



**Cape Peninsula
University of Technology**

**The impact of employee participation on organisational productivity at a university of
technology in the Western Cape, South Africa**

By

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DECLARATION

I, Tchapchet Emmanuel Tamen, declare that the content of this thesis represent my own unaided work, and that the thesis has not been previously submitted for any academic examination towards any qualification. Moreso, it represents my own humble opinion and not necessarily those of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

6th of August 2013

.....

.....

Signed

Date

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated:

- To the beloved memory of my father who returned to the Lord on the 26th of November 2010. May your gentle and humble soul rest in perfect peace. May you continue to guide, protect and direct your children and grand children from beyond. Father we love you, but our Heavenly Father loves you more, hence He decided to take you.

- To my mom for her endless love to all her children and grand children. May the Almighty God give you more years on earth so that you can enjoy the fruits of your labour.

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There is no gain in stating that a piece of work of this nature cannot single handedly be carried out. I would, therefore like to profoundly and whole heartedly thank all those who have been involved in one way or another in the realisation of this work.

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LIST OF ACRONYMES

CB	Collective Bargaining
CCMA	Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CUSA	Council of Unions of South Africa
FOSATU	Federation of South African Trade Unions
HE	Higher Education
ILO	International Labour Organisation
LRA	Labour Relations Act No 66 of 1995
NEHAWU	National Education, Health and Allied Workers Union
PASO	Pan African Students Organisation
South Africa	SA
SASCO	South African Students Congress
TU	Trade Union
TU(s)	Trade Unions
UDUSA	Union of Democratic University Staff Association
WPF	Workplace Forum

WPF(s)

Workplace Forum

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ABSTRACT

Broadly speaking, employee participation is the totality of forms, either directly (personal or by employees themselves) or indirectly (through employees' representatives) by which individuals, groups, and/or collectives secure their interests or contribute to the decision making process. Employee participation has often been heralded as a solution, if not the panacea for low institutional effectiveness, efficiency and productivity. Institutional productivity is a basic goal of management in today's highly competitive HE institution environment. This is because higher productivity signifies that the employees are rendering services of good quality and this will attract new students. The primary objective of any public HE institution is to render services of good quality to the students (inputs) so as to produce more graduates (outputs or productivity).

Employee participation in decision making beyond collective bargaining is relatively new in South African civil service. Recognizing the need to supplement CB and for South African civil service to be more competitive, the LRA of 1995 No 66 introduced the system of Workplace Forums. A Workplace Forum is an in-house body, which is intended for the promotion of participative management through consultation, cooperation, joint decision making and information sharing. This new dispensation was mainly aimed at improving the effectiveness, efficiency and productivity of South African workplaces. More so, the new dispensation also aimed to promote shop floor democracy, and to encourage power sharing in South African workplaces. However, the uptake of this new dispensation in the public HE institution for this study is slow due to the adversarial relationship between the unions in the HE institution where this study was conducted.

The reality is that, there are platforms in the Faculty for this study through which employees can voice their opinions. This notwithstanding, the respondents for this study stated that this platforms are not effective because management most of the time uses its prerogatives (Executive Ruling) to decide on issues under debate for the interest of the Faculty. The fact that there is an adversarial relationship between the unions in the institution for this study and the fact also that management most of the time uses its prerogatives to ignore the inputs of the employees means that meaningful employee participation is a "show" and not "real" in the institution and Faculty where this study was conducted.

This study investigates the impact of employee participation in decision making on a Faculty's productivity. A qualitative method was employed, and face-to-face semi-structured interviews were used to collect data for this study. The data that was collected for this study was analyzed qualitatively by using themes.

The overall finding shows that it is perceived that employee participation has a positive impact on the Faculty's effectiveness, efficiency and productivity. This is because the respondents stated that they render effective and efficient services to the students because there are more than enough opportunities or platforms where they can contribute to the Faculty's decisions and management. However, the respondents also indicated that they would be more effective, efficient and productive if the management of the Faculty should translate their inputs into practice.

The study also found that employee participation is still in its infancy in the institution and Faculty owing to the three main factors below:

- Lack of management commitment in the process. This is as a result of fear on the part of management to loose its managerial prerogatives and control over the Faculty; and
- Lack of trade union support. This is because there is an adversarial relationship between the unions in the institution for this study; and
- Lack of employees' commitment. This is due the fact that employees see no commitment on the part of the unions in the institution and management of the Faculty for this study.

In order for there to be any meaningful or effective employee participation in decision making in the institution and Faculty for this study, the above obstacles should be overcome.

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Chapter One

Introduction, Problem Statement and Outline of Research Project

1. Introduction

If institutions in South African public HE should survive the continuing onslaught of international competitiveness, management and Trade Unions TU(s) should seek ways to improve productivity levels (that is produce more graduates). To achieve this, management and TU(s) should, as a matter of necessity, promote meaningful employee participation in decision making.

Meaningful employee participation in decision making in SA is still in its infancy and numerous obstacles should be overcome in order to achieve this as the dominant mode (Bendix, 2010:705). Preliminary consultations with some academic and administrative staff towards obtaining information from the institution under study suggested that the management of a Faculty mostly ignored the inputs of employees, which has resulted in a lot of turbulence, laxity, high rate of absenteeism and resignations, which have severe negative impacts on the efficiency, effectiveness, and productivity of the Faculty. This, therefore, means that the management of the Faculty should as a matter of urgency, translate the inputs of employees into practice most of the time in order to make the academic employees to deliver high quality services to the students so as to improve the productivity of the Faculty (that is produce more graduates).

This research explored the perceptions of employees at a Faculty in a University of Technology in the Western Cape on the impact of employee participation in decision making on the Faculty's productivity. The main objective of the study was to ascertain whether employee participation in decision making has any impact on the productivity of a Faculty.

According to Carson (2005:453), an average employee learns under proper conditions, and that through proper leadership, management can make employees more motivated and productive. It

seems that leadership behaviours, therefore, have a strong influence on employees and institutional outcomes.

A leader who uses engagement or participation creates benefits for an institution and its employees, as engagement improves the performance of an institution and reduces role conflicts, role uncertainty, absenteeism and turnover amongst employees (Greasley *et al.*, 2008, cited in Mendes & Stander, 2011:2). A high turnover rate of employees costs South Africa several millions of rands a year through decreases in productivity (Grobler, Warnich, Elbert, Carrell & Hatfield, 2006, cited in Mendes & Stander, 2011:3). Participative governance in the workplace is essential because the issues that are prevalent in the workplace are too complex and interdependent to be handled by a few people in authority (McLangan & Nel, 1995:1).

1.1 Clarification of key words

1.1.1 Collective bargaining (CB)

This refers to a process of negotiations about working conditions and terms of employment between representatives of an employer and employees, with a view to reaching an agreement wherein the terms serve as a code to define the rights and obligations of each party in their employment relations with one another (Sharma & Goyal, 2010: 338).

According to Anstey (1997:4), CB is an indirect form of employee participation in decision making and it is a form of employee participation most common worldwide. CB is a vehicle, which is used by employee representative Trade Unions (TUs) to regulate workplace behaviours, production, wages and substantive conditions of employment through a process of negotiation between TU(s) and employer representatives (Anstey, 1997:4).

In the same vein, Bendix (2010:708) states that CB is an indirect form of employee participation in decision making, particularly because through the process of CB, TU(s) and employers'

representatives engage in joint regulation of workplace related issues, and may jointly solve problems, which arise.

1.1.2 Engagement

According to Hayday, Perryman and Robinson (2004), cited in Ferrer (2005:4), engagement is a positive attitude, which is held by an employee towards an organisation and its values. An engaged employee is aware of business setting, and works with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organisation (Hayday, Perryman & Robinson, 2004, cited in Ferrer, 2005:4).

Engaged employees give more of what they have to offer. As a result, an engaged workforce is more effective, efficient and productive (Macey, Schneider, Barbera, & Young, 2009:2). One can deduce that engaging the workforce in the decision making process, is a tool that can be used by an organisation to increase its effectiveness, efficiency and productivity.

1.1.3 Employee participation

Westhuizen (2010:11) provides a more comprehensive definition of employee participation in decision making as "... the totality of forms, that is direct (personal or by the employee) or indirect (through the representatives of the employees) by which individuals, groups, collectives secure their interests ... or contribute to the decision making process".

The importance of this definition lies in the fact that, it clearly brings out the two forms of employee participation in decision making, namely direct (by employees themselves), and indirect (through their representatives).

Elele and Fields (2010:370) classify employee participation in decision making into:

- Direct employee participation with management; and

- Representative employee participation in decision making through a Trade Union (TU) or staff association.

It can be deduced that employee participation in decision making can either be direct (by the employee themselves) or indirect via their representatives (Trade Unions or staff associations such as WPFs).

Research conducted by Perry, Mesch and Paarlberg (2006:509) show that participation is linked to decision making, since participation leads to better decisions. This is because participation improves information and knowledge sharing, which are necessary for high quality decision making.

1.1.4 Productivity

Productivity can be defined as performance measures, which encompasses both efficiency and effectiveness (Bhatti & Qureshi, 2007:57). Therefore, measures of institutional productivity for this study are effectiveness and efficiency. Hence this researcher used effectiveness and efficiency to determine the impact employee participation has on the productivity of a Faculty.

According to Pritchard (1995:1), an organisation can improve its productivity either by changing its technology or by using its people. Similarly, Putz (1991:9) states that there are many ways in which an organisation can improve its productivity. These include: investment in plants and equipment, research and development, new methods of production and new technologies. The author further states that the largest unexplored opportunity for increasing organisational productivity is through effective use of the workforce or employees (Putz, 1991:9). Part of the concerns of this study was to understand how an organisation can use its people or workforce to increase its productivity.

1.1.5 Workplace Forum (WPF)

A workplace forum is a body intended for the promotion of participative management through consultation, decision-making and information-sharing (Grogan, 2001:273). Where an employer employs 100 or more people in a workplace, a TU or TU(s) acting jointly, which represent(s) a majority of those employees, may apply to the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) to establish a Workplace Forum (WPF) (South Africa, 1995:53). Similarly, Mboweni (1997:34) points out that a WPF may be established in any workplace where there are more than 100 employees and must only be initiated by a representative TU. A representative TU is a registered TU, or two or more registered TU(s) that act jointly, and have a majority of the employees as members (South Africa, 1995:53).

It is evident that in any workplace where an employer employs 100 or more employees, a representative TU may apply to the CCMA for the establishment of a WPF.

Section 79 of the LRA presents four general functions of a WPF (South Africa, 1995:53), which shown below:

- Must seek to promote the interests of all employees in the workplace, whether or not they are TU members;
- Must seek to improve efficiency in the workplace;
- Must be consulted by the employer, with a view to reaching consensus on matters of mutual interest; and
- Must participate in joint decision-making on matters of mutual interest.

1.2 Background to the research problem

Employee participation, by global standards, is by no means a new innovation. Venter, Bendeman, Conradie, Dwortzanowski-Venter, Holtzhausen, and Levy (2009:471) suggest that many industrialized countries had, by the end of the Second World War, introduced systems of

work councils to facilitate dispute resolution. For example, the 1952 German Works Constitution Act was enacted after the war as a measure to revamp the productivity of German firms.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO, 1967) has passed several recommendations regarding consultation and cooperation between employers and employees at the level of the enterprise. In essence, these recommendations state that proper steps should be taken to promote consultation and cooperation at the level of an undertaking on matters of mutual interest, and not within the scope of issues that are usually dealt with through CB. An example of these recommendations is Recommendation 129/1967 of the ILO. This recommends that management should provide information regarding general health and safety regulations, the general situation of the undertaking, its prospects and plans, explanations of decisions that are likely to affect an employee's situation in the undertaking, and methods of consultation between managers and employee representatives.

Meaningful employee participation in decision making is relatively new in SA (Venter *et al.*, 2009:471). Recognizing the need for South African industries to become more competitive, the Labour Relations Act No. 66 of 1995 (hereafter referred to as the LRA), noted that adversarial bargaining is ill-suited to the task, and that management and labour must find ways of dealing with each other. With the passage of the LRA, WPF(s) were proposed as being designed to perform the functions that CB cannot easily achieve. WPF(s) must be initiated by a majority TU or TU(s). WPF(s) must promote the interests of all employees in the workplace, irrespective of whether or not they are TU members (South Africa, 1995:53).

The purpose of WPF(s) is not to replace, but to supplement CB through a system of non adversarial relations dealing with non wage matters that must, by their nature, be dealt with at the level of the workplace (Anstey, 1997). Despite the fact that the LRA provides for the establishment of WPF(s), which are specific participative mechanisms under South African labour law, evidence suggests that the uptake of WPF(s) in South African workplaces has been very slow (Anstey, 1997). This is because trade unions are distrustful of any participative

structures, and perceive them as an attempt to dilute their powers as the main challengers of management.

Preliminary consultations with some academic and administrative staff towards obtaining a background for this study from the institution under study, suggest that the management of a Faculty rarely implement the inputs of employees and the failure of the management at the Faculty to implement the inputs of employees, has resulted in much turbulence, laxity, a high rate of absenteeism and resignations, which have severe negative impacts on the services deliver to the students of the Faculty under study.

1.3 Statement of the research problem

Lack of commitment on the part of the management of a Faculty to translate the inputs of employees into practice has resulted in a lot of turbulence, laxity, high rate of absenteeism and resignations. Since the beginning of 2013, seven staff of this Faculty have resigned and they include both academic and administrative staff. These have caused severe negative impacts on the services delivered to the students.

1.4 Research question

Does management prerogative inhibit employee participation?

1.5 Research objectives

The following are the research study's objectives:

1. To establish whether employee participation has any impact on the productivity of a Faculty;
2. To examine the transformation which have been established by the management of a Faculty to encourage employee participation;
3. To determine whether adversarial attitude between unions in the institution for this study hinders meaningful employee participation;

4. To ascertain why collective bargaining is the most used form of employee participation in a Faculty; and
5. To investigate why industrial cooperation in the sphere of a Faculty is still in its infancy.

1.6 Research limitations

Owing to the fact that this study involved only a single Faculty in a University of Technology, the results cannot be generalized to the entire institution. Moreover, the problems encountered during the data collection process may have resulted in inaccurate or inadequate information. This is particularly true where some respondents stated that in the institution where this study was conducted there is a closed shop agreement instead of an agency shop agreement. Furthermore, the sample of participants was small therefore one can expect gaps in the findings.

1.7 Significance of the research

This study presents benefits in a variety of spheres. Firstly, Venter *et al.* (2009:471) argue that meaningful employee participation in decision making is relatively new in South Africa (SA), thus this study adds to the scanty literature on employee participation in public HE institutions in SA. Secondly, this study presents the benefits of employee participation to a Faculty. Thirdly, this study gives the first valuable insight on the impact of employee participation on the productivity of a Faculty. Lastly, this study is significant for the discipline of Industrial Relations in that it will help to minimize industrial actions, and will enhance cooperation in HE institutions.

1.8 Ethics statement

Due to the sensitive nature of the topic, anonymity of participants was strictly ensured. The data that was collected for the study was confidential, and was only available to the researcher. Authorization was obtained from the Ethics Commission before this research was conducted

(Appendix C). Participation in this research was purely voluntary, and participants were free to withdraw from the study whenever they wished to without reprehension by the researcher.

1.9 Research methodology

This section presents the data collection methodology that was employed, the research design, population and sample, as well as how the collected data was analysed. An extended narrative of these are presented in Chapter 4.

1.9.1 Data collection

This study applied the semi-structured interview method for the collection of empirical data. Semi-structured interviews were conducted because this enabled the researcher to gather huge amount of data owing to the fact that the interviewees provided the researcher with in-depth information (Allen-Ile, 2010:12).

1.9.2 Research design

The essay or narrative method, otherwise known as the qualitative method, was used. This was because it enabled the researcher to explore the behaviours, perspectives and experiences of the people under study (Immy, 1997:1). Denzin and Lincoln (1994:2), cited in Neergaard and Ulhoi (2007:5), define qualitative research as an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings and try to make sense of it, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning that people bring to them. Bloomberg and Volpe (2008:7-9) add that qualitative research is suited to promoting a deep understanding of a social setting or activity, as viewed from the perspectives of the research participants.

Qualitative research differs from quantitative research, firstly, since quantitative research employs a deductive process. This means that theories constitute the genesis for the formulation

of the hypothesis that is tested. In contrast, qualitative research makes use of inductive thinking. This means that social phenomenon is investigated in order to ascertain whether an empirical sample can function as the beginning of a theory (Boeije, 2010:5). Secondly, qualitative research deals with relatively small samples, which are carefully selected in contrast with quantitative research, which depends on larger samples that are randomly selected (Patton, 1990:169, cited in Kuzel, 1999:33-34). In the same vein, Potter (1996:104) adds that in qualitative research, sampling is more concerned with gaining access to relevant data or information about the subject under investigation. The sampling techniques employed for this study are presented below.

1.9.3 Population

For the purpose of this study, the targeted population comprised senior lecturers in a Faculty at a University of Technology in the Western Cape. This was because the researcher's preliminary investigation with some academic staff made this researcher to understand that most of the senior lecturers have worked in the institution for long. Thus, they possess more practical experience and expertise that they can use to provide rich and in-depth information to this researcher. The researcher interviewed 12 of the 30 senior lecturers in a Faculty based on their availability for the study.

1.9.4 Research sample

This study used a non-probability sampling technique in the form of snowball and convenience sampling methods. A snowball sample is a technique where one subject gives the researcher the name of another subject, who, in turn provides the name of the third, and so on (Brewer & Miller, 2003:275). Houser (1998:105) adds that in a snowball or chain sampling, the researcher contacts participants and requests them to identify individuals who have knowledge about the topic. Convenience sampling is a sampling technique in which participants are selected because they are available or easy to find (Grinnell & Unrau, 2010:234).

A snowball sample was employed because the preliminary investigation with some academic staff in the institution under study proved that some senior lecturers in the Faculty under study have worked with the institution for a decade and has more practical knowledge and experience than others. The snowball sample enabled the researcher to interview mostly the senior lecturers who have been worked in the institution and Faculty long. The sample of senior lecturers for this research was done based on their availability. A convenience sample was used in order to save time.

1.9.5 Data analysis

Data analysis is the process of arranging, and giving meaning to the mass of collected data (Delpont, Devos, Fouche & Strydom, 2005:333). The data that was collected was analyzed qualitatively by using themes. Thematic analysis refers to identification of themes within a collected data (Ezzy, 2002:88).

1.10 Literature review

The concept of employee participation emphasizes the need for cooperation between employer and employee, and for employees to share in the decision making processes of management (Bendix, 2001:652). Employee participation entails the involvement of the employee in as many facets of his/her work life as possible; this may occur either directly or indirectly through TU(s), which are the representatives of the employees (Bendix, 2001:652).

It is widely believed that employee participation may affect an employee's job satisfaction, productivity, commitment, which can create comparative advantage for an organisation (Bhatti & Qureshi, 2007:54). High performing, effective organisations have a culture that encourages employee involvement, since employees are willing to get involved in the decision making process, goal setting and problem solving activities, which then results in higher employee performance (Slocum & Woodman, 1998, cited in Bhatti & Qureshi, 2007:57).

Employee participation can either be direct or indirect. In direct participation employees are involved in the activity or process. In the case of indirect participation, their involvement occurs through TU(s), which are the employees' representatives (Bendix, 2001:657). In the same vein Kester (2007:45) states that indirect participation is a situation where employees share in some or all decisions that are made in the workplace via their representatives. The following are some of the reasons for employee participation:

Firstly, making employees to participate in the decision making of an undertaking is an acknowledgement of the vital role that employees play in an organisation, and is also recognition of their economic rights (Venter *et al.*, 2009:473).

Secondly, engaging the employees in decision making is an extension of the principles of democracy in the workplace, where employees can exercise greater influence over decisions that affect their lives at work (Davis & Lansbury, 1992:231).

Lastly, engaging employees in decision making will help to reduce turnover, absenteeism, the number of grievances, and will result in a more cooperative relationship between management and labour (Massarik & Tannenbaum, 1999:293).

If South African public HE institutions should respond to the challenges of globalization, it must seek ways to improve productivity levels. This cannot be achieved through adversarial or conflictual relationships between unions or between management and labour, but can best be achieved by a more cooperative relationship between unions and between labour and management (Klerck, 1999:14).

The declared aim of the LRA is to encourage participative management rather than adversarial bargaining within an undertaking (Grogan, 2001:273). To this end, it introduces new plant-level institutions such as WPF(s), which are intended to promote cooperation between labour and management. By virtue of this system, employees obtain joint consultative powers in the management of the undertaking with regard to issues that concern them (Van & Van, 2002:317).

WPF(s) differ from TU(s), since they are in-house institutions, which operate within a particular organisation, and membership is limited only to employees of that particular institution (Grogan, 2001:273). The LRA advocates a clear institutional separation between CB and WPF(s). The rationale for this separation is to facilitate a shift from adversarial industrial relations to more cooperative relations (Klerck, 1999:14).

Separating WPF(s) from CB contains several implicit assumptions. First, the affirmation that production issues can best be dealt with at the level of the individual workplace; second, the claim that traditional CB structures are unsuited to regulate production related issues; and third, an informal relationship is postulated between participation, cooperation and an increase in organisational productivity (Klerck, 1999:15).

1.11 Structure of dissertation

The study comprises six chapters. The following is a layout of the chapters and a brief description of each section.

Chapter One: Introduction, problem statement and outline of research project

Chapter One presents the problem statement, outline and background of the study. It also presents definitions of key terms, the significance, aims, and limitations of the study.

Chapter Two: Employee participation in decision making and organisational productivity

Chapter Two presents a comprehensive literature review in order to ascertain if there is any theoretical relationship between the research variables. The research variables are employee participation (independent variable) and organisational productivity (dependent variable).

Chapter Three: Public sector higher education labour relations.

Chapter Three puts this study within its context

Chapter Four: Research methodology

Chapter Four highlights the research design, data collection method, sampling technique, and the type of data analysis that was utilized for this research, while the strengths of these techniques and their appropriateness for this study are also outlined.

Chapter Five: Finding and Results

Chapter Five consists of a presentation of the data, as well analysis thereof.

Chapter six: Discussion, Recommendations and Conclusion

Chapter six presents general discussion about the research study's results, and suggestions for further research.

1.12 Summary

This chapter introduces the study. It discussed the research methodology, the research population, the sample size and method, the research question, the problem statement, the research objectives, the rationale of the study and the significance of the research. The chapter that follows presents employee participation in decision making, and its impact on organisational productivity.

Chapter Two

Employee Participation and Organisational Productivity

2.1 Introduction

An organisation is a collection of people who work to achieve a common goal (Amos, Hellriegel, Jackson, Klopper, Louw, Oosthuizen, Slocum & Staude, 2008:6). Similarly, Judge and Robbins (2009:41) add that an organisation is a consciously organized social entity, which comprises two or more people, and functions on a continuous basis to achieve a common goal or set of goals.

In order to meet its goals, vision and to improve its effectiveness, efficiency and productivity, the management of any organisation should engage all stakeholders in the running of a business. A stakeholder refers to any person that has an interest (stake) in a business, or any person who can be affected directly or indirectly by the activities of an organisation (Faure & De Villiers, 2004:63). In this regard, Shelley (2000:17) adds that a stakeholder is any person or group of persons that have, or claim, ownership, rights, or interests in an organisation and its activities.

Examples of stakeholders are: employees, internal teams, customers, vendors, suppliers and even members of the surrounding community or local economy who are affected by business decisions (Moriarty, 2010:373). Employees are the productive force of an enterprise and they constitute the main focus of this study. An employee can be defined as:

(a) Any person, excluding an independent contractor, who works for another person or for the State and who receives, or is entitled to receive, any remuneration; and

(b) Any other person who in any manner assists in carrying out or conducting the business of an employer, and "employed" and "employment" have meanings corresponding to that of "employee" (South Africa, 1995:119).

Engaging all stakeholders in the running of a business is an extension of the principle of democracy in the workplace. This is often referred to as industrial or workplace democracy (Davis & Lansbury, 1992:231); (Lessing, Schepers & Valoyi, 2000:32).

Nel, Erasmus, Kirsten, Swanepoel and Tsabadi (2005:289) define democracy as government by the people; the form of government in which the sovereign power resides in the people, and is exercised either directly by them or by their representatives. In this regard, Gianni and Giuseppe (2010:4) state that the essence of democracy is participation.

It can thus be deduced that the term “democracy” refers to a situation in which a person or a group of people have the right to participate in making decisions, which may affect them individually or as a group. They can either do it directly or indirectly through their representatives. What then is industrial democracy?

Industrial democracy is the extent to which employees or their representatives influence the outcome of organisational decisions (Nel *et al.*, 2005:286). From the above definition, one can rightly state that industrial democracy is a situation in which management and employees or their representatives jointly participate in the decision making process in order to jointly regulate the workplace and its management. What is employee participation in decision making?

According to Westhuizen (2010:10), there are several definitions of employee participation in decision making just as there are authors on the subject. Shelley (2000:7) defines employee participation in decision making as the process in which two or more parties influence each other in making certain plans, policies or decisions. Nel *et al.* (2005:289) add that participation refers to influence in decision making exerted through a process of interaction between employees and managers, and based on information sharing. In the same vein, Rivera-Batiz and Rivera-Batiz (2002:135) state that “participation... includes the involvement of people ... in the process through which decisions are reached... in corporate and workplace decision making”.

Du Toit and Oosthuizen (1999:214) define employee participation as a management style that actively seeks employees' inputs, allowing employees to contribute to the resolution of work related issues. Westhuizen (2010:11) provides a more comprehensive and broad definition of employee participation by defining employee participation in decision making as "... the totality of forms, that is direct (personal or by the employee themselves) or indirect (through the representatives of the employees) by which individuals, groups, collectives secure their interests ... or contribute to the decision making process". The importance of this definition lies in the fact that it clearly brings out the two forms of employee participation in decision making, namely direct (by employees themselves), and indirect (through their representatives).

From the above definitions, one can agree with Elele and Fields (2010:371) that participation is linked to decision making, since participation gives management, employees and their representatives an opportunity to jointly regulate the workplace and its management.

According to Lessing, Schepers and Valoyi (2000:32), there are four main decision areas in which employees desire to participate. These include: decisions about their work life; decisions about their working conditions; decisions about human resources; and decisions about corporate policy and planning. Participation of employees in decision making is promoted for different reasons. Some participatory arrangements are initiated mainly in order to improve productivity (Bjorne & Torunn, 2006:139). The aim of this study is to find out whether employee participation in decision making has any impact on organisational productivity.

2.2 Organisational productivity and employee participation

According to Pritchard (1990:3), organisational productivity has received so much attention in recent years that it is now a household concept. For example, we talk with our spouse, friends, and family relatives about how productive one's day was.

Organisational productivity is a basic goal of management in today's business environment (Jamal & Wayne, 2007:1). This is so because if the productivity of an organisation is higher than

that of its competitors, that organisation survives better because higher productivity will result in higher profits, and more job opportunities (Pritchard, 1990:5). According to Prokopenko (1987:9), productivity improvement is not merely about doing things better, but it is doing the right things better. What is organisational productivity?

2.2.1 Some definitions of organisational productivity

Pritchard (1990:8) states that while there is agreement that organisational productivity is important, there is little agreement on what the term organisational productivity means. This notwithstanding, most authors agree that the term organisational productivity should be defined in terms of organisational effectiveness and efficiency (Pritchard, 1990:8). Gunasekaran, Korukonda, Virtanen and Yli-Olli (1994:169) define organisational productivity as a combination of the efficiency and effectiveness of an organisation. Organisational effectiveness is the degree to which an organisation achieves its goals. Organisational efficiency is knowing how to do a task, and doing it right with less time and resources (Smith, 1995:7).

Amos *et al.* (2008:8) define organisational productivity as the ratio of outputs to inputs, where performance effectiveness and efficiency are measures of organisational productivity. Effectiveness refers to achieving organisational goals, which is directly linked to levels of customer satisfaction, while efficiency refers to the cost of resources in relation to goal achievement (Amos *et al.*, 2008:8).

Prokopenko (1987:3) defines organisational productivity as the relationship between outputs that are generated by a production system and inputs that are provided to create the output. Thus, productivity is defined as the efficient and effective use of organisational resources. Similarly, Pritchard (1990:8) expands on this definition by stating that organisational productivity is a combination of the efficiency and effectiveness of an organisation, where efficiency is a measure of outputs divided by inputs, for example, monthly output of a production unit divided by the number of personnel hours used to generate the output; and where effectiveness is the

relationship of outputs to some standard or expectation, for example, monthly production output expressed in a percentage of the organisational goal for that month.

It can be deduced that organisational productivity refers to the effective and efficient use of the resources of an organisation.

2.2.2 Importance of productivity increase

According to Pritchard (1995:1), improving organisational productivity is an issue that has been important and will continue to be important. All organisations whether private or public should endeavour to improve their productivity and best utilize their resources in order to meet the needs of their customers, and hence stay in business. Below are a few advantages of increases in organisational productivity:

- Productivity improvement is a determinant of how competitive a country's products are nationally and internationally (Prokopenko, 1987:7);
- Productivity growth is an important economic factor to control inflation (Pritchard, 1990:6);
- If the productivity of an organisation is higher than that of its competitors, that organisation stands a better chance to stay in business (Pritchard, 1990:5); and
- Increases in organisational productivity is an indicator of rapid economic growth, higher standards of living, profit increments and employment opportunities (Prokopenko, 1987:6).

According to Pritchard (1995:1), an organisation can improve its productivity either by changing its technology or by the use of its people. Similarly, Putz (1991:9) states that there are many ways in which an organisation can improve its productivity. These include: investment in plants and equipment; research and development; new methods of production; and new technologies.

The author further states that the largest unexplored opportunity for increasing organisational productivity is by effective use of the workforce or employees (Putz, 1991:9). This study's concern is how an organisation can use its people or workforce to be more productive.

People are key to organisation performance and productivity. When managers and employees are motivated and have the appropriate skills, performance targets are accomplished, and are often exceeded (Berman, 2006:125). It can be argued that when employees are not motivated, irrespective of how skillful they are, their performance will be below expectation.

Organisations which effectively use their workforce by creating opportunities for them to participate in decision making, either directly or indirectly, are generally more efficient, effective and productive than organisations, which do not properly engage employees in the management of the business (Elele & Fields, 2010:370). Proponents of employee participation in decision making claim that engaging the workforce or participative management increases employees' morale, job satisfaction, commitment and productivity (Parnell & Crandall, 2000:523). Participative management is a process in which subordinates share a significant degree of decision-making power with their immediate superior (Judge & Robbins, 2009:259). In this regard, Odendaal (2009:176) adds that participative management is usually promoted as a solution, if not a panacea for low productivity. If employees are engaged in decisions that affect them, employees will become more motivated, committed to the organisation, productive and satisfied with their jobs (Odendaal, 2009:176). Klerck (1999:21), employee participation in decision making increases the efficiency of an organisation owing to an increase in the flow of information.

Carrig and Wright (2006:31), cited in Holwerda (2011:38-39), state that if employees are allowed to participate in decision making, it will result in a happy and committed workforce. An organisation that has a happy and committed workforce outperforms those with a less happy and committed workforce (Carrig & Wright, 2006:31, cited in Holwerda, 2011:38-39).

In a study which was conducted by Harter *et al.* (2002), cited in Avey, Hughes and Norman (2008:53), it was discovered that an organisation can use engagement to improve its

effectiveness and efficiency. This finding is in line with Martell's (1987:117), cited in Du Toit and Oosthuizen (1999:216); Isabirye (2007:176) studies, which proved that organisations cannot only use participative management to become "world class", but can also use it to improve work performance and productivity. Similarly, the Gallop Organisation which studied the impact of employee participation in decision making in 7,939 business units in 36 companies, found that employee participation in decision making is directly associated with increased performance, customer satisfaction, effectiveness, productivity, profitability and a reduction of employee turnover (Konrad, 2006:1). These findings are in line with research that was conducted by Defourney, Estrin and Jones (1985:198). In their study they found that corporate productivity is generally positively related to measures of workers' participation. Bishakha, Ganapathy and Malavika (2010:90) state that employee participation in decision making is a major factor, which contributes to organisational productivity, performance and the long term survival of an organisation. Similarly, Conte and Svejnar (1988:150) state that organisations or firms that offer worker participation in management have a tendency to be more productive ones.

According to Miller and Monge (1986:727), employee participation fulfills needs, which leads to satisfaction, which reinforces motivation, and this, in turn, increases workers' productivity. Schuler (1980:338) states that employee participation in decision making improves satisfaction at work, and job satisfaction will increase commitment and productivity.

2.3 Forms of employee participation

Two forms of employee participation can generally be identified, namely direct and indirect participation (Nel *et al.*, 2005:291).

2.3.1 Direct employee participation

According to Kester (2007:45), direct participation occurs when employees share in some or all decisions that are made at an enterprise level by themselves. Direct participation "...customarily entails that the subordinates participate, speak for themselves about work or

matters related to work. It is regarded as a process of job enrichment and enlargement where the employee is offered the possibility of extending the depth and width of his work tasks, but without any control over organisational planning or goal setting” (Nel *et al.*, 2005:291).

Direct participation also includes the sharing of financial rewards, which result from increased productivity; the provision of all information relevant to a job; consultation about changes that may affect the employee; and personal involvement of employees in the decision making process (Nel *et al.*, 2005:292). According to Sako (1998:5), direct participation refers to mechanisms, which enable individual employees to influence their day-to-day operations.

Summarily, direct participation is concerned with face-to-face contact between managers and their subordinates (Du Toit & Oosthuizen, 1999:214). Examples of direct participation include: face-to-face meetings, or one-on-one meetings between management and employees, exchange of emails, and questionnaires.

2.3.2 Indirect employee participation

Indirect participation is a situation where employees share in some or all decisions that are made in the workplace via their representatives (Kester, 2007:45). According to Finnemore (2006:197), the indirect participation of employees in decision making is one whereby employees participate through a TU.

According to Anstey (1997:4), collective bargaining (CB) is an indirect form of employee participation in decision making, and it is the most common form of employee participation worldwide. CB is a vehicle used by employee representative TU(s) to regulate workplace behaviours, production, wages and substantive conditions of employment through the process of negotiation between TU(s) and employers’ representatives (Anstey, 1997:4).

Similarly, Bendix (2010:708) states that CB is an indirect form of employee participation in decision making, particularly because the process of CB allows TU(s) and employers’

representatives to engage in the joint regulation of workplace-related issues, whilst they may jointly solve problems, which may arise.

2.4 Different levels of employee participation

Levels of participation refer to the extent, which employees or their representatives influence decision making in an enterprise. This can range from employees simply being informed about management decisions through two-way communication, and up to a stage where employees have joint or full control over decision making in an enterprise (Du Toit & Oosthuizen, 1999:214).

A distinction is usually drawn between three levels of participation within an organisation (Nel *et al.*, 2005:292).

2.4.1 Low-level participation

At this level of participation, management makes an effort to improve communication and attitudes, but still views employees as relatively passive (Du Toit & Oosthuizen, 1999:214). Here participation of employees is usually via staff bodies. For example in public HE institutions, the participation of employees at the level of their department (Departmental Meeting) is a low-level participation.

2.4.2 Mid-level participation

This takes place when an employee participates in the decision making processes of the plant or establishment, concerning, for example, the way in which the company's rules, regulations, and disciplinary procedures should be applied and executed (Nel *et al.*, 2005:293). According to Du Toit and Oosthuizen (1999:214), at this level management seeks to actively involve the employees in productivity and cost management. An example of mid-level participation in a public HE institution is participation at the level of a Faculty (Faculty Board Meeting).

2.4.3 Top-level participation

At this level management views the employees as partners in the enterprise and rewards efforts through gain sharing or profit sharing schemes (Du Toit & Oosthuizen, 1999:214). here, top management and the representatives of employees decide on issues of strategic importance for the organisation as a whole (Nel *et al.*, 2005:293). An example of top level participation in public HE institution is participation at the level of the institution (Senate).

2.5 Objectives of employee participation

Employee participation is generally seen to satisfy ethical/moral, political, social and economic objectives of employees (Venter, 2003:441).

2.5.1 Ethical/moral objectives

Workplaces are not only a source of employment and income, but also have an impact on the health, wellbeing, security, happiness, and self-esteem of employees. Therefore, the participation of employees in decision making is an ethical and moral imperative (Cassar, 1999:57).

It seems employee participation can boost the morale and wellbeing of employees in the workplace.

2.5.2 Political objectives

Political democracy in its basic form refers to government for the people by the people and with the people (Bendix, 2010:707). If employees are entitled to influence those issues, which impact on them politically through a democratic process, it follows that they should have an equal say on issues, which have an impact on them economically (Venter, 2003:441).

Engaging employees in decision making is an extension of the principle of democracy in the workplace, where employees can exercise greater influence over decisions, which affect their lives at work (Davis & Lansbury, 1992:231); (Lessing, Schepers & Valoyi, 2000:32). Since 1994, increasing pressure has been placed on South African workplaces to introduce processes and structures that will allow employees to participate in decision making at all levels of an organisation (Venter, 2003:442).

It can be deduced that employee participation is an extension of industrial democracy.

2.5.3 Social objectives

Employee participation in decision making can improve job satisfaction, commitment and labour relations (Haggerty, 2005:3).

2.5.3.1 Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction is a positive feeling about a job resulting from an evaluation of its characteristic (Judge & Robins, 2009:117). According to Venter (2003:443), employee participation in decision making may increase levels of job satisfaction and, consequently, motivation. Motivation refers to processes that account for an individual's strength, direction, and persistence of effort towards attaining organisational goals (Judge & Robbins, 2009:209).

2.5.3.2. Commitment

Organisational commitment can be defined as the degree to which an employee identifies with a particular organisation and its goals and desires to maintain membership in the organisation (Judge & Robbins, 2009:6). Employee participation is a vehicle to gain commitment to responsibility. Satisfied employees are more committed to an organisation and its goals, and committed employees will use extra energy to promote the interests and well being of the organisation in which they work (Haggerty, 2005:3).

2.5.3.3. Labour relations

Efficient and effective internal communication, which is vital for an organisation can only be achieved by engaging employees in decision making. In the opinion of Branch (2002:1), one of the main social organisational utilities of participation is that it offers the possibility of resolving contradictory interests through negotiation, rather than by the imposition of authority.

According to Massarik and Tannenbaum (1999:293), engaging employees in decision making will help to reduce labour turnover, absenteeism, the number of grievances, while the end result is a cooperative relationship between management and labour, as opposed to an adversarial relationship. Shelley (2000:6) also believes that employee participation may foster more cooperative attitudes amongst employees and management, thus raising efficiency by improving teamwork and by reducing the loss of efficiency arising from industrial disputes.

2.5.4 Economic objectives

The main economic purpose of employee participation is that cooperation is seen as bringing about greater commitment, performance and motivation on the part of employees, which will result in higher productivity (Bendix, 2010:707). Cabrera, Ortega and Cabrera (2003:44) believe that employee participation increases effort, which subsequently improves efficiency, and productivity, while it also reduces the cost of monitoring employees and it leads to increased commitment. Cook (2008:20) adds that organisations that have higher levels of employee commitment and engagement outperform their competitors in terms of performance, productivity and profitability. To link this to public HE, any public HE institution that engages its employees in decision making, will render services of good quality to the students than institutions which do not engage their employees.

Employee participation can result in a higher rate of outputs and increased quality of products owing to greater personal effort and attention on the part of employees (Massarik & Tannenbaum, 1999:293). In the case of public HE, employee participation will result to the

delivery of quality services to the students and this will improve the number of graduates (productivity). Shelley (2000:5) expands on the views of Massarik and Tannenbaum (1999:293) by stating that employees may work harder if they share in decisions that affect them, while the enterprise will then also operate more efficiently.

Engaged employees give more of what they have to offer, and they are more productive. Improving employee engagement is the most powerful force used by most organisations to increase organisational effectiveness and efficiency (Macey, Schneider & Barbera, 2009:2).

2.6 Nature of employee participation

Employee participation can either be ascending or descending (Venter, 2003:447).

2.6.1 Ascending participation

This refers to extending employees' influence beyond CB into areas of managerial prerogative in order to protect the interests of employees (Venter, 2003:447). Ascending participation is an effort by individuals at a higher level within an organisation or institution to provide direct opportunities for individuals at lower levels in the organisation to have a greater voice in the decision making process (Perry, Mesch, & Paarlberg, 2006:508). Senior lecturers are involved in ascending participation. They interact with management at the Faculty Board and some at the Senate which is the largest decision making body at any HE institution.

One can deduce that ascending employee participation in decision making is an effort by management to provide employees with opportunities so that they may contribute to the management of an organisation as opposed to indirect participation, which is done by employees' representatives (TUs) through the process of CB.

2.6.2 Descending participation

This refers to participative structures that are initiated by management, which voluntarily transfer power from management to employees. It is usually introduced to motivate employees, and to encourage identification with the goals and objectives of the organisation (Venter, 2003:447).

Perhaps it is for this reason that Putz (1991:9) states that the largest unexplored opportunity for an organisation to achieve its goals and to improve its effectiveness efficiency and productivity, is via the effective use of its people.

2.7 Conditions necessary for successful employee participation

In order for employees in an organisation to effectively engage in decision making, the following conditions must be met: effective engagement of subordinates; management commitment; management style; an appropriate organisational culture; training; and trade union support (Venter *et al.*, 2009:488).

2.7.1 Effective engagement by subordinates

In order for participative structures to be maximally effective, the support and commitment of subordinates is an absolute requirement (Venter *et al.*, 2009:493). An organisational environment where subordinates are involved in planning or implementing changes, can help to reduce resistance to new change efforts, encourage subordinates' commitment to the changes, and enable subordinates to cooperate with management in order to achieve the goals of the organisation (Weber & Weber, 2001:291). For instance, in the Institution and Faculty for this study, engaging the subordinates in decision making will improve service delivery to students and productivity.

2.7.2 Management commitment

Management commitment can be defined as “engaging in and maintaining behaviours that help others achieve their goals” (Cooper, 2006:1). The introduction of participatory initiative presupposes the full commitment of management for it to be successful. This is because management is responsible for leading and motivating the workforce; for creating the requisite supportive culture; and for creating the policy framework, which is necessary for the effective implementation of employee participation in decision making (Venter *et al.*, 2009:488).

According to Macey and Schneider (2008), cited in Bishakha, Ganapathy and Malavika (2010:84) it is the organisation’s responsibility to create conditions that sincerely engage the workforce. The disclosure of business and financial information to employees by management is a critical requirement for effective employee participation in decision making, and is a true test of management’s commitment to the process (Venter *et al.*, 2009:488).

Employees are better able to make more informed decisions, as well as a greater impact in the decision making process if they have the right information at their disposal. If employees have the right information at their disposal, they will be able to identify more strongly with the aims, objectives and vision of the organisation.

The South African government has, since 1994, created an environment that is more conducive to information sharing. For example, Section 32(a) of the Constitution of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996, grants everyone the right to access to information, which is held by the state (South Africa, 1996:15). Section 32(b) further grants everyone the right of access to any information, which is held by another person if the information is required to exercise or protect any right (South Africa, 1996:15).

Sections 16(2) and 89(1) of the LRA also provide for disclosure of information, which is conducive to harmonious labour relations. In terms of Section 16(2) read alongside section 14(4) employers are required to disclose all relevant information to representative TU(s) in order to

ensure effective consultation and CB (South Africa, 1995:15). Section 89(1) provides that an employer must disclose to a WPF all relevant information that will enable a WPF to engage effectively in consultation and joint decision-making (South Africa, 1995:58).

One can deduce from the above that any meaningful participation of employees in decision making, requires an effective commitment of management to the process, and management should be transparent towards employees by disclosing all relevant information to them.

2.7.3 Management style

According to Du Toit and Oosthuizen (1999:216), management style is a strong predictor of degrees of participation. Management has the prime responsibility of initiating structures for appropriate communication, information sharing and setting the right procedures for employee participation in decision making. Employees should perceive these structures as desirable and effective (Cassar, 1999:59).

Ainsworth and Brown (2000:3) add that management style is a key variable for the effectiveness and success of employee participation. Work relationships between managers and their subordinates depend on power distance. If the power distance is low, the distance between managers and employees will be small, and there will be cooperation because the contacts are direct. If the power distance is high, which is a management style that is often used by autocratic managers, employees will hardly have any say in decision making (Hofstede, 2005:55-56, cited in Bialas, 2009:107). Employee participation in decision making is more acceptable in a low power distance management style rather than in a high power distance style of management (Porter & Rees, 1998:168). In the Faculty for this study, one can say that there is a low power distance since there are a lot of platforms through which the staff can chip in their inputs. This is just the norm in any HE institution.

According to Cooper and Xu (2011:399), management style is a key antecedent of employee engagement. Autocratic management, which vests power, authority, and decision making in

management, is deemed to be incompatible with employee participation in decision making for a number of reasons, which are outlined below.

- Autocratic managers are traditionalists, and usually believe that organisations will only work effectively if employees are closely monitored and controlled. If employees become too involved in decision making, they will likely neglect their work and thus not meet their different targets. According to autocratic managers, therefore, employees should be told what to do, and how, when and where to do it;
- Autocratic managers are inflexible and are often threatened by change, particularly if the change involves a direct challenge to their managerial prerogatives. Managers might feel that their jobs are threatened by employees who participate in decision making, since the reality is that employees are often more creative and innovative, and might well come up with better ideas and solutions;
- Autocratic managers lack the capacity, skill and expertise in communication and teamwork to engage effectively in participative management; and
- Autocratic management is often based on the belief that employees have neither the skills nor the inclination to participate in decision making (Venter *et al.*, 2009: 490).

Conversely, in a democratic style of management, managers acknowledge the value of employee input; foster a culture of information sharing; promote cooperation; and encourage employees to participate in decision making (Venter *et al.*, 2009:490). The above idea is supported by Mclagan and Nel, 1996:16, cited in Du Toit and Oosthuizen (1999:213). They state that in an authoritarian style of management, managers think and employees do. In contrast, in a participative style of management, people in different positions think at the same time about the same thing, but not in the same way.

The above shows that in an authoritarian style of management, people in senior positions think and subordinates execute, as opposed to a participative system where those who are in senior positions think at the same time as their subordinates, as they engage in issues as a unit. In the case of the Faculty for this study, this researcher feels that management and employees think at the same time since there are a lot of platforms through which the employees can participate in the decision making process.

2.7.4 Organisational culture

Organisational culture can be defined as a set of core values and behavioural norms; behavioural patterns, which govern the way that people in an organisation interact with each other and place effort in their jobs and the organisation at large (Van Muijen *et al.*, 1992:250, cited in Hartog & Verburg, 2004:58). In this regard, Berry (2004:2) states that organisational culture refers to a pattern of basic assumptions, invented, discovered, or developed by a given group, as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal investigation, which has worked hard enough to be considered valid, and be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.

Cultural context plays an important role in a decision making process. In high power distance culture, the superior is the person who more often takes decisions without subordinates' participation, and gives subordinates precise instructions on how to execute decisions. Conversely, in low power distance culture, employees participate in making decisions (Bialas, 2009:107).

Organisational culture affects the way in which people set personal and professional goals, consciously and subconsciously think; make decisions; perform tasks; and administer resources to achieve them (Lok & Crawford, 2003:323). The participation of employees presupposes an organisational culture that:

- Reflects the broader socio-political imperatives of democracy, inclusiveness and effective engagement by all;
- Is supportive of the empowerment of employees by allowing autonomy and discretion in carrying out tasks; this is equal to academic freedom in HE.
- Provides an environment that facilitates a commitment to free, open and transparent exchange of information; this is equal to academic debate in HE.
- Encourages effective, tolerant and engaged leadership through necessary reward systems in order to overcome management resistance to participative structures; and
- Inculcates the requisite values of trust, tolerance, commitment, openness and cooperation (Venter *et al.*, 2009:489).

2.7.5 Training

Training is defined as a planned learning experience which is designed to bring about permanent change to an individual's knowledge, attitudes or skills (Noe, 1986:736). Training is important because when employees and management make vital workplace decisions, it is of utmost importance that they have the skills and abilities that are required to make the right decisions (Konrad, 2006:1). To support the above idea, Ainsworth and Brown (2000:12) state that training provides employees and management with necessary skills to operate within a participative context.

According to Pfeffer and Veiga (1999:43), training is an essential component for an organisation because it provides management and employees with knowledge to identify and resolve problems, and to initiate changes in the workplace. Education and training increase commitment towards the participative process (Venter *et al.*, 2009:491).

According to Venter *et al* (2009:491), training typically involves the following:

- Awareness training designed to sensitize management and employees alike on the importance of worker participation in decision-making and the positive impact that the participative process will have on the success of an organisation;
- Providing management and its employees with an understanding of those actions and behaviour which is conducive to successful participation; and
- Equipping employees with the requisite tools to engage effectively in the decision-making process.

2.7.6 Trade union support

According to Venter *et al* (2009:493), trade unions might be distrustful of participative structures, perceiving them as an attempt by management to either dilute their power or to co-opt them in order to influence their activities. It is thus imperative that unions should be included from the start in initiating, developing and implementing participative decision-making structures in order to ensure transparency, and hence the success of any participative structures.

2.8 Employee participation in South Africa

Before discussing employee participation in decision making in SA, it is of paramount importance to briefly present the historical development of South Africa's labour relations, as this may help one to understand the current situation. South African labour relation has evolved from a system of dual labour relations (that is one for the white workers and the other for the black workers) to the current system of a unique labour system. As Dekker (1990: 40) rightly puts it, racism was built into employment practices from the beginning of South Africa's labour relations. In support of Dekker's (1990: 40) views, Venter (2006) adds that South African labour relation has a long and negative history. This is because the Apartheid government divided the

nation along racial lines and, in the process, Blacks were relegated to the status of second-class citizens in all spheres of life. For instance, the Industrial Conciliation Act of 1924 excluded Black employees from the definition of what constituted an employee, which effectively prohibited them from exercising any employment rights (Finnemore & Van der Merwe, 1991: 167).

In order to better understand the history of South African labour relations, the development of South African labour relations shall be divided into five phases as seen below:

The first phase is the period between (1652-1870). This was the period before the discovery of gold and diamonds in SA. Gresse (2002: 96) states that this period was dominated by the agricultural economy, work relations were individualistic and workers were not organised because of strict rules. For example, Ordinance 49, 50 of 1828 introduced pass laws for black workers and in 1841 the Masters and Servants Act was introduced to regulate employment relations. Nel *et al* (2005:69) point out that the Masters and Servants Act No. 15 of 1856 (which repealed the 1841 Act) tightened up employer-worker relations because it widened the scope of offences. For example, under this new Act, failure by a servant to commence work at an agreed date, unlawful absence from work, negligence, improper work performance, refusal to obey a command, and the use of abusive languages constituted offences warranting imprisonment with or without hard labour for a period not exceeding one month. It is evident that the Masters and Servants Act prohibited the servants (who were mostly black workers) from challenging the decisions of the masters (who were whites). Perhaps it is for this reason that Gresse (2002: 96) correctly points out that the Masters and Servants Act did not give the workers/servants any right to collectively organise themselves and to protect their interests.

In a nutshell, one can say that during the period (1652-1870) workers in SA were not collectively organised. The situation was compounded with the passage of the pass laws (which compelled the black workers to move with their identification documents) and the Masters and Servants Act which gave the workers/servants no rights to challenge the decisions of the masters/employers.

The second phase is the period between (1870-1920). This was the period where gold and diamonds were discovered in SA. The discovery of gold and diamonds led to the urgent need of skills to extract these minerals. The skilled workers were mainly recruited from overseas. These skilled workers did not only provide the skills and knowledge necessary for the mines, but also introduced their trade unionism system to protect their interests (Nel *et al*, 2005:70). The unions excluded blacks because they were regarded as cheap labour which could be used by the employers to undermine the job security of the Europeans skilled workers. In a nutshell, the skilled workers kept their labour scarce by limiting trade union membership.

In 1898, the South African Typographical Union which was the first local SA union was formed. This union only catered for white workers (La Grange, 2000:10). It can be deduced that TU membership in this era was based on race since the above union only cater for white workers. This provoked numerous industrial actions in the mines. In 1883 a strike by black workers at the diamond field in Kimberley was one of the first recorded strike by blacks in SA although it was not organised.

In 1884 SA had its first official strike. Five white miners died, and 40 were injured in a strike at Kimberley diamond field (Dekker, 1990:39). After the Anglo-Boer War, the masses of whites who had to look for jobs became a threat to the skilled workers. This led to a large strike in the mines in 1907(Klerck, 1999:7). The numerous disputes in the mines led to the promulgation of the Industrial Disputes Prevention Act No. 20 of 1909. This Act did not achieve its objectives and this led to the enactment of the Mines and Works Act No. 12 of 1911, which was promulgated in an attempt to consolidate all previous legislations relating to the mining sector (La Grange, 2000:10).

In an attempt to address the numerous strikes by black workers between 1883-1910, the Black Labour Regulations Act No. 15 of 1911 was also enacted. Although this Act was intended to regulate the labour matters of black workers, it did not make provision for CB and negotiation between employers and black workers (Nel *et al*, 2005:72). The existence of the Mines and Works Act No.12 of 1911 and the Black Labour Regulation Act No.15 of 1911 portrayed the

dual system of SA labour relations. The former mostly regulated employment relations between the white workers and employers while the later regulated employment relations black workers and employers. It can be deduced that the white workers were more militant than their black counterpart since the 1911 Black Labour Regulation Act did give the black workers any CB rights.

According to La Grange *et al* (2000:11), after the First World War of 1914, black workers formed various unions to protect their interests. One of such unions was the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union founded in Cape Town in 1919 in order to meet the needs of black workers. This union and other black unions became more militant and encouraged the black workers to become more skilled and to engage in the economy. The white workers saw this as a big threat. The situation was compounded by the fall in the price of gold in 1920. The fall in gold prices in 1920, made the mine owners to seek ways to reduce costs and to de-skill the jobs (Gresse, 2002:98). Workers were informed that wages might have to be cut and that marginally profitable mines were to be closed. White workers saw this as another threat of losing their jobs to cheaper black labour. This led to the great strike of 1922 popular known as the Rand Rebellion. In this strike, 153 workers were killed, and 500 wounded. After the strike the government realized the strength of workers and decided to establish statutory mechanisms for CB and the settling of disputes. This led to the enactment of the Industrial Conciliation Act No. 11 of 1924 which was the centerpiece of CB in SA (Johann, 2006:2). It is evident that the Rand Rebellion was a turning point in SA labour relations. It marked the end of ways of black and white workers and it produced the "conciliation system" introduced through the 1924 Industrial Conciliation Act.

The third phase is the period between (1924-1956). After the 1922 labour unrest, the government realized that new labour legislation was essential. The industrial Conciliation Act No. 11 of 1924, was enacted. This Act made provision for the establishment of industrial councils as the core centralized CB institution that still exists (except that the name was changed to bargaining council in 1995). La Grange *et al* (2000:7) state that the purpose of the Act was to prevent labour unrest by providing a mechanism for CB and for resolving disputes through conciliation. To

achieve its objectives, the Act provided for conciliation boards, mediation, arbitration and industrial councils. TU(s) and employers' association could now be registered. The industrial councils became the recognized bargaining bodies. Agreements reached by the industrial councils and employers were published in the Government Gazette and became legally enforceable (La Grange *et al*, 2000:7). Section 24 of this Act is vital since the term "employee" was defined as excluding a person whose contract of service or labour was regulated by any black pass laws and regulations or by the Black Labour Regulation Act No. 15 of 1911. The majority of black male workers were thus excluded from this definition which meant that blacks were excluded from membership of any registered TU (Nel *et al*, 2005:74). In a nutshell, black workers who have always constituted the overwhelming majority of the working class were not entitled to take part in CB. This was done by not allowing them to belong to or establish registered TU(s), the only unions that were allowed to join industrial councils (Johann, 2006:2). It can be deduced that the 1924 Act was an instrument of racial discrimination. Beside the 1924 Act, the Wage Act No. 27 of 1925 was also enacted. The aim of this Act was to determine the minimum wage levels for workers in cases where the employers and workers were unorganised (Nel *et al*, 2005:74).

According to Gresse (2002:101), the great depression as well as the increase in black and white trade unionism between 1931-1935 made the government to appoint the commission of inquiry into industrial legislation in 1934 (the Van Reenen Commission). The commission found that there was need to update the 1924 Act and the Industrial Conciliation Act No. 36 of 1937 which repealed the 1924 Act was promulgated. The objective of the 1937 Act was to create peace between employers and white workers through the mechanisms of conciliation, mediation and arbitration. A new Wage Act No. 44 of 1937 was passed which regulated the affairs of blacks who were not included under the definition of an employee as well as whites who were not unionized (Gresse, 2002:101). It seems the legislation which regulated the wages of the unionized whites was different from that which regulated the wages of the black workers.

In 1948 the National party came to power after defeating the Smuts government. Dekker (1990:41) states that the national party appointed a commission, namely the Industrial

Legislation Commission of Inquiry of 1948 (otherwise known as the Botha commission), to investigate and report on existing employment legislation (which comprised Act No. 36 of 1937 among others). The Botha Commission pointed out serious discrepancies and problems in industrial legislation and recommended new legislation for blacks and non-blacks (Klerck, 1999:10). As a result of the Botha Commission's investigation, the Black Labour Relations Act No. 48 of 1953, the Industrial Conciliation Act No. 28 of 1956 and the Wage Act No. 5 of 1957 were promulgated (Klerck, 1999:10). These three statutes portrayed the dualistic system of South African employment relations (that is one for the white workers and the other for the black workers). The Black Labour Relations Act No. 48 of 1953 as the name implies applied only to blacks. The new Wage Act No. 5 of 1957 replaced Wage Act No. 44 of 1937. This new Act only regulated the wages of black workers. The Industrial Conciliation Act No. 28 of 1956 repealed the Industrial Conciliation act No. 36 of 1937 and went further than the 1924 and 1937 Acts in that it introduced far-reaching discrimination into labour affairs. For instance, apart from excluding black workers from registered TU(s), section 77 of the Act introduced statutory job reservation by reserving certain jobs for the whites (Nel *et al*, 2005:75). It can be deduced that the policy of the national government was that of separate development, with different employment legislation and structures for blacks and non blacks, which meant that racial segregation and separate development were of paramount importance at that stage in South African labour relations history.

The fourth phase is the period between (1956-1990). It is evident from the above that the legislative labour reforms in SA up to 1956 depicted the fact that, at that time, SA practised a truly dualistic labour relation system (one for the white workers and the other for the black workers). This remained the position in South African labour relations until the late 1970's where a complete updating of the country's labour legislation was deemed necessary, since it was evident that the dual system of employment relations was no longer serving its purpose and was creating numerous labour unrest and conflicts, particularly between the black and white workers. It was against this backdrop that the South African government wisely decided in 1979 to appoint the Wiehahn Commission to investigate and make recommendations on the labour unrest in the country. The Commission recommended amongst other things that:

- full freedom of association be granted to all employees regardless of race, and sex;
- trade unions, irrespective of composition in terms of race or sex be allowed to registered;
- Statutory job reservation be phased out; and
- Fair employment practices be developed by the Labour Court (La Grange et al, 2000:11).

The above recommendations substantially changed South African labour relation. Black workers were granted formal access to CB and TU rights (Klerck, 1999:8). The Commission's recommendations ultimately led to the introduction of the Labour Relations Act 94 of 1979 which, for the first time in South African labour legislation recognized Black workers under the formal definition of what constituted an employee (Venter, 2006:33).

The significance of this legislation was the deracialisation of the workplace, as Black employees were now able to form and become members of TU(s) in SA (Bendix, 2001:53). According to Dekker (1990:51), the inclusion of Black South African employees in the Labour Relations Act 94 of 1979 saw the formation of two important trade union federations. These were FOSATU (Federation of South African Trade Unions), which was founded in 1979, and CUSA (Council of Unions of South Africa), which was founded in 1980. In 1985 these two unions merged to form COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Union), which was instrumental to SA liberation struggle (Venter, 2003:42). For instance COSATU was also represented at CODESA (the Convention for a Democratic South Africa), in which all the major parties (such as the African National Congress, the National Party, the Pan Africanist Congress, the Inkatha Freedom Party and the Democratic Party) were invited to negotiate a peaceful transition to South Africa's first democratically elected government (Venter, 2003:43). Johann (2006:2) correctly states that during the 1980,s, the industrial landscape of SA changed dramatically as black unions became more militant, grew rapidly, gained recognition from employers, and started participating in industrial councils.

The fifth phase is the 1990, s: An ethos of change. Finnemore and Rensburg (2002:32) correctly point out that the 1990's saw the transition from the Apartheid years to the new democratic SA. As a result of the transition, some legislation were enacted to redress past discrimination

amongst, which were the LRA No. 66 of 1995; the Constitution of the Republic of SA, Act 108 of 1996; the Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997; the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998; and the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998.

According to Finnemore and Rensburg (2002:32), the Apartheid era was characterized by racial divisions between skilled and unskilled workers; Apartheid wage gaps; poorly educated workers; dictatorial management styles; a lack of protection for the most vulnerable workers; and a dualistic system of labour relations, one for the black workers (Africans, Coloureds, and Indians) and the other for the white workers.

From the above brief history to achieve the right to bargain, it seems that the South African labour relations system understands the CB processes well. CB is a process whereby employees' representatives TU(s) negotiate with representatives of the employer (Employers' Associations) for wage increases and the improvement of working conditions.

Perhaps it is for this reason that Bendix (2001:311) states that the South African system entrenches CB as a predominant process in the conduct of the labour relationship. Similarly, Nel *et al.* (2005:184) also state that CB is a product, as well as an integral part of the South African labour environment. There are two levels of CB: centralized and decentralized bargaining. The former occurs when bargaining takes place between one or more TU(s) and a group of employers from a particular industry at bargaining council. The latter occurs when bargaining takes place between an individual employer and a union at plant level (Grogan, 2001:292).

One can, therefore, safely agree with Sivalingam (2007: 15) who adds that CB is the dominant form of employee participation in SA, because the Constitution restricts itself solely to CB, and goes no further than that on the issue of employee participation.

Hence, Bendix (2010:720) correctly states that employee participation, as it has been practised in Europe, has not been prevalent in SA. TU(s) are, as in the past, still concerned mainly with CB

functions, which consist of negotiation over working conditions and wages, rather than promoting participative practice.

2.8.1 CB as the dominant form of employee participation in SA

2.8.1.1 Some definitions of CB

According to Slabbert and Swanepoel (1998:203), it is difficult to give one correct, comprehensive definition of the concept “collective bargaining”; since there are as many definitions as there are authors on the topic.

Bendix (1996:249-250), cited in Slabbert and Swanepoel (1998:203), provide a broad definition of the term CB. They define it as: “a process, which is necessitated by needs, interests, goals, values, whereby employee’s/employees’ collectives and employer’s/employers’ collectives, by the conduct of continued negotiation and the application of pressure and counter-pressure, attempt to achieve some balance between the fulfillment of the needs, goals and interests of management on the one hand and employees on the other, the extent of which either party achieves its objectives, depending on the nature of the relationship itself, each party’s source and use of power, the power balance between them, the organisational and strategic effectiveness of each party, as well as the type of bargaining structure and the prevalent economic socio-political and other conditions”.

Grogan (2001:284) refers to CB as a process whereby employers and employee collectives seek to reconcile their conflicting goals through a process of mutual accommodation. At its simplest, the term CB is a process where employees’ representatives TU(s) negotiate with representatives of management over wages and working conditions (Finnemore & Rensburg, 2002:133).

Salamon (1998:305), cited in Venter (2006:350), defines CB as a method of determining wages and conditions of employment and regulating the employment relationship, which utilises the

process of negotiation between representatives of management and employees and is intended to result in an agreement, which may be applied across a group of employees.

Du Toit, Johann, Shane and Theron (2010:1) refer to CB as an adversarial process, which involves parties that have conflicting interests when seeking mutually acceptable compromise. Louw (2010:318) also defines CB as a process whereby workers organize collectively in order to exercise a bargaining power in negotiations with employers, which would otherwise be absent from the individual employment relationship.

There is a great debate as to whether CB can be categorized as a form of employee participation in decision making. While to some authors CB is not a form of employee participation, to others CB is an indirect form of employee participation in decision making. Authors such as Sivalingam (2007:13); and Gianni and Giuseppe (2010: 46) believe that CB is not the same as employee participation. Other authors such as Anstey (1997:4); Bendix (2010:708); Elele and Fields (2010:46) believe that CB is an indirect form of employee participation in decision making.

Based on the fact that CB is a vehicle which is used by employees' representatives (TUs) to regulate workplace behaviours, production, wages and substantive conditions of employment through a process of negotiation, the researcher believes that CB is an indirect form of employee participation in decision making.

2.8.1.2 The law and CB in SA

The LRA and the Constitution have established a basis for CB in SA by protecting freedom of association, allowing for the registration of TU(s) and employers' associations, granting TU(s) certain organisational rights, and providing for the enforceability of collective agreements (Grogan, 2001:257); (Bendix, 2010:78).

In this regard, Section 23 of the Constitution states that:

- Every worker has the right to form and join a trade union;
- The right to strike;
- Every employer has the right to form and join an employers' organisation;
- Every trade union, employers' organisation and employer has the right to engage in collective bargaining; and
- National legislation may be enacted to regulate collective bargaining (South Africa, 1996:10).

In line with the above Constitutional provisions, Section 1 of the LRA states that its aims are:

- To give effect and to regulate the fundamental rights conferred by Section 23 of the Constitution;
- To give effect to the obligations incurred by the Republic as a member state of the International Labour Organisation;
- To provide a framework within which employees and their trade unions, employers and employers' organisations can collectively bargain to determine wages, terms and conditions of employment; and
- To promote orderly collective bargaining (South Africa, 1995:8).

2.8.1.3 Bargaining Process

The bargaining relationship is a union initiated relationship. It is rare for an employer to approach his/her employees or union with a view to establishing a bargaining relationship (Bendix, 2001:240). The first step in a CB relationship occurs when an employer recognizes a TU as the bargaining agent for its employees in a particular bargaining unit. With the enactment of LRA, an employer is now obliged to accord rights of recognition only to registered unions, which sufficiently represent the work force (Fouche, 1999:236-237).

This relationship is then formalized in a document known as a recognition collective agreement, which sets out the conditions under which the relationship will operate, and procedures, which should be followed (Grogan, 2001:287). Bendix (2010:298) points out that the recognition agreement (also known as a relationship agreement) does not only confirm that the employer accepts a union as a bargaining agent, but also stipulates the rules and procedures for the conduct of the relationship and the issues, which will be subject to bargaining.

Similarly, Nel *et al* (2005:187) believe that a recognition collective agreement is a collective agreement, which aims to provide a framework within which employees' and employers' representatives operate. This agreement compels the employer to bargain with the employees' representatives. This therefore means that the employer is duty bound by virtue of a recognition collective agreement to bargain with the representatives of the employees. In the event of a dispute about a refusal to bargain, a party can only proceed to industrial action once an advisory award has been obtained from the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (South Africa, 1995:44).

2.8.1.4 Content of CB

Any matter of mutual interest concerning the employment relationship may form the subject-matter of negotiations between the employees' and employers' representatives (Fouche, 1999:249). Grogan (2001:290) expands on the views of Fouche (1999:249) by stating correctly

that the current LRA has left the bargaining agenda open, and is subject only to the requirement that an advisory award should be made before workers can engage in strike action over a claim to bargain over a particular issue.

Salamon (1987:289), who is supported by Bosch and Rossouw (2003:233), points out that the subject matter of a CB relationship is defined as terms and conditions of employment (that is bread and butter issues) or any other matter of mutual interest. Any matter of mutual interest between the employer and employees may be subject to negotiation. However, in practice, CB still focuses on wages and conditions of employment, since most employers still firmly insist on managerial prerogatives (Bendix, 2010:309).

From the above it seems that CB is concerned with all matters of mutual interest between the employer and employees, but in practice it is limited to wages and conditions of employment because most employers still strongly believe in managerial prerogatives.

2.8.1.5 Bargaining levels

Fouche (1999:248) points out that bargaining levels refer to whether bargaining takes place at plant or company level, namely between an individual employer and a union (decentralized bargaining), or at sector or industry level (centralised bargaining), namely between one or more unions and a group of employers at a bargaining council. Grogan (2001: 292) concurs with Fouche (1999:248) by stating that bargaining level refers to whether bargaining takes place between union and individual employers (plant-level or decentralised bargaining), or between one or more unions and a group of employers at a bargaining council (sector-level or centralised bargaining).

Bendix (2010:74) identifies four types of bargaining levels:

- Narrow decentralised bargaining: occurs where a union or unions acting together decide to bargain only on behalf of certain employees at a particular organisation;

- Broad decentralised bargaining: this is where a union or unions acting together decide to bargain on behalf of all employees in an organisation;
- Narrow centralised bargaining: this is where a union or unions acting together decide to bargain on behalf of certain employees in an industry; and
- Broad centralised bargaining: occurs where a union or unions acting together bargain on behalf of all the employees in an industry.

The LRA No 66 of 1995 prefers centralised bargaining because Section 1 of the LRA states that its purpose is to promote CB at a sectoral level (South Africa, 1995:8).

The above shows that a bargaining level determines with and on the behalf of who bargaining will take place, and whether bargaining will take place with one or more workers and TU(s). The bargaining level also determines the employees who will be affected by a collective agreement, which is the outcome of the bargaining process (Slabbert & Swanepoel, 1998:211).

2.8.1.6 Bargaining conduct

In order to achieve the objectives of CB, the parties must approach negotiations with an open and a sincere desire to reach an agreement (Bosch & Rossouw, 2003:235). According to Fouche (1999:248), meaningful and good faith bargaining is an essential element of the bargaining process.

Hence, the parties in the CB relationship must conduct themselves in a manner, which is conducive to reaching consensus.

The LRA places the employer under a duty to disclose to a representative union all relevant information that will enable a union to engage effectively in with the CB process (South Africa, 1995:15). Bosch and Rossouw (2003:238) rightly point out that the disclosure of relevant

information is an essential element of good faith bargaining. However, such disclosure should not cause any harm to an employer or employee (South Africa. 1995:16).

Practices, which constitute bargaining in bad faith include:

- Unreasonable preconditions for bargaining;
- Premature unilateral action;
- Illegitimate pressure or tactics;
- Denial of union access to the workplace;
- Inadequate substantiation of proposals and dilatory tactics;
- By-passing a recognized union and negotiating directly with employees when the union was not acting in bad faith; and
- Unilaterally implementing an unnegotiated proposal (Bosch & Rossouw, 2003:235).

One can correctly state that sincere intentions, good faith, an open mind, and disclosure of information, among others, are requirements of the CB process.

2.8.1.7 Bargaining styles/approaches

According to Nel *et al.* (2005:167), there are two approaches to CB: distributive (win-loss bargaining) and integrative (win-win bargaining).

- Distributive bargaining: it is based on adversarial relationship between labour and management where their goals are in direct conflict and the outcome of this approach is that one party is a winner and the other a loser (Nel *et al.*, 2005:167).

In support of the views of Nel *et al.* (2005:167), Bendix (2001:243) adds that distributive bargaining takes place when management and the union are in opposing positions and when a gain for one party represents a loss for the other. It mostly deals with economic issues such as

wages, annual leave, holidays, benefits and bonuses. This is the approach used by the institution and Faculty for this study since the unions have an adversarial relationship.

- Integrative bargaining

This is the process of collaboration with a win-win orientation on the part of the parties as they look for solutions of mutual benefits, that is, the best solution for both is aimed for by both (Anstey, 1991:165, cited in Slabbert & Swanepoel, 1998:209). Hence, Bendix (2001:245) states that integrative bargaining occurs when both parties have the same preference for a successful outcome or are equally concerned to solve a problem.

It seems that distributive bargaining is characterised by an adversarial relationship between management and labour, while integrative bargaining is concerned with cooperation between management and labour in order to jointly solve a problem.

2.9 South African government's response to employee participation

The first democratic elections, which were held in 1994 marked the start of a democratic era in SA. After having looked at countries such as Germany, and Japan, the African National Congress (ANC) government decided to re-structure the workplace, and promote employee participation by enacting laws to regulate the conduct of the parties to the employment relationship (Sivalingam, 2007:24).

The Constitution and, especially the LRA, bring this concept of democracy directly into the employment relations arena (Nel *et al.*, 2005:283). The LRA, for example, stipulates that one of its aims is to promote employee participation in decision-making in the workplace (South Africa, 1995:8).

2.9.1 The Constitution and employee participation

The South African Constitution is the supreme law of the country. The Constitution outlines the rights guaranteed to citizens in Chapter Two, entitled the Bill of Rights.

According to Sivalingam (2007:21), the South African Constitution set the pace by providing for and restricting itself solely to CB and goes no further than this on the issue of employee participation in decision making. The Constitution promotes freedom of association. It is evident from the history of South African labour relation that employees did not have the right to collectively bargain with employers in the past.

In this regard, Section 23 of the Bill of Rights states that:

- Every worker has the right to form and join a trade union;
- Every worker has the right to strike;
- Every employer has the right to form and join an employers' organisation; and
- Every trade union, employers' organisation and employer has the right to engage in CB.

National legislation may be enacted to regulate CB (South Africa, 1996:10).

In line with the above Constitutional provisions, Section 1 of the LRA states that its purpose is to advance economic development, social justice, labour peace and the democratisation of the workplace by fulfilling the primary objectives of the LRA, which are:

- To give effect to and regulate the fundamental rights conferred by Section 23 of the Constitution;
- To give effect to obligations incurred by the Republic as a member of the ILO;
- To provide a framework within which employees and their trade unions , employers and employers' organisations can:
- Collectively bargain to determine wages, terms and conditions of employment and other matters of mutual interest; and
- Formulate an industrial policy;
- To promote

- a) Orderly collective bargaining;
- b) Collective bargaining at a sectoral level;
- c) Employee participation in decision making in the workplace; and
- d) The effective resolution of labour disputes (South Africa, 1995:8).

2.9.2 The LRA and employee participation

It seems that although the Constitution restricted itself solely to CB as far as the issue of employee participation in decision making is concerned, the LRA goes further than this by promoting employee participation in decision making through WPF(s), which is a novel concept in South African labour law (Todd, 2004:42).

A WPF is a workplace-based body, which consists of employee representatives who meet with management representatives to engage in co-decision making on some issues and consultation on others (Bendix, 2010:97). The members of a WPF are drawn from the ranks of employees in the workplace, excluding senior managers (Grogan, 2001:275).

Finnemore and Rensburg (2002:254) state that WPF(s) in SA were initially modelled work councils in Europe, but during negotiations of the final drafting of the LRA amendments were made, which gave TU(s) a decisive role in the establishment of a WPF, unlike the works councils in Europe, where it is employees who decide on its establishment and not the TU(s).

This seems to be an explanation why in SA a WPF can only be triggered by a representative union in any organization with more than 100 employees (South Africa, 1995:53). From the definition of a WPF, it that seems it can enhance a more co-operative relationship between management and labour rather than the adversarial relationship, which characterizes the CB process.

2.9.2.1 Establishment of a WPF

Where an employer employs 100 or more people in a workplace, a TU or TU(s), which act jointly and represent(s) a majority of such employees, may apply to the CCMA to establish a WPF (South Africa, 1995:53). Similarly, Mboweni (1997:34) points out that a WPF may be established in any workplace where there are more than 100 employees and must only be initiated by a representative TU.

A representative TU means a registered TU, or two or more registered TU(s) which act jointly, and have as members a majority of employees who are employed by an employer in a workplace (South Africa, 1995:53).

One can deduce that in any workplace in which the employer employs 100 or more employees, a representative TU may apply to the CCMA for the establishment of a WPF.

2.9.2.2. Meetings

Regular meetings must be held between the WPF and the employer, where the employer must present a report on its financial and employment situation, its performance since the last report and its anticipated performance in the short and long term (Anstey, 1997:100). There must also be regular meetings between a WPF and the employees in the workplace, where a WPF must report on:

- Its activities, generally;
- Matters in respect of which it has been consulted by the employer; and
- Matters in respect of which it has participated in joint decision-making with the employer (South Africa, 1995:56).

2.9.2.3 Functions of a WPF

Section 79 of the LRA lays down four general functions of a WPF (South Africa, 1995:53), namely:

- It must seek to promote the interests of all employees in the workplace, whether or not they are trade union members;
- It must seek to improve efficiency in the workplace; and
- It must be consulted by the employer, with a view to reaching consensus, about matters referred to in section 84 of the LRA, which are:

- a) Workplace restructuring, introduction of new technology and new work methods;
- b) Changes in the organisation of work;
- c) Partial or total plant closures;
- d) Mergers and transfers of ownership when that affects employees;
- e) Employees' dismissals based on operational requirements;
- f) Exemptions from any collective agreement or any law;
- g) Job grading;
- h) Criteria for merit increases or the payment of discretionary bonuses;
- i) Training and education;
- j) Product development; and

k) Export promotion (South Africa, 1995:56).

- To participate in joint decision-making on matters referred to in Section 86 of the LRA, which include:

a) Disciplinary codes and procedures;

b) Rules relating to the appropriate regulation of the workplace in so far as they apply to conduct not related to the work performance of employees;

c) Measures designed to protect previously disadvantaged persons; and

d) Changes to any rules, which regulate social benefit schemes that are controlled by the employer (South Africa, 1995:57).

It is evident from the above that the LRA intends to use WPF(s) as vehicles for the promotion of cooperative or participative management through information-sharing, consultation, and joint decision-making.

2.10 An evaluation of employee participation in SA

This study shows that CB is the dominant form of employee participation in decision making in SA (South Africa, 1995:8). This view is supported by Sivalingam (2007: 15) who holds that CB is the dominant form of employee participation in SA, because TU(s) in SA focus more on CB functions, which consist of negotiations over wage increases and the improvement of working conditions rather than the promotion of direct participative practices in SA workplaces.

It is also evident that the LRA goes beyond the Constitution by providing for WPF(s), which are intended to be used as vehicles for the promotion of employee participation in decision making

and cooperative or participative management through information-sharing, consultation, and joint decision-making.

The question one can ask at this juncture is: do employees in SA actually participate in decision making? To answer this question, the researcher briefly re-examines CB and WPF(s) as forms of employee participation in decision making in SA.

If one should consider some theoretical perspectives, one would answer the above question both in the affirmative and negative. The researcher briefly evaluates employee participation in decision making in SA starting with CB, and then WPF.

According to Gianni and Giuseppe (2010:3), CB is different from participation because it is based on conflict to oppose or influence the decisions and choices of the other party. Similarly, Horwitz, Jain and Mbabane (2005:6) believe that employee participation is not the same as CB. This is because employee participation is characterized by consultation, information sharing and joint decision making, while CB is conflictual and adversarial.

In support of the views of Horwitz, Jain and Mbabane (2005:6), Britwum and Kester (2007:46) state that CB is not the same as participation because the key words of “collective bargaining” are confrontation, industrial action or warfare, conflict and adversarialism, while those of participation are partnership, consultation, cooperation, information sharing and joint decision making. Sivalingam (2007:13) adds that CB is not the same as employee participation, because CB is narrowly concerned with negotiations over wages and working conditions.

However, many authors believe that CB is an indirect form of employee participation in decision making.

According to Anstey (1997:4), CB is an indirect form of employee participation in decision making and it is the most common form of employee participation worldwide. CB is a vehicle, which is used by employees’ representatives (TUs) to regulate workplace behaviours,

production, wages and substantive conditions of employment through the process of negotiation between TU(s) and the employers' representatives (Anstey, 1997:4).

Similarly, Bendix (2010:708) states that CB is an indirect form of employee participation in decision making, particularly because in terms of the process of CB, TU(s) and employers' representatives engage in joint regulation of workplace related issues and may jointly solve problems, which arise.

In the same vein, Elele and Fields (2010: 46) classify employee participation in decision making into:

- Direct employee participation with management; and
- Representative employee participation in decision making through a TU or staff association.

Based on the fact that CB is a vehicle, which is used by employees' representatives (TUs) to regulate workplace behaviours, production, wages and substantive conditions of employment through the process of negotiation, the researcher believes that CB is an indirect form of employee participation in decision making.

As far as WPF(s) are concerned, the LRA seeks to promote meaningful and effective employee participation in decision making through WPF(s) by making information sharing, consultation and joint decision making mandatory. However, WPF(s) have not really established themselves in the South African labour (Bendix, 2010:100).

Perhaps a simple reason for the unpopularity of WPF(s) in SA may in part be attributed to the fact that a WPF can only be established upon application by a representative union to the CCMA (South Africa, 1995:53).

According to Sivalingam (2007:54-55), for WPF(s) to take root in SA, it is necessary to change the legislation, and allow employees in an organization, irrespective of whether they are union members or not, to apply to the CCMA for the establishment of a WPF. This is what is done in Europe with the works councils system. Works councils are triggered by employees and not TU(s). If employees in SA are given a chance to establish a WPF, perhaps WPF(s) will become prevalent in SA. Isabirye (2007:163) adds that a majority of employees in SA are not members of any union. From the foregoing, this researcher feels that allowing employees to initiate a WPF may make WPF(s) popular in the South African labour relations arena.

It seems employees in SA, actually participate in decision making indirectly through TU(s), which are representatives of the employees. This is so because management and TU(s) are reluctant to promote direct participative practices.

Perhaps this is the reason why Bendix (2001:653) rightly points out that meaningful employee participation in decision making in SA is still in its infancy, and numerous obstacles should be overcome if this becomes the dominant mode. Bendix (2010:720) further adds that workers' participation, as it is practised in Western Europe, is not prevalent in South African labour relations.

The question one can ask at this juncture is: what obstacles prevent employee participation in decision making in the South African labour arena?

2.11 Reasons why employee participation is still in its infancy in SA

The following reasons account for the slow development of meaningful and effective employee participation in decision making in South African labour relations.

2.11.1 Lack of management commitment

According to Cassar (1999:59), management has the prime responsibility of initiating structures for appropriate communication, information sharing and setting the right procedures for employee participation in decision making. However, in practice, management in the South African labour relations arena, regard participative initiatives as an attempt to water down the managerial prerogatives (Venter *et al.*, 2009:474). Similarly, Bendix (2001:652) adds that employers in the South African labour relations arena object to participative initiatives because according to them, it delays the decision making process and takes control out of the hands of management.

One can say that employers in SA do not promote participative initiatives in order to preserve managerial prerogatives.

2.11.2 Lack of union support

TU(s) in SA do not encourage participative structures because they consider it as a threat to their role as the main challenger of managerial decisions (Bendix, 2001:652). Venter *et al.* (2009:474) add that TU(s) perceive the introduction of participative structures as an attempt to weaken their power.

As was the case in the past, perhaps this is the reason why TU(s) in SA concentrate more on CB functions, which consist of negotiations over wages and working conditions, rather than the promotion of meaningful and effective participative structures and practices.

2.11.3 Lack of employees' commitment

Employees lack commitment because they see a slight commitment by management to promote meaningful participation (Venter *et al.*, 2009:474). Another possible reason why employees do

not show any interest in participation is that management in most cases uses its managerial prerogative to ignore the inputs of the employees.

It seems that the introduction of participative schemes in the South African labour relations arena still leaves much to be desired. In brief, for it to be prevalent, it requires the full commitment of all concerned parties.

2.12 Employee participation in some selected countries

According to Horwitz, Jain and Mbabane (2005:5), the systems, which parallel South Africa's system are the German and Dutch systems of Work Councils, which have the same objectives as South African WPF(s). Mahabir and Wood (2001:232) state that South Africa's WPF(s) were inspired by the German works councils system. Works councils are generally regarded as the most outstanding and powerful form of industrial democracy in contemporary capitalist societies. Works Councils are initiated by employees and not TU(s), as is the case in SA. The researcher examines employee participation in Germany and the Netherlands, since their systems are analogous to the South African labour relations system.

2.12.1 The Netherlands

The Dutch industrial relations system is characterized by a dual system of employees' representation. There is representation through CB, which is an adversarial approach, and representation through works councils, which is a more cooperative mode of engagement (Klaveren & Sprenger, 2005:5).

Employee participation has a strong tradition in the Netherlands, because employee participation can enhance stability in employment conditions and contribute to optimal performance of a company in all its goals (http://www.heussen-law.nl/download/newsletter/Works_Council_Act_I_%20EN_JCC_Holland_Sep_Oct_2006.pdf).

Employee participation in workplaces in the Netherlands is essentially through works councils (<http://www.worker-participation.eu/National-Industrial-Relations/Countries/Netherlands/Workplace-Representation>).

A work council is a body, which comprises of employees within an enterprise, which has the task of promoting the interests of the workforce and the enterprise as a whole (<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/emire/NETHERLANDS/WORKSCOUNCIL-NL.htm>).

Frege (2002:223) adds that works councils are institutionalized bodies of collective worker participation at a workplace level, and have consultative, informatory and co-determination rights. In the same vein, Smith and Uwe (2006:652) define works councils as institutionalized bodies of worker representation whose functions are distinct from those of unions.

Through the works councils, Dutch employees have a strong need to state their opinions, and review management decisions, while managers strive for consensus with employees before making any final decisions (Van den Berg & Wiersma, 1998:64)

In the Netherlands, the works councils have its legal basis in the 1979 Works Council Act (<http://www.plgworldbook.eu.com/Resources/i/a/x/Netherlands%20-%20Arbitration.pdf>).

The councils have various powers such as the right of consent; the right to prior consultation; the right to information; and the right to nominate candidates for the supervisory board (<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/emire/NETHERLANDS/WORKSCOUNCIL-NL.htm>).

In the Netherlands, 90% of companies that have 100 or more employees have work councils, and 56% of companies that have 35-100 employees have works councils (Anstey, 1997:45). Similarly, Van der Heijden (2000:1) states that in the Netherlands 92% of companies that have 100 or more employees have works councils, while the percentage has increased to over 80% in smaller companies.

In contrast to SA, the above figures show that employee participation in decision making is prevalent in the Netherlands.

2.12.2 Germany

The German system of industrial relations is characterized by a dual structure of employee representation through works councils and unions (Smith & Uwe, 2006:660). Works councils provide a mechanism for participation in decision making (co-determination) at a plant level, while collective agreements are negotiated between unions and employers' associations at a sectoral level (Olaf & Uwe, 2003:471); (Addison, Schank, Schnabel & Wagner, 2007:187).

Similarly, Addison, Teixeira and Zwick (2007: 3) state that in Germany CB is conducted by TU(s) and employers' associations, while works councils focus on productive issues. Perhaps this is the reason why Addison (2005:407) states that in Germany, workplace participation occurs through works council rather than via TU(s). FitzRoy and Kraft (2005:236) add that in Germany CB is formally separated from all facets of co-determination.

Works councils in Germany are defined and governed by the Works Constitution Act. The first Works Constitution Act (1952) still forms much of the basis of the information, consultation and co-determination rights. The second was the 1972 Works Constitution Act and the most recent legislation, the 2001 Works Constitution Act, sought to encourage works councils formation, and strengthen existing works councils (Addison *et al.*, 2007:4).

Section 1 of both the old and new Works Constitution Act provide for the election of works councils in all establishments that have five or more employees (Addison, Bellmann, Schnabel & Wagner, 2002:2). In the same vein, Olaf and Uwe (2003:473) state that the creation of works councils highly depends on the initiative of employees in establishments, which have five or more employees.

One can deduce that in Germany, works councils are expressly provided for by the law, while their creation depends on the initiative of employees in establishments, which have the basic size threshold of five or more permanent employees established under the law.

According to FitzRoy and Kraft (2005:236), works councils are not allowed to strike. They are vehicles to improve workplace cooperation and productivity. Where council and management fail to reach an agreement on any issue, they may appeal to an internal arbitration board or to the labour court for a solution (Olaf & Uwe, 2003:474). This can not work in SA because strike is the power base of TU(s) in SA.

German works councils have information, consultation, and co-determination rights. Employers have a duty to provide timely and comprehensive information to enable works councils to discharge their statutory duty (Addison, Schnabel & Wagner, 1997:423). Shelley (2000:9) refers to co-determination as an industrial relation setting in which employees and management act as joint partners in the decision-making process, and bear equal responsibility for the outcomes of all decisions.

Granting co-determination rights to works councils is a mechanism to protect the interests of the work force (Olaf & Uwe, 2003:473). Perhaps this is the reason why Gianni and Giuseppe (2010:26) state that the model of employee participation in decision making, which is considered as the most complete, is the German one. This is because under the German Works Constitution Act, employers are obliged at enterprise level not to merely consult, but also to co-decide (co-determination) with the works councils on some issues.

2.13 Summary

It is evident from this chapter that in spite of the modest efforts by the South African government to ensure that employees in South African workplaces participate in decision making, there are three major obstacles to these efforts. This explains why authors such as Sonia Bendix believes that employee participation in decision making within the sphere of South African labour

relations is still in its infancy, as these obstacles should be overcome if this is to be the dominant mode.

One of the reasons why employee participation in decision making is still in its infancy in the South African labour relations arena is the fact that WPF(s), which are provided for by LRA to promote employee participation in decision making, can only be initiated by a representative TU and not by employees. This is different from other countries such as Germany and the Netherlands, where employee participation in decision making is more prevalent. Perhaps this is because the establishment of works councils depends on the initiative of employees and not TU(s), as is the case in South Africa.

Also worthy of note is the fact that CB, which is a process where employees' representatives (trade unions) negotiate with the representatives of management (employers' associations) over wages and working conditions, remains the dominant form of employee participation in the South African labour relations arena.

Chapter Three

Public Sector Higher Education Labour Relations

3.1 Introduction

According to Yemin (1993: 469), the demand for public or governmental services notably health, education and other social services is high in most countries across the world. Perhaps one of the reasons for this assertion is that organisations in the public sector render services to the entire public at little or no cost since they receive subventions from the government. This is as opposed to organisations in the private sector which are out to maximize profits and minimize losses. Another possible reason could be that organisations in the public sector provide services which are vital to the entire nation and some (nurses, armed forces, police, firefighters, magistrates, and prison guides) provide services which are “essential” to the public. Hence any disruption in the form of strike will greatly affect the welfare of the citizens, governmental plans, the safety and security of the public.

The high demand for the services provided by organisations in the public service makes Yemin (1993: 471) to ask the question as to whether civil servants should be allowed to form and join TU in order to engage in CB with the state their employer? And if so, should any restrictions be placed on this right? To answer these questions, article 2 of the International Labour Organisation Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to organize requires that: “All workers without distinction whatsoever are entitled to establish and join TU(s) of their choice ..., the sole exceptions being the armed forces and the police”. It is evident that every employee irrespective of whether he/she is a public servant or private employee has the right to join a TU of his/her choice.

In line with the provisions of article 2 above, this right has been firmly established in the public service by the government of most countries which are signatories to the International Labour Organisation. For example, CB was introduced in American public service following the adoption of the 1962 Executive Order at the federal level, followed by the adoption of local laws in most states (Ehrenberg, Klaff, Kezsbom & Nagowski, 2002: 2). Similarly, in Canada, CB was introduced in the public sector by the adoption of legislation at the federal level in the 1960s, followed by the enactment of local laws in most states (Bartkiw & Swimmer, 2003:579). For the purpose of this study, this researcher shall focus on public higher education.

Organisations in public HE sector are largely involved in service provision (Hill, 1995:11). This means that public HE institutions are service providers. According to Voss and Gruber (2006:229), in order for public HE institutions to provide services of good quality to the students (who are the customers of public HE institutions), the academics should be: knowledgeable, well-organized, encouraging, helpful, caring to students' needs, approachable, experienced, friendly and should have good communication skills. Rendering services of good quality will help improve the productivity (that is more graduates) of public HE. Psacharopoulos, (1996:121-123) states that the productivity of any public HE institution depends largely on the following:

- i) The ratio of students per lecturer: This measure assumes that fewer students per lecturer result in more attention being given to individual students. Hence this will improve productivity.
- ii) labour relations: too much strikes from students or lecturers greatly affect productivity negatively;
- iii) Admission requirements: The quality of any HE institution first depends upon the raw materials (students) that enter the system. If the less able are selected, it will have a negative impact on the institution's productivity (that is the graduates).
- iv) Central regulation: Most HE institutions are state monopoly. HE institutions cannot fully be productive with too much regulation from the central government.

- v) Limited funds for research: Teaching is not the only activity that makes one a good teacher at a university, or the only means of learning by students. Research is an integral part of the work of universities. Limited funds for research will negatively affect the productivity of any HE institution.
- vi) Too much lecturer/student absenteeism: High absenteeism of lecturers as well as students will negatively affect service delivery, teaching and learning. All these will affect productivity.

Generally, HE institutions have two main goals: to create and to disseminate knowledge (Pereira & Da Silva, 2003:1). The creation of knowledge is done through research, and dissemination is done through education. Pereira and Da Silva (2003:6) add that the education process can further be categorized or sub divided into “teaching” (knowledge transmission) and “learning” (knowledge obtained by learning). It can be deduced that, research and education constitute the central objectives of HE institutions be it public or private. The tables below show the teaching and learning processes of HE institutions:

Input	Process	Output (Productivity)
Student (raw material)	Lecturers or teachers act on students to “transmit knowledge”.	Educated students (Graduates).

Table 3.1: Model proposed for teaching process in HE institutions by (Jauch & Orwig, 1997:283).

Input**Process****Output (Productivity)**

Student (learner) Faculty Educational Material.	Learner interacts with guide and educational materials.	Educated persons (Graduates)
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Table 3.2: Model proposed for learning process by (Da Silva & Pereira, 2003:6).

It can be deduced from table 1 and 2 above that in public HE institutions, the students (customers) are the product-in-process. They are the raw material when admitted in the institution and finished product when they graduate. The transformation of the inputs (students) into outputs (graduates) is done by the teaching staff through teaching, learning and research.

Perhaps the fact that the “teaching staff” in every public HE institution have the responsible to transform the raw material (students) into finished products (graduates) is the reason why Voss, Gruber and Szmigin (2007:950) state that the “academics” or “teaching staff” are key actors in every HE institutions. As Constanti and Gibbs (2004:244) put it the role of the academic is to provide services to students in order to transform the raw materials (students) into finished products (graduates).

It goes therefore without saying that, if the management of any public HE institution really wants the lecturers or “teaching staff” to discharge services of good quality and improve productivity (that is produce more graduates), management should create a labour environment which enables the academics to either directly (by themselves) or indirectly (through their elected representatives) participate in decisions concerning their working life (Constanti & Gibbs, 2004:244). The labour relation of the public HE institutions of some selected countries shall be examined.

3.2 Public HE labour relations in some selected countries

According to Budlender (2009:24), CB in the public sector differs from that in the private sector in that, in the public sector there is only one employer (the state) against numerous and large unions. Another difference is that civil servants are service providers and in most cases their salaries are voted by parliament. This is as opposed to employees in the private sector whose salaries are determined by their employers. This researcher feels that the above two differences could be the reasons amongst others why it is difficult for civil servants to achieve any meaningful salary increment through CB. These notwithstanding, to the humble opinion of this researcher, through CB civil servants can at least better their working conditions.

In this section, the public sector labour relations of America, Canada and South Africa shall be examined. The public HE labour relation of these three countries has some similarities and differences as will be seen. Before examining CB in the public HE of these three countries, it is of utmost importance for one to start off by presenting the position of the International Labour Organisation on CB in the public service. Article 7 of the International Labour Organisation Convention 151 of 1978 states that:

“Measures appropriate to national conditions shall be taken, where necessary, to encourage and promote the full development and utilization of machinery for negotiation of terms and conditions of employment between the public authorities concerned and public employees’ organisations, or such other methods as will allow representatives of public employees to participate in the determination of these matters”.

In line with the above provisions, most countries in the world have adopted legislation aimed at promoting CB in the public sector in general.

3.2.1 Public sector HE labour relations in America

As Hedgepeth (1999:691) rightly puts it, CB has now been fully established in the public sector of America in general. For the purpose of this study, this researcher shall lay emphasis on the public HE sector. In America, unionism is fast increasing in public HE sector and has eclipsed that of the private HE sector (Bennett & Masters, 2003:533). What this means is that in America, the number of public HE employees who belong in a TU is more than their counterparts in private HE. The historical development of CB in American public HE, the legal framework and the trends in public HE union membership shall be examined.

Starting with the historical development of CB in American public HE, only a small portion of employees in American public HE institutions were organized before 1960 (Freeman, 1994:1). In support of the views of Freeman (1994:1) Moe (2009:156) states that prior to 1960, few public HE employees in the United States of America belonged to unions. This means that in America, prior to 1960, unionization was at its utmost apex in the private sector. This was because no state had laws permitting CB for public HE employees in particular and civil servants in general. However, this situation changed in the 1960s, as the Federal government followed by most states passed laws making it easier for public HE employees and other civil servants to organize themselves so as to bargain collectively with management over salaries and working conditions (Moe, 2009:156). As a result unionization in American higher education has become primarily a public sector phenomenon. For example, in the mid 1990s, about 38% of employees in American public HE institutions were covered by CB agreement, while only 6% of employees in American private HE institutions were covered by collective agreement (Ehrenberg, Klaff, Kezsbom & Nagowski, 2002: 3).

The second point of concern is the legal framework. As afore mentioned, the adoption of laws extending CB rights into American public sector led to the rise of union membership in American public HE sector. Freeman (1994:10) states that at the federal level, Executive Order 10988 which president Kennedy announced in 1962, and which was later strengthened by subsequent presidents (for example in 1969 president Nixon passed Executive Order 11491),

were the principal cause of the rapid organization of employees in the American public sector in general. These Orders provided for the recognition of unions in American public HE institutions and the public sector in general (Freeman, 1994:10).

At the level of the states, state governments swiftly followed the Executive Order and established their own local laws governing CB for civil servants in their states (Ehrenberg, Klaff, Kezsbom & Nagowski, 2002: 2). The legal environment therefore varies at the level of the states because the Executive Orders gave state governments the powers to establish their own local laws or legislation governing CB for civil servants in their states (Bennett & Masters, 2003:535). This means that in the United States, the laws which regulate CB rights of employees in public HE sector vary from one state to another. This is contrary to the situation in American private HE sector where the National Labour Relations Act (NLRA) is the uniform law which governs CB among employees in the private sector in general (Aaron, 1996: 1097).

According to Bennett and Masters (2003:536), 41 out of the 51 states that made up the United States of America have adopted their own local laws which regulate CB in public HE. This means that the federal law is the law which regulates CB for employees in public HE in the ten states which do not have their own local laws governing CB in public HE. The 41 states which have their own local laws governing CB in public HE are: Alaska; Arizona; Arkansas; California; Colorado; Connecticut; Delaware; District of Columbia; Florida; Georgia; Hawaii; Idaho; Illinois; Indiana; Iowa; Kansas; Kentucky; Maine; Massachusetts; Michigan; Montana; Nebraska; Nevada; New Hampshire; New Jersey; New Mexico; New York; North Dakota; Ohio; Oklahoma; Oregon; Pennsylvania; Rhode Island; South Dakota; Tennessee; Texas; Utah; Vermont; Washington; Wisconsin; and Wyoming. This researcher shall use the State University of New York (SUNY) to portray the relationship between management and labour.

In the New York State for example, the passage of the Taylor Law in New York State in 1967 gave public HE employees and employees in the public sector in general in New York the right to engage in CB (Hedgepeth, 1999:694). The State University of New York as the name implies is a public HE institution. In this institution, there is an agency shop agreement in place and

bargaining takes place at decentralized or plant level (Bennett & Masters, 2003:537). The representatives of management and labour in this institution just as in any other public HE institution bargain over salaries and working conditions (Bennett & Masters, 2003:537). Ehrenberg, Klaff, Kezsbom & Nagowski (2002: 20), add that public employees or civil servants in the New York state just as is the case in many other states are not allowed to strike. This means that the staff of the State University of New York (SUNY) are prohibited from striking. One can safely say that the absence of strike limits the bargaining power of the staff in this institution in particular and the civil servants of the state of New York in general. It is important to note that, in a system of free CB, strikes and lock-outs serve an important role. Without strikes or some form of economic weapon, labour might never be able to force management to take its demands seriously and management might never be able to use “lock-out” to force employees to withdraw demands. Therefore, with little bargaining power one should expect very small union impact on the salaries and working conditions of the staff in the State University of New York in particular and the civil servants in New York in general.

With regards to the Trends in public sector unionization in American public sector in general, by 1984, approximately 36% of all government employees in the United States were members of unions (Ichniowski, 1998:19). In the mid 1990,s, about 38% of employees in American public HE institutions were covered by CB agreement, while only 6% of employees in American private HE institutions were covered by collective agreement (Ehrenberg, Klaff, Kezsbom & Nagowski, 2002: 3). These union gains in the public sector are remarkable because it occurred when the private sector unions experienced dramatic declines in membership (Trejo, 1991:166). In American public HE, representation of academics is split between three competing unions: the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) union, The National Education Association (NEA) and the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) union (Penner, 1998:71). The table below shows the trends in private and public HE sectors unionization in the United States of America for some selected years.

Trends in Private and Public HE Sector Unionization in America, 1950-2001, Selected years.

Year	Overall Union Union Rate	Private Sector Rate	Public Sector rate	Private Sector Membership (in thousands)	Public Sector Membership (in thousands)
1950	31.6%	34.6%	12.3%	13,550	743
1960	28.6%	31.9	10.8	14,613	902
1970	29.6	29.1	32.0	16,978	4,014
1980	23.2	20.6	35.1	15,273	5,694
1990	16.1	12.1	36.4	10,227	6,484
1995	14.9	10.4	37.8	9,400	6,926
1996	14.5	10.2	37.6	9,384	6,854
1997	14.1	9.7	37.2	9,327	6,747
1998	13.9	9.5	37.5	9,306	6,905
1999	13.9	9.4	37.3	9,419	7,058
2000	13.5	9.0	37.5	9,148	7,100
2001	13.5	9.0	37.4	9,113	7,162

Table 3.3. Source (Bennett & Masters, 2003:537).

As shown in table 3 above, nearly 35% of private HE sector workforce in the United States was unionized in 1950. In contrast, only 12% of public HE sector workforce was organized in the same year. As can be seen from the table, as the years unfold, the percentage of public HE sector employees organized keeps increasing while that of the private HE sector declines.

3.2.2 Public sector HE labour relations in Canada

Canada just like America is a federal state made up of eleven states. Penner (1998:71) states that CB appeared in Canadian public HE institutions for the same reason as in the United States. That is the adoption of enabling legislation which led to the growth of unions in the public sector. The historical development of CB in the Canadian public HE sector and the legal environment of the Canadian public HE sector shall be discussed.

According to Bartkiw and Swimmer (2003:579), CB for most employees in the Canadian public HE sector and other public services became a reality in the mid 1960,s. This period was marked by the removal of legal barriers and the adoption of enabling legislation which granted CB rights to both the federal and provincial public sector employees in HE, health and other public departments (Rose, 2004:272).

The removal of legal barriers by the federal and provincial governments in Canada in 1960 led to the extension of CB rights in the Canadian public HE sector and the public department in general. Perhaps this is the reason why Rose and Chaison (1995:103) state that change in Public policy governing union certification in the public service in general facilitates union organization and growth in the Canadian public sector. Certification procedures in the new laws made it easy for TU(s) in public HE and other public services in general in Canada to become certified bargaining agents (Bartkiw & Swimmer, 2003:597). It seems the removal of legal barriers in 1960 and the adoption of enabling laws led to the growth of unionization in Canadian public HE and other public services in general just as was the case in America.

In Canadian public HE, the representation of the Academics is also split between three unions: The Association of University Teachers (CAUT), which is the equivalent of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) in America. It represents most unionized full time academics in the English speaking provinces. In the French speaking provinces like Quebec, the academics are represented by the Confederation des Syndicats nationaux (CSN) and Centrale de L'enseignement du Quebec (CEQ) (Penner, 1998:71). Institutions in Canadian public HE and

other public services has an agency shop agreement and CB takes place at the decentralized or plant level except for Quebec province which has adopted a highly centralized bargaining (Bartkiw & Swimmer, 2003:581). This means that public employees who do not belong to unions are covered by collective agreement and are required to pay union dues.

3.2.3 South African public sector HE labour relations

It is evident from the historical development of South African labour relations in the previous chapter that South African labour relations have undergone profound changes. For instance, with the advent of democracy since 1994, public servants including those in public HE institutions in SA have been granted individual and CB rights which were previously denied (Makwembere, 2007:10). This means that prior to 1994 civil servants in public HE institutions in SA did not have the right to collectively bargain with the state their employer. The views of Makwembere (2007:10) is corroborated by Budlender (2009:24) who adds that prior to 1994, there was virtually no CB in the SA public service. The centerpiece for CB in the SA public service in general was the LRA No 66 of 1995 that extended full CB rights to almost all the civil servants in SA except those in the: National Defence Force; the National Intelligence Agency; and the South African Secret Service who are excluded from the application of the above Act (South Africa, 1995:8). The above Act therefore extended CB rights to civil servants in SA public HE institutions since they are not excluded from its scope of application.

Spearheading the move towards transforming and achieving CB rights in public HE institutions in SA, was the student associations on the one hand, particularly student organisations such as the South African Students Congress (SASCO), and the Pan African Students Organisation (PASO). On the other hand, workers' unions like NEHAWU (the National Education, Health and Allied Workers Union) and staff association like UDUSA (Union of Democratic University Staff Association) also consistently demanded change in HE institutions in SA (Fourie, 1999:278). In South Africa, Public HE institutions are under the Department of HE and Training and are their establishment; funding and governance are regulated by the Higher Education Act No101 of 1997. In terms of the governance/management of public HE institution, section 26 of the above

Act states that every public HE institution must have the following structures: a council, senate, principal, vice principal, students' representative council and such other structures or offices as may be determined by the institutional statute (South Africa, 1997:21).

For the purpose of this study, this researcher shall focus on the labour relation of the HE institution under study. In the institution for this study, there are three TU(s). This researcher managed to interview only the representative of one of these unions (NEHAWU). This was because the representatives of the other two unions were not available. Since they were not available, they asked this researcher to send them a copy of the interview guide via their email address for them to respond. This researcher emailed the interview guide to them as per their request but unfortunately none of them responded. Besides the representative of NEHAWU, this researcher also managed to interview the manager of the Faculty for this research. Appointments were made prior to the interview. The respondents gave this researcher 30 minutes for the interview due to their busy work schedule. The responses of the Faculty Manager shall be presented in chapter six in order to present a balanced argument (that is that of management and the respondents). For the sake of anonymity, this researcher shall not disclose the other two unions of the institution where this study was conducted.

The following salient points were evident from the interview this researcher had with the representative of NEHAWU:

- There are three TU(s) in the institutions. One is dominated by the coloureds, the other is dominated by the whites and the third is dominated by those from the disadvantaged group (NEHAWU). This means that unionism in this institution is based on racial inclination. This has created a culture of racial segregation and has resulted to an adversarial climate in the institution. The representative of NEHAWU made this researcher to understand that the need for change is the main goal of NEHAWU since its members are mostly those from the disadvantaged group (the blacks). Perhaps this could be the reason why the representative of NEHAWU said that “It is a pity that in this institution, the need for change is a black thing because they were the suppressed....”

- There is an agency shop agreement and CB between the unions and management of the institution takes place at decentralised or plant level. An agency shop agreement is a collective agreement between a representative TU and an employer or employers' organisation requiring the employer to deduct an agreed agency fee from the wages of employees identified in the agreement who are not members of the TU but are eligible for membership thereof (South Africa, 1995:19).
- It was also evident that the three unions do not speak in one voice since they do not have same background and agenda. One union (NEHAWU) is more militant in its approach while the other two are more relax because according to the representative of NEHAWU their union executives are also managers. This researcher feels that it is difficult for employees in this institution to achieve their demands via TU because the unions in this institution do not have same background, agenda nor speak in one voice. The lack of cooperation between the unions is an advantage for the management of the institution. Due to the above circumstances, this researcher feels that meaningful employee participation in the institution and Faculty for this study is a “show” and not “real” especially as CB takes place at decentralised or plant level.

3.3 Summary

The labour relation of the public HE institutions of America, Canada and South Africa has some similarities and differences. The similarities are: Firstly, the public HE in each country has an agency shop agreement in place. Secondly, CB between the unions and the management in the public HE in each country takes place at the decentralized or plant level. The differences are: firstly, in Canada and America the law which regulate CB in public HE varies as most states have their own local laws which govern CB in public HE. This is not the case in South Africa. In South Africa the LRA No 66 is the unique law which regulates CB in public HE. Secondly, in America and Canada civil servants including those in public HE are prohibited from striking whereas in South Africa civil servants can strike.

Also worthy of note is the fact that there is lack of cooperation between the unions in the institution under study and unionization is based on racial inclination. This makes it difficult for the demands of the employees to be achieved via a TU. The chapter that follows examines the methodology employed for this research.

Chapter Four

Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with tools and techniques that were employed in this research, as well as the research design, method of sampling, data collection, and data analysis. The suitability of the techniques for this study and tools that were used for this study are also discussed in this chapter.

4.2 Research design

Research design refers to a plan to conduct or carry out a study (Maxwell, 2005:2). Similarly, Kumar (2008:15) defines a research design as a written plan for a study, which communicates the intentions of the researcher. Gupta and Gupta (2011:32) add that a research design is the arrangement of conditions for the collection and analysis of data in a manner that gives relevance to the research purpose. It refers to the approach or all those decisions that a researcher selects or makes to study a particular phenomenon (Creswell, 1998:2, cited in Fouche, 2005:268). Uwe (2007:128) adds that research design is a plan to collect and analyze evidence that will make it possible for the investigator or researcher to answer whatever questions that he or she has posed.

Given the above, the research design of an investigation represents a systematic plan which is prepared for purposes of conducting a research study. It touches almost all aspects of the research, from data collection to selection of the techniques of data analysis.

Qualitative method was used for this research. The reason why qualitative method was employed and the benefits for this study are provided in the next page. The research was qualitative because the researcher conducted face-to-face interviews, as opposed to a questionnaire, which is the main data collection tool in a quantitative study. Corbin and Strauss (1990:17), cited in Hoepfl (1997:2), defines qualitative research as any kind of research that produces findings

which are not arrived at by means of statistical procedure or other means of quantification. Uwe (2007:2) adds that qualitative research involves an interpretative, naturalistic approach to the world. Qualitative research is based on making observations that are summarized and interpreted in a narrative report (Gravetter & Forzano, 2011:158).

The primary distinction between quantitative and qualitative research is the type of data that they produce. Quantitative research produces scores, which are usually numerical values that are submitted to statistical analysis for summary, while the result of qualitative research is a narrative report that is a written discussion of the observations (Gravetter & Forzano, 2011:158).

Qualitative research was employed because according to Allen and Earl (2010:438), it is the appropriate method that must be used if one wants to explore the behaviour of people in their everyday settings, and report their stories as they tell them. Thus, since this study is concerned with employee participation in decisions that affect their daily working life, the qualitative research method was the most appropriate method for the study.

Adopting a qualitative design allowed the researcher to gain more in-depth information that may be difficult to express quantitatively (Hoepfl, 1997:2). Similarly, using a qualitative research permitted the researcher to uncover rich, qualitative, in depth information, as opposed to merely quantifying the problem (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, cited in Ally, 2009:23).

In addition, utilizing a qualitative research design enabled the researcher to understand the broader social, cultural, psychological, economic and political contexts within which the research question is entrenched (McNeill, Robinson, Tolley & Ulin, 2002, cited in Ally, 2009:23). Sharon (2009:15) asserts that qualitative researchers gather data to build concepts, hypotheses, or theories, rather than deductively testing hypotheses, as is the case in quantitative research. Given the above, one can say that qualitative researchers study things in their natural and daily settings in order to make sense of them or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings that people give them.

4.3 Research population and sample

Research population refers to the complete group for which a study is based (Blankenship, Breen & Dutka, 1998:152). In the same regard, Engel and Schutt (2005:103) state that a research population refers to the entire set of individuals to which study findings are generalized.

The population for this study comprised senior lecturers. This was because the researcher's preliminary investigation with some academic staff made this researcher to understand that most of the senior lecturers have worked in the institution for long. Thus, they possess practical experience and expertise that they can use to provide rich and in-depth information to the researcher. A total of 12 of the 30 senior lecturers in the Faculty were interviewed, based on their availability. Through the secretaries of the departments which are under the Faculty for this study, this researcher got to know that the Faculty for this study has 30 senior lecturers. Each secretary gave this researcher the number of senior lecturers under her department. From that, this researcher came up with a total of 30 senior lecturers.

The research was conducted at this institution because this researcher is a student at the institution. This made it easier for the researcher to approach the senior lecturers in the Faculty to obtain information pertaining to this study. The research was conducted at this Faculty because preliminary investigation towards getting information for this study from some academic and Administrative staff in the institution showed that the Faculty for this study is presently the largest Faculty in the institution in terms of student numbers. Thus, this makes the management of the faculty a challenging task.

Gupta and Gupta (2011:41) define sampling as the process of selecting a few (a sample) from the bigger group (the sampling population) to become the basis for estimating or predicting the prevalence of an unknown piece of information, outcome, and situation regarding the bigger group. Similarly, Kuye and Sulaimon (2011:7) state that a sample is a part of the entire population, which is carefully selected to represent that population. Burke and Larry (2012:216) define sampling as the process of studying a subset (called sample) which is selected from a

larger group (called the population) in order to understand the characteristics of the larger group. Hence, one can safely agree with Kuye and Sulaimon (2011:7) who define sampling as a part of the entire population, which is carefully selected to represent that population.

According to Panneerselvam (2004:192), sampling methods can be broadly classified into probability and non-probability sampling. The former is more rigorous and free from biases because each unit of the population has a probability of being selected as a unit of the sample. In terms of the latter, there may be instances that certain units of the population will have zero probability of selection because judgement and convenience of the interviewer are considered to be the criteria for selection of sample units of such sampling.

Denscombe (2007:13) adds that probability sampling is based on the idea that the people that are chosen to be part of the sample are chosen because the researcher has some notion that they will be a representative cross-section of the whole population. Non-probability sampling is conducted without such knowledge about whether those who are included in the sample are representative of the overall population.

Perhaps this is the reason why Hoepfl (1997:3) states that there are no strict criteria for sample size in a qualitative study. Sample size depends on the purpose of the study, what information will be most useful, and what information will have credibility. Judgements about usefulness and credibility are left to the researcher. Patton (2002:244), cited in Delpont and Strydom (2005:328), states that there are no rules for sample size in non-probability or qualitative investigations. Sample size depends on what the researcher wants to know, the purpose of the study, what will have credibility, and what will be useful.

It seems that in probability sampling every unit in the population has an equal chance of inclusion in the sample, while in non-probability sampling inclusion is based on the judgement of the researcher and the availability of the participants.

For this study, a non-probability sampling technique was employed; snowball and convenience samples were used in a single organisation. A snowball sample is a technique where one subject gives the researcher the name of another subject who, in turn, provides the name of the third, and so on (Brewer & Miller, 2003:275). In the same regard, Houser (1998:105) adds that in a snowball or chain sample, the researcher contacts participants and requests them to identify individuals who have knowledge about the topic. Convenience sampling is a sampling technique in which the participants are selected because they are available or easy to find (Grinnell & Unrau, 2011:234).

A snowball sample was used for this research study because the preliminary investigation towards obtaining information for this study proved that some senior lecturers have worked in the institution for long and have more practical knowledge and experience than others. The snowball sample enabled the researcher to interview only the most experienced and knowledgeable senior lecturers. The sample of senior lecturers for this research was done based on their availability. Convenience sample was used in order to save time.

4.4 Research participants

This study focused on senior lecturers at a Faculty in a University of Technology in the Western Cape. The Faculty has 30 senior lecturers, and the researcher interviewed 12 of the 30 senior lecturers in the faculty, based on their availability in order to save time.

4.5 Data collection procedure

Apart from utilizing secondary sources such as research articles, journals and books to obtain theoretical knowledge of the research objectives, the study applied the interview method as the main instrument for the collection of empirical data for the study. Uwe (2007:78) states that interviews are one of the dominant methods in qualitative research. There are various methods to conduct interviews, and depending on the research question and objectives, an appropriate

interviewing technique must be used. To be able to choose an appropriate interviewing technique, an understanding of potentially useful interviewing methods was deemed necessary.

4.5.1 Structured interviews

With regard to structured interviews, the interviewer poses a collection of questions from a previously compiled questionnaire to a respondent face-to-face, and records the latter's responses (Wellman, Kruger, & Mitchell, 2005:165). In a structured interview the researcher basically asks the same set of questions over and over, and these questions are based on a pre-determined set of questions. In the event that the respondent strays from the question, the researcher will guide them back to the topic at hand. According to Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006:125), a structured interview ultimately allows for a greater degree of comparison between interviews, which will make data analysis easier, since all data will be based on the same kind of structure. However, Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006:125) also argue that a qualitative research approach should give the respondent an opportunity to explain their experiences and perspectives about a matter. Therefore, less structure will allow for this to be achieved.

This option would have been too rigid for a qualitative approach for this research. The idea of the interview is to obtain in-depth information; hence, a structured approach would not have allowed the interviewer to adapt questions, depending on the situation in the interview. Furthermore, this research also seeks to obtain peoples' personal experiences of the impact of employee participation in decision making on organisational productivity. A structured form of the interview might hinder this. A structured interview was, therefore, omitted as one of the options to conduct the interviews.

4.5.2 Unstructured interviews

This approach is informal and can be used to explore a general area of interest in an in-depth manner. These are also known as in-depth interviews, and there is no predetermined list of questions to work through, although the researcher should have a clear idea of the aspect that he or she wants to explore (Wellman *et al.*, 2005:165). This is arguably one of the most common types of qualitative interviewing techniques. Since it is unstructured, it gives the respondent an opportunity to give an account of themselves with minimal interruptions. Richards and Morse (2006:113) state that it is more like storytelling and the role of the researcher is to listen and allow the participant to tell his or her story without interruption. Richards and Morse (2006:111) further identify the following as characteristics of unstructured interviews:

- Unstructured interviews have relatively few prepared questions; may be only one or more grand tour questions;
- The researcher listens to and learns from the participant; and
- Unplanned, unanticipated questions may be used; also probes for clarifications.

This approach would have been good for this research, but this researcher believed that conducting an interview without a schedule or guide might have resulted in not asking all the relevant questions that would have achieved the research objectives. The researcher also believed that respondents had to be guided in order to obtain information, which is relevant to the research questions, rather than to allow them to speak randomly. A major advantage of this interview method would have been to use an in-depth, personal and intimate interview approach with the respondents. Hence, this approach was not deemed appropriate for this study.

4.5.3 Semi-structured interviews

In terms of semi-structured interviews, the researcher has a list of themes and questions that should be covered, although these may vary from one interview to another, and interview schedules and guides are used (Wellman *et al.*, 2005:164). Semi-structured interviews allow respondents some freedom to talk about what is of interest or important to them. Therefore, respondents are not totally limited. However, the researcher will have knowledge about the study topic, which allows the researcher to come up with a set of questions, which is arranged in a logical sequence in order to suit the research question. Usually, the interviewer will ask the same questions to all participants, although not necessarily in the same order, whilst supplementing the main questions with either planned or unplanned probes (Richards & Morse, 2006:114). The following are characteristics of semi-structured interviews, as identified by Richards and Morse (2006:111):

- Open-ended questions are developed in advance, along with prepared probes; and
- Unplanned, unanticipated probes may also be used.

This interview approach was the one that was used for this research. This approach is neither too structured nor unstructured. Despite having some sort of structure and pre-determined questions, this approach permitted the researcher to have an in-depth encounter with the respondents by asking them some probing questions, which were not contained in the interview schedule, but were derived during the preliminary investigation to obtain information on the topic. Hence, key data was obtained during the interview sessions. During the interview, some pertinent issues came up which prompted this researcher to ask some probing questions which were not contained in the interview guide in order to better understand some of the respondents. For instance during the interview, most of the respondents made this researcher to understand that there are many platforms in the Faculty through which they can chip in their inputs. This

notwithstanding, to them management rarely implement their inputs. This researcher asked them if the fact that there are many platforms through which they can chip in their inputs make them to be satisfied with their job. It goes without saying that if they are satisfied with their job, they will deliver services of good quality to the students which will improve the productivity of the Faculty (that is produce more graduates).

LeCompe, Shensul and Shensul (1999:149) state that semi-structured interviews consist of pre-determined questions that are related to domains of interest, and are administered to a representative sample of respondents to confirm study domains, variables and items for analysis. The researcher used semi-structured interviews because according to Harre, Langenhove and Smith (1995:12), semi-structured interviews allow for greater flexibility and produce richer data. In the same regard, semi-structured interviews were employed because according to Allen-Ile (2010), semi-structured interviews enable a researcher to gather huge volumes of data because the interviewees fully express their views on each of the questions. Considering that the topic deals with the participation of employees in decisions, which affect their daily working life and the impact that such participation (be it direct or indirect) may have on their daily productivity, semi-structured interviews were seen as the best instrument to use in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the topic.

4.6 Interview design

Semi structured interviews, as mentioned in the previous section, were used to obtain information from the targeted population. Respondents for the interviews were initially contacted face-to-face and given an informed consent letter which spells out the purpose of this study. The main aim of the interviews was to obtain empirical data on the impact of employee participation in decision making on the Faculty's productivity.

For the purpose of this study, the interviews were tape-recorded and notes were taken in some cases. This was done with the consent of the respondents. Blaxter *et al.* (1998) and Marshall and Rossman (2006), cited in Ally (2009:25), tape-recording is a most efficient and effective method, as it enables the researcher to focus his/her attention on the participants rather than by note taking, which can be distracting. However, recording the interview may make participants reluctant to disclose contentious issues (Ally, 2009:25). Hence, the researcher decided to take notes in cases where a participant was not comfortable with tape-recording.

The interview guide for this study comprised twelve questions which addressed points of interest for the study. The twelve questions were further categorised into five themes in order to help the researcher achieve the objectives of the study. In order to achieve the study objectives, the twelve questions contained in the interview guide were derived from the theoretical studies on the topic. According to Panneerselvam (2004:196), the validity and reliability of questions contained in an interview schedule largely depends on theoretical studies of the topic under investigation, and the views of the research participants. Hence, the validity and reliability of the twelve questions contained in the interview guide for this study were based on the theoretical studies on the topic and from information that was obtained from the respondents at the Faculty for this study during the interview. The interview questions are attached as Appendix A.

4.7 Procedure

A request to conduct this study at the site was forwarded to the Ethics Committee (Appendix B). Authorization was obtained from the Ethics Committee for access to the site (Appendix C). The interview was conducted in January 2012. Prior to the interview, face to face appointments were made with each participant in advance. The interview was conducted in the office of the respondents. The interviews were conducted for 30-45 minutes. Each respondent was given an informed consent letter prior to the interview (Appendix D). None of the respondents signed the informed consent letter. The respondents just read the letter and appointments were made for the interview. Acceptance to take part in the study was done verbally.

4.8 Data analysis

According to Hoepfl (1997:6), data analysis is the process of “working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable pieces, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what to tell others”. Data that was collected from the interviews were transcribed verbatim, and pseudonyms were used to protect the anonymity of the participants. The data was reviewed immediately after collection to ensure that important inferences were easily remembered.

The data for this study were analyzed using themes. The two steps below help this researcher greatly to understand and analyze the huge data that was collected: the first step involved reviewing the data, which involved playing and re-playing the tape recorder and making notes. The notes were read and re-read in order to gain a general understanding of the content, and also to identify themes. In the course of reviewing, comprehensive notes were made. For those not recorded the notes that were taken were read thoroughly to gain a proper understanding of the content. The second step comprised organizing the data in order to be familiar with the content and to make the data more manageable and easy to navigate.

4.9 Ethical consideration

Due to the sensitive nature of the topic, anonymity of respondents was strictly assured and assumed names were used during data analysis and report writing. The data that was collected from the study was not disclosed to anyone and was only available to the researcher. Informed consent was obtained from all participants verbally, while authorization was obtained from the Ethics Commission to conduct the study at the institution and Faculty. Participation in this study was on a voluntary basis, and participants were free to withdraw from the study whenever they wished, without reprehension by the researcher.

4.10 Summary

This chapter outlined the approach in which the research was conducted. For this study, qualitative methodology was used and semi-structured interviews were conducted. Snowball and convenience sampling, comprising 12 participants, were employed in a single organisation. The data that was collected was analyzed qualitatively by using thematic analysis. The chapter also presented the delimitations and scope of the study. The next chapter presents an interpretation and in-depth analysis of the data that was collected for this study.

Chapter Five

Data Analysis and Results

5.1 Introduction

As mentioned in the previous chapter, this study used qualitative research because the researcher employed personal in-depth semi-structured interviews as the main tool for the collection of empirical data, as opposed to a questionnaire, which is the main tool that is used to collect data in a quantitative study. An interview guide containing twelve questions was used to collect data from respondents who were senior lecturers in a Faculty at a University of Technology in the Western Cape. All the questions for the interview were derived from theoretical studies on the topic. The researcher obtained rich and profound information from the research participants by way of personal in-depth semi-structured interviews. A huge amount of information was obtained from the research participants, and the main aim of this chapter is to present data that was collected from the personal in-depth semi-structured interviews. The data is presented and analyzed qualitatively by using themes. Five themes were formulated from the thirteen questions that were contained in the interview schedule. These themes are presented and analyzed below.

5.2 Trade unions as vehicles for employee participation (Theme 1)

Theoretical study shows that collective bargaining (CB) between trade unions TU(s) and employers' associations constitutes the most used form of employee participation in South Africa's industrial relations. The aims of this theme are to ascertain, how long the respondents have been working with the institution; whether they belong to a union; and why they joined trade union (TU). The duration that participants have been with the institution and the reasons for joining a TU would help the researcher to determine the number of years that the participants

have been working with the institution, and why CB is the most used form of employee participation in the Faculty. The responses to this theme shaped the interviews.

5.2.1 Duration with the institution

From the twelve interviews that were conducted, the responses regarding the number of years that the respondents have been working with the institution varied. Five of the respondents have been working with the institution for more than two decades.

P1: "I have been a lecturer since the year 1985, senior lecturer since 1988, and a Head of Department since 1995".

P3: "This is my 27th year. I have been working 27 years with the institution".

Two participants indicated that they have been working with the institution for more than one decade.

P2: "I am now in my 16th year".

Five participants indicated that they have been working with the institution for less than 1 decade.

P12: "I have been here for almost five years now".

It is evident that most of the research participants have been working with the institution for quite a long period of time. This made it possible for them to provide the researcher with rich

and in-depth information regarding why they decided to join a TU, as opposed to any other form of employee participation.

5.2.2 Reasons for joining a trade union.

Eleven of the twelve participants that were interviewed belong to a TU. Most of the participants stated that they joined a TU primarily because the union can represent them by collectively bargaining with management over wage increases and improvement of their working conditions.

P9: “... there are hundreds of reasons that make one to join a trade union, but the basic one is representation of employees by collectively bargaining with management over wage increases and improvement of working conditions”.

P6: “Trade unions negotiate increases of employees’ salaries and improvement of working conditions. That is the main benefit”.

P8: “... trade unions are famous for pay increase...”.

From the above responses, one can agree with Bendix (2010:720) who states that employee participation is a process, which recognizes the rights of employees directly and indirectly in engagement with management in areas of organisational decision making, as it has been practised in Europe, and is not prevalent in SA. TU(s) are, as in the past, still concerned mainly with its CB function, which consists of wage increases and improvement of working conditions, rather than promoting direct participative practices (Bendix, 2010:720).

Two of the participants who belong to a TU said that besides wage increases and improvement of working conditions, they joined a TU because in the institution, there is a closed-shop agreement. This notwithstanding, as mentioned in chapter 3, the institution for this study has an “agency shop collective agreement” and not a closed-shop collective agreement. An agency shop

collective agreement is a collective agreement between a representative TU and an employer or employers' organisation requiring the employer to deduct an agreed agency fee from the wages of employees identified in the agreement who are not members of the TU but are eligible for membership thereof (South Africa, 1995:19).

P3: "In this place there is a closed-shop agreement. That means you do not have a choice. You must belong to a union".

P6: "I have always been a member of a union since I joined the institution".

One of the participants who is a member of a TU is not actually in favour of TU(s) in the institution.

P10: "Actually in principle I am not very much in favour of unions in a tertiary environment.... So I am actually personally not very much in favour of unions in this environment. I think it is not necessary, there could be other forums...".

Overall, the results suggest that all the respondents joined a TU basically because they want the union to represent them by collectively bargaining with management over wage increases and working conditions. These findings corroborate Bendix's (2010:720) assertion that employee participation, as has been practised in Europe, has not been prevalent in SA. TU(s) are as was the case in the past still mainly concerned with CB function, which mostly involves wage increases and improvement of working conditions, rather than promoting direct participative practices.

5.3 Role of management style on employees' performance (Theme 2)

The aim of this theme was to investigate whether the management style of the Faculty for this study is autocratic or democratic, and also to determine what role the management style plays on employees' performance.

5.3.1 Management style

All twelve participants demonstrated a good understanding of the meaning of management style. Eight of the participants seemed comfortable with the management style, which they regard as democratic, inclusive and participative.

P2: *“The management style of the ... Faculty is very democratic. Sometimes, I feel too democratic as opposed to autocratic... if someone should say that we have no opportunity to put our point of view then that person is some where lost...”*

P3: *“... I am very comfortable to say that it is very democratic. The Dean heading up the Faculty gives us opportunity to participate in things... it is very participative, gives you opportunity to have your say and to make contributions. It is not I tell you what to do and you must do; don't query...”*

P4: *“I think this being an academic institution; it is much more of a democratic management whereby every member of staff is given a right to have a say. Ultimately the decisions are made from above, but there is democracy, there is voting on issues”*

Three of the participants indicated that it is difficult for them to voice an opinion on the management style, because the current Dean of the Faculty is new, and has not been at the institution for long. According to them, he must be given a fair chance for his management style to play out.

P9: "... the new style, I don't know. It is not yet established under the new Dean. So I can't say much about that".

P10: "... at the moment it is difficult to say because the new Dean has not been here for long. So it is difficult to voice an opinion".

One of the participants was not totally in support of the view that the management style of the Faculty is inclusive or participative.

P8: "... he is opened and willing... he makes us believe that it is inclusive, but it is not really. However, I feel it is because he is extremely too inexperienced. However, he is got time still to proof himself".

Since eight of the twelve participants that were interviewed were of the view that the management style of the Faculty is more democratic, participative, and inclusive as opposed to autocratic, one can, therefore safely state that the management style of the Faculty is a democratic and participative one.

5.3.2 Role of management style on employee performance

Nine of the participants indicated that the management style of the Faculty has a positive impact on their performance.

P2: "Oh as an individual, it gives me a lot of motivation..."

I often feel that the pressure is on me to perform... ”.

P4: “I think is a fairly good way of managing because it gives me a say. I feel like my views are valued, and so my performance is improving... ”.

P11: “... it affects my performance positively because when you participate in decisions; you will be in the position to own it and so when you own it, you can implement it... ”.

One of the participants indicated that the management style affects performance negatively, as well as positively.

P12: “... it is difficult I can say to you that it affects it only positively or only negatively. There are certain aspects that it affects negatively in the sense that I feel there is often a lack of structure and in terms of my performance, it makes it difficult for me to move forward and often you are stuck because you are not sure which direction to go because the direction is still up for debate. On the positive note, from a sort of relationship perspective, in terms of my relationship with my colleagues and things, that is improved and that improves my performance because I am getting a lot more Inputs from people, I feel freer to give my own inputs at meetings. There is a lot more debate, I think we are being more creative and more innovative in the faculty. There are a lot of new things, and changes. So from that perspective, I think it definitely improves performance... ”.

One of the participants said that it is difficult to voice an opinion on the role of management style on employees' performance, because according to this participant, the current Dean who heads the Faculty is new, and has not been with the institution for long.

P10: *“... at the moment it is difficult to say because the new Dean has not been here for long. So it is difficult to voice an opinion...”*

Management style did not appear to be a factor, which impacts the performance of one of the respondent.

P8: *“... in terms of my teaching and learning, I don't think any type of management style will change the way I do my work... I do get annoyed and frustrated at times, but there is a bigger picture. The bigger picture for me always is the students and the institution”*.

It is evident from the above responses that most of the participants believe that the democratic management style of the Faculty has a positive impact on their performance.

5.4. Respondents' understanding of employee participation (Theme 3)

At first sight, it seems that the concept of employee participation is a concept which is generally understood. Do employees have the same understanding of this concept? And how does the institution and Faculty for this study translate the notion of employee participation into practice? To answer these questions, the researcher probed the respondents' understanding of employee participation and whether they participate in decisions that affect their working life.

All twelve respondents demonstrated a good understanding of the concept of employee participation.

P9: *“Employee participation... I think how I understand it, is to be in a position to make all decisions regarding your own work situation, that means that no one is prescribing*

you what to do and how to do it... ”.

P4: “It means giving a voice to employees to influence what affects them. It means having your views respected as an employee, as a key stakeholder within the organisation”.

P10: “...in principle I will say it probably means that people’s inputs are requested and opinions are obtained when decisions are made...”.

P11: “It is a scenario where employees will also be involved in decision making process. So it becomes easier for them to own the decisions and implement them”.

P1: “Employee participation to me does not necessarily mean that the employee does take the decision, because the employee is not mandated to make the decision. However, I think it is absolutely important that the employee is given the necessary opportunities to give inputs towards the decision... to me I understand on that maximum inputs but not necessarily the decision itself...”.

It can be deduced that the research participants’ understanding of employee participation differs. However, the bottom line to all of them was that employee participation means that management should consult with employees in order to get their inputs before making a final decision.

The above findings are in line with the definition of employee participation propounded by Sonia Bendix. She defines employee participation as a concept, which emphasizes the need for cooperation between employer and employee, and for employees to share in the decision making processes of management (Bendix, 2001:652).

5.4.1 Respondents' participation in decisions that affect their working life

All of the respondents stated that they participate in decisions that affect their working life. They believe that this is because the new Dean of the Faculty is transparent and democratic.

P9: *“Very much, I think there are lots of opportunities in our work environment. Here at ... this faculty, I personally experience a lot of opportunities for me to make decisions that are affecting me, my workplace, my work station, my office, but that is naturally of this job. If you are in the academic world in South Africa, let's say in the western world, you will experience a lot of freedom. It is just the norm that the academic must live with this responsibility that the decisions that he is making is of such that the ordinary man will make same decisions in the same circumstances. So it is not expecting from you to make extra-ordinary decisions that is making life difficult for people around you. You have to make decisions that is contributing to a better life for everybody”.*

P8: *“... in a way we do...to a large extent, yes...”.*

P4: *“Yes I do participate.... I proposed a lot of things and put them forward at the Faculty Management Meetings. I also agree and disagree with things in a way that favour my position”*

It is evident that there are more than enough platforms through which participants participate in decisions which affect their working life. This is line with the principle of academic freedom which is just the norm in HE. The humble recommendation of this researcher is that management should maintain these the above platforms.

5.5 Impact of employee participation on productivity (Theme 4)

The aim of this theme was to investigate if employee participation in decision making has any impact on productivity. To achieve this objective, the researcher used effectiveness and efficiency, which constitute measures of productivity.

5.5.1 Impact of employee participation on effectiveness

Eleven of the twelve participants who were interviewed believed that if employees are given the chance to participate in decision making, it will have a positive impact on effectiveness.

P1: "I will say very, very, very, positively employee participation is always beneficial or has the potential of being beneficial most of the time.... When you have employees participating and the decision is implemented, they work because they were part of the decision... is not you decide as the manager.... Employee participation can speed up problem identification... as a result effectiveness will improve...".

P12: "Yes... firstly, I think the decision making will be better, things will become more creative and more innovative if people are given a chance to participate in decision making because I think a lot of the time very important view points and ideas are neglected because people aren't included. So I think from that point of view, I think the product that we deliver to our students as the clients will be enhanced. And secondly, I think from a personal point of view, people will feel like they belong, and I think their commitment to the organisation will improve because they will feel like they have been heard and even if the participation does not have a direct impact on performance

in the long run it will because people are going to be more committed to the institution, proud of the institution, more satisfied in their work because they feel like they are heard. So for those reasons, I definitely think that participation will increase performance of staff ...”.

P4: “It does affect because an employee is the one who implements. So you need their buy-in to be able to implement. Without a buy-in they can sabotage any thing to be implemented...”.

One of the participants did not totally agree that employee participation in decision making has a positive impact on effectiveness. For this participant, employee participation may affect effectiveness positively or negatively.

P10: “Well the thing is that, it could be a two edge of sword. And I think it will depend on the attitude of management whether they are proactive or reactive...”.

One can safely state that employee participation has a positive impact on effectiveness. This is because eleven of the twelve participants indicated that employee participation in decision making has a positive impact on effectiveness.

5.5.2 Impact of employee participation on efficiency

Ten of the twelve participants stated that employee participation has a positive impact on efficiency.

P4: “It does affect because if an employee participate in decision making, then the employee will be able to participate in the implementation of whatever is put in place. They become motivated and they become more efficient...”.

P9: *“Very much so, very much so with the condition that the employees see and feel that their decisions have an impact. They will try to become more involve in decision making, but if they see that their decisions are going no where, they will withhold their decisions. So if you give them the opportunity, make sure there are results”.*

One of the participants stated that employee participation in decision making can only have a positive impact on efficiency if it is managed well.

P10: *“... is very difficult to say in general.... I think if it is managed well, and people feel that their voices are heard, I think it would definitely improve people’s motivation level and the attitude towards the workplace...”.*

One of the participants stated that employee participation in decision making has a negative impact on efficiency.

P12: *“... I think that participation can actually decrease efficiency in the sense that it takes longer to get things done when you get people to participate...”.*

Hence, one can deduce that employee participation has a positive impact on efficiency. This is because ten of the twelve participants that were interviewed believed that employee participation in decision making can increase efficiency. These findings are in line with the views of Klerck (1999:21) who states that employee participation in decision making increases the efficiency of an organisation owing to an increase in the flow of information, and an increase in organisational efficiency, which signifies an increase in its productivity.

5.5.3 Impact of employee participation on productivity

Ten of the research participants agreed that employee participation in decision making has a positive impact on productivity. Their responses are shown below.

P4: *“It does because a motivated employee would be one who would be willing to produce more...”*.

P5: *“Yes, definitely if employees in today’s times feel that they are forced to do unpopular things, and they have no choice in which option they get, then they are definitely, I think unproductive, unhappy people are not productive...”*.

P9: *“Yes I fully agree with that...”*.

One of the participants state that there are no guarantees that if employees are given the chance to participate in decision making, it will affect productivity positively, but the possibilities are high that it will increase productivity.

P2: *“... there are no guarantees, but the possibilities are high...”*.

One of the participants indicated that employee participation in decision making can affect productivity negatively if it is not managed well.

P10: *“... is a two edge of sword. It depends how it is managed.... It could affect it negatively if it is not managed well, but it would not necessarily affect it positively if it is there”*.

Hence, one can deduce that if employees are given an opportunity to participate in decision making, it will affect effectiveness, efficiency and productivity positively. These findings are in line with research, which was conducted by Defourney, Estrin and Jones (1985:198). In their

study they found that corporate productivity is, in general, positively related to measures of workers' participation.

These findings corroborate the views of Klerck (1999:21) who asserts that employee participation in decision making increases the efficiency of an organisation owing to an increase in the flow of information, and an increase in organisational efficiency, which signifies an increase in its productivity. Similarly, Bjorne and Torunn (2006:139) point out that employee participation in decision making significantly influences organisational productivity.

5.6 Enablers of employee participation (Theme 5)

The aims of this theme were to examine the platforms through which employees in the Faculty can voice their opinion and also to ascertain whether through the platforms, employees effectively participate in decision making. The responses are shown below.

5.6.1 Mechanisms aimed at promoting employee participation

Most of the research participants stated that, in the Faculty for this study, there are forums or platforms through which employees can participate in decision making. These include: Emails, Questionnaires, One-on-One or Face-to-Face Meetings, Subject Committee Meetings, Teaching and Learning Committee Meetings, Research Committee Meetings, Departmental Meetings, Faculty Board Meetings and Senate.

P10: "Well there are Forums where staff can raise issues. They can raise issues in departmental meetings, they can raise issues at the Faculty Board. Whether or not that will be acted upon or taken into consideration is hard to tell. Other than that, I am not really aware of anything... in the faculty specifically".

P5: "There are not really mechanisms per se, but the

organisational set up is such that it allows... no mechanisms of that nature, every now and then there can be ad hoc meetings which are need driven... in terms of something that we have created, you need to tell me about it. I am not aware of anything like that... ”.

P6: “... we have various forums. We have on the department side, we need to have regular departmental meetings, if you are part of a committee, we have teaching and learning committees, we have research committees. You are able to voice your opinion in these committees. And we also have faculty board meeting that we have once a term and where certain issues can be raised and certain decisions have to be made. So there are sufficient opportunities for people to voice their opinions through departmental meetings, through open door policies... through committee meetings and through the faculty board”.

P9: “... if you just look at the system, you have subject committees, for instance that is the beginning for decision making concerning your work.... Departmental meetings, faculty board meetings which is normally at the end of every term... ”.

P7: “... we do participate through one on one meeting with the management at different level. We do use communications, emails, face to face meetings, departmental meetings, faculty board... ”.

It seems the Faculty for this study has more than enough platforms or opportunities through which employees can voice their opinions or participate. The big question is how effective are these platforms or opportunities in promoting employee participation?

5.6.2 Effectiveness of platforms

According to the respondents, there are more than enough opportunities or platforms in the Faculty through which they can chip in their inputs. The question is how effective are these opportunities or platforms in promoting employee participation in decision making? In other words, does management translate their inputs into practice? In terms of this question, most of the respondents indicated that these platforms are not effective because most of the time the inputs of employees are ignored by management.

P8: *“... no in that aspect there is nothing.... But we have departmental meetings, faculty board meetings, but that is the theory, in practice comments and suggestions you make nine times out of ten times are not implemented or are ignored...”*

P12: *“... the measures are there in place, but I don't know always if they work the way they were intended to work, because of a variety of reasons.... They are effective in a Perfect world, but we don't live in a perfect world. So I don't believe they are effective as they could be...”*

P9: *“That is the most difficult one to answer. Some of them are effective, some of them are not effective for the pure reason that the people who are in charge of carrying out decisions lax in things.... Decisions are not carried out in practice.... I think that is lacking in this organisation...”*

Despite the existence of platforms and opportunities where employees can participate in decision making, it seems that most of the time management does not translate their inputs into practice. This is the reason why the respondents feel that these platforms are not effective.

5.7 Summary

This chapter presented an analysis of the data and an interpretation of the results of the research study. It is evident from this chapter that TU(s) in the institution for this study are still mainly concerned with CB functions, which consist of negotiation over the improvement of employees' wages and working conditions, rather than promoting direct participative practices. This is because the respondents stated that they joined a TU so that the union can collectively bargain with management over wages and working conditions.

Also worthy of note is the fact that the management style has a positive impact on employees' performance. It is also evident that employee participation has a positive impact on the Faculty's effectiveness, efficiency, and productivity.

Furthermore, the Faculty for this study has opportunities or platforms where its employees can voice their opinions. However, these platforms or opportunities, according to most of the respondents, are not effective because management in most cases does not translate the suggestions, inputs, and opinions of employees into practice. The next and final chapter presents a discussion and recommendations for future studies, based on the research findings.

CHAPTER SIX

Discussion, Recommendations and Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to determine the impact of employee participation on the productivity of a Faculty in a University of Technology in the Western Cape. This chapter presents a discussion of the research findings, and aligns them to the objectives of the study.

As afore mentioned, this study was qualitative in nature because the researcher used personal in-depth semi-structured interviews as the main tool to collect empirical data, as opposed to questionnaires, which are the main tools that are used to collect empirical data in a quantitative study. The data that was collected was analyzed qualitatively using themes.

Employee participation may be beneficial for public HE institutions for three main reasons: political, social and economical. Politically, it is vital because engaging the employees in decision making is an extension of the principle of democracy in the workplace through which employees can exercise greater influence over decisions which affect their lives at work. Socially, employee participation can improve service delivery, job satisfaction, commitment and labour relations. Economically, cooperation is seen as bringing about greater commitment, performance and motivation on the part of employees which will result in higher productivity (graduates).

It is worth mentioning that in any HE institution, the students (inputs) are the product-in-process. They are the raw material or inputs when admitted in the institution and finished product when they graduate. The transformation of the inputs (students) into outputs (graduates) is done by the teaching staff through teaching, learning and research. This therefore means that in the context of HE, the graduates constitute the productivity.

6.2 Impact of employee participation on the Faculty's productivity

The researcher's measures of the Faculty's productivity were effectiveness and efficiency. For this section of the study, this researcher asked the respondents questions relating to the impact of employee participation on their effectiveness, efficiency and productivity.

6.2.1 Impact of employee participation on effectiveness

6.2.1.1 Responses obtained from face-to-face interviews

Results, which relate to the impact of employee participation on the respondents' effectiveness were obtained, and these are shown below.

Most of the respondents for this study believed that if employees are given a chance to participate in decision making, it will make them to deliver effective services to the students. Below are some of the responses:

“ I will say very, very, very, positively employee participation is always beneficial or has the potential of being beneficial most of the time.... When you have employees participating and the decision is implemented, they work because they were part of the decision... is not you decided as the manager.... Employee participation can speed up problem identification... as a result effectiveness will improve... ”.

“Yes... firstly, I think the decision making will be better, things will become more creative and more innovative if people are given a chance to participate in decision making because I think a lot of the time very important view points and ideas are neglected because people aren't included. So I think from that point of view, I think the

product that we deliver to our students as the clients will be enhanced. And secondly, I think from a personal point of view, people will feel like they belong, and I think their commitment to the organisation will improve because they will feel like they have been heard and even if the participation does not have a direct impact on performance in the long run it will because people are going to be more committed to the institution, proud of the institution, more satisfied in their work because they feel like they are heard. So for those reasons, I definitely think that participation will increase performance of staff ...”.

“It does affect because an employee is the one who implements. So you need their buy in to be able to implement. Without a buy in they can sabotage any thing to be implemented...”.

When employees in HE are given a chance to participate in the decision-making process, it makes them feel that they are part and parcel of the institution. This increases their commitment to the institution and makes them more effective in the way that they perform their tasks. Employees will even become more effective in the way that they do their work if management actually implements their inputs practically. A high number of positive responses indicated that employee participation will make the respondents to deliver effective services to the students of the Faculty. This will improve the effectiveness of the Faculty for this study.

The next question related to the impact of employee participation on efficiency.

6.2.2 Impact of employee participation on efficiency

6.2.2.1 Responses obtained from face-to-face interviews

Results, which relate to the impact of employee participation on efficiency, were obtained and these are shown below.

Ten of the twelve respondents stated that employee participation makes them to be efficient. Below are the responses of some of the participants:

“It does affect because if an employee participates in decision making, then the employee will be able to participate in the implementation of whatever is put in place. They become motivated and they become more efficient...”

“Very much so, very much so with the condition that the employees see and feel that their decisions have an impact. They will try to become more involve in decision making, but if they see that their decisions are going no where, they will withhold their decisions. So if you give them the opportunity, make sure there are results”

As is evident, a high number of positive responses (ten of the twelve respondents) indicated that employee participation makes them efficient. Since most of the respondents stated that employee participation makes them effective and efficient, one can, therefore, state that employee participation has a positive impact on the Faculty’s productivity. This is because, as mentioned earlier, the measures used to measure the productivity of the Faculty for this study were effectiveness and efficiency.

The last question in this section was posed to confirm the overall results, and to determine whether employee participation has any impact on productivity. The responses are shown below.

Ten of the respondents agreed that employee participation in decision making has a positive impact on productivity.

“ It does because a motivated employee would be one who would be willing to produce more...”

“Yes, definitely if employees in today’s times feel that they are forced to do unpopular things, and they have no choice in which option they get, then they are definitely, I think unproductive, unhappy people are not productive...”

“Yes I fully agree with that...”

These positive responses are indications that employee participation has a positive impact on the Faculty’s productivity.

6.2.3 Recommendation

It is evident that almost all of the respondents believe that employee participation has a positive impact on the Faculty’s effectiveness, efficiency, and productivity. This researcher therefore recommends that the management of the Faculty should continue to allow employees to participate in the decision-making process. This as can be deduced from the responses of the respondents will make them to render services of good quality to the students. Rendering services of good quality to the students will have a positive impact on the effectiveness, efficiency and productivity of the Faculty.

6.3 Enablers of employee participation

The respondents stated that there are more than enough platforms or forums in the institution and Faculty where employees can voice their opinions. However, the respondents stated that the problem they have is that management most of the time ignores their inputs. In order to get a balanced view, this researcher interviewed the Manager of the Faculty for this study to get management’s opinion. The Faculty Manager stated that in the Faculty, the rule or norm is that of academic freedom. That is, employees are free to make decisions. This notwithstanding, the management of the Faculty sometimes used its prerogatives in the form of “Executive Ruling” to

decide on certain issues under debate for the interest of the Faculty. Perhaps it is in cases where management decides on issues under debate using its prerogatives (executive ruling) that made most of the respondents to state that management most of the time ignores their inputs.

6.3.1 Responses obtained from face-to-face interviews

The results for this variable showed the highest negative responses throughout the personal in-depth semi-structured interviews. Most of the respondents stated that there are forums, platforms and opportunities in the Faculty where employees can contribute their inputs. These include: Emails, Questionnaires, One on One or Face to Face Meetings, Subject Committee Meetings, Teaching and Learning Committee Meetings, Research Committee Meetings, Departmental Meetings, Faculty Board Meetings and Senate.

“Well there are forums where staff can raise issues. They can raise issues in Departmental Meetings, they can raise issues at the Faculty Board Meeting. Whether or not that will be acted upon or taken into consideration is hard to tell. Other than that, I am not really aware of anything... in the faculty specifically”.

Most of the participants indicated that these opportunities are not effective because most of the time their inputs are ignored by management.

“... no in that aspect there is nothing.... But we have Departmental Meetings, Faculty Board Meetings, but that is the theory, in practice comments and suggestions you make nine times out of ten times are not implemented or are ignored...”.

“... the measures are there in place, but I don't know always if they work the way they were intended to work, because of a variety of reasons.... They are effective in a

Perfect world, but we don't live in a perfect world. So I don't believe they are effective as they could be... ”.

“That is the most difficult one to answer. Some of them are effective, some of them are not effective for the pure reason that the people who are in charge of carrying out decisions lax in things.... Decisions are not carried out in practice.... I think that is lacking in this organisation... ”.

It is evident that there are more than enough platforms in the Faculty through which employees can voice their opinion. However, the respondents stated that the problem they have is that management most of time ignores their inputs. In order to get a balanced view, this researcher interviewed the Manager of the Faculty for this study to get management's opinion. The Faculty Manager stated that in the Faculty, the rule or norm is that of academic freedom. That is, employees are free to make decisions. This notwithstanding, the management of the Faculty sometimes use “Executive Ruling” to decide on certain issues under debate for the interest of the Faculty. Perhaps it is in cases where management decides on issues under debate using its prerogatives (executive ruling) that made most of the respondents to state that management most of the time ignore their inputs. All in all, one can say that the Faculty has more than enough platforms through which employees can voice their opinion.

6.3.2 Recommendations

In order for there to be any meaningful employee participation, management should most of time endeavour to translate the opinions of the employees into practice. If employees see that their inputs are not taken seriously, they will become discouraged and will look at the decision making process as a management affair.

For employee participation to be effective, it should emerge from the core of management. Management should really become committed and participative, and should depart from fears of losing its managerial prerogatives.

6.4 The effect of adversarial attitude on meaningful employee participation

Adversarial relationship between the TU(s) in the institution for this study greatly hinders any meaningful employee participation. The unions in the institution for this study do not cooperate, do not have same agenda nor speak in one voice and the situation is compounded by the fact that unionization in the institution is based on racial inclination. As afore mentioned, there is one union for the coloreds, one for the whites and the other for the blacks who are those from the unprivileged group (NEHAWU). One can therefore understand why NEHAWU is more militant in its approach than the other two unions in the institution. This makes it difficult for the employees to achieve their demands via a TU. This is particularly true because CB in this institution takes place at plant or decentralised level. The adversarial relationship between the unions works for the advantage of management. The response of the representative of NEHAWU speaks for itself: “It is a pity that in this institution, the need for change is a black thing because they were the suppressed”. There is therefore no solidarity between the unions since one of the unions is more militant while the others are reluctant. One can deduced that, the relationship between the unions is therefore conflictual and adversarial. There is therefore no doubt that under such circumstances, there can not be any meaningful employee participation.

6.4.1 Recommendation

The humble recommendation of this researcher is that the unions in this institution should endeavour to speak in one voice especially as CB between the TU(s) in this institution and management takes place at decentralised level. If they do, perhaps it will help promote meaningful employee participation and could make management of the institution to take their demands seriously.

6.5 CB as the dominant form of employee participation

As mentioned above, the adversarial relationship between the TU(s) in the institution for this study greatly hinders any meaningful employee participation. While one of the unions is pressing for change, the other unions are reluctant and comfortable with CB functions, which consist of negotiations over working conditions and wage increases rather than promoting direct participative practice. This certainly is because these two TU(s) perceive direct participative practices as an attempt to dilute managerial prerogatives. This to the humble opinion of this researcher could be the main reason why CB is the dominant form employee participation in the Faculty and institution.

6.5.1 Recommendation

The TU(s) in the institution for this study should cooperate and engage more in promoting meaningful participative practices, especially direct participative practices rather than be exclusively concerned with CB functions, which mainly comprise negotiations over working conditions and wage increases. If this is done, meaningful employee participation will hopefully become prevalent in the Faculty, and will mature in this regard.

6.6 Reasons why employee participation is still in its infancy in the Faculty

Three major factors account for the slow development of employee participation in the Faculty for this study, namely:

- Lack of management commitment in the process. This is as a result of fear on the part of management to lose its managerial prerogatives and control over the Faculty;
- Lack of Trade Union support. This is because TU(s) do not speak in one voice and unionization is based on racial inclination. Perhaps one of the reasons for lack of cooperation

between the unions in the institution is that some unions are distrustful of any participative structures, and perceive them as an attempt to dilute the powers of management; and

- Lack of commitment on the part of the employees. This is because the employees see no commitment on the part of management and TU(s).

6.6.1 Responses obtained from face-to-face interviews

“... participation in my view should also come out of the heart of management... to me the way to address the issue is to change the heart of management. That management really becomes participative”

“... in practice comments and suggestions you make nine times out of ten times are not implemented or are ignored...”.

“... there are hundreds of reasons that make one to join a trade union, but the basic one is representation of employees by collectively bargaining with management over wage increases and improvement of working conditions”.

6.6.2 Recommendations

From the foregoing, the humble recommendations of this researcher are that Management should indeed be more participative and depart from the notion of managerial prerogative.

Trade unions should, as a matter of urgency, engage more to promote direct participative practices, rather than be exclusively concerned with CB functions, which mainly comprise negotiations over working conditions and wage increases. If this is done, the employees will be committed to the process and meaningful employee participation will hopefully become prevalent in the Faculty and will mature in this regard.

6.7 Delimitations and challenges

Reasons for the site, choice and limited number of participants for this study were explained in Chapters One and Four. The study focused on senior lecturers, and 12 of the 30 senior lecturers in a Faculty were interviewed based on their availability. The findings of this study can, therefore, not be generalized across all the lecturers in the Faculty for this study and across all the faculties in the institution.

This study only focused on employee participation in decision making. It did not examine employee participation in the financial affairs of the Faculty.

The main challenge, which was experienced, was that of time-frame. This was because the senior lecturers had a busy work schedule, and some were even hard to find on campus at times. This made it difficult for some of them to create time out from their busy schedule in order to participate in this research. Notwithstanding, the researcher managed to interview those who were available in order to save time.

6.8 Suggestions for future research

It is recommended that future research should address the following:

- All academic staff, should be included in future studies, namely: senior lecturers, lecturers, junior lecturers and even part-time lecturers in the Faculty; and
- Future research should examine the impact of employees' financial participation on the institution's productivity.

6.9 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to investigate whether employee participation in decision making has any impact on the productivity of a Faculty in a University of Technology in the Western Cape, South Africa. Broadly speaking, employee participation is the totality of forms, that is direct (personal or by the employees) or indirect (through the employees' representatives) by which individuals, groups, collectives secure their interests or contribute to the decision making process.

Employee participation has often been heralded as a solution, if not the panacea, for low institutional effectiveness, efficiency and productivity. The findings of this study strongly corroborate this assertion. The findings showed that employee participation in decision making has a positive impact on the effectiveness, efficiency and productivity of a Faculty in a HE institution. Institutional productivity is a basic goal of management in today's public HE environment. This is because higher productivity (graduates) in any public HE will attract new students. The primary objective of any public HE institution is to deliver services of good quality so as to produce more graduates (productivity).

It is evident from this study that CB is an indirect form of employee participation in decision making. This is because CB is the vehicle which is used by employees' representatives (TUs) to regulate workplace behaviours, production, wages and substantive conditions of employment through the process of negotiation between TU(s) and the employers' representatives (Anstey, 1997:4).

The South African government has made modest efforts to promote meaningful employee participation in decision making in South African workplaces by introducing WPF(s) in the LRA. However, the WPF system is in need of review. Policy makers in SA should, as a matter of urgency, review the requirement that a representative TU must trigger the establishment of a WPF, especially if one should consider the experience of other countries such as Germany and the Netherlands. In the workplaces of these countries, works councils, which are the equivalent

of the SA WPF system, are triggered by employees in the workplace concerned and not the TU(s).

The dilemma in the institution for this study with regard to employee participation is that the TU(s) do not speak in one voice. Due to the adversarial and conflictual relationship between the TU(s) in the institution, there can not be any meaningful and effective employee participation in decision making. The SA WPF(s) system can constitute meaningful and effective avenues of employee engagement, if properly handled. The success of the SA WPF system depends hugely on a change of attitude by TU(s). Indeed, one can say that the legislator might have been short-sighted by thinking that the WPF(s) system introduced by the LRA as a solution to adversarial labour relations in South African workplaces including HE could be successful if its establishment is triggered by a representative TU.

It is also evident from this study that in spite of the modest efforts by the South African government to ensure that employees in South African workplaces participate in decision making, there are three major obstacles to these efforts. These obstacles account for the slow development of any meaningful or effective employee participation in decision making in the institution and Faculty for this study, and are:

- Lack of management commitment in the process. This is as a result of fear on the part of management to loose its managerial prerogatives;
- Lack of TU support. This is because the unions do not cooperate and do not have same agenda ; and
- Lack of commitment on the part of the employees. This is because the employees see no commitment on the part of management and TU(s).

However, the reality is that public HE institutions in SA are using different platforms to promote employee participation. For example, the Faculty for this study uses Emails, Questionnaires,

Face-to-Face or One-on-One Meetings, Departmental Committee Meetings, Faculty Board Meetings, and Senate to promote employee participation in decision making. This notwithstanding, the respondents stated that management does not translated their inputs into practice most of time.

Therefore, in order for there to be any meaningful or effective employee participation in decision in the Faculty and institution for this study, the above three major obstacles should, as a matter of urgency, be overcome. These obstacles are:

- Lack of management commitment in the process. This is as a result of fear on the part of management to loose its managerial prerogatives;
- Lack of TU support. This is because the unions do not cooperate and do not have same agenda ; and
- Lack of commitment on the part of the employees. This is because the employees see no commitment on the part of the TU(s) in the institution and management of the Faculty for this study.

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Appendix A

Interview Guide

1. How long have you been working with this institution?
2. Are you a member of any trade union?
3. Why did you decide to join a trade union?
4. How would you describe the management style of this Faculty?
5. How does this management style affect your performance?
6. What do you understand by employee participation in decision making?
7. Do you participate in decisions which affect your working life?
8. In your opinion, how does employee participation in decision making affect organisational effectiveness? (Where effectiveness means the ability to produce results expected of you).
9. How does employee participation affect organisational efficiency? (Where efficiency means the ability to produce expected results fast).
10. How does employee participation affect organisational productivity? (Where productivity is a measure of effectiveness and efficiency).
11. Are there any platforms in the Faculty through which you can voice your opinion?
12. If so, how effective are these platforms?

Appendix B



Tchapchet Emmanuel Tamen

Student Number: 210179333

Cell number: 076 252 3238

No 65 Oasis Street, Riverton.

27th June 2011

To the Ethics Committee

Letter for permission

I am currently pursuing a Master's Degree in Human Resource Management. For this purpose I have opted to do a full dissertation. My research topic is "*The impact of employee participation on organisational productivity at a University of Technology in Western Cape, South Africa*". My research method comprises of conducting interviews with some selected senior academic staff in a Faculty.

Participation in this research is voluntary and participants are free to withdraw from the study at any time without reprehension. Participants are assured that all information is confidential and anonymity is guaranteed. Participants will not be harmed in any way throughout the research process.

Should you wish to verify the above particulars, please do not hesitate to contact my supervisor, whose details are below for ease of reference.

Thank you.

Prof. COK, Allen-Ille

June 2011

Tell: 021 460 3293

Appendix C

14. TAMEN, TCHAPCHET EMMANUEL MTech: Human Resource Management

Supervisor: Prof C Allen-Ille

The committee has reviewed his application and reported the following comments:

- ☒ The submission includes a REC 5 form completed and acceptable for the review.
- ☒ Ethical considerations included within the proposal but needs to state privacy is a confidentiality process
- ☒ Letter of permission is included\
- ☒ Interview schedule is included

Decision: APPROVED

Appendix D

Dear sir/Madam

Informed consent letter

I am a student at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Cape Town Campus, engaged in the second year of my Master's Degree in Human Resource Management. I am conducting research on **the impact of employee participation on organisational productivity at a University of Technology in the Western Cape, South Africa**. For the purpose of my study, I request that you participate in my interview in order for me to obtain data for the research. The purpose of my study is to ascertain whether employee participation has any impact on organisational productivity.

Participation in this research is voluntary and participants are free to withdraw from the study at any time without reprehension. Participants are also assured that all information is confidential and anonymity is guaranteed. Participants will not be bored in any way throughout the research process.

Thank you

Yours faithfully

E.T. Tchapchet

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