

**DEVELOPING A SELF-EMPOWERMENT CONCEPTUAL
FRAMEWORK TO ENHANCE ALIGNMENT, ENGAGEMENT
AND AGILITY USING QUANTUM SKILLS**

M Fuller

Student number: 8386

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Academic supervisor: Dr Dewald Scholtz



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ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to develop an employee conceptual framework by exploring how employees can empower themselves. Consulting for businesses on operations and strategy has led to many discussions on why employees at all levels often feel that they cannot contribute positively to their businesses. The inability to make these decisions seems to be due to their perception that they cannot empower themselves. Employees believe that only those with greater authority can bestow empowerment.

The researcher identified a gap in the research and current knowledge related to employee self-empowerment. There is noteworthy research related to empowerment and self-empowerment; however, there is no simple or easy-to-understand self-empowerment framework that employees can follow should they wish to empower themselves. This qualitative phenomenological study used the Repertory Grid to identify the constructs of fifteen purposefully selected mid-level managers through structured interviews. The seven emerging themes of purpose, assurance, intentionality, decision-making, alignment, engagement and agility were arranged to develop a self-empowerment conceptual framework. These were aligned with the seven quantum skills designed to influence the employee's thinking. The skills of seeing, thinking and feeling will create greater intentionality. The skills of knowing, acting and trusting will help employees embrace volatility. The seventh skill of being combines the previous six to help employees cultivate interdependent relationships.

The self-empowerment framework suggests a process that employees can follow to empower themselves and develop their leadership competencies and practices, which in turn encourage the emerging behaviours of alignment, engagement and agility as discussed in the TIPS Managerial Leadership framework.

The potential implications of this study are that employees can develop a positive mindset and purpose by using quantum thinking. In addition, a positive attitude implies that employees will be agile and outward-focused.

The resulting behavioural change can positively impact performance and help cultivate leadership competencies and practices. Moreover, the difference in a single employee's behaviour can influence their colleagues' behaviour, resulting in improved company performance and profitability.

Keywords: Employee self-empowerment, Quantum thinking, Agility, Engagement, Alignment, Influence.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my wife Louise and daughter Claire who are also my best friends. Without your consistent love, support, and encouragement, this study would not have been possible. You taught me it is never too late to chase my dreams.

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GLOSSARY

Employee	The term employee in this study refers to mid-level managers. Paterson Grading Model B and D.
Employee self-empowerment	An employee's willingness and ability to demonstrate that they can influence others to co-create and deliver meaningful contributions to the business.
Empowerment questions	When asked, questions reframe thoughts and beliefs, leading to positive action.
Metanoic leadership	Leadership that inspires transformative action through a fundamental shift in thinking.
Metanoic organisation	Metanoic organisations believe in the creative power of aligned employees to develop a fundamental shift in thinking.
Paterson Job Grading System	A method where jobs are evaluated based on predefined criteria, and it analyses decision-making in tasks required for each.
Quantum thinking	The ability to think creatively and holistically without boundaries resulting in an interconnected approach to problem solving and decision-making.
Quantum skills	Quantum skills are a set of seven cognitive abilities inspired by quantum physics principles applied to various aspects of thinking and decision-making.
Repertory Grid (RepGrid)	The Repertory Grid is a set of rating scales which use the individual's constructs as the subject matter on which ratings are carried out. It is a form of structured interviewing that arrives at a precise description uncontaminated by the interviewer's viewpoint.
Self-actualisation	The ability to take advantage of one's knowledge and skills while being aware of one's limitations.
Shared leadership	Maximising human resources by moving decision-making down to the lowest possible level based on employee expertise and competence.
Thought leadership	An individual's thoughts, ideas or opinions enable them to be seen as an authority allowing them to influence the actions and perceptions of others.

ABBREVIATIONS

5IR	Fifth Industrial Revolution
DARE	Decision-making, Ability, Responsibility and Engagement
EQ	Emotional quotient (emotional intelligence)
LUR	Learn, Unlearn, Relearn
NDP	National Development Plan
PDCA	Plan, Do, Check, Act
ROI	Return on Investment
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely
SMME	Small, Medium and Micro Enterprise
STM	Scientific Thinking Mechanism
TIPS	Technology, Innovation, People, Systems
UN	United Nations
VSM	Value Stream Mapping
VUCA	Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity

IMPORTANT TERMS USED IN THIS STUDY

For easy reference, the following is a list of important terms used by the researcher that pertain to this study, and specifically the data collection and analysis using Jankowicz's (2004) Repertory Grid (RepGrid) and the TIPS Managerial Leadership Framework (Da Vinci, 2019). Some of these terms have differing meanings, depending on the academic discipline. These terms are further explained in Chapters 2 and 3.

Constructs	A personal unit of description or analysis related to the phenomenon of self-empowerment. Each construct has two opposite or contrasting poles.
Elements	Terms, examples, or occurrences that the research participants think best represents the topic.
Emerging behaviours	Using the Da Vinci TIPS Managerial Leadership Framework to optimally manage Technology, Innovation, People and Systems, results in the emerging behaviours of Engagement, Alignment and Agility.
Triad	A triad of elements was systematically compared by asking which two elements were similar and how the third was different.
Poles	The poles are used to differentiate the elements according to similarity and dissimilarity.
Emergent pole	The left pole is the emergent pole and describes the similarity between elements.
Implicit pole	The right pole, known as the implicit pole, describes the dissimilarity between elements.

CHAPTER 1:

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF STUDY

1.1 Introduction

One of the central strategic challenges for companies is reconciling long-term thinking, global development, and international collaboration with increasing operational stability and efficiency (Senge, Roberts, Ross, Roth, Smith and Kleiner, 2011). Many company executives believe that governance is managing 'hard' structures (boundaries and performance measures), often paying little regard to the 'soft' structures (aspirations, competencies, and skills), thus negatively impacting on the way people think and behave.

However, Boyce (as cited in Preston, 2014), supported by Senge et al. (2011), suggests that the focus should be on empowering and engaging employees. ASQ (as cited by Westcott, 2013) defines empowerment as management methods used by businesses to provide employees with the tools and authority to control their daily activities. Today, employees are a company's most significant sustainable competitive advantage when they are able to gain knowledge from any source and rapidly convert it into action for the benefit of the business (Boyce, as cited in Preston, 2014; Gino, 2019; Kingma, n.d.).

Pearce and Manz (2015), Fitzsimons, James and Deyner (2011) and Goksoy (2016) use the terms 'self-leadership', which is the process of leading oneself, 'distributed leadership', where leadership is distributed amongst employees and 'shared leadership', where leadership is a collaborative approach, when describing today's educated and digital workforce. These three types of leadership are discussed in greater depth in section 2.8 under leadership. These employees offer a greater depth of knowledge and a passion for making a difference in the workplace. Being able to empower themselves will shift the traditional leadership model from a top-down approach to a bottom-up approach. Kirkman and Rosen (2010) and Kingma (n.d.)

suggest that performance will improve once employees are engaged and perceive that they are empowered to influence their workplace.

Yet employees are often hesitant to implement solutions or take advantage of identified opportunities (Aycan and Sheilia, 2019). The scope of authority given by managers to employees has limited creativity and agility, which negatively impacts both employee performance and business profitability (Jordaan, 2019). The current levels of employee and manager collaboration and transparent communication are inadequate, resulting in disengagement.

In an effort to reduce business risk and improve productivity, many managers limit the level of authority and do not delegate responsibility for workplace decisions (Kirkman and Rosen, 2010; Takahashi, 2020; Jarcho, 2019). The unintended consequence of these actions is disempowerment, which can lead to employees disengaging from their workplace (BMG, 2013; Whitman, 2012).

Nonetheless, many companies and managers have employee empowerment plans included in their strategies and are implementing them in their businesses (Karakoc, 2009). However, according to Aycan and Shelia (2019), many employees resist this empowerment process because of the concerns they have about it impacting their work-life balance, potential failure and the negative impact that failure could have on their career. Why then, when given the opportunity to grow or be empowered in their workplace, do employees not take up these opportunities? Employees must be confident in their knowledge, skills and ability to empower themselves if they are to influence their workplace to make a meaningful contribution.

Thus, the research question the researcher sought to answer is stated as follows:

How are employees able to empower themselves to influence others in their workplace to co-create and deliver meaningful contributions to the business?

1.2 An introduction to empowerment

Meyerson and Dewettink (2012) suggest that with companies decentralising and moving to more organic organisational structures, knowledge workers and communities of practice are more prevalent. Employee empowerment is more relevant in today's globally competitive environment, especially when businesses want to create agility and a competitive advantage (Kingma, n.d.; Mercer, 2020).

Where projects and initiatives are implemented within businesses and are not sustained, it is largely because employees do not feel part of the process (empowered) and thus disengage from the process. When employees feel disempowered, new projects are found to be challenging to implement. Projects are not sustained without continual effort and involvement by the management team (Mbirikira, Musingwini, Muzoriwa and Phuti, 2005; Alioua and Simon, 2017).

Kotter (2008) suggests that employees feel disempowered when they perceive insurmountable barriers in their path, such as their inability to influence their workplace. In the researcher's experience, these perceptions result from businesses controlling employee behaviour through policies, procedures, and systems to reduce business risks such as safety, quality, and damage to equipment. The researcher suggests that this singular focus on leveraging resources to achieve operational excellence could lead to the loss of focus on organisational culture (Senge et al., 2011a).

Many leaders assume employees are not motivated to take the initiative and, in this way, drive their own views and agendas (Senge et al., 2011a). Womack and Jones (2003) discuss mismanaging collective awareness; essentially the beliefs, ideas, and attitudes which unify employees. According to Martela (2019) and Slatten and Lien (2016) the unintended consequences of this behaviour have left employees feeling that businesses do not value them. In addition, they feel they are only employed to give manual labour, not critical thinking. This, in turn, translates to a lack of ownership

and a reluctance to accept accountability or responsibility for their performance (Aycan and Sheilia, 2019).

Engaging with the other stakeholders in the workplace will lead to peer learning, which Boud, Cohen and Sampson (2002) describe as the informal, mutually beneficial sharing of knowledge skills and experiences between co-workers. Gaining knowledge and expertise is one of the elements required for self-empowerment (Priyadharshany and Sujathat, 2015). The literature review discusses this in greater depth in Chapter 2.5. Buchanan and Huczynski (as cited in Cameron and Green, 2014) define learning as the process of acquiring knowledge via experience, which subsequently leads to behavioural change. The researcher notes that there are several tools and strategies that can be developed or refined to change employee behaviour to focus on self-empowerment (Womack and Jones, 2010; Senge, Roberts, Ross, Smith, and Kleiner, 2011b). These strategies and tools will be discussed in Chapter 2, the literature review, which also deals more fully with the concept of self-empowerment.

1.3 Brief introduction to leadership in metanoic organisations

Kiefer and Senge (1982:1) developed the concept of metanoic companies and describe 'metanoic' as a 'unifying principle underlying a broad base of contemporary organisational innovations: that individuals aligned around an appropriate vision can have extraordinary influence in the world'. Belanger and Van Slyke (2000) suggest that self-control and shared learning leads to more productive employees. When employees feel that they can influence their workplace and make their voices heard, they become more engaged, which positively impacts their performance (Cameron and Green, 2009). Blanchard (2019) suggests that managers should move more to a delegating style of management when employees are seen as 'high-performance employees'.

Mid-level managers, according to Tabrizi (2014), do not only manage change in businesses but are instrumental in leading that change. The TT100 organisations could be considered metanoic organisations, which according to Keifer and Senge (as

cited in Adams, 2005), are organisations with a clear vision and purpose, and engaged employees.

The leadership of these organisations could also be considered to exhibit elements of quantum skills (Kocak, 2020; Shelton, 2012). Quantum thinking is a concept that suggests that there are specific quantum principles that can be applied to human cognition and decision-making. Quantum thinking is the ability to remove the barriers to thinking and simultaneously hold two or more opposing thoughts (Zohar, 2016). The quantum principle of superposition aligns to embracing ambiguity. 'Thought superposition' allows employees to hold two opposing ideas at the same time, where the question is more important than the answer. Quantum thinking encourages creativity, innovation decision-making, emotional intelligence and holistic thinking leading to creating competitive advantage (Shelton, 2012). These quantum skills include value-driven action, positive and transparent communication, non-linear structures, and a focus on relatedness and 'centre-out' decision-making. According to Broaddus (as cited in Reisman, 2019), this suggests a different, unrestricted level of thinking, which this study explores related to self-empowerment. These concepts are further elaborated on in the literature review in Chapter 2.

1.4 Significance and Contribution

The researcher is a management consultant, who has travelled extensively and worked in various businesses and industries throughout his career. He has worked in over 50 manufacturing facilities and businesses across sectors such as financial, mining, packaging, confectionery, and manufacturing.

Lately, the focus has been to use quantum thinking to challenge current views on leadership (Collins, 2015), operations (Shelton, 2012) and strategy (Whitman, 2018) within the company. Vyas (2019) states that, 'Quantum thinking is the ability of the mind to view a problem from all sides.' This whole brain thinking, and insatiable curiosity has resulted in improved organisational culture, engagement, processes, productivity and profits (Zohar, 2016; Senge et al., 2011a).

However, some of these improvements and initiatives have been shown to be unsustainable because employees felt disempowered and therefore tended to disengage (Kirkman and Rosen, 2010).

The researcher has found that one constant link to low productivity and employee engagement is the perception held by employees that they have been disempowered by the business regarding their ability to influence their workplace positively (Dery, Woerner, and Beath, 2020). They feel unable to change their current status and therefore disengage themselves from the workplace. This process has led the researcher to challenge business leaders and employees to develop their own critical thinking skills and continually question their current reality, with the view to using self-empowerment as a motivational, performance, and leadership development tool.

According to Rock (2009), certainty is a domain of social experience that the brain treats as a survival issue. The brain considers uncertainty as a physical threat. The researcher, over his long career, believes that one of the most significant barriers to action is uncertainty. During that time, the researcher found that he could influence people into action by engaging in discussions around quantum thinking and alternative ideas through the continuous use of empowering questions (Shelton, 2012). Quantum thinking can be explained as the ability to think holistically without boundaries, resulting in being able to hold more than one contradictory idea at the same time (Thompson, 2019). Employees who perceive themselves as empowered are more engaged, have a greater resilience and are innovative, adding value and profit to the business.

Meta research is defined as research about research (Loannisis, Fanelli, Dunne, Drake and Goodman, 2015) and seeks to increase the quality of research, while reducing inefficiency. In his exploration and identification of a research gap related to employee self-empowerment, the researcher read books related to the topic and searched online using Google Scholar, EBSCOhost, University Library Guides and various internet sites showing academic journals with content written by subject matter experts.

There are many tools and frameworks for businesses and leaders to use to empower employees (Casemore, 2015; Greasley, et al., 2008; Senge, et al., 2011b). There were also some frameworks that were presented as self-empowerment frameworks (Desai, 2018; Rohima and Suman, 2013; Sheer, 2019), which had elements of the themes that emerged from this study but did not focus on employees. Rocha (1997) presented a Ladder of Empowerment where she discusses individual empowerment as rung 1 of different types of empowerment. Gershon (2018), developed a model called the Practice of Empowerment, which is a systemic behaviour change model that focuses on both the individual as well as the organisation, and is discussed in more detail in section 2.5.1.

However, the researcher has not found any tool or easy to understand framework, that employees at all levels can use to empower themselves. In this study, a self-empowerment conceptual framework will emerge from the constructs elicited. The framework will present a simple process that employees can follow, which will assist in developing and sustaining their engagement, agility, and self-empowerment.

1.4.1 Researcher's DARE model

Based on observations and experimentation discussed in 1.4, the researcher developed his own model of self-empowerment, i.e., a model which he called DARE. The model has been successfully tested in various businesses over the past fifteen years. However, he wanted to know if this model could be improved using the seven quantum skills linked to quantum thinking. In this VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity) world with the advent of the 5th Industrial Revolution, would an updated model give businesses more of a sustainable competitive advantage.

DARE is an acronym for Decision-Making, Ability, Responsibility and Engagement (based on the work of Joiner and Josephs (2007). Zohar (2016), Collins (2105) and Shelton (2012) suggest that quantum thinking, can reframe the thinking of an employee's mindset to encourage self-belief and develop purpose. This study

explored whether the quantum skills could be incorporated into a conceptual framework, linked to the themes that emerged from the self-empowerment constructs.

D.A.R.E. SELF-EMPOWERMENT FRAMEWORK

• Self-Empowerment delivers...

• Engagement

- + Accepting Power: Ability & Responsibility
- + Tools: EQ

• Performance

- + Accepting Power: Decision Making & Responsibility
- + Tools: Personal Mastery

• Leadership

- + Accepting Power: Responsibility & Ability
- + Tools: Managerial Leadership

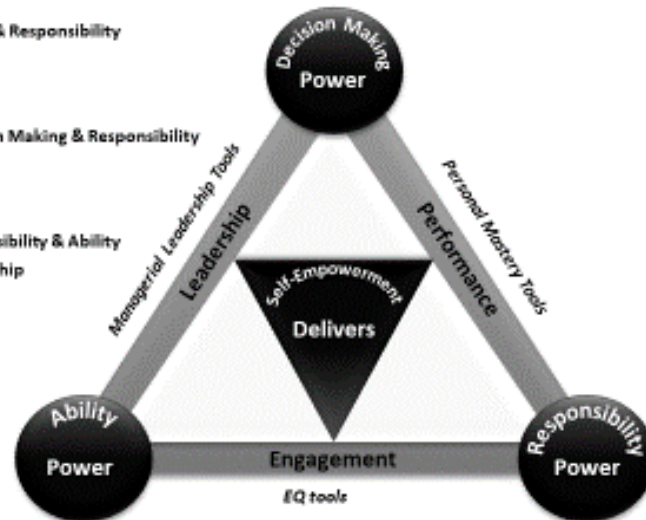


Figure 1-1: D.A.R.E. Self-Empowerment framework (Original)

Adapted from Joiner and Joseph (2007)

The DARE model suggests that there are three 'powers' that must be accepted and embraced by employees who want to empower themselves. The first is the confidence to make the Decision to be better tomorrow that they are today. This intentional continuous improvement focus suggests purpose, and links to the second element Ability (Womack and Jones, 2010). Ability relates to skills and knowledge, which is gained through a focus on continuous learning and sharing of knowledge through networking. As their knowledge and skills grow, employees become more confident in making and defending operational decisions (Senge, et al., 2011a). The third power is Responsibility, which refers to the employee's willingness to be held accountable for decisions they make. Self-empowerment is a result of the behaviours that emerge by combining the three powers. Employees need to embrace and demonstrate the powers for the three behaviours to emerge.

Engagement emerges when employees are confident of their skills and knowledge and show a willingness to accept responsibility for the decisions they make. This behaviour is supported by an employee's understanding of themselves. Performance is improved with the employees focus on continuous improvement and being willing to defend their value adding decisions (Rappoport, 2015). This behaviour emerges as employees become more confident in their abilities through personal mastery. Employees grow their influence through their confidence and ability to clearly communicate, justify and defend their decisions. Leaders do not need authority, but they do need the ability to influence others (Cialdini, 2021). By demonstrating these elements, employees exhibit some of the competencies required of an agile leader as discussed by Joiner and Joseph (2007).

Four competencies are required to be an agile leader (Joiner and Josephs, 2007). The first is to be brave in making decisions once opportunities are uncovered through environmental scans and foresight; secondly, the ability to accelerate their development and to learn through experimentation and networking; thirdly, take responsibility for creative problem solving and transformation; and fourthly, understand and engage with stakeholders to build networks of knowledge workers and create better alignment. Using these tools allows employees to influence their workplace performance positively as they grow their reputation as knowledge experts (Joiner and Josephs, 2007).

Building agile leadership competencies will lead to thought leadership, which, according to Rogers (2015), is an employee sought out because of their knowledge, skills, or thinking. The study intendeds to explore whether self-empowered employees demonstrate these competencies. Demonstrating these competencies will lead to the practice of sharing knowledge and power with others to enable them to solve problems and influence decisions leading to improved performance. The researcher aimed to explore the construct of agility *inter alia* in the research and explains more about agile leadership in the literature review (Chapter 2). After consulting the literature, the researcher defined the research problem statement, and devised the research

instruments, data collection strategies, and data analyses tools for the findings of the research.

1.5 Research problem

Employees are reluctant to take up empowerment and growth opportunities within their workplace, or as offered by the business (Aycaan and Sheilia, 2019). Yet new innovations, processes, and systems implemented by companies have shown a high rate of success (or sustainability) only when employees are given, and take up, ownership of these projects and feel empowered to influence their workplace (Cameron and Green, 2009).

Senge (2011a) suggests that those employees that can continuously learn and grow will give businesses a sustainable competitive advantage in this VUCA world (Kok and Jordaan, 2019). Pink (2010) and Franz (2004) believe that the more empowered employees are, the more engaged and productive they become. These employees also exhibit higher levels of autonomy, personal mastery, and purpose (Pink, 2010), customer service, job satisfaction, and organisational commitment (Kirkman and Rosen, 2010), and leadership skills (Pearce and Manz, 2005).

Thus, the research problem that this study intends to address is the lack of a specific framework that employees can use to empower themselves within a workplace in order to influence others to co-create and deliver meaningful contributions to the business.

Co-creation is the collaborative process between employees resulting in the creation of new solutions or opportunities that add value to the business (Han, 2019; Krawchuck, 2017). In the context of self-empowerment co-creation can be used to develop networks that will give employees more control of their work environment and tasks. In addition, it can lead to an increase in job satisfaction, improved performance, greater flexibility and job sharing. Self-empowered employees can influence other stakeholders to co-create opportunities and solutions to help their business attain a

competitive advantage (Senge, et al., 2011a). Although the study was conducted in a South African context, the expectation is that the conceptual framework will be such that it can be successfully implemented in businesses both nationally and internationally. The data was collected through interviews and during the process reached saturation. Data saturation along with the research design and strategy allows the researcher to suggest that the framework could be generalised (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2022; Boddy, 2016).

1.6 Research type

The researcher chose to use a qualitative, exploratory, research design to understand the employee experiences related to self-empowerment. This links to both his ontology and epistemology (explained further in Chapter 4). The study explores the relationship between thought and action to explain the emerging behaviours of agility, engagement, and alignment; terminology used in the TIPS Managerial Leadership Framework (Da Vinci, 2019) based on the constructs of self-empowerment uncovered in the research.

The TIPS Managerial Leadership Framework (Da Vinci, 2019) is discussed in Chapter 2, The Literature Review. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2016) refer to this as 'connecting the dots'. This is further discussed in Chapter 3, which deals with the research methodology.

1.7 Research orientation

1.7.1 Ontology

Ontology, according to Saunder et al., (2016) is the researchers' assumption about the nature of his reality. The researcher's 'ontology', as defined by Foucault and Nietzsche (1997, as cited by Yates and Hiles, n.d.), is his continuous study and questioning of presumed truths to see if they are what we take them to be. His ontology embraces multiple realities and is, therefore, one of a relativist (Saunders, et al., 2016).

1.7.2 Epistemology

The researcher took an interpretivist epistemological approach to the research; viz. that knowledge is gained and transferred through practical application collaboration and experimentation (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). The researcher understands that human behaviour is complex and therefore focused on the participants observations and experiences that influence their constructs related to employee self-empowerment. This study collected qualitative data through structured interviews to focus on individual perceptions of interactions and behaviours related to employee self-empowerment (Capper, 2018).

1.7.3 Axiology

According to Saunders et al. (2016), axiology is the study of the nature of values and value judgments. The researchers' values are demonstrated through their selection of the research topic, philosophy and methodology. The researcher is focused on helping others grow and develop themselves. This study elicited constructs to create a shared understanding of employee self-empowerment. The value held by each participant in the sample group influences their perceptions and understanding of self-empowerment (Saunders, et al., 2016). The conceptual framework developed by identifying the constructs' patterns will allow employees to contribute positively to their workplace. All these aspects related to the research design and methodology are further elucidated in Chapter 3.

1.8 Aims and objectives of the study

1.8.1 Aim

The aim of this study was to develop a framework that enables employees to empower themselves, within a workplace, in order to influence others to co-create and deliver meaningful contributions to the business. Research on self-empowered teams has lagged that of self-directed teams. Self-directed work teams consist of groups of people who, with limited supervision, combine different skills and knowledge to work

towards a common purpose (Turner and Makhija, 2006). BMG (2013) suggests that empowerment fails because of unclear expectations and the ineffective execution of goals; therefore, research should focus on self-directed teams.

The researcher challenges this notion because, in his view, BMG (2013) has assumed that empowerment can be given to someone, even if they do not want it. This study intends to show that empowerment is a personal construct, and as such, cannot be given but has to be intentionally sought, accepted, and embraced (Rock, 2007; Rock and Halvorson, 2014; Aycan and Sheilia, 2019). Employees need to demonstrate a willingness to want to influence their workplace. Empowered employees, therefore, are those who accept new learnings and the responsibility to make decisions; a workplace where each employee has an opportunity to express their voice in decision-making (Rappoport, 2015). The researcher adopts the view that research must move beyond self-directed employees to broaden the systemic impact of employee effectiveness (Kirkman and Rosen, 2010).

Thus, the researcher intends to develop a conceptual framework for self-empowerment based on the data gathered through the research conducted and supported by a review of relevant literature. He explores whether employees with a purpose can empower themselves in their workplace through quantum thinking, which Collins (2011) defines as thinking without boundaries. The researcher supports his arguments and proposals through qualitative, phenomenological research on employee self-empowerment, using structured interviews and thematic analysis to elicit the participants' constructs related to the topic. This is discussed further in section 1.12.

Employees will be more likely to demonstrate a willingness to make a difference in their workplace when they learn to reframe their thinking (Llopis, 2012; Rappoport, 2015). They will realise that by having self-belief, they can increase their capacity for growth and development.

As a result, they will be more engaged, aligned, and agile, which leads to improved productivity and performance (Mercer, 2020).

1.8.2 Objectives

The objectives of this study are the following:

1. Evaluate whether employee motivation is driven by a purpose.
2. Explore what constructs employees' link to their experience of self-empowerment.
3. Assess whether employees who use Quantum thinking are self-empowered.
4. Explore the links between self-empowerment and leadership.
5. Assess what level of influence self-empowered employees exert in the workplace.

1.9 Research question

The research question linked to the aim is stated as follows:

How are employees able to empower themselves within a workplace in order to influence others to co-create and deliver meaningful contributions to the business?

The research sub-questions linked to the five objectives stated above are as follows:

1. How does a purpose drive employee motivation?
2. What constructs are linked to self-empowerment?
3. How does quantum thinking lead to self-empowerment?
4. How does self-empowerment link to leadership?
5. What influence do self-empowered employees exert on those around them?

1.10 Conceptual research framework developed

According to Robson (2011), a conceptual framework is critical for the research design because it informs the research through a system of concepts, assumptions, beliefs and theories. It is a framework explaining the constructs to be studied. The theory

selection must depend on its appropriateness, ease of application, and exploratory power (USC Library, 2016).

The researcher is an interpretivist who conducted his research to explore an identified phenomenon to offer understanding through a conceptual framework designed to improve future practice (Saunders et al., 2016). Theories, concepts, and research findings are considered in terms of the roles they play as instruments of thought and action (USC Library, 2016).

1.11 Research design

1.11.1 Research paradigm

The research paradigm of this study is one of interpretivism. It suggests that there is a difference between reality and people's perceptions of reality (Bisman, as cited in Krauss, 2005) and thus perceptions have an element of plasticity (Churchland, 1979).

The researcher's phenomenological philosophy led to the choice of an inductive approach to, and a qualitative design for, the research (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). This phenomenological study explores the understanding of the phenomenon of self-empowerment through structured interviews with the selected sample group. Constructs were developed and interrogated, based on the research participant's perceptions and practical experiences of self-empowerment (Kolb, 1984), with a view to developing a conceptual framework for self-empowerment.

1.11.2 The DARE self-empowerment framework

The researcher first examined his own model of self-empowerment (DARE), which he has used for over fifteen years in his career as a management consultant, with the ultimate aim of presenting a new conceptual framework for self-empowerment. This model was explained in an earlier section of this chapter (section 1.4.1).

By using quantum thinking, which Collins (2011) describes as boundary-less thinking, i.e. asking the right question is more important than finding the correct answer, the researcher also explores whether quantum thinking is a critical component of this model.

1.11.3 PDCA model

When the sources are comparable and consistent, the data are accepted as reliable and valid (Golafshani, 2003). The Plan, Do, Check, Act (PDCA) model (Figure 1-2), is a graphical interpretation of how the researcher proceeded. It improves practices by offering a clearly defined and repeatable process so that the researcher can focus on continuous improvement (Koshy, 2010).

In the planning phase the researcher identified fifteen businesses of various sizes that were category winners in the TT100 competition. These businesses have all created a competitive advantage for themselves by managing people, technology, and innovation in a systemic way. A mid-level manager was selected from each business because of the insights that they would give because of their position. The data collecting instrument decided upon was the Repertory Grid because of the potential to reduce researcher bias (Jankowicz, 2004; Fransella, Bell and Banister, 2004). Additional detail is discussed in 3.8.2. Finally, the interview tool was piloted and the letters of consent for the participants were compiled.

In the second phase the mid-level managers identified, were contacted and invited to participate in the study. Each participant signed the letter of consent and sat for a one-on-one interview, which consisted of approximately one hour. The repertory grid tool was used to elicit constructs and is discussed in 3.10.3.

In the third phase the constructs that emerged from the data collected was discussed with the participants to check authenticity and integrity. The data was then moved to a cloud account protected by an alpha-numeric password.

In the final phase the data was analysed and interpreted. Seven themes emerged from the analysis, which are purpose, assurance, intentionality, decision making, agility, engagement, and alignment. (Refer to 4.4) These themes were used to develop an employee self-empowerment conceptual framework.

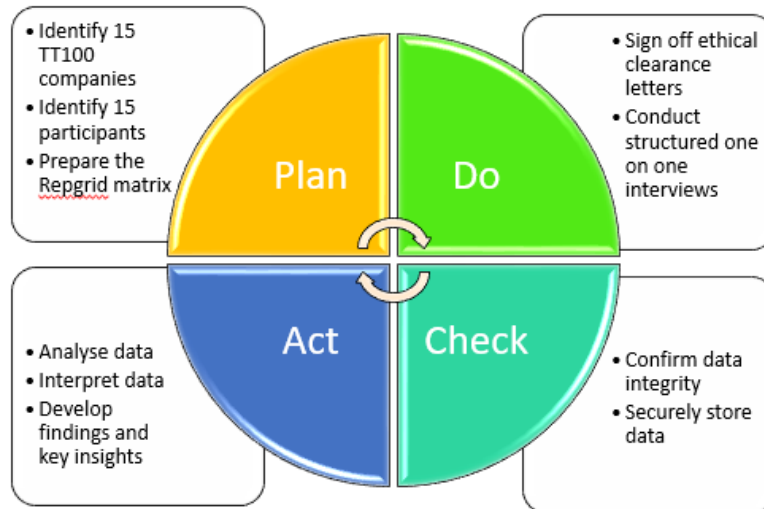


Figure 1-2: PDCA used in the research design

Adapted from Demming (Demming, 2023)

1.12 Research methodology

Based on the research design discussed above, the study adopted a qualitative methodology.

1.13 Data collection

The Repertory Grid (Jankowicz, 2004; Fransella, Bell and Banister, 2004) was used to design the structured interviews to explore the meanings the interviewees gave to their empowerment experiences. The RepGrid is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 (Research Design and Methodology).

According to Rappoport (2015), self-empowerment requires logic and imagination. Logic relates to the capacity to reason and analyse information to get to the core of what is essential and is the vision for making goals tangible and visible. He suggests that engaging in the creative process widens the perception of possibilities (Rappoport, 2015). This study therefore used empowering questions as the logic process and quantum thinking as the imagination process for the interviews. Empowering questions are open, thought-provoking questions (Rock, 2007). When asked, they influence the respondent to reframe their thinking and beliefs, leading to new insights and positive actions (Zohar, 2016).

Qualitative data were collected in the form of elements and constructs, which explored the interviewees' thinking, experiences, and beliefs regarding employee self-empowerment. The elicited constructs also allowed the interviewees to explore their understanding of themselves.

1.14 Sampling method

Although qualitative method sampling strategies could employ both non-probability and probability techniques, the researcher chose to use a purposive sampling method to select the population. The population consisted of mid-level managers from small, mid and large companies who had participated in the TT100 competition, run by the Da Vinci Institute in conjunction with the Department of Science and Technology (TT100, 2018). The scope of the study was limited to 15 middle managers representing 15 businesses.

The businesses selected were past winners of the TT100 competition, run by the Da Vinci Institute and the Department of Technology (TT100, 2018). Competing businesses are selected to participate in the TT100 competition based on their ability to create a competitive advantage by creatively managing the technology, innovation, people, and systems in their organisations. These companies consider themselves unique in their ability to use their management of technology, innovation, people, or systems to create a sustainable competitive advantage.

Further, these businesses consider themselves metanoic organisations, which Kiefer and Senge (2005, as cited in Plessis, 2019) define as organisations that have shifted their thinking from coordinated to cooperative (Jarche, 2019). A coordinated organisation is one where the traditional pyramidal structure has been partially flattened. There is still a hierarchy, and communication are still from the top down. However, there are feedback loops where the feedback is considered by the leader at the top of the hierarchy, and they may issue different instructions or decisions. Cooperative organisations have a flatter structure, multi-directional transparent communication and decision making that is democratic, including all levels of employees. Leadership is shared and is based on the best person for the current project. Zohar (2016) suggests that this change requires a level of quantum thinking.

One mid-level manager was purposefully selected from each of the 15 companies identified. These managers were contacted telephonically to discuss the research and invite them to participate. All the managers contacted agreed to participate in the study resulting in a 100% participation rate. The companies were selected from each business level; namely small, mid, and large companies. The selection of mid-level managers is because, according to Tabrizi (2014), these are the employees in organisations that are the most influential and drive change. They also bring various 'lenses' that can be used to view self-empowerment. The lenses lead to building a holistic conceptual framework and considering possible solutions to employee self-empowerment (Teddlie and Yu, 2007).

The size of the business is measured using the number of full-time employees and total annual turnover. For this research, emerging and small companies were classified as having a maximum of 50 full-time employees and a maximum annual total turnover of five million South African Rand. Medium-size companies had a maximum of 250 employees with a maximum annual turnover of 10 million South African Rand, and large companies had more than 250 employees and an annual turnover in excess of 10 million South Africa Rand.

1.15 Data analysis

The data were collected in both the form of a grid (see Appendix 2) and digital recordings. Each participant's grid was analysed and compared using the GridSuite software, which is designed to code, sort, manage, and graphically present qualitative data (Fromm, 2017).

Multiple sets of data were collected and analysed separately to identify patterns related to the participants' experiences towards self-empowerment. Common constructs were identified and interrogated using digital recordings. The research not only compared constructs between the research participants, but also compared these constructs between sizes of companies (see section 4.7). The intent was to explore whether these constructs change, depending on whether the company is a small or emerging company versus a large corporation.

The constructs elicited through the Repertory Grid interviews were used to identify patterns to develop themes. The themes were used to develop a new, improved self-empowerment conceptual framework, thus elaborating on the researcher's current DARE model. The themes were placed in the conceptual framework based on the process that employees would need to follow to empower themselves. The study then explored whether there is any integration between the conceptual framework, the seven quantum skills (Shelton, 2012) and the TIPS Managerial Leadership Framework (Da Vinci Institute, 2019). Drennan (1992) suggests that when an employee believes in their purpose and value, they are more likely to demonstrate a willingness to make a difference.

1.16 Research ethics

Ethics describes the codes of professional conduct expected by the researcher (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). The researcher built trust with the research stakeholders by ensuring the confidentiality and integrity of the research (Israel and Hay, 2006). Participants signed a Letter of Consent (Appendix 1), designed by the researcher. The letter included the reason for the study, a guarantee of confidentiality,

and details of ethical rules and principles to be followed for the duration of the study (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). The qualitative data generated were analysed using the GridSuite software Fromm (2017). The data are securely stored in a cloud account, protected by an alphanumeric password, and only accessible by the researcher. The cloud account will be deleted after five years.

1.17 Research findings

The researcher explored employee empowerment and self-empowerment models (Rappoport, 2015; Gautam and Jhajharia, 2016; Thomas, 1990; Famularo, 2002) to develop a uniquely South African self-empowerment conceptual framework focused on sustainability. The researcher also explored the impact of self-empowerment on engagement, performance, and leadership and the influence on the emerging behaviours of agility, engagement and alignment (Da Vinci Institute, 2019).

In reviewing previously tested knowledge, this study compared the literature findings against the primary data collected and explored the context, support of theories, and the success of the application. The Self-Empowerment Conceptual Framework is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 (Results and Findings) and Chapter 5 (Conceptual Framework).

1.18 Structure of the thesis

The structure of this thesis is as follows.

Chapter 1 Background and context: Provides a general overview of the study, including the research problem, aims, research questions, research philosophy, research design, research methods, and an overview of the initial conceptual framework.

Chapter 2 Literature review: Provides a detailed review of all the literature researched pertaining to understanding the study, results of similar studies, and discussions of

thought leaders. The literature review is divided into 15 themes. It allowed the researcher to explore the themes related to self-empowerment and thinking and benchmark his findings (Chapter 4) against other studies (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

Chapter 3 Research design and methodology: Discusses what was done and how the study was conducted. The discussion includes the research orientation and paradigm, as well as the research design and assumptions. The research methodology discusses the research implementation, including the population, sample, data instruments, ethics, analysis, and planned fieldwork.

Chapter 4 Data analysis and presentation: Provides an analysis of the data collected from the structured interviews and presents the emerging themes based on the identified constructs. In addition, the links between the constructs, quantum thinking, and the TIPS Managerial Leadership framework are explored. The relationships between the findings and the emerging behaviours of agility, engagement, and alignment are also explored.

Chapter 5 Conceptual framework: Discusses the employee self-empowerment framework in detail, the linkages between the various elements, links to quantum thinking, and the TIPS Managerial Leadership Framework. Moreover, the implementation of the framework is reviewed.

Chapter 6 Recommendations: Presents four recommended actions to assist in implementing the framework. Two additional areas for future research are identified and concluded in discussing the potential benefits businesses will accrue from having more empowered employees.

Chapter 7 Conclusion: Discusses the limitations of the study and mitigation strategies. The research question is answered, and how the aim and objectives were met is discussed. This discussion leads to solving the research problem. In addition, the assumptions are reviewed and commented upon.

1.19 Conclusion

Chapter 1 provided an introduction and orientation to the study, where the background and context were described. The research problem was discussed, including the aims, objectives and assumptions developed for this study. Finally, the research design and methodology were discussed, including sampling methods, data collection, analysis, and research ethics.

Chapter 2 comprises the literature review, identifies research themes, and discusses the main theories in the fields relating to the objectives of the research. Chapter 2 explores the literature related to the key themes of self-empowerment, quantum thinking, power and influence, as well as engagement, performance, and leadership. In reviewing the literature, additional themes emerged related to intentionality, decision-making, communication, and levels of consciousness. The reviewed literature was used to underpin this exploratory study.

The chapter reviews current empowerment theory and investigates the links to self-empowerment (Al Zeera, 2001; Boud et al., 2002; Jones et al., 2012; Rappoport, 2015; Wellins et al., 1993). The theories include the influence of power (Cialdini, 2021; Workers Solidarity Movement, 2011; Raven, 2008), quantum thinking (Collins, 2011; Zohar, 2016; Shelton, 2012), and leadership (Harvey et al., 2021; Goksoy, 2016).

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In Chapter 2, themes are developed around the literature related to employee self-empowerment. A critical review of the relevant literature gives the study more form and depth prior to embarking on the actual research journey. The direction of the research was influenced by new thinking, or insights, generated through reviewing the related literature.

The literature review begins with the future of work and the competencies that employees will require for 2025. It also discusses how employees can make a difference in their space through understanding the National Development Plan for South Africa as well as the links between the 4th industrial revolution and 5th industrial revolution. The literature then discusses the concepts of empowerment and self-management compared to self-empowerment. Performance theory, levels of consciousness as well as communication, power and influence are discussed as they relate to employee self-empowerment. All these discussions then lead into intentionality focused on developing a purpose, gaining new knowledge and making and communicating decisions. The seven quantum skills are discussed as a method to change employee thinking to empower themselves and develop leadership competencies and practices as discussed in the managerial leadership framework.

Various models have been incorporated into the literature review to enhance the discussions by providing structured frameworks to help organise, discuss and analyse existing research. Uncovering relationships, gaps and patterns across studies give a better comprehension of employee self-empowerment.

2.2 The Future World of Work

2.2.1 *The Four Worlds of work*

According to PWC (2017), there will be potentially four different worlds of work, one of which will emerge in 2030. There are several socio-economic, political and technological factors that may influence which world of work is most likely to emerge.

These four worlds of work are as follows:

The RED world is where employee empowerment and innovation drive customer centricity. Digital platforms and technology create niche markets and products. It is a world where ideation and innovation outpace regulation and challenge ethics. In the red world AI, robotics and technology empower employees to be more productive and creative. Moreover, greater flexibility will allow them to have a better work-life balance and greater flexibility. In addition, it will be easier for employees to gain new knowledge and skills in order to remain relevant and competitive in the changing business environment. Having more control over their work environment fosters a culture of self-empowerment (PWC, 2017).

The BLUE world is where large corporations have significant control over their business environments. Corporate size and partnerships are used to fend off competition and capture markets. It is a world where profit is more important than social responsibility. Governments and regulators will need to balance the corporate power to protect markets and employee rights. For employees to empower themselves in this world, they will need to demonstrate their value to the business.

The GREEN world is where corporate social responsibility, focus on the environment and sustainability are a business imperative. Companies will focus on diversity and human rights by placing their social and environmental conscience at the centre of their commercial strategy. In addition, strategies will focus on 'profit with a purpose', which considers the environmental impact and employee well-being as a key part of their operations. Self-empowered employees in this world will have an intrinsic

motivation to make a meaningful contribution to the business (Weeks and Schaffert, 2019).

The YELLOW world is where employees and companies look for greater meaning and purpose in their work. It is a world where 'humanness' is valued, and consumers search for and support organisations with relevance and a 'social heart'. Bringing humanity back into the work environment is the key focus of the 5th Industrial Revolution (PWC, 2017). In the yellow world employees that have unique skills or knowledge will be in demand. Businesses will focus on growing and developing value adding skill sets in employees and will develop retention strategies designed to improve employee welfare and work life balance. In this world employees will be able to empower themselves through building their expertise, which will lead to them being able to increase their bargaining power and influence.

According to PWC (2107) there are several elements that will influence which world of work becomes the most dominant in 2030. The first is the pace of technological advancement because it will influence the demand for specific skills and knowledge specifically related to AI and digitisation. Socioeconomic factors such as hybrid working and increased social and environmental consciousness will move businesses towards the green world. Globalisation will influence employment opportunities, where agility rather than geography is a factor that is considered when recruiting skills and knowledge. This is linked to a focus on personal mastery and lifelong learning that will encourage the emergence of the yellow world.

Given the global impact of the Covid 19 virus, the researcher believes that the world has been forced to move towards the red world. Companies in the red world will develop a culture that values employee self-empowerment, which will lead to increased engagement, agility, and resilience. During the initial phase of the pandemic, both companies and employees turned to digitisation and technology to continue operating (OECD, n.d.). Many employees are no longer required to be bound to a geographical location or working hours. However, remote working employees not only need to motivate and manage themselves, but also must prove that they are still

adding value to the business. Profitability and performance are measured by exceeding targets (output) compared to time spent at work (input) (Info Entrepreneurs, 2009).

Companies have embraced blended or hybrid work as they look at managing their remote employees more effectively (Littenberg-Tobias and Reich, 2020). Employees required to work part of the week at the office reduce the need for large office spaces, leading companies to consider selling off or downgrading offices. With employees working remotely, businesses are starting to view employees more as contractors than full-time staff (Nerantzi, 2020; Karr, Loh and San Andres, 2020). This will allow them to convert fixed costs into variable costs (OECD, n.d.). In this new reality, companies will contract skills and knowledge, rather than people, to meet the requirements of specific projects or business needs (Rasheed, Kamsin and Abdullah, 2020).

It is for this reason that employees need to be able to empower themselves. Self-empowerment will build their influence and help develop cooperative networks. Personal mastery requires employees to focus on lifelong learning and technical expertise in order to have up-to-dated knowledge and skills. Self-empowered employees need to remain relevant in the future world of work if they intend to make a difference in their space (Christenson et al., 2018).

2.2.2 Employee Competencies required for the future

Dery, Woerner and Beath (2020) note that in an effort to get their employees ready for the future, businesses are equipping them with digital tools and training them to become more efficient and effective by using the tools. In today's world employees fall into various states of future readiness. Generally, where companies start exploring technology, they automate or digitise processes and systems and train employees on the use of the tools. Employees only use the technology as instructed to do the work without creativity or innovation and limited engagement. Where companies aggressively build their digital footprint, but fail to effectively train or engage employees, the maximum benefit of the technology is not achieved. Moreover,

employees with a high level of digital skills will not only protect their knowledge but also look for outside opportunities where they can put their skills to work.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2022) suggest that the skills and knowledge required by employees in 2030 fall into three categories. The first category is cognitive and meta-cognitive skills, where employees will need to demonstrate both critical thinking, collecting and analysing information to make informed decisions, and creative thinking, identifying innovative solutions and opportunities through insatiable curiosity. The two types of thinking are used to find solutions to complex problems (Snowden and Boone, 2007). Employees will also need to intentionally drive and reflect on the application of the skills and knowledge learnt through their personal mastery journey. They will also need to have a high emotional intelligence to influence others to implement solutions and build resilience. The second category is social and emotional skills where employees need to demonstrate empathy and a belief in themselves and their competencies. These soft skills will be used to develop trust through keeping promises and taking accountability for decisions made. These skills will help self-empowered employees build networks that collaborate and co-create solutions and opportunities to add value to the business. The third category is where employees demonstrate their practical and physical skills in the form of competently using new technical knowledge and skills to complete tasks and communicate with others (OECD, 2019).

The World Economic Forum (2023) suggest that because of emerging technologies, fifty percent (50%) of employees will need to be reskilled by 2025 if they are to remain relevant or competitive in the business environment. Employees who intentionally focus on developing their problem solving, self-management, networking and technological skills can become competent within six months. These skills include actively developing creative and critical thinking to develop innovative solutions for complex problems. Encouraging insatiable curiosity and embracing technology will build resilience and develop agility. Demonstrating these skills will not only add value to businesses in the future but will also influence others to follow (Cialdini, 2021), which requires leadership competencies.

2.2.3 National Development Plan (NDP)

The National Development Plan 2030 (NDP) is an action plan developed by the government to build South Africa through growing the economy and empowering the people (National Planning Commission, n.d.). This plan is adapted from and supports the United Nations (UN) sustainability goals (United Nations, 2012). The 2030 UN goal is to give citizens equal opportunities for growth and development, based on their ability, education, and hard work rather than birth (United Nations, 2012). The two key targets of the NDP are first to reduce the number of people living in households with a monthly income below R419 per person from 39% to 0%, and secondly, to reduce inequality, as measured by the Gini coefficient, from 0.68 to 0.6 (National Planning Commission, n.d.; United Nations, 2012).

Employees should focus not only on adding value to their specific businesses but also on how they can have a more significant national and social impact within the South African business environment. In empowering themselves, employees should consider how they could add value to one or more of the NDP elements. For example, employees in the public section can use their skills and knowledge to influence the implementation of policies or programmes, while employees in the public sector can influence business strategies and actions to support the NDP initiatives.

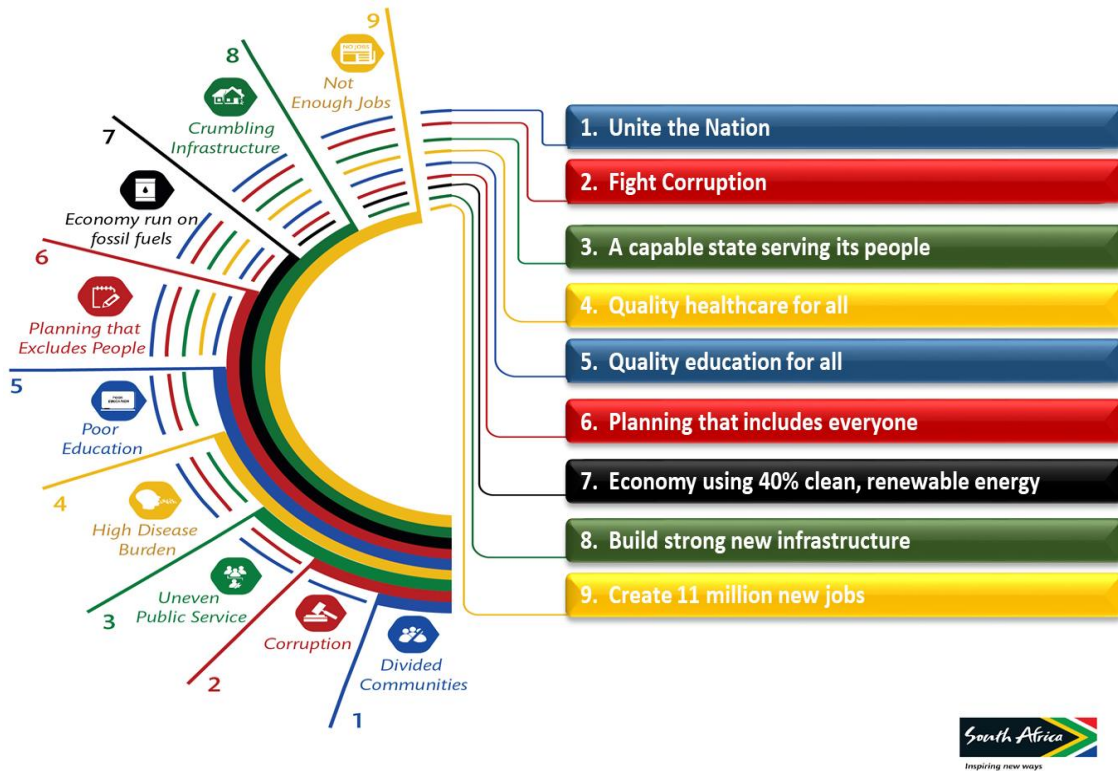


Figure 2-1: National Development Plan Goals

National Planning Commission (2019)

The National Planning Commission (n.d.) has identified nine NDP goals (Figure 2-11) to be achieved by the target date of 2030.

1. Unite all South Africans, irrespective of race and class, with the common goal to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030.
2. Encourage active citizenry where South Africans hold the government accountable for their actions to reduce corruption and strengthen democracy.
3. Build a capable and developmental state that assists citizens and businesses in developing and using their strengths, skills, and knowledge to maximise their potential.
4. Give all citizens equal access to healthcare to increase the average life expectancy to 70 years. In addition, to reduce injuries, accidents, and violence by 50% from 2010 levels.

5. Ensure access to education for all children where 80% will complete 12 years, and 90% will score a minimum of 50% for maths, science and literacy. Ensure access to free tertiary education for those unable to afford it.
6. Develop partnerships with businesses, communities, and citizens to cultivate strong leadership throughout society and work together to solve problems.
7. Develop renewable energy sources to generate 40% of the total energy requirements.
8. Strengthen key capabilities, including skills, infrastructure, social security, strong institutions, and partnerships both within the country and with key international partners.
9. Reduce unemployment by creating 11 million new jobs. One million will be in the agricultural sector. Raise economic growth, increase global trade by 50%, and make the economy more labour-absorbing.

2.2.4 Fourth Industrial Revolution vs Fifth Industrial Revolution

According to Lindsay and Hudson (2019), the 1st Industrial Revolution started with the introduction of the steam engine resulting in, amongst others, the mechanisation of the textile industry, the Second Industrial Revolution developed tools for mass production, and the 3rd Industrial Revolution was the introduction of the internet. The 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR) was characterised by the emergence of artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning (ML), big data, robotics, nanotechnologies and other sustainable technologies. The interconnectedness of these elements gave rise to unique opportunities for growth and development of industries, businesses and employees. (Lindsay and Hudson, 2019).

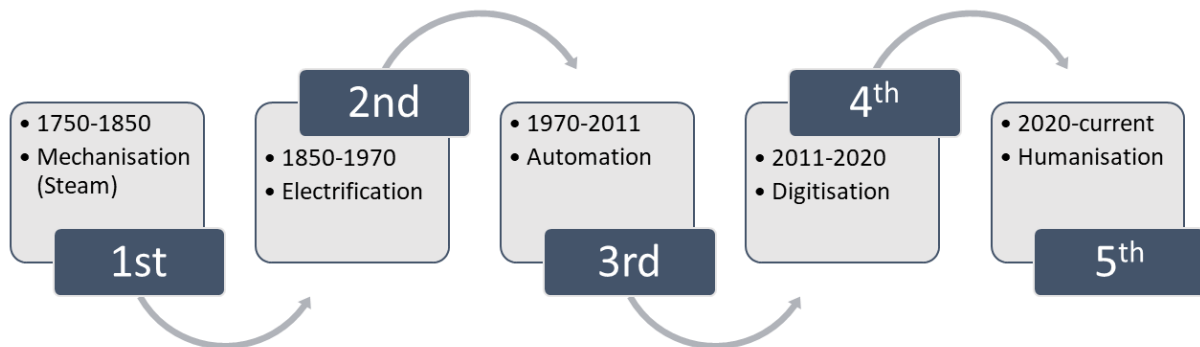


Figure 2-2: Industrial Revolution journey

Adapted from Gauri (2019)

Benioff (as cited by Lindsay and Hudson, 2019) defines the 5th Industrial Revolution as putting humans back into the workplace, rather than removing them from the workplace. Employees will create more human-centric processes and systems by combining these new technologies focusing on sustainability and developing new jobs and opportunities. 5IR focuses on how industry can improve the world, compared to 4IR, which focuses on improving efficiency and productivity. Lindsay and Hudson, (2019) suggest that the 5th industrial revolution will provide a more sustainable future through increased efficiencies, reduced waste and focus on the environment. The emerging technologies will also improve the quality of life and lead to a more including society reducing inequality.

There is much debate currently around the 5th Industrial Revolution and whether industry is there yet. The general consensus is that industry is somewhere between the 4IR and 5IR (Fanoro, Mladen and Sinha, 2021; Sarfraz, Sarfraz, Iftikar and Akhund, 2021). Whereas 4IR will develop the technology, 5IR will define the ethics and impact of the technology that will be used (Fanoro et al., 2021).

The perceptions of the 'world of work' will change, where the focus will be on growth, work-life balance and working from outside the 'office' (PWC, 2017; Sarfraz et al., 2021). PWC (2017) refer to this as the Yellow World (refer to section 2.13). The focus will change from long-term employment contracts to project-driven contracts based on the contractor's knowledge, skills, and networks (Fanoro et al., 2021). Thus, self-empowerment skills will be critical in this new world because they continuously develop critical thinking, agility, and resilience (Peart, 2019).

Gauri (2019) believes that in embracing 5IR, businesses will change their focus from 'for profit' to 'for benefit'. Companies will trust employees and consumers more, and use technology to build 'humanity' (PWC, 2017). Governments, likewise, will focus on populations not merely surviving but thriving, as proposed by the UN sustainability and NDP goals for 2030, as reflected in Figure 2-1.

2.3 Empowerment vs. Self-empowerment

The literature review explores the various definitions and understanding of what empowerment means to communities, businesses, and employees. The researcher has found that when discussing employee experience of empowerment in South African companies, they generally interpreted it to mean Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment.

The United Nations (UN) (2012) defines empowerment as assisting people, communities, and countries in increasing their control over the elements and decisions that influence their lives, growing their resources, and improving their quality of life. In this definition, the UN suggests that empowerment requires those with greater authority or resources to enable others to make decision that influence their lives or environment. ASQ (as cited by Westcott, 2013) defines empowerment as management methods used by businesses to provide employees with the tools and authority to control their daily activities. This definition also suggests that empowerment is given to others. Klidas, van den Berg and Wilderom (2007) suggest

empowering employees is a process of moving decision-making down to the lowest possible level. Liker (2004) and Takahashi (2020) support this thinking.

Govender and Bussin (2020) state that driving employee participation creates empowerment. However, their research also finds that businesses control the level of authority or empowerment, and as a result, they limit employee input on decisions to manage any potential risk. In addition, employees are disinclined to take on the responsibility or participate in decisions for fear of being blamed or persecuted (Aycan and Sheilia, 2019). MacDonald (2019) finds that a non-participative company culture would disempower employees, thus supporting this thought. Greasley, Bryman, Dainty, Price, Naismith and Soetanto (2008) present research suggesting that employees do not identify themselves with the term 'empowerment'. Instead, they tend to associate more with personal responsibility and control over their tasks and workplace.

Empowerment, therefore, is often interpreted as being when those with greater authority give employees specific authority to carry out work instructions and make decisions. This empowerment entirely depends on the power and authority given to employees, which can easily and quickly be taken away by anyone with more authority than the employee (Aycan and Sheilia, 2019). However, empowering employees can give them the confidence to question and make decisions, leading to them empowering themselves further. Self-empowerment is a level of power or influence developed by employees. It is not dependent on others or linked to a level of authority. Employees can cultivate and enhance their self-empowerment over time as they advance and grow. The researcher believes that accurately defining self-empowerment in the context of this research paper will correctly position the study. Moreover, the definition is critical if the framework is to be tested and findings implemented in businesses both locally and internationally.

For this study, employee self-empowerment is defined as the employee's willingness and ability to demonstrate that they can influence others to co-create and deliver meaningful contributions to the business.

Self-empowered employees will freely share information and thoughts with others, are interdependent, and hold themselves accountable for their decisions to influence their workplace and those around them (Blanchard, 2019a). Martela and Kostamo (2018) suggest that today's organisations seek to improve performance and reduce costs by engaging employees. This focus on developing self-directed and innovative employees will lead to more motivated and loyal employees, enabling companies to be less hierarchical (Blanchard, 2019b; Pearce and Manz, 2015).

Even though self-managed employees are given the authority to make non-critical workplace decisions, these are often limited in scope (Martela, 2019). According to Bernstein, Bunch, Canner and Lee (2016), companies are now focusing on becoming more agile by replacing hierarchical control with the principle of employee self-management.

However, to reduce business risk and improve productivity, many managers do not delegate responsibility and they limit the level of authority and employee involvement in workplace decisions (Kirkman and Rosen, 2010). The unintended consequence of these actions is the disempowerment of employees, which leads to employees disengaging from their workplace (BMG, 2013; Whitman, 2012). Priyadharshany and Sujatha (2015) suggest that businesses unintentionally disempower their staff by restricting their opportunities to gain knowledge or skills through training and development.

Moreover, resources or information related to their work are regulated, thus controlling the employees' ability to experiment or implement their knowledge in the workplace. This process also hampers employee advancement opportunities, based on social constructs such as race or gender. The 'structural disempowerment' process directly impacts the employees' psychological empowerment, including meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact (Priyadharshany and Sujathat, 2015). Essentially, employees are predisposed to the idea that they cannot empower themselves and make a difference in their workplace.

Whitman (2012) states that for employees to move from disempowerment to empowerment, they must pass through five phases. The first phase is ignorance, where employees are unconscious of their disempowering behaviour. The second phase is post-behaviour awareness, where the employee becomes aware of their disempowering behaviour only after the fact. These employees are usually disengaged and disinterested in the impact of the disempowering behaviour on themselves or their tasks. The third phase is present awareness, where employees are aware of their disempowering behaviour while doing it. However, even though employees are aware of the disempowering behaviour and the effect it has on their work, they do not change their behaviour but continue with the disempowering behaviour. In the fourth phase, employees are conscious of the disempowering behaviour that they are about to engage in and have a choice to change that behaviour. This phase is crucial because self-empowerment is a conscious choice, where employees make decisions and engage in behaviour that will lead to improving their growth and level of influence. When employees have a willingness and purpose, they develop an intrinsic motivation to empower themselves (Kirkman and Rosen, 2010; Casemore, 2015). The final phase of moving between disempowerment and empowerment is the phase of conscious, empowered behaviour; defined as conscious intentionality (Shelton and Darling, 2001; Maxwell, 2019). Employees will consciously engage in empowering behaviour that leads to increased influence and improved decision making.

According to Maxwell's (2019) Law of Intentionality, change in this fast-moving and uncertain (VUCA) world is inevitable, but focusing on personal growth and development must be intentional. This law also links to the quantum skill of quantum feeling, which is a decision to create a positive mindset (Shelton, 2012) and Collin's (2015) view that positive energy needs to be created for change. Negative energy is created when employees think about the current disempowered state because their focus will be on the problems that need to be surmounted to become empowered. All their energy is focused on their problems. It is related to being disempowered and the potential challenges of becoming empowered. Employees should instead focus on

their desired future state, where they will focus on looking for opportunities to move from their current state to their future state and create positive energy.

Instead of thinking 'How do I get from HERE to THERE?'

Instead, think of 'How I get from THERE to HERE?'

(Collins, 2015)

Priyadharshany and Sujuthat (2015) discuss four elements that Thomas and Veldhouse (1990) identify that influence employees' motivation to empower themselves. They suggest that all these elements must be present for employees to empower themselves. These 'dimensions of empowerment' are as follows (Priyadharshany and Sujuthat, 2015):

1. Meaningfulness is created when employees can measure a task's value, importance, or purpose against their own principles. A sense of meaning is essential for employees to develop intrinsic motivation. Understanding how their efforts, engagements and decisions contribute to the business and team performance builds a sense of fulfilment and purpose.
2. Competence is created when employees believe that they can complete a task proficiently based on their skills and knowledge. Employees who focus on self-development and growth are more likely to their competencies to proactively identify problems and opportunities and engage with other stakeholders to develop solutions.
3. Self-determination is created when employees can decide when to execute and task and how to do the work. This also includes determining the planned outcome. Employees who are able to make decisions, collaborate with others and be creative and innovate in developing solutions and making data driven decisions will have greater job satisfaction and demonstrate enhanced problem-solving skills.
4. Self-belief is created by the degree to which employees perceive that they can influence the execution and outcome of the tasks. Employees who perceive that

they can contribute to business performance and success will take more responsibility in decision-making and explore new challenges.

If employees exhibit all four of these dimensions, they will perceive themselves as being empowered and engage more with the business and other stakeholders (Priyadharshany and Sujathat, 2015). This research intends to demonstrate that self-empowerment is a personal construct and, as such, cannot be given but has to be developed, accepted, and embraced. The four dimensions discussed above are all internally focused. Self-empowerment in this study requires employees to have an external focus to influence others to co-create meaningful contributions.

The two fundamental abilities that employees need for developing self-empowerment are gaining knowledge and developing expertise related to the workplace (Priyadharshany and Sujathat, 2015). Employees use these processes to build their confidence and expertise power (Raven, 2004). Self-empowered employees will deliver higher, sustainable, productivity and a potential competitive advantage (Kirkman and Rosen, 2010; Cameron and Green, 2009).

Jones, Latham and Betta (2012) argue that allowing employees to engage in creative and innovative thinking only gives an illusion of empowerment because managers limit their employees' authority and stifle their creativity due to their concerns over risk, productivity, and profit. They suggest that self-directed work employees are a better solution, and this notion is supported by BMG (2013) and Franz (2004).

However, Kirkman and Rosen (2010) argue that businesses need to move beyond self-directed employees, who are generally internally focused, to broaden the employees' effectiveness. In essence, self-empowered employees will have a systemic impact on the whole business through developing cooperative networks. According to Jarcho (2019), cooperative networks consist of employees with equal authority and influence where decisions are made democratically, and leadership is shared. They are all focused on working towards a common goal or purpose. These

networks are discussed in more depth under the TIPS Managerial Leadership Framework (2019) competencies in section 2.9.3.

Employee self-determination is defined by Forner, Jones, Berry and Eidenfalk (2020) as the ability of an employee to make independent and confident decisions. Self-determination theory linked to intrinsic motivation suggests that employees are motivated by elements such as creativity and growth (assurance), job satisfaction, rewards and peer validation (alignment). These elements link to both the emerging constructs and the themes identified in the employee self-empowerment framework such as engagement, autonomous decision-making and collaboration.

2.4 Self-management vs. Self-empowerment

Self-managed employees are given the authority to carry out work instructions, with clear goals and objectives and with minimal management intervention (Bernstein, Bunch, Canner and Lee, 2016). However, this authority is based on the discretion of those with greater power and can quickly be taken away.

According to Yang and Guy (2011), self-managed employees usually work in teams that will have a high degree of autonomy related to their decision-making and actions. They are resilient and self-motivated to achieve their goals and demonstrate the ability to efficiently identify and solve problems. These employees will collaborate with other stakeholders to develop and achieve shared goals. The benefits of developing self-managed employees are that these employees are more engaged and able to make effective decisions quickly, therefore are more productive and efficient than those employees that are managed. Managers are then able to focus on other tasks, such as planning, which boosts their productivity and value they bring to the business. To develop self-managed employees', managers will need to find employees that are able to communicate effectively with their managers and other stakeholders to ensure that there is a clear understand of the objectives and goals. Effective communication is also required to build trust both between the manager and employee as well as between the employee and other stakeholders.

According to Kirkman, Stoverink, Mistry and Rosen (2019), four dimensions separate self-empowered employees from self-managed employees.

Table 2-1: Self-Managed vs Self-Empowered Employees

Adapted from Kirkman (2019)

Dimension	Self-Managed	Self-Empowered
Potency	May feel powerful. Potency is limited by structure and authority	Feel powerful and capable of making a difference leading to confidence and agility
Meaningfulness	Work is not necessarily meaningful due to limited tasks	Work is meaningful leading to engagement & sense of purpose
Autonomy	Degree of autonomy limited by structure, process & oversight	A high degree of autonomy and control develops trust & ownership
Impact	Confinement to specific projects may limit their ability to influence strategy	Work has a big impact leading to ideation and innovation

Self-managed employees are those whom their leaders have empowered by being given the authority to manage themselves. Self-managed employees are given goals, objectives, and boundaries within which they can perform. The first dimension is potency, which relates to employee performance, collective experiences, and general effectiveness. While both self-managed and self-empowered employees have a level of power over their work and decisions, self-empowered employees will demonstrate a greater sense of agency and influence. Self-managed employees, although capable and authorised to complete their assigned projects or tasks will have limited potency and influence outside their scope of work. This will also limit the changes and innovative ideas they are able to implement. Self-empowered employees have a more positive experience because they decide where their efforts and performance will be most effective within the business. As a result, they will gain confidence in their abilities and demonstrate greater ownership and influence.

The second dimension is meaningfulness, where employees collectively share the importance and value of their tasks. Although self-managed employees are able to structure how they do the work assigned and decide on the processes, their sense of meaningfulness will only be limited to the task at hand. Their ability to influence strategy or link to the broader purpose of the business may be limited. Self-empowered employees will have greater meaningfulness because they have identified their own purpose, compared with self-managed employees who strive towards a given goal. Self-empowered employees are able to design their work to align with the company vision, mission and strategy, thus giving a greater sense of fulfilment.

The third dimension is autonomy, which is how the employee experiences freedom in decision-making and discretion in their work. Self-managed employees can make decisions but are limited by their scope of work and level of authority. Their decisions will have a reduced influence outside of their scope. Self-empowered employees perceive themselves to have greater decision-making freedom. This is because decisions are made by consensus, which requires trust and buy-in from all stakeholders. This gives them a greater freedom to question, experiment and innovate.

The fourth dimension is impact, where the work produced by the employee is considered significant and important. Self-managed employees have specific parameters and responsibilities within their specific set of tasks. While they may have control over how the tasks are executed and the decisions taken, these are confined to their scope of work and may have a limited impact beyond their work, depending on how it fits into the business strategy. Self-empowered employees decide where they, and those around them, can make the greatest impact on the business. Their innovative solutions and opportunities can lead to transformative change within the business.

Van Manen (2015) believes that employees feel empowered when they participate in decisions that influence their work areas. This in turn influences their behaviour (Kirkman and Rosen, 2010), leading to higher performance. Employees working

together co-create knowledge and understanding (Martela, 2019), resulting in a more effective workforce (Belanger and Van Slyke, 2000).

2.5 Employee Self-Empowerment

2.5.1 Self-empowerment

There are many definitions of self-empowerment related to a change in attitude, suggesting that self-empowerment results in the autonomy to make decisions. For this study, employee self-empowerment is defined as the employee's willingness and ability to demonstrate that they can influence others to co-create and deliver meaningful contributions to the business. There are a number of models and frameworks that discuss self-empowerment, such as (Sheer, 2019), which focused on adolescents empowering themselves, (Desai, 2018), which focused on developing self-empowerment skills in children and a study on elevating poverty through self-empowerment (Rohima and Suman, 2013). The Ladder of Empowerment, developed by Elizabeth Rocha (1997), was one of the first civic-participation models to conceptualise individual and collective forms of community empowerment in democratic decision-making. All of these models have elements, which relate to the themes developed in this study. However, none were found to offer a clear easy to follow process for employees to empower themselves.

Gershon (2018), developed a model called the Practice of Empowerment, which is a systemic behaviour change model that focuses on both the individual as well as the organisation. The model does discuss some of the elements and themes identified by this study but the implementation of the model requires a practitioner to take employees and businesses through the empowerment process, which suggest that the change process is driven by business. The model suggest that organisational culture change consists of growth and development of employees including interpersonal skills. These need to be linked to building trust across all levels, demonstrating empathy through transparent, multi-directional communication and employees being willing to take responsibility for their work. Employees are guided

through how to create self-awareness leading to developing a vision, which in turn leads to changing behaviour and growth.

2.5.2 Performance theory

There are a number of theories related to performance. The four seminal theories discussed below relate best to this study.

Goal Setting Theory developed by Locke and Latham (2002), states that when employees have clearly defined and measurable goals, SMART goals (O'Neill, 2000), it gives employees the purpose and motivation to achieve the goals. The more challenging the goals are the more they will influence employees to extend themselves to learn new skills and gain new knowledge to achieve success. A continuous progress towards the goals set give employees a feeling of achievement and confidence in themselves. Setting and meeting goals not only fosters a culture of continuous improvement and personal mastery but also increases performance and engagement (Rock, 2007).

Expectancy Theory developed by Vroom (1995), states that there is a measurable, interdependent relationship between effort, performance and result. According to Vroom (1995), employees' performance is influenced by their belief that the greater the effort, the better the performance (expectancy). Further they believe that an improved performance will result in a desired reward or recognition (instrumentality), that the employee will value (valence). When self-empowered employees have a clear purpose and the self-belief to develop and set goals and objectives they will demonstrate higher levels of performance, which will influence others to emulate their behaviours (Cialdini, 2021).

Social Cognitive Theory developed by Bandura (1991) supports the concept of peer learning, which is the exchange of knowledge and skills within teams or networks of knowledge workers. The theory suggests that employees learn to develop their skills set and gain new knowledge through observing their peers. This process influences employees to change their behaviour through emulating their peers, which results in

improved performance and resilience. As performance improves employees gain confidence and increases their self-efficacy. Self-empowered employees can reinforce this behaviour and improved performance by firstly acting as a role model for others, secondly encouraging a transparent, multi-directional communication process and thirdly demonstrating the leadership competency of recognising and celebrating accomplishments as discussed in the managerial leadership framework (2.9.3) (Da Vinci Institute, 2019).

The human performance curve is defined by the Yerkes-Dobson Law based on the amount and type of stress being experienced by employees (Figure 2-8) (Corbett, 2015). It dictates that performance will increase with physiological or mental arousal through the creation of eustress. 'Eustress' is stress that has a positive effect energises us and motivates us to make a change. However, when eustress levels get too high, eustress turns to distress resulting in a reduction in performance and engagement (Gwyer, 2017).

Selye (1946), the founder of stress theory (as cited by Tan and Yip, 2018) states that 'distress' follows the three phases of alarm, adaption and exhaustion and as such distress negatively affects employees' attitudes and performance.

Zingela, Stroud, Cronje, Fink and van Wyk (2022) suggest that when employees have a common response, known as the four F's, when faced with threatening or stressful situations. Fight involves confronting the threat to aggressively attempt to overcome it. This could also result in employees being angry or defensive leading to conflict. Flight is the opposite where the employee will avoid the situation, which could also lead to disengagement. In the Freeze response employees will dissociate or detach themselves from the situation because they feel unable to act. The final stress behaviour is Fawn. Employees will try to please or acquiesce to the threatening individual or situation to avoid conflict. Researchers posit that to achieve optimal performance, employees must be in a constant state of 'uncomfortableness' (Collins, 2015; Zohar, 2016). This state is where the brain works hardest to develop balance or certainty (Rock, 2009).

The Yerkes-Dobson law suggests that there is an emotion generated by every action (Corbett, 2015). This emotion can be positive (eustress) or negative (distress). Positive emotions or eustress will lead to improved performance and engagement, where negative emotions or distress will lead to reduced performance and disengagement. Employees that are not challenged or developed tend to be disengaged, resulting in underperformance because of boredom (Rock, 2009). One of the barriers to self-empowerment is the distress caused to employees who perceive they are not valued, and this perception is often driven by engaging in complex tasks or experiencing an authoritative style of leadership and company culture (Martela and Kostamo, 2018).

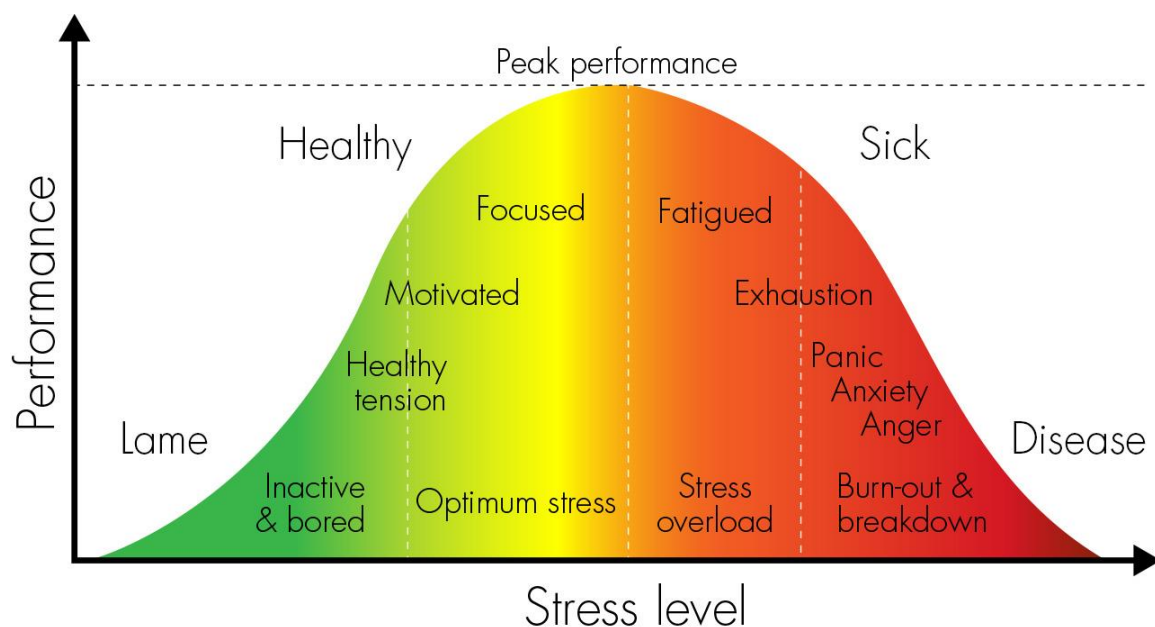


Figure 2-3: The human performance curve (Yerkes-Dodson Law)

Mind Tools (2016)

Juxtaposed with this is where employees are exhausted and anxious due to being overworked. Multiple tasks; tight, unrealistic deadlines; and the inability to prioritise all tasks lead to employee breakdowns. The distress caused by this uncertainty leads to disengagement, absenteeism, and burnout (Martela and Kostamo, 2018). The performance zone is the area in which the challenge, support, demands, and control of the job are in balance, thus creating positive pressure or eustress. Peak

performance or arousal is when equal amounts of eustress and distress are felt (Akindola, Ajewole, Abimbola and Oluremi, 2023).

The Jerkes-Dobson theory suggests that for employees to empower themselves they must feel that their work is meaningful, and they can make a difference in their space. In addition, they must challenge themselves with setting stretch goals, completing complex tasks and a focus on continuous improvement (Martela and Kostamo, 2018). Employees who actively develop their skills and knowledge will gain confidence and feel that they have control over the practices and decisions made in their workplace. Their improved self-efficacy will increase their productivity and efficiency, improve their decision making and give them the confidence to experiment more to co-create innovative solutions with their networks.

2.5.3 Levels of consciousness

As employees grow in confidence and trust in themselves, their knowledge and skills, their understanding of the world around them, and their ability to influence it, changes. Barrett (2020) refers to this change in intentionality or motivation as moving through levels of consciousness, which he adapted from Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs model. Barrett (2020) suggests that wants are more important than needs. As long as employees perceive that their wants are not fulfilled, they will subconsciously remain at that level. An example is that employees will stay at Maslow's survival level if they feel they do not have enough power to be respected by their peers. Barrett (1998) calls this self-esteem 'consciousness'.

Barrett (1998) suggests that employees move through five transformational stages (Figure 2-9) as they become more aware or conscious of their behaviour. However, achieving consciousness is more a journey than a destination, which means that attaining consciousness is also a process of continuous improvement and personal mastery (Barrett, 1998).

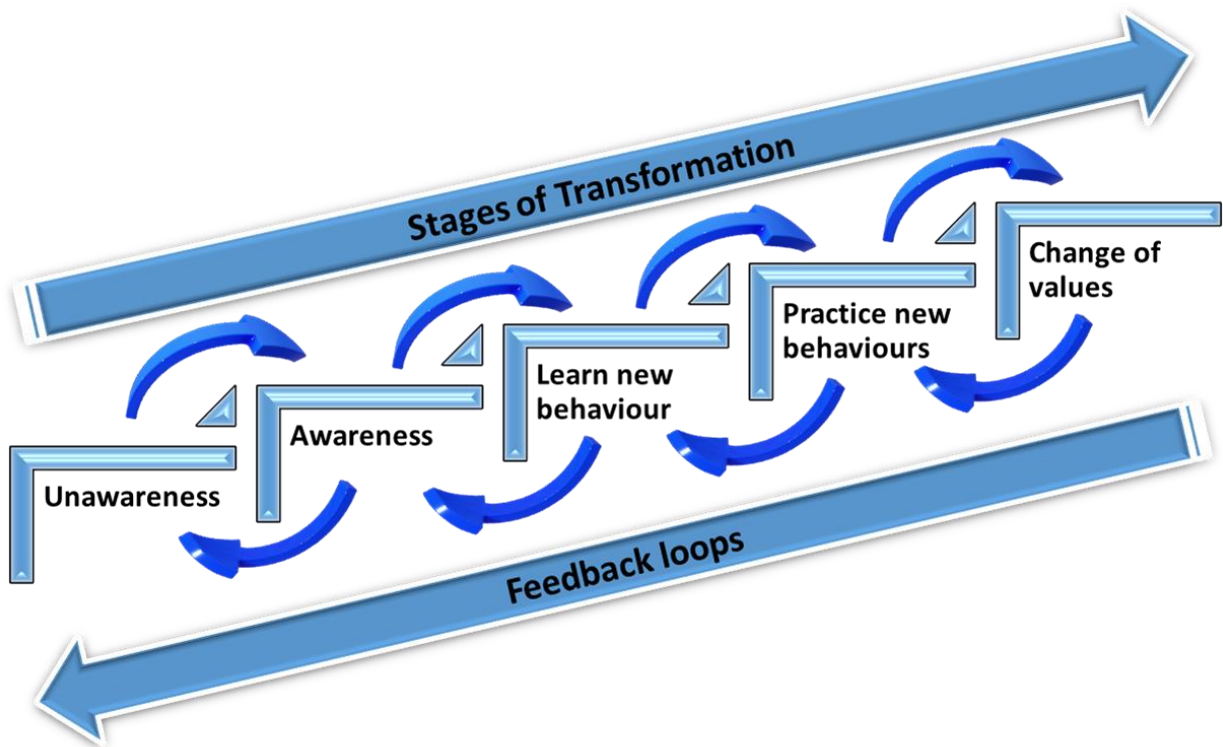


Figure 2-4: The dynamics of transformation and evolution of consciousness

Adapted from Barrett (1998)

According to Barrett (1998), the first stage is unawareness, where employees are unaware of their behaviour impacts on their attitude and perceptions. The second stage of awareness is where employees are aware of the disempowering behaviour but are unwilling to change the behaviour. The third state of transformation is where employees begin to embrace change and learn new, more empowering, behaviours. This is the start of the employees' self-empowerment journey, where they are focused on themselves and their development or growth. In the fourth stage, employees practice the new empowering behaviours focused internally on improving their power, relationships, and influence. The fifth stage of transformation suggests that employees change their focus from self to others (Barrett, 1998). This change in focus is the start of the employees' leadership journey, where they build EQ, influence, and cooperative networks.

Barrett's (1998) transformational stages link to Whitman's (2012, 2018) Five Levels of Consciousness' model (Figure 2-10), which seems more appropriate for this study on employee self-empowerment. The five levels of consciousness focus on conscious self-empowerment, self-esteem, and self-actualisation, which support the conceptual framework discussed in Chapter 5. This model also supports the change in thinking required for employee self-empowerment.

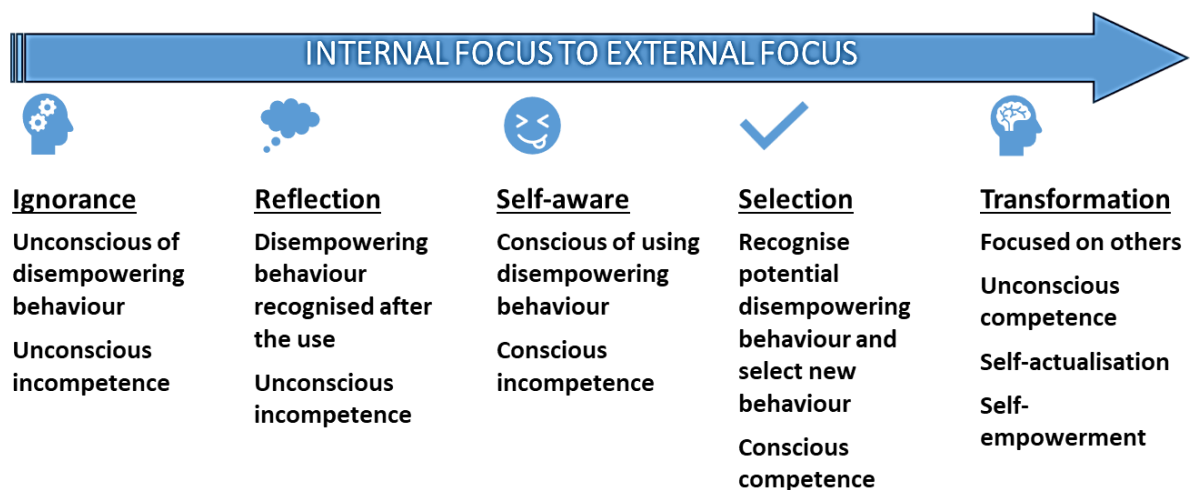


Figure 2-5: Levels of Consciousness

Adapted from Whitman (2012)

The first level is ignorance, where employees are unaware that their behaviour, actions and thinking disempowers them (Whitman, 2012). Employees at this level are not self-assured or confident in themselves and, as such, are unconsciously incompetent, according to Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership model (The Center for Leadership Studies, 2017). As a result, they are reluctant to make decisions and will accept instruction without question (Kendrick, 2004). These employees also tend to be disengaged and will be reluctant to take risks because they are in survival mode, motivated by fear and a need for security (Barrett, 2020).

The second level of consciousness is post-behaviour awareness, where employees are initially unaware of their disempowering behaviour (Whitman, 2012). Employees only become aware of this behaviour on reflection of the intended and unintended

consequences of their actions. Although instructions and documented procedures still control behaviour and actions, employees start questioning them (Whitman, 2012). Their conscious incompetence will allow them to understand that there may be a better way, but they will not know how to progress (The Center for Leadership Studies, 2017). Their lack of confidence in their skills and knowledge makes them reluctant to challenge processes and instructions (The Center for Leadership Studies, 2017).

The third level of consciousness is present awareness (Whitman, 2012). Employees are more confident in their knowledge and skills and more certain of themselves. They are consciously competent, and as a result, are aware of engaging in disempowering behaviour (Whitman, 2012). Employees at this level are able to think creatively and develop innovative ideas, which is the start of developing empowering behaviours. However, they are reluctant to change their behaviour or challenge processes because of their perceived social and business risks (Rock, 2007).

The fourth level of consciousness is the level of choice where employees can intentionally decide whether to engage in empowering behaviour (Whitman, 2012). Consciously competent employees are confident in themselves, their knowledge, and their skills (Rock, 2007). Their increased certainty also encourages them to take more risks (Rock, 2007). This confidence allows them to question procedures and processes and decide on the best solution or opportunity. However, these choices lead to behaviours that are focused on personal growth and development (Rock, 2007).

The fifth level of consciousness is empowerment (Whitman, 2012), where employees have replaced disempowering behaviour with empowering behaviour. This study defines self-empowerment as the ability to influence others to co-create and deliver meaningful contributions to the business. Employees consciously review their values (Barrett, 1998) and change their behaviours and actions to focus on growing and developing others. The change in focus drives employee self-actualisation (Whitman, 2012). Employees use their personal mastery to create cooperative networks of

knowledge workers, where decisions are made, and knowledge and skills are shared to achieve a common goal (Rock, 2007).

Self-empowerment, therefore, is an intentional iterative journey of transformation that employees will have to embark on (Barrett, 1998, 2020). To develop a consciousness of empowerment, employees must build their confidence and self-worth by expanding their knowledge and skills (Rock, 2007). This change in thinking and personal mastery will encourage employees to review their values and behaviours to achieve self-actualisation (Whitman, 2012).

2.5.4 *Emotional Intelligence (EQ)*

Emotional intelligence, according to Goleman and Boyatzis, (2017) consists of twelve elements, which when developed can be used by employees to enhance their emotional well-being, build strong relationships, and effectively develop their influence. Employees who can effectively manage their EQ are better equipped to handle challenges, embrace growth opportunities, develop networks and contribute positively to their work environment.

The first EQ element is *self-awareness*. Employees can empower themselves by recognising their emotions, reactions, strengths, and weaknesses. By understanding their emotions, employees can manage their emotions and reactions effectively. This in turn will allow them to make informed decisions about their growth and development. This element links to the first step in the self-empowerment framework, namely assurance. Self-awareness leads to employees becoming more aware of the triggers for both their positive and negative emotions. *Emotional awareness* allows employees to recognise rising emotions and managing them to generate a positive energy, which will enhance decision-making, performance, and trust. Once employees are aware of their emotions, they need to use their awareness to regulate their emotions. Where employees demonstrate emotional *self-regulation* and consistency, they are more likely to remain composed and focused in stressful situations, handle criticism positively, and avoid impulsive reactions that may harm their relationships. *Regulating*

emotions allows employees to better handle stress and reduce burn-out, leading to an improved work-life balance.

Developing *intrinsic motivation* enables employees to set a purpose and develop meaningful goals, to stay focused and determined, and build resilience. *Resilience* enables employees to quickly recover from setbacks and learn from their failures to develop new opportunities or solutions. Employees who are self-motivated will have a positive attitude and continuously explore growth and development opportunities. A focus on personal mastery is a leadership competency linked to engagement, according to the managerial leadership framework (Da Vinci Institute, 2019).

Self-empowered employees will need to build *social awareness* to help understand the dynamics between stakeholders in order to anticipate and proactively adapt to changes. This links to developing *strong social skills*, which will assist employees to build relationships and networks of knowledge workers, so that they are able to influence others to co-create value-adding solutions and opportunities. Transparent communication will not only enhance teamwork but also help minimise conflict.

Empathy, emotional expression, and active listening play important roles in demonstrating authenticity, which nurtures trust and builds influence in the workplace. Empathy enables employees to understand the perspective and emotions expressed by their peers, resulting in greater trust, enhanced communication and a work environment that encourages collaboration and co-creation. Employees who are confident in themselves and who express their emotions genuinely create transparency and trust. Openly sharing emotions facilitates better communication and stronger connections with colleagues. Additionally, practicing active listening demonstrates a genuine interest in the ideas and concerns of others. Active listening not only builds rapport and trust, but also enhances the ability to understand and engage with complex problems and make well-informed decisions.

Finally, Goleman and Boyatzis, (2017) suggest that employees who possess *strong interpersonal skills* can build rapport, negotiate effectively, and resolve conflicts

collaboratively. These interpersonal skills along with the other EQ skills will help employees who wish to empower themselves to develop trust and influence within their work environment and enhance their leadership competencies.

2.5.5 Communication for self-empowerment

For self-empowered employees to influence others to co-create and deliver meaningful contributions to the business, they must be effective communicators. Clear, concise, and static-free two-way communication creates engagement, thus positively influencing performance (Senge et al., 2011a). Work instructions, plans, and strategies are only effective if practically executed (Rocha, 2015).

In the context of employee self-empowerment, effective communication entails the ability to engage in open and honest dialogue, encompassing active listening and the provision of candid feedback, even if such feedback may contain negative aspects. Emphasising a developmental approach, feedback serves as a platform for sharing ideas and suggestions. Clearly articulating communication with a focus on organisational goals and objectives aids in fostering a comprehensive understanding of individual roles and encourages employees to exercise autonomy in decision-making (Rappoport, 2015).

Fostering a two-way communication environment that incorporates positive reinforcement becomes instrumental in cultivating trust and enhancing the sense of value among employees. Furthermore, multi-directional and transparent communication is of particular importance when self-empowered employees assume the role of motivating their peers or networks to actively participate in creative and innovative endeavours.

To promote sustainable engagement, self-empowered employees must proficiently communicate expectations and clearly outline the specific tasks and responsibilities assigned to each team member (Rappoport, 2015). The regular provision of feedback, regardless of its tone, serves to clarify the progress made and contributes to a culture that celebrates successes, thereby promoting an environment that encourages

experimentation, risk-taking, and supports innovative practices. The accomplishments of self-empowered employees serve as a source of inspiration for others, empowering them to drive the process of continuous improvement (Womack and Jones, 2010).

Cialdini's Principle of Consistency (2009) states that if a person commits to an idea or goal, verbal or written, they are more likely to achieve the commitment because they want to maintain their good self-image.

Cialdini's principle of consistency plays a significant role in reinforcing personal growth and development. When employees make explicit commitments to themselves, whether it's setting goals, or pursuing new skills, they are more likely to follow through with consistent actions to uphold those commitments (Cialdini, 2021). Once they publicly declare their intention, they feel a sense of responsibility to honour that commitment. This commitment, when reinforced by consistent actions, leads to a reinforcing loop of empowerment, where each act of fulfilling the commitment strengthens their belief in their ability to achieve their goals.

Moreover, the principle of consistency can also be applied in cultivating empowering beliefs and attitudes. When employees commit to adopting a growth mindset, for instance, believing in their capacity to learn and improve, they are more likely to engage in consistent efforts to expand their knowledge and skills. This consistency in pursuing self-improvement fosters a sense of self-efficacy and confidence in their ability to overcome challenges and succeed.

Gino (2019) suggests that effective communication requires a set of five specific skills to enhance sustainable collaboration that is clear and focused. These skills allow employees to identify opportunities, co-create collaborative solutions, and develop practical self-empowerment tools. The first skill identified is that of active listening. Active listening is a technique that involves intentionally paying attention to the speaker, clarifying understanding of the message and developing a response. Active listening will help the listener empathise with the speaker and develop a response that is clear and focused. The 'listener' must ask empowering or open-ended questions

starting with who, what, when, where and how, thus encouraging discussion. An empowering question is one that when asked leads to action. A question beginning with 'why' is usually considered a challenging question, which could lead to misunderstanding and conflict (Rock, 2009).

Good listeners will not use 'why' because it could lead to misunderstanding of the respondent's intention and conflict between the parties. Focusing on the speaker allows them space to present their opinions and ideas. As a result, the listener identifies alternative 'lenses' through which to view the topic or problem discussed.

The second skill is to practice empathy; watching for neuro-linguistic signals such as speech patterns or body language for unspoken thoughts and asking open-ended questions to expand and personalise the conversation. The third skill is to use open and transparent feedback to build others by being specific. Focusing on the actions and not the person will reduce conflict should the feedback be negative. Add to ideas rather than suggesting alternatives. Making feedback a positive experience will encourage others to seek you out when they require help with mentoring, coaching, or problem-solving (Gino, 2019).

The fourth collaboration skill required is 'flexing'. Gino (2019) describes this as the ability to confidently allow others to take control of the conversation so that the best ideas always win. This ability requires a good understanding of oneself (Emotional Quotient (EQ)) and a willingness to delegate. The final skill required is to encourage 'win-win' collaborations through transparent and honest communication to identify the needs and expectations of others. Immediately recognising and advertising wins inspires intentional innovation and collaboration (Gino, 2019) (Da Vinci Institute, 2019).

2.5.6 Personal Power for self-empowerment

Power, according to Raven (2004, 2008) is divided into internal power and external power. External or positional powers are those given by others and are difficult to use for self-empowerment because there is limited trust. Legitimate power is the power

gained because of the position or level of authority held. This power allows the holder to exert influence over those with a lower position or less authority and is linked to the following two positional powers. Coercive power gives the holder the ability to punish or threaten others for non-compliance. Reward power allows the holder to influence the behaviour and actions of others through offering rewards or recognition as an incentive for compliance. Informational power is obtained by having access to or controlling information that others deem valuable or scarce. Status power according to Greene (2007), is used like reward power where status is offered to those who comply through positions on teams, panels or boards. This power can also be used as a coercive power by threatening to remove the status. All of these powers can be lost should the holder lose their position, access to information or authority.

Employees who wish to empower themselves will need to use their internal powers to maximise their influence. Internal or personal power is a power developed by the employee and cannot be taken away by others. Referent power is obtained because of the holder's influence in society, their reputation, charisma or attractiveness to others. This power is based on trust and liking and can be used to influence the thinking and actions of others. The power of expertise is unlike the informational power, because it relies on the expertise, experience, knowledge, skills or competence the holder has to influence others. This power can be built through active learning and development. These elements of expertise power are usually within a specific domain but could also be general elements across domains. According to the WEF (2023), these skills and knowledge can be developed over six months, which will allow self-empowered employees to start influencing others and build their leadership competencies.

2.5.7 Influence for self-empowerment

Other than using information and expertise power, Laker and Patel (2020) suggest that there are additional ways where influencing skills can be developed. Trust is a key element in building influencing skills and to build trust there must be a good rapport established with others. Employees wishing to influence others will need to

demonstrate a strong emotional intelligence through being authentic and consistent in both their actions and communications. In addition, influencers need to show empathy, which includes positive feedback and recognition. An effective tool for both building influence and credibility is to build networks of knowledge workers and industry experts. Building relationships encourages others to listen and share knowledge and insights. Networks will also give diverse opinions allowing multiple solutions and opportunities to be developed and tested (Jarche, 2019).

Cialdini (2021) suggests that people will emulate those they see as experts (social proof) and are more likely to be influenced by those that they like and who demonstrate consistency and commitment. Building the powers of information and expertise discussed in 2.5.4 and cultivating the influencing skills discussed above will help self-empowered employees to influence behaviours and actions. This will lead to developing their leadership competencies as they build their influence.

2.6 Intentionality

Employee self-empowerment thrives on intentionality, a focused and single-minded attitude towards accomplishing specific actions or strategies (Hutschenreuter, Han, and Kleindienst, 2019). Maxwell (2019) highlights that intentionality is fundamental for leadership, as employees need to be intentional in their efforts to grow and develop.

A key aspect of fostering self-empowerment among employees is by emphasising personal mastery. By focusing on personal mastery, individuals can enhance their self-efficacy, leading to increased confidence in setting and achieving tasks and goals. Attaining these goals and celebrating small wins contributes to reinforcing the belief in one's capability for success (Prestwich, Perugini, and Hurling, 2008; Von Bergen and Bressler, 2021). Such a mindset allows self-empowered employees to embrace change with confidence and approach challenges with solution-based thinking.

To cultivate intentional growth (personal mastery) in self-empowered employees, Maxwell (2019) presents two critical questions: "What are you doing to grow yourself

today?" Given the volatile and uncertain nature of today's business environment (Kraaijenbrink, 2018), employees must continuously improve. This necessitates consistently challenging their current reality and beliefs, seeking new insights and perspectives within their workplace.

By focusing on the desired state rather than the existing state, employees are encouraged to adopt a forward-thinking approach, contemplating solutions and opportunities for growth rather than dwelling on problems (Collins, 2015). In doing so, they become architects of their own empowerment, actively pursuing growth and development, and positioning themselves to thrive in an ever-changing world.

Intentionality is a single-minded attitude that focuses on completing specific actions or strategies (Hutschenreuter, Han and Kleindienst, 2019). Maxwell (2019) suggests that intentionality is foundational for leadership because employees need to be intentional to grow and develop.

Focusing on personal mastery will develop and enhance employee self-efficacy because they will be more confident in setting and achieving tasks and goals. Attaining goals and generating small wins will support the employees' belief that they are successful and thus drive further success (Prestwich, Perugini and Hurling, 2008; Von Bergen and Bressler, 2021). Employees that believe in themselves are confident in their knowledge and capabilities, and successfully embrace change, resulting in solution-based thinking. Focusing on the desired state, rather than the existing state, encourages employees to think about solutions and growth, rather than problems (Collins, 2015).

For self-empowered employees to intentionally focus on growth (personal mastery), there are two critical questions that they should ask themselves (Maxwell, 2019). The first is, 'What are you doing to grow yourself today?' Today's world is volatile and uncertain (Kraaijenbrink, 2018), so for employees to stay relevant in the ever-changing business environment, they need to be better tomorrow than they are today. They

must consistently challenge their current reality and beliefs to develop new insights into their workplace.

Self-empowered employees can use Goldsmith's Wheel of Change model (2015) (Figure 2-2) to assess and plan the process of personal mastery when looking for direction in growing themselves. The model suggests that employees who embrace change and are focused on growth, development and personal mastery will manage their knowledge in three ways. They will either add new knowledge or skills, retain current useful knowledge and skills or erase irrelevant knowledge and skills. For employees to remain relevant and competitive with the current skills and knowledge, they will need to persevere and maintain or improve it through continuous improvement processes such as re-training (Goldsmith, 2015). By accepting that their current knowledge and skills cannot be improved potentially threatens their relevance and ability to add value. Employees who focus on continuous improvement and demonstrate insatiable curiosity will always be looking to add to their skills and knowledge. New knowledge leads to developing new innovative solutions or opportunities, which add value to the business. According to Raven (2008) new knowledge and skills reinforce the power of expertise, which increases the ability of the employee to influence others. Lastly Goldsmith (2015) suggests that knowledge that is no longer relevant should be erased or forgotten. Likewise, the use of skills that are no longer relevant or have lost their value should be reduced or replaced with new innovative practices.

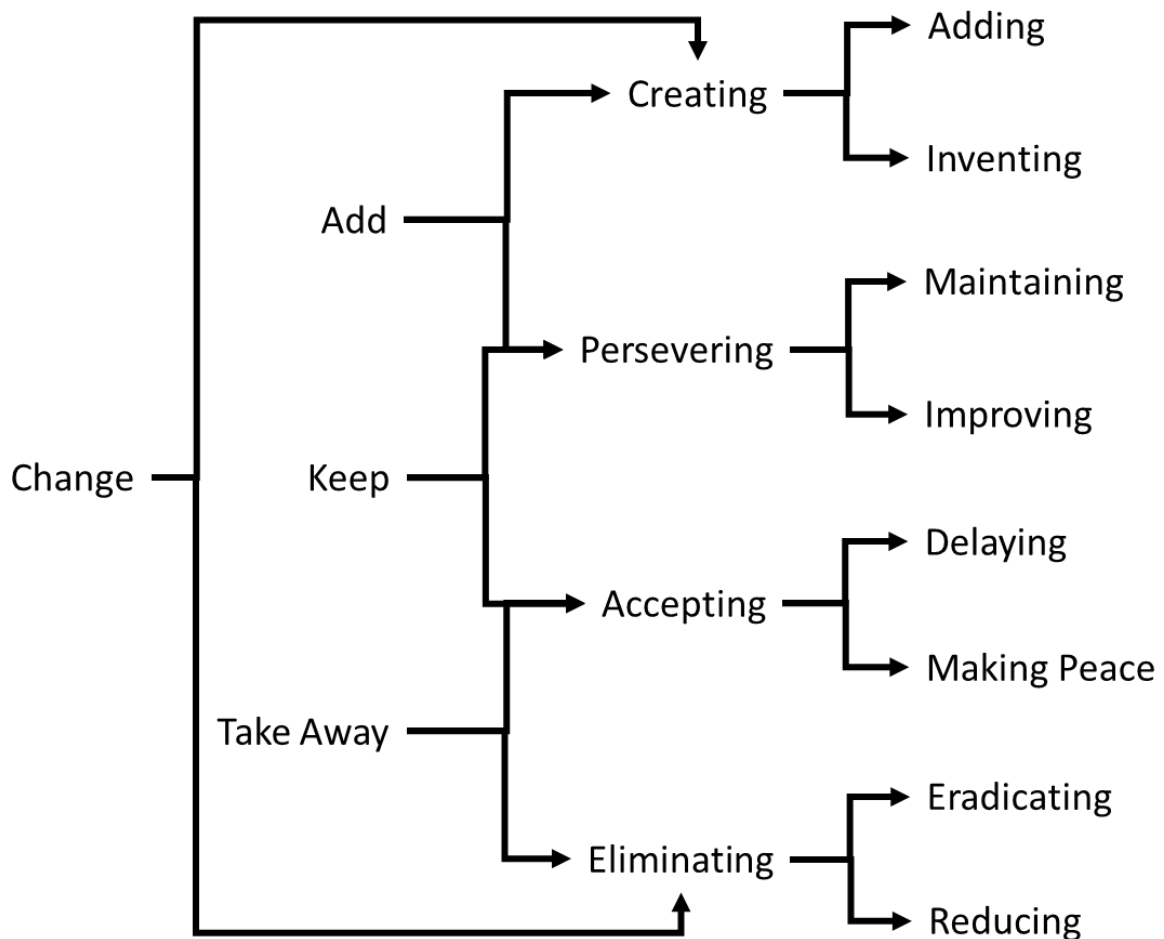


Figure 2-6: Change model

Adapted from Goldsmith (2015)

When intentionally focusing on growth, self-empowered employees will ask a second question, ‘What are you doing to grow others?’ Focusing on developing others will allow employees to exert influence in their workplace, which according to Cialdini (2009), is the influencing skill of reciprocity. Section 2.5.6 discusses power and section 2.5.7 influence in more detail. However, employees cannot grow others if they do not grow themselves first, because they will have nothing new to offer (Cialdini, 2009). Self-empowerment in this study has an internal and external focus on influencing others to co-create and deliver meaningful contributions.

2.6.1 Purpose

Purpose is the important first step in employees deciding to empower themselves. In developing their purpose employees will need to understand how their purpose will align with the business vision and mission statement as well as the business values. A clear sense of purpose will influence the employee to develop the intrinsic motivation and commitment needed to empower themselves. There are several elements that can influence employees to develop a purpose, leading to their decision to empower themselves (Stander and Rothmann, 2009).

Alignment with the organisation's mission and vision leads to a stronger sense of purpose among employees. When employees see the positive impact of their work on the business, they perceive their work as meaningful and significant, fostering a greater sense of purpose and motivation. Furthermore, employees who find meaning in their work are more likely to take initiative and invest themselves in their work, leading to higher levels of engagement and performance.

Another important driver of self-empowerment, according to O'Brian and Cave (2017), is intrinsic motivation, which stems from a genuine interest in one's work. Employees who are intrinsically motivated by their purpose are more likely to actively focus on their development and personal growth. They proactively pursue opportunities to enhance their skills and knowledge, recognising that continuous learning is essential for fulfilling their purpose. Their desire for growth contributes to their self-empowerment and continuous improvement where they will align their developmental goals with their purpose, making them more meaningful. When a strong purpose drives the employees self-directed approach to their development it enhances their resilience and commitment.

Additionally, purpose empowers employees with autonomy in decision-making. When employees have a clear sense of purpose, they align their decisions with their values and objectives, leading to a greater sense of control over their work and decisions. This confidence enhances their influence with their peers and other stakeholders,

encouraging collaboration and co-creation while sharing a common purpose. The supporting work environment further influences others to develop a purpose focused on self-empowerment.

2.6.2 Learn, unlearn and relearn

Warrel (2020:1) quotes Alvin Toffler, a futurist saying, 'The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn'. Employees' current knowledge and skills create a bias, influencing their opinions, behaviours, and actions.

The ability to test current thinking and processes continuously is a critical skill, supported by Warrel (2020:1) who says, 'What got you here won't get you there', and Collins (2015), who said that the most important lesson is not what you need to learn, but what you need to unlearn.

In the new, ever-changing work environment, employees change jobs more often and work longer before retirement. Therefore, employees require continuous learning where skills and knowledge are becoming irrelevant faster, so they must be constantly updated (Kenyon, 2022). Remaining relevant in the continuously changing business environment requires new learning and a willingness to discard knowledge or processes that have become irrelevant (Goldsmith, 2015). Where there are insufficient resources to change processes, or irrelevant expertise that employees cannot yet discard, they need to focus on continuous improvement.

2.6.2.1 The three pillars of LUR

This study proposes three key pillars related to learning in the learn, unlearn and relearn (LUR) process. These pillars link to Da Vinci's principles and the TIPS Managerial Leadership Framework's (2019) practices and competencies (explained further in section 2.16).

The first pillar demonstrates insatiable curiosity, closely linked to Da Vinci's principle of *curiosita*, the TIPS (Da Vinci, 2019) practices of personal mastery and problem probing, and the TIPS (Da Vinci, 2019) competencies of promoting experimentation and trans-disciplinarity. Continually questioning the current reality develops not only critical thinking skills (Nappi, 2017) but also stimulates the brain (Rock, 2007). Our learning is limited by the questions we ask. According to Christensen (2018), business leaders often focus more on getting things done than challenging accepted practices.

The ever-changing business environment restricts businesses from creating disruption and competitive advantage. For a company to be agile, it must continuously question everything (Berger, 2014). An example is Raymond Ackerman, who lives by the mantra, 'Always search for the truth' (SA History Online, n.d.).

The second pillar is to become comfortable with embracing change. Leaders and employees cannot unlearn if they are afraid to question what they have already learned. Drucker (2015) suggests that agile business leaders will continuously look for weaknesses in their business and treat them as opportunities for improvement.

Zohar (2018:24) says that companies and leaders that will make a difference and be successful in the future will be those that 'lead from the edge of chaos'. Da Vinci's principle of *sfumato* (as cited by Gelb, 2009), i.e., the willingness to embrace ambiguity, paradox, and uncertainty, also supports this thinking.

To help create certainty in this VUCA world, Bawany (2016) developed the LEAP model (Figure 2-2). Business leaders must continuously learn new things and be willing to challenge and discard the old (liberal). They must constantly demonstrate a positive attitude by focusing on solutions and opportunities rather than problems (exuberant). Leaders must challenge corporate thinking and be open to embracing new ideas or directions (agility). Finally, leaders must build networks (partnerships) based on trust, co-creation, and common purpose, rather than hierarchical silos. This figure is shown next.

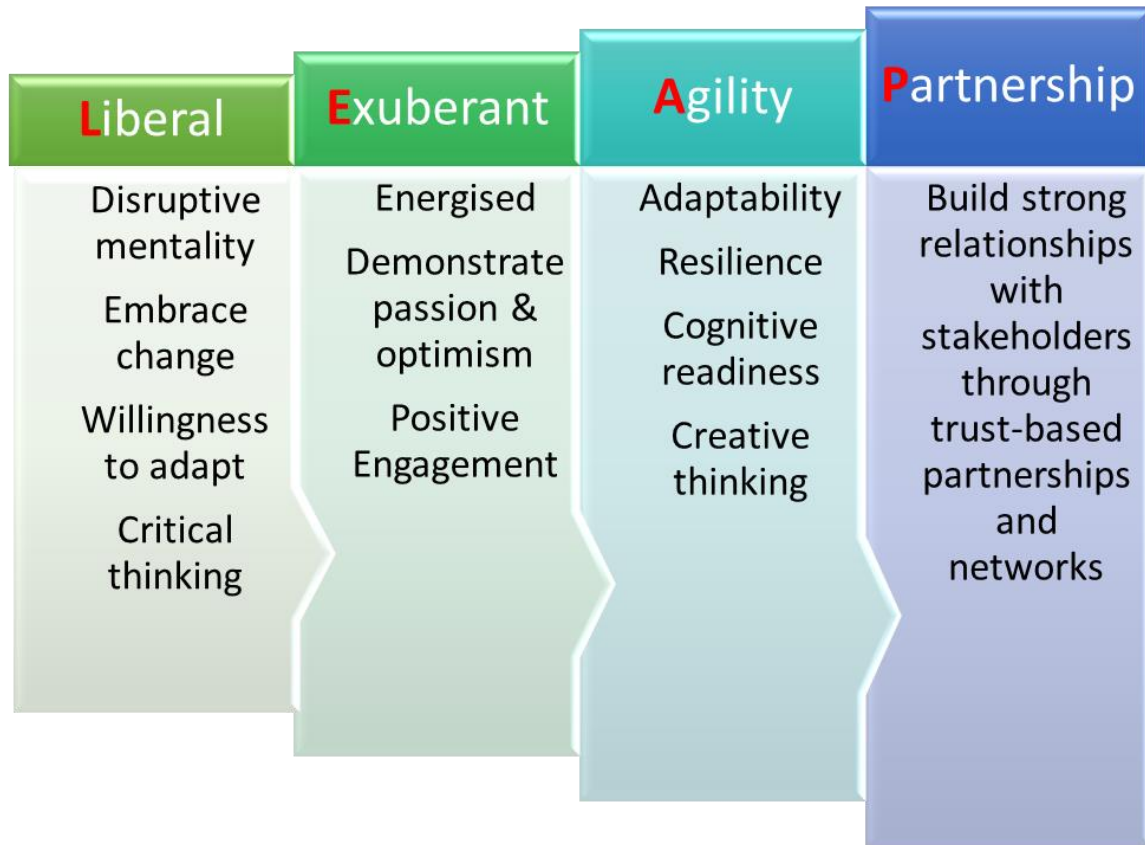


Figure 2-7: The LEAP Model

Adapted from Bawany (2016)

The third pillar is learning from making mistakes, linked to Da Vinci's (2019) principle of *dimostrazione*. According to Rogers (2020), the most significant learning comes from mistakes. If you do not make mistakes, you are not working hard enough on problems. This process is key to unlearning and relearning. Businesses should ignore mainstream thinking and challenge current processes to pursue differentiation through learning from mistakes (Rogers, 2020). Employees focused on self-empowerment must be ambitious in developing solutions, focusing on multiple small wins to create continuity (Rogers, 2020).

Organisations that want to create or maintain their competitive advantage must concentrate on hyper competitiveness and unique and individual customer experiences. This focus requires continuously redefining processes, boundaries, roles, behaviours, and relationships. Azmi (2008) suggests that creating this agility requires employees

to follow an iterative learning, unlearning, and relearning cycle. Collaboration converts these actions of learning, unlearning and relearning into corporate learning. Azmi (2008) discusses three models to help understand the learning, unlearning, and relearning process.

2.6.2.2 Models of LUR

Employees in learning organisations must develop a FAST culture (Azmi, 2008) to rapidly and effectively implement the personal mastery required for self-empowerment and the co-creation of solutions (Figure 2-3).

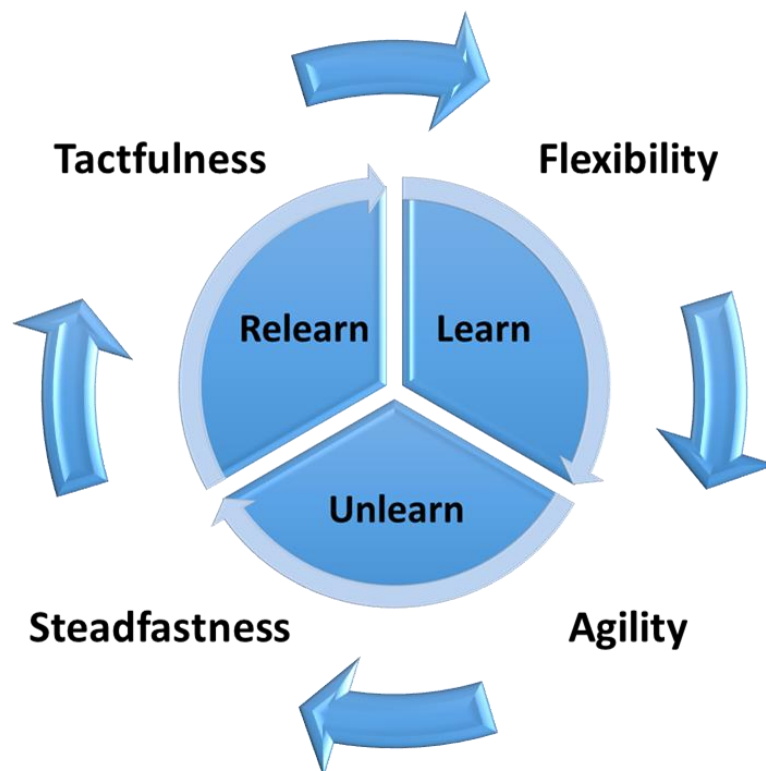


Figure 2-8: FAST Model

Adapted from Azmi (2008)

Four elements define the FAST culture:

1. Flexibility, where space, time, and work are fluid, and are focused on enhanced performance. Flexibility is particularly relevant in today's new blended working environment, where output is more important than input.
2. Agility, where employees embrace uncertainty and quickly adapt to changes in the business environment to take advantage of opportunities to develop real-time solutions.
3. Steadfastness, where employees demonstrate resilience in living their values and pursuing their goals. This commitment leads to consistency in decision-making.
4. Tactfulness focuses on responsibility and accountability, allowing employees to deliver innovative solutions through encouraging a culture of 'learn, act, share' (Senge et al., 2011b:47). This continuous improvement culture challenges current processes and systems and co-creates and tests identified solutions or opportunities. Knowledge is co-created through peer learning, building certainty, and reducing perceived risk.

Senge et al. (2011a) suggest that learning organisations build resilience and sustainability by embracing five disciplines. The first discipline is creating a shared vision; a leadership competency required to align employees and businesses, supported by the managerial leadership framework (Da Vinci Institute, 2019). The second discipline focuses on systems thinking; developing and managing causal relationships between stakeholders and networks. This includes understanding the consequences of, and more importantly, the unintended consequences of decisions and actions (Senge et al., 2011a).

The third discipline is the ability to use generalisations and assumptions to develop conceptual frameworks, or mental models, through which the business environment is understood. The fourth discipline is encouraging learning through curiosity, creative thinking, and experimentation (Senge et al., 2011a). For businesses to be agile, employees need to be engaged and focused on innovative continuous improvement.

This discipline is closely linked to the fifth discipline, i.e., personal mastery (Senge et al., 2011a).

Continuous learning includes acquiring new knowledge and skills, and forgetting what is no longer relevant in the fast-changing world.

Unlearning or forgetting is an intentional and positive continuous improvement process in which past or current biases and best operating practices are challenged, revised, or eliminated (Azmi, 2008). Intentional unlearning allows organisations to retain critical knowledge, skills, and processes while at the same time interrogating them to allow space for new learning.

Unintentional unlearning (Azmi, 2008) is destructive and disruptive for businesses and employees. This disruption, shown in Figure 2-4, suggests three significant causes for unplanned unlearning (Azmi, 2008). The first cause is decay, where knowledge and skills are lost because they are no longer used in the workplace, or they have become irrelevant due to new strategies or revised best practices. The second cause is sabotage, where disgruntled employees purposefully disregard or destroy knowledge, systems or processes, intending to disrupt the workflow or bypass quality processes (Azmi, 2008). The researcher has observed that sabotage often increases during wage negotiations between employees and managers. The third cause of unintentional unlearning is negligence (Azmi, 2008).

Emerging constructs in this research suggest that disempowered employees are not passionate about their work and, as a result, are demotivated and unfocused. This attitude leads to negligence where employees look for the easiest solution for themselves, irrespective of the impact on the business or others.

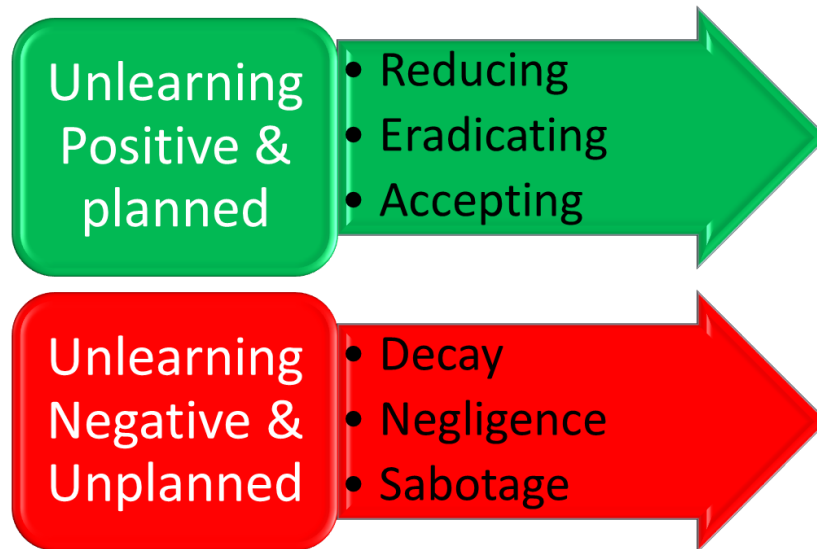


Figure 2-9: Unlearning Model

Adapted from Azmi (2008)

Corporations are reviewing their strategies to maintain competitiveness in the new blended working environment (Alioua and Simon, 2017). Their focus is often on reviewing organisational structures and the management of resources, specifically around maximising skills and knowledge. For employees to remain relevant, they need to focus on personal mastery and continuous learning (Douglas and Roberts, 2020).

Alioua and Simon (2017) state that two specific strategies influence when businesses acquire and use new knowledge that results in change. The first is where business changes are scheduled at predictable intervals, irrespective of market changes (Alioua and Simon, 2017). This proactive strategy allows businesses to navigate the VUCA world better. Knowledge and skills are gained, refreshed and stored until the required changes are initiated. Azmi (2008) calls this process time-pacing in Figure 2-5. Time is temporal, not linear (Bakker, DeFillippi, Schwab and Sydow, 2016), influencing how and what employees learn. Employee learning focuses on the fastest solution when tight deadlines need to be met, or unplanned disruptions occur. With planned changes, employees have time to experiment and focus on combining their knowledge and skills with others to co-create the best solution.

The second strategy, event-pacing, is driven by changes in the business environment or market (Morgeson, Mitchell and Liu, 2015). Focusing on events will give businesses and employees an insight into when and what changes will result, and what learning and skills will be required. In reacting to these events, companies quickly search for and acquire the relevant skills and knowledge to retain or develop their competitive advantage (Bakker et al., 2016). Employees will plan to gain their learning through courses and workshops focused on their future needs and expectations.

Organisations and employees need to focus on the three principles of change to coordinate these two relearning strategies and acquire the right transitional skills and knowledge (Azmi, 2008). The first of these principles is Range, which refers to the size of the change. Understanding the depth and breadth of the change, as well as the potential impact the change could have on the business and stakeholders, will influence what skills and knowledge are acquired (Azmi, 2008). The more significant the change, the greater the depth of learning required.

The principle of Rhythm refers to regulating the speed of change as a key factor in managing change (Morgeson et al., 2015). Linking the necessary change to the capacity to learn and acquire skills is critical for businesses looking for sustainable progress. The third principle, Route, refers to clearly understanding the goals and vision of the company (Azmi, 2008). Specific knowledge and skills will be required to deliberately manage the direction of the change focused on achieving the strategic goals and vision.

Using these three principles, employees will decide what skills and knowledge will need to be learnt to remain relevant and to assist the company achieve its strategy.



Figure 2-10: Relearning Model

Adapted from Azmi (2008)

2.6.3 Decision-making

Businesses traditionally base their strategy and decisions on the belief that there is a level of order and predictability in their world (Snowden and Boone, 2007). Based on this thinking, businesses generally make decisions based on best practices, influenced by subject matter experts, as reflected in the Cynefin model (Snowden and Boone, 2007).

However, Krawchuck (2017) thinks that this belief leads to silos being developed in businesses, which inhibits sharing resources and ideas, leading to a stagnant company and more significant risk in a volatile and ever-changing world.

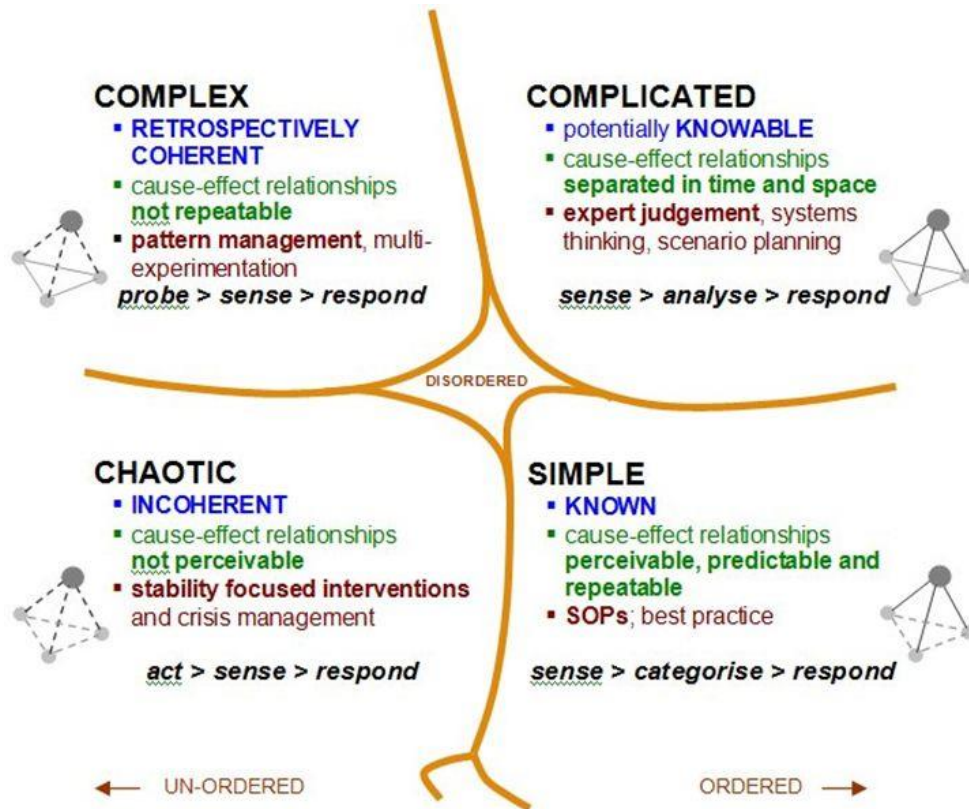


Figure 2-11: The Cynefin framework

Snowden and Boone (2007)

Zohar (2016) suggests that leaders and managers who intend to make a difference and successfully navigate this volatile world will lead by embracing uncertainty and chaos. To maintain a competitive advantage, decisions must be made in the unordered world (Qian, n.d.), as reflected in the Cynefin model (Snowden and Boone, 2007), where cause and effect relationships are unpredictable and not repeatable.

Decisions will often lead to the creation of agility through experimentation, operationalised ideation, and trans-disciplinary learning. These leadership practices, reflected in the TIPS Managerial Leadership Framework (Da Vinci Institute, 2019), will be discussed in greater depth in section 2.16.

To effectively negotiate the unordered world, self-empowered employees must encourage others to work together and pool their resources. In developing

collaborative networks, they must influence peer decision-making, encouraging the development of interdepartmental and external company collaboration (Krawchuck, 2017). Collaboration requires employees to maintain a mindset that includes transparent, multi-directional communication, active listening skills, and a willingness to accept diversity and ideas. Positive co-creation necessitates self-empowered employees intentionally deciding to cultivate and demonstrate this collaborative mindset (Krawchuck, 2017). They will need to engage with, and include competent knowledge workers in their networks, using technology to test group thinking and decisions, thus leading to achieving the common purpose.

The mindset will help develop flat, cooperative structures with shared understanding and purpose. In addition, it will create an organisational culture where experimentation, diversity, positive feedback, and transparent communication are valued and practised (Krawchuck, 2017). Self-empowerment will require employees to make brave decisions, often searching for shared understanding and collective agreement on actions through developing collaborative networks and processes (Krawchuck, 2017). The aim is to develop an adaptive and balanced response by being able to manage paradoxes to create unique solutions to challenges.

Traditional thinking and beliefs about decision-making and leadership are becoming irrelevant in today's VUCA world. Kraaijenbrink (2018) describes the world as volatile and uncertain, where new technologies constantly increase the speed of change. The pace of change results in an inability to understand and predict changes resulting in uncertainty (Rock, 2009). The growing numbers of factors, both internal and external, that influence change is ever more interconnected, resulting in greater complexity in analysing data. The volatility, uncertainty, and complexity all lead to ambiguity, where interpreting change becomes ever more difficult.

2.7 Quantum thinking

According to Thompson (2019), the word 'quantum' means the smallest amount of something, for example, energy. These sub-atomic particles, which hold potential

energy, are unpredictable and random in their behaviour yet are stable, similar to socially based systems. Dyer (as cited by Shelton and Darling, 2001) and Thompson (2019) suggest that humans are quantum beings. As such, the mind, or consciousness, is influenced by quantum principles.

Logical thinking is thinking in words or language, where related terms must make sense. Creative thinking is thinking in pictures, where two pictures can be linked even though they are contradictory. Quantum thinking is the ability to remove the barriers to thinking and simultaneously hold two or more opposing thoughts (Zohar, 2016). Quantum thinking, used in relearning, creates multiple unique opportunities and solutions, leading to agility and competitive advantage.

Quantum thinking is an unlimited and all-encompassing mode of thinking. Quantum thinking is about duality and the ability to view problems from all sides. It is also the ability to simultaneously hold two contrasting or mutually exclusive thoughts (Qian, n.d.), resulting in multiple potential solutions to a particular problem. Quantum thinking focuses on understanding and interrogating the problem, rather than looking for the correct answer. The right question is more important than the right answer.

Shelton (2012) suggests that employees must be encouraged to embrace contradictions because they lead to multiple right answers. McCann (as cited in Shelton and Darling, 2001:43) is quoted as saying, 'Keep away from answers but live in the middle of the question to avoid the magnetic poles of oppositional opinion and embrace the ambiguity of the unfinished answer'. If leaders are unable or unwilling to challenge thought, their thoughts may not be worthy of reflection.

2.7.1 Quantum skills for self-empowerment

In this VUCA world, people are looking for leadership, not management (Kingma, n.d.). As Zohar (2016) says, the leaders of tomorrow need to lead from the edge of chaos. Managers focus on traditional processes and systems to get results, as opposed to leaders who guide, challenge and develop their employees. Leaders who wish to make impactful decisions and successfully navigate this VUCA world must remove the

barriers to their thinking and decision-making. They must understand and navigate the volatility and interconnectedness of the new world (Zohar, 2016).

To eliminate barriers to their thinking and enhance their effectiveness, leaders need to change their thinking paradigm. The traditional linear thinking based on certainty is no longer effective in a world of uncertainty. Shelton and Darling (2001) and Shelton (2012) identify seven quantum (thinking) skills required to lead in the VUCA world.

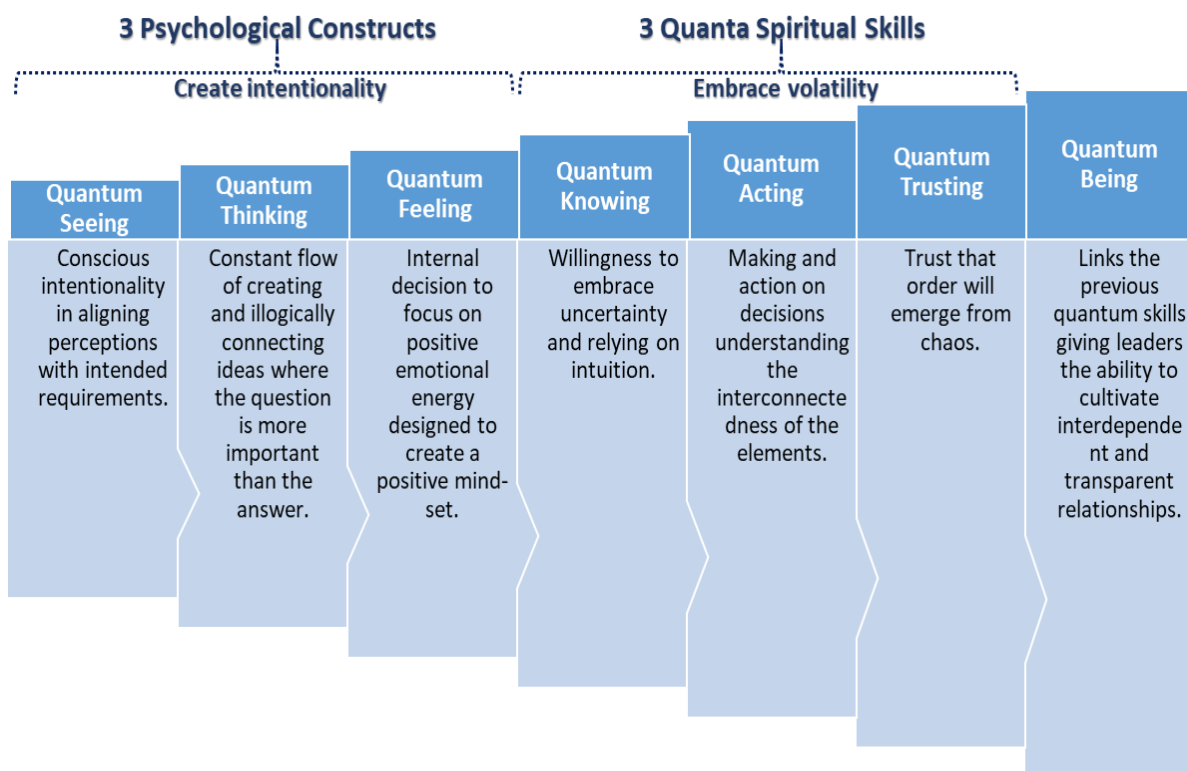


Figure 2-12: Quantum skills for a VUCA world

Adapted from Shelton and Darling (2001)

The first three skills of quantum seeing, quantum thinking, and quantum feeling are known as psychological constructs designed to create intentionality (Shelton and Darling, 2001). John Maxwell (2019) defines ‘intentionality’ as deliberate or purposeful actions, behaviours or thoughts driven by a purpose or goals. A quantum leader will create intentionality by focusing on the good of the whole, rather than being focused internally (Zohar, 2016).

The second skill set, which embraces volatility, will be grounded in the three universal spiritual principles of quantum knowing, quantum acting, and quantum trusting. The seventh skill is one of quantum being, which links all the previous six skills (Shelton and Darling, 2001).

2.7.2 *The Seven Quantum Skills*

2.7.2.1 Quantum Seeing

The first skill of quantum thinking is quantum seeing. This skill focuses leaders and managers on conscious intentionality, which means aligning their insights with their intended outcomes. This is the process through which reality is created (Shelton and Darling, 2001). An intention is a vision influenced by purpose and mission which leads to action. It is generally based on assumptions that the linear perception of reality is true. Quantum theory suggests that 80% of perception is subjective because it is based on circular thinking (Leptourgos, Bouttier, Jardri and Deneve, 2020).

Circular thinking reinforces the view that belief equals perception, which influences belief (Leptourgos et al., 2020). For example, decisions will be made based on previous outcomes, believing that the results will be the same. Managers and leaders will focus on specific opportunities based on previously tested solutions while ignoring others. Therefore, developing conscious intentionality will serve as a compass, directing managers to opportunities that would have otherwise been missed (Leptourgos et al., 2020). Moreover, involving employees in the decision-making and creativity processes, using tools such as visual management techniques, will help influence managers' mindsets and direct their intentionality (Womack and Jones, 2010; Senge et al., 2011b).

There are two Da Vinci principles (as cited by Gelb, 2009) that influence intentionality. These are *curiosita*, defined as insatiable curiosity, and *sensazione*, defined as using the senses to see and experience the world. Human perception is highly subjective. Therefore, when managers challenge their current reality using questions and sharpened senses, they can change their perceptions and intentionality, using new

lenses to identify new opportunities. These principles are also supported by business leadership practices such as probing reflective practices and managerial competencies such as promoting experimentation (Senge et al., 2011b). The TIPS Managerial Leadership Framework (Da Vinci, 2019) will be discussed in greater depth in section 2.16.

2.7.2.2 Quantum Thinking

The second construct is quantum thinking. This skill is defined by Shelton and Darling (2001), as a constant flow of creative, often illogical, ideas that go beyond the 'in the box' binary thinking. According to research by Allen and Van der Zwan (2019), logic and creativity are not functions of the brain's left or right hemispheres. They suggest that thinking is a whole-brain function. Therefore, this research study discusses binary and creative thinking without referencing the brain's hemispheres. Binary thinking is defined as logical, linear, and circular thinking where the lower brain centres, categorises, and prioritises thoughts to create certainty (Rock, 2007).

As such, the lower brain cannot conceptualise multiple options. Many managers still rely on binary, logical thinking, dependent on words and language. Einstein is quoted as saying that you cannot solve a problem using the same thinking that caused it (as cited by Anderson, 2012). Quantum thinking engages the creative processes, where the brain thinks in pictures, so it is not restrained by the logic of language or words, resulting in faster information processing (Shelton and Darling, 2001). As a result, it collects seemingly unrelated ideas and connects them in illogical ways to identify unique understanding, solutions, and opportunities.

This type of thinking is referred to 'out of the box' or creative thinking. However, the researcher suggests that true quantum thinking uses both binary and creative thinking; otherwise known as 'whole brain' thinking (Zohar, 2016; Collins, 2015). Using only creative thinking may lead to missed opportunities or solutions that come from binary thinking. Gelb (2009) writes about the Da Vincian principle of *arte/scienze*, in which a balance of logic and creativity is used to develop whole brain thinking.

Therefore, true quantum thinking eliminates the box because it is thinking without barriers.

2.7.2.3 Quantum feeling

The third skill or psychological construct is quantum feeling. This skill enables managers and leaders to review and change their constructs by focusing on the positive aspects of their experiences (Shelton and Darling, 2001). Quantum thinking requires an internal decision to focus on positive emotional energy, which will create a positive mindset. A positive attitude transforms old paradigms and allows managers and leaders to identify otherwise hidden opportunities (Shelton and Darling, 2001).

Gelb (2009) supports this concept through the Da Vincian principle of *corporalita*, where the focus on the right work-life balance is used to reduce stress and negativity. In addition, the TIPS Managerial Leadership Framework (Da Vinci Institute, 2019) suggests that a critical managerial leadership practice is social and emotional intelligence, which translates to being able to minimise negative emotions and energise oneself through positive emotions.

The 5th Industrial Revolution focuses on bringing humanity back into the workplace (Gauri, 2019; Gautam and Jhajharia, 2016; Lindsay and Hudson, 2019). This is explained further in a later section of this chapter. Managers and future leaders will therefore need to be more spiritual, moving their focus from internal self-interest to external concern for others; a skill required by managers and leaders in this volatile and fast-changing world (Shelton and Darling, 2001).

Quantum knowing

The fourth quantum skill of quantum thinking is developed through the willingness to embrace uncertainty, i.e., quantum knowing. Gelb (2009) calls this Da Vincian principle of being open to ambiguity and paradox *sfumato*. Managers and leaders have, in the past, focused on reducing uncertainty by collecting and analysing information, creating complacency and 'mindlessness' (Gelb, 2009). Langer (2000) suggests that the focus should instead be on staying aware of the environments in which businesses operate through mindful and intentional decision-making. Embracing uncertainty focuses on internal and external environments, connecting information intuitively. Decisions made in the complex and chaotic space generate emergent and innovative solutions and practices (Snowden and Boone, 2007).

This thinking is supported by Zohar (2016), who suggests that those who will make a difference in the future world are those who engage in the un-ordered world. The TIPS Managerial Leadership Framework (Da Vinci Institute, 2019) suggests that promoting experimentation leads to agility and competitive advantage development. Quantum knowing, therefore, promotes whole brain thinking, where the value of intuitive learning and ideas are embraced and practised in these learning organisations (Snowden and Boone, 2007). This business culture encourages employees to experiment and innovate, thus empowering themselves (Boud et al., 2002; Senge et al., 2011a).

2.7.2.4 Quantum acting

The fifth quantum skill is quantum acting, which is the ability to make decisions and act on them, understanding the interconnectedness of the elements (Shelton and Darling, 2001). The quantum theory of causality states that decisions and choices made will influence the future decisions and choices of others (Zohar, 2016).

The Da Vincian principle of *connessione* or interdependence (Gelb, 2009) explains that understanding the impact of intended and unintended consequences of decisions on relationships is required. These relationships within, and across, environmental boundaries, and the systems thinking that supports the view that the whole is greater

than the sum of the parts, are discussed further in the section on the TIPS Managerial Leadership Framework (Da Vinci Institute, 2019).

Quantum acting, therefore, allows managers and leaders to make responsible decisions for the good of the whole. These decisions are based on understanding the consequences and the unintended consequences of the resulting actions across both local and global environments. Quantum acting leads not only to conscious intentionality but also facilitates the development of a win-win company culture, which is a TIPS managerial leadership competency (Da Vinci Institute, 2019).

2.7.2.5 Quantum trusting

The sixth quantum skill is quantum trusting. Shelton and Darling (2001) define this as the ability of managers and leaders to trust that order will come out of chaos following natural processes. Chaos and uncertainty are required to drive change and growth, thus creating a natural structured chaos or evolution.

Leaders and managers must have a clear intention and focused commitment to embrace chaos to use the skill of quantum trusting (Shelton and Darling, 2001). They must reduce their influence or interference over the natural progression of processes through processes such as delegation (Blanchard, 2019). Therefore, this concept is very challenging, especially where traditional leadership models value predictability and control. Leaders and managers need to be willing to learn from the mistakes coming out of the chaos, which Gelb (2009) calls the Da Vincian principle of *dimonstrazione*.

2.7.2.6 Quantum being

The seventh quantum skill is quantum being, which links the previous six quantum skills, allowing managers and leaders to cultivate interdependent and transparent relationships (Shelton and Darling, 2001). This skill is critical to developing the relationships that employees need if they want to influence their peers, co-create

solutions and opportunities, and become self-empowered. As a result, all relationships are peer-learning opportunities.

The researcher believes that an element of self-empowerment is the ability to develop mutually beneficial relationships, where the combination of expertise, skills, and thought in a partnership is greater than the sum of the individuals. This ability will create a true quantum system. The TIPS Managerial Leadership Framework identifies several leadership practices and competencies that can be used to develop the skills of quantum being (Da Vinci Institute, 2019). These leadership practices and competencies will be discussed in detail in section 2.16.

2.8 Leadership and self-empowerment

Leadership in business is often seen as the authority or power given to an employee by the company to give instructions, make decisions, and enforce obedience (Drucker et al., 2015; Govender and Bussin, 2020). However, the Oxford Dictionary (2019) defines leadership as the capability of an employee to influence and guide other members of an organisation. This definition suggests that leadership does not require employees to have authority. However, leaders do need the ability to influence others.

Self-empowerment is defined in this study as an employee's ability to influence others to co-create and deliver meaningful contributions to the business. This study explores whether employees require leadership skills to empower themselves or whether they develop leadership skills in the process of empowering themselves.

In this new VUCA world of blended work environments, Ayca and Sheilia (2019) suggest that the majority of employees are reluctant to lead or stand out. A study conducted by Torres in 2014 shows that only 34% of the workforce are willing to assume leadership positions (as cited by Ayca and Sheilia, 2019). Some 66% of those interviewed are reluctant to lead because of their fear of failure or fear of their decisions harming others (Ayca and Sheilia, 2019). The lack of confidence in their

abilities supports their perception that potential failure, or low performance, would have a negative impact on their career and earnings (Ayca and Sheilia, 2019).

Employees are also concerned about the negative effects of greater responsibility and accountability on their work-life balance (Ayca and Sheilia, 2019). Uncertainty drives inaction (Rock, 2007). Self-empowerment requires employees to intentionally focus on their development and embrace their potential.

According to Pearce and Manz (2015), employees are currently better educated and demonstrate a higher level of skills and knowledge than past generations. Their self-confidence encourages them to empower themselves through focusing on self-development and shared leadership (Pearce and Manz, 2015). Rogers (as cited by Forbes, 2017) suggests that the critical leadership competencies of open-mindedness and curiosity are more important than business experience.

Sharing skills and knowledge builds trust when it improves performance and adds value to others (Harvey et al., 2021). It helps self-empowered employees to build and influence communities of practice. These networks identify and implement unique solutions and opportunities, thus delivering meaningful contributions to the business (Harvey et al., 2021).

Self-empowered employees cultivate leadership through the unique skills and knowledge that they develop, which influence others to seek them out for advice, assistance, or insight on related issues, and as a result, self-empowered employees can affect and guide the course of actions or opinions within their workplaces (Shelton and Darling, 2001). For employees to empower themselves, Langer and Kleiner (2015) suggest that they will need to understand and master their context or environment. In that way, they can intentionally control and mindfully create the environment they need to contribute positively to the business. Intentionally paying attention to their environment will allow employees to identify influencing opportunities where they can capitalise on their unique skills and knowledge (Langer and Kleiner, 2015).

Leadership in Africa is also influenced by elements such as the spirit of Ubuntu. Ubuntu translates into 'I am because you are' (Ngomane, 2020). In practising Ubuntu, employees believe that group relationships are more important than individual relationships. Respect for others and the ability to empathise with others helps to build trust. To demonstrate leadership competencies, self-empowered employees require the ability to embrace diversity and build creative networks that co-create solutions and opportunities (Langer and Kleiner, 2015).

2.8.1 Distributed leadership

Distributed leadership according to Goksoy (2016) is where responsibility and accountability is distributed amongst employees. Fitzsimons, et al., (2011) suggest that distributed leadership involves the delegation of authority, decision-making, and responsibilities across several selected employees within the business, rather than being concentrated solely in the hands of a few selected managers or leaders.

Distributed leadership plays a pivotal role in employee empowerment by decentralising responsibility and leadership and promoting a sense of shared ownership, engagement, and collaboration. Distributed leadership is used by businesses to empower employees by allowing them to participate in decision-making processes and contribute their knowledge, skills, and expertise to achieving strategic business goals. In this process employees are recognised for their unique knowledge and skills, which are leveraged to add value to the business. This recognition boosts the employee's self-esteem and reinforces their value within the business. The result is engaged employees, who actively communicate and collaborate with other stakeholders and who are willing to share their knowledge and skills to achieve common goals (Goksoy, 2016). Empowerment given by the business has the risk that should the employee not perform to the business's expectation, they can just as easily be disempowered by the business.

However, employees who want to develop sustainable empowerment can use the distributed leadership framework to take charge of their roles, decisions, and

development to grow their own influence. Distributed leadership promotes a learning culture. Employees are encouraged to use their initiative and to develop their skills and knowledge. Cialdini (2021) suggests that where employee's gain new skills and knowledge, they can use this expertise power to build their resilience, agility and influence (Cialdini, 2021).

2.8.2 Self leadership

Self-leadership is the process of leading oneself and is defined by Pearce and Manz (2015) and Blanchard (2019) as a concept that emphasises an employee's ability to take control of their own actions, thoughts, and behaviours to achieve their goals. Self-leadership is closely aligned with employee self-empowerment, as both concepts focus on giving employees the tools and mindset to take ownership of their work, make informed decisions, and actively contribute to adding value to their business. It involves creating a purpose, setting goals, motivating oneself, and managing personal growth and development effectively.

Self-leadership and self-empowerment both cultivate a culture of accountability, autonomy, and continuous improvement, leading to increased resilience, job satisfaction, performance, and innovation while also encouraging initiative. Self-empowered employees can independently make decisions aligned to both their own goals and the business strategy. Where self-leadership encourages individuals to seek out opportunities for growth, self-empowerment provides employees with the resources and autonomy to engage in continuous learning and skill development. Both self-leadership and employee self-empowerment contribute to creating a positive work environment (Blanchard, 2019).

2.8.3 Shared leadership

Self-empowered employees will be confident enough in themselves that their focus is more external rather than internal so will share leadership with their team and networks encouraging collaboration (Pearce and Manz, 2015). Shared leadership and employee self-empowerment are two interconnected concepts that focus on sharing

authority, responsibility, and decision-making throughout a team, network or business (Lee, Willis and Tian, 2018; Conger and Kanungo, 1988). They both aim to enhance collaboration, engagement, and overall effectiveness within the business environment. According to Fitzsimons, James and Deyner, (2011) shared leadership is a collaborative approach, where leadership capabilities and expertise are not held by a single person but shared among all team members. Decisions are made collectively using multiple lenses and combined skills and knowledge to give diverse perspectives while developing solutions and opportunities. Both the concepts of shared leadership and self-empowerment encourage mutual support and accountability among team members. Stakeholders are more likely to contribute actively to shared leadership initiatives, which cultivates a culture of trust, openness, and continuous improvement (Pearce and Manz, 2015).

2.8.4 Quantum Leadership

To continue to be relevant and competitive in the current volatile and uncertain business environment, businesses need to be agile enough to reorganise and adapt spontaneously to changes in the environment. Zohar (2016, 2022) suggest that each company and each person is unique therefore leadership principles should be generic, allowing leaders to adapt them to their specific personality, company and situation. Quantum leadership is the concept of using quantum principles to understand these general leadership practices. Zohar (2022) suggests that there are twelve quantum leadership principles, which will empower leaders to become transformational forces to drive positive change within their organisations.

Self-awareness is the cornerstone of effective leadership. Quantum leaders understand their strengths, weaknesses, values, and beliefs, allowing them to make conscious decisions. Leaders who are self-aware demonstrate authenticity, which enhances their effectiveness and fosters trust among team members. Quantum leaders also possess a *clear vision* for the future of their organisation, which aligns the team and encourages them to develop a shared purpose and meaning, leading to

greater unity. Leaders resonating with the organisational *values* and goals create an environment of connectedness.

Change is inevitable, and quantum leaders are agile in adapting to new circumstances. Demonstrating *spontaneity* enables leaders to adapt their thinking to recognise and take opportunities and experiment with innovative approaches, which encourages a culture of continuous improvement. Spontaneity according to Zohar (2022) is found in the chaotic space, which is where leaders act intuitively, without planning or forethought so demonstrate field independence. *Field Independence* is defined by Zohar (2022) as breaking free of the limitations set by traditional thinking. Quantum leaders break with traditional thinking to explore diverse perspectives and find radical and innovative solutions to complex challenges.

Quantum leaders are *insatiably curious*, leading to them continually questioning processes and systems within the business environment. This culture of inquiry encourages experimentation and continuous improvement. Quantum leaders possess the ability to reframe problems *creatively* to find new perspectives and discover innovative solutions and opportunities.

In understanding the relationships and the *interconnectedness* of all stakeholders in the business environment, quantum leaders are able to balance short-term objectives with long-term sustainability through holistic thinking. Their decision-making takes into account the impact the decisions will have on others. The principle of non-linearity recognises that cause-and-effect relationships are often interconnected and non-linear.

Quantum leaders value and embrace *diversity* in their teams. The different viewpoints lead to greater creativity and inclusivity resulting in enhanced and cooperative decision-making. In addition a *compassionate* approach is essential for quantum leaders. Their genuine care for the well-being of their employees fosters a positive work culture, boosting morale and productivity. *Humility* plays a crucial role in fostering an environment of open communication and continuous growth. Quantum leaders

actively listen to their team, and learn from their failures. The principle of entanglement suggest that these decisions and relationships will impact both internal and external stakeholders.

Quantum leaders view *adversity* as an opportunity for growth. Challenges are leveraged to overcome obstacles leading to increased resilience within the team. Holding a strong sense of *purpose* promotes a belief in the significance of their work. Their passion and dedication motivate their teams, inspiring collective efforts to achieve meaningful and impactful goals.

2.8.5 *Metanoia*

Kiefer and Senge (2005, as cited by Plessis, 2019) define metanoia as a significant shift in organisational thinking. There are various elements or dimensions that metanoic organisations must demonstrate, but primarily they must have a meaningful vision that gives employees a strong purpose and creates alignment, and they must also exemplify integrity and trust in their employees (Kiefer and Senge, 2005, as cited by Plessis, 2019). This shift in thinking moves from the traditional hierarchical top-down approach to cooperative thinking.

The TIPPS Managerial Leadership Framework suggests that Keifer and Senge's definition (as cited by Plessis, 2019) of metanoia can also be applied to leadership. First, these leaders must accept responsibility for their decisions and for the actions of those they lead. Secondly, they must share their knowledge and skills, which will build competence in others, allowing them to develop their solutions and solve their problems. Finally, metanoic leaders must practice active listening in co-creating solutions and opportunities (Da Vinci Institute, 2019). Recognition and praise must be given to those who put effort into making a difference and improving their workspace.

The managerial leadership competencies, practices, and emerging behaviours will be discussed further in section 2.16 which deals with the TIPS Managerial Leadership Framework (Da Vinci, 2019). In empowering themselves, employees will develop leadership skills through developing their ability to influence others.

2.8.6 Power

Although there are multiple definitions of power and influence, the concept of power is defined by Han (2019) as the ability to influence the behaviour of others through exercising force or authority. Influence is defined by Greene, (2007) and Raven, (2008) as the ability to effect a change in behaviour or thinking of others through setting examples. Power is centralised, focused on the self, and relates to control; whereas influence is decentralised, focused on others, and refers to co-creation. Co-creation is the collaborative process between employees that results in creating new solutions or opportunities that add value to the business (Han, 2019).

However, power and influence are closely related, often interchanged and intersect when viewed in the context of a person exerting influence over another (Zaaiman, 2020). Relationships are impacted by the type and intensity of the power used to influence. Power is given or delegated by those with greater authority, whereas influence is earned and given by others as a sign of trust (Zaaiman, 2020; Hofman, Hartl, Gangl, Hertner-Tiefenthaler and Kirchler, 2017). For example, managers generally restrict the level of control they give to their employees to minimise unintended consequences of their decisions. As a result, managers unintentionally demonstrate a level of distrust and limit employee engagement and empowerment (Appelbaum, Bailey, Berg and Kalleberg, 2000, 2004; Hofman et al., 2017).

Self-empowerment is defined as the ability to influence others to co-create and deliver meaningful contributions to the business in this study (Rappoport, 2015). The level of influence is dependent on the type of power used because each power has its own quality and efficacy based on the situation. For employees to be able to empower themselves they will need to develop specific powers to positively influence others. This study considers how these two elements, although mutually exclusive, are also complementary and can be used by employees to empower themselves.

2.8.6.1 Positional power

French and Raven (1959) identify two specific categories of power, positional power and personal power. These categories are further divided into five bases of power, coercive, reward, legitimate, referent and expert power (French and Raven, 1959). Further research led Raven (2004, 2008) to identify the sixth base of power known as informational power. Friedrich's proposes a 'law of anticipated reactions' (as cited by Sanidas, 2005:95), which states that employees will manage their compliance based on anticipated rewards, recognition, or punishment. Leaders, managers and employees can use these powers both negatively and positively.

Positional power (French and Raven, 1959) is an external power which one can only have through a position of authority. Positional power is linked to a specific position and the authority that position can wield. Only once a person moves to that position do they inherit that power and authority (French and Raven, 1959). For leaders and managers, therefore, the power is transitional and non-sustainable because it is lost when they no longer have that position. Positional power comprises of four types of power (French and Raven, 1959):

1. Coercive power is where the threat of force is continuously exerted to punish non-compliance (Hofman et al., 2017). This use of power is usually known as 'management by fear' and is used by authoritarians. Coercion ensures that employees will only work to meet the minimum expectations. This power destroys trust, alignment, and engagement, often leading to employee migration.
2. Reward power is used when rewards or recognition are given for achieving good performance. However, sustained good performance relies on continued reward and recognition. Over time employees may consider these rewards and recognition as rights, which may need to be increased to retain the performance.
3. Legitimate power is derived from a position of authority. This power is based on social positions or a position within a hierarchy. Compliance is given through a feeling of obligation guided by societal rules and expectations. Cialdini (2009) suggests figures of authority automatically influence people to be compliant;

however, the power is transitional and only available while holding that position of authority.

4. Informational power is gained by having the ability to access and control the dissemination of information that others require to execute tasks or build knowledge. This information is often privileged or confidential information.

According to Appelbaum et al. (2000), one of the main drivers of self-empowerment is access to knowledge and skills. This view is also supported by Priyadharshany and Sujathat (2015), Blanchard (2019a), and Foucault (as cited by Workers Solidarity Movement, 2011), who state that power is inseparable from knowledge. Foucault (as cited by Workers Solidarity Movement, 2011) suggests that no body of knowledge can be formed without some form of power, and no power can be exercised without the retention or release of knowledge. An example is when the flow of data is controlled, or where data are manipulated or distorted to influence an outcome or decision. Informational power is lost when the source of information can no longer be accessed.

Although the positional powers of coercion, reward, legitimacy, and information impel employees to achieve the minimum expected delivery, they do not encourage employees to be engaged, aligned, or most importantly, agile.

2.8.6.2 Personal power

The second type of power is personal power (French and Raven, 1959). This is an internal power that does not rely on position or authority and is where employees have an opportunity to build power for themselves. Personal power is demonstrated by an employee's self-awareness, confidence, and competence. There are two bases of personal power (referent and expert), which, when used together with integrity, build trust and an ability to influence others to share knowledge and skills in the co-creation of innovative ideas (Cialdini, 2009).

1. Referent power derives from membership in groups where beliefs and behaviours are shared, and compliance is seen as 'fitting in'. Referent power is given by others to those they hold in high regard and based on their

perceptions of one's worth or influence (Cialdini, 2009). Cialdini (2009) refers to this as the influencing principle of social proof, stating that employees will emulate those they hold in high regard and thus be more engaged and committed in their tasks.

2. Expert power (Cialdini, 2009) is gained by having and demonstrating specific and unique knowledge and skills. Trust and influence can be built by developing others through sharing these skills and knowledge. However, this power is dependent on the level of perceived expertise (Cialdini, 2009). Employees will need to continually update and improve their knowledge and skills to retain this power. Those who identify their strengths and unique knowledge, or skills can use them to develop their expertise power as the start of their self-empowerment journey. Yarberry & Sims, (2021) suggest that employees who work remotely rely on their cognitive skills to empower themselves through learning and networking to build their influence.

Cialdini, (2021) is of the opinion that expert power can be used to influence others by building the influencing skill of reciprocity.

2.8.7 Influence

Where power is possessed, influence is exerted (Zaaiman, 2020). Influence is the capability to shape the belief, opinions, and actions of others. Cialdini (2009) suggests that influence is the ability to persuade others. There are seven types of influence identified by Cialdini (2021); reciprocity, commitment or consistency, social proof, authority, liking, scarcity and unity. These types of influence, when linked to the power bases discussed above, can be used to develop self-empowerment.

The principle of *commitment* states that a task or promise is more likely to be completed successfully once an employee has committed to it publicly. Employees want to be seen as consistent because it influences how others perceive them. Consistency is not only measured where words are followed by actions, but also by stable emotional behaviour and transparent multi-directional communication.

Demonstrating consistency allows self-empowered employees to build trust and influence (Cialdini, 2021).

The principle of *social proof* states that employees will follow the actions and beliefs of the majority of their team or group in an effort to 'fit in' (Cialdini, 2021). This links to groupthink, where members will embrace the consensus of the group without question (Hastie and Sunstein, 2015). The danger with having a strong leader or a strong bond within the group is that individuality, diversity, and creativity may be stifled (Hastie and Sunstein, 2015). Self-empowered employees will need to encourage individual creativity and experimentation to generate innovative thinking.

The principle of *liking* states that employees are more likely to listen to those that they like. Liking is based on sharing similar characteristics, values, or purpose (Cialdini, 2021). The principle of *authority* states that figures of authority can influence others because of their position, uniform, or level of authority. Positional power is often used to exert this influence (Hastie and Sunstein, 2015). However, employees are also able to develop this skill through their social media engagement, knowledge, and expertise (Cialdini, 2021).

The principle of *scarcity* states that services and products have a greater perceived value the more difficult it is to acquire them. Self-empowered employees can use this principle to motivate others to build their personal mastery (Cialdini, 2021). The principle of *unity* states that employees want to be part of a team. Shared experiences, expertise, and co-creating solutions and opportunities connect members through strengthening relationships and trust (Cialdini, 2021).

The principle of *reciprocity* states that when employees are given knowledge, skills or support, they feel obligated to the provider (Cialdini, 2021). Self-empowered employees will be able to use their power of expertise to influence their networks, and they will also exert influence through informational power by disseminating knowledge and building skills in others (Hastie and Sunstein, 2015). This influencing skill of

reciprocity is a powerful tool when wanting to influence and get agreement from others (Cialdini, 2021).

The researcher explored any links between power, influence, and the constructs that emerged through interviews to identify potential proficiencies required for employees to empower themselves.

2.8.8 Leadership Competencies required for 2025

The workplace landscape is expected to undergo significant transformations by 2025 due to rapid technological advancements, globalisation, and changing work dynamics (OECD, 2019; WEF, 2023). As a result, certain competencies will become increasingly important for employees to remain relevant and competitive in this changing business environment. The World Economic Forum (2023) suggests that based on these potential changes employees will need to be self-aware and understand their areas for growth and development. Employees will also need to be self-motivated, actively seek knowledge, embrace challenges and focused on the continuous improvement of their knowledge and skills. As technology embeds itself into the workplace personal mastery will need to be driven by insatiable curiosity and an improved proficiency in the use of digital tools.

The most important competency for employees to be future ready is their ability to understand and demonstrate various types of thinking. Analytical thinking will help employees navigate 'big data' through critical analysis to identify trends. Informed insights will reduce risk and increase the success of data-driven decisions regarding innovations and problem-solving. Creative thinking will become more important as technology is imbedded in all areas of business. Employees will need to become innovative when developing opportunities of solutions and will need to be agile in embracing change. In addition, employees will need to view the work environment in a systemic manner, understanding the interconnectedness of all stakeholders and the consequences and unintended consequences of their decisions. Systems thinking therefore will enhance overall efficiency and profitability (Senge et al., 2011b).

Leadership will become more important than the level of authority where influencers demonstrate resilience and adaptability when quickly responding to change and uncertainties. Developing shared goals and vision will be driven by networks of knowledge workers where improved intercultural communication and trust will be built through empathy and active listening. Employees will be expected to take the initiative and guide others.

All these competencies identified by WEF (2023) are the competencies required of employees who want to empower themselves. Developing a positive attitude requires a change in thinking (Rock, 2007). This study suggests that, for employees to change their thinking, they will need to embrace and demonstrate the seven quantum skills.

2.9 TIPS Managerial Leadership Framework

Self-empowered employees are seen as influencers; meaning that they will demonstrate leadership elements even though they may not have the authority (Kendrick, 2004). According to Zohar (2016), today's leaders must stay relevant by leading from the edge of chaos. Successful businesses today focus on fast, not big, and their leaders must understand and manage complexity by continuously probing, thinking, and engaging with employees, sharing leadership, and creating a sense of purpose (Zohar, 2016; Da Vinci Institute, 2019). Businesses are becoming decentralised, and networking is more important than ever (Fanoro et al., 2021). Critically reviewing businesses and effectively developing and managing networks are essential steps in self-empowerment (Peart, 2019; Gauri, 2019).

The TIPS Managerial Leadership Framework is an effective sense-making tool for leaders and employees as it encourages employees to challenge their current reality and develop new, emergent thoughts, perspectives and understanding (Da Vinci Institute, 2019). TIPS stands for technology, innovation, people and systems. The Da Vinci Institute has developed the framework over 28 years, based on 150 metrics and it includes a sample of 1900 emerging, small, medium and large enterprises. The framework assists in creating systemic, agile and innovative solutions designed to

engage all stakeholders (Da Vinci Institute, 2019). A graphic representation of the TIPS Managerial Leadership Framework is given below.

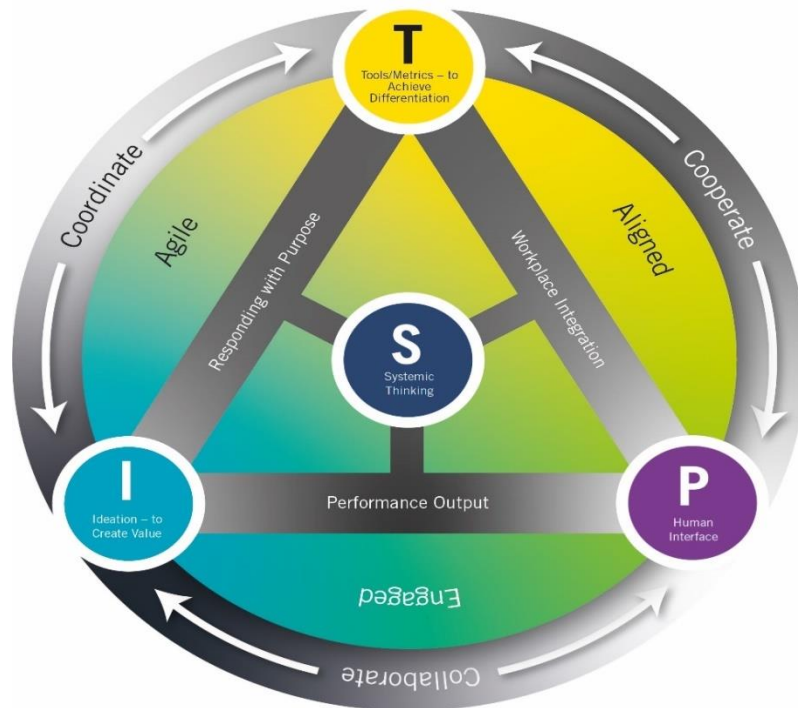


Figure 2-13: TIPS - Elements and emerging behaviours

Da Vinci Institute (2019)

2.9.1 Elements of TIPS

The elements of the TIPS Managerial Leadership Framework are the management of *technology* (which are the tools people and organisations use to improve performance and gain a competitive advantage), the management of *innovation* (the process of creating, developing, and communicating value-adding ideas), and the management of *people* (the human interface) (Da Vinci Institute, 2019).

2.9.1.1 Management of technology

The management of technology relates to the planning, design, optimisation, operation, and control of technology in a business to gain a competitive advantage.

This advantage could include using tools such as computers and handheld devices to deliver products, processes, and services more efficiently, faster, and at a lower cost. The focus is on creating a sustainable, competitive advantage through differentiation or cost leadership (Shane , 2008; Da Vinci Institute, 2019).

2.9.1.2 Management of innovation

The management of innovation is the management of the process of creating, developing and communicating ideas. These ideas only become innovative when customers see value in the product, process, or service offered and are prepared to pay for it. This is generally termed the 'commercialisation' of an idea. The value could be either commercial or social (Gershon, 2018; Da Vinci Institute, 2019).

2.9.1.3 Management of people

The management of people is the management of business processes to engage people. This process includes recruitment and retention, training and development, rewards and recognition, and most importantly, the sharing of knowledge and leadership. The human element relates to all stakeholders, from staff to customers to suppliers and shareholders (Da Vinci Institute, 2019).

2.9.1.4 Management of systems

All of these elements, i.e., technology, innovation and people, need to be viewed through a systemic lens regarding their interconnectedness related to the following systems (Senge et al., 2011a; Da Vinci Institute, 2019).

1. Micro systems refer to the environment where employees experience interpersonal relations such as family relationships, personal relationships, and job designation.
2. Meso systems refer to the social or work environment where employees engage in multiple relationships.

3. Exo systems refer to the environment containing the employee in which events that do not involve the employee, such as management decisions, affect the employee.
4. Macro systems refer to a cultural environment which includes political and/or religious beliefs.

Effectively using these elements help employees develop innovative and holistic solutions for their business (Da Vinci Institute, 2019).

2.9.2 Emerging behaviours

When leaders effectively use the identified leadership competencies and practices to manage the TIPS elements of technology, people, innovation, and systems thinking discussed above, it encourages their employees to behave in a certain way. These desirable behaviours of engagement, alignment, and agility are called 'emerging behaviours' (Da Vinci Institute, 2019) as they emerge when people are led competently by their leaders.

Combining the effective management of two specific elements in a systemic way will promote a specific emerging behaviour as discussed below:

Engagement emerges when innovation and people are managed in a transparent and open manner, and this often leads to greater performance and output (Kotter, 2008; Senge et al., 2011a).

Alignment emerges through managing technology, such as tools, processes, and systems, to empower people to improve their performance (Da Vinci Institute, 2019). According to Belanger (2000), technology can influence how we behave and communicate, which in turn influences workplace integration.

Agility according to Senge (2011a) emerges when the ideas that are created and developed through the ideation process are converted into innovations through managing and optimising technology or business tools (Da Vinci Institute, 2019).

These emerging behaviours aim to create a sustainable competitive advantage (Da Vinci Institute, 2019). As Kim and Maubourgne (2019) suggest, businesses should not focus on competing, but rather concentrate on capturing the target market by making competitors irrelevant. They use the analogy of swimming in a blue ocean (Kim and Maubourgne, 2019).

2.9.3 Managerial leadership practises

To take advantage of these emerging behaviours, leaders must successfully and efficiently demonstrate certain managerial leadership practices and competencies (Da Vinci Institute, 2019). The TIPS Managerial Leadership Framework identifies various specific practices and competencies demonstrated by successful leaders, as shown in Figure 2-14 below (Da Vinci Institute, 2019).

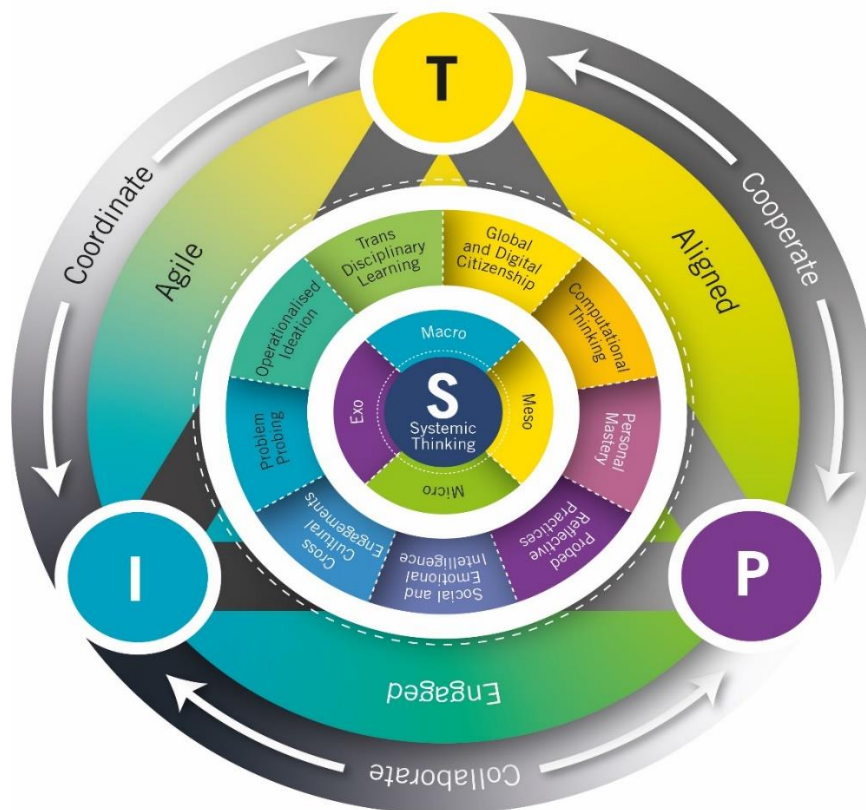


Figure 2-14: TIPS – Managerial leadership practices

Da Vinci Institute (2019)

Managerial leadership practices refer to specific actions organisations and business leaders take to establish and manage effective working relationships (Da Vinci Institute, 2019). Co-creating results and developing creative, networked workplaces is termed a Wirearchy (Husband, 2013) which, according to this author, are built on trust, knowledge, personal integrity, and a 'safe to fail' collaborative learning culture enabled by interconnecting people and technology. Employees feel free to express themselves in their work and develop unique solutions and processes (Husband, 2013).

Managers must seek to create engagement, agility and alignment.

2.9.3.1 Practices to develop Engagement

In creating engagement, which is the emerging behaviour between the management of people and ideation, three practices are required by leaders (Da Vinci Institute, 2019).

1. Reflective practise

The first is the need to probe reflective practices, which means leaders must think about how they think. Leaders are required not only to challenge their thinking but also the thinking of those around them (Da Vinci Institute, 2019). By challenging their follower's thinking, leaders are empowering them to develop their own unique solutions.

2. Social and emotional intelligence

The second practice needed to create engagement is social and emotional intelligence. Goleman and Boyatzis (2017) state that you must understand yourself before understanding others. The level of a person's EQ is directly related to their ability to understand others and collaborate with them (Stein and Book, 2011). This is critical if leaders are to develop trust and engagement.

According to Goleman (1995), one of the world's leading EQ academics, EQ is focused on five abilities. First is the ability to confidently recognise your own emotions and their impact on others; and second is the ability to control your emotions through managing disruptive impulses, showing honesty and integrity, taking responsibility, and being open to change and new ideas.

3. Develop SMART goals

The third is the ability to motivate yourself through developing clear SMART goals, having a positive, continuous improvement attitude and demonstrating resilience (Da Vinci Institute, 2019). SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely (O'Neill, 2000).

4. Show empathy

Fourth is the ability to show empathy through understanding relationships, reading emotions, and creating opportunities for others. This is the ability to demonstrate good social skills through building solid relationships and networks (Goleman 1995; Da Vinci Institute, 2019). These social skills include constructs such as influence, managing conflict, transparent communication, and collaboration (Goleman 1995; Da Vinci Institute, 2019).

5. Cross-cultural engagement

Cross-cultural engagement means managing diversity as a competitive advantage (Da Vinci Institute, 2019). A business' only real, sustainable competitive advantage in today's VUCA world is their people (Priyadharshany and Sujathat, 2015). Competitors can quickly copy products or services; however, having a diverse team enhances that competitive advantage because the more diverse the team is, the more 'lenses' can be used to identify solutions to problems and opportunities (Da Vinci Institute, 2019).

2.9.3.2 Practices to develop Agility

In creating agility, which is the emerging behaviour between the management of innovation and technology, leaders also require three practices.

1. Problem solving

The first practice is problem probing. Three of Da Vinci's principles relate to problem probing (Da Vinci Institute, 2019). The first is *curiosita*, being insatiably curious, always asking questions and searching for the 'truth'. Probing problems allows one to challenge current thinking and solutions to identify the root causes. This willingness to embrace ambiguity, *sfumato*, will often take leaders into unknown territory. This also accords with quantum thinking, i.e., holding two opposing views at the same time (Collins, D. 2015). There is a good chance that mistakes will be made while exploring opportunities and testing solutions. *Dimostrazione* refers to leaders creating a safe-to-fail environment to encourage innovation (Da Vinci Institute, 2019).

2. Operationalised ideation

The second practice required to create agility is operationalised ideation (Da Vinci Institute, 2019). Creative ideas, generated through ideation, are tested and converted into innovations for which customers will pay. Leaders encourage experimentation and measure the implementation of ideas (Da Vinci Institute, 2019).

3. Trans-disciplinary learning

The third practice required for agility is trans-disciplinary learning (Da Vinci Institute, 2019). The benefit of exploring the diverse problems and opportunities within the business, through integrating experiences and views across multiple disciplines, allows leaders to generate new knowledge and understanding (Da Vinci Institute, 2019). This process also will lead to developing a sustainable competitive advantage for the business (Senge et al., 2011a).

2.9.3.3 Practices to develop Alignment

In creating alignment, which is the emerging behaviour between the management of technology and people, three leadership practices have been identified (Da Vinci Institute, 2019).

1. Global and digital citizenship

The first practice is global and digital citizenship (Da Vinci Institute, 2019). Watanabe-Crockett (2019) defines a global digital citizen as a leader who is responsible and ethical, leveraging technology to grow a sense of community on a global scale through collaborative networking and empathy.

This mindful leadership requires leaders to demonstrate four behaviours. The first behaviour is digital self-governance, keeping others safe from harm online and offline. The second behaviour is to show others how to navigate the internet safely and ethically. The third behaviour is giving back to communities using technology in the form of social media and crowdfunding. Lastly, leaders create digital spaces where global solutions can be co-created to support a sustainable planet (Da Vinci Institute, 2019).

2. Computational thinking

The second practice required for alignment is computational thinking (Da Vinci Institute, 2019). According to the International Telecommunication Union (2021), there was an average of 4.9 billion people using the internet daily in 2019. Google processed an average of 3.8 million searches a minute, and internet users will generate 7.4 zettabytes by the end of 2021 (Finance Online, 2020).

As a result of the speed at which the world is changing, and this enormous amount of data, leaders need to be able to quickly sift through the data when looking for solutions or opportunities. Computational thinking consists of four steps to simplify this process (Da Vinci Institute, 2019). First, break the big problem into small, easy-to-manage mini problems (decomposition), then remove the mini problems that do not require solving or that will inhibit your ability to develop a solution for multiple mini problems

(abstraction). Then look for patterns such as repeating causes or solutions and finally develop step-by-step instructions for each solution (algorithmic design) (Da Vinci Institute, 2019).

3. Personal mastery

The third leadership practice required for agility is personal mastery (Da Vinci Institute, 2019). Leaders in today's fast-moving world need to have focus, vision, purpose, belief in themselves, a drive for continuous improvement, and self-knowledge. One of Senge's (2011b) five disciplines is personal mastery, demonstrated by confident leaders grounded in the present, showing a sense of purpose, embracing change, and driving continuous learning: both in themselves and others.

2.9.4 Managerial leadership competencies

Managerial leadership competencies are the skills and behaviours used by leaders to improve performance and encourage the behaviours of engagement, agility and alignment, as demonstrated through the managerial leadership practices discussed above. The TIPS Managerial Leadership Framework identifies six competencies shown in Figure 18 below.

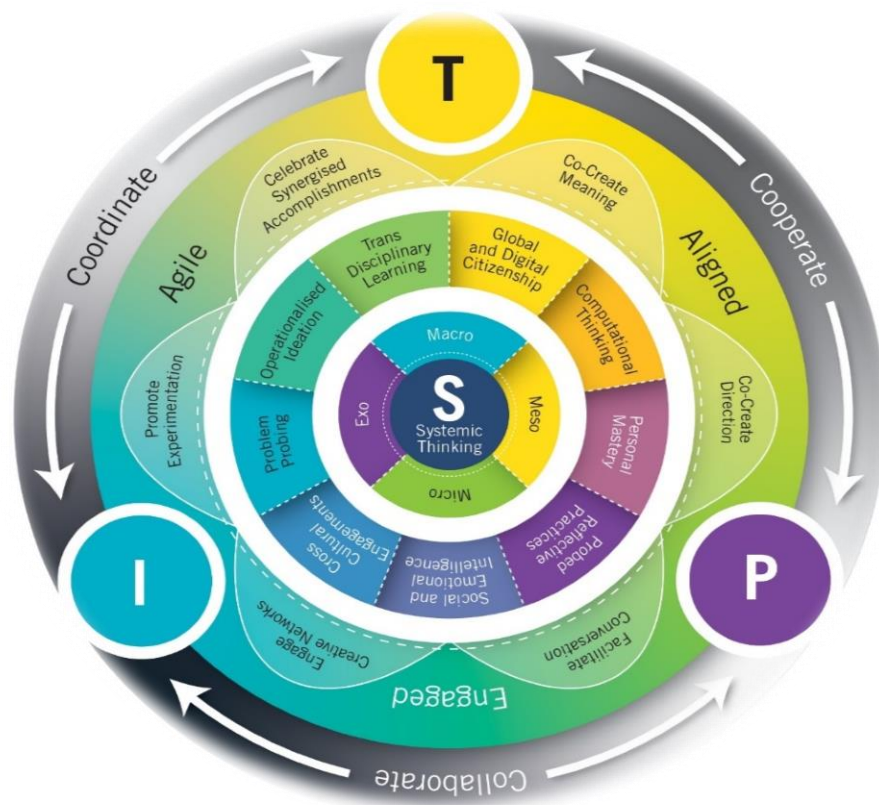


Figure 2-15: TIPS - Leadership competencies

Da Vinci Institute (2019)

2.9.4.1 Competencies to create alignment

There are two competencies required to demonstrate the alignment practices (Da Vinci Institute, 2019).

1. Co-creating meaning

The first is co-creating meaning, which the Japanese call *Ikigai*, loosely translated as 'what makes life worthwhile' (Hashimoto, 2000). When businesses and employees have a common purpose, it creates synergy, which in turn creates positive energy leading to alignment and integration of the workplace (Da Vinci Institute, 2019).

2. Co-creating direction

The second competency is co-creating direction, where leaders and followers co-create their vision, mission and values (Da Vinci Institute, 2019). They then use these as the guiding principles in developing shared goals and strategies.

2.9.4.2 Competencies to co-create engagement

There are two managerial leadership competencies used to demonstrate the engagement practices:

1. Competency to facilitate conversation

Leaders who develop a safe space for transparent, multi-directional, open and honest discussions create collaboration and engagement (Da Vinci Institute, 2019). This competency, linked to shared leadership practices such as moving decision-making to the lowest possible level, creates knowledge sharing, accountability and holistic solutions (Liker, 2004).

2. Engage creative networks

The second managerial leadership competency is to engage creative networks (Da Vinci Institute, 2019). Developing and engaging in creative networks builds mutual trust and encourages sharing knowledge and skills. This competency, in turn, leads to a culture of continuous improvement, which strengthens engagement and collaboration (Da Vinci Institute, 2019).

2.9.4.3 Competencies to demonstrate agile practices

There are two managerial leadership competencies used to demonstrate agile practices (Da Vinci Institute, 2019).

1. Promote experimentation

The first is to promote experimentation (Da Vinci Institute, 2019). Managerial leaders must create safe spaces for actively experimenting with creative ideas developed through the ideation process to develop innovations. Taking risks in a safe environment promotes self-reflection, stimulates adaptive thinking, and encourages innovative solutions (Da Vinci Institute, 2019).

2. Celebrate accomplishments

The second managerial competency linked to agility is to celebrate synergised accomplishments (Da Vinci Institute, 2019). This process follows 3-steps; firstly, give recognition immediately, secondly, do it with passion, and thirdly, advertise it widely. Recognition is a powerful motivator as rewards lead to creativity, agility, and a 'winning' team mentality (Da Vinci Institute, 2019).

2.9.5 *Business realities*

Managerial leaders will find themselves in one of three business realities (Da Vinci Institute, 2019).

The first is the coordinated workplace, which is results and deadline driven. A single individual directs knowledge and actions using positional power where communication is one-way (Jarche, 2019; Da Vinci Institute, 2019). The collaborative workplace is where a central figure introduces ideas, which a group of knowledge workers tests. There is two-way communication in the collaborative workplace, but the central figure makes the final decision (Jarche, 2019; Da Vinci Institute, 2019).

The cooperative workplace is where knowledge workers volunteer to share their knowledge and skills through multi-level and multi-directional, transparent communication for the good of the group (Jarche, 2019; Da Vinci Institute, 2019). Where the first two workplaces are hierarchical, all participants in the cooperative workplace have equal authority and responsibility in achieving the common goals (Da Vinci Institute, 2019).

2.10 Conclusion

The literature review focused on self-empowerment through the concepts of power and influence, the idea of empowerment, and the concept of engagement. Quantum thinking and leadership concepts were discussed, related to how they enable or retard performance. Chapter 5, the Conceptual Framework, discusses the framework proposed by the researcher based on literature reviewed and the constructs identified through analysing the primary data (i.e., the findings of the research conducted – Chapter 4).

The following chapter, Chapter 3, comprises a discussion regarding the orientation and paradigms of the study as well as the research design, methodology, and assumptions.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In Figure 3-1 below, the researcher presents a visual map of the interconnectedness of the research concepts. Chapter 3 discusses these concepts and their linkages. The researcher focuses on the research design, which is considered the blueprint of the study (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). In the research methodology, the researcher expands on how the study was conducted following the blueprint.

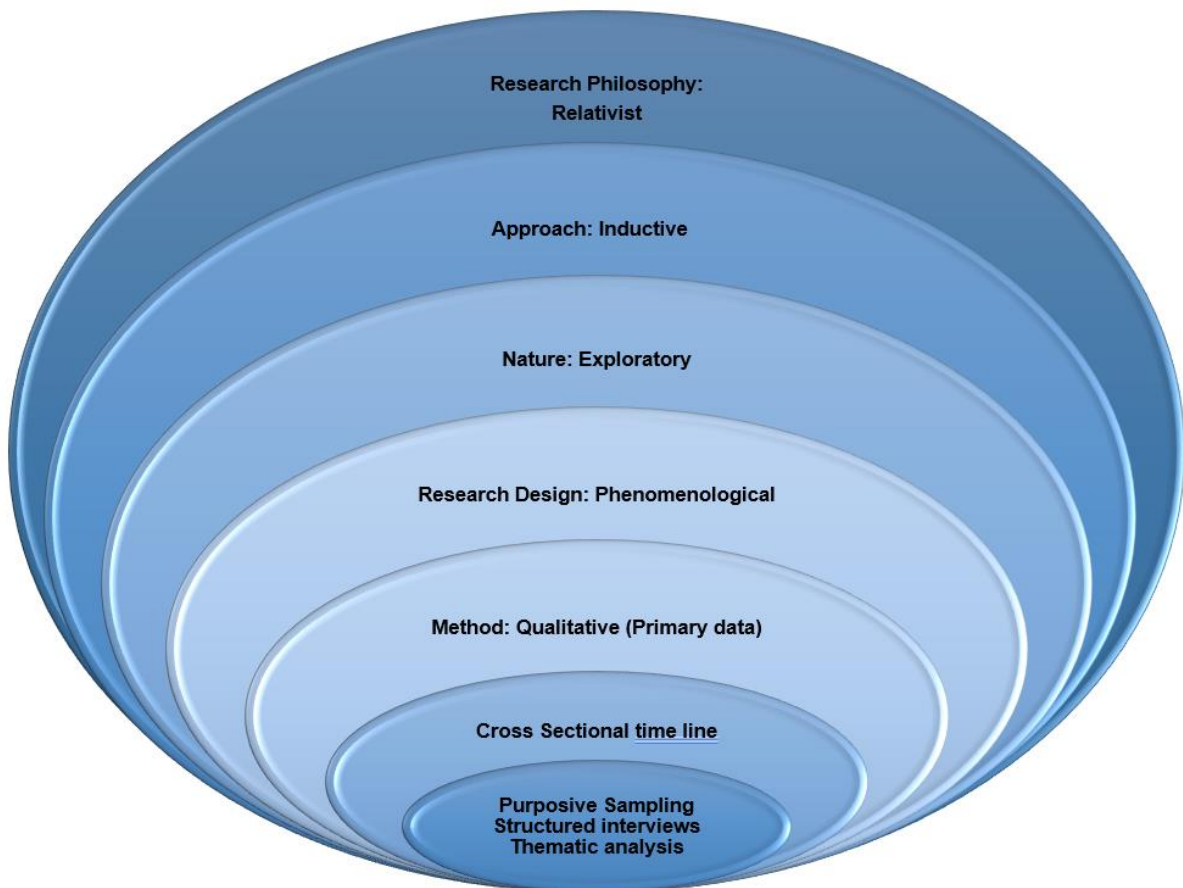


Figure 3-1: Interconnectivity of research concepts in the research design

Adapted from Sunders et al. (2015)

This study aimed to explore how the research participants' perceptions, perspectives, and understanding of self-empowerment influenced their behaviour (Gilbert and Gandhi, 2012) and willingness to embrace self-empowerment. It also aims to reveal how the participants' workplace culture influenced their engagement and performance. The findings were used to develop a framework on self-empowerment (Chapter 5) that could be used by employees as self-empowered employees deliver higher, sustainable, productivity and a potential competitive advantage (Kirkman and Rosen, 2010; Cameron and Green, 2009).

Structured interviews were conducted with mid-level managers who fall in band D in the Paterson Grading System (Cotter, 2015), and the findings were analysed using GridSuite software (Fromm, 2017). These are further explained in the section on research instruments.

The researcher chose to use a qualitative, exploratory research design, where understanding the employee experience related to self-empowerment through structured interviews aims to increase the body of knowledge on self-empowerment. These research methods link to both his ontology and epistemology. The study aimed to explore the relationship between thought and action to explain the emerging behaviours of agility, engagement, and alignment, based on the constructs uncovered in the research (Chapter 4). The researcher used inductive reasoning to explain the constructs (Bryman and Bell, 2015) which emerged through the empirical data collected (Merton, 1973). Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012) refer to this as 'connecting the dots' in research.

3.2 Aim of research

This study sought to develop a conceptual framework that enables employees to empower themselves within the workplace to influence others to co-create and deliver meaningful contributions to the business. The study also explored whether employees who use quantum thinking (Collins, 2011; Zohar, 2016; Shelton, 2012) feel inspired or willing and able to empower themselves. For this study, the term 'employee' refers to

mid-level managers who fall in band D in the Paterson Grading System (Cotter, 2015). This is explained further in the section that deals with the research instruments.

3.3 Research problem

As stated in Chapter 1, the research problem that this study intended to address is the lack of a specific framework that employees can use to empower themselves within a workplace in order to co-create and deliver meaningful contributions to the business.

3.4 Research question

3.4.1 Main research question

The original question was, 'Why do some employees not take empowerment opportunities when offered to them?' However, based on the literature reviews and conversations held with influential business people, the question the researcher amended the research question as follows:

How are employees able to empower themselves within a workplace in order to influence others to co-create and deliver meaningful contributions to the business?

3.4.2 Objectives

In addition to answering the main research problem, the study had the following objectives:

1. Objective 1: Evaluate whether employee motivation is driven by a purpose.
2. Objective 2: Explore what constructs employees' link to their experience of self-empowerment.
3. Objective 3: Assess whether employees who use quantum thinking are self-empowered.
4. Objective 4: Explore the links between self-empowerment and leadership.

5. Objective 5: Assess what level of influence self-empowered employees exert in the workplace.

Linked to the aim and objectives of the study were the assumptions the researcher made, which are discussed in a later section of this chapter.

3.4.3 *Secondary research questions*

In line with the primary research question and the objectives of the study, the researcher sought to answer the following secondary questions:

1. How does a purpose drive employee motivation?
2. What constructs are linked to self-empowerment?
3. How does quantum thinking lead to self-empowerment?
4. How does self-empowerment link to leadership?
5. What influence do self-empowered employees exert in the workplace?

This is shown in the following table.

Table 3-1: Research links between aims and objectives

<p>Research Problem: The research problem is the lack of a specific framework that employees can use to empower themselves within a workplace in order to influence others to co-create and deliver meaningful contributions to the business.</p>	
<p>Aim: The aim of this study is to develop a framework that enables employees to empower themselves within a workplace in order to influence others to co-create and deliver meaningful contributions to the business.</p>	<p>Primary Research Question: How are employees able to empower themselves within a workplace in order to influence others to co-create and deliver meaningful contributions to the business?</p>
<p>Objectives:</p> <p><i>Objective 1:</i> Evaluate whether employee motivation is driven by a purpose.</p> <p><i>Objective 2:</i> Explore what constructs employees link to their experience of self-empowerment.</p> <p><i>Objective 3:</i> Assess whether employees who use quantum thinking are self-empowered.</p> <p><i>Objective 4:</i> Explore the links between self-empowerment and leadership.</p> <p><i>Objective 5:</i> Assess what level of influence self-empowered employees exert in the workplace.</p>	<p>Secondary Research Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ How does a purpose drive employee motivation? ✓ What constructs are linked to self-empowerment? ✓ How does quantum thinking lead to self-empowerment? ✓ How does self-empowerment link to leadership? ✓ What influence do self-empowered employees exert in the workplace?

3.5 Research orientation and paradigm

The researcher's worldview is transformative in nature. Those who hold this world view continually re-evaluate ideas and actions as new knowledge is gained and analysed (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). This world view is a fluid process of ongoing learning, critical reflection, dialogue and action that can lead to positive change and a more critical and reflective approach to learning and work. The researcher's actions

are based on a basic set of beliefs of exploring all possible solutions and 'doing what works best', gained over 30 years in the workplace. This worldview allowed the researcher to select methods and techniques best suited to explore the research question and achieve the research aim (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). In this study, the researcher's exploratory nature and transformative worldview, led to him using structured interviews to gain insight into the respondent's personal experiences by aiming to elicit specific constructs related to self-empowerment.

Cupchik (2001) argues that positivist and constructivist ontologies, while approaching phenomena in different ways, are similar in that they are deconstructive. They break the flow of events to selectively focus and analyse specific phenomena, resulting in a source of bias and distortion. Heisenberg's principle states that phenomena are transformed in the act of measurement (as cited by Cupchik, 2001).

The research paradigm of this study is one of relativism. It suggests that there is a difference between reality and people's perceptions of reality (Bisman, as cited in Krauss, 2005), and this 'reality' of perceptions has an element of plasticity (Churchland, 1979). This aligns with the researcher's interpretivist epistemology, where he seeks objectivity through studying the real world to gain empirical knowledge through a mixture of inductive reasoning and exploration (Outhwaite, as cited by Krause, 2005). As such, knowledge and understanding are co-created by a researcher and the research participants during a study.

3.5.1 Ontological aspect

Blaikie (1993) defines ontology as 'the science or study of being' as it deals with the nature of reality. The collection of beliefs reflects the researcher's interpretation of what constitutes the 'truth'. The researcher's ontology', as defined by Foucault and Nietzsche (1997, as cited by Yates and Hiles, n.d.), is his continuous study and questioning of presumed truths to see if they are what we take them to be. His ontology is, therefore, one of a relativist.

3.5.2 Epistemological aspect

The researcher is aware of the challenges in the multi-directional communication of relevant knowledge between management and employees and how knowledge is perceived (Senge et al., 2011a; Harvey, Mitchell, Jones and Knight, 2021). He has an interpretivist epistemological approach where knowledge is gained and transferred through practical application and experimentation (Belanger and Van Slyke, 2000). As such, the researcher had to hold a subjective viewpoint while devising the research instruments, collecting, and analysing the empirical qualitative data so as not to insert his bias into the findings (Tucci, 2015).

3.5.3 Axiology

According to the and Saunders et al. (2016), axiology is the study of the nature of values and value judgments. This study elicited constructs to create a shared understanding of employee self-empowerment. The conceptual framework the researcher developed, by identifying the constructs and their patterns which emanated from the participants during the research, and which will allow employees to contribute positively to their workplace, is presented in Chapter 5.

The conceptual framework will encourage employees to embrace the values of personal growth, resilience, collaboration and open-mindedness. In addition, learning to develop their quantum skills will assist employees in understanding the value of interconnectedness and embracing change. These values will influence employees alignment, engagement and agility as they empower themselves to be able to influence others to deliver meaningful contributions to the business.

3.6 Research design

The research question is stated as,

How are employees able to empower themselves to influence others in their workplace to co-create and deliver meaningful contributions to the business?

To best answer the research question, the researcher selected an exploratory, qualitative design based on his interpretivist philosophy and 'worldview'. This links to his interpretivist epistemology, where he sought to make sense of the elements and constructs that emerged when the research participants discussed their views and experiences of self-empowerment.

3.6.1 Exploratory study

Exploratory research is often conducted in a new area of enquiry in which the study aims to scope out the magnitude and extent of a particular phenomenon, problem or behaviour (Saunders et al., 2016). This would allow the researcher to develop insights and clarify his understanding of employee self-empowerment. The benefit of an exploratory study is that it is adaptive and structured in nature, which means that the study direction can change depending on the data collected.

This exploratory study collected primary data in the form of the participant's views on self-empowerment. From this, various elements and constructs emerged which the researcher then used when analysing the findings with a view to presenting a new framework for self-empowerment. Identified patterns may explain or recognise causal links (Yin, 2009), which could enhance or inhibit self-empowerment.

3.6.2 Phenomenological design

The phenomenological research strategy collects and clearly reflects the research participant's experiences related to a phenomenon, free from interpretation by the researcher. Nicholls (2019) calls this the participant's 'life-world' to which she attaches the concept of intentionality. Intentionality, or reflective awareness, has been the researcher's own experience related to the world; in this case, self-empowerment, which cannot be separated from thinking or experience. The use of the RepGrid can significantly reduce the impact of a researcher's bias on the collection and interpretation of the data (Jankowicz, 2004) – explained in section 3.8.2.

3.6.3 Cross-sectional study

This study is a cross-sectional study in which the phenomenon of employee self-empowerment was explored using two structured interviews for each participant. The research participants' views on self-empowerment have been developed over time, however, the elements and constructs that emerged from the interviews represent a 'snapshot' of their understanding of self-empowerment at the time of the interviews.

3.6.4 Mode of reasoning and enquiry

There are three approaches to reasoning listed by Saunders et al. (2016); namely deduction, induction, and abduction. The researcher's interpretivist philosophy led him to select an inductive approach to the research. Inductive reasoning uses specific observations, which are then applied to broad generalisations. In essence, inductive reasoning is used to develop theory.

Rich data are collected in a qualitative study and analysed to find patterns. The data collected in this study involved exploring the research participants' understanding of self-empowerment, and with new data, existing theories may be reviewed and modified and possibly a new theory built (Saunders et al., 2016).

The study starts with a broad focus on the research participant's understanding of self-empowerment during the structured interviews. The focus was then narrowed to identify the research participant's constructs of self-empowerment. These constructs assisted in developing a conceptual framework (Chapter 5) that future research will test and validate.

The researcher interacted with the research participants through co-creating their elements and constructs linked to their experiences of self-empowerment. The research attempted to understand why some employees hesitate to empower themselves when offered such opportunities. The mode of enquiry was qualitative, as the study explored the impact of the research participant's behaviour on self-empowerment, engagement, and performance (Van Manen, 2015).

3.7 Assumptions

The researcher made the following assumptions before proceeding with the research. He believes that the assumptions listed below were explored once the data were analysed and the results tabled (see subsequent chapters). The researcher attempted to compensate for any bias he may have had when gathering the primary data using the structured interviews he developed.

The data were tested to ensure validity through the design of the grid, clarifying the purpose and structure of the study, and guaranteeing anonymity and protection of the data (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

1. Assumption 1: All employees are willing and able to empower themselves.
2. Assumption 2: Employees who are continuously engaged in their workplace will feel more committed and empowered to influence their workplace.
3. Assumption 3: Transformation in the workplace can be achieved through quantum thinking to develop leadership. According to Womack and Jones (2010: 295), 'all that is needed is for someone to turn dreams into actions in the pursuit of perfection'.
4. Assumption 4: Management supports processes to develop employee empowerment and share leadership. According to Manz and Sims (as cited in Kirman and Rosen, 2010), leaders who allow employees to set their own performance and goals create more autonomy.
5. Employees that seek self-empowerment ask empowering questions (open-ended and thought provoking) that lead to action.

In relation to Assumption 5, by asking empowering questions, employees can empower themselves and others to reduce uncertainty by better understanding the current reality and identifying options to increase certainty. This links to the Da Vinci principles of *curiosita*, the insatiable curious approach to life; *sfumato*, being comfortable with not knowing; *demonstrazione*, learning from mistakes; and

connessione, the understanding of the interconnectedness of all things (as cited by Gelb, 2009).

3.8 Research instruments

This section discusses the research instrument used in this research study.

3.8.1 Paterson Job Grading System

The Paterson Job Grading System is a method where jobs are evaluated based on predefined criteria, and it analyses decision-making in tasks required for each job (Paterson, 2020). It categorises jobs into six groups that are graded and grouped into two to three sub-grades. These factors include stress, individual tolerance, length of employment, and number of responsibilities. These all correspond to organisational levels. The six grades, also known as bands, also define pay scales (Paterson, 2020).

Table 3-2: The Paterson Job Grading System

Paterson (2020)

BAND	TYPE	TITLE	GRADE	KIND	TITLE
F	Policy making	Top Management	10 9	Coordinating Policy	President (MD) Vice-President (Ex Director)
E	Programming	Senior Management	8 7	Coordinating Programming	General Manager Admin Manager
D	Interpretive	Middle Management	6 5	Coordinating Interpretive	Department Manager Superintendent
C	Routine	Skilled	4 3	Coordinating Routine	Supervisor Technician
B	Automatic	Semi-skilled	2 1	Coordinating Automatic	Chargehand Machinist
A	Defined	Unskilled	0	Defined	Labourer

The research participants of this study were Band D, or middle management employees. Tabrizi (2014) believes that middle managers are the most influential managers in leading change in an organisation. These managers are the link between the Executive who develop business strategy, and operational employees who execute the plan. The researcher posits that they are best placed to offer a balanced and unbiased view of employee self-empowerment at all levels of the business. This instrument was used to select the sample group of participants.

3.8.2 Repertory Grid interview tool

The Repertory Grid (RepGrid) is a set of rating scales which uses the individual's own constructs as the subject matter on which ratings are carried out. It is a form of structured interviewing that arrives at a precise description uncontaminated by the interviewer's viewpoint (Jankowicz, 2004). The interviewer asks research participants to differentiate between simple experiences rather than asking abstract questions.

This process provides a tangible view of how the research participants position themselves. According to Fromm (2017), knowing a person's constructs will help identify and understand their actions. The RepGrid enabled the researcher to create a more holistic view of the research problem and identify trends that could lead to 'future-proofing' the desired results. This instrument was the primary data collection instrument. An example of a RepGrid used is shown below. Please note this grid is just an example from the pilot study conducted and was not used as part of the data analysis in this study.

Topic: Employee Self-Empowerment
 Elements: Elicited by the interviewer
 Constructs: Elicited by the interviewer
 Ratings: 5 point scale (1 = Emergent pole & 5 = Implicit pole)

Construct: Emergent Pole #1		Elements										Construct: Implicit Pole #2	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
1	Lack of confidence	5	3	3	3	4	5	5	4			1	Belief in self
2	Has expert knowledge	2	3	4	5	3	1	2	1			2	Is a generalist
3	Focus on task and customers	3	4	2	4	3	4	5	4			3	High interpersonal skills
4	Lack of analysis (1 dimensional)	5	4	4	1	4	5	3	4			4	Good critical thinking skills
5	Immature (EQ)	2	4	3	1	2	3	5	5			5	Authentic (EQ)
6	Lack of self-esteem (Stiving)	2	2	3	4	3	4	5	4			6	High self-esteem (Arrived)
7	Judgemental	2	5	4	3	2	4	5	4			7	Open to others opinions
8	Self-centred (Narrow exposure)	3	3	2	1	3	4	4	2			8	World centric (Broad exposure)
9	Resist change	1	2	2	1	1	2	2	2			9	Embrace change
10												10	

Elements		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	Tshepo										
2	Peter										
3	Niradna (Task focused)										
4	Lindiwe										
5	Nkozazana										
6	Niel										
7	Bongani										
8	Steven (Black sheep)										
9											
10											

Element Questions: 1: What colleagues come to mind when you think about self empowerment?
 2: Of the three identified colleagues which two are similar and why?
 3: How is the third colleague different from the other two?

Figure 3-2: Example of the RepGrid

Jankowicz (2004)

3.8.3 GridSuite software

The GridSuite software was used for the data analysis. Fromm (2017) designed the GridSuite software to produce, manage, and analyse data collected by the RepGrid interview tool.

3.8.4 QDA Miner software

The Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) Miner software was developed by Provalis Research in 2004 as a computer-assisted data analysis tool to help researchers code and analyse qualitative data. QDA Miner is specifically designed for content analysis.

Researchers such as Creswell (2018) suggest that computer-assisted data analysis tools such as QDA Miner allow researchers a more intimate understanding of the data, thus leading to a better analysis.

3.9 Population and sampling

3.9.1 Population

The population comprised mid-level managers from small, mid and large South African companies who had participated in the TT100 competition, run for the past 30 years by the Da Vinci Institute in conjunction with the Department of Science and Technology (TT100, 2022). Competing businesses are selected to participate in the competition based on their ability to create a competitive advantage by creatively managing Technology, Innovation, People or Systems (the categories in the competition) in their companies.

The winners are identified as those companies that are judged to manage these elements most effectively to create a competitive advantage. According to Broaddus (as cited by Reisman, 2019) and Da Vinci (TT100, 2018), managing these categories suggests a different, unrestricted level of thinking, which this study intended to explore related to self-empowerment.

3.9.2 Sample

Although qualitative research sampling could employ both non-probability and probability techniques, the researcher chose to use a purposive sampling method to select the sample. A phenomenological research design lends itself to the researcher selecting the research participants in order to achieve the aim and objectives of the study. Although single sources of data each have their weaknesses, the RepGrid allows for a more robust data collection instrument to be designed (Jankowicz, 2004).

Fifteen companies were purposefully selected from the TT100 competition winners' population by identifying five small businesses, five mid-sized businesses and five

large companies that had won in each of the four categories over the past five years, i.e., Management of Technology, Management of Innovation, Management of People, and the Management of Systemic Thinking.

For this research, the size of the business was measured using the number of full-time employees and total annual turnover. Therefore, small companies were classified as having a maximum of 50 full-time employees with a maximum total turnover of R5 million, medium-size companies had a maximum of 250 employees with a maximum annual turnover of R10 million, and large companies had 250 employees and an annual turnover in excess of R10 million.

The sample group comprised one mid-level manager (Paterson Band D – explained in the previous section under research instruments) drawn from each of the 15 companies identified. Each research participant was purposefully selected. The researcher obtained a list of mid-level managers from each of the 15 companies and selected the employee number reflected in the middle (median) of the list. This resulted in 15 participants. However, data saturation was reached after 12 interviews, but a further three interviews were conducted to confirm that data saturation had been reached. Boddy (2016) and Du Plooy-Cilliers, (2022) recognises that where there is a homogenous population data saturation can occur within 12 interviews. Thus, the sample size was 15 mid-level managers.

A representative sample group should mirror the thoughts and experiences of the selected population related. The selection of mid-level managers was because, according to Tabrizi (2014), these are the employees in organisations that drive change. They will also bring various 'lenses' that are used to view self-empowerment. These 'lenses' will lead to building a holistic conceptual framework (Chapter 5) and considering possible solutions to employee self-empowerment (Teddlie and Yu, 2007).

3.10 Data collection

To reduce the potential impact of the researcher's bias, it was essential for the data collection process in this study to allow participants to express their views in their own words without the constraints of fixed questions or the researcher attempting to guide the conversation. The open-ended, non-judgemental questioning process was only used to clarify the participants' meaning if it was unclear.

The RepGrid (explained in 3.10.2) was used as the data collection instrument around which a matrix was built for each research participant. The RepGrid required the researcher to guide the participant in developing their elements and constructs relating to the study. As such, they co-created the elements and constructs. For this reason, there was only one pre-prepared question (Jankowicz, 2004). The initial data collection plan required two one-hour interviews with each research participant, conducted on two sequential days,

The first structured interview was focused on ensuring the participants clearly understood the research, expectations, and ethical considerations. The participants' elements related to the topic were identified and listed in the matrix. The second structured interview was aimed at focusing on developing the participants' constructs related to the topic, recording them in the matrix, and comparing them with each element. The matrix (refer to Appendix 2) was used to simplify the collection and analysis of the data.

3.10.1 Pilot

A pilot was conducted to test the RepGrid instrument using three participants. These results are not included in the study. Several insights learnt from the pilot resulted in changes in the proposed questions and methodology. In the pilot, the first question asked the participants, 'What elements come to mind when you think about employee self-empowerment?' This question was meant to develop the elements used to elicit the constructs in the actual data collection phase.

During the second triage phase, when comparing the elements to elicit the constructs, the participants often used the elements identified in phrasing their constructs. The researcher was concerned that the first question influenced the development of the constructs, so he changed the question to 'What colleagues come to mind when you think of employee self-empowerment?'

The second insight was that the participants preferred to complete the process in one sitting, resulting in the interviews lasting approximately 90 minutes. The advantage was that all elements and opening discussions were still fresh in the interviewees' minds, which assisted them during the triad elicitation process.

3.10.2 Understanding the RepGrid terms

The topic that was discussed during the interviews was employee self-empowerment. During the structured interviews, the researcher guided the interviewee to develop their own elements and constructs.

Elements are defined as terms, examples or occurrences that research participants think best represent the topic (Jankowicz, 2004). Elements are usually mutually exclusive and expressed as nouns (describing words) or verbs ending in 'ing'. For example, if the topic was 'Leadership', the elements identified could be 'engaging employees' or 'a skilled communicator'.

The research question or qualifying statements could be used to suggest categories for the elements. In this study, the topic of 'Employee Self-Empowerment' was used to identify colleagues in the workplace. These elements were used to develop or discover an emergent and implicit **pole** for each construct. A **triad** of elements was systematically compared by asking which two were similar and how the third was different.

The **poles** were used to differentiate the elements according to similarity and dissimilarity. As such, the two poles were used to describe the extremes of the rating scale. The left pole, known as the emergent pole, described the similarity between

elements. The right pole, known as the implicit pole, described the dissimilarity between elements. An example of an emergent pole could be a 'transformational leader' when looking at the similarity between the two elements listed above. The implicit pole is then identified when the research participants are asked how the first two elements are different from the third element; 'results focused' and/or 'autocratic leader' may be suggested.

Constructs are defined as a personal unit of description or analysis related to a phenomenon (Jankowicz, 2004). A set of constructs organises a person's experiences, so they construct their subjective world which influences their behaviour (Fromm, 2017). Personal constructs are the differentiations of the elements identified by the poles. Essentially a construct is the research participant's attitude towards employee self-empowerment that is usually difficult to measure quantitatively but can be explained through the use of variables.

Each construct has two opposite or contrasting poles, the emergent and implicit poles, which show a clear relationship to the topic, and are appropriately articulated. In discovering the research participant's constructs, the researcher was able to clarify how they thought about the topic and what meaning they gave to the topic.

The **rating scale** consisted of five levels. Level 1 is articulated using the emerging pole, and level 5 is articulated using the implicit pole. The rating scale was used to express the views and experiences of the research participants towards employee self-empowerment using their own constructs where the elements were rated against each set of poles.

The rating of the element then showed the researcher what the participant thought about their experience related to employee self-empowerment. For example, the research participant was asked to rate (1 to 5) the element of 'engaging employees' against their identified constructs of 'transformational leader' (Rating 1) and 'autocratic leader' (Rating 5). Their rating would then be based on their experiences related to leadership.

3.10.3 The RepGrid procedural steps

Structured interviews were used to collect qualitative data from the research participants. These data were in the form of the research participants' elements/constructs, based on their experiences of employee self-empowerment. Each set of data was manually captured in a RepGrid matrix specific to the research participant (refer to Appendix 2). The research participants' elements and constructs were captured on a numerically sequenced RepGrid matrix, where the rating scales were completed for further analysis and comparison.

The researcher and the research participants agreed to discuss employee self-empowerment and to capture the data on the RepGrid analysis matrix (refer to Appendix 2). Thus, the researcher and the participants co-created and agreed on a set of **elements**, which were then reflected in the columns of the RepGrid matrix. The researcher encouraged the research participants to clarify their thinking around the elements, comparing them systematically. The researcher digitally recorded the interviews and saved them in a cloud account, protected by an alphanumeric password. The recordings will be deleted after five years. The recorded interviews were not transcribed, thus adding to the security of the data.

Taking a **triad** of elements (numbers 1, 3, and 5), the researcher then asked the research participant, 'Which two of these are the same in some way, and how do they differ from the third?' The participants were assured that the researcher was not looking for a 'correct' answer but rather how the participant perceived the elements.

The research participant was asked, 'What do the two elements have in common, as opposed to the third?' The commonality, known as the **emergent pole**, was captured on the left-hand side of the matrix. The converse, the reason the third element is different, known as the **implicit pole**, was captured in the same row on the right-hand side. The researcher ensured that the implicit pole was a truly bipolar expression, i.e., a pair of words or phrases which express a contrast. These poles thus reflected the research participants' **constructs**.

The constructs were captured using the research participant's own words. The researcher and research participant clarified the meaning of the constructs being expressed so that they made sense.

The constructs were presented on the RepGrid matrix as part of the rating scale, with the phrase on the left (emergent pole) describing the '1' end of the scale and the phrase on the right (implicit pole) describing the '5' end of the scale.

The research participants then allocated a score (1, 2, 3, 4 or 5) to the element against each set of constructs, and this was captured in the matrix. The score reflected which of the poles was closest to the participant's understanding of the element. The researcher continually reviewed the directionality of the rating.

The researcher elicited as many different constructs (views or perceptions) as the research participant held on employee self-empowerment. This was done by offering various triads of elements until a minimum of eight sets of constructs were identified. Generally, participants started to struggle with generating new constructs after the eighth construct was developed.

3.11 Data analysis

Once all the interviews had been concluded and all the data collected, the researcher transferred all the data from the matrices into the GridSuite software for analysis. Fromm (2017) designed the GridSuite software to produce, manage, and analyse data collected from RepGrid interviews.

The researcher used GridSuite to capture, edit, and analyse the data in a transparent manner. The constructs from the matrices were compared and were visually represented using dendrograms (hierarchical cluster analysis) showing the structures and patterns in the constructs. Henry, Dymnicki, Mohatt, Allen and Kelly (2015) suggest that a cluster analysis can be used in qualitative research to identify patterns that may not be seen through thematic analysis. These patterns were used to influence the design and structure of the conceptual framework for self-empowerment. The aim

of the research is to develop a conceptual framework that enable employees to empower themselves within the workplace in order to influence others to co-create and deliver meaningful contributions to the business.

QDA Miner software was also used to identify the patterns and develop themes emerging from the constructs identified. This process helped display patterns and relationships and supported the comparison, interpretation and presentation of the data.

A cluster analysis was used to sort the raw data by similarity and present the findings per theme in the form of tables. This analysis also allows the researcher to identify similarities and differences between research participants (Fromm, 2017). Applied thematic analysis (Guest, MacQueen and Namey, 2014) was used to identify the themes using the elicited constructs, where the researcher immersed himself in the data. This required multiple readings of the data to gain a better understanding of the constructs as well as the interpretations. The strength of applied thematic analysis is the focus on transparency and efficiency in using whatever instruments are appropriate to complete the analysis.

3.12 Data integrity and validity

The reliability of analysed data using thematic analysis could be questioned because the researcher could use their own interpretations when identifying themes. The interpretation of data could therefore be influenced by researcher bias. In the researcher's opinion, the consistency and accuracy of the data was ensured through the use of the RepGrid, GridSuite and QDA Miner tools, which significantly limited the impact of the researcher's bias on the data.

The measurement of a variable involves relating a qualitative value to a parameter being investigated by the researcher. The researcher reviewed the methods that he had chosen for the measurement and is of the opinion that the measurements meet the specific criteria listed below.

According to Marshall, Rossman and Blanco (2019) the criteria for analysing qualitative data, dependability, credibility, transferability and confirmability are not measurable but can be established through data triangulation. The two key elements of qualitative research are validity and reliability.

3.12.1 Validity

Validity in academic research means that a relational measure is valid to the extent that it measures what it intended to measure (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). According to Marshall et al. (2019) validity also refers to the credibility, transferability and confirmability of the findings. This study provides a true picture of the research participants' reality through the use of the structured interviews and RepGrid tools. These tools ensured credibility through the accurate description of the elements and constructs, as well as verifying the inferred meanings given by the research participants. Reaching data saturation supports confirmability because similar constructs emerged even though they came from the different perspectives of the participants. Data saturation in conjunction with the strict management of the data collection and analysis process will enable others to identify other areas where the findings can be implemented (Boddy, 2016; Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2022). The conclusions can thus be generalised and mapped to the larger population. This talks to transferability.

3.12.2 Replication or repeatability

Information and data are repeatable if repeated measurements give the same result within acceptable accuracy (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). The accuracy and value of all data used in the decision-making process should be validated to ensure its usefulness. In the same manner, the accuracy and reliability of the RepGrid must be determined. In this case, data errors could be defined in terms of unclear elements or constructs and inaccurate recording. Where inaccurate data or information are used, it may render any final result worthless. Therefore, the research used multiple

tools; interviews, the RepGrid matrix, GridSuite and QDA Miner software to ensure repeatability.

3.12.3 Accuracy

The accuracy of a value defines how closely it reflects the true value (Saunders et al., 2012). In effect, the use of any data depends on its accuracy. The accuracy should be known to enable any conclusions based on the data to be used with confidence.

The data collected in the interviews were subjective and changed with each research participant. However, the interviews and RepGrid tools ensured that the research participants' elements and constructs were accurately captured, reflected, and validated by the research participants.

3.12.4 Reliability

Reliability relates to the accuracy and trustworthiness of data collecting methods and their overall dependability (Marshall et al., 2019). Data saturation will enrich the data and improve dependability (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2022). In the case of scientific measurement, reliability may be defined in terms of the calibration of an instrument to give accurate results. Both the RepGrid interviewing technique and the GridSuite software have been tested by multiple researchers since 2017 and confirmed to deliver accurate and reliable data for analysis (Fromm, 2017).

3.12.5 Representativeness

The researcher ensured that the sample group were representative of the larger population. The population comprised businesses that had participated in the TT100 competition run by the Da Vinci Institute and the Department of Technology. Successful businesses create a competitive advantage based on their ability to creatively manage their company's technology, innovation, people, and/or systems. According to Broaddus (as cited by Reisman, 2019), this suggests a different,

unrestricted level of thinking, which this study intended to explore related to self-empowerment.

The research participants were mid-level managers, which according to Cotter (2015), are those who interpret plans, decide on the direction to be taken, and then coordinate and supervise the required actions. Tabrizi (2014) is of the opinion that they do not only manage change in business but are instrumental in leading that change.

3.12.6 Data integrity of non-scientific knowledge

The modern approach to knowledge is to accept narrative knowledge as a form of knowledge. The knowledge that is passed from one generation to another by word of mouth may be assumed as true. Such information could be used as a basis for making scientific decisions, but decisions need to be based on factual information. These could come from the following:

Authority: While the value of sound experience in any field cannot be discounted and can be an invaluable source of information, the requirement to verify the accuracy and reliability of any information used in a decision-making process is essential.

Opinions: Knowledge may be sought from peers, colleagues, friends or professional contacts on the basis that in that particular field of interest, they have knowledge that could be useful. This knowledge may have influenced the research participants' constructs and needed to be interrogated during the structured interviews.

Traditions or accepted truth: Traditions, accepted as truth, are passed on, often with the degree of truth increasing with successive iterations. While employees should not underestimate the value of traditions in developing their organisational culture, it is essential to keep in mind that when using traditional truth as a basis for developing constructs, the accuracy of the knowledge would determine the validity of the construct.

Systematic observation: Systematic observation implies that data are collected using a well-defined system that reduces the element bias in the information. The RepGrid is structured to reduce researcher bias while identifying the research participants' constructs.

Objectivity: Objectivism integrates subjectivity and objectivity because objective knowledge requires active, sophisticated subjective processes such as perception, analytical reasoning, synthetic reasoning, logical deduction, and the distinction of essences from appearances. Conversely, subjective processes can enhance one's objective comprehension of the world. This study was based on subjective data.

3.13 Research ethics

It is also crucial to understand the main ethical issues implied by the choice of research strategy (Saunders et al., 2016). Acquiring knowledge in a controlled manner implies that the conditions under which the data were obtained represent the conditions to which the data will be applied.

Research ethics govern the standards of conduct for all researchers. This includes plagiarism, misuse of privileged information, interference, and informed consent. It is essential to adhere to ethical principles and practices to protect the research participants' dignity, rights, and welfare (Roth and Von Unger, 2018). The researcher attempted to remove or reduce any bias he had towards the topic by selecting the data collecting tool (refer to section 3.12) and using digital tools to analyse the data to develop themes (refer to section 3.11).

Informed consent includes the following, which is also discussed in the Letter of Consent. (Refer to Appendix 1):

1. Purpose of the research.
2. What will they be doing and for how long.
3. Offer to withdraw at any time.

4. Potential benefits or harm to the participant.
5. How privacy will be protected (anonymity and confidentiality).
6. How the data will be stored
7. How to get a copy of the results.
8. Researcher and supervisor's contact details.

Where research involves people, the researcher was especially sensitive to employees as research subjects, even if the research is intended to benefit the employees or improve workplace practice. Laws such as the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPI) (Department of Justice, 2013) protect humans' right to privacy and their right to refuse to participate in any research study. A research participant may never be forced or convinced (coerced) into participating in a study. For this reason, universities and other research institutions require that the researcher seeks permission to conduct research. In addition, the 'Letter of Consent' informed the participants that the data collected will be securely stored on the cloud and protected by an alpha-numeric password. All data will be deleted after five years (see Appendices).

The researcher intends to publish and share the findings of this research and, as such, required permission from the research participants in the form of a 'Letter of Consent' (refer to Appendix 1). Although the research was focused on individual insights, the research participants were all working for various companies. As such, the research participant, or company, required a 'Letter of Authorisation' (refer to Appendix 3). The most direct ethical concern of social science research is the possibility that the research will cause harm to the research participants. Fortunately, the danger of physical or social harm from participation in this social science research is very low.

Nevertheless, given the researcher's interest and the topic of the study, participation in social research may, in some cases, produce rather extreme emotional reactions, which may have long-term adverse outcomes. The researcher attempted to mitigate this by clearly stating the intent of the study and confirming that participation was *voluntary* and that the research participant was free to withdraw from the study at any

stage and was granted complete anonymity. Participants were advised that the data collected for the study would remain confidential and only be used for the study. The researcher also advised that the data would be stored on the 'cloud' and be protected by an alphanumeric password only known to the researcher. Data would be destroyed after five years from the date of completion of the study. The researcher also allowed the research participants to *access and comment on the findings* to confirm the accuracy of the data and to eliminate any uncertainty they may have had regarding the research and the interpretation of the data (Saunders, et al., 2016).

3.14 Conclusion

In this chapter, the research paradigm, design and methodology of the study were discussed. The population and sampling methodology were discussed in detail and explained why the constructs gained from mid-level managers were important. The Repertory Grid data collecting tool was discussed in detail including the structure, terms and implementation of the tool. Credibility, transferability and confirmability of the findings were discussed related to validity and dependability related to reliability. Research ethics, including data storage, discussed how the data were collected, analysed, and compared to ensure the integrity, validity and accuracy of the results.

In Chapter 4 the data collected via the RepGrid interviews is analysed, and the findings presented are supported by graphics and a detailed discussion.

CHAPTER 4:

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

4.1 Introduction

In Chapter 4, the data collected through the structured interviews using the RepGrid technique are discussed and analysed using applied thematic analysis. The findings, in the form of constructs, are used to identify and discuss the emerging themes. The constructs are also linked to the TIPS Managerial Leadership framework (discussed in Chapter 2) to see whether self-empowered employees exhibit the required leadership practices and competencies.

4.2 Methodology selection

As discussed in Chapter 3, this study used applied thematic analysis to analyse the identified themes. Guest et al. (2014) argue that applied thematic analysis is focused on understanding the topic of the study and answering the research question to develop a practical solution for the problem. Where constructs were elicited through triad testing using the repertory grid, a data taxonomy was developed to identify the relationships between the emerging constructs so as to develop the themes. Both the GridSuite and QDA Miner software were used in this process.

4.3 Analysis of constructs

All 15 mid-level managers that were contacted and invited to participate in the study agreed, resulting in a 100% response rate. In the 15 structured RepGrid interviews conducted, 117 constructs were identified, which were later reduced to 55 unique constructs. After conducting the initial 12 interviews, many of the constructs presented were found to be similar to those previously identified, and thus a further three interviews were conducted to confirm that data saturation had been reached. According to Du Plooy-Cilliers, (2022) data saturation recognises that where there is a homogenous population data saturation can occur within 12 interviews.

Each construct consists of an implicit pole and an emergent pole, as discussed in Chapter 3. In developing the constructs participants first stated the emergent pole, which was the similarity between the two elements identified then offered the contrast or dissimilarity comparing the third element, which was stated as the implicit pole. The result was that the emergent and implicit poles had both positive (empowering) and negative (disempowering) statements. The first phase of the analysis was reducing the data. All positive comments (codes) related to self-empowered employees, in the constructs, were listed under the implicit pole. This pole reflected the participant's thoughts on a self-empowered employee in each interpreted construct.

In contrast, the opposite emerging pole reflected their thoughts on a disempowered employee. All negative comments related to disempowered employees were listed under the emergent pole. This process simplified the analysis because the set of statements listed under each of the poles was explicitly linked to self-empowered and disempowered.

In phase two, the constructs were sorted by using the positive comments listed under the implicit pole. Duplicated constructs were identified, where participants recorded the same statements related to both self-empowerment and disempowerment in their constructs. The duplicated constructs were interrogated to see whether the participants' understanding or interpretation of the statements, linked to both the implicit and emergent poles in the construct, were similar. Constructs with a similar or identical understanding and interpretation of both statements in the constructs were combined. This process reduced the constructs from 117 to 55.

In phase three, the positive statements referring to employee self-empowerment (codes) were listed under the implicit pole and were grouped into themes and reviewed against QDA miner and GridSuite Fromm (2017). A word was selected that best described the collection of constructs and was used to label the theme. Seven themes emerged, as shown in Figure 4-1 below. In the second review, the researcher linked statements to multiple themes based on the participants' interpretation of their statement relative to their construct. Figure 4-1 also graphically shows an emerging

pattern of the importance of each theme based on the constructs or codes linked to that theme.

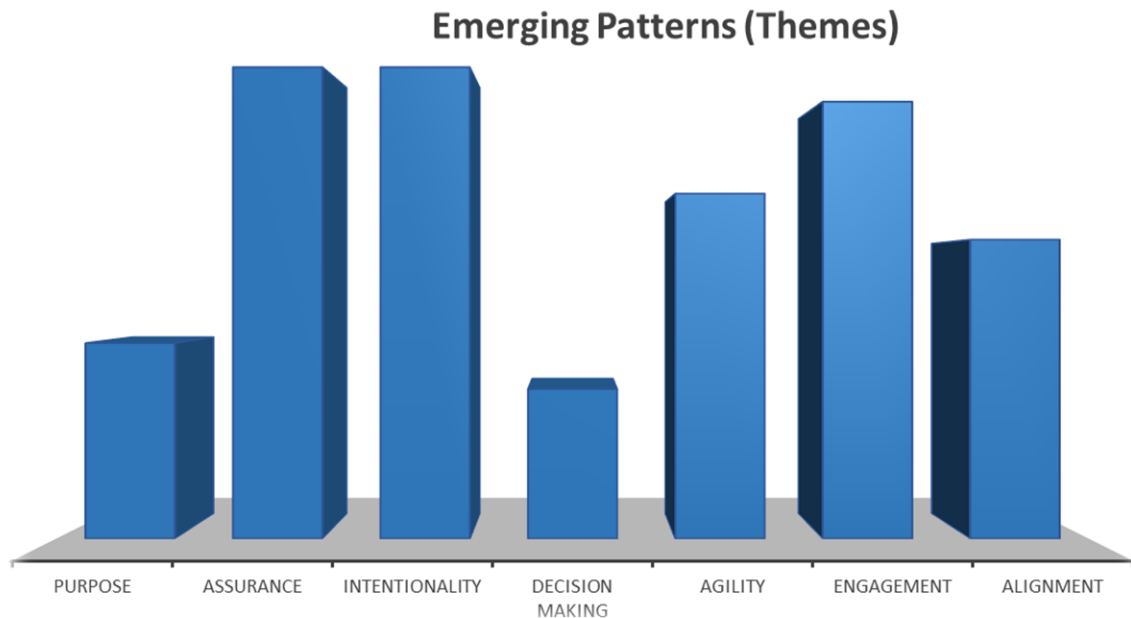


Figure 4-1: Emerging patterns (Themes)

The themes that emerged from the process discussed above were then linked to the seven quantum skills as shown in Figure 4-2. The descriptions used by Shelton, (2012) to describe the seven quantum skills were compared to the constructs that made up each theme. It was discovered that the quantum skills aligned with the emerging themes as shown in Figure 4.2. The reasoning used to link the quantum skills for the emerging themes are discussed in the analysis of the themes that follow in 4.4.

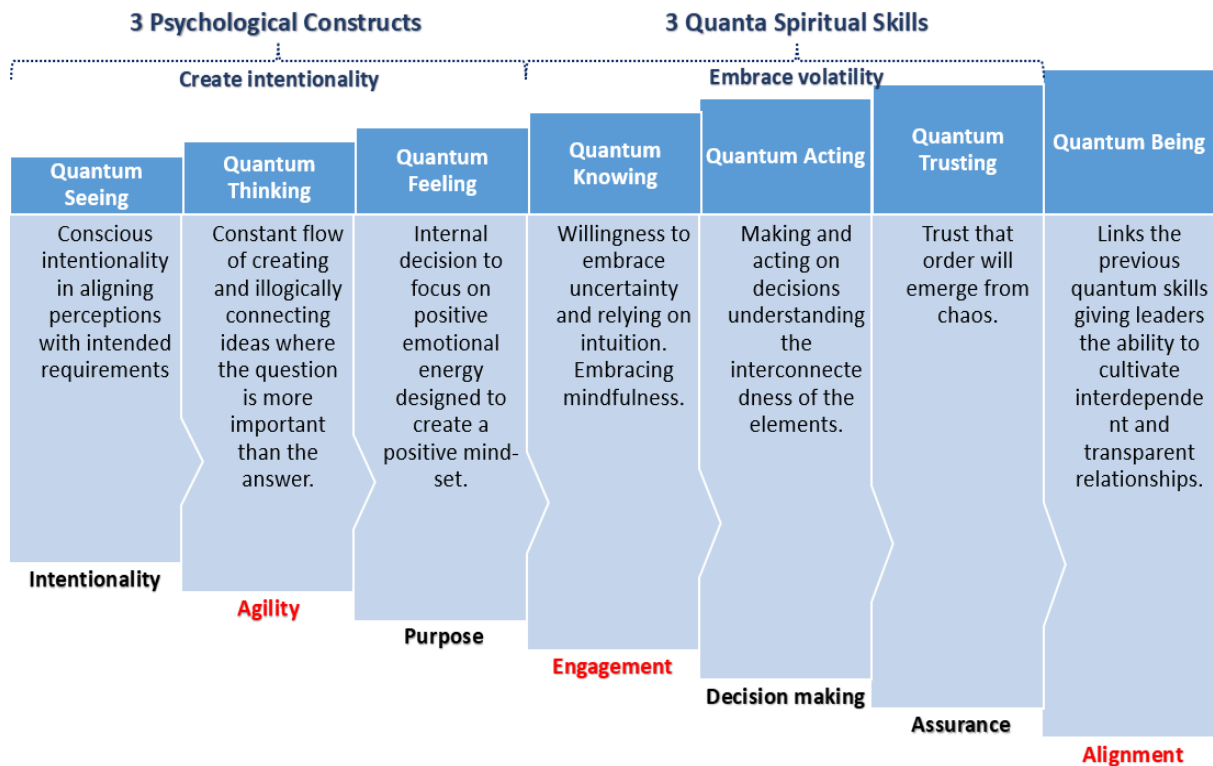


Figure 4-2: Themes linked to quantum skills

Adapted from Shelton and Darling (2001)

4.4 Analysis of themes according to constructs linked to quantum skills

Each theme consists of a number of constructs related to the themes. The intention is to show which constructs make up each theme and to discuss their importance related to the theme and to quantum thinking. To that end, the constructs have been listed based on the participants interpretation of the construct and the importance given to them by the participants. The researcher was provided with statements from the participants, which reflect their personal perspectives and potential biases.

Aligning the quantum skills to the themes will demonstrate how employees wanting to empower themselves can use of the seven quantum skills to create intentionality (engagement), embrace volatility (agility), and develop a systemic understanding (alignment) of the business environment (Shelton and Darling, 2001; Shelton, 2012).

The key themes of agility, engagement and alignment, discussed in the TIPS Managerial Leadership framework (Figure 2-13), are therefore clearly linked to the quantum skills. This suggests that in the process of empowering themselves employees also develop their leadership competencies. The quantum skills are as shown in Figure 4-2 above.

4.4.1 Purpose

Table 4-1: Purpose constructs

Purpose constructs	
Construct: Emergent Pole #1	Construct: Implicit Pole #2
Fixed in their thinking	Focused on growth
Established knowledge (relies on current knowledge)	Learning new skills(Looking for new knowledge)
Still learning	Knowledgeable
Needs guidance	Self-motivated
Does not demonstrate passion	Is passionate about their work

Purpose is defined by Barrett (2020) as a sense of resolve or determination held by a person. For this study, purpose is defined as the vision that creates a conscious desire or motivation within an employee. This desire, if strong enough, has the potential to motivate the employee to take action. Purpose links to the quantum skill of ‘quantum feeling’ where internal decisions are made to focus on positive energy and mindset (Shelton and Darling, 2001). The participant's understanding and interpretation of purpose, in relation to employee self-empowerment, can be interrogated through the linked constructs (refer to Table 4-1).

The participants believe that a key element required for an employee to have a purpose is that they need to want to make a difference in the workplace. Self-empowered employees are passionate about their work, engaged in their workplace,

and want to make meaningful contributions to their workplace through working with others.

The participants believe that 'knowledgeable or qualified' employees will be those who will have the desire to empower themselves. Interestingly, the participants' definition of 'well qualified' did not rest purely on formal qualifications but also included personal experience and knowledge gained in the workplace.

The participants also believe that those with little formal qualifications will be reluctant to engage in the workplace or make an effort to gain informal knowledge and experience, which suggests that they do not have a clear purpose (Aycan and Sheilia, 2019). This could be due to the fear of making mistakes in their job or being ridiculed by their peers. Rock (2009) suggests that the brain sees perceived or conscious incompetence as a risk, almost as a physical threat, and so it leads to inaction. For disempowered employees to develop purpose, they need to be mentored or coached by leaders in the business to help them develop conscious competence (Blanchard, 2019a).

The comments listed under the emergent poles of the linked constructs suggest that disempowered employees are those who do not have a clear purpose or passion for their work. They are fixed in their thinking, and content to 'follow the rules' to maintain the status quo based on their current knowledge and skill set. These employees actively resist changes and do not embrace new knowledge or skills.

4.4.2 Assurance

Table 4-2: Assurance constructs

Assurance constructs	
Construct: Emergent Pole #1	Construct: Implicit Pole #2
Lack of confidence	Belief in self
Lack of self-esteem (Striving)	High self-esteem (Arrived)
Little formal qualification	Well qualified
Novice	Experienced (SME)
Cautious	Confident in their space
Insecure in their space	Confident in their space
Incompetent	Competent in their job
Has expert knowledge	Is a generalist

Assurance, in this study, is defined as the ‘belief in self’ through having confidence in one’s abilities, knowledge and skills. Assurance links to the quantum skill of ‘quantum trusting’, which is the certainty, or confidence, that order will emerge from the chaos. In this VUCA world, uncertainty can be reduced through the belief in one’s self (Shelton and Darling, 2001). The participants’ understanding and interpretation of assurance in relation to employee self-empowerment can be interrogated through the linked constructs (refer to Table 4-2).

The participants believe that self-empowered employees are both confident in themselves and confident in the work that they do. As a result, they are willing to challenge their own thinking and learn from others to co-create solutions and opportunities. Even though these employees may not necessarily have the authority to act, they are still able to influence and encourage their peers to be innovative and resourceful. They do this by focusing on the community and the organisation and supporting the ideas of others.

Feeling competent and being perceived as competent in completing tasks builds self-confidence and strengthens the belief in oneself (Rock, 2007). This suggests that self-empowered employees are more likely to be those with experience, rather than novices or apprentices. This is supported by the participants' interpretations of their constructs.

Having the relevant knowledge and skills was considered to be important for self-empowered employees. However, participants were of the view that employees that are specialists are more likely to have an internal focus, so they would be less likely to empower themselves. Specialists could assist others in solving problems but are reluctant to share knowledge as they consider this to be reducing their authority or power. This, as compared with employees who are considered generalists based on their knowledge and skills. Generalists are considered not only more likely to empower themselves, but also more likely to support others to become empowered through knowledge-sharing and peer learning.

4.4.3 *Intentionality*

Table 4-3: Intentionality constructs

Intentionality constructs	
Construct: Emergent Pole #1	Construct: Implicit Pole #2
Focused on the end goal	Attention to detail
Partial execution of tasks	Focus on the detail of tasks
Focus on end result	Focus on the detail
Efficient	Effective
Unstructured thinking (Unfocused)	Structured thinking
Does not complete tasks	Gets things done
Stasis	Intentionality

Intentionality, in this study, is defined as a single-minded attitude that focuses on completing specific actions or strategies (Maxwell, 2019). Where purpose relates to

the reason, intentionality relates to the resolve. Intentionality is the link between a belief in oneself (assurance) and the actions required leading to self-empowerment (Maxwell, 2019; Joiner and Josephs, 2007).

Intentionality links to the quantum skill of 'quantum seeing', which is the conscious intentionality in aligning perceptions with intended requirements (Shelton and Darling, 2001). This also relates to employees taking responsibility for their actions and decisions. The participants' understanding and interpretation of intentionality in relation to employee self-empowerment can be interrogated through the linked constructs (refer to Table 4-3).

When viewing the constructs linked to intentionality and related to self-empowerment, the word most often used to describe intentionality or constructs linked to intentionality is 'focus'. The various interpretations of focus and how it is applied in the workplace include a focus on strategy, a focus on the task or business, a focus on others, and a focus on self (Martela, 2019; Pearce and Manz, 2015).

Self-empowered employees are considered those who focus on the detail, rather than focusing on the end goal or result. Quantum thinking suggests that focusing on identifying the correct question is more important than focusing on arriving at the correct answer (to the wrong question) (Collins, 2016). By focusing exclusively on the end goal, the participants suggested that employees would view the task through a lens of 'the end justifies the means. This thinking may be efficient in completing the task but could lead to an ineffective end result.

Focusing exclusively on the goal could also lead to shortcuts being taken or safety protocols being ignored for the sake of expedience. The impact on the business was considered to be more important than expedience. The impact was interpreted to be the positive impact a completed task would have on the business, which includes 'doing it right the first time'. Self-empowered employees demonstrate structured thinking in planning and ensuring that tasks are effectively and timeously completed.

Disempowered employees focus on the end goal and completing the task as quickly as possible. The focus on efficiency, rather than quality, combined with their unstructured thinking, often leads to unintended consequences, resulting in irrelevant solutions and incomplete tasks. Self-empowered employees, therefore, intentionally focus on the detail to ensure that the goals they set are met, offering maximum value to the business and employees.

4.4.4 Decision-making

Table 4-4: Decision-making constructs

Decision-making constructs	
Construct: Emergent Pole #1	Construct: Implicit Pole #2
Does not interrogate tasks given	Critically analyse tasks before execution
Lack of analysis (1 dimensional)	Good critical thinking skills
Need to elicit new ideas	Present solutions
Reactive (Need to be reminded to get things done)	Proactive (Gets things done)
Decisions need to be approved	Can make own decisions
Do not admit to their mistakes	Take responsibility

Decision-making, in this study, is defined as the thought process of collecting information, then identifying and reviewing options before selecting a relevant solution and course of action (Groenewald, 2015; Bawany, 2016). Decision-making links to the quantum skill of ‘quantum acting’, which is understanding the interconnectedness of all related elements when making and acting on decisions (Shelton and Darling, 2001). The participants’ understanding and interpretation of decision-making in relation to employee self-empowerment can be interrogated through the linked constructs (refer to Table 4-4).

Self-empowered employees interrogate processes and tasks using critical analysis, which is the employees’ view of a process, solution, or task. Decisions will be made

based on the employees' understanding of the impact, or potential impact, on their business unit as well as on other parts of the business. Understanding the interconnectedness of departments allows employees to take into account the consequences and unintended consequences of any planned action.

Self-empowered employees therefore solve problems and present solutions based on critical thinking, interrogating the details of the task or problem, and understanding the potential impact both upstream and downstream of their position. This focus allows employees to make the best decision for the business. Disempowered employees will have an internal focus, based on achieving the end goal as quickly and simply as possible without due thought or concern over unintended consequences. Problems arising from this process are often ignored or passed on, resulting in incomplete tasks.

The participants believe that self-empowered employees are self-motivated, and as such are willing to take decisions, present solutions, and act to ensure that tasks are completed, rather than waiting for guidance or the authority to act. The decisions taken, however, are linked to their level of knowledge and experience. These employees will admit to their own mistakes and are willing to be held accountable for the decisions they have made.

Disempowered employees are reactive, rather than proactive, because they are reluctant to make decisions themselves without clearing it with a higher authority. They are also reluctant to challenge current systems and processes. When they are required to do so, they use one-dimensional thinking, which limits analysis and solutions.

4.4.5 Agility

Table 4-5: Agility constructs

Agility constructs	
Construct: Emergent Pole #1	Construct: Implicit Pole #2
Only does what is asked	Identify additional opportunities
Stick to the rules	Challenge the rules
Keep things the same	Pursuit of improvement
Follow procedure	Embrace change
Resist change	Embrace change
Traditional thinking	Innovative thinking
Stagnant thinking	Innovative thinking
Hesitant	Agile
Fixed thinking	Ability to unlearn

Agility, in this study, is defined as demonstrating the willingness to embrace change and question uncertainty (Joiner and Josephs, 2007; Martela, 2019). Employee agility, refers to the ability of employees within an organisation to quickly adapt, learn, and make autonomous decisions in response to changing circumstances and challenges. Employee agility links to the skill of ‘quantum thinking’, which is the constant flow of creating and illogically connecting ideas where asking the right question is more important than knowing the right answer (Shelton and Darling, 2001). The participants’ understanding and interpretation of employee agility in relation to employee self-empowerment can be interrogated through the linked constructs (refer Table 4-5).

The participants view self-empowered employees as focused on continuous improvement, which includes their own growth and development and through endlessly searching for innovative opportunities and solutions, not hesitating to experiment and embrace change. In an effort to remain current and relevant in the business, self-empowered employees will continuously challenge the rules,

processes, and procedures and are focused on adding value for the business, customers, and themselves.

Creative and Innovative thinking is used by self-empowered employees to challenge the status quo. Best practices are regularly tested and challenged to identify and present new solutions and opportunities.

Self-empowered employees demonstrate a willingness to unlearn current thinking processes, systems, and procedures and replace or improve them as they relearn, based on new discoveries and insights (Warrell, 2020). This intentional process requires employees to have insatiable curiosity. Participants believe that self-empowered employees will demonstrate a willingness to embrace uncertainty and the unknown. By testing potential ideas, solutions, and opportunities through experimentation, these employees not only learn from their mistakes but are also willing to be held accountable and take responsibility for their actions.

Disempowered employees only do what is required, accepting current processes and procedures as a given. Disempowered employees, based on the analysis of the constructs, resist change in an effort to maintain the balance in their workplace. They are hesitant to offer suggestions, and instructions are followed without question provided they fit the requirements of the job description. New tasks and processes are actioned following rules and methodologies supplied by those with greater authority.

4.4.6 Engagement

Table 4-6: Engagement constructs

Engagement constructs	
Construct: Emergent Pole #1	Construct: Implicit Pole #2
Not responsive	Responsive
Passive engagement	Actively engage with others
Confrontational	Effectively deals with conflict (Tactful)
Structured engagement (logical)	Animated engagement (Creative)
Monitor initiatives	Drives initiatives
Quiet	Outspoken
Direct	Subtle
Immature (EQ)	Authentic (EQ)
Judgemental	Open to other's opinions
Unreliable	Trustworthy
Erratic (Behaviour & emotions)	Consistent behaviour

Engagement in this study is defined as an employee's emotional commitment, demonstrated through showing enthusiasm and dedication in supporting their job, their peers, and the business (Preston, 2014). Engaged employees tend to feel a strong sense of ownership. The participants believe that self-empowered employees will be continuously looking for opportunities to influence others and are focused on making a difference and adding value to their company. This engagement is considered particularly valuable when there is volatility and uncertainty in the workplace.

Employee engagement links to the quantum skill of 'quantum knowing', which is the willingness to embrace uncertainty and relying on intuition (Shelton and Darling, 2001). Engaged employees use this skill to navigate uncertainty and complexity in the work environment. Engaged employees demonstrate a willingness to face ambiguity, take risks and be creative and innovative by relying on their intuition and abilities. The

participants' understanding and interpretation of employee engagement in relation to employee self-empowerment can be interrogated through the linked constructs (refer Table 4-6).

There are two specific areas of engagement identified in the definition: the first being the engagement with people, and the second being the engagement with the business. However, when viewing the linked constructs, the participants focused on engagement with people.

Self-empowered employees will be outspoken and responsive to outside opinion. They will actively engage with others through developing networks of influence. Neuroscience suggests that employees who develop these networks of influence are more likely to be trusted and respected by their peers (Rock, 2009). Trust between co-workers encourages engagement, leading to co-creation and improved performance.

The participants view self-empowered employees as those who demonstrate high emotional intelligence (Emotional Quotient (EQ)). Emotional intelligence is the ability to manage emotions based on the 12 elements identified by Goleman and Boyatziz (2017) as discussed in the literature review (Section 2.5.4). These employees are considered authentic because they are recognised as linking their actions to their words. They are animated in their engagement with others and show empathy and tact when dealing with conflict. They also have good active listening skills and readily consider the opinion of others, and therefore they are relied upon when co-creating the development and drive of creative initiatives.

Disempowered employees are passive and structured in their engagement, and generally confrontational when challenged. They tend to be judgemental of others, directive in their responses, and erratic in managing their emotions. This leads to them being distrusted by others. Disempowered employees are considered unreliable, disengaged, and unwilling to accept responsibility or empower themselves.

4.4.7 Alignment

Table 4-7: Alignment constructs

Alignment constructs	
Construct: Emergent Pole #1	Construct: Implicit Pole #2
Manage others (Directive)	Influence others (Supportive)
Directive	Influencing
Conflictual	Collaborative
Focus on tasks and customers	High interpersonal skills
Focused on own space (Internal)	Big picture thinking (External)
Self-centred	Community focused
Self-centred (Narrow exposure)	World centric (Broad exposure)
Focused on own objectives	Reliability (Supportive)
Focused on self	Focused on organisation

Alignment in this study is defined as demonstrating the willingness embrace the business vision, mission, values, and goals (Senge et al., 2011a; Zohar, 2016). Living the business values ensures that all employees follow the same ‘rules of engagement’ when interacting with others and making business decisions.

Employee alignment links to the quantum skill of ‘quantum being’, which is the employees’ ability to cultivate interdependent and transparent relationships by combining or exercising the other six quantum skills (Shelton and Darling, 2001). The participants’ understanding and interpretation of employee alignment in relation to employee self-empowerment can be interrogated through the linked constructs (refer to Table 4.).

Whereas the constructs linked to engagement have an internal focus, the constructs linked to alignment are focused more externally. There are two key patterns emerging from the constructs linked to alignment: influence, and an external focus on the ‘big picture’. Barrett (1998) The fifth stage of transformation suggests a shift in the mindset

of an employee, where they change their internal focus on themselves to an external focus on others. Employees demonstrate a higher EQ and influence thus improving their ability to build cooperative networks. This change in focus, where disempowering behaviour is replaced by empowering behaviour is demonstrated when employees use their skills and knowledge to influence decision-making in developing solutions and opportunities. Witman (2012) calls this the phase of self-actualisation and is essential for becoming a leader. This study defines self-empowerment as the ability to influence others to co-create and deliver meaningful contributions to the business

The constructs that are listed in Table 4-7 suggest that self-empowered employees are those that are seen as reliable, supportive, and collaborative. This links to the view held of how self-empowered employees develop a 'network of influence' to encourage co-creation, as discussed previously in the section on engagement. In creating alignment, the employees' superior interpersonal skills are used to create 'networks of influence' that include external elements such as customers, suppliers, and competitors. In creating these networks, self-empowered employees are able to understand the needs and requirements of customers and suppliers, as well as the perceived threats from competitors. They can effectively scan the environment and understand how to influence the relationships between stakeholders resulting in an innovative customer centric approach. Their view is not only limited to the business but also includes both a community and world-centric (global) view. According to Kim and Mauborgne (2019) and Senge et al. (2011b) having a holistic or systemic view of the business environment can lead to building a sustainable competitive advantage.

Disempowered employees are not considered as being aligned with the business. These non-aligned employees are those that are internally focused and self-centred. The belief is that when they are challenged, or required to extend themselves, they are directive and conflictual in their response. One comment received during the interview process was that these employees will even attempt to sabotage initiatives that they do not agree with. Disempowered employees are unwilling to help others, take on additional responsibilities or expose themselves to new thought or processes.

4.5 Disempowerment

The statements that relate to disempowerment are shown under the emergent pole in the constructs. The key theme that emerges from reviewing the emergent poles of the constructs in Figure 4.8 is an internal focus or focus on self rather than a focus on others. The emergent poles suggest that employees will not consider empowering themselves if they lack confidence in themselves. Aycan and Sheilia (2019) suggest that if employees perceive that additional responsibility or engagement poses a threat to themselves, they will not engage and sometime even actively resist change. The participants viewed these employees that were not willing to empower themselves as non-performers, unwilling to embrace change, with limited thinking and were disengaged from the business. An interesting focus point to these views, raised during the interviews, was linked to the employee's age. Those who were over 50 were largely viewed as conservative in their thinking and focused on planning for their retirement so seen as disempowered or disengaged. Moreover, older employees do not encourage engagement because they fear that any transfer or sharing of their knowledge or skills would have a negative impact on their power, authority, and retirement. This contradicts the research conducted by Douglas and Roberts (2020) who find that employees over 50 are more likely to be engaged. The researcher is cognisant that these are the personal views of some participants and could be influenced by their biases.

The constructs elicited suggest that employees will not empower themselves if they are unsure of themselves and their abilities. In addition, some employees are reluctant to embrace change or take on any new tasks or responsibilities because of their uncertainty Rock (2007, 2009). The key constructs that emerged related to disempowerment suggest that employees who perceive themselves to be disempowered actively disengage and discourage change to keep things the same. These employees are reactive rather than proactive and will only do what is asked as long as it is within their job description or best operating procedure. They will have a linear, stagnant thinking process, which results in not being creative and an unwillingness to make decisions or engage in the decision-making process. Where

these employees are in a position of authority, they are seen as autocratic, stifling creativity, innovation, and employee engagement.

4.6 Key self-empowerment constructs

From the 55 constructs identified, seven of them were identified as key constructs related to employee self-empowerment (Refer to Table 4-8). The selection is based on the importance given to them by participants and the interpretation of the constructs by the participants. The implicit pole shows the primary behaviours participants see in self-empowered employees.

Table 4-8: Key self-empowerment constructs

Key self-empowerment constructs	
Construct: Emergent Pole #1	Construct: Implicit Pole #2
Stasis	Intentionality
Keep things the same	Pursuit of improvement
Needs guidance	Self-motivated
Manage others (Directive)	Influence others (Supportive)
Fixed thinking	Ability to unlearn
Passive engagement	Actively engage with others
Lack of analysis (1 dimensional)	Good critical thinking skills

Self-empowered employees are self-assured and have a strong belief in themselves and their skills and knowledge. Most importantly, they are seen to be those who intentionally look for solutions and opportunities to make a difference in their workplace. These employees pursue continuous improvement both internally focused on their growth and development, and externally through actively engaging with others and developing networks of influence. They may not have formal authority but are considered influencers in their workplace and are seen as willing to challenge their own ideas while incorporating the ideas of others in exploring solutions or

opportunities. In these cooperative networks the focus is on implementing the best idea irrespective of where the idea comes from. Self-empowered employees will demonstrate agility in embracing change and using insights gained through their insatiable curiosity and networks to co-create and deliver meaningful value-adding solutions and opportunities, thus significantly contributing to the business.

4.7 Research insights

During the interview process, participants underwent an internal reflection process while developing and articulating their constructs. The participants were all mid-level managers, resulting in them looking at both their colleagues and themselves through the lens of self-empowerment. This process led to new insights being generated for some participants. Some of these insights are discussed next.

Participant 3 stated that his team members were reluctant to make decisions or offer solutions, no matter how much he tried to empower them. During the interview, he realised that he regularly questioned their decisions in his efforts to enable team members to take on more responsibility. His insight was that his behaviour and communication style possibly led the team members to believe they were not trusted. He decided to be more open in his communication and to let the team members decide how much responsibility they were confident in taking.

Participant 8 worked in a business where employees are required to be specialists in their field. He realised that the silos that operate in the business were not due to employees being unwilling to help, but that they were unable to help because the areas were so specialised. This insight came from him developing constructs which suggested that self-empowered employees should have a broad exposure to the working environment, be open to other's opinions, and have good networking skills.

The most insightful comment came from Participant 11, who said 'I thought I was empowered, but looking at my comments has got me thinking'.

As discussed in 3.8.2 the fifteen companies were divided into three categories, small businesses, medium businesses and large businesses. Five companies were selected from each category and one mid-level manager was selected from each company. The constructs that emerged in the study suggest that employees' views of the concept of self-empowerment are essentially the same, irrespective of the size of the organisation. However, participants from small and emerging businesses believed that it is easier to empower themselves compared with those in larger organisations. They believe that smaller businesses have fewer rules and more freedom to engage across departments resulting in a broader understanding of the business. This suggests a more transparent and multi-directional communication style and an opportunity for employees to diversify their knowledge and skills. When defining the type and level of skills, knowledge or qualifications being required for self-empowerment, participants from the large companies focused more on formal qualifications. In contrast, those from small businesses focused more on experience and practical knowledge. However, all did agree that 'well qualified' did not rely purely on formal qualifications but would also include experience, knowledge and practical skills.

4.8 Links to the TIPS Managerial Leadership Framework

During the structured interviews, constructs were discussed and interpreted by the participants.

The constructs and themes were linked to the Da Vinci (2019) TIPS Managerial Leadership Framework discussed in Chapter 2 in an effort to examine the relationship between self-empowerment and leadership to understand it more clearly. For the sake of clarity, the TIPS Managerial Leadership Framework is repeated here.

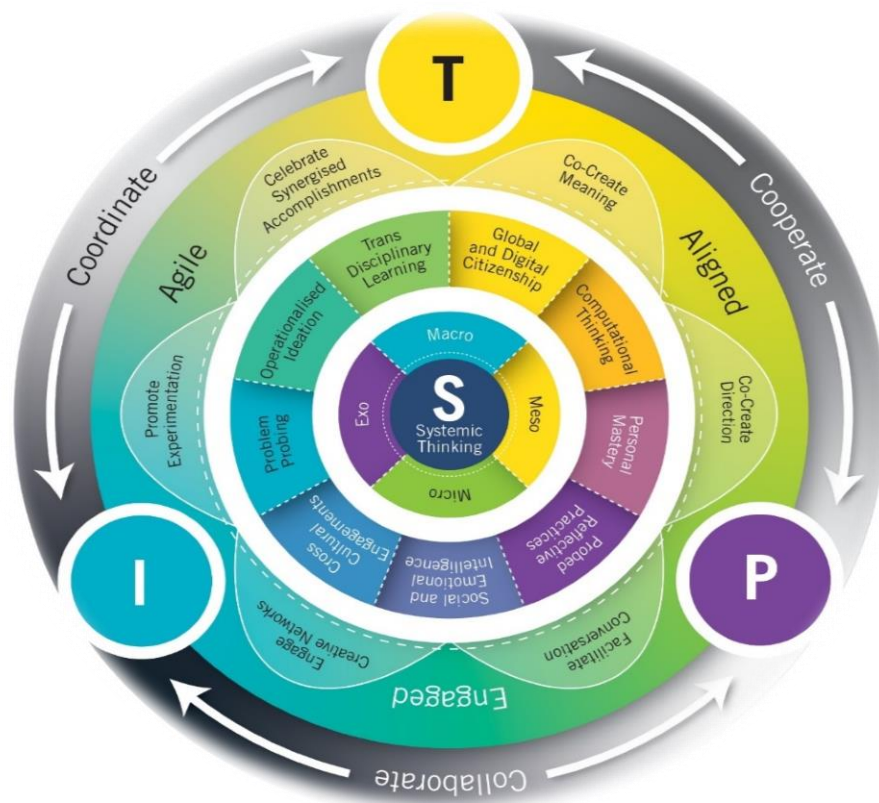


Figure 4-3: TIPS Managerial Leadership Framework

Da Vinci (2019)

Each construct was considered to see whether it supported any of the competencies and practices that drive the emerging behaviours (engagement, agility and alignment) of the TIPS Managerial Leadership Framework (Da Vinci, 2019).

What was interesting was that although leadership was regularly discussed during the interpretation of constructs, it was not mentioned in any interview, and the word was not given in any specific construct. However, the constructs identified contained words such as power, authority, and influence, which suggests the participants view of leadership. According to Westcott (2013), being empowered will give employees a level of power or authority, and Kessler (2010) suggests that exercising influence, not power, is a sign of a good leader. These insights suggest that self-empowered employees would also make good leaders.

It was noted that based on the participants interpretation of the constructs, individual constructs were able to support multiple competencies and practices. The constructs were then viewed against the six managerial leadership competencies and practices, and finally linked to the three emerging behaviours.

Table 4-9: Elements of the TIPS Managerial Leadership Framework

Elements of the TIPS Managerial Leadership Framework			
Emerging behaviours	Agility	Engagement	Alignment
Leadership Competencies	Promote experimentation	Facilitate conversations	Co-create meaning
	Celebrate synergised accomplishments	Engage creative networks	Co-create direction
Leadership Practices	Problem probing	Probe reflective practices	Global and digital citizen
	Operationalised ideation	Social and emotional intelligence	Computational thinking
	Transdisciplinary learning	Cross-cultural engagement	Personal mastery

4.8.1 Engagement

Based on the participant’s interpretation of their constructs and the linking of the constructs to the TIPS Managerial Leadership competencies and practices (Da Vinci, 2019), engagement emerged as the most important leadership behaviour. Engagement in this study is defined as the employee’s demonstration of their passion and commitment to their job and the company (Osbourne and Hammoud, 2017; Gilbert and Gandhi, 2012). Engagement, according to the TIPS Managerial Leadership Framework (Da Vinci Institute, 2019), is created when leaders encourage their employees to experiment and innovate in challenging boundaries.

The constructs that suggest self-empowered employees have the required competencies are linked to trust and the ability to influence others. Influence is used to drive initiatives that encourage others to support and grow their organisation and

peers (Cialdini, 2021). The data suggest that self-empowered employees are seen as leaders. The constructs show that self-empowered employees demonstrate a willingness to collaborate with others in developing solutions or opportunities, thus creating peer engagement through creative networks and transparent, multi-directional communication. These competencies are supported by the TIPS Managerial Leadership framework (Da Vinci Institute, 2019).

The first leadership practice linked to engagement is the ability to probe and analyse the thinking of both peers and oneself. The constructs that support this practice suggest that self-empowered employees will be confident in themselves and their ability (Vance, 2006). This is demonstrated in their ability to engage in transparent and balanced conversations. They will have a holistic outlook of the business environment, be innovative in their thinking, and be open to discussing new ideas or solutions with a view to continuous improvement. Their focus is to share knowledge through collaboration while co-creating meaningful contributions to the business.

The second leadership practice, linked to engagement, is to be able to demonstrate a high emotional intelligence or EQ. Emotional intelligence is a leader's ability to understand their strengths, manage their emotions, and empathise with their peers (Goleman and Boyatzis, 2017). The importance of having good emotional intelligence is that it enables leaders to build meaningful relationships with others. The constructs that support this practice suggest that self-empowered employees are trusted because they demonstrate authenticity and an ability to deal with conflict (Vance, 2006) effectively and fairly. Their belief in themselves is combined with their focus on co-creating value for both the community and the whole business.

The third leadership practice, linked to engagement, is the ability to engage effectively with people across all cultures. In a study conducted by Lorenzo and Reeves (2018), covering 1700 businesses in eight countries, they find that businesses that effectively manage diversity have staff that are more innovative and engaged, resulting in increased profitability. This is supported by PWC (2021) who find that businesses

view diversity as a critical success factor in developing a sustainable competitive advantage.

The constructs that support cross-cultural engagement suggest that self-empowered employees demonstrate high interpersonal skills, are supportive, and focused on 'the best idea wins' irrespective of where it comes from. They are proactive in identifying and implementing continuous improvement processes through intentionally involving all employees in developing creative networks across the business (Hutzschenreuter et al., 2019). They encourage their peers to look at what is best for the business.

4.8.2 Agility

Agility was considered the second most important leadership behaviour based on the analysis of participants interpretation of the constructs. In this study agility is defined as a willingness to embrace change and quickly respond to challenges. Agility, according to the Managerial Leadership Framework (Da Vinci Institute, 2019), is created when leaders support employee innovations through the use of technology.

The constructs that suggest self-empowered employees have the competencies that are required are linked to encouraging others to experiment and embrace change. While the constructs do not specifically mention the celebration of accomplishments, they do suggest that self-empowered employees intentionally embrace and support the ideas of others in the pursuit of continuous improvement.

The first leadership practice linked to agility is the ability to interrogate problems effectively in order to identify the root cause. The constructs that support problem probing suggest that self-empowered employees are able to critically analyse and discuss problems in detail. They actively engage with others to encourage experimentation demonstrated through their willingness to question and collaborate. Their knowledge, competence, and holistic worldview allow them to influence their peers to focus intentionally on continuously pursuing improvement.

The second leadership practice, linked to agility, is the ability to create value for both the business and employees based on the results of experimentation or derived from creative ideas (ideation). Value is created through the commercialisation or operationalisation of ideas, which is referred to as innovation (Senge et al., 2011a) (Christenson et al., 2018).

The three key constructs identified for influencing successful value creation are intentionality, encouraging collaboration, and effective implementation. Additional constructs that support operationalised ideation suggest that self-empowered employees influence their peers to embrace innovative thinking and are authentic and responsive in their support of these innovations. The researcher has found that the most effective way for leaders to celebrate these accomplishments and develop a 'winning' mentality is to intentionally search for people who are actively engaged in developing innovations. Recognise their efforts immediately and offer them support and encouragement, and finally, advertise their success broadly.

The third leadership practice linked to agility is the ability to collaborate across the whole business to develop universal solutions to problems. This trans-disciplinary approach ignores traditional company boundaries, often referred to as silos, in an effort to develop holistic solutions or opportunities. In quantum thinking terms, this approach suggests that the right question is more important than the right answer. This supports the focus on identifying the root cause in the first practice. Managerial leaders are then able to develop multiple solutions or opportunities related to a single problem, resulting in more effective outcomes.

The constructs that support trans-disciplinarity suggest that self-empowered employees are skilled at developing creative networks across the business. They are considered generalists because of their holistic viewpoint, and that, combined with their willingness to unlearn, gives them the confidence to embrace the views of others in seeking answers.

4.8.3 Alignment

In this study alignment is defined as the extent to which employees believe in and work towards the company vision and mission (Jordaan, 2019; Kingma, n.d.). Alignment, according to the TIPS Managerial Leadership Framework (Da Vinci Institute, 2019), is created when leaders encourage their employees to understand and manage current technology to improve their performance.

The constructs that suggest that self-empowered employees have these competencies are linked to their ability to demonstrate their authenticity and to influence others. While they have a broad exposure to the business environment and are 'big picture' thinkers, their focus is on continuously identifying solutions and opportunities to grow their organisation and peers (Senge et al., 2011a; Rappoport, 2015). Self-empowered employees are seen as leaders because they demonstrate a willingness to develop passion within employees by encouraging them to co-create a unifying vision and goals.

The first leadership practice linked to alignment is the ability to guide employees on how to leverage technology in an ethical manner while engaging with the digital community; especially relevant with the advent of 5IR, as previously mentioned in Chapter 2. The constructs that support digital citizenship suggest that self-empowered employees are trusted and considered reliable and authentic (Finance online, 2020) (Karakoc, 2009). As a result, they have the ability to influence, support, and encourage others to take responsibility for their ethical engagement in the digital environment.

The second leadership practice linked to alignment is computational thinking, which is the ability to look at 'big data' and distil the relevant information required to solve business problems or to identify opportunities (Senge et al., 2011b). There are several constructs that support the suggestion that self-empowered employees practice the skill of computational thinking. Self-empowered employees have the ability to not only understand the business environment holistically, but to also be able to break down problems using their structured thinking and can focus on detail. Their critical analysis

will assist in recognising patterns and identifying pertinent data before developing and presenting solutions.

The third leadership practice linked to alignment is personal mastery, which is the focus on continuously challenging current thinking and gaining new knowledge and skills (Plessis, 2019). There are a number of constructs that support the suggestion that self-empowered employees practice the skill of personal mastery. Firstly, they act with intentionality in taking responsibility for their own growth and development. Their curiosity is demonstrated by their willingness to question the current state, to think innovatively, and to learn from others when co-creating solutions or identifying opportunities. Their strength is their ability to test their assumptions, unlearn irrelevant knowledge and relearn new knowledge (Plessis, 2019).

4.9 Conclusion

In this Chapter, seven themes were developed by grouping the 55 identified constructs. These themes were discussed in relation to the constructs that emanated from the data, purpose, assurance, intentionality, decision-making, agility, engagement, and alignment. They were linked to the seven quantum skills identified by Shelton and Darling (2001) and Shelton (2012). These themes are quantum seeing, quantum thinking, quantum feeling, quantum knowing, quantum acting, quantum trusting and quantum being, as shown in Figure 4.2.

Further, the constructs were linked to the TIPS Managerial Leadership Framework (Da Vinci Institute, 2019) to show that based on the constructs identified, self-empowered employees demonstrate the leadership competencies and practices required of a managerial leader. Chapter 5, the Conceptual Framework, discusses the framework proposed by the researcher based on literature reviewed and the findings of the data.

CHAPTER 5:

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

5.1 Introduction

As stated in Chapter 1, the research problem that this study intended to address is the current lack of a specific framework that employees can use to empower themselves to co-create and deliver meaningful contributions to the business so that the business attains a competitive advantage.

For this study, as explained throughout this research, employee self-empowerment is defined as the employee's willingness and ability to demonstrate that they can influence others to co-create and deliver meaningful contributions to the business. This definition suggests that for employees to truly empower themselves, they will need to have various competencies to lead.

The author's initial framework, i.e., DARE, helped focus the research and assisted in the reflection, analysis, and interpretation of the data collected. For the sake of clarity, this is repeated here.

D.A.R.E. SELF-EMPOWERMENT FRAMEWORK

• Self-Empowerment delivers...

• Engagement

- Accepting Power: Ability & Responsibility
- Tools: EQ

• Performance

- Accepting Power: Decision Making & Responsibility
- Tools: Personal Mastery

• Leadership

- Accepting Power: Responsibility & Ability
- Tools: Managerial Leadership

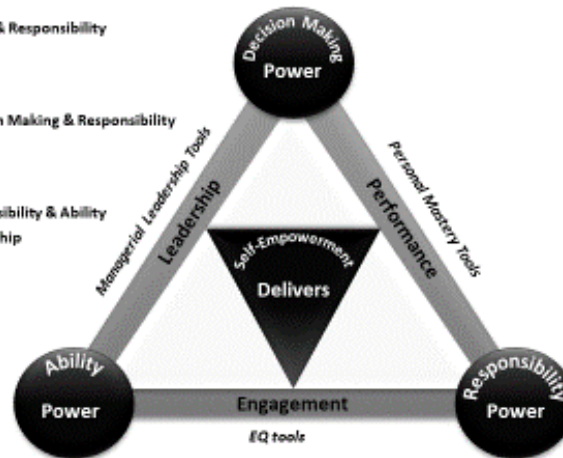


Figure 5-1: D.A.R.E self-empowerment framework (Original)

Researcher's own (adapted from Joiner and Josephs, 2007)

The key elements used to develop the new employee self-empowerment framework were the themes that emerged from the identified constructs in the qualitative research with the 15 research interviewees who were all mid-level managers of successful companies. These companies are winners in the TT100 competition, run for the past 30 years by the Da Vinci Institute in conjunction with the Department of Science and Technology (TT100, 2022). These themes were purpose, assurance, intentionality, decision-making, agility, engagement, and alignment.

These themes also linked to the seven skills required for quantum thinking, which Collins (2011) and Zohar (2016) describe as boundary-less thinking. The seven quantum skills are quantum seeing, quantum thinking, quantum feeling, quantum knowing, quantum acting, quantum trusting, and quantum being (Shelton and Darling, 2001; Shelton, 2012).

The research findings were also contrasted with, and linked to, the TIPS Managerial Leadership Framework (Da Vinci Institute, 2019) and this framework also influenced the new framework the researcher developed.

The research explored whether quantum thinking could be considered a critical component of the self-empowerment framework and how the seven quantum skills could reframe thinking related to the employees' mindset and belief in purpose for self-empowerment. When an employee believes in their purpose and value, they are more likely to demonstrate a willingness to engage in the workplace and be focused on making a difference (Drennan, 1992; Vance, 2006; Osbourne and Hammoud, 2017).

5.2 Development of conceptual framework

According to Saunders et al. (2016), conceptual frameworks are developed when researchers explore phenomena to generate an understanding and build theory. Identified themes and patterns from the research can be used to construct a conceptual framework using inductive reasoning.

The relationships between the themes that emerged in this study are visually represented vis-à-vis employee self-empowerment. The self-empowerment framework answers the research question, 'How are employees able to empower themselves to influence others in their workplace to co-create and deliver meaningful contributions to the business?' In addition, it helps to solve the research problem, which is the lack of a specific framework that employees can use to empower themselves to co-create and deliver meaningful contributions to the business.

The initial conceptual framework (DARE model) was developed before the study began, based on the researcher's views, observations and understanding of self-empowerment. However, the framework was reviewed after completing the literature review and analysing the constructs identified during the data collection. The identified themes that emerged during the analysis and interpretation of the data were used to

refine the self-empowerment conceptual framework (Figure 5-2), thus limiting the researcher's bias in developing the framework.

Thus, the new conceptual framework represents a synthesis of data gathered from the existing DARE model, the literature review (Chapter 2), and the findings of the research (Chapter 4).

5.3 New Employee Self-Empowerment Framework

The employee self-empowerment framework (Figure 5-2) has been developed to guide employees in their journey towards self-empowerment. The framework discusses the type of thinking and behaviour employees will need to demonstrate to empower themselves (Shelton and Darling, 2001; Shelton, 2012). This conceptual framework gives employees a tool to help them focus on their intent to become more agile in their thinking, leading to self-empowerment as suggested by Senge, et al., (2011a).

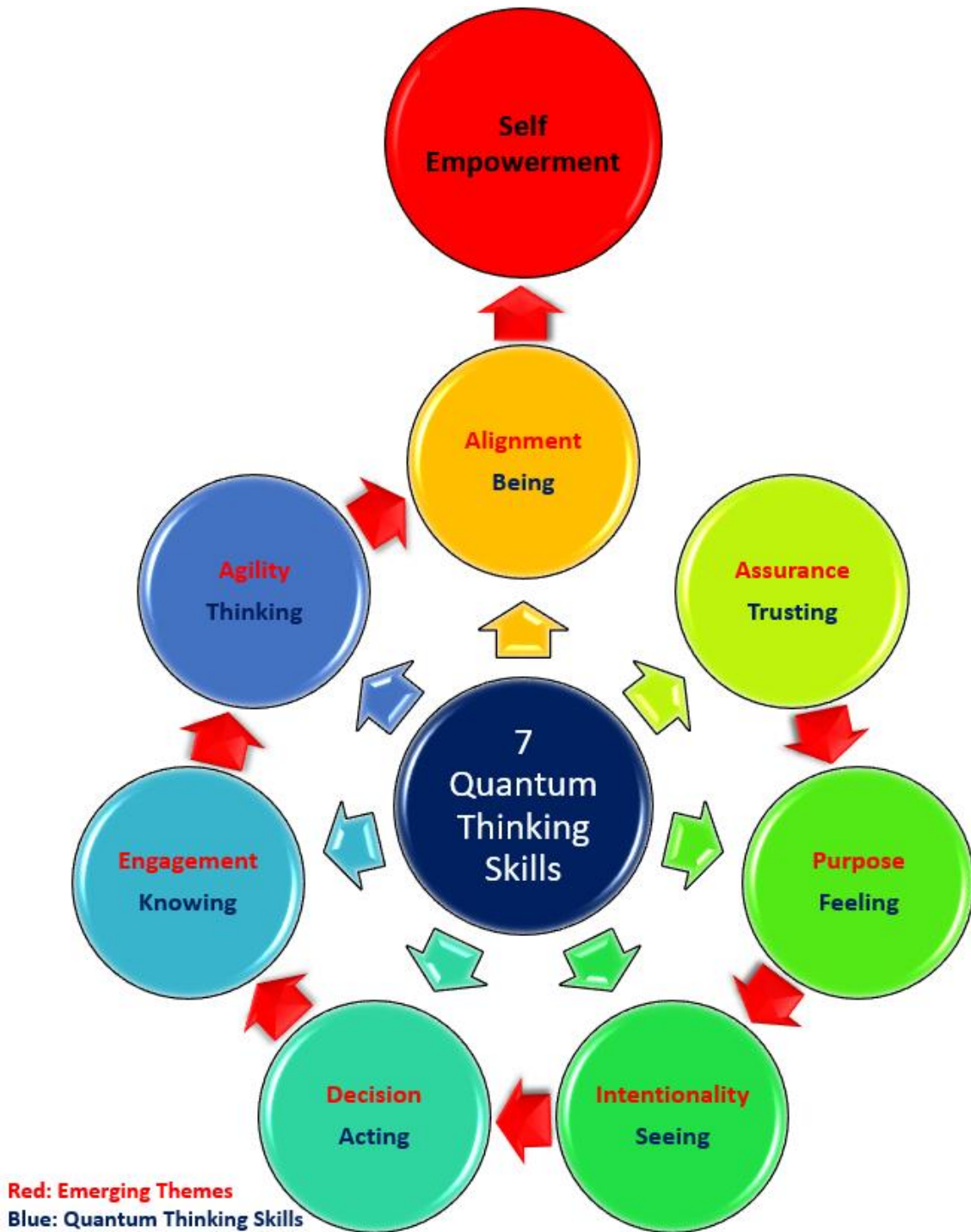


Figure 5-2: The Employee Self-Empowerment framework

The Employee Self-Empowerment Framework is a continuous iterative loop designed to develop the type of thinking and action required for self-empowerment. Each step of the framework is designed around one of the emerging themes and has been placed

in sequence. The research determined the sequence based on the thinking and action process that employees would need to go through to empower themselves. The framework suggests that should employees follow this sequence of steps, they can change their thinking, perceptions and behaviours thus enabling them to empower themselves (Casemore, 2015). Developing intrinsic motivation requires employees to have confidence in themselves and their skills and knowledge. Self-belief will encourage them to explore and act on potential opportunities for growth (Vallerand, 2000). The first four steps, namely assurance, purpose, intentionality and decision, focus on changing the employee's thinking to increase their confidence and willingness to make the decision to act and empower themselves. The more control employees feel they have over their decisions, the greater their trust in the decisions and the greater their resolve to act (Maxwell, 2019; Rock, 2009). The final three steps, namely engagement, agility and alignment, focus on building the employee's influencing and leadership skills and is discussed in more detail later in this section.

5.3.1 Assurance

The first step in self-empowerment and intrinsic motivation is developing a belief in oneself. In this study, assurance relates to one's perception of competence and belief in oneself through a confidence in one's abilities, knowledge and skills. Robertson (2021) suggests that although self-confidence could lead to errors, self-belief increases motivation and confidence leading to improved performance while lowering uncertainty. Assurance is linked to the skill of 'quantum trusting', which is the confidence and belief that certainty will emerge from the uncertainty (Shelton, 2012). This is one of the quantum skills used to embrace volatility.

To increase certainty, employees will need to trust in themselves to be able to embrace volatility. As employees gain knowledge and skills, their confidence and belief in themselves increases (Rock, 2009; Berger, 2014). They better understand how they can add value to the business by identifying innovative opportunities. This self-belief gives employees a direction in which to focus their attention to help their peers and the business evolve, trusting that balance can be achieved without control or authority.

The belief that their actions will lead to achieving the desired future state reinforces their vision and purpose (Casemore, 2015).

Assurance or self-belief therefore creates a positive mindset in employees, which gives them the confidence to look for growth opportunities. In addition, belief in self will motivate employees to focus on their values and setting goals. This leads to developing a purpose.

5.3.2 Purpose

Purpose is the second step in employees being able to empower themselves and develop intrinsic motivation (Vallerand, 2000). Kirkman and Rosen (2010) and Casemore (2015) suggest that employees are more motivated to empower themselves when they have a clear vision or purpose. This positive self-belief, linked to the skill of quantum feeling, and deciding to have a positive mindset, helps to create purpose and intentionality (Shelton, 2012).

Collins (2015) suggests that a positive, solution-focused mindset is developed by employees mentally placing themselves in the desired state and thinking about how to get 'here' (desired state) from 'there' (current state). This is as opposed to employees mentally placing themselves in the current state and thinking about how to get to the desired state. The decision to use potential solutions, rather than potential problems, to identify and focus on opportunities creates positive emotional energy and a positive mindset (Drennan, 1992). 'Quantum feeling', therefore, drives solution-based thinking focused on achieving a meaningful future state or end goal, thus giving employees a purpose (Shelton, 2012; Llopis, 2012; Rappoport, 2015).

Having a clear purpose therefore gives employees a sense of direction, value and control. It provides a growth path where employees can align their actions with their goals and vision. Having a purpose develops intrinsic motivation in employees, giving them a reason to prioritise and act on their goals. A clear purpose then leads to creating intentionality.

5.3.3 *Intentionality*

The third step in employees being able to empower themselves and develop intrinsic motivation is intentionality. Self-empowerment is a conscious choice to commit to a set of actions. A mental attitude is similar to a habit, which Rock (2009) suggests can be developed or changed through having a purpose. Intentionality is a mental attitude that employees are able to create once they believe in themselves and have a vision (Drennan, 1992). When they can see a future possibility, or desired state, and trust that they have the skills and knowledge to help them attain this goal, they will form goals and act intentionally (Hutschenreuter et al., 2019). According to Kesting (2006), intentionality will influence what goals employees set and what actions are taken to achieve them. Employees will focus on information and skills relevant to their goals. This reduces the risk of failure and increases the confidence they have in making decisions.

The quantum skill of 'seeing' is linked to creating a resolve, where employees consciously align their beliefs and desires (Shelton, 2012). Employees will identify areas that matter to them, and where they feel they can have impact through applying their knowledge and skills. Intentionality is the foundation of decision-making and the resulting actions.

Employees will make decisions based on their perception of the potential risk and rewards associated with the decision (Prestwich et al., 2008). Uncertainty will reduce their willingness to make a decision and take action because the higher the uncertainty, the higher the perceived risk to the employee (Rock, 2007). However, employees will only act if they are confident of success.

Having the confidence to intentionally make choices and act on them enhances employee confidence and gives them a sense of agency. It increases their resilience and ownership allowing them to correct self-limiting beliefs. Intentionality allows employees to focus on decisions that will lead them to achieving their goals and will increase their feeling of self-empowerment.

5.3.4 Decision Making

Assurance, purpose and intentionality all lead to the fourth step in the employee self-empowerment framework, decision-making. These three elements give employees the confidence to make clear decisions that reflect their values, beliefs and aspirations. Making decisions that influence work outcomes increases the employees feeling of self-empowerment (Kesting, 2006). Once employees have aligned their beliefs in themselves with confidence regarding their skills and knowledge, they will have the resolve to act (Priyadharshany and Sujathat, 2015; Gilbert and Gandhi, 2012). They will tap into the emergent thinking developed through the quantum skills of 'trusting, feeling and seeing' to develop a determination to empower themselves, confident that they have reduced the perceived risk while understanding the potential and unintended consequences. Employees will make decisions related to their growth plan and perceived impact on their environment.

Although decision-making involves an element of risk, employees will be confident enough and will be resilient so that any mistakes made will be seen as an opportunity for learning and development. Decision-making will also encourage employees to engage with others to co create solutions and opportunities (Kesting, 2006).

Quantum 'acting' embraces volatility by ensuring that employees understand the interconnectedness of elements, a systemic view, thus confirming certainty when making decisions (Shelton, 2012). With this understanding and confidence, employees will be more proactive in experimenting and presenting solutions, which leads to greater engagement (Westcott, 2013).

The last three steps in the employee self-empowerment framework, engagement, agility and alignment, focus on employees demonstrating their ability to lead through self-empowerment. These steps are linked to the emerging managerial leadership behaviours of engagement, agility and alignment, as discussed in the TIPS Managerial Leadership Framework (Da Vinci Institute, 2019) and used to inform the research study. Self-empowered employees will encourage others to also make decisions,

which develops their sense of purpose and leads to better engagement (Tanjeen, 2013).

5.3.5 Engagement

The fifth step in employees empowering themselves is engagement. This is the first step where employees start to develop their leadership competencies. Employees want to be accepted by their peers. They measure their status based on their perception of their relationships (Rock, 2009; Gilbert and Gandhi, 2012; Goldsmith, 2015). Employees who intentionally empower themselves will actively engage with their peers, be non-judgemental, responsive and transparent in their communication, and open to alternative opinions (Govender and Bussin, 2020; Keifer and Senge, 2005) (Osbourne and Hammoud, 2017).

Engagement increases certainty (Rock, 2007), allowing employees to be more confident in embracing volatility. Self-empowered employees demonstrate the skill of quantum 'knowing' through a willingness to challenge thinking, engage with others, and show proficiency in embracing uncertainty and mindfulness, thus relying on intuition. They will be consistent in their behaviour and build trust, which will allow them to develop creative networks (Da Vinci Institute, 2019). Pink (2010) and Franz (2004) believe that the more empowered employees are, the more engaged and productive they become.

Creative networks can quickly identify, test, and refine potential solutions and opportunities (Hutzschenreuter et al., 2019). Employees in these networks share knowledge, skills, and authority, enabling them to solve problems and make decisions, thus leading to improved performance. This practice encourages employees in these networks to quickly learn and unlearn, which according to Senge et al. (2011a), will help the company gain a sustainable competitive advantage. The confidence shown by self-empowered employees will enable them to manage this creative process, encourage experimentation, and develop multiple, sometimes seemingly illogical, but valuable, ideas (Zohar, 2016).

5.3.6 Agility

Agility is the sixth step in the journey to self-empowerment. The quantum skill of 'thinking' creates intentionality and is linked to agility (Shelton, 2012). Agility in this conceptual framework refers to leadership agility. The four competencies required to be an agile leader (Joiner and Josephs, 2007) are to be brave in making decisions once opportunities and solutions are uncovered. Secondly, they can accelerate their development and learn through experimentation and networking. Thirdly, they take responsibility for creative problem solving and transformation; fourthly, they understand and engage with stakeholders to create better alignment (Joiner and Josephs, 2007). By following the first five steps of the empowerment framework employees will have demonstrated the four competencies that are required of an agile leader, according to Joiner and Josephs (2007).

Building agile leadership competencies requires self-empowered employees to think critically and encourage their networks to experiment when challenging the rules or identifying new solutions or opportunities (Rogers, 2015). Employees need to be open to change, demonstrating flexibility, resilience and a proactive mindset. These competencies are reflected in the constructs identified through the data collection and the TIPS Managerial Leadership framework (Da Vinci Institute, 2019).

Employees seek out agile leaders because of their knowledge, skills, and ways of thinking (Cialdini, 2009; Raven, 2004). Tapping into agile leadership competencies allows self-empowered employees to positively influence their workplace performance as they grow their reputation as knowledge experts (Joiner and Josephs, 2007; Raven, 2004). When employees feel that they can make their voices heard, they become more engaged (Cameron and Green, 2009), thus positively impacting their performance and alignment.

5.3.7 Alignment

The final step in employee self-empowerment is alignment, where employees recognise how their engagement and decision-making have allowed them to co-create

solutions and opportunities that have added value to the business. A self-empowered employee will create a clear business purpose for themselves and others to align to. Creating alignment will encourage group decision-making, which reinforces the commitment to achieve the goals set and encourages a positive work environment. An added advantage is that aligned employees are more likely to be innovative and creative in their thinking (Pasion-Caiani, 2015).

When alignment is linked to engagement and agility it creates enthusiasm and a willingness to co-create solutions and opportunities, which encourages collaboration (Da Vinci Institute, 2019) (Pasion-Caiani, 2015). Moreover, co-creation encourages alignment where a common vision, mission, values, and goals are embraced (Jordaan, 2019; Kingma, n.d.). Self-empowered employees have a systemic view of the relationships between the various business environments and have the ability to cultivate interdependent networks of relationships comprising knowledge workers. The skill of quantum 'being', combined with the other quantum skills, allows self-empowered employees to co-create a shared vision and pursuit of goals (Shelton, 2012).

5.4 Summary of the Framework

For an employee to empower themselves, they will first need to grow their confidence, identify their purpose and resolve to set and achieve goals. The first four steps in the employee self-empowerment framework are designed to develop intrinsic motivation by changing their thinking.

Step 1 is building confidence, and a belief in themselves through acquiring knowledge and skills to challenge their self-limiting beliefs. A positive mindset leads to step 2, where the employee develops a personal goal or purpose. Having a clear purpose gives employees a sense of direction where they can align their actions with their goals and vision. Their self-belief and ambition foster their intent to use their knowledge and skills to intentionally make a difference in step 3. Intentionality allows employees to make decisions that will lead them to achieving their goals and as such

will increase their feeling of self-empowerment. Assurance, purpose and intentionality all lead to step 4, the decision making. These three elements give employees the confidence to make clear decisions that reflect their values, beliefs and aspirations. The decision to select goals and act is where employees are confident of the outcome and have minimised the perceived risk. The last three steps in the self-employment framework are where employees demonstrate their leadership competencies and willingness to lead.

Step 5 is where self-empowered employees, relying on their knowledge, skills and intuition, engage with others by developing creative networks. Encouraging experimentation and critical thinking provides a continuous flow of creative ideas, tested and commercialised to create agility in step 6.

Following these six-step process shows that self-empowered employees can create alignment (step 7) through interdependent and transparent relationships. The seven quantum skills help employees empower themselves by giving them creative and critical skills. These skills help in decision making, interactive communication and the ability to use whole brain thinking to view the business environment systematically. Refer to Table 5.1 below.

Table 5-1: Application of the Employee Self-empowered Framework

Steps	Theme	Quantum Thinking Skill	Application (TIPS)	Result
1	Assurance: a belief in self & own competence leading to developing confidence	Trusting: trust that order will emerge from chaos	Build skill, knowledge & personal mastery	Confidence, engagement, sharing knowledge & skills, growth mindset
2	Purpose: the vision that creates a conscious desire or motivation within an employee	Feeling: Internal decision to focus on positive emotional energy designed to create a positive mindset	Focused on solution-based thinking	Look for passion & impact
3	Intentionality: a single-minded attitude that focuses on completing specific actions	Seeing: conscious intentionality in aligning perceptions with intended requirements	Develop specific plans for growth & impact aligned to their vision, identify small wins	Focus on growth development & influence for continuous improvement
4	Decision-making: the thought process of collecting information, identifying & reviewing options & selecting the relevant course of action	Acting: making and acting on decisions understanding the interconnectedness of all the elements	Makes & act on decisions related to growth and impact	Confident decision-making & acceptance of accountability
5	Engagement: emotional commitment demonstrated through showing enthusiasm & dedication in supporting their job, peers & business	Knowing: willingness to embrace uncertainty & rely on intuition. Embracing mindfulness	Demonstrate transparent communication & active listening. Embrace diversity to build networks of knowledge workers	Influence workplace & peers to co-create solutions & opportunities to add value to the business
6	Agility: willingness to embrace change & question uncertainty	Thinking: constant flow of creating & illogically connecting ideas where the question is more important than the answer	Demonstrate continuous innovative improvement & insatiable curiosity	Continuous flow of new innovative ideas linked to value-adding solutions & opportunities
7	Alignment: willingness to embrace vision, mission, values & goals	Being: ability to cultivate interdependent & transparent relationships	Co-create common purpose through vision, mission & values in the networks	Influence peer learning & cooperation

However, the researcher considers that there may be some limitations to the implementation of the self-empowerment framework in businesses by willing employees. According to Keerthika, Henry, Karthikenyam and Chennai (2018), there are several challenges employees could face in trying to empower themselves. Authoritarian leadership or organisational culture may be the first challenge that employees face, where the leaders actively work to keep the status quo. The lack of support from leaders could be because of their fearing losing their authority or influence. Leaders could also withhold access to training and development thus limiting the employee's growth and ability to build self-confidence.

In addition, employees could encounter resistance from their peers who prefer the traditional hierarchical system. This could lead to competition, tension and conflict with those that do not support their self-empowerment initiatives. This change in dynamics could cause a breakdown in relationships and potential sabotage of the employee's progress. As a result, employees who are willing to take the initiative to empower themselves may fear repercussion from their peers and leaders resulting in them abandoning their journey (Aycan and Sheilia, 2019).

However, the researcher believes that these challenges can be overcome if employees actively follow the seven steps in the self-empowerment framework.

5.5 Conclusion

In Chapter 5, the researcher placed the seven themes that emerged in an order to show a process employees will follow to empower themselves (refer to Table 5-1). This process is the base of the new Employee Self-Empowerment Framework, where the first four steps are used by employees to empower themselves and build influence. The last three steps are used by employees to further build their influence and develop their leadership competencies. Using his own DARE model as the starting point, the elements were taken from the themes uncovered in the data analysis of the research conducted and were then linked to the seven quantum skills (Shelton and Darling, 2001; Shelton, 2012) and the TIPS Managerial Leadership Framework (Da Vinci,

2019). The Framework shows how employees can develop thinking and skills that will encourage self-empowerment and leadership.

The first step in the journey of employees empowering themselves is developing a belief in themselves (assurance), which will give them the confidence to develop a purpose or goal. The confidence will encourage them to intentionally make the decision to develop their knowledge and skills, thus enhancing their ability to influence others. As their confidence, knowledge and skills grow, so will their engagement and willingness to challenge current thinking, processes and systems. Their demonstration of their agility will encourage others to follow their example and co-create solutions and opportunities that add value to the business.

As shown in Table 5-1, the themes are in a specific sequence. Each of the seven quantum skills were explored and aligned to a specific theme or step in the self-empowerment framework. These quantum skills suggest the type of thinking that employees will need to embrace during their transition through each specific step in the empowerment process.

The following chapter comprises the conclusion of this research, details the limitations of the research, and provides suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 6:

RECOMMENDATIONS AND RETURN ON INVESTMENT

6.1 Introduction

The researcher believes this study is relevant in today's business environment because of the uncertainty caused by volatility and continuous change (VUCA). For businesses to be sustainable and agile, employees need to be more engaged (Krawchuck, 2017; Senge et al., 2011a).

This research, and the resulting self-empowerment framework, will only hold value for businesses if employees use it to empower themselves to co-create and deliver meaningful contributions. Although the study is on employees empowering themselves, the business will need to create a culture, which will encourage employees to empower themselves. Chapter 6 discusses the recommendations for implementing and testing the conceptual framework, the potential benefits, and recommendations for future studies. Return on investment in this study is defined by the researcher as the accrued benefits of the study quantified over time. Because the framework has not yet been tested the benefits discussed are proposed or potential benefits of implications of the study.

6.2 Recommendations for business owners and employees

This study explored whether employees are able to empower themselves by changing their thinking. The aim was to develop a simple self-empowerment framework for employees to understand and implement. The researcher is of the opinion that business will have a limited input or influence on the implementation of the employee self-empowerment framework. The framework is designed for employees, at any level, to empower themselves even in a business with autocratic leadership. Self-empowerment is about building confidence and influence. However, there are opportunities for the business to develop a supporting culture and socialise the idea of self-empowerment to encourage employees to explore this opportunity.

6.2.1 Recommendation 1

The first recommendation is to develop an awareness of the self-empowerment framework. The first action required is for the business executive team and leadership to agree to allow an employee self-empowerment programme in the business. The session should include representative from the leadership, human resources and unions to ensure buy in at all levels. During the session an overview of the process should be discussed as well as how leaders and managers will give employees the freedom to experiment with the framework, understanding that the process may be implemented by employees at all levels. If the process is to be sustainable, employees cannot be forced or coerced, but must decide for themselves whether or not to use the framework. Managers must understand how to build a transparent learning culture that encourages employees to test themselves (Senge et al., 2011a). Once agreement has been reached the second action is to run town-hall sessions for all employees introducing the framework and explaining how it can be used. During this session, identified problems are resolved and opportunities discussed (Martela and Kostamo, 2018). These sessions will be run by the human resources team in conjunction with union representatives. The third action in developing awareness is for the training and development team to create and implement a training manual and programme to demonstrate how employees can use the self-empowerment framework to maximise their influence and develop their leadership competencies.

Table 6-1: Recommendation 1 - action list

Recommendation # 1	Action	Responsibility
Develop an awareness of the self-empowerment framework	Meet with EXCO to ensure leadership 'buy in' of a self-empowerment program	HR & Unions
	Run 'town hall' sessions to socialise the idea and develop 'buy in'	HR & Unions
	Develop and roll out a guide and training program on how to use the framework	T&D & Unions

6.2.2 Recommendation 2

The second recommendation is positive reinforcement, which is defined as the process of recognising and rewarding desired behaviour (Goldsmith, 2015). Rock (2009) suggests that social rewards, such as recognition, are more sustainable than tangible rewards such as money because they create a sense of belonging and purpose. For the first action all employees must be encouraged to develop a positive self-empowerment or winning culture. The researcher believes that a winning culture is developed by both employees and management intentionally looking for those demonstrating remarkability (Da Vinci Institute, 2019; Senge, et al., 2011b). The agile leadership competency of celebrating accomplishments (discussed in section 2.16.4.3.) suggests that immediately recognising the remarkability and advertising it widely encourages this winning culture. Cialdini (2021) suggests that employees will want to emulate those they see being recognised for demonstrating curiosity and innovative thinking.

The second action is to promote collaboration through developing a culture of continuous improvement based on self learning and development linked to transparent multi-directional communication (Watanabe-Crockett, 2019; Llopis, 2012). Continuous improvement is most effective when driven by employees working in networks, using peer learning to focus on a common purpose or goal. (Womack and Jones, 2010; Senge, et al., 2011b). The third action is to encourage a culture of experimentation leading to innovation (Kashan, Wiewiora and Mohannak, 2021; Liker, 2004). An open culture that celebrates employee resourcefulness supports employees who are willing to take risks and learn from their mistakes and successes, while focused on customer needs. Employees, and networks of knowledge workers, need to be confident enough to identify opportunities for projects where they can use their strengths, knowledge, and skills to add value to the business. Employees must be encouraged to focus on continuous improvement spaces to experiment and challenge thinking, processes, and systems.

Table 6-2: Recommendation 2 - action list

Recommendation # 2	Action	Responsibility
Develop processes for Positive Reinforcement	Develop a positive self-empowerment organisational culture	All employees at all levels
	Develop an organisational culture of continuous improvement through learning	EXCO & Leadership HR & T&D
	Encourage an organisational culture of experimentation and innovation	EXCO & Leadership HR

6.2.3 Recommendation 3

The third recommendation is to identify how best to measure and log all projects, which includes successes and failures. Measuring success is vital to drive sustainability. Goals and targets that are not measured cannot be managed (Casemore, 2015). Measuring tools that are developed and implemented by employees have a greater chance of buy-in by the employees because they will develop tools that measure what they think are important (Forner, Jones, Berry and Eidenfalk, 2020). However, the progress or performance could also be measured by standard business tools such as key performance indicator (KPI) measurements. Measuring activities allows employees to identify the causes of successful and unsuccessful actions. Self-empowered employees must celebrate all the successes and recognise stakeholder participation. They must also interrogate unsuccessful activities to learn from their mistakes and identify alternative solutions and potential opportunities. The opportunities and solutions can then be used to develop activities that add value to the business and meet customers' needs. For this recommendation to be sustainable, self-empowered employees will need to be open to feedback and encourage stakeholder participation through building creative networks (Govender and Bussin, 2020).

Table 6-3: Recommendation 3 - action list

Recommendation # 3	Action	Responsibility
Measure and log all accomplishments	Develop a visual measuring tool such as a 'project board' to measure and track the progress of all identified opportunities and solutions	All employees

6.2.4 Recommendation 4

Lastly, employees must test the self-employment framework in their workplace to see whether they are able to empower themselves by changing their thinking (Llopis, 2012; Rappoport, 2015). No specific action from the business is required because the decision to use the framework must originate from the employee. There are two actions to this recommendation. The first is to experiment with the framework, exploring each step to see how it fits with the employee's thinking. Once a step has been explored and tested, the employee must reflect on their experience and look at what value they have gained. They need to ask questions of themselves such as 'Did the process change their thinking?' and 'How can I improve the outcome?' The employee must explore each step in sequence. The second action is for the employee to discuss their experiences and thoughts with others to get feedback, which can be used to develop an improved result or identify new opportunities. This multi-directional communication and feedback will encourage others to think about experimenting with the self-empowerment framework for themselves. Cialdini (2021) suggests that employees will emulate those that see others being successful or growing. The final action is to offer a leadership development programme for those self-empowered employees who demonstrate some of the leadership competencies or practices found in the TIPS framework or demonstrate some of the quantum skills. These employees will be seen as influencers in their space.

Table 6-4: Recommendation 4 - action list

Recommendation # 4	Action	Responsibility
Test the self-empowerment framework	Experiment with the self-empowerment framework, reflecting on the progress	All employees
	Discuss thoughts and opportunities with other stakeholders	All employees
	Offer a leadership development programme for self-empowered employees who demonstrate leadership competencies of thinking	T&D

6.3 Potential barriers to use and recommendations for future research

During the research process and while developing the conceptual framework, the researcher discussed some of the emerging thinking with the interviewees and colleagues. The results of the discussions identified both future research ideas as well as concerns over potential barriers in the application of the framework.

Although supported by research, the conceptual framework has not yet been tested in businesses. During the researcher's consulting work, he took the opportunity to discuss the self-empowerment framework with employees in various companies of different sizes. The feedback received was that all agreed that the process could work in their business and some of these employees decided to test the framework for themselves. It is anticipated that the feedback from these pilot experiments will enable the researcher to refine the design and application of the self-empowered framework, which could lead to future research. The current study can be expanded to include future research on using the seven quantum skills to build self-empowered teams.

The employees' primary concern was that managers might try to sabotage their efforts to empower themselves. Some reasons given to motivate this perception were fear of losing power, authority, or position. The brain steers away from uncertainty because of potential risk (Rock, 2009), which can result in inaction or a reluctance to change.

Future research could identify the possible causes of managers' reluctance to allow their employees to empower themselves and thus help employees to develop mitigation strategies. In addition research could be conducted on using the seven quantum skills to develop quantum leadership, which is a more holistic, inclusive and transformative approach to leadership (Zohar, 2022).

Additional value-adding research can focus on the impact of watching others apply the conceptual self-empowerment framework to disempowered employees. When employees see the difference in the behaviour of an employee that has empowered themselves, will they be influenced to use the same process to develop their own empowerment? Cialdini (2021) suggests that employees try to emulate those they see as successful. He calls this the influencing skill of social proof. If this is true, a single self-empowered employee can influence many others and create a snowball effect. The following section will discuss the potential benefits of the study.

6.4 Benefits of the study: ROI

Return on Investment (ROI) is defined in this study as benefits quantified over time. The self-empowerment conceptual framework that emerged from this exploratory study has not yet been tested in business. Therefore, it is impossible to calculate this study's financial return on investment. However, this study can suggest several potential benefits should employees decide to empower themselves.

Kokila (2016) identified several potential benefits to having empowered employees. These benefits, listed below, are supported by the identified constructs and the practices and competencies discussed in the TIPS Managerial Leadership framework (Da Vinci Institute, 2019).

The first potential benefit is improved efficiency and quality of work. The emerging constructs suggest that effectiveness is more important to self-empowered employees than efficiency. However, the focus on questioning and continuous improvement both

talk to improved quality. Reflection and problem probing are two leadership practices that self-empowered employees use for constant improvement.

The second benefit is generating and strengthening a positive work culture. The constructs that emerged in the research suggest that self-empowered employees are supportive, have good emotional intelligence, and focus on building collaborative networks with a common purpose. Knowledge workers in the networks share knowledge and skills, leading to greater confidence and pride in their team and their solutions (Boud et al., 2002).

Finally, self-empowered employees have the confidence to use their skills, knowledge, and strengths to develop original solutions. Their managerial leadership competencies of experimentation and innovation lead to agility (Da Vinci Institute, 2019). The additional benefit is that it gives employees the ability to respond rapidly to changes in the VUCA business environment.

Embracing change and managing uncertainty requires the skill of quantum 'knowing' when reflecting on opportunities. The constructs suggest that self-empowered employees are insatiably curious, confident, and holistic in their innovative thinking.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter discussed four recommended actions to aid employees in the journey of self-empowerment. Two additional potential areas of study were also identified. Although the ROI cannot be quantified, the potential benefits of the study were discussed.

The following chapter comprises the conclusion of this research, detailing the study's limitations, and discusses how the aim and objectives were met.

CHAPTER 7:

CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

Chapter 7 is the study's conclusion. The research question is answered by giving a synopsis of the employee self-empowerment framework. The chapter details how the research problem was solved and how the aim and objectives were met. In addition, the assumptions made in Chapter 1 are reviewed and answered. The limitations of the research are also be discussed in more detail.

7.2 Research question

The research question, 'How are employees able to empower themselves to influence others in their workplace to co-create and deliver meaningful contributions to the business?' was answered by developing the employee self-empowered framework discussed in Chapter 5.

The employee self-empowerment framework is an iterative process consisting of seven sequential steps linked to actions and thinking. By following the process, which helps to change their thinking, employees who want to empower themselves can build their influencing skills and develop leadership competencies. The framework is discussed in more detail in section 5.3.

Step one is assurance, building self-confidence through self-development. Aligned with the quantum skill of trust, it encourages employees to embrace complexity and volatility. Self-belief aligned with the quantum skill of feeling develops a positive mindset, which encourages employees to develop a purpose and set goals. This is the second step in the framework. The third step of intentionality is the act of being deliberate and conscious in their actions and requires employees to use the quantum skill of seeing where they create a resolve. Employees who have passed through the first three steps will develop intrinsic motivation, which are the internal factors that

drive employees to decide to engage in an activity. These internal factors include aligning their goals to their purpose, resilience, a feeling of fulfilment and greater control over their environment. The fourth step in decision making is aligned with the quantum skill of acting helps employees make holistic decisions based on their understanding of the interconnectedness of stakeholders and environment complexity and volatility.

The first four steps, namely assurance, purpose, intentionality and decision-making, focus on changing the employee's thinking and actions to increase their confidence and willingness to make the decision to empower themselves. The more control employees feel they have over their decisions, the greater their trust in the decisions and the greater their resolve to act (Maxwell, 2019; Rock, 2009). The final three steps, namely engagement, agility and alignment, focus on building the employee's influencing and leadership skills. The leadership competencies and practices linked to these are discussed in 2.9. Once employees have progressed through the first four steps, they are more confident to engage with others, to challenge thinking, embrace volatility and uncertainty and encourage other stakeholders to co-create solutions and opportunities. This quantum skill of knowing supports the employee's active engagement. The fifth step in the framework is agility where employees will use the innovative quantum skill of thinking to build their critical thinking skills and influence. Self-empowered employees will encourage their networks to collaborate, to experiment, learn from mistakes and recognise remarkability in identifying innovative solutions and opportunities. This leads to the final step in the framework, alignment. Using the quantum skill of being, which is influenced by all their skills, self-empowered employees can develop interdependent and transparent relationship. The relationships linked with co-creation encourage alignment, where networks embrace a shared vision, mission, values and goals leading to co-creation.

7.3 Aim and objectives

7.3.1 Aim

The research problem that this study identified was the lack of a specific framework that employees can use to empower themselves to co-create and deliver meaningful contributions to the business. An employee self-empowerment conceptual framework was developed using the emerging constructs from the research linked to the seven quantum skills of trusting, feeling, seeing, acting, knowing, thinking and being (Shelton, 2012). The framework and implementation were discussed in detail in Chapter 5. Employees now have a simple and easy-to-understand framework that they can use to empower themselves.

This research aimed to develop a framework that employees can use to empower themselves. The aim has therefore been achieved through developing the employee self-empowerment conceptual framework discussed in Chapter 5. The research suggests that employees can change their perceptions and thinking by following the seven sequential steps identified in the framework.

7.3.2 Objectives

There were five objectives linked to the aim of the research, and this section explains how the research met these objectives.

Objective 1: Evaluate whether employees are driven and motivated by a purpose.

Authors such as Thomas and Velthouse (1990), Rock (2007) and Pink (2010) have written about how purpose and vision influence meaning and motivation. The emerging constructs from the research suggest that self-empowered employees develop a purpose and set of goals by improving their confidence through continuous learning and personal mastery.

Objective 2: Explore what constructs employees' link to their experience of self-empowerment.

Some 55 constructs emerged from the 15 structured interviews using the RepGrid as the data collection tool and analysed using, *inter alia*, the GridSuite software. These constructs were grouped to identify the seven themes of assurance, purpose, intentionality, decision-making, engagement, agility and alignment, used to develop the employee self-empowerment framework shown in Figure 5-2.

Objective 3: Assess whether employees who use quantum thinking are self-empowered.

Section 4.4 in the study discussed the links between the constructs, the skills required for quantum thinking (Shelton, 2012). The constructs also linked to the emerging elements of agility, engagement and alignment in the TIPS Managerial Leadership Framework (Da Vinci Institute, 2019) as discussed in Section 4.8. There is a clear alignment between the constructs that emerged, the skills used for quantum thinking and the leadership competencies and practices reflected in the TIPS framework and the quantum skills as shown in Table 5-1. Moreover, the words used in the constructs, such as influencing, collaborative, and focused on others, suggest that peers view empowered employees as leaders.

Objective 4: Explore the links between self-empowerment and leadership.

As in objective 3, section 4.8 clearly links the constructs that emerged during the interviews to the TIPS Managerial Leadership framework (Da Vinci Institute, 2019) practices and competencies required of a managerial leader. The constructs that are discussed in section 4.4 describe the practices and competencies required of managerial leaders. The nine practices are global digital citizenship, computational thinking, personal mastery, probing reflective practices, social and emotional intelligence, cross cultural engagement, probing reflective practices, operationalised ideation and transdisciplinary learning. The six competencies are to co-create

meaning, co-create direction, facilitate conversations, engage creative networks, promote experimentation and celebrate synergised accomplishments.

Objective 5: Assess what level of influence self-empowered employees exert in the workplace.

According to Cialdini (2021), influence is the ability to create a common vision or purpose and motivate others to work cooperatively to achieve the vision. The emerging constructs in the research used terms and words such as actively engaged with others, collaborative, high interpersonal skills, and an external focus; and all suggest a high level of influence. Self-empowered employees build their influence by developing networks that co-create solutions (Krawchuck, 2017; Langer and Kleiner, 2015). Focusing on growing others requires sharing knowledge, which also creates influence (Harvey et al., 2021; Hastie and Sunstein, 2015).

7.4 Assumptions

The researcher acknowledges that he commenced the study with a strong bias, which led him to postulate four assumptions.

Assumption 1: All employees are willing and able to empower themselves.

Based on the constructs that emerged, and other research (Aycan and Sheilia, 2019), it appears that not all employees are willing to empower themselves. Reluctance is driven by elements such as lack of self-assuredness, uncertainty regarding the impact of their decisions on work and staff, and finally, the impact of additional responsibility and accountability on their work-life balance.

Assumption 2: Employees who are continuously engaged in their workplace will feel more committed and empowered to influence their workplace.

This assumption is the view of Kirkman et al. (2019), however, Jordaan (2019) and Whitman (2018) suggest that the leadership or management style can negatively

affect engagement even for empowered employees. The discussions during the structured interviews suggest that engaged employees demonstrate a high level of empowering behaviour and influence.

Assumption 3: Transformation in the workplace can be achieved through quantum thinking to develop leadership.

According to Womack and Jones (2010:295), 'All that is needed is for someone to turn dreams into actions in the pursuit of perfection. The themes of continuous improvement and insatiable curiosity that emerged from the research through the constructs support this assumption. The self-empowerment framework, discussed in Chapter 5, suggests that employees can use the seven quantum skills to develop a positive attitude and intentionality towards cultivating cooperative networks and leadership competencies.

Assumption 4: Management will support processes to develop employee empowerment and share leadership.

According to Manz and Sims (as cited in Kirman and Rosen, 2010), leaders who allow employees to set their own performance and goals create more autonomy. However, Jordaan (2019) and Osbourne and Hammoud (2017) suggest that managers will limit the power and influence of employees to manage potential risk. The responses received from the interviewees during the structured interviews support this view. Thus the researcher suggests that management support can be a topic for future research.

7.5 Limitations to the research

In this study, limitations are defined as the potential barriers identified that may have impacted the quality of the study. The first limitation was that the research participants were diverse and had various levels of education and understanding of English, the language used in this study. The researcher acknowledges that this may have impacted the quality of data received from the instruments. To mitigate this risk, he

ensured that the participants clearly understood the processes through active listening and transparent discussions.

A second limitation was that the research participants might have found it challenging to practically implement some of the new insights gained during the interview. Employees who wanted to empower themselves were identified during the interviews. Some participants were unsure how to start the self-empowerment process. Once the self-empowerment framework was developed, the researcher approached some participants and discussed the results. The intention was to suggest that the self-empowerment framework be piloted with identified employees. This is also one of the future areas of recommended research indicated in Chapter 6.

7.6 Conclusion

The research problem in the study was resolved through the development of the self-empowered framework. The research aim and objectives were met, and the research question answered.

The researcher suggests that employees who apply the recommendations discussed in Chapter 6 will be able to empower themselves in their workplace. Not only will they develop themselves, but they will also build their leadership competencies and practices.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Letter of consent

LETTER OF CONSENT

(date)

Research title: A Self-Empowerment Framework to Enhance Alignment, Engagement and Agility using Quantum Thinking

Dear (*participant name*)

I am a student at the Da Vinci Institute: School of Business Leadership, in the process of conducting research, which will culminate in a thesis for my Doctorate study, under the supervision of Dr Dewald Scholtz. (dewalds@davinci.ac.za). During my years of consulting, employees and managers have often said that they do not feel that they are able to empower themselves so as to make a difference in their space. This research intends to identify your individual elements which will be rated using your constructs related to empowerment. The results will be used to develop a conceptual framework that could help employees empower themselves to influence those around them.

The elements are defined as nouns and verbs describing your observations around the topic. The constructs are defined as your personal descriptions and analysis defining what you think about the topic and will be used to rate these elements.

As a manager in your business your practical experience and insights would add great value to the research. I would like to invite you to participate in two (2), 1-hour interviews, held on two consecutive days, to discuss and develop your thoughts around the elements (nouns and verbs describing the topic) and constructs (personalised unit of description and analysis) related to the topic of employee self-empowerment. The interviewing tool used will be the Repertory Grid (RepGrid). The RepGrid is a set of rating scales, which use your own constructs as the subject matter on which ratings are carried out. It is a form of structured interviewing, which arrives at a precise description of your thoughts and observations around

employee self-empowerment, uncontaminated by the interviewer's own viewpoint (Jankowicz, 2004).

Please note that your participation is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time without any negative or undesirable consequences. There is no remuneration offered for your participation. All interviews will be recorded and digitally transcribed before the recording is erased. All data collected will be treated as confidential and used strictly for this research project. All responses will be given a number based on the sequence of receipt and will only be referred to in the study by that number resulting in participant anonymity. The data will be securely stored on the cloud and protected by an alphanumeric password. After five (5) years the data will be deleted. The results of the research will be available to you should you wish to review them.

A requirement of this degree is that the research be published once completed. Your voluntary participation in this research would be greatly appreciated.

Kind Regards



Mark Fuller

Mobile: 083 654-8533

mark@davinci.ac.za

Participant (name): _____ Title: _____

Company: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 2: Repertory Grid Matrix

Topic: Methods / Understanding of Self-Empowerment
 Elements: Elicited by the interviewer
 Constructs: Elicited by the interviewer
 Ratings: 5 point scale

Construct: Emergent Pole #1

		Elements													
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12		
1															1
2															2
3															3
4															4
5															5
6															6
7															7
8															8
9															9
10															10
11															11
12															12

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	12												
	11												
	10												
	9												
	8												
	7												
	6												
	5												
	4												
	3												
	2												
	1												

Construct: Implicit Pole #2

Elements

Appendix 3: Letter of authorisation

LETTER OF AUTHORISATION

(date)

Research title: A Self-Empowerment Framework to Enhance Alignment, Engagement and Agility using Quantum Thinking

I am a student at the Da Vinci Institute: School of Business Leadership in the process of writing a thesis for my Doctorate study under the supervision of Dr Dewald Scholtz (dewalds@davinci.ac.za). As such, I hope to be able to interview (*employee name*) with a view to identify their elements and constructs related to the topic of employee self-empowerment. The two 1-hour sessions will be held on consecutive days.

The elements are defined as nouns and verbs describing their observations around the topic and the constructs, personal descriptions and analysis defining what they think about the topic, will be used to rate these elements.

All data collected will be treated as confidential and used strictly for this research project. Research ethics principles, including anonymity, confidentiality and informed consent will be strictly adhered to. Data will be digitally stored in a cloud account, protected by an alphanumeric password and will only be accessed by the researcher. The results of the research will be available to you should you wish to review them. Please note that a requirement of this degree is that the research be published once completed.

The interviewing tool used will be the Repertory Grid (RepGrid). The RepGrid is a set of rating scales, which use the participants own constructs as the subject matter on which ratings are carried out. It is a form of structured interviewing, which arrives at a precise description of their thoughts and observations around employee self-empowerment, uncontaminated by the interviewer's own viewpoint (Jankowicz, 2004).

This letter serves to confirm that I have been given the necessary authorisation to conduct the required research with the identified employee within your business and that you agree to the research being published on completion of the study.

Your agreement and support of this research would be greatly appreciated.

Kind Regards

Mark Fuller

Mark Fuller

Mobile: 083 654-8533

mark@davinci.ac.za



Authorised by (name): _____

Title: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 4: Constructs

Construct: Emergent Pole #1		Construct: Implicit Pole #2
Does not interrogate tasks given	1	Critically analyse before execution
Not responsive	2	Responsive
Only does what is asked	3	Identify additional opportunities
Need to elicit new ideas	4	Present solutions
Passive engagement	5	Actively engage with others
Focus on end goal	6	Attention to detail
Focused on self	7	Focused on organisation
Focused on own space (internal)	8	Big picture thinking (external)
Established knowledge (relies on current knowledge)	9	Learning new skills (Looking for new knowledge)
Fixed in their thinking	10	Focused on growth
Self-centred	11	Community focused
Stick to the rules	12	Challenge the rules
Little formal qualification	13	Well qualified
Confrontational	14	Effectively deals with conflict (Tactful)
Cautious	15	Confident in their space
Incompetent	16	Competent in their job
Manage others (Directive)	17	Influence others (Supportive)
Lack of confidence	18	Belief in self
Has expert knowledge	19	Is a generalist
Focus on task and customers	20	High interpersonal skills
Lack of analysis (1 dimensional)	21	Good critical thinking skills
Immature (EQ)	22	Authentic (EQ)
Lack of self-esteem (Striving)	23	High self-esteem (Arrived)

Construct: Emergent Pole #1		Construct: Implicit Pole #2
Judgemental	24	Open to others opinions
Self-centred (Narrow exposure)	25	World centric (Broad exposure)
Resist change	26	Embrace change
Reactive (Need to be reminded to get things done)	27	Proactive (gets things done)
Still learning	28	Knowledgeable
Do not admit to their mistakes	29	Take responsibility
Structured engagement (logical)	30	Animated engagement (Creative)
Unreliable	31	Trustworthy
Partial execution of tasks	32	Focus on detail of tasks
Erratic (behaviour and emotions)	33	Consistent behaviour
Traditional Thinking	34	Innovative thinking
Decisions need to be approved	35	Can make own decisions
Conflictual	36	Collaborative
Insecure in their space	37	Confident in their space
Does not demonstrate passion	38	Is passionate about their work
Stagnant thinking	39	Innovative thinking
Hesitant	40	Agile
Needs guidance	41	Self-motivated
Does not complete tasks	42	Gets things done
Focus on the end result	43	Focus on the detail
Unstructured thinking (unfocused)	44	Structured thinking
Novice	45	Experienced (SME)
Directive	46	Influencing
Efficient	47	Effective

Construct: Emergent Pole #1		Construct: Implicit Pole #2
Monitor initiatives	48	Drives initiatives
Quiet	49	Outspoken
Keep things the same	50	Pursuit of improvement
Focus on own objectives	51	Reliability (supportive)
Fixed thinking	52	Ability to unlearn
Stasis	53	Intentionality
Follow procedure	54	Embrace change
Direct	55	Subtle

Appendix 5: Ethical Clearance Certificate

The Da Vinci Institute for Technology Management (Pty) Ltd
PO Box 185, Modderfontein, 1645, South Africa
Tel + 27 11 608 1331 Fax +27 11 608 1332
www.davinci.ac.za



Reference: 001920
Date: 03 September 2020

Ethical Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the Doctorate Research of the student named below has received ethical clearance from The Da Vinci Institute Ethics Committee. The student and supervisor will be expected to continue to uphold the Da Vinci Institute's Research Ethics Policy as indicated during the application.

Proposed Title: Quantum Thinking driving Employee Self-Empowerment: A South African Perspective

Student Name: Fuller Mark

Student number: 8286

Supervisor: Dr Dewald Scholtz

Co-Supervisor: N/A

Period: Ethics approval is granted from 2020/09/03 to 2022/05/25

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "HB Klopper".

Chairperson: Research & Ethics Committee

Prof HB Klopper
Executive Dean: Research and Institutional Partnerships

Director: S Anderson (Principal and Chief Executive Officer), M Burger
Company Registration No. 2001/009271/07
Registered with the Department of Higher Education and Training as a private higher education institution under the Higher Education Act, 1997.
Registration No. 2004/HE07/003

From: Phindulo Victor Litshani

Email: victor@davinci.ac.za or phindulo.l@gmail.com

Cell: +27 (0) 76 39 3680

Date: 23rd April 2019

Re: Letter of consent

I Phindulo Victor Litshani as the manager of the TT100 programme agreed to allow Mark Fuller to collect data from TT100 winners for his research on DEVELOPING A SELF-EMPOWERMENT CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK TO ENHANCE ALIGNMENT, ENGAGEMENT AND AGILITY USING QUANTUM SKILLS.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Phindulo Victor Litshani', written over a horizontal line.

Name: **Phindulo Victor Litshani**