective bias. Because some of these terms are rather new, it is possible that there might have been differences in the way these were understood by the respondents. Together with the above limitations, the study also was constrained by the usual difficulties that accompany data collection through questionnaires, namely; high non-response rates (for those who do not respond and for those who return half-completed questions), bias due to non-response often remains indeterminate; and personal contact is generally not possible (the drop-and-pick later method was employed leaving no room for clarification on misunderstood terms)

5.4   SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The fact that there is a difference in managers' attitudes to mentoring and other aspects of empowerment on the basis of educational qualifications calls for an in depth study on why this is so. More educated managers have positive attitudes towards empowerment than their less educated counterparts.

Further research might also be necessary to study the employees own attitudes towards empowerment initiatives with a view to understanding what they make of them. While managers may be full of ideas on what aspects of empowerment are necessary (such as training), it is important to obtain employees own perception of these initiatives.

More in-depth attitudinal research could also be conducted to focus upon the effect of company policies and management style on work attitudes. Finally one may also study how managers of public sector organizations view empowerment of their subordinate's vis-à-vis their private sector counterparts.

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APPENDIX 1: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

Faculty of Commerce
Dept of Business Administration
University of Nairobi
P.O.Box 30197
Nairobi

Date

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: MBA RESEARCH PROJECT QUESTIONNAIRE

The undersigned is a student at the University of Nairobi, pursuing a Masters of Business Administration (MBA) Degree in Human Resource Management. As part of her coursework assessment, she is required to submit a research project on an area of management.

As one of the leading oil companies, your company has been carefully selected for a survey on managers' attitudes towards employee empowerment. You are kindly requested to complete the attached questionnaire, which is designed to gather information on employee empowerment.

All the information you disclose will be used only for this academic exercise and will be treated in the strictest of confidence.

Your cooperation will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

Grace Ndungu   **Professor P K'Obonyo**
MBA student   **Supervisor**
0721598301

SURVEY OF DEPARTMENTAL OIL MANAGERS

KENOL/KOBIL

DEPARTMENTS	MANAGERS
1. MARKETING DEPARTMENT	1. HEAD MARKETING
2. OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT	2. HEAD OPERATIONS
3. ACCOUNTS AND FINANCE	3. FINANCE DIRECTOR
4. INTERNATIONAL SALES DEPARTMENT	4. INT. SALES MANAGER
5. GENERAL MANAGEMENT	5. GENERAL MANAGER
6. ADMINISTRATION	6. ADMINISTRATION MANAGER

SHELL B/P

1. RETAIL MARKETING	7. RETAIL MANAGER
2. COMMERCIAL MKTING DEPT.	8. COMMERCIAL MANAGER
3. OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT	9. OPERATIONS MANAGER
4. COUNTRY CHAIRMAN	10. CUSTOMER SERVICE MGER
5. HUMAN RESOURCES DEPT.	11. HUMAN RESOURCE MGR
6. FINANCE DEPARTMENT	12. FINANCE MANAGER
7. EAST AFRICA SUPPLIES	13. E A SUPPLIES MANAGER
8. LPG MARKTING	14. LPG GENERAL MANAGER

CALTEX KENYA

1. GENERAL MANAGEMENT	15. GENERAL MANAGER
2. ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT	16. HUMAN RESOURCES MGR
3. MARKETING DEPARTMENT	17. HEAD MARKETING 18. LPG MANAGER
4. ACCOUNTS & FINANCE DEPT.	19. FINANCE MANAGER
5. OPERATIONS DEPARMENT	20. HEAD OPERATIONS
6. INTERNATIONAL SALES	21. EXPORTS MANAGER

TOTAL KENYA

1. MARKETING DEPARTMENT	22. BUSINESS DEVT MGR
2. GENERAL MANAGEMERT	23. MANAGING DIRECTOR
3. ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT	24. HUMAN RESOURCE MGR
4. OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT	25. OPERATIONS MANAGER
5. ACCOUONTS DEPARTMENT	26. FINANCE DIRECTOR
6. INTERNATIONAL SALES DEPT	27. AVIATION MANAGER

MOBIL OIL KENYA

1. GENERAL MANAGEMENT	28. PUBLIC RELATIONS MGR
2. OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT	29. MAINTENANCE MANAGER
3. MARKETING DEPARTMENT	30. HEAD MARKETING

4. FINANCE DEPARTMENT

5. ADMINISTRATION DEPATMENT

6. COMMERCIAL MARKETING

7 EAST AFRICA SUPPLIES

31. M I S MANAGER

32. HUMAN RESOURCE MGR

33. LUBRICANTS MANAGER

34. EA SUPPLIES MANAGER

APPENDIX 3

QUESTIONNAIRE –EMPLOYEE EMPOWERMENT

Instructions

1. This survey is for the sole purpose of fulfilling the requirement for the MBA degree

2. Answer the questions as truthfully as possible

3. Respond by ticking or filling in the space provided.

PART ONE

1. Name of your company...

2. Year when your organization was established in Kenya....................

3. To which of the following categories does you company belong?

    [ ] a subsidiary of a multinational

    [ ] local company

    [ ] any other, please specify..

4. How long have you been employed in this company......................

5. Your highest level of Education: (Please tick appropriate level)

    [ ]   Secondary/High school certificate

    [ ]   Post graduate Diploma

    [ ]   Undergraduate Degree

[ ]   Post graduate Degree

[ ]   Professional qualifications

[ ]   Other (please specify)...

6.   How long have you been in the management of your company?

(Please tick appropriate box)

[ ]   1 – 5 years

[ ]   6 – 10 years

[ ]   11 – 15 years

[ ]   16 – 20 years

[ ]   over 20 years

7.   Highest level of professional training attained……………………………

8.   Which position/title do you hold?

     [ ]   Chief executive   [ ]   Production manager

     [ ]   Marketing manager   [ ]   Human resource manager

     [ ]   Finance manager   [ ]   Any other (please specify)………

9.   What is your age in years?

     [ ]   20 – 25   [ ]   26 – 30   [ ]   31 – 35

     [ ]   36 – 40   [ ]   41 – 45   [ ]   over 45

10.   How many employees report to you directly? ....

PART TWO

Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. Indicate by ticking against the number that best represents your level of agreement.

[5]   Strongly agree

[4]   Agree

[3]   Neither agree nor disagree

[2]   Disagree

[1]   Strongly disagree

1. I believe employees should be allowed to make decisions
affecting their work   [5] [4] [3] [2] [1]

2. I usually recommend training with a view to empower
the employees in my department   [5] [4] [3] [2] [1]

3. I follow up on ideas developed by staff in my
department to gauge their implementability

4. In my opinion employees in this company should have
autonomy in their relations with the customers   [5] [4] [3] [2] [1]

5. I believe in ensuring that employees are comfortable with
power bestowed upon them   [5] [4] [3] [2] [1]

6. I believe that there should be a high degree of team work

in this department   [5] [4] [3] [2] [1]

7. I encourage equal opportunities for all employees for career
advancement in this organization   [5] [4] [3] [2] [1]

8. I believe employees should play a role in making decisions
 affecting their work   [5] [4] [3] [2] [1]

9. I attend personally to the staff appraisals for my department
and discuss their performance with them   [5] [4] [3] [2] [1]

10. I entrust employees in my department with important
 responsibilities   [5] [4] [3] [2] [1]

11. I am comfortable with sharing ideas and knowledge with
staff working in my department   [5] [4] [3] [2] [1]

12. In my opinion, a high level of employee commitment to
 departmental goals and objectives is highly desirable   [5] [4] [3] [2] [1]

13. In my opinion all employees should have access to most
 departmental information with ease   [5] [4] [3] [2] [1]

14. In my opinion, employees should be given the mandate to
 make decisions that affect the organization   [5] [4] [3] [2] [1]