

Phenomenological Study: A Look at the Empowerment as a Management Strategy

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Abstract—The objective of the research was oriented to understand the Empowerment as a managerial strategy at an individual, organizational and community level in the Madre Verónica Briguglio headquarters (Riohacha - Colombia). Methodologically, it was of a qualitative nature and a discretionary sample of 7 members of the educational community was taken (managers, teachers, operatives and parents). As a data collection technique, observation was used, implemented through the interview instrument. For the analysis of the data, a phenomenological study was applied, which generated 8 essential-universal categories corresponding to each of the aspects of the interview: exercising abilities, cognitive abilities, control over assigned resources, social skills, support in institutional activities, use of environmental resources, conflict resolution and recognition of diversity.

Keyword - Decision Making, Conflict resolution, Social skills, Cognitive skills

I. INTRODUCTION

The articulation of the Empowerment concept is attributed to the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire. In developing his theory and philosophy of education, he focused on the humanity of the oppressed and believed it necessary to enter his world and identify with them to understand his needs. From this, Lorraine Gutiérrez in 1990 conceptualized Empowerment as a process to increase personal, interpersonal or political power and improve the lives of marginalized people; I also argue that the ultimate goal was the socio-political liberation of the excluded communities [1].

On the other hand, Empowerment is also defined as an active and participatory process through which individuals and groups gain greater control over their lives, acquire rights and reduce marginality. The importance of this has been recognized in statements by important institutions such as the World Health Organization and the United Nations. For researchers from different disciplines, this process represents an approach based on strengths and the ability of people to face difficult circumstances or conditions of a community, to define and actively participate in solutions to the problems they face [2].

As exemplars of the Empowerment study, we have [3], where the social consequences of ICT are examined and the existing knowledge of the Empowerment perspective is used as a theoretical lens, not only to conduct the study, but also to analyze the data with expectations based on this interpretative approach and make new, unidentifiable findings at the beginning of the investigation. On the other hand, in [4] a systematic review and a meta-analysis of the implementation and effectiveness of Empowerment in the community of sex workers is carried out, in order to reduce HIV infection and promote health and human rights in general. Finally, in [5] the complex interaction between the Empowerment of patients with type 2 diabetes and the socio-demographic characteristics, the clinical results and an ample set of dimensions centered on the people is analyzed, in order to provide useful elements to improve the programs educational and results.

Regarding the managerial approach, there are multiple applications. In [6], a theoretical relationship between Empowerment and trust is developed, to improve the management actions of a veterinary clinic and motivate its employees. In addition, [7] presents a model that shows the quality of the exchange of coworkers and the organizational hope that significantly influence the empowerment of the workplace. Finally, in [8] the impact of the Empowerment of the work teams in crisis management in the Electricity Distribution Company of Jordan is identified.

Taking into account the above, the following question arises: How to describe the Empowerment as a management strategy for the Madre Verónica Briguglio Educational Institution? In order to respond to the above, the objective of the research is to understand Empowerment as a management strategy at an individual, organizational and community level in the Institution under study, through a phenomenological analysis. Phenomenology is defined as a theoretical point of view that advocates the study of the experiences of individuals, because human behavior is determined by phenomena of experience, instead of the objective reality and physically described; it can also be seen as a method to obtain meanings for people through the analysis of

their language (oral or written) [9]. To carry out this objective, this methodology was used by members of the educational community under study (managers, teachers, operatives and parents).

II. METHODOLOGY

The methodological approach used was of a qualitative nature, because the emphasis of the research was on the process, meanings and the researcher together with the object of the study were linked interactively so that the findings were created according to the context of the situation, what led to an approach between the researcher, the people and the phenomenon under study, to understand, explain and interpret in depth and detail what happened [10].

A. Population and sample

Once the purpose of the research was defined, a population represented by 38 members of the educational community of the Madre Verónica Briguglio headquarters (managers, teachers, operatives and parents) was established. To define the size of the sample, discretionary sampling was considered (Table 1), which consists in the selection of a small number of units in the study, without intervention of chance and under some criterion established by the researcher [11]. Therefore, the following characteristics were determined: (a) geographical, living in the area of influence of the educational institution; (b) labor, that were hired officials; (c) association, which will be part of the school governing body (board of directors, academics or parents' association).

TABLE I. Font Sizes for Papers

Position	Quantity	Sample
Manager	3	1
Teacher	8	2
Operative	7	2
Parents	20	2
Total	38	7

B. Data collection

As a data collection technique, observation was implemented, defined by [12] as a qualitative research method that not only includes participant observation, but also encompasses ethnography and research work in the field, where involve multiple study sites and integrate the data obtained as auxiliary or confirmatory research. On the other hand, [13] adds that the researcher under this technique is the main instrument to observe, collect and analyze data and that it also operates under the following assumptions: (a) the research focus is in the process, instead of the results; (b) the same, has greater interest in the sense of life of people and their events; and (c) the investigation must involve fieldwork, be descriptive and inductive.

As an instrument for data collection, the interview was used, described by [14] as a popular medium widely used to collect qualitative data, where the researcher wishes to obtain first-hand information. On the other hand, it mentions the following strengths of the instrument used: (a) it allows to measure attitudes and other contents of interest; (b) admits interpretive validity; (c) provides detailed information and relatively high response rates; (d) it is useful for exploration and confirmation; and (e) the measurement validity of this is valued as moderately high.

C. Data analysis

For the value analysis of the experiences, personal observations and other manifestations of the interviewees, protocols were made to maintain the focus of the analysis in accordance with the purpose of the study. For this, the following sequence of actions of the phenomenological analysis proposed in [15] was taken into account:

- (a) Transcription: consists of the recording of the interview, election and transcription of opinions and annotations related to the incidents of the process and other manifestations.
- (b) Elaboration of units of general meaning: the interventions are collected and then grouped by unit of meaning by the general character (aspects related and not related to the research topic).
- (c) Development of units of meaning relevant to the research topic: Then, the units of meaning relevant to the research topic are selected, a search for convergence and divergence is carried out and, finally, thematic categories are constructed.
- (d) Verification of units of relevant meaning: Search is made for criteria that allow grouping units of meaning in categories that reflect common aspects or categories and are named under a heading, topic, question, etc.
- (e) Conclusion: The human experience is transformed into meaningful knowledge, where the most important aspects of the whole process of phenomenological analysis are contemplated.

D. Validity and Reliability of data

The data obtained from the interpretation of the results were subjected to a triangulation process. This is considered as a control procedure implemented to guarantee reliability between the results of any investigation. In addition, it has as a priority to increase the validity of the results and reduce the problems of bias. On the other hand, it generates a dialogue that thrives on the contrast between what seems obvious and the discoveries with official interpretations of a particular object of study [16].

E. Research procedure

The research was conducted based on a set of established stages, which allowed building it (Figure 1).



Fig. 1: Stages for the development of research

- I. Previous stage: Initially the theoretical and philosophical assumptions were established that allowed knowing the object to be apprehended, from the exploration, description, explanation and interpretation of the reality of the Empowerment as a management strategy. In addition, the detailed observation of the phenomenon under study is carried out, and the interview collection instrument is structured and applied.
- II. Descriptive stage: Empowerment was described as a management strategy, reflecting the experience of the members of the educational community under study. In addition, a phenomenological reduction is made, where only the subjective world of the interviewees is highlighted, what is lived and focused on the Empowerment as a management strategy.
- III. Structural stage: We proceeded to study and analyze the data obtained to find units of essential meanings (essential-universal phenomenological categories) and as a process of validation of results, triangulation is implemented.

III. RESULTS

As a case study, the research was conducted with members of the educational community of the Madre Verónica Briguglio Educational Institution (Riohacha - Colombia). The results are presented below through the steps established in the previous section:

I. Previous stage

A. Clarification of budgets

The budgets that are part of this research are the following: The Empowerment as a management strategy allows to identify the skills that managers, teachers, operatives and parents must develop for decision making, resource management and teamwork; On the other hand, it helps to establish opportunities for participation in decision making, to practice co-responsibility and leadership; in the same way, it allows distinguishing between an empowered organization and an unpowered one; and finally, it promotes the educational institution and motivates the members of the educational community to be able to access resources and resolve conflicts.

B. Observation

The observation was made through a previous visit and during the execution of the interview. The first was carried out in order to personally talk with the coordinator of the institution, comment on the purposes of the study and specify a permit for the observation and interview of key informants. Subsequent visits use guiding questions to have a clear focus of the observation point. The questions that make up the guide are: What skills characterize managers, teachers, operatives and parents in decision making, resource management and teamwork? Do members of the educational community have opportunities for participation in decision making and leadership practice? And are members of the educational community motivated?

From the above it was obtained that the institution under study is located in the municipality of Riohacha, rural area, Arenalito community. It offers the levels of preschool, basic primary and secondary education. In addition, it has a rural type infrastructure, with enough green spaces to carry out sports, cultural and institutional activities. Its vision is to offer a quality educational service, with qualified teachers and committed to their work, by the hand of all members of the educational community. On the other hand, the conditions of the neighborhood are on a low economic level, with access to basic services such as water, electricity and gas. The

institution has an ethnic-educational character, due to the fact that the population is mostly indigenous (Wayuu). Likewise, an atmosphere of harmony, respect and collaboration among its members is perceived. Finally, we observed some skills that characterize managers, teachers and operatives such as dialogue, kindness, emotional treatment, group work, participation and motivation.

C. Survey

The interviews are specified based on the availability of time of the informants and are carried out following rules that favor their development. The procedure consists in recording structured individual interviews with the support of a digital recorder and they are executed in the office of the coordinator of the institution. The instrument used is composed of open and structured questions, divided into three parts: (1) collection of information related to the individual Empowerment level; (2) Information about the organizational level is collected; and (3) questions related to the community level are included. In addition, the script of the interview is elaborated in an intentional way to discover some psychological processes (knowledge, memory, understanding and relationship) (Table 2).

TABLE II. Levels and processes of empowerment

Level of analysis	Questions	Process of Empowerment
Individual	1	Knowledge of Empowerment
	2, 3, 4, and 5	Skills for decision making
		Resource management for the development of functions
Organizational	6 and 7	Opportunities to participate in the activities of the institution
		Shared responsibilities for the development of functions and activities inside and outside the institution
Community	8, 9 and 10	Access to community resources
		Opening of mediating structures for conflict resolution

Each interview lasts 5 to 15 minutes. Prior to its realization, the participants know the research topic, they know that the conversation is recorded and that access to participation is voluntary.

II. Descriptive stage

The descriptions of the Empowerment as managerial strategy made by members of the educational community under study, corresponded to a set of interventions made by the interviewees, which were analyzed in a phenomenological way from the psychological point of view and reduced in the same way, but from the subjective world of the informants. The essential aspects of this stage are shown in Table 3, which shows the topics addressed in the interview and the number of verbal interventions of the interviewees.

TABLE III. Number of verbal interventions made by the informants and the aspects dealt with in the interview

Aspects of the interview	N° of interventions
Knowledge of Empowerment as a management strategy	192
Skills of managers, teachers, operatives and parents for decision making	524
Management of resources (human, physical, economic and financial) by the members of the community under study for the development of their functions	823
Ability to teamwork	445
Opportunities to participate in the activities of the institution	605
Shared responsibilities for the development of functions and activities inside and outside the institution	640
Access to community resources by members make up the educational community	460
Opening of mediating structures for conflict resolution	471
Tolerance to diversity to accept, recognize and value others	653
Total	4,813

III. Structural stage

After the transcription of the interviews, of the 4,813 resulting protocol descriptions (see Table 3), 98 essential phenomenological synthesized categories were established, which were then grouped by content similarity, generating 8 essential-universal phenomenological categories corresponding to each one of the aspects of the interview (Table 4).

TABLE IV. Essential themes corresponding to the essential-universal phenomenological categories - synthesized

Essential-universal phenomenological categories	N° de essential themes
Exercise capabilities	10
Cognitive skills	2
Control over assigned resources	31
Social skills	2
Support in institutional activities	6
Use of environmental resources	23
Conflict resolution	16
Recognition of diversity	8
Total	98

With a view to contribute from the theory and experience, a respectfully valued analysis product of the experiences of key informants; the process of triangulation is implemented, in which the results of the study contrast with theoretical approaches that describe Empowerment as a management strategy from the explanatory, analytical and hermeneutical perspective:

A. Individual level of Empowerment

The results suggest that the interviewees have knowledge of Empowerment and relate it to: "empowerment", "capacity to exercise assigned functions" and "relationship with the way people handle power". In this regard, in [17] it is added that Empowerment is a cognitive state characterized by a sense of perceived control, perceptions of competence and internalization of goals and objectives.

In terms of skills for decision making, the results of the study support that for this, "we must observe, analyze and interpret events" and that "it is also necessary to study the decisions and take into account the experiences". In relation to this, in [18] we add that decision making is a cognitive process that requires a complex integration of multiple sources of information to produce distal, socially mediated results. He also mentions that effective decision making requires more than applying a set of cognitive operators with existing knowledge of the desired solutions.

Regarding the resources to carry out the work, initially the interviewees stated that "they have resources from the environment and the institution" and that "there are those who manage their own resources until they are provided by the entity", then they referenced that they have two types: physical (stationery, infrastructure, technological equipment, recyclable materials, among others) and human talent. [19] Defined this term as the stock of available factors that an organization owns or controls, which are converted into final products or services using a wide range of other assets and linking mechanisms such as technology, information systems for management, incentive system, climate of trust between management and workers, among others. On the other hand, they indicate that these are not suppliers of competitive advantage, but depend on how they are used and with what skill they are managed.

In relation to the control over resources, the results determine that "they are limited because they are minimized and there is a process to access them", and another view points out that this "is related to the management and appropriate use of the tools of job". In this regard, [20] adds that for an institution to fulfill its mission, objectives and show favorable results, it is necessary that people have control over themselves, over the resources of the institution and the environment (internal and external).

On the other hand, there are the skills for teamwork, which, according to the informants are "dialogue, communication and support", also state that "it is necessary to analyze the environment to establish how to work with the community to complement and take advantage of the skills of others ", " respect, dialogue and good coexistence are three elements that are part of teamwork "and" communication is the main strategy ". Regarding this, [21] they describe that working as a team requires the exercise of a series of essential skills, such as giving and receiving (feedback), being adaptable and managing time well. Likewise, team members must adopt a series of internal attitudes, necessary to make the most of the aforementioned interdependencies, such as listening, collaboration and optimism.

B. Organizational level of Empowerment

When responding to the aspects in which greater participation is achieved within the institution, the key informants indicated that it is due to "the capacity or state of mission", "to work to give what one has in favor of others", "Support in all fields", "work from the educational side of the students", "a proactive personality" and "seek the common good". In this regard, in [20] it was pointed out that participation promotes a sense of community and social belonging, which opposes personal uprooting and socio-cultural disintegration, in addition, implies having enough knowledge and skills to carry out processes of decision making. Regarding the

shared responsibilities, the members of the educational community added that "all of them ensure safety, accident prevention and student discipline", in addition, they determined that "the responsibility is to forge integral students".

C. Community level of Empowerment

Faced with access to community resources, key informants added that "it has always been open", "the resources offered by the community are only focused on the environmental part" and finally, "they receive collaborations from the community, due to the economic shortage of the Madre Veronica Institution ".Regarding the mediating structures, they added that "the academic coordinator, the Diocese of Riohacha, the community leader and the group director, are the bodies in charge of mediating difficulties between the school and the community." Finally, regarding diversity in the institution, they stated that "it is presented in the environmental (fauna and flora), ethnic (Wayuu, Afro and mestizo) and population" and "are from different contexts, neighborhoods, populations, cultural and social moments".

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the objective outlined in the research, which was aimed at understanding the Empowerment as a management strategy at the individual, organizational and community level at the Madre Verónica Briguglio headquarters (Riohacha-Colombia), it is concluded:

- i) Empowerment as a managerial strategy motivates people to feel committed, participate in the decision making processes and generate changes, such as empowerment, feedback and the acquisition of knowledge for a successful performance.

Regarding the phenomenological description:

- ii) It was found at the individual level the importance of the rector and coordinator know and appropriate the Empowerment, so to enable its members to assume new responsibilities, lead, train and participate in decision making processes.
- iii) The process for developing managerial skills for decision making is a key factor in solving problems, because they promote the search for information, selection of alternatives, analysis, execution and control.
- iv) People must develop skills that combine resources (human, physical, financial, technology, knowledge and information) with capabilities.
- v) For managers, teachers or operators, the sense of control over resources is related to motivation.
- vi) The skills for teamwork implies an organized support for the achievement of a common goal, moving from dependence to independence, and then to interdependence, development of knowing how to give and receive, sense of adaptability, time management, assertive communication , innovation, trust, cooperativism, among others.

From the phenomenological exploration at the organizational level, it was deduced that:

- vii) Participation plays a fundamental role, because you can acquire mastery and control, and with it, influence the environment, forming the manager of the educational institution for the development of skills and techniques, which help your employees to acquire the sense of co-responsibility.

Regarding the interpretation in the phenomenological framework at the community level, it is necessary to:

- viii) Empowerment involves access to community resources
- ix) The school is called to consider diversity and with it, the way of approaching it from the curriculum, which involves contemplating strategies that build a curriculum capable of ensuring integration and interculturality.

Finally, at a general level, it was deduced that the educational institution object of study must:

- x) Implement ongoing training programs aimed at its members, to strengthen skills that allow a sense of control, critical awareness and participatory attitudes.
- xi) Generate scenarios for participation, establishment of networks and achieve influence on political issues.
- xii) Form coalitions with the organizations in their area of influence, exercise greater leadership and develop skills for participation in parents and other members of the educational community.

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