

STUDY OF EMPLOYEE EMPOWERMENT AND JOB SATISFACTION OF UNIVERSITY STAFF IN A TQM PERSPECTIVE: IMPLICATIONS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION MANAGERS

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Abstract

Employee empowerment and job satisfaction have recently been progressively presumed as aspects of quality management and a competitive advantage of organizations. However, they have scarcely been studied in a higher education leadership context. The purpose of the research was to a) explore the correlation between employee empowerment in management practices and job satisfaction in a higher education institution's context, by applying perspectives of organizational psychology and higher education leadership and b) determining their implications for higher education leadership at the institutional level. The study tested the hypothesis that there should be a correlation between employee empowerment and job satisfaction of university employees. Data were obtained using an on-line survey method from a sample of 158 administrative and academic staff at the selected public university in Georgia. Correlation analysis was made for the purpose of analysing correlation between employee empowerment and job satisfaction. For ensuring the validity, criterion validity has been applied. The data were interpreted based on the Total Quality Management conceptual framework. The results of the research showed that there is a positive correlation between employee empowerment and job satisfaction in general and a high degree of empowerment is more correlated with job satisfaction in case of academic staff than in case of administrative. The research outcomes offer meaningful implications to individuals involved in quality assurance practices and leadership roles at universities. The findings of the research will allow higher education managers to maximize organizational strategies and improve overall organizational quality culture at universities, by considering the topics explored in the present research. Finally, limitations and suggestions for future research are discussed.

Keywords: *employee empowerment, HEIs leadership, job satisfaction, TQM.*

Introduction

Since the launch of the Bologna Process there has been a boost of quality assurance systems and models at higher educational institutions of the European Higher Education Area. Being a member of the Bologna process countries, quality assurance issues are central at higher educational institutions of Georgia too. While quality assurance is mostly associated with the development of curricula, state/international accreditation standards, and with improved teaching and learning there still remains a challenge of understanding quality by examining it from a holistic view of quality. When speaking of quality assurance, the role of universities' quality management and organizational culture is somewhat "neglected" or understudied,

while it is essential for universities to have a quality management culture for responding to quality assurance challenges, “imposed” by increased competition and the Bologna process. On the other hand, strong market forces and ideas of management have significantly affected developments in the field of education (Jones, 2013) in many countries of the western world, including Georgia. The underlying assumption in this respect is that focusing on quality and empowerment of external and internal stakeholders (including university staff) involved in the field of higher education, results in increased efficiency of the field. Therefore, analysis of quality management *status quo* at university level in quality management perspective is very important for identifying problem areas and for determining the future directions of universities organizational development, in respect with quality assurance and quality culture.

Research Focus

The novelty of the research lays in the focus of the research itself, as it attempts to study quality management culture in the field of higher education leadership through lenses of organizational psychology, and management studies. In this study this is accomplished by focusing on a very specific topic - analysis of relationships between employee empowerment and job satisfaction among university employees, in a total quality management (TQM) perspective. The research also focuses on implications for educational managers in relation to employee empowerment and job satisfaction, which also leads to educational managers’ contribution to the total quality management improvement at universities. Therefore, it may be said that the study is interdisciplinary by its nature, and hence offers a comparatively holistic picture of university quality management of the particular university under study. The research focused on answering the following research questions:

1. Does the employee empowerment lead to employee satisfaction or the opposite at the university under study?
2. In what ways (if any) do employee empowerment and job satisfaction may result in the improvement of Total Quality Management Practices of the university?
3. What are the implications for educational managers in the study of employee empowerment and job satisfaction?

Employee Empowerment

Employee empowerment is defined in many ways, but in general terms it is defined as the process of allowing employees to have input and control over their work, and the ability to openly share suggestions and ideas about their work and the organization as a whole (Richards, 2010). Empowered employees are committed, loyal and conscientious (Grensing-Pophal, 2010). Involving employees, empowering them, and bringing them into the decision making process provide opportunities for continuous improvement (Besterfield, 2011). Recent studies show that many successful organizations adopt some kind of empowerment initiative in their workforces (Spreitzer, 2006; Spreitzer & Doneson, 2008; Valsania, Moriano & Molero, 2016). According to one of the most recent Gallup management studies, which analysed the data from more than 30000 employees, it was identified that employee empowerment is one of the six crucial components, which contributes to the creation of high-performance culture at organizations (Abdallah & Ahluwalia, 2013). Practices in higher education leadership make it evident that academic staff are more empowered and have a stronger voice in the education management process compared to the administrative staff (Salameh, 2011). Surprisingly enough, even in conditions of increased demand on existence of quality management culture at universities, the study of administrative staff empowerment has received little attention.

It is accepted that when employees feel empowered at work a) they believe that they may influence strategic, administrative and/or outcomes of everyday tasks b) education managers

show interest in understanding employees' opinions on work-related decisions, including remuneration policies (Bandura, 2012, Spreitzer, 2013). It means that employees may have control over their work. Consequently, the focus of the research related to the employee empowerment at the selected university implied determination of the employee empowerment level by the two indicators – having control over the work (education managers' interest towards understanding employees' opinions) and belief of ability to influence work outcomes in everyday educational management practices.

Job Satisfaction

In recent years students-centred approach has become one of the key features of higher education quality assurance systems. Universities around Europe accept students as customers and make huge efforts to satisfy students' needs. In parallel with it, there is also a tendency to treat employees of the university (both academic and administrative) as internal customers in higher education institutions. And while meeting with students' needs falls within the framework of the European Higher Education Quality Assurance guidelines, meeting with employees' needs represents one of the aspects of quality management in the field of higher education leadership, thus, setting a context for ensuring the realization of QA guidelines in respect to the higher education quality. Meeting with the university employees' needs logically involves their job satisfaction.

There has been a huge interest towards this topic, majorly in business companies. Several studies have attempted to determine relationships between job satisfaction and job performance (Bakotić, 2016; Kampkötter, 2016). Other earlier studies show that variables such as age and education level have certain impact on employee job satisfaction (Gordon E. O'brien & Dowling, 2007). In case of university employees, job satisfaction has to be as essential as a student's satisfaction, as employees are people, who if treated right, will translate the university management message and vision to customers (Hamburg, 2012) i.e. students and to general public, when state universities are concerned. This is why helping education managers understand the importance of having a high level of job satisfaction among the respective faculties can assist them to better understand the faculty needs and improve the quality management culture at universities in general.

Comparing Academic vs. administrative staff in Higher Educational Institutions

The research primarily focused on the study of correlation between perceived levels of employee empowerment and job satisfaction of academic and non-academic staff in the selected higher education institution, and identifying its implications for fostering quality management in the field of higher education leadership, in the case of the university under study. By non-academic staff employees hired by the university for the purpose of supporting student services and academic staff at the particular university were implied. While academic staff is mainly responsible for teaching and learning at universities, non-academic staff perform day-to-day tasks for university functioning, so they are not less important key components in today's higher education settings. Several studies have shown that non-academic employees in higher education outnumbered academic staff at universities. According to the *Times Higher Education* World University Rankings Hesa data analysis of 2015, the support staff was in the majority of 71 % in institutions of higher education in the UK (Times Higher Education Ranking, 2015). This is why when selecting the target group for the current research, administrative staff was also surveyed.

TQM Approach in Higher Education

TQM approach is the idea of achieving quality built on the belief that quality is meeting primarily with the customers' needs and requirements (Tenner, 2013). In recent years, use of TQM solely in the field of business has become a myth. And many educators already believe that Deming's TQM principles can ideally shape the development of higher education field too. In this respect higher educational institutions in Georgia, similar to the universities of the former soviet countries in the region, are in a process of transition. On the one hand, these universities are usually tradition bound and often still under the influence of centralized management practices common in the soviet and post-soviet period. But on the other hand, increased competition and focus on quality conditioned by the Bologna process, as well as Georgia's choice of Europeanization place the state institutions of higher education of Georgia in a position of responding to quality challenges. In European school of quality, middle management is the flagship of quality issues within the organization, and the skills, qualifications and the following of formal rules are dominant (Toth & Jonas, 2014). Correspondingly, this is the middle management of universities in Georgia too, who have to do with the opportunities of universities development and alignment of higher education to quality standards. But surprisingly enough, study of quality management cultures in the field of higher education is somewhat understudied (Perovsek, 2016), whereas it is impossible to get a quality education without introducing quality management approaches and accepting the complexity of the concept of quality, by universities, which implies that quality management in the field of higher education leadership represents one of the constructs of quality in the field of higher education. Thus, discussion of research results in the total quality management perspective, will offer valuable implications for higher education managers, who are committed to the organizational development of universities in the country.

Problem of Research

Quality management itself is a very broad concept. In the present research an attempt has been made to study quality management/organizational development of a university by identifying the correlation between the constructs of employee empowerment and job satisfaction, as one of the particular public universities of Georgia. Therefore, the focus of the present research falls within the domain of quality management and organizational development of universities – the area of huge potential of exploration in the field of higher education leadership. Understanding of quality at higher educational institutions in Georgia often implies ideal teaching and learning practices, and it is often “forgotten” that quality of educational institutions cannot be achieved without focusing on quality management in the field of higher education leadership, which is a part of the organizational culture of universities. The research results and discussion about the correlation between employee empowerment and job satisfaction, presented in this article, will deepen knowledge in the field of higher education leadership related to quality management, thus contributing to better understanding of employee satisfaction and overall development of quality education management practices at universities, particularly with contexts in transition similar to Georgia.

Methodology of Research

General Background of Research

The diagram below represents the research model and a brief listing of two variable constructs of the research – employee empowerment and job satisfaction, as well as TQM approach indicators according to which the variables were analyzed:



Figure 1: Research model.

Empowerment is recognized as an essential factor in managerial and organizational effectiveness in organizational theory, as well as leadership and management practice (Hill & Huq, 2010). Number of empowerment initiatives have been linked to improved job satisfaction, but the research on this topic in the field of higher education is very scarce.

For the purpose of evaluating job satisfaction, Herzberg’s duality theory (two-factor theory) on Job Satisfaction has been applied as a theoretical framework. According to Herzberg’s theory, Job Satisfaction depends on motivational factors and dissatisfaction depends on hygienic factors (Gaziel, 2010). The data were collected during April – August of 2016 and data analysis was made during October – December of 2016.

Sample of Research

For the purpose of ensuring representativeness of the results, the sample of the higher educational institution under study was tested by quota selection method, which implied using criteria of age, position (academic, administrative community positions) and the length of work experience at the university (including the length of work experience at the current position).

The sample size was determined by using Creative Research Systems software solution using the following formula:

$$Sample\ Size = \frac{\frac{z^2 \times p(1-p)}{e^2}}{1 + \left(\frac{z^2 \times p(1-p)}{e^2 N}\right)}$$

Where:

Z equals to 1.65, as the confidence interval was 90 %, *p* is a percentage picking a choice, expressed as decimal (.5 used for sample size needed), which is 0.5, *N* is a whole population of 378, and *e* is equal to 0.05

If these values are used in the formula, it will be represented in the following way:

$$Sample\ Size = \frac{\frac{1.65^2 \times 0.5(1-0.5)}{0.05^2}}{1 + \left[\frac{1.65^2 \times 0.5(1-0.5)}{0.05^2 \times 378}\right]} = \frac{272}{1.719} = 158$$

So, the sample size consisted of 158 responses – 67 academic staff or researcher and 91 administrative staff among them (see Table 1); the sample margin of error was +/- 5%, confidence interval 90 % with confidence level Z score = 1.645 and standard of deviation .5.

Demographic indicators of the staff reviewed showed that there were 109 (69%) women and 48 (31%) men; academics (41%) and education administrative staff (59%, out of which about 5% also had academic position); among academics 7% had Master’s and 93%

PhD degree, 20 persons were 28-40 years old (31%), 14 between 41 and 50 (22%), 21 between 51 and 60 (32%) and 10 of them above 60 (15%); among education administrative staff 20% had BA degree or equivalent, 60% Master’s degree, 10% PhD and 4% had other qualifications, 29 persons among administrative staff (32 %) were between 24 and 30, 36 persons (39%) between 31 and 40, 16 (17 %) between 41 and 50, and 11 (12%) between 51 and 58, among administrative staff 56% had 1-3 years work experience, 30% between 4 and 9 years of work experience and 13% between 10-20 years of work experience as for the academic staff, 58% had between 4-9 years of work experience, 31% between 10-20 years, 6 % between 1-3 years and 5% had more than 20 years of work experience.

Table 1. Number of respondents.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Academic staff, researcher	67	41.7	41.7	41.7
Administrative staff	91	58.3	58.3	100
Total	158	100	100	

Instrument and Procedures

The research instrument adopted for was of a quantitative nature and attempted generalization of the results on the whole population of the university department, where the study was carried out. The questionnaire involved the measurement of employee empowerment and job satisfaction. For this purpose on-line survey approach has been used as a research strategy. The survey examined employee empowerment and job satisfaction of the specific state-funded Georgian higher education institution. The questionnaire Google forms link was sent to respondents on their emails and respondents were asked to fill-in the questionnaire.

The structure of the research instrument itself was based on the literature review made on job satisfaction and employee empowerment, as well as the Job Satisfaction questionnaire developed at the faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities of Algarve University (in Portugal). The questions were grouped mainly according to Herzberg’s duality theory (two-factor theory) on Job Satisfaction. The survey aimed at identifying correlations between employee empowerment and job satisfaction values essential for quality management culture in the field of higher education leadership, which were then used for the purpose of analyzing these aspects in a total quality management perspective in the case of the university under study. Type of data measurement applied in the questionnaire was ordinal. The optional answers in the questionnaire involved ordinal sets of scales from 1 to 6, labeling responses to which respondents agreed the least and most, i.e. from “totally disagree” to “agree totally”, with the “neutral” response in the middle.

The data were collected during April-August of 2016. The survey was anonymous, the Google form did not allow identifying the respondents, and they were notified about this in advance. The hypothesis was verified based on the Kendall’s tau and Spearman’s Rank Correlation Coefficient obtained for the correlations studied. For the purpose of assessing reliability, internal consistency technique Cronbach alpha has been used.

Data Analysis

Data analysis aimed at finding correlation between employee empowerment and job satisfaction of academic and administrative staff at the university under study, for the purpose of the future forecast or generalization of the research outcomes in the context of similar universities.

As mentioned, before the questions were grouped mainly according to Herzberg's duality theory (two-factor theory) on job satisfaction. According to this theory, two types of factors affect the individual's job satisfaction and dissatisfaction. These are motivational (intrinsic factors) and hygienic (extrinsic) factors:

- Motivational factors are ones that are under control of individuals and imply feelings of personal growth, professional recognition, self-realization
- Hygienic factors are defined by the organization and are beyond employees' control; e.g. salary, working conditions, organization policies, level of supervision etc.

According to Herzberg's theory, job satisfaction depends on motivational factors and dissatisfaction depends on hygienic factors.

Data analysis was performed using SPSS21. In statistical analysis, scatter diagrams allowed to see the contained outliers in several cases. In cases like this, Pearson's correlation coefficient for the sample with and without the outliers was calculated. The results showed that there was not much difference between these two results. For the purpose of double-checking that outliers did not substantially influence the results, Spearman's rank coefficient was also calculated.

Results of Research

For the purpose of answering to the first question, employee empowerment was measured in terms of employee's perceived influence over management decisions and work outcomes perception of control over their work, as well as education managers' interest in understanding employees' opinions on work-related decisions, including remuneration policies. Figures 1 and 2 below present results received related to these aspects at the university under study

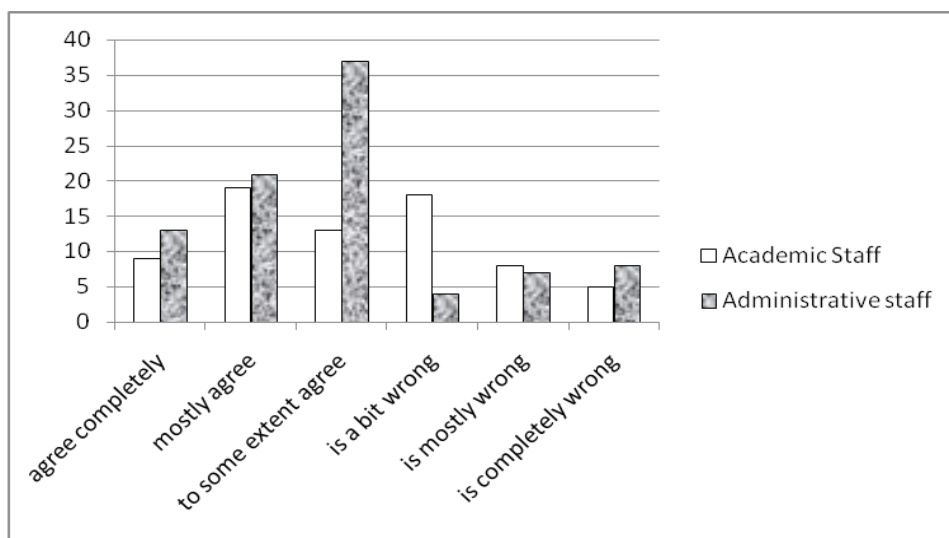


Figure 2: Comparison of Academic and Administrative staff responses on employees' influence over management decisions and work outcomes.

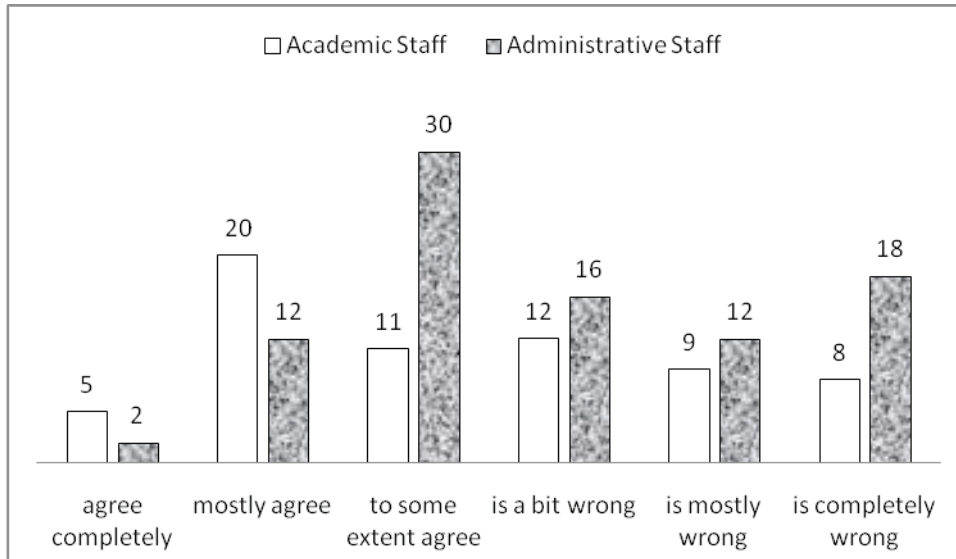


Figure 3: Comparison of academic and administrative staff responses on perceived management interest to understanding employees' opinions on work-related decisions (including remuneration policies).

For the purpose of answering to the second research question, firstly, measurement of job satisfaction among academic and administrative staff was made. This was done by enquiring about intrinsic and external motivational factors and secondly, correlation analysis between employee empowerment and job satisfaction of the university staff has been made.

The results of the research showed that the major determinant of job satisfaction among academic, as well as, administrative staff was a feeling of being a successful professional in the field, though this indicator was higher among academics, compared to administrative staff. Another factor, which resulted in job satisfaction were opportunities for professional development in case of academic staff, whereas in case of non-academics it was a feeling of respect from the university managers (see Figure 4).

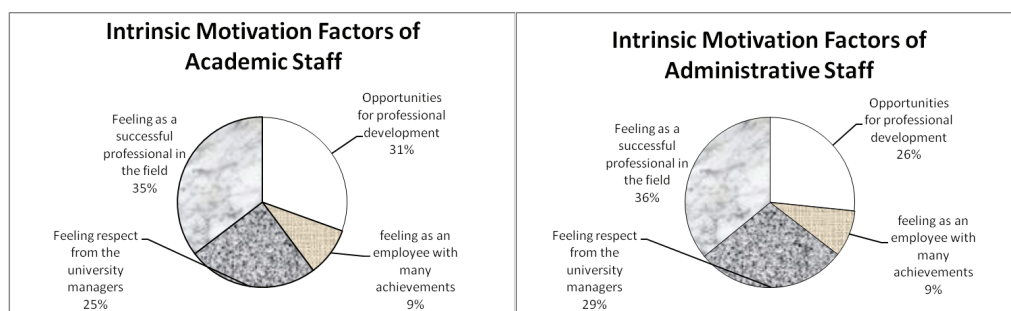


Figure 4: Comparison of intrinsic motivation factors among academic and administrative staff resulting in job satisfaction.

External motivational factors of employees were analysed through the following indicators: relationships with other employees, safety (the respondents had to choose to what extent they agreed with the statement – “I am optimistic as to what will happen to me in the future at work”), and salary and benefits. The results showed that on average, academic staff is more satisfied with salary and other benefits than administrative staff, but both of them have an almost equal level of safety and feeling of stability in their positions (see Figure 5).

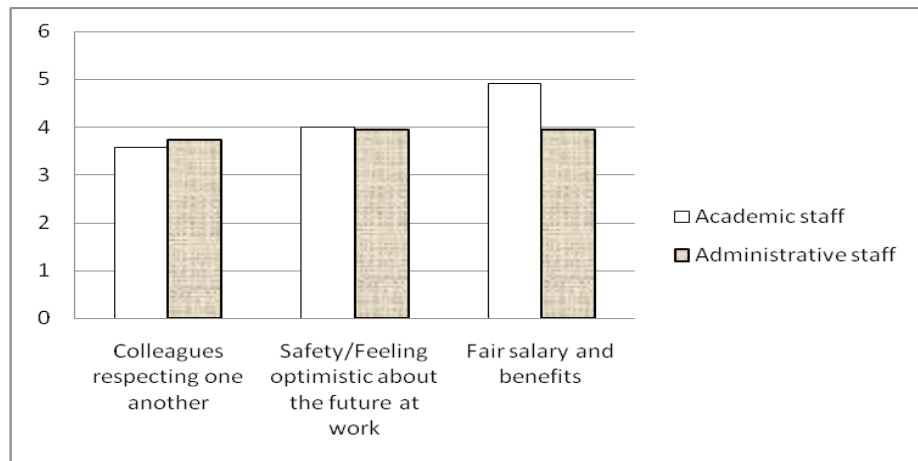


Figure 5: Comparison of external motivation factors resulting in job satisfaction in academic and administrative staff.

As for the correlation analysis, firstly, the average scores for employee empowerment and job satisfaction were calculated, i.e. two new variables were created, and then the scatter plot diagram was made, based on these two variables of employee empowerment and job satisfaction (see Figure 6).

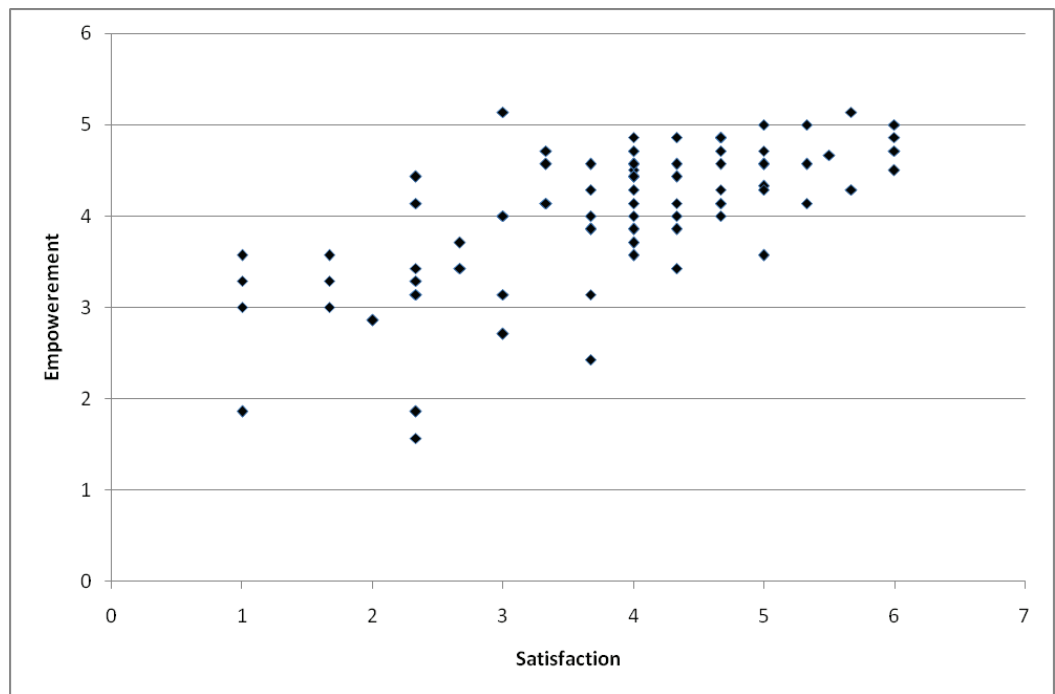


Figure 6: Scatter plot diagram of employee empowerment and job satisfaction variables.

For the purpose of testing the hypothesis, i.e. for identifying whether there was a correlation between the variables of employee empowerment and job satisfaction, pairwise associations procedure was applied. As the questions in the survey involved ordinal scales, Kendall's tau and Spearman's rank correlation coefficients were used. The results of the correlation analysis are outlined in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Correlations between employee empowerment and job satisfaction.

			Employee empower- ment	Job satisfac- tion
Kendall's tau_b	Employee empow- erment	Correlation Coef- ficient	1.000	.477**
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.0001
		N	152	152
	Job satisfaction	Correlation Coef- ficient	.477**	1.000
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.
		N	152	156
Spearman's rho	Employee empow- erment	Correlation Coef- ficient	1.000	.624**
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.0001
		N	152	152
	Job s satisfaction	Correlation Coef- ficient	.624**	1.000
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.
		N	152	156

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

According to the data presented in Table 2, it may be inferred that there is a positive correlation between employee empowerment and job satisfaction (Kendall’s tau = 0.47, Spearman’s rho = 0.624) even at 0.01 level of reliability, which means that in cases of high level of employee empowerment there is a high level of job satisfaction. Although this does not obviously mean that there is a cause and effect relationship between these two variables of employee empowerment and job satisfaction.

Comparisons were also made according to the type of employees, i.e. between the academic and administrative staff. According to the study results, there is a higher correlation between employee empowerment and job satisfaction among academic staff, compared to the results received in the case of the administrative staff (See Table 3).

Table 3. Comparison of correlations between employee empowerment and job satisfaction among academic and administrative staff.

Position			Employee empowerment	Job satisfaction
Academic staff	Kendall's tau	Employee empowerment	1.000	.528**
			Correlation Coefficient	
			Sig. (1-tailed)	.0001
			N	80
		Job satisfaction	.528**	1.000
			Correlation Coefficient	
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	
		N	80	
	Spearman's rho	Employee empowerment	1.000	.685**
			Correlation Coefficient	
			Sig. (1-tailed)	.0001
			N	80
satisfaction		.685**	1.000	
		Correlation Coefficient		
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000		
	N	80		
Administrative staff	Kendall's tau	Employee empowerment	1.000	.407**
			Correlation Coefficient	
			Sig. (1-tailed)	.0001
			N	72
		Job satisfaction	.407**	1.000
			Correlation Coefficient	
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	
		N	72	
	Spearman's rho	Employee empowerment	1.000	.531**
			Correlation Coefficient	
			Sig. (1-tailed)	.0001
			N	72
Job satisfaction		.531**	1.000	
		Correlation Coefficient		
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000		
	N	72		

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

In general, academic staff perceived themselves as more empowered compared to administrative staff. As for the extent of job satisfaction, indicators of intrinsic motivation leading to job satisfaction proved to be almost the same between these two groups, but in regard to the external motivation factors resulting in job satisfaction, academic staff perceived itself in a more advantaged position, which results in a difference in the level of job satisfaction. The data analysis also showed that there was a positive correlation between employee empowerment and job satisfaction among the university staff in general.

For the purpose of answering to the second and the third research questions, the results are discussed further in the university total quality management (TQM) perspective in the following section, in which there is also an attempt to interpret research results in respect with the implications for educational managers for improving TQM practices at universities.

Discussion

It has to be noted that in studies of the quality management of the Higher Educational Institutions, the quality management is in many cases perceived in the perspective of Total Quality Management philosophy (Al-Bashir, 2016). This together with other factors implies creation of organizational culture by educational leadership based of constant need for improvement and engagement of everyone in management, as well as, decision making processes (Pratasavitskaya, 2010). Quality culture is a set of values based on Deming's rules of quality (Orsini, 2013), which has been used extensively in business organizations. But implementation of TQM at higher educational institutions requires a different approach, as in the case of universities there are employees, whose work is based on knowledge and is not related to just maximizing financial profits, or achieving scale economies, as it is the case among business companies. Quality management implies 8 principles, but the present research results will be related to only three of them, which are: ceasing dependence on inspection to achieve quality, driving out fear, and institution of a vigorous program of education and self-improvement for everyone.

The first one is primarily linked with the empowerment of employees; by increasing employee empowerment educational managers would definitely increase employee job satisfaction and decrease dependence on inspection to achieve quality. Although according to Langfred and Rockman "organizations characterized by knowledge work will experience pressures from a variety of sources to provide increasing levels of autonomy to employees. Furthermore, as the nature of work has changed, the manifestations of employee autonomy have become more complex and varied (Langfred & Rockman, 2016). As for driving out fear, and institution of a vigorous program, in the present research they were examined by measuring employees' perception of stability and safety at work and the possibility of professional development. In this respect the results of the study were positive, but it would certainly be better if administrative staff too had more opportunities for professional development, if the university aims at improvement of quality culture and management.

The research results reflect the previous studies of employee empowerment on job satisfaction. Namely, by using longitudinal analysis Lee G. And other researchers have identified that employee empowerment may have accelerated effect on job satisfaction in a certain span of time (Lee, 2016). Despite the fact that the majority of previous studies focuses on the positive effects of employee empowerment, it would be interesting to make further studies whether this proves to be the same in all cases.

Limitation of the current study was that the research focused only on one government-funded higher education institution and the results may not be generalizable to private universities in Georgia, due to management culture and motivational factors of employees resulted from the difference in types of the educational institutions. But the research outcomes may form a foundation for the further study aiming at the development of higher education practices at universities with comparatively similar characteristics.

Conclusions

The research sheds some light on certain aspects and the study of management practices in higher education, particularly by focusing on correlations between employee empowerment and job satisfaction of academic and non-academic staff, at HEIs. For this, a theoretical framework was developed based on the related literature. The research confirmed the existence of a positive correlation of employee empowerment on job satisfaction, which coincides with the results of previous studies on employee empowerment. Secondly, the research showed that the university management would increase its efficiency, if they focused on introduction of employee empowerment practices. Thirdly, the importance of the research is that it advanced

knowledge base about administrative staff in higher education. Inclusion of administrative staff in the research was particularly important as they have received less attention in the scholarly literature, and on the other hand, when carrying out a research for the purpose of total quality management, it is important to collect and reflect on data from the administrative staff too, as TQM implies inclusion of every member of the organization in the process of decision making and management practices.

It may be said that the research outcomes may serve as a catalyst for diagnosis and development of the university under study, as well as, increase higher education leadership capacity. Further, by replicating the research in cases of samples of other universities in Georgia, higher education leaders would become able to diagnose internal departmental state and identify their strengths and weaknesses in respect with the organizational health dimensions. Study of these issues is particularly important as they are statistically correlated with an increased effectiveness of organizations, including higher educational institutions.

The results of the study analysed correlation between employee empowerment and job satisfaction in a TQM perspective. The findings of the research contribute to the literature by opening new directions for future research for improving education leadership practices, aiming at increasing employee empowerment and job satisfaction. Further study of employee empowerment and job satisfaction would allow to build up a theory and introduce effective management interventions, depending on the university context and/or higher education setting. For example, the research model used in this research may be improved in the future by adding new variables to explain employee job satisfaction at educational institutions, which on its own way results in increased quality of management at higher educational institutions. Further, by replicating the research in universities of other countries, it will also become possible to receive useful comparative data, make comparisons of research outcomes in different cultural settings, thus, increasing the generalizability of findings.

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