

Increased accountability through monitoring empowerment programmes

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OPSOMMING

Bemagtiging is nodig om magtelose individue te help om beheer oor verskillende aspekte van hul lewens te verkry. Bemagtiging is dikwels die verklaarde doelwit van intervensieprogramme. Dit is dus noodsaaklik dat programme gemoniteer en geëvalueer word om toerekenbaarheid en sinvolheid te verseker. 'n Oorsig van vyf studies word aangebied waarin 'n gestandaardiseerde kwantitatiewe meetinstrument, Bemagtigingsvraelys van Albertyn, toegepas is. Die Bemagtigingsvraelys bestaan uit 61 stellings met 'n Likertskaal-styl respons. Die stellings verteenwoordig aanwysers van bemagtiging op drie vlakke naamlik, die Mikro-, Interpersoonlike en Makro-vlak. Die meetinstrument is by verskillende meetgeleenthede (voor-, her- en/of opvolg-toets) in die vyf studies gebruik. Die gevalle betrek by die studies het bestaan uit werklose vroue betrokke by vaardigheidsopleiding of VIGS eweknie-leerlingopleiers, en betrokke by formele of informele opleiding. In die geval van slegs voortoetsing het die meting die aanvanklike bemagtigingstatus en behoeftes van individue aangetoon sodat die intervensieprogramme daarvolgens aangepas kon word. Voor en natoetsing het die doeltreffendheid van intervensieprogramme aangedui en as terugvoering oor die sinvolheid van programbeplanning en -aanbieding gedien. By bykomende opvolgtoetsing is inligting verkry oor die retensie en die handhawing van die bemagtigingstatus verwerf na blootstelling aan die intervensie. Professionele persone staan voor die uitdaging van toerekenbaarheid by die beplanning van intervensies om die bepaalde behoeftes van die teikengroep aan te spreek en gedragsverandering wat volhoubaar is, te verseker. Dit kan van nut wees by verdere programbeplanning en die verbetering van dienste, en kan behulpzaam wees met die verkryging van fondse vir toekomstige intervensieprogramme.

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INTRODUCTION

Professionals working within the field of Human/Family Ecology and Consumer Science are often faced with the challenges of planning interventions to address the specific needs of the target group they serve. Especially within the field of Adult Education and Community Development, professionals have to focus on assessing the specifically identified needs of the individuals. This is important for increased satisfaction of the client as well as increased efficacy of the training programme/intervention. Long-term changes in behaviour are linked to relevance in meeting the learning needs of the individual at a particular stage of their development (McKenzie-Mohr & Smith, 1999:74).

Empowerment is often the stated aim of many interventions and thus monitoring the effectiveness of the programmes aiming to empower disempowered individuals is imperative as it would enhance accountability. Ethically, it is important to be accountable especially when working with individuals who have expectations at the start of intervention programmes (Endres, 1997). Often these expectations have been created by the professional during the promotion/advertising of the specific programme. Apart from being unethical, failure to deliver on promises made can increase participants' resistance to change making facilitation more difficult at a later stage.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The impact of globalisation is increasingly marginalising the poor. Effects are evident especially on those who are powerless. Examples are socially excluded groups, especially women and children and those individuals with HIV/Aids (Hake, 1999; McGregor, 2001). Planning interventions for marginalised groups requires a holistic perspective of individuals and their circumstances. A multi-dimensional perspective of empowerment is essential within the debate of adult education and community development, as powerlessness is often a characteristic of these individuals and groups. Empowerment is often stated as the key thrust of programmes and interventions where the target group are those who are experiencing the effects of poverty and powerlessness. The three concepts of powerlessness, power and empowerment are discussed briefly.

The feelings of *powerlessness* in individuals are prevalent in the fast-changing realities present in society. Powerless individuals lose their ability to make choices, being more subjected to external prescriptions and prescriptions of others. They are left with a

deeply pessimistic view of themselves, as they are unable to affect their transformation due to power that is overwhelming to them. The effects of powerlessness, according to Parsons (1991) and Zimmerman (1995), are alienation from resources, distrust of societal institutions, lowered self-esteem, fatalism, self-blame, hopelessness and reduced ability to exercise personal control. The powerless clearly are in need of an intervention to facilitate their transformation.

As *power* relations are present everywhere in society, the role of adult education in changing unequal power relations needs to be debated by educators (Tisdell, 1993). Without an analysis of power there is a danger that transformative learning, instead of being emancipatory, could operate as a subtle form of self-control. Historically, power has been viewed as an oppressive, negative force controlling individuals, but the post-modern perspective focuses on the more subtle ways in which inequality is maintained and created in more subtle ostensibly social practices (Westwood, 1992).

Apart from being a form of subtle control, which needs to be borne in mind when working with adults, power also is viewed as a creative, active and enabling force (Inglis, 1997). Power is seen in terms of relations built consistently into the practices of everyday life rather than something imposed from the top down. This notion and emphasis of power in the post-modern debate correspond with the focus of empowerment on people becoming self-regulating, disciplined and in control (Zimmerman, 1995).

Empowerment aims ultimately to transform society based on the foundation of the individual's empowerment. Knowledge and increased understanding of power relations expand the capacity for acting freely and being empowered. The aim of empowerment within an individual is to increase control at the three levels of power, namely the Micro-level, Interface level and Macro-level (Albertyn, 1995:70-72). Evans (1992) states that empowerment concerns one's perceived and actual ability to determine the course of one's life and community.

LeCompte and DeMarrais (1992) state that empowerment must involve more than the micro-level, and that the other spheres need to be addressed for true empowerment to be facilitated. The guiding definition of empowerment for adult educationalists should include a psychological sense of personal control (Micro-level), but must also move to the wider effects occurring at social and community levels (Solomon, 1976:26; Rappaport, 1981; Pinderhughes, 1983). The Macro-level component includes the individual's critical reflection on power relations and his/her readiness to take action. According to Israel *et al* (1994) and Riger (1993), much of the literature focuses on the individual-level attributes and for empowerment to be a meaningful concept distinct from self-esteem and self-efficacy, the broader context within which the individual exists must be recognised. Spreitzer (1995) who did research on the psychological dimension of empowerment suggests that further research should focus on the *gestalt* of empowerment and should ex-

amine the micro-macro linkages relevant to empowerment.

It is essential to have clarity regarding the outcomes or indicators of empowerment otherwise the concept becomes a buzzword promising vague outcomes. Those who link poverty with lack of income often equate empowerment with economic empowerment. "Since income is not the sum total of human lives, the lack of it cannot be the sum total of human deprivation" (United Nations Development Programme, 1998:25). Empowerment is seen as a multi-level construct in which each level of analysis is interdependent on the others (Zimmerman, 1995).

Thus, only if there is evidence of outcomes from all the dimensions of empowerment within an individual can it be said that empowerment has taken place. The various indicators identified in the literature were arranged according to the three levels of empowerment (Micro-level, the Interface level and the Macro-level) and the outcomes are reflected in Textbox 1.

Once an empowerment intervention has been implemented, the facilitator needs to evaluate the success of the programme in terms of the aim of empowering the target group (Cadena, 1991). A measuring instrument can assist in identifying aspects that have been empowered and which levels need to be focussed on and in so doing, serve to continually improve the practice of professionals in their work with their target group. Mathiba (1995) asserts that social change and transformation within a country and amongst individuals can be brought about or facilitated through education and training programmes. Disempowered persons are often unaware of, unmotivated and unable to change their conditions of oppression. Intervention, through a series of processes, seeks to motivate individuals to take control of their lives.

MEASURING INSTRUMENT USED

An existing structured empowerment questionnaire based on a dendrogram of the indicators or outcomes of empowerment developed by Albertyn (1995:70) and standardised by Albertyn (2000: 111-122) was applied with the groups in the studies referred to in this paper. The summated rating method was followed in the design and standardisation of the empowerment questionnaire:

- ◆ Literature review identified outcomes of empowerment on three levels: Micro-, Interface level and Macro-level resulting in a dendrogram;
- ◆ Based on the dendrogram, between three to five statements were formulated for each indicator/outcome (157 statements);
- ◆ Exploratory studies using 22 subjects tested for readability and comprehension (141 statements remained);
- ◆ Resultant questionnaire was applied to 311 subjects with similar characteristics to those of the target group.

TEXTBOX 1: LEVELS OF EMPOWERMENT: SUMMARY OF INDICATORS (Albertyn, 2000:41-43)

Micro-Level		
Ability to accomplish tasks Attitude change Behaviour change Belief in success Certainty of achievement of goals Command over events Competence Confidence Dignity Direct own choices Faith and growth in skills	Feeling of having power over one's life and destiny Improved coping skills Increased control over resource allocation Individual assertiveness Individual determination Individual growth Leadership Motivation New visions and possibilities	Paid work Personal control Pro-active Self-efficacy Self-esteem Self-respect Self-sufficiency Self-worth Sense of agency Upward mobility Use efforts and resources to achieve success
Interface Level		
Ability to effect the behaviour of others Ability to make a difference in the world around us Collective group efficacy Community organisation	Community participation Decision making Exercising influence Feelings of shared fate Group identity Individual assertiveness in group	Mutual support Problem solving Release of hidden resources Support systems Understanding power and status of groups
Macro-Level		
Ability to make a difference and have command over events Awareness of rights and increased collective political power Critical reflection of social problems and understanding their place in society Increased control and access to resources Ready to take action and participate in social change and reconstruction		

An item analysis was applied to shorten the questionnaire by selecting only the most valid statements. Two criteria were relevant:

- ◆ Determination of the discriminative power by considering the distribution of the responses to measure the degree of utilisation of the 4-point Likert scale (51 statements discarded, 90 remained);
- ◆ Spearman correlation was applied to determine the extent to which all responses to individual statements correlated with the total score (29 statements discarded, 61 remained).

The final questionnaire consisted of 33 statements for the Micro-level, 15 for the Interface level and 13 for the Macro-level (Total = 61 statements).

Validity testing of the final questionnaire (61 statements) was done by:

- ◆ Content validity was established using two experts;
- ◆ Comparison of qualitative and quantitative data collected in the experimental part of the research further validated the questionnaire;
- ◆ Investigation of heterogeneity in the eight experimental groups using side-by-side box-and-whisker plots verified the validity of the measuring instrument (the questionnaire discriminated amongst the respondents).

This measuring instrument, consisting of 61 Likert-scale statements to measure empowerment on the three levels, was applied in the studies reported in this article.

AIM OF THIS ARTICLE

This article focuses on five studies where empowerment was monitored. The groups that participated were involved in a variety of intervention programmes and included unemployed women seeking skills training and HIV peer educator trainees, and involved training within a formal setting and informal community development settings. The empowerment questionnaire was applied for different reasons for the various studies depending on the aim of the research as it concerned each group and their particular needs.

Study One: HIV training for Ancillary Health Workers (Macleod-Downes, 2005)

The questionnaire was applied in the form of a needs analysis to a group of ancillary health workers attending a training programme presented by Robin Trust in three centres of South Africa, namely Port Elizabeth, Hlomo Hlomo in KwaZulu Natal and four groups in Cape Town. The aim of the research was to analyse the empowerment needs of the target group attending an existing programme to assist in adapting the programme to include a component on empowerment of women for adopting safe sexual practices. Eighty-four respondents attending the programme formed the convenience sample for this study. Evaluation was conducted as a once-off assessment prior to commencing the training programme. The empowerment questionnaire was therefore applied as a pre-test only. Analysis of the data involved examining the frequency distribution of the responses of the total group for

each of the statements (indicators) on the empowerment questionnaire. Each indicator that reflected a high disempowered response in the group was identified.

It was found that the group of women had low scores for the empowerment indicators especially on the Micro-level with reference to self-efficacy and their belief in their ability to succeed. They did not have faith in their personal skills in terms of competence, coping skills and personal responsibility. In terms of the Interface level and Macro-level indicators, they did not believe that they could make a contribution in society and were not willing to participate and take action. They were also not prepared to be assertive even when they knew their rights. These aspects were therefore acknowledged as being aspects for focus in interventions. This would assist planning by ensuring that those aspects where individuals were vulnerable were addressed in order to empower the participants more effectively (Macleod-Downes, 2005:84-87; 101; 105).

Study Two: Sewing Training for out-of-work women (Albertyn, 2003)

A community development project that aimed to empower women by teaching sewing skills to unemployed women in an informal settlement in Cape Town was evaluated using a pre-test/post-test design. Eight participants who took part in an eight-week sewing training programme were evaluated. The sewing programme was one of the courses provided by an NGO that has been operating in the area for 15 years. Other training programmes provided were baking, home-management, woodwork, computer and business skills for unemployed individuals in the informal settlement. The aim of the research was to assess the strengths and weaknesses of an existing programme to make recommendations for the future. The empowerment questionnaire was applied to the group on the day before commencement of the training programme and again directly after the last session. The empowerment questionnaire was translated into Xhosa and students from the Human Ecology Department (University of the Western Cape) served as fieldworkers. The mean scores for the individuals and for the group were calculated on the three levels of empowerment, as well as their total scores.

It was found that the course did not succeed in empowering the participants in the groups evaluated on all of the levels of empowerment. There was an improvement only on the Micro-level (approximately 2%) when comparing the average score of the group directly after the course with their score prior to the intervention. They felt more empowered in terms of personal aspects of their lives but there were no evident benefits in terms of interpersonal and Macro-level issues. It was recommended that programmes teaching skills should move towards addressing the life-skills required for life and interaction in society together with the technical skill. An integrated approach was recommended (Albertyn, 2003).

Study Three: Skills training programme (Mncube, 2003)

A study conducted by Mncube (2003) within a community development setting illustrated the impact of a skills training programme on a group of women with similar characteristics to those in the previous study. The difference was that Mncube applied a more integrated approach. The sample consisted of the seven respondents who had been accepted to attend a home-management programme provided by an NGO in the Fisantekraal community. The group's empowerment status was assessed before commencing the home-management programme (pre-test) and then participatory action research was applied in the needs analysis, programme planning and implementation of a programme for unemployed women. The programme was evaluated by means of the standardised empowerment questionnaire directly after the programme (post-test) to assess the effect of the programme on the participants. The training programme was integrated with life-skills training by addressing the needs as they arose.

It was found that this group had increased empowerment scores directly after the course on all the levels of empowerment. The greatest impact was found on the Micro-level but there were also improvements on the Interface and Macro-levels. Mncube focused her programme on addressing the needs identified in the group at the pre-test and the findings indicate that she successfully addressed these needs. Empowerment assessments as part of the process of planning and implementation appear to increase efficacy of empowerment interventions.

Study Four: Housing Literacy Programme (Van der Merwe, 2000)

Effective programmes should aim at sustainable long-term development and this can be ascertained by applying the empowerment questionnaire at a post-post testing occasion three months after completion of an intervention. In a study conducted by Van der Merwe (2000:68-108) the technical teaching method was compared with the emancipatory method of teaching while conducting a housing literacy programme with new homeowners in two previously disadvantaged communities (eight respondents in each group). It was found that in the long term (at the post-post testing occasion) there was greater sustained improvement in the participants' empowerment score where the emancipatory method of teaching was used compared to the technical method of teaching. The empowerment score of the former group (emancipatory method) rose by 11% when comparing the pre-test score with the post-post test score. By comparison, when testing across the same time frame, the empowerment score of the latter group (technical method) rose by 3%. This comparison illustrates the long-term impact of various teaching methods in experimental educational research.

Study Five: Self-Development programme (Albertyn, 2000)

Quantitative measures can be applied to facilitate accountability and to help in monitoring the impact of programmes for those who are powerless. However, quantitative measures have limitations and this is acknowledged especially when working with vulnerable or powerless groups (Israel *et al*, 1994; Rappaport, 1995). It is therefore essential to also listen to the stories of participants. This can provide valuable insights into the individual experiences that participants have as a result of interventions. In-depth interviews to note participants' experience of empowerment were conducted with a randomly selected sample of half of the participants in a self-development programme in eight different companies in the Western Cape (33 respondents).

The statement made by one respondent directly after an empowerment intervention illustrates the qualitative information that can be obtained: "My husband said I'm definitely more assertive" (Albertyn, 2000:163). Another respondent said: "I've become a bit selfish to think about me-what I want as a woman. I feel it has given me a lot of confidence and that the confidence must come from within, from myself. Yes I have changed and for me the confidence is something fantastic." (Albertyn, 2000:154). Together with a quantitative questionnaire, in-depth interviews will give valuable qualitative data regarding the effect of training programmes on the empowerment evident in individuals through the course of training programmes.

Knowles (1980:204) observed that often after an adult educational intervention there is a euphoric reaction to the learning experience. This could be reflected in a high Micro-level score. If the participant has not gained skills that are empowering to bring about sustained change it could make individuals more resistant to further interventions. It is also important that empowerment should address the other levels of empowerment to enable individuals to be proactive and to bring about change in their environments (LeCompte & DeMarrais, 1992). A Macro-level perspective involves mobilising groups of individuals to work together to bring about change. Freire (1985:125) states that action reflects a change in behaviour which is the aim of learning. Advocacy and critical reflection on society is a vital part of the empowerment process (Riger, 1993; Israel *et al*, 1994). Previous research has shown that empowerment starts with the individual's belief in themselves and this is often the first step to empowerment on the Interface and Macro-levels (Albertyn, 2000:171,178).

CONCLUSION

Ascertaining empowerment status prior to an intervention can assist in need analysis to ensure effective programme planning to meet the particular needs of powerless individuals. Application of the questionnaire at the post-testing occasion will help to determine the effectiveness of training to address the empowerment needs of the group of participants. This can thus assist in further programme planning and improvement of services to those marginalised in society. It can also

provide useful data to assist in securing funding for further interventions.

Accountability is essential when working with adults, especially where there is a scarcity of resources. It is important to monitor and ensure that interventions live up to the formulated aims and objectives. Otherwise cliché and empty promises will disillusion the people we are trying to serve. This may make them more resistant to further intervention thus entrenching powerlessness and hopelessness. The model of empowerment that views the multi-dimensional concept on the three different levels provides a framework for professionals seeking to empower their target group. This could serve to empower practitioners to facilitate empowerment of marginalised groups effectively.

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