EMPOWERMENT PERSPECTIVE IN INDONESIAN CULTURE

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study was to explore empowerment perspectives in Indonesian culture. In particular, it explores which components of empowerment are prevalent and the most important in three Indonesian Universities in Yogyakarta. Data from sixty three academic and administrative staff were collected from surveys and interviews.

Five components of empowerment frequently cited in the literature were focused on: authority or control, competence, resources, self efficacy and teamwork. Four dimensions of Hofstede, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity-femininity, and collectivism-individualism were used to understand how Indonesian culture influences the practices of empowerment in Indonesian organizations.

The results of this study revealed that all components of empowerment are perceived as quite prevalent and amongst the most important for Indonesians. However, the type of job carried out by staff members and their position or level in the organizations influenced the degree of empowerment. It was also interesting to note that some findings contradicted with expectations derived from Hofstede's four dimensions. Authority was perceived as amongst the most important component despite Indonesia's high power distance in which power is unequal among team members.

INTRODUCTION

Organizations are demanding more from their employees than ever before due to higher customer expectations, increased globalisation and more sophisticated technology. In an increasingly competitive global economy, companies have been searching for various management programs that promise competitive advantage (Yeh and Lin, 1996).

It is an environment where traditional Command and Control (CC) hierarchies are considered increasingly less appropriate (Quinn and Spreitzer, 1997). According to Zorn (1991) the old CC style of management that predominated for most of industrial history cannot detect the need for change, or move with the speed necessary for companies to compete successfully.

Achieving extraordinary outcomes in a competitive environment needs more than the traditional view of management. The resultant reengineering, downsizing, delayering, networking, teaming, and empowerment strategies have found mixed results as organisations struggle with transforming themselves into systems that are more flexible, informed, responsive, and adaptive (Houtzagers, 1999).

The concept of empowerment is seen as the key to unleashing employee potential and to

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increasing efficiency and effectiveness. How- ever, environmental forces have an important role to play in empowerment. Behaviour in organisations is shaped by societal norms and values of national culture which may be reflected and intensified in the organization's culture of norms and values. In some organi- sations, for example those found in Indonesia, a strong national culture is also embedded in organizational culture. The relatively high levels of power distance and uncertainty as characteristics of Indonesian culture could make it difficult to implement empowerment in organisations in Indonesia (Pearson and Chatterjee, 1996).

Empowerment helps an organization become more effective and efficient. It also can give an organization a competitive advan- tage. In western management literature, employee empowerment is touted as an important means for organizations to become more effective. Therefore, research is needed to see if empowerment functions similarly in non-western cultures, such as Indonesia, and how it differs in those cultures. It would seem to be important for those concerned with implementing empowerment successfully into organizations to have knowledge of the national culture. In this study this would be Indonesian culture.

Three universities in Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University (GMU), National Develop- ment University (NDU/UPN), and the Islamic of Indonesia University (IIU/UII) were selected for this research. This research should make a significant contribution to organi- zations, especially tertiary educational institu- tions that deal with empowerment in Indonesia.

1. Purpose

The primary purpose of this research is to explore empowerment perspectives in Indonesian culture. The objectives are to 1) discuss the components of empowerment

which Indonesians perceive as being important in Indonesian organizations, 2) examine components of empowerment which Indonesians consider most and least important to empowerment, 3) find out what management practices in Indonesian organi- zations make organisation members feel empowered or disempowered. The findings should indicate the types of experiences of being empowered and or disempowered that employees encountered in their organizations.

2. Hofstede's Cultural Patterns

Environmental forces such as national culture have an important role in empower- ment. Norms and values of national culture may shape behavior in organizations. As Hofstede (1991) mentions, national cultures and their dimensions are useful for the understanding of organizational cultures. Four dimensions identified by Hofstede – power distance, collectivism-individualism, uncer- tainty avoidance, and femininity-masculinity – are used to assess culture.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Definition of Empowerment

Empowerment is an emerging construct used by theorists to explain organizational effectiveness. It is a construct that has become widely used in the organizational behavior literature and commonly used by other social scientists who have dealt with issues of the powerlessness of minority groups such as women, blacks, and the handicapped (Conger and Kanungo, 1988). Although empowerment lacks universal definition the term is currently used to describe a variety of interventions that give more autonomy and an increase in power to subordinates (Pearson and Chatterjee, 1996).

According to Appelbaum and Honeggar (1998) the term empowerment embodies a vision that calls for a substantial increase in

the influence that lower-level employees will have in an organization that adopts an empowerment philosophy. Empowerment is not a static "event", but rather a dynamic fluctuating evolutionary process in which the manager, employee and team are all involved (Pastor, 1996).

In summary, empowerment is sharing power to make decisions or act in ways that influence organizational direction and performance. The word power means an ability or capacity to achieve some goal. Therefore, empowerment involves employees being given the authority, autonomous decision making, resources, and feelings of self efficacy in order to encourage and allow these employees or organization members to contribute to an organization's goals.

2. Components of Empowerment

Empowerment is complex concept. It tends to mean different things to different people (Quinn and Spreitzer, 1997). Each researcher may define components of empowerment in different ways. There are five commonly cited components of empowerment: authority or control, competence, sharing resources such as information, self efficacy and teamwork.

3. Common Problems of Empowerment

The primary source of resistance to empowerment is upper-level managers who are unwilling to confront the disparity between the empowering values they espouse and the disempowering behaviors they model (Logan et al., 1996).

Organizational conditions which lead to powerlessness include major organizational changes, impersonal bureaucratic climates, start-up ventures, competitive pressures, poor communication systems and highly centralized resources (Appelbaum and Honeggar, 1998). A recent study that examined the extent to which empowerment is actually being practised within North American business

revealed that a significant gap exists between the perception of empowerment held by managers and the reality as viewed by employees. A study of two hundred managers in Fortune 1000 companies showed that 88 percent believed that were giving employees more authority to make decisions and to take actions than previously. However, the results of another American study showed that employees felt empowerment was more a myth than reality in their so-called empowered organizations. Clearly, "there is a significant gap between the perception of empowerment as viewed by management and the reality as viewed by employees" (Appelbaum and Honeggar, 1998, p. 31).

Not all empowerment initiatives have had favorable outcomes. The success rate for Fortune 1000 corporate reengineering efforts has been reported at well below 50 percent and participatory management was assessed by more than 250 managers as having "generally not accomplished much" (Strebel cited in Swenson, 1997, p. 20).

One of three major barriers common to most large organizations is bureaucratic culture. A bureaucratic culture encompasses multiple layers of hierarchy that impede change. It emphasizes the maintenance of the status quo through a strong tradition of top-down directives, the lack of a credible vision for the future, short-term managerial thinking, and a lack of management support for real change. As Pearson and Chatterjee (1996) mention, in most cases bureaucratic organizations tend to conceive and implement empowerment as a "top down" process. Moreover, this culture is often reinforced by a reward system that emphasizes the status quo (Quinn and Spreitzer, 1997).

Enderwick (cited in Smith and Mouly, 1998) observes that a key barrier to the successful move from a hierarchical structure to team functioning is the reluctance of some senior and middle managers to give up the power and status of their formal positions.

Thus, while employees demonstrated a certain reluctance to take on more responsibility, middle management failed to create an environment that encouraged empowerment. Since empowerment raises the prospect of a loss of control, managers sometimes act in ways that disempower employees. Empowerment may result in hostility and blame and employees may feel the risks of empowerment are high, while the potential benefits are low.

Therefore, the primary barriers can be summarised as follows: the management system of organization that supports the reluctance and resistance of top or upper level management to share power with all members, lack of real commitment to fully participate in the process of empowerment from senior managers, and lack of communication about the benefits of empowerment. In addition, in organizations where a bureaucratic culture exists the members of the organisation tend to maintain the status quo through top-down directives. This is reflected by centralisation of decision making and also highly centralised resources.

4. Culture and Empowerment

Hofstede's research (1991) goes further in showing how the underlying values of the cultural group permeate to affect relationships, work and social values. National cultural values are likely to persist, even when a multinational tries to impose norms on all its branches. Local values determine how headquarters' regulations are interpreted. By implication, a multinational that insists on imposing organizational norms is in danger of lowering morale and creating inefficiencies.

Environmental forces have an important role in empowerment. Behaviour in organizations is shaped by societal norms and values of national culture which may be reflected and intensified in the organization's culture of norms and values. Hofstede (1991) showed in his research that the culture of a country has great influence on what is called the "power

distance", which is defined as the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally. Therefore, if the national culture is high in power distance, it is likely that the organizational culture will hold hierarchy in high regard. In such organizations it may be more difficult to encourage managers to adopt empowerment practices. There is also strong evidence to illustrate that national culture has significantly affected management practices, leadership and job design. However, it is also widely acknowledged that international or global forces stimulate organizational change. These drastic environmental shocks are profoundly influencing management practices to the extent that rigid authoritarian styles are being discarded in favor of greater employee empowerment (Pearson and Chatteerjee, 1996).

5. Indonesian Culture

Literature review and research on Indonesian culture will be presented in this section, with particular attention on aspects of culture that may influence views of empowerment. Hofstede's dimensions of cultural differences are used to structure the discussion.

It is important to know that Indonesia is a multi-ethnic country where politics, economics, religion and ethnic diversity are blended. The ethnicity of Indonesians varies greatly. As Hofstede (1997) mentions, national culture scores may be misleading. Indonesians agree that especially on the dimension tough-tender, ethnic groups within the country vary considerably with the Javanese taking an extreme position towards the tender side.

6. Hofstede's Cultural Patterns in Indonesia

6.1. High Power Distance

Indonesia is ranked as a high power distance country as shown in **Table 1** (Hofstede, 1997). In countries where the PD is high,

employees are seen as frequently afraid of disagreeing with their bosses, and bosses are seen as autocratic or paternalistic. Organizational structures tend to be hierarchical. Decision making is concentrated at the top and carrying out the decisions at the lower levels. The managerial attitude is that the lower levels need direction and supervision.

Table 1. Hofstede's five dimensions of culture

Country	PDI Score	UAI Score	IDV Score	MAS Score
Malaysia	104	44	26	50
Philippines	94	44	32	64
Mexico	81	82	30	69
Arab countries	80	68	38	53
Indonesia	**78**	**48**	**14**	**46**
Singapore	74	8	20	48
Hong Kong	68	29	25	57
Thailand	64	64	20	34
South Korea	60	85	18	39
Taiwan	58	69	17	45
Japan	64	92	46	95
USA	40	46	91	62
Australia	36	51	90	61
Great Britain	35	35	89	66
New Zealand	22	49	79	58

Source: Hofstede (1997). *Software of the Mind*

The most significant figure in the Indonesian hierarchies with their accentuated vertical relationship is the 'bapak' – the father, the boss. The attitude of "asal bapak senang" (keeping the father happy) is an indispensable condition in Indonesian society. In any setting, the person who at that moment has the bapak role may expect deference and obedience (Dunung, 1995). Members in the group are comfortable with leaders' authority and are likely to perform any duties even if they are not explicitly stated as their responsibility.

Employees manage their work according to what the manager wants or they intuit what he or she wants. Managers are seen as showing relatively little consideration but like to see themselves as benevolent decision-makers.

Coercive and referent power is stressed over reward, expert, and legitimate power. Staff do not challenge decisions made by those in authority. Installing a set of procedures for sharing information, allowing self-control and practising participation are perceived as a "perfect" management style in a western sense by Indonesian staff that is not necessarily transferable to their organizations.

6.2. Uncertainty Avoidance

In terms of uncertainty avoidance index (UAI), Indonesia tends to appear as moderately low UAI (see table 2.1 above). In moderately weak UAI countries anxiety levels are relatively low. Therefore, people give the impression of being quiet, easy-going, indolent, and controlled (Hofstede, 1997). Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (cited in Sparrow and Wu, 1999) mention that people from low UAI need to have flexibility and adaptability, short-term considerations and initiative.

This can be seen by the attitude of Indonesian people in their everyday life. Two-thirds of the population in Indonesia live on the island of Java and about 59 percent population are Javanese (Draine and Hall, 1991). Most Javanese people enjoy their daily life without being threatened and worried about what may happen in the future. As a Javanese proverb says "nrimo ing pandum" (take whatever comes) and "alon-alon waton klakon" (life is not to be hurried). As life in the physical environment is very uncertain, given the danger posed by the ocean and volcanoes, people put trust in the willingness of their God to give them good fortune. This belief underpins their outlook on life. Therefore, people tend to have a low stress and low expressiveness and do not need to be aggressive. In terms of rules, people believe in unwritten (informal) rules than formal rules. They tend to obey the rules that come from their religions or traditions of their culture. Therefore, there are no clearly defined formal rules and conventions governing members' behavior.

This also reflects that Indonesians tend to use high-context messages or covert messages.

6.3. Collectivism-Individualism

Indonesia with its low individualism prefers a collectivist orientation as a cultural value. Obligations to the group are always based on what is best for the group, and the groups to which a person belongs are the most important social units. In turn, the group is expected to look out for and take care of its individual members. Collectivist cultures reflects in a relatively stronger value given to providing everyone with training and good working conditions. Harmony or "harmonis"/ "rukun" tends to result in nonconfrontational behavior. Indonesians tend to view any threat to harmony as an issue.

Indonesia with its collectivist cultures puts emphasis on belonging. The ideal of being a good member relies on informal controls, and the team approach is highly applicable. Teamwork as the heart of the empowerment process seems to be accepted by most organizations in Indonesia. Rodrigues (1997) mentions that the application of teamwork is more applicable in collectivist societies than in individualistic societies.

6.4. Masculinity-Femininity

Indonesia ranks in the middle on MAS index. In Indonesia, working with cooperative colleagues and having a good relationship with manager and secure employment are relatively important. Moreover, it is fact that many women in Indonesia are politicians, business people; engineers; and doctors. However, the sexes are still sharply differentiated. The commonly held view is that women should be working in the nurturing areas, such as teaching and nursing, whereas men should be working in assertive areas, such as engineering.

In terms of empowerment in Indonesia, women and men are treated in differently by their managers. Gender discrimination is evident in Indonesia. Managers are quite reluctant to promote women to higher positions in the managerial level, even if they are qualified for that position. Men are represented in strategic positions as decision maker, whereas women are placed as administrators for day-to-day operations. Moreover, in the reward system, there is discrimination between women and men because women are supposed to be housewives. Even if men and women have the same experience, background and job responsibility, women receive lower salaries than man does.

7. Empowerment and Tertiary/Higher Educational System in Indonesia

The level of empowerment that suits a given organization depends on the extent to which it is helpful to have individuals free to improve their situation (Clutterbuck, 1994). Empowerment in the service industries might be very different from that in the product industries. There may, however, be more common ground than we think as the boundaries have yet to be pushed really severely. In recent years, theories of management have affected the ways that schools are run (Whitaker, 1993).

Establishing an empowering environment at the managerial level in education could constitute both a reflection of a philosophy and a set of teaching techniques. The teaching techniques can be at once creative and systematic. The central goal of creating empowering environments should be to facilitate learning. In principle, establishing empowering environments at the managerial level in education could be done with any other topic such as teacher evaluation, budget preparation, curriculum development, and students' discipline (Glasman, 1997).

However, Ferguson (cited in Whitaker, 1993) points to some of the essential differences between schools and commercial

organizations. The schools are entrenched bureaucracies whose practitioners do not need to get re-elected or to attract patients, customers, and clients. Those educators who would like to innovate have relatively little authority to change their style.

Empirical studies in the education and personnel literature have shown that organizational change incorporating decentralization and empowerment is accompanied by members' knowing more about the day-to-day operations of the organisation, greater feelings of involvement, more satisfaction with the organisation and their jobs, and increased motivation to perform (James, 1996).

Therefore, the need for educational institutions to be more cost effective with their limited resources, and still provide quality products and services, is a clear and compelling reason to explore new and different ways to restructure the educational delivery system. Restructuring through the application of the principles of empowerment can provide a means to revamp the educational institutions' inefficient instructional systems and provide quality products and services, or in other words, provide a quality education for their students.

Empowered teams within each educational institutions, which share the vision and goals of the educational institutions' system provide the initial impetus in promoting quality education and cost effectiveness (Glasman, 1997). Conley (cited in David 1995) documents that schools managed by empowered teams of educators and administrators have the autonomy of setting their annual budgets and making policies which have an impact on the quality and economic efficiency of the instructional programme.

RESEARCH METHODS

Survey data were collected from sixty three staff of three higher/tertiary educational institutions: GMU, IIU and NDU in Yogya-

karta, Indonesia. The sample was based on purposive or judgemental sampling. Forty-one academic staff and twenty-two administrative staff constituted the target groups.

The instrument of questionnaires (task 1) focused on five components of empowerment: authority, competence, and having and sharing resources such as information, self efficacy and teamwork. It consisted of twenty items or statements. Six items/statements developed by Chiles and Zorn (1995) under two components of empowerment, authority and competence, were used. In task 2, respondents considered their own culture. Each respondent was asked to choose what he or she considered the 5 most important and the 5 least important items/statements of empowerment components based on their cultures. This was shown by writing an "M" for most important and an "L" for least important beside the items. Task 3 consisted of open-ended questions that allowed for personal, flowing, and comprehensive responses. This method of inquiry also allowed respondents to expand on the answers they gave on the task 1 of the questionnaire.

Interviews were conducted with a purposive sample of staff from two universities (GMU and NDU). The interviews were intended to find out staff's experiences of empowerment as currently practiced. Most interviewees had been working with educational organizations from five years to ten years. The interviews consisted mainly of open-ended questions with some probing questions asked when necessary. Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide.

The mean or average was calculated for each item to find out the perceived highest and lowest rated items. ANOVA single factor was used as main analytical method to test the differences among the means/average of five independent variables. Correlation analysis was used to analyse the correlation between components (within groups) of empowerment. A significance test was also used in order to

test whether the correlation between components was significant.

DISCUSSION

Data from task one on the questionnaire suggested that the most prevalent component of empowerment is competence, followed by resources, self efficacy, teamwork and authority. However, findings from task one suggest that all five components – including authority – are quite high, or prevalent.

Data from questions three and four of the interviews are limited. However, those participants who responded suggested that the most prevalent component of empowerment is authority, followed by resources, competence, teamwork, and self efficacy. Thus, all five components – competence, authority, resources, teamwork and self efficacy – of empowerment seem to be quite prevalent in Indonesian universities.

Findings resulted from the open ended questions, and questions two and three in the interviews suggested that authority, competence, resources, teamwork were perceived as amongst the most important components of empowerment. Self efficacy was the least important possibly because the respondents subsumed self efficacy within the notion of competence. However, the study showed that all components of empowerment were considered.

Authority is perceived amongst the most important component of empowerment by staff members in educational institutions in Indonesia. When asked the most important thing management do to make them feel empowered, by far the most frequent answer was granting authority. Granting authority was also a prominent answer when participants were asked the meaning of empowerment and appropriateness of empowerment for Indonesia. This reflects the staff's belief that decentralized decision making and flexible management style are needed due to the issue of quality emerging in educational institutions.

This finding is interesting as Indonesia is ranked as a high power distance country. According to Hofstede (1991) in countries which have high power distance, organizations centralize power as much as possible in a few hands. Subordinates are expected to be told what to do. However, the more authority inherent in the job, the less job-related dependence results (Kotter, 1979). It could be assumed that the professional (academic staff) would have a high degree of autonomy. In teaching, for example, the academic staff would have the authority or autonomy to decide the appropriate and suitable course content and how to deliver this to students according to a given course outline. In terms of research, academic staff would need flexibility to decide on their research topics and the scope of research. As mentioned before, administrative staff would also have considerable authority in choosing the way they perform their jobs including decision making. An example is when administrative staff are dealing with unprogrammed decision making they do not need to consult their superiors.

The advantage of empowerment is that the more autonomy a person has over how a job is to be done, the more potential there is for improved productivity (Smith, 1997, p.120). According to Conley (cited in David 1995) the quality and economic efficiency of the instructional programme is improved, if schools are managed by empowered teams of educators and administrators who have the autonomy of setting their annual budgets and making policies which have an impact on. However, degree of empowerment depends on the staff's level of position in organisation. According to Ruin (1998), the degree of empowerment correlates with the intensity or level of delegating either power, mandate, authority, capacity, function or a simple task. Some administrative staff want to have close supervision, formalised rules, clear structure/guidelines,

and clear job descriptions, suggesting they attribute less importance to authority and autonomy.

In terms of **resources**, most staff members perceived that empowerment should be supported by adequate resources, especially information, supplies, and funding for projects. Considering resources is amongst the most important components of empowerment and was a prominent response when staff were asked the meaning of empowerment and also the most frequent answer to the questions on the most important things management do to make staff feel empowered. According to Kanter (1977), access to resources refers to the ability to obtain the materials, money, and rewards necessary for performing and completing a job. The conception of empowerment usually refers to professionals empowering one another through the sharing of power, information, or resources (Garner, 1995). Appelbaum and Honnegar (1998) noted that "structure of power refers to access to three sources of power which are resources, support and information to empower staff" (p. 37). As mentioned before, although the Dean or Heads of Department in some private universities provide staff members with facilities to access information, not all staff members have access to on-line information from computer such as Internet, databases, and supplies or equipment for learning and teaching.

Difficulties that administrative and academic staff encountered were on how to allocate limited resources to support competing demands in service delivery to students. Facilities such as data processing, catalogue in library, and supplies or equipment for teaching and learning process are still operated manually. The problems that academic staff encountered are the lack and shortage of available equipment such as audiovisuals and computers when teaching and learning processes would benefit from having these technological aids. Good teaching in the classroom is principally about motivating students and showing them efficient information-organizing techniques (Donald, 1997). It is clear that staff at three universities had little or no influence over the resource allocation. Here, centralized decision making and power distance are strongest. As Hofstede (1997) mentions, in such countries with high power distance like Indonesia power is still distributed unequally and centred decision making is the norm. Examples include the allocation of the university's budget for resources. As already mentioned, no staff member had the right to make decisions related to budgets. The budget is set each semester by management, and staff have to work within its parameters. Although staff did have autonomy to a certain extent in deciding which project to support, they could not ask for extra funding.

The most prominent response that emerged from the meaning of empowerment was **competence**. This was the first response from and frequently mentioned by all staff members when they were asked the meaning of empowerment. As mentioned before, the Indonesian term of empowerment "pemberdayaan" means empowering staff through increasing their capabilities, capacities, knowledge and skill. According to Griffiths and Kind (cited in Rehman et al., 1997), competence is a generic knowledge, skill or attitude of a person that is related to effective behaviours as demonstrated through performance. For academic staff that means competency in teaching, research and administration and management; and for administrative staff it is competency in dealing with administration and management issues.

According to Cole (cited in Donald, 1997), "As a center for research and technological advance, the university plays a more direct role through application of that knowledge" (p. 10). The university has a contract with society to supply expertise in the form of problem solution or the next cohort of experts, and the public has a direct stake in the outcomes (Donald, 1997). This feeling of a need for

competence could be related to the direct role of the university in the advancement of technology and knowledge. It was clear from the study that the exercise of legitimate and expert power of both academic and administrative staff has significantly contributed to the staff's feeling of competence.

Moreover, according to Hofstede (1991), in countries with high power distance index, education settings are valued because they are teacher-centered. The term for a teacher in India and Indonesia is 'guru' which derived from the Sanskrit word for 'weighty' or 'honorable'. In such a system the quality of one's learning is seen as virtually exclusively dependent on the excellence of one's teachers (Hofstede, 1991). This puts a great responsibility on teachers and thus they would be likely to see competence as very important for fulfilling this expectation of students.

Randolph (cited in Neher and Natale, 1997) defines empowerment as "recognising and releasing into the organisation the power that people already have in their wealth of useful knowledge and internal motivation" (p. 31). Here empowerment can play a pivotal role because the advanced knowledge requires the unleashing of employee potential. The first requirement for empowering staff is to ensure they are competent.

Empowering staff can also be achieved through working in teams. It is not surprising with Indonesia's collectivist orientation as a cultural value that teamwork was perceived among the most important components of empowerment. Collectivist cultures promote the view that people belong to in-group that demands lasting loyalty from which members can not easily free themselves (Bandura, 1995). According to Quinn and Spreitzer (1997) building teams to encourage cooperative behavior is one of the implicit strategies for empowerment.

The different type of work carried out between academic and administrative staff in

the educational context may have an effect on the way staff members approach teamwork. For academic staff, their primary role could be seen as highly individualistic, involving teaching preparation for class, and tutorials (Varey and Nolan, 1996). Oshagbemi (1999) shows in his research that academics as group tend to be individuals rather than team players and so may not fully cooperate when placed in a team situation. On the other hand, it was clear from the study that the nature of the work of administrative staff enhanced teamwork – the planning and the need to coordinate activities meant that these people experienced a sense of empowerment. Administrative staff were experiencing working as a team.

The idea that professionals should cooperate, communicate effectively, and be "team players" has been discussed, advocated, and accepted by educators for a long time (Garrett and Whitehouse cited in Garner, 1995). Teamwork is compatible and congruent with the goals of all organisations devoted to educating students, helping people, and facilitating change. Moreover, teamwork fosters better communication across the organisation when people from diverse areas or processes are brought together as part of any improvement project team (Scott, 1995). Examples include working together as team at strategic and operational levels of the school in the areas of the school program such as curriculum evaluation, assessment developers, research and development, and staff development. Therefore, teamwork is necessary for both academic and administrative staff in order to improve quality in education and also to meet accreditation standards.

Perception of **self efficacy** was the least important component of empowerment by Indonesians. As already indicated this could be because self efficacy was a component of having competence but another reason could be that the respondents were not familiar with the term self efficacy. As Bandura (cited in Pearson and Chatterjee, 1996) conceptualised,

the notion of self efficacy is related to personal beliefs regarding competence and abilities to complete the task successfully. Therefore, the perception of self efficacy is closely related to knowledge and skill. As Spreitzer and Quinn (1997) noted, if "people are confident about their ability to do their work well; they know they can perform" (p. 4). The concept of empowerment involves enhancing feelings of self efficacy among organisational members (Conger and Kanungo cited in Smith and Mouly, 1988).

In learning and teaching settings in Indonesian universities, students rely heavily on lecturers as a source of knowledge rather than on other sources, such as books, journals/articles or computers. Students are supposed to respect lecturers since they have legitimate and expert power. The lecturer is perceived as an expert. As mentioned before, in high power distance cultures like Indonesia, education is teacher-centered; teachers outline the intellectual paths to be followed (Hofstede, 1991). According to Bandura, (1995) "the study material is supposed to reflect the wisdom of the educational personnel, who are not to be contradicted or criticised" (p. 154). Moreover, teachers are expected to have better understanding of subjects and more knowledge than their students have. Students are also highly structured by some both written and unwritten rules as discipline given by the schools. This contradicts with Indonesia's moderately low uncertainty avoidance in which format and rules are not considered very important. Thus, the high expectation from students that a lecturer always will perform better than the students will to some extent increase the lecturer's sense of self efficacy. Bandura (1995) posited that self efficacy influences performance primarily through increasing a person's effort and persistence.

All learning and teaching processes in universities involve not only staff academic (lecturers) but also administrative staff. The latter are perceived by students as having legitimate power, especially in their position as administrator of student's performance data and their role as information sources of teaching and learning matters. The key role of both academic and administrative staff as key players in successful teaching and learning processes to some extent may maintain and increase their self efficacy.

In terms of management practices that made staff feel empowered were **autonomy/ authority**, **clarity/certainty/structure**, **recognition/appreciation**, and **teamwork**. Management practices that were perceived as disempowering were **limited resources**, **an autocratic way of leadership** and **centralised decision making**, and **lack of coordination**.

Autonomy/authority to decide the best way to perform staff's jobs is perceived as an empowering practice. It is clear that the main job description of academic staff is teaching, research, and management and administration. Educators such as teachers and lecturers are typically people who are ready to make decisions and be held accountable for them (Wetlaufer, 1999). Academic staff are given more autonomy because they are directly accountable for students progress. Examples include freedom in deciding what course/ ubject academic to teach and the method of delivery including what books to use. According to Byrt (1989) autonomous professionals will not only develop a range of skills but also a broad knowledge of understanding of the subject content and of the conceptual framework of teaching and learning. As one academic staff GMU mentions "academic staff are perceived as using internal control." Administrative staff also have considerable authority to make decision on how to perform their job. They do not need consult superiors when they are dealing with un-programmed decision making.

It is interesting to note from the findings that having **clear structure** and **rules** were perceived as an empowering practice. This is surprising given the idea that Indonesia has

moderately low uncertainty avoidance in which people feel comfortable with uncertainty, accept risk more easily and take each day as it comes. The finding also contradicts with Indonesia's high context culture (McLaren, 1998). In the high context culture, people divulge less information officially in written forms (Hall cited in Sparrow and Wu, 1999). Therefore, in Indonesia with its moderately low UAI and high-context culture, it could be assumed that managers might empower their staff by letting them make decisions with few or less rules and guidance or supervision. However, as mentioned before, degree of empowerment depends on staff's level of position in organisation. According to Ruin (1998), the degree of empowerment correlates with the intensity or level of delegating either power, mandate, authority, capacity, function or a simple task. Close supervision, formalised rules, clear structure and clear job descriptions are perceived as empowering practices in administrative staff's current jobs. In this case, the management is perceived as providing clear guidance for administrative staff in order to empower people. As Quinn and Spreitzer (1998) reported, in terms of empowerment, organizations provide clear goals, clear line of authority, and clear task responsibilities. Management needs to help the administrative staff to develop their competencies and skills required for functioning as administrators. This will reduce the disabling effects of uncertainty and ambiguity.

Recognition/Appreciation is perceived by staff members as an empowering practice of management. According to Rudman (1997), extrinsic rewards are external reinforcements including pay, other benefits, promotion or recognition. Recognition/appreciation for academic staff and administrative staff's good performance can be categorised into two types of reward: monetary and non-monetary. The Indonesian government (Culture and Education Department) is involved in appraising the performance of academic and administrative staff of GMU, and only the performance of academic staff of DNU and IIU performance is evaluated by the government. The management of DNU and IIU evaluate the performance of their administrative staff. It can be assumed that the more a staff member contributes to the organization such as the length of time worked, and especially for academic staff the higher number of credit points she/he has gained from performing in research, will reflect in higher functional level and salary. According Quinn and Spreitzer (1998), recognition from the management will allow for greater learning and growth. This personal growth, in turn, leads to increased self confidence. Non monetary recognition/appreciation is also given by the management for staff who have good performance. Examples include awards for best lecturer and best administrator.

To some extent, academic and administrative staff had experienced **working** in **teams**. Teamwork encourages members to share their knowledge, skill and experiences (Long, 1996). Empowered teams within each educational institutions, which share the vision and goals of the educational institutions' system provide the initial impetus in promoting quality education and cost effectiveness (Glasman, 1997). In the universities studied, management had assigned its academic staff to work in teams, for example, in certain course/subjects, and research projects that covered broad topics. In addition, to continuously improve quality of education and to meet accreditation standards, all staff have to work as a team to show continuous progress in specific areas such as curriculum evaluation, assessment developers, research and development, and staff development. However, given that Indonesia's high power distance, barriers of hierarchy or status among team members still persist. Moreover, although Indonesia ranks in the middle on masculinity index, the sexes are still sharply differentiated. This is

influenced by the perception that a male member has more capabilities even though the female member has greater experience.

A negative outcome of a collectivist culture was voiced by one academic staff at DNU. She noted that "empowerment through team members is only for a few people who have a special personal relationship to superiors which would be considered nepotism and collusion." The performance of team members sometimes was evaluated based on seniority and having a special personal relationship to team leader rather than contribution to the team.

Staff may also have had the experience of being discriminated against by a team leader or felt a lack of commitment from team members toward the team's goals. A feeling of disappointment because of discrimination and a lack of commitment among team members may not have been expressed directly by staff since they would try to maintain harmony or "harmonis"/"rukun." Collectivist cultures reflect in a relatively stronger value given to the provision to everyone of good working conditions. Harmony tends to result from nonconfrontational behavior. According to Wickisier (1997), even though a quality action plan may be developed and good results expected from all employees through the teamwork and working together, if team members lack commitment this can have a negative effect and discourage people from seeing teamwork as valuable.

The **limitation of resources** such as information, supplies for teaching and learning process is perceived as disempowering by staff in educational institutions in Indonesia. A significant number of organizations appear to believe the theory of empowerment requires managers to provide the resources available to complete the task (Long, 1996). It was clear from the study that GMU, DNU and IIU are still traditionally hierarchical (bureaucratic) organizational structures. A bureaucratic culture encompasses multiple layers of hierarchy

that impede change (Quinn and Spreitzer, 1998). It is characterized by a preference for the status quo, lack of management support for real change and short-term managerial thinking. Although there is opportunity for staff to recommend new resources needed, final decisions are on the top level management. It is evident that the high power distance in Indonesia means that "subordinates are likely to be separated from their bosses by wide differentials in salary, privileges and status symbols" (Brown, 1998, p. 43).

Given the increasing demand for quality of students, having adequate resources is important. Facilities such as on-line information from computer, and technological aids will support staff to perform well. As mentioned before, all facilities and equipment are not adequate enough for supporting staff members' jobs. Information, library catalogues, communication networks, supplies for teaching and learning process are still operated manually. Universities are not providing facilities such as Internet/email to staff and students. Only a few staff have access to the internet/email as a source of information and a tool of communication. Most of are still using direct contact or face to face, phone calls and letter to communicate with others.

Academic and administrative staff encountered the problems of the allocation of resources with competing demands. Given the increasing demand for quality from students and the high competition among universities, it is not only academic staff who are concerned about the limited resources, but also administrative staff are concerned the lack and shortage of resources may mean they perform inefficiently and ineffectively.

Having the understanding of Indonesia's high power distance, it is not surprising that staff members experienced being disempowered by an **autocratic way of leadership** and **centralised decision making**. In such countries with high power distance, superiors are entitled to privileges, contacts between

superiors, and subordinates are supposed to be initiated by the superiors and the network of organisation is still centralized (Hofstede, 1991). One academic staff expressed this feeling by saying "one man show management." The power is unequally distributed through units or subunits of organization. Managers of these societies tend to believe only a few people in the organization have the right to make decisions (Honold, 1997). However, in today's organization, authoritative decision making and leadership styles may be acceptable. Moreover, giving the issue of quality in education, all staff should be invited to contribute their ideas and suggestions to management.

Findings from study also show that staff, especially administrative staff, feel that a **lack of coordination** can be considered as a disempowering practice. It is interesting to note that this finding is correlated with the needs for having clarity/certainty/structure by most of the administrative staff. One administrative staff suggested that management "should have regular formal or informal meetings to allow staff members exchange ideas, solve the problem and share knowledge, skill and experience." As mentioned before, an autocratic style of leadership is somewhat inappropriate in today's organisation, however, it is evident that administrative staff members are comfortable to be led by their superiors. According to Hofstede (1991), "employees are seen as frequently afraid of disagreeing with their bosses, and bosses are autocratic or paternalistic. Instead, among them express a preference for a boss who decides autocratically or paternalistic." Correlation between occupation/status level and educational level of subordinates and power distance index has been mentioned by Hofstede (1991). Administrative staff can be categorised as semiskilled and skilled staff and the study shows that these staff value high power distance. On the other hand, academic staff (lecturers), who can be classified as

professionals, seem to value the low power distance.

CONCLUSION

Empowerment involves staff members' feelings of having authority, autonomous decision making, resources and self efficacy. Empowerment perspectives may differ between cultures because the different national culture shapes organizational behavior. In an effort to understand empowerment perspectives in Indonesian culture, this study was undertaken to gain an idea of how staff members perceive empowerment, how empowerment works in Indonesian culture and the implications of empowerment practices for Indonesians, especially in educational institutions. Five empowerment components frequently cited such as authority, competence, resources, self efficacy, and teamwork, and four dimensions of Hofstede's cultural patterns were explored in the study.

Indonesians found empowerment or in Indonesian term "*pemberdayaan*" in practices such as granting the authority to make decision, having competence, having resources and working in teams. Self efficacy was perceived as the least important component possibly because the notion of competence may contain the idea of self efficacy. The implications of empowerment in Indonesia, therefore, are perceived as having considerable autonomy or authority to reflect their competence to perform the jobs supported by adequate and available resources. Indonesians also perceived having a sense of being empowered when working in teams.

The findings showed that culture has a significant role in empowerment in Indonesia. The high power distance was evident in centralized decision making and rootedness in seniority. It can be assumed that top management would have more power compared to subordinates. This evidenced in the fact that staff members could not make decisions

related to the allocation of budget for resources.

An interesting finding from the study was that staff members saw authority as an essential component to have a sense of being empowered. The expected finding based on Hofstede's cultural patterns would be that Indonesians would not receive delegated authority easily, but findings revealed that. Academic and administrative staff members do exercise their authority and are able to make decisions related to their jobs. Another interesting findings is having clear structure and rules were perceived as important by staff members to have a feeling of being empowered. It was expected that the staff would have been comfortable with ambiguity due to the moderately low UAI. There were differences here between administrative staff and academic staff. It was evident that staff in administrative jobs perceived having a clear structure and rules as important. In teamwork setting, the high power distance, collectivism and moderately low masculinity of Indonesia had a significant effect on gaining commitment from team members. Staff members experienced being discriminated against by team leaders if they had no special personal relationship and or if they were females.

Management practices currently applied in Indonesian organizations such as giving authority, providing clear structure and rules, giving recognition/appreciation, encouraging working in teams were perceived as an empowering; whereas limited resources, autocratic way of leadership and centralized decision making were seen as disempowering. There were differences in perception between administrative staff and academic staff related to the status/level and type of job.

The combined findings obviously have practical implications for Indonesian managers, human resources professionals, and others interested in empowering staff especially in the Indonesian culture. Authority or autonomy and competence are essential components of empowerment since staff would have flexibility to enhance their capabilities, knowledge and skill to carry out and perform the jobs with the consideration of staff members' level or position. Adequate and available resources should be available to support staff performance. Treating team members equally regardless their position and sex would provide a sense of an empowerment. Moreover, by feeling recognized/ appreciated, staff members will increase their self confidence. In turn management will have the benefits of having empowered staff members in organizations.

Despite the limitations of this study, it adds to understanding of how empowerment works in Indonesian culture. Given the emerging issue of demand for quality service, it would be useful for management to encourage input from staff members. Empowerment is seen as a valuable management practice to enable staff to deal with the increasing demand for quality. However, perspectives on and practice of empowerment in educational institutions in Indonesia may differ from those in other institutions, such as business organizations. Therefore, further research would be needed to expand empowerment perspectives in another organizations in Indonesia in order to provide comprehensive understanding of empowerment in Indonesian culture.

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