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Organisational culture as perceived by employment equity candidates.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Since its inception in 1998, The Employment Equity Act has brought about a change in the demographic makeup of South African organisations. The face of the South African workplace has therefore become more diverse. Through programmes of affirmative action, employers have made efforts since the early 1990s to include, in management structures, people from historically disadvantaged backgrounds who were previously denied such access (Thomas, 1996).

In spite of this radical change, advocates of the Employment Equity Act (thereafter referred to as the Act) have argued that the legislation is not having a significant impact since the implementation thereof is not occurring rapidly enough. This argument is based on the notion that management structures are still the domain of White males. The 7th Annual Report, covering the 2006-2007 reporting period, of the Employment Equity Commission supports this argument. In this Annual Report, the Chairperson of the Commission for Employment Equity noted that the outcomes of the report revealed that the progress in implementing the Act by employers is still moving at a very slow pace (Commission of Employment Equity, 2007). This slow pace of transformation continues to uphold and thus confirms the racial and gender inequalities that continue to exist in the South African economy.

Statistics presented by the Minister of Labour at the release of the 7th Annual Report of the Employment Equity Commission also support this argument. The report revealed that

African males occupy 8.4 percent top management and 9.8 percent senior management; African females occupy 2.9 percent top management and 3.6 percent senior management; Coloured males occupy 2.7 percent top management and 3.7 percent senior management; Coloured females occupy 2 percent top management and 2.1percent senior management; Indian males occupy 4.5 percent top management and 5.4 percent senior management; Indian females occupy 1.7 percent top management position and 2.3 percent senior management. White males on the other hand, occupy 60.2 percent top management positions and 51.9 percent senior management positions; White females are holding 14.7 percent top management positions and 19 percent senior management positions.

Employment equity (and affirmative action as a component of an organisation's employment equity strategy) is claimed to be part of the process of managing the country's diversity. In his writings, Verwey (1998) claimed that organisations can only manage their diverse workforces successfully when their corporate cultures are receptive and supportive to diversity. Furthermore, Agocs (2002) highlighted that the weakness of employment equity policies, in general, is a result of little specific provision made for addressing of the systemic discrimination within the culture of the workplace. Debates have also risen with regards to the suitableness of South African organisational cultures for the successful implementation of the transformation process.

Several writers such as Khoza (1993) and Bindell (1993) have even disputed that the cultures of many South African organisations are not conducive to support the transformation process in the country. These writers claim that the mono-cultural

Eurocentric organisational cultural values practiced in South African organisations fail to consider diversity in organisations and as a result they prevent the development of individual potential (Khoza, 1993). Consequently, they have suggested that in order to manage people successfully in a changing South Africa, these cultures need to move away from ‘Western’ ways of managing people to more 'African' ways.

In support of these arguments, Ramphele (1993) asserted that changing institutional cultures to reflect a more inclusive ethos should be central to equity programmes. Human, Bluen, and Davies (1999) also stated that there is a tendency for organisations to impose policies and procedures that run against organisational culture which result in the failure of such policies and procedures. They asserted that even though an organisation describes itself as an equal opportunity organisation, if it is populated with managers that have negative stereotypes of women and Black people, such policies and procedures are often invaded and the status quo prevails. In certain instances, the situation is compounded when the organisation is unable to identify its own culture. This is more pronounced in cases where unconscious basic assumptions such as racist beliefs are prevalent. There will be a disconnection between what that organisation says and what they do and previously excluded groups will tend to view the organisation as being hypocritical and they will be frustrated and demotivated (Human et al., 1999).

When they experience this frustration, some individuals from these groups leave organisations while others refuse to apply for selection or promotions. Those with greater levels of self-confidence will fight against the dominant culture but often with little

success. All these activities have a negative impact on the transformation process and they have resulted in the slow pace thereof. Thomas and Bendixen (1999) and Thomas and Robertshaw (1999) have suggested that in order for Employment Equity practices to work and thus transformation to occur in South African organisations, there is a need for organisational cultures to create genuine equal opportunity for a diverse group of (competent) people. “These cultures would need to define their mission and values, and standards in a consultative and self-conscious fashion as well as develop the mechanisms to ensure that these are the only ones taken into consideration when appointments or promotions are made” (Human et al., 1999, p.17).

For the transformation process to be successful there is a challenge for every South African organisation to create a culture that wilfully questions irrelevant stereotypes that exist with regards to whether or not certain groups, such as gender and race, are suitable for a certain position based on irrelevant stereotypes. Moreover, there needs to be a commitment from managers to create a positive environment that will result in effective performance and growth of individuals who work in it. These organisations will therefore have to reinforce strong organisational cultures based on what is essentially important in terms of its mission and goals, rather than these existing stereotypes. According to Human et al. (1999) inclusive or accommodating organisational cultures are those that believe in the basic equality and dignity of people, irrespective of their position in the company, their race, gender, physical or mental ability, wealth, sexual orientation and so on.

Indeed, some organisations have made attempts to create cultures that are accommodative; however, they have failed to actively appoint members of previously disadvantaged groups. It is important to note that transformation requires a balance between attaining members from previously disadvantaged groups and at the same time making sure that they are content and industrious once they are there.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Organisational Culture defined

The concept of organisational culture was introduced in the early 1960's from the field of organisational psychology. There is currently a great deal of interest in the study of organisational culture and this interest stems from the fact that it offers a non-mechanistic, flexible and imaginative approach to understanding how organisations work (Brown, 1995). Another reason for this wide interest in the study of organisational culture is to find explanations why organisations enjoy different rates of profitability, turnover, and market share (Brown, 1995).

Although there has been a great deal of interest in the study of organisational culture, there are debates around defining it and these have been primarily attributed to people's use of different concepts and definitions (Ott, 1989). While there is no consensus about its definition, most authors probably agree that it is holistic, historically influenced, related to anthropological concepts, socially constructed, soft, and stable, and difficult to change (Hofstede, 2001).

Some writers of organisational culture tend to treat it as something an organisation has, while others treat it as something that the organisation is (Smircich, 1983, cited in Hofstede, 2001). Other authors go as far as asserting that culture is to organisations what personality is to an individual (Ott, 1989). The consensus from the academic literature suggests that organisational culture is the visible and less visible norms, values and

behaviour that are shared by a group of employees which shape the group's sense of what is acceptable and valid. These are generally slow to change and new group members learn them through both an informal and formal socialisation process (Wallace, Hunt and Richards, 1999).

Schein (1985) suggested that culture is best thought of as a set of psychological dispositions (which he calls basic assumptions) that members of an organisation possess, and which leads them to think and act in certain ways. Schein (1990) defines culture as 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 integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and therefore, is to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.

Williams, Dobson and Walters (1989) define culture as commonly held and relatively stable beliefs, attitudes and values that exist within the organisation. These elements of culture are manifested in the patterns of behaviour together with the rituals and symbols in the organisations. According to Hofstede (2001) culture is collective programming of the mind, and it manifests itself in values, symbols, heroes, and rituals; and these distinguish the members of one organisation from another.

Deal and Kennedy (1982, p.4) defined corporate culture informally as "the way we do things around here". Hofstede (2001) claimed that corporate culture is equivalent to organisational culture, therefore, it should be noted that they tend to be used

interchangeably in the organisational theory literature. Kotter and Heskett (1992) refer to it as values that are shared by individuals and that tend to persist over time even when group membership changes. Ott (1989) stated that beliefs and values are what people will admit to whereas, basic underlying assumptions are what people actually believe and feel and what determines their patterns of behaviour whether or not they are aware of them. This would suggest that basic underlying assumptions are unconscious.

In sum, organisational culture represents a common perception held by the organisation's members and is thus considered to be a system of shared meaning (Robbins, 1987). This view implies that individuals with different backgrounds or at different levels in the organisation will tend to describe the organisation's culture in similar terms (Robbins, 1987).

Although organisational culture has common properties, it has been argued that most organisations have a dominant culture and numerous sets of subcultures within that dominant culture. Robbins (1987) declared that a dominant culture expresses the core values that are shared by a majority of the organisation's members. Subcultures on the other hand tend to develop in large organisations to reflect common problems, situations, or experiences that members face. It is important to note that in this text, organisation's culture refers to the dominant culture as this macroview of culture provides an organisation its distinctive personality.

The Importance of Culture in Organisations

Culture has been argued to be important in organisations and many authors asserted that it mainly functions as an asset in organisations (Brown, 1995; Ott, 1989). According to Deal and Kennedy (1982) culture has a powerful influence throughout the organisation as it affects practically everything from what decisions are made, who gets promoted to how employees dress. It governs the way a company processes information, its internal relations and its values.

The most significant functions of culture according to Brown (1995) include conflict reduction, co-ordination and control, the reduction of uncertainty, motivation, and competitive advantage. Organisations have a strong tendency of experiencing conflict, and culture can serve as a force for integration and consensus therefore reducing conflict. In the form of beliefs, values, attitudes and basic assumptions, culture can become a powerful means of control within organisations. Brown (1995) also noted that organisational culture can be a source of intrinsic motivation and as a result it can influence the efficiency and effectiveness of organisations.

Organisational culture identifies the primary goals, work methods and behaviour, how individuals interact, address each other, how friendship and personal relationships are conducted. It guides organisational membership, how the boundaries are maintained, who is an insider and who is an outsider (Williams et al., 1989). Culture can also perform a social function, it provides a medium for friendships to develop; it also provides an opportunity for the development of identity and a sense of belonging (Williams et al.,

1989). It represents the collective conscious and unconscious of the organisation and also forms the basis for the interpretation of meaning, is a pervasive influence on organisational behaviour and as such a significant determinant of organisational performance (Williams et al., 1989).

Culture has also been argued to have an effect on the successes or failures of organisations. For instance, it has been stated that the reason why Japanese companies become successful is a result of their strong cohesive culture throughout the entire nation, and the links among businesses (Deal and Kennedy, 1982). However, authors like Sathe (1985) argued that an organisation's culture does not only act as an asset, but can also act as a liability. This is because shared beliefs, values and assumptions can interfere with the needs of the organisation and lead people to think and act in inappropriate ways.

Research on organisational effectiveness maintains that the strength of an organisation's culture plays a vital role in determining whether an organisation succeeds or fails. An organisation is said to have a strong culture when its members accept the core values, agree on their order of importance, and are highly committed to them. Robbins (1987) emphasised that stronger cultures make it clearer for the employees to understand what the organisation stands for.

Culture identifies what is important in the external environment, what the management of the organisation attends to and monitors. It also influences how management interprets the information and the responses it makes to changes in the external environment.

Furthermore, it contributes to strategic analysis and the development of strategy within an organisation; it is thus a crucial determinant of the success of strategic implementation (Williams et al., 1989). It represents the collective conscious and unconscious of the organisation and also forms the basis for the interpretation of meaning, is a pervasive influence on organisational behaviour and as such a significant determinant of organisational performance (Williams et al., 1989).

Although most authors argue that culture is important to organisation, Schonken (1997) cautions against the overstating of the importance of culture. He emphasised that understanding culture alone will not guarantee the success of an organisation. Furthermore, Kotter and Heskett (1992) also contended that corporate culture can only be helpful to a point of shaping managerial behaviour in organisations.

Approaches to Organisational Culture

Smircich (1983) made a clear distinction between two approaches to understanding organisational culture. The two approaches are primarily concerned with whether culture is a variable or a root metaphor of an organisation (Smircich, 1983); that is, whether it is something an organisation has or something an organisation is (Schall, 1983). The first approach regards organisational culture as an independent variable, that is something separate from other features of the organisation such as structure and technology, and the second perceives it as a root metaphor (Smircich, 1983). Schultz (1995) described these two approaches as functionalism and symbolism where the culture-as-variable approach adopts the functionalist perspective and the culture-as-metaphor adopts the symbolist

perspective. This conceptual usage has been imported from the structural-functional paradigm which is a branch of social anthropology. According to Bagraim (2001), the main reason for the adoption of the structural-functional paradigm is because; the organisational culture perspective asserts that organisations produce cultures that maintain social structures.

Culture as a Variable

Most authors view culture as a variable, which may be affected by both external and internal stimuli, and which may consciously be managed by the organisation itself. This approach implies that organisational culture is something that the organisation "has", as opposed to something that the organisation "is" (Smircich, 1983). As a variable, organisational culture is seen as something that may be influenced, managed, changed and manipulated, and in turn it can change and manipulate members and features of the organisations (Wilson, 2000).

Under this approach, specialised interventions are designed to make organisational cultures more receptive to change (French and Bell, 1995, cited in Bagraim, 2001). These interventions allow for realignments that could transform the organisational system into one that is more directed to achieving organisational goals. Legge (1995) stated that most organisational psychology practitioners adopt this approach because they believe that it provides solutions which could result in an overall systemic balance and organisational success (cited in Bagraim, 2001). Moreover, managers tend to welcome this approach as it allows them to compare culture with other organisational variables. Researchers who

study culture as a variable have a tendency to use reliable, valid, and easily administered quantitative measures (Kringle and Burgoon, 1995).

As stated earlier, the culture-as-variable approach adopts the functionalist paradigm. In functionalism the organisation is seen as a natural system, and culture is thus viewed as necessary for its survival (Schultz, 1995). The functionalist paradigm "seeks to discover the role which each aspect of cultural practice plays in sustaining the culture as an ongoing system" (Morgan *et al.*, 1983, p. 19, cited in Wilson, 2000). According to Schein (1992), functionalism proposes a universal framework for culture which envisages different levels of culture. Cultural elements are thus listed according to the categories or levels within which they fall, and the researcher's task is to find the relations between them (Schultz, 1995).

The functionalism approach is based on the assumption that culture develops through problem solving within the organisation, what Schein (1992) refers to as the problems of external adaptation and internal integration. This approach is therefore, primarily diagnostic, and studies under this approach produce results that can make comparisons between organisations as the results produced between organisations as they are using the same theoretical framework (Schultz, 1995).

Culture as a Metaphor

In his reviewed work, Smircich (1983) suggested that both managers and organisation theorists use metaphors or images as a way of understanding organisations and

organisational life. Consequently, by stating that an organisation is a culture is a way of stating that it can be understood *as if it were* a culture. The metaphoric perspective defines culture as the symbols, ceremonies, stories, rumours, and myths that communicate the organisation's values. Most researchers operating from this perspective are primarily concerned with the emerging nature of culture, and they use research methods, usually qualitative in nature, to uncover the participants' perspectives (Kringle and Burgoon, 1995).

In contrast to the culture-as-variable approach discussed above, the culture-as-metaphor approach is based on the symbolism perspective. This approach assumes a social constructionist view that culture is about the construction and reconstruction of meaning, which is specific to the organisation and its particular context (Schultz, 1995). Consequently, reality is defined as subjective and multi-dimensional, and different meaning may be conveyed by different phenomena (Schultz, 1995). Culture can thus, never be totally understood and explained, and must be discovered through interpretation.

Research under this approach is based on ethnographic investigation, where there is a search for associations between meanings, uniquely describing the organisation; rather than, a model being produced (Schultz, 1995). Both the functionalism and symbolism view culture in a pattern, however, in functionalism the pattern is seen as shared, whereas in symbolism there may be shared or non-shared webs of meaning (Schultz, 1995).

Although there are differences between the two approaches to culture, many writers agree that there are both external manifestations of culture, which may be observed in behaviour or processes, and also supporting belief systems, which Schein (1992) calls underlying assumptions. Many theorists also conceive culture as multi-layered (e.g. Rousseau, 1990; as cited in Schein, 1992). Schein (1992) wrote about a three part model; first manifest artifacts, behaviour and processes; second, conscious and sometimes written espoused values; and third underlying, unwritten, and largely unconscious assumptions. The three part model will be discussed in greater detail later in the chapter.

Perspectives of Organisational Culture

Wilson (2001) maintained that in order to fully understand the complexity of organisational culture literature, it is imperative to explore the various perspectives of culture that have been adopted by organisational behaviourists. Martin and Meyerson (1988) identified the following three major perspectives in organisational culture research.

Integration Perspective

The Integration perspective is based on the notions that all cultural manifestations are interpreted as consistently reinforcing the same themes, all member of the organisation share an organisation-wide consensus, and the culture is described as a realm where ambiguity is excluded. Integration studies tend to describe organisation-wide consensus in harmonious, familial terms, which merge the public and private domains, so that organisations are seen as families (Martin, 1992).

The Differentiation Perspective

According to the Differentiation perspective, cultural manifestations are sometimes seen as being inconsistent (for example, when managers say one thing and do another). This perspective is suspicious of claims of organisation-wide consensus and it sees consensus as located primarily within subcultural boundaries. Studies conducted using the Differentiation perspective, do not usually deny the existence of the similarities, consistencies, and unities that are the focus of the Integration studies; however, Differentiation research goes a step further by exploring the viewpoints of subcultures that see things differently.

The Fragmentation Perspective

The fragmentation perspective focuses on ambiguity as the essence of organisational culture. This approach views ambiguity as the norm, with consensus and dissension coexisting in a constantly fluctuating pattern influenced by events and specific areas of decision making. The Fragmentation perspective discards the clarity of consistency and of inconsistency; it rather explores the complexity of relationships between one cultural manifestation and another. It therefore, presents a multiplicity of interpretations that seldom amalgamate into a stable consensus (Frost, Moore, Louis, Lundberg, and Martin, 1991). The fragmentation view of culture argues that there can be no unified understanding of culture because matters such as race, ethnicity, gender, occupation, hierarchical position and other identifying characteristics co-exist within each member of an organisation (Hatch and Cunliffe, 2006).

The Fragmentation viewpoint perceives both the unity of Integration studies and the clearly defined differences of the Differentiation perspective as myths of simplicity, order, and predictability, imposed on the socially constructed reality that is characterized by complexity, multiplicity, and flux. Fragmentation studies are said to have a lot in common with postmodernism, however, Martin (1992) claimed that postmodern cultural studies often go beyond the fragmentation assumption to assert that reality, in this case culture is an illusion, an arena of competing truth claims and stories that aim to suppress and marginalize those who do not accept and support the dominant view the illusion hides.

Elements of Organisational Culture

It has been asserted organisational culture occurs at many levels and authors have generally agreed on this assertion, however, many of them seem to disagree on the number of levels involved. For instance, Kotter and Heskett (1992) claim that organisational culture consists of two levels that differ in terms of their visibility and resistance to change.

The first level is the deeper and less visible level and the second level is the more visible level. At the deeper and less visible level, culture denotes the values shared by the people in a group and that tend to persist over time even when the group membership changes. Culture tends to be very difficult to change at this level because group members are often unaware of many values that bind them together and sometimes keep them apart. On the other hand, at the more visible level; culture represents patterns of behaviour or style of

an organisation that new employees are encouraged to follow (Kotter and Heskett, 1992). Culture at this level is easier to change than in the first level.

Hofstede (1997) contends that organisational culture consists of four levels, namely, symbols, heroes, rituals, and values. This model is based on his model where he asserted that values cannot be observed directly, rather, they can be inferred from their manifestations in alternatives of behaviour (Hofstede, 1980). Symbols are words, objects that convey a specific meaning that is only recognised by individuals sharing a culture. It has been argued that new symbols are easily developed and old ones disappear.

Heroes are people who possess particular characteristics that are highly valued in a culture and they therefore serve as models of behaviour. These individuals can either be alive or dead, or; real or imaginary. Rituals are defined as sets of activities that consolidate various forms of cultural expression into organised events, which are carried out through social interaction. Rites are an indication of what is acceptable behaviour in an organisation.

According to Hofstede (1997) the core of culture is formed by values which are tendencies to prefer certain conditions or situations over others. Values have a positive and a negative side, for instance, they deal with good versus evil and rational versus irrational (Hofstede, 1997). Many values are unconscious to those who hold them and they therefore cannot be directly observed by outsiders. Hofstede (1997) assert that they can only be inferred from the way people act under a range of circumstances.

Schein (1985) argued that organisational culture consists of three levels, namely, artifacts at level one; beliefs, values and attitudes at level two; and basic assumptions at level three. The three-level model by Schein (1985) is argued to provide the most useful typology for classifying elements of organisational culture into usable groupings. Different authors have acknowledged and utilised this model in their analyses.

Schein's Model of Organisational Culture

Schein's model is based on the notion that the essence of culture is its core basic assumptions. According to Hatch and Cunliffe (2006), this core manifests as values and behavioural norms that are recognised, responded to and maintained by members of the culture who in turn, use them to make choices and take action, and eventually, culturally guided choice and action produce artifacts.

Level 1: Artifacts

These are the most visible manifestations of an organisation's culture (Brown, 1995). Artifacts generally refer to the physical and socially constructed environment of an organisation. They are often described as physical arrangements, patterns of behaviour, and abstract linguistic expressions such as stories and jokes (Schein, 1985). There is a vast array of different forms of artifacts observable within organisations and these are regarded as subcategories of artifacts. These include material objects; physical layouts; technology; language; behaviour patterns; symbols; rules, systems, procedures and programmes.

As stated by Brown (1995), *material objects* include annual reports, the products an organisation makes, and sales and advertising brochures, corporate logos and mission statements. Corporate logos symbolise the values of the organisation and mission statement on the other hand, define the long-term vision of the organisation in terms of where it wants to be and whom it wants to serve (Brown, 1995). Both corporate logos and mission statements often make reference to the purposes of the organisation, its principal business aims, the key beliefs and values of the company, definitions of its major stakeholders, and ethical principles which govern codes of conduct.

It is known that some organisations spend huge amounts of money in *physical layouts* such as stylish buildings, office layouts, landscape gardening. Brown (1995) argued that this emphasis on physical layouts is a result of the need for modern organisations to adapt to a post-modern society in which organisations are judged in terms of their appearance as well as performance. Research by Berg and Kreiner (1990) indicated that architectures of corporate buildings have a significant influence on employee behaviour in terms of how they interact, communicate and perform their work tasks. They claim that buildings are rarely left to speak for themselves; rather, they are described, reviewed and interpreted by employees, customers and the general public.

Brown (1995) argued that individuals' thoughts on the subject of organisational culture are culturally bound and therefore, individuals in organisations tend to develop mutual understanding through the common use of *language* and conceptual categories. For instance, Schein (1985) indicated that abstractions such as 'good service ', 'high quality

and ‘excellence’ are commonly used to frame strategic and operational objectives in organisations and they mean different things in different organisational cultures.

Metaphors and stories can also be powerful means of communicating ideas, and are in common use in many organisations (Brown, 1995). Some organisations have one prevalent metaphor, but most use different metaphors to describe different sorts of activities. Stories these are defined as narratives focusing on a single, unified sequence of events, and which are apparently drawn from the history of the organisation.

The subcategory of *behaviour patterns* includes the rites, rituals, ceremonies and celebrations of an organisation. Beyer and Trice (1988, cited in Brown, 1995) defined rites and rituals as planned sets of activities that merge a variety of forms of cultural expression into organised events which are carried out through social interaction. Rites explain how an organisation works, what it views as acceptable behaviour and how it manages change. Ceremonies may be thought of as celebrations of organisational culture. The final subcategory of artifacts refers to the rules, systems and procedures of the organisation. The types of artifacts discussed above are by no means fully exhaustive, as there are many other forms observable within an organisation.

Level 2: Beliefs and Values

Values and beliefs are part of the cognitive substructure of an organisational culture (Ott, 1989). They are the sense of “what ‘ought’ to be, as distinct from what is’ (Schein, 1985, p.15). Values are concerned with moral and ethical codes, and they determine what people think ought to be done. Wilson (1997) claims that these notions, about acceptable

norms, values and behaviour, can vary greatly in different groups; in some settings people care deeply about money, in others about customer wellbeing or employee wellbeing. Beliefs are concerned with what people think is and is not true (Brown, 1995).

It is difficult to distinguish between beliefs and values in practice, because beliefs about how the world works frequently involve values, that is, what ought to be done (Brown, 1995). Furthermore, some authors have defined values as particular sorts of belief. Schein also claimed that a founder's beliefs and values are taught to new members and, if validated by success (e.g., organisational survival instead of failure), undergo cognitive transformation into assumptions (Schein, 1985, 1991).

Deal and Kennedy (1982) stated that values offer a sense of common direction for all employees and guidelines for their day-to-day behaviour. They further stated that some of these values may remain conscious and may be stated explicitly in a company's mission statement as the "dominant values of the organisation" (Deal and Kennedy, 1982). There is a wide belief that companies succeed when their employees identify, embrace, and act on the values of the organisation. Some authors have even argued that organisations gain great strength to from shared values (Deal and Kennedy, 1982).

It is often believed that if employees know what the standards of their organisation are, they will make decisions that will support those standards; and as a result, they will feel that they are an important part of the organisation. According to Wallace et al. (1999), organisational values can powerfully influence what people actually do, and therefore,

they ought to be a great concern for managers. Therefore, managers have an important challenge of shaping and enhancing values of their organisations.

Deal and Kennedy (1982) highlighted that values are powerful because people care about them and this power can be constructive and destructive. They stated a number of risks associated with the strong values, namely, the risk of obsolescence; the risk of resistance to change; and the risk of inconsistency. The risk of obsolescence is associated with environmental changes that may not be accommodated by the shared values of the organisation. The risk of resistance to change is similar to the previous risk in that the shared values of the organisation is willing to change in order to adapt to the environment in which they exist. The risk of inconsistency is concerned with the contradictions that occur between managerial behaviour and professed values (Deal and Kennedy, 1982).

Level 3: Basic Underlying Assumptions

Schein (1985) defines basic assumptions as taken-for-granted solutions to identifiable problems. Level 3 elements of organisational culture include spirit and truths as constructed by individuals (Brown, 1995). Basic assumptions are held unconsciously and are very difficult to surface. Schein (1985), Siehl and Martin (1990, cited in Alvesson, 2002) asserted that basic underlying assumptions are likely to have dropped out of the awareness and they also include perceptions held by individuals.

Schein (1985) claimed that basic assumptions hold the key to understanding (and changing) a culture. He also argued that assumptions are best examined using clinical

techniques and recommended that a "motivated group of insiders" raise its own assumptions to consciousness with the aid of a clinically trained helper/consultant (Schein, 1991). Although Schein has not discussed cultural dynamics in the terms used here, he has written about dynamics as group learning. Schein (1985) suggested a typology of basic assumptions with five dimensions: humanity's relationship to nature, the nature of reality and truth, the nature of human nature, the nature of human activity, and the nature of human relationships.

Humanity's relationship to nature refers to the relationship that the organisation perceives they have with the environment in which they exist. The nature of reality and truth refers to different ways of which organisations establish/assumes their truth and reaching decisions. The nature of human nature refers to the different assumptions/perceptions that organisations have about their employees. The nature of human activity refers to the level of importance that the organisations place on the private lives of employees as compared to their work lives. The nature of human relationships refers to the way organisations assume people should relate to each other.

If a basic assumption comes to be strongly held in a group, members will find behaviour based on any other ground questionable. Argyris (1976) asserted that implicit assumptions guide behaviour and tell members how to perceive, think about, and feel about things (cited in Schein (1985). Basic assumptions are similar to theories-in-use and they tend to be non-confrontable and non-debatable and are therefore difficult to change (Argyris, 1976; cited in Schein, 1985). The re-examination of basic assumptions

temporarily destabilises people's cognitive and interpersonal world, and thus releases large quantities of basic anxiety.

Douglas (1986; cited in Schein, 2004) claim that culture as a set of basic assumptions informs its members on what to pay attention to, what things mean, how to react emotionally to what is going on, and what actions to take in various kinds of situations. When a set of assumptions have been developed, individuals will be comfortable with others who share the same set of assumptions and very uncomfortable and vulnerable in situations where different assumptions operate. This is because they either do not understand what is going on or they misperceive and misinterpret the actions of others (Douglas, 1986; cited in Schein, 2004). Schein (2004) claims that the human mind is in need of cognitive stability and as result; any challenge or questioning of a basic assumption will release anxiety and defensiveness.

Should the organisation consider changing aspects of a group's culture, it is important that they recognise this connection. For instance, if one assumes, based on past experience, that people will take advantage of them whenever they have an opportunity to do so, they will expect to be taken advantage of, and they will interpret the behaviour of others in way that coincides with those expectations. Also, if the people in the organisation assume that everyone is highly motivated and competent, they will act in accordance with that assumption by encouraging people to work at their own pace and in their own way (Schein, 2004).

Employment Equity in South Africa

Spanning the breadth of colonisation and apartheid, employment in South Africa was always segregated along racial lines. The apartheid system ensured that non-Whites were denied equal access to quality education and quality jobs. This was done through the implementation of job reservation policies and regulations by the apartheid government. The bad practices of the past have resulted in inequalities that still exist. The Department of Labour's annual report indicates that White English-speaking conglomerates predominantly control the economy. In order to redress the past inequalities in the workplace imposed by the apartheid system, the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998, amended in 2006, was introduced by the new democratic government as a legislative act.

The primary aim of the Employment Equity Act (EEA) is to promote employment equality given the structural and systemic nature of the labour market discrimination (Employment Equity, 1998). This legislative act provides a coherent framework and guidelines for ensuring the transformation of internal labour market practices. In addition, the act encourages employers to actively introduce and implement affirmative action initiatives which are also provided for in the South African Constitution.

The EEA therefore calls for certain employers to implement affirmative action, (especially in white collar jobs) which is aimed at redressing these past discrepancies, to promote diversity in the workforce and to improve the economic status of protected groups. Given that the past laws actively discriminated against, Africans, Coloureds, Asians, women, and individuals with disabilities, chapter three of the EEA requires

organisations employing more than 50 people to implement affirmative action (Employment Equity Act, 1998, Department of Labour, 2007).

With the demise of apartheid and the ushering of the new democratic political dispensation in 1994 as well as the implementation of the EEA, the country has witnessed a new wave of black ownership and control of business. As at February 1998, ten percent of the market capitalisation of Johannesburg Stock Exchange was controlled by black consortia (Singh, 1998). Magwaza (Sunday Times, 14.01.07) however argues that not much more than 3 percent of the Johannesburg Stock Exchange is owned by Blacks. Thus it can be seen that, on a macro level, with black economic empowerment deals, the face of South African business is changing albeit at a relatively slow pace.

While some progress has been made in this area, management structures are still the domain of White males. In June 1998 a study conducted by the University of Cape Town's Graduate School of Business, reported that 87 percent of private sector management is White, 93 percent of executive managers are White, 92 percent of senior managers are White, and six per cent of all managers are Black African (Thomas and Robertshaw, 1999). The Department of Labour's Commission for the Employment Equity 2005 report indicated that out of 4301 top and senior management recruited in large businesses, between 2003 and 2005, 44.7 percent were White males, 24.9 percent were Black African 29 percent were females and 8.2 percent were Black African females (Department of Labour, 2006).

Although the changes have been significant at the governance, policy and structural levels; however, it has been argued that the transformation process is faced with serious obstacles, especially in the private sector. The result of which is the slow pace of meaningful transformation. The slow pace of the transformation process has been attributed to a number of factors. For instance, it has been said that the lack of psychological shift in the mindset of many White South Africans is preventing significant change from occurring in the institutional culture of higher learning and the workplace (Bowmaker-Falconer, Horwitz, Juang, and Taggar, 1997).

Furthermore, research conducted in South Africa indicates that attitudes towards and perceptions of affirmative action vary according to respondents' demographic variables, political ideologies and personal experiences of relative deprivation (Stevens, Franchi, and Swart, 2006). Employment Equity recruits are constantly exposed to racist harassment and they often face prejudiced criticism with regards to the work they do. This reduces their confidence in their professional competencies. Studies have also indicated that negative attitudes towards AA have adverse effects on target-group members' self-esteem, self-evaluation of competence and performance (Kravitz and Platania, 1993).

The Commission for Employment Equity (CEE), a statutory body established in terms of section 28 submitted an annual report to the Minister of Labour on the implementation of employment equity in terms of section 33 of the Act. This report covers the period from 1 May 2006 and 31 March 2007. In the report, the chairman of the CEE reported that the

employment equity outcomes in the companies under study indicated that the progress of implementing the Act by employers was moving at a "snail pace", especially at senior positions. He emphasised that this snail paced movement confirms that racial and gender inequalities still exist in the workplace (CEE, 2007).

To indicate that transformation is moving at a slow pace, especially in senior positions, the CEE 2006-2007 report revealed that there was only a 1.1 percent increase in Blacks (i.e. Africans, Coloureds and Indians) representation in all top management positions from 21.1percent in 2004 to 22.2 percent in 2006. It also reported that within the Black group, African representation decreased by 0.5 percent from 11.8 percent in 2004 to 11.3 percent in 2006. Black In terms of female representation in top management level, there was a 6.5 percent increase from 15.1 percent in 2004 to 21.6 percent in 2006. According to the report, the percentage change for males at the top management level decreased by 6.5 percent from 84.9 percent in 2004 to 78.5 percent in 2006, with Black male representation decreasing by 1.1 percent from 16.7 percent in 2004 to 15.6 percent in 2006.

At the Senior Management level, Black representation increased by 1.2 percent from 25.7 percent in 2004 to 26.9 percent in 2006, 18.5 percent in 2000 to 26.9 percent in 2006. Within the Black group, African representation had the slowest increase of 0.3 percent from 13.1 percent in 2004 to 13.4 percent in 2006. Female representation at the senior management level increased by 3.7 percent from 23.7 percent in 2004 to 27.4 percent in 2006, with White females accounting for the highest increase of 1.9 percent and African

females with the lowest increase of only 0.1 percent. Furthermore, Table 1 illustrates the representation of designated groups in different occupational levels as reported by the CEE report of 2006-2007.

Table 1: Designated group representation across occupational levels

Occupation Level	Designated group		
	Black (%)	**Female (%)**	**Disabled (%)**
Top management	22.2	21.6	1.2
Senior management	26.9	27.4	0.8
Professionally qualified, experienced specialists and middle managers	36.5	36.3	0.7
Skilled technical, academically qualified and junior management	58.4	20	0.7
Semi-skilled and discretionary decision making	81.9	33.4	0.6
Unskilled and defined decision making	90	30	1.3

Source: Commission for Employment Equity (2006-2007, pg 8, 12)

As a result of the EEA, most South African organisations are becoming diverse due to the composition of a multicultural workforce. To manage such diversity, appropriate systems and understanding of both ethnic and corporate cultures are required. There is a need to move beyond understanding diversity, towards seeking to utilise it in the improvement of

managerial and organisational effectiveness (Horwitz, 1999). However, failing to understand cultural differences can lead to misguided assumptions, poor working relations, underperformance and discrimination. By valuing diversity and seeing it as a strength, organisations will realise the creative potential of employees. Ramphele (1993) asserted that it is essential that equity programmes encourage a change in institutional culture so that it moves towards a more inclusive culture. This statement illustrates the importance of organisational culture in managing diversity within organisations.

Thomas and Robertshaw (1999) proposed that Employment Equity and related strategies of Affirmative Action are necessary. Although these initiatives are legislated, the organisational context within which designated groups work, must be prepared to sustain Employment Equity initiatives. The objective here would be to establish an organisational culture that allows people to utilise their different insights, ways of doing things, their creativity and different perspectives, borne out of the diversity that they bring to the company, be it through race, gender, ethnicity, disability or life experience, among other factors.

Thomas and Bendixen (2000) stated that it is critical to gain an understanding of the values that people from different ethnic backgrounds bring into their places of employment. They further asserted that it is important that South African managers unite the richness of the many ethnic groups so as to enhance productivity and facilitate global competitiveness. There is therefore, a need to understand ethnic values and their impact on management effectiveness in the workplace.

Most of the literature on organisational culture has been produced largely by American authors. Therefore, there is limited literature on the culture of South African organisations. Schonken (1997) reported that traditionally South African organisations have dealt with racial diversity by applying a process of assimilation whereby Blacks are required to change in order to fit into the existing White culture of the organisation.

Van der Post (1995) argues that the African ways of living have been discredited for centuries and as a result their cultural archetypes have been dishonoured. Khoza (1993) extends this argument by stating that organisational culture cannot be imposed on people without taking into account the cultural archetypes of the people in question. However, Khoza (1993) asserted that corporate South Africa is guilty of doing this.

The culture in many South African organisations is believed to be very Eurocentric as many of the business practices are cast in a European style. Moreover, Binedell (1993) posited that South African business is accustomed to a White, male dominated hierarchical social and economic system. However, he claimed that South Africa's transition to a democratic government was expected to challenge and reshape the landscape in due course. The political and economic power shifts that continue to occur will change how organisations are constructed.

According to Christie (1996), South African organisations are characterised by standardisation, conformity, a high degree of intolerance (usually expressed in racist or sexist terms), a high degree of masculinity, procedural approach to management, and an

obsession with hierarchy. There has been a call from different authors for an adoption of a more African corporate culture that will compete globally (Binedell, 1993, Khoza, 1993 and Thomas, 1996). By calling for an African-management flavour to South African business practice, the African management theorists imply that the ethnicity of managers can influence the creation of specific management cultures, in this case, African management cultures (Thomas and Bendixen, 2000).

South African organisational culture, established by top and senior management, tends to encourage new entrants to the company to assimilate the norms and values, historically developed in the white mould, and generally conform to "the way things are done around here"(Thomas and Robertshaw, 1999). It is evident that Employment Equity is an important component of transformation in South Africa. However, its success has been argued to depend largely upon the organisational environment and culture of South African organisations to make sure that they are fully inclusive and accommodating of peoples of diverse backgrounds. For this reason, it becomes of importance to investigate if organisational culture can aid in the explanation of the slow process of meaningful transformation in South Africa.

Perceptions of the Employment Equity Act in the form of Affirmative Action

As stated previously, the Employment Equity Act (EEA) calls for particular employers to implement affirmative action (AA). Affirmative action as the main tool for the implementation of EEA has been very controversial since inception in South Africa. Researchers have suggested that there are some important, underlying influences that

shape attitudes and perceptions towards affirmative action. Demographic variables such as race and gender have been shown to be predictors of perceptions on AA. It is documented that White males respond more negatively than do other types of respondents to affirmative action plans not based purely on merit as stated earlier (McMillan-Caperhart and Richard, 2005). For the most part, research demonstrated that non-Whites were more accepting of AA policies than Whites (Konrad and Linnehan, 1995; Sherman, Smith and Sherman, 1983, cited in McMillan-Caperhart, 2005).

These systematic differences in support for affirmative action among different racial and ethnic groups have been interpreted as support for both the self-interest and collective-interest perspectives (Kluegel and Smith, 1983). Kravitz et al. (1997) proposed that self-interest and collective-interest are among the most influential mediators of AA attitudes (cited in Little, Murry, and Wimbush, 1998). The self-interest perspective is based on the notion that individuals tend to oppose policies that threaten their own well-being and to support policies that benefit them (Little et al., 1998). The collective-interest perspective suggests that opposition to AA is mediated by threats primarily to the welfare of the groups to which people belong. It involves the perceptions of costs and benefits to members of one's group in general.

According to Tajfel and Turner (1986), self-interest is associated with personal identity while collective-interest is related to social identity. Furthermore, self and collective-interest can influence such everyday behaviours as helping (Tajfel and Turner, 1986),

resource allocations, and support for public policies and adherence to the law (Little et al., 1998).

Aim and Rationale for current research

From the theoretical background it is evident that organisational culture can be quite resilient to change. Furthermore, it is also evident that the South African legislation is directing the nature of change in the character of South African organisations, albeit at a slow pace. Literature on employment equity argues that organisational culture can either aid or derail the process of transformation. Therefore, organisational culture can be one way to understand the slow process of meaningful transformation.

Based on these notions, the aim of the research is to investigate organisational culture as perceived by employment equity candidates working in the private sector. Also, to see if organisational culture can aid in the understanding the slow transformation process in South Africa. From the aim of the following study the research question becomes evident: How do employment equity candidates perceive the characteristics of their organisation's culture in accommodating them?

Chapter 3: Methodology

The aim of this chapter is to provide information on the methods utilised and the procedures followed when the present research was executed. It includes the biographical information of the participants, the design of the study, the nature of and the motive for the use of the interview for data collection, and how the data was analysed.

Research Design

The research is qualitative in nature. Qualitative research is defined as the interpretive study of a specified issue or problem in which the researcher is central to the sense that is made (Patton, 2002). The qualitative paradigm stems from an anti-positivistic, interpretative approach, is holistic in nature and aims at understanding social life and the meaning that people attach to everyday life. Smith (2003) stated that qualitative approaches in psychology typically entail exploring, describing and interpreting the personal and social experiences of participants.

According to Merriam (2002) the key to understanding qualitative research lies with the idea that meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world. Qualitative research does not see reality as a fixed, single, or measurable phenomenon as it is assumed to be in positivist, quantitative research. Rather, it is based on the notion that there are multiple reactions and interpretations of reality that change over time. Researchers using these methods are therefore interested in understanding what those interpretations are at a particular point in time and in a particular context (Merriam,

2002). Qualitative analysis therefore places emphasis on the importance of context of behaviour as it is influenced by historical, ecological, political, cultural and temporal conditions, and the meaning thereof (Patton, 2002).

These methods are primarily concerned with understanding and explaining the qualities and the characteristics or properties of a phenomenon by using evidence from the data and literature (Rosnow & Rosenthal, 1996). Moreover, these methods seek representation of meaning of a delimited issue or problem (Henning, van Rensburg, and Smit, 2004). For this reason, variables in a qualitative study are not manipulated or controlled for.

There are several advantages to qualitative methodology; firstly, it allows the researcher to pick up the nuances, uncertainty, emotional reactions and ambiguity characteristic of human interaction which is missed in some quantitative analysis (Smith, 2003). Moreover, since the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and data analysis they will be able to broaden their understanding through nonverbal as well as verbal communication. This method also allows the researcher to process the data immediately, clarify and summarise material, check with respondents for accuracy of interpretation, and explore unusual or unanticipated responses (Smith, 2003).

The role of the researcher in qualitative approaches is to actively engage in the making of meaning from text or with the 'subject' under study (Henning et al., 2004). The primary role of the researcher as the instrument for data collection has shortcomings for this methodology. This is because a qualitative approach is theoretically underpinned by the

understanding of meaning as constantly constructed experience revealed through the lens of a particular interpretive framework (Packer and Addison, 1989, cited in Merriam, 2002). As a result, according to Merriam (2002), the interpretation of data and the findings are informed or influenced by the researcher's own subjectivity.

For that reason, the researcher might have biases that can impact significantly on the outcomes of the study (Merriam, 2002). Although it is difficult to eliminate these biases and subjectivities that the researcher has, it is important that the researcher identifies and monitors them and how they may shape the way he or she collects and interprets the data (Peshkin, 1988, cited in Merriam, 2002).

Procedure

The current study was conducted in the head office of a large South African bank. The organisation provides financial services for the public and also for corporations. The organisation has branches throughout South Africa, however; the research was carried out in their Head Office based in Johannesburg. The research proposal was presented to the Human Resource Director of the bank who granted the researcher permission to conduct the study. The HR director informed the various heads of each division about the study and asked them to provide all the names and contact details of the Employment Equity Candidates (employees from designated groups as defined by the EEA of 1998) working in their divisions.

The researcher contacted several individuals telephonically and via email. The first fifteen individuals to accept an invitation to participate in the research were chosen as a sample and were provided with a participant information sheet explaining what the study entails. They were then asked to sign consent forms allowing the researcher to interview them and record the interviews. As the primary operating language in the company is English, the participant information letter, consent forms and the interviews were in English.

It is important to note that the participants were provided with sufficient information in order to give informed consent to participate in the study. Once informed consent was obtained, the researcher conducted and recorded in-depth interviews with the participants. The interviews were conducted individually on different days and recorded using an MP3 player. In order to assure privacy and convenience to participants, all fifteen interviews were conducted in the meeting rooms in the organisation. The recorded interviews were then transcribed and analysed by the researcher.

Sample and Sampling Method

The sample in the current research was comprised of individuals who are Employment Equity candidates working in professional positions or white-collar jobs. As the Employment Equity Act of 1998 stipulates, EE candidates are individuals who fall under designated groups. The designated groups include females, Blacks, Coloureds, Asians, and people with disabilities (See Table 1). The EE candidates who participated in the study were obtained from different divisions of the bank and they all participated on a

voluntary basis. They were all in professional positions, literate and able to understand English.

The sampling method that was used is purposive sampling which is a non-probability sampling procedure. This means that the probability of any particular member of the population being chosen is unknown (Struwig & Stead, 2001). Purposive sampling occurs when the researcher looks for people who fit the criteria of 'desirable participants' as was the case in this study.

The biographical breakdown of the sample is summarised in Table One. With regards to race, the sample is comprised of 6 African males, 5 African Females, 2 Coloured females, 1 Indian female and 1 Indian male (See Table 1). This sample is in someway representative of the EE candidates in terms of the demographic makeup of the country. In addition, there were no White females and people with disabilities in the sample as it was challenging to find participants in these groups who were willing to participate in the study. The limitations of and the sample and the sampling method will be discussed in detail in chapter six.

Table 2: Biographical Breakdown of Sample

Pseudonym	Race	Gender	Position	Tenure (Years)
Anna	Indian	Female	Junior management	0.5
Jack	African	Male	Junior management	6
Jeffrey	African	Male	Middle management	14
Lebo	African	Female	Junior management	8
Lerato	African	Female	Middle management	2
Lisa	Coloured	Female	Junior management	10
Precious	African	Female	Supervisory level	0.25
Robert	Indian	Male	Junior management	3
Sarah	Coloured	Female	Junior management	12
Sibusiso	African	Male	Junior management	6
Sifiso	African	Male	Middle management	2
Sindiswa	African	Female	Junior management	0.75
Thami	African	Male	Senior management	3
Tumi	African	Female	Middle management	11
Vusi	African	Male	Learner	0.83

Data Collection

Interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted and recorded using an MP3 player. Each participant was interviewed individually at their offices or in one of the meeting rooms. The duration of the interviews varied between the participants, however, the average time was 50 minutes. Welman and Kruger (2001) describe these interviews as personal interviews as the interviewer visited the participants' workplace. Personal interviews are flexible and adaptable; however, they can be costly and time consuming.

This form of data collection was used due to its numerous advantages. Firstly, they provide an opportunity to establish relationships with the participants and to stimulate the trust and cooperation often needed to probe sensitive areas. Secondly, they help subjects in their interpretation of the questions and lastly, they allow flexibility in determining the wording and sequence of the questions by giving the researcher greater control over the situation (Rosnow & Rosenthal, 1996). Also, the researcher has control in the interview situation through personal interaction and they will be able to follow up on incomplete or vague responses (Welman and Kruger, 2001).

The qualitative research interview is different from other interviews in that it aims to be more flexible in a lack of prior assumptions at the same time interpreting the meaning of lived experience (Berg, 1995). Given that the human discourse is complex and varied, Kvale (1996) highlights that the qualitative interview should be seen as an art rather than a science where personal sensitivity and creativity cannot be formalised. Consequently, in

a qualitative research interview, emphasis is placed on the account and feelings of the interviewee.

A qualitative interview can also explore meaning that reaches beyond the direct world of the interviewee to include the social or even ideological dimension (Kvale, 1996; Terre-Blanche and Kelly, 1999). Its main aim is to assemble descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the story told (Kvale, 1996).There are many different forms of interviews; however, semi-structured interviews were used to collect data in the current research. A semi-structured interview occurs when the investigator has a set of questions on an interview schedule, but the interview is guided by the schedule rather than be dictated by it (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, and Tindall, 1994).

Conducting interviews demands consideration of reflexivity in the research process (Banister et al., 1994). Reflexivity is a way of emphasising the importance of self-awareness, political, cultural consciousness, the ownership of one's perspective (Patton, 2002). Banister et al. (1994) asserted that personal reflexivity occurs when the researcher acknowledges who they are, and how their personal interests and values influence the process of research from the onset. It centralises the influence of the researcher's life experience on the research and the construction of knowledge. It is therefore important for the researcher to monitor their role and influences and how their values impact on their decision making, the research process and the outcomes (Banister et al., 1994; Patton, 2002).

Data Analysis

There are different methods that could be used to analyse research interviews, and thematic analysis is one such method. This qualitative method of analysis will be used in the current research.

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is defined by Braun and Clarke (2006) as a qualitative method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns or themes within data. Aronson (1994) asserted that thematic analysis is a search for themes that emerge as being important to the description of the phenomenon. Also, Rice & Ezzy (1999, cited in Braun and Clarke, 2006) emphasised that the thematic analysis process requires one to identify themes through careful reading and re-reading of the data. It is thus a form of pattern recognition within the data, where emerging themes become the categories for analysis.

It has been stated that thematic analysis is a method that is essentially independent of theory and epistemology, and it can thus be applied across a range of theoretical and epistemological approaches. As a result of its theoretical freedom, thematic analysis (TA) offers a research tool that is flexible and useful which can possibly present a rich and detailed, yet complex, account of data.

There are several phases to conducting a thematic analysis that the researcher followed in the current research as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). Firstly, the researcher transcribed the research interviews verbatim. This was followed by the generation of

initial codes from the transcribed data set. The next step was to search for themes and this was done by collating codes into potential themes. The themes are then reviewed to check if they related to the coded extracts and the entire data sets. The final step was to define and name themes and to refine them when necessary. The different steps will be described in detail in the following section.

Transcription

Interview data obtained in this study was transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Transcription is defined as the act of recording and preparing a record of the participants' own words (Van Maanen, 1988). Clifford (1983) defined transcriptions as written accounts or texts of what participants said in response to the interview questions or to a researcher's query (cited in Van Maanen, 1988). They may result from retyped handwritten note or audio recordings.

Riessman (1993, cited in Lapadat and Lindsay, 1999) claim that the process of transcription is time consuming, frustrating, and at times boring, however, it can be an excellent way for one to start familiarising themselves with the data. Researchers like Van Maanen (1988) went as far as to argue that transcription should be viewed as a critical stage of data analysis within the domain of qualitative methodology. Lapadat and Lindsay (1999) emphasised that transcription is not merely a tedious act of placing spoken words on paper; rather it is an interpretative act that involves a creation of meanings. Braun and Clarke (2006) emphasised that "thematic analysis requires a rigorous and thorough 'orthographic' transcript, a 'verbatim' (that is, word for word)

account of all verbal and sometimes nonverbal utterance (e.g., coughs) utterances" (pg. 88)

Van Maanen (1988) argued that transcriptions should not be viewed as an innocent way of recordings things the way they are, rather, they are mediated by the researcher's own standards of what is relevant to them and by the historically situated queries put to participants.

Coding

The aim of coding was to make sure that all the interview sections that are related under the same heading could be retrieved with ease. Also, coding ensures that the volume of data under each of these headings is both manageable and meaningful (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The coding process involved recognizing (seeing) an important moment and encoding it (seeing it as something) prior to a process of interpretation (Boyatzis, 1998). According to Boyatzis (1998), codes identify a feature of the data (semantic content or latent) that appears interesting to the analyst. It also refers to 'the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon' (pp. 63). Encoding the information organizes the data to identify and develop themes from them.

Miles and Huberman (1994) stated that the process of coding is also an important part of analysis as it involves organising data into meaningful groups. Coded data differ from the units of analysis (your themes), which are (often) broader. Themes only start to develop

subsequent to the coding phase where the interpretative analysis of the data occurs, and in relation to which arguments about the phenomenon being examined are made (Boyatzis, 1998).

Boyatzis (1998) indicated that coding depends on whether the themes are more 'data-driven' or 'theory-driven'; in the former, the themes will depend on the data, but in the latter, you might approach the data with specific questions in mind that you wish to code around. The theory-driven approach was utilised to code data in this study because the coding was driven by the theoretical framework guiding the study (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Coding extracts can be done using a number of ways, manually by writing notes on the texts being analysed or by using 'post-it' notes to identify segments of data. The manual method of coding as utilised in the current study by using highlighters to indicate potential patterns. Codes were initially identified and then they were matched with data extracts that demonstrate that code (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Finding themes

When doing thematic analysis, Braun and Clarke (2006) emphasise the importance of determining what counts as a theme in the data. This is also important in terms of coding. Boyatzis (1998) defined a theme as "a pattern in the information that at minimum describes and organises the possible observations and at maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon" (p. 161). According to Patton (2002), a theme encapsulates important

phenomena in the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set. The data set might produce a number of instances of the theme; however, these instances do not necessarily mean the theme itself is more important.

In addition, a theme might be given considerable space in some data items, and little or none in others, or it might appear in relatively little of the data set. Consequently, the researcher's judgement is of great importance to determine what qualifies as a theme (Boyatzis, 1998). Braun and Clarke (2006) stated that the 'keyness' of a theme is not dependent on quantifiable measures, rather, it depends on whether it captures something important in relation to the overall research question.

Themes can be identified in one of two primary ways in thematic analysis: in an inductive or 'bottom up' way (Frith and Gleeson, 2004), or in a theoretical or deductive or 'top down' way (Boyatzis, 1998; Hayes, 1997). Themes in the present research were extracted using the theoretically-driven thematic analysis approach. Literature on organisational culture theory and employment equity practices was used as a guide for coding data and extracting themes. The advantage of using this type of thematic analysis is that it provides a more detailed analysis of some aspect of the data (Boyatzis, 1998).

Nevertheless, it is important to note that this type of analysis can be limiting to the researcher in that it can possibly provide a less description of the data overall. Alternatively, using the inductive or data-driven approach would have generated themes

that are strongly linked to the data and consequently provided a rich description of the data however; the researcher did not use this approach as it would have possibly generated themes that have little or no relation to the specific questions that were asked of the participants (Patton, 2002).

Boyatzis (1998) stated that it is important to decide the 'level' at which themes is to be identified: at a semantic or explicit level, or at a latent or interpretative level. Boyatzis (1998) asserted that thematic analysis at the latent level goes beyond the semantic content of the data, and starts to identify or examine the underlying ideas, assumptions, conceptualisations and ideologies that are theorised as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data. The development of the themes involves interpretative work and the analysis that is produced is not just description but is already theorised.

Thematic analysis can also be conducted within a realist/essentialist paradigm. In the essentialist/realist approach, motivations, experience, and meaning are theorised in such a way that a simple, and for the most part, unidirectional relationship is assumed between meaning and experience and language (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995).

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter provides the results obtained from the study. The results were generated by thematic analysis and are discussed in the form of general analysis of the whole sample, and where differences arise they are presented accordingly. The sample consisted of 15 bank employees holding professional positions.

Themes

The findings are presented in the form of theoretically generated themes from the interview transcripts. Broad themes of interest which arose from the analysis of the data included perceptions and experiences of organisational culture, perceptions of employment equity and affirmative action, the organisation's commitment to transformation and, culture's influence on the transformation process. Some of these themes have sub-themes within them.

To elaborate on the findings, extracts were taken from the interview transcripts. It is important to note that to ensure confidentiality of the participants; the names used in the findings are pseudonyms. Each theme and arising sub-themes are presented below:

Artifacts

This theme arises out of Schein's (1985) model in his theorisation of organisation culture as outlined in earlier parts of this report. The selection of this theme from a theoretical

basis is evidence of the inductive approach articulated by Boyatzis (1998). This involves the interpretation and analysis rather than simple description of information.

As stated previously, artifacts are the most visible manifestations of an organisation's culture and they generally refer to the physical and socially constructed environment of an organisation (Brown, 1995). The researcher spent a month at the bank's premises interviewing employees for the current study. Throughout this time, the researcher observed some of the artifacts which characterises this bank. This was done in accordance with a suggestion from Schein (1985, 2004) who emphasised the study of artifacts as part of the process of understanding the culture of an organisation.

The Bank is situated in the busy parts of the city. The architecture of the head office is designed in such a way that all its buildings are interconnected through corridors. One notable thing about the building was the fact that the windows were never opened. Sifiso also made the researcher aware that the windows cannot be opened. He said, "I sit by the window, but the window doesn't open, I can't breathe fresh air from outside". Shared facilities such as the meeting rooms, restrooms, smoking rooms, and coffee areas were found on each floor in the building. The Bank also had a large cafeteria and a fitness centre. Most of the offices were open offices with a few closed offices. The researcher was told that line managers occupy the closed offices, however, there were certain individuals in some divisions who occupied closed offices but they were not line managers. When the researcher met with the HR Director of the Bank, she noticed that although the directors had the biggest offices, they were also open plan offices.

In terms of the type of language used in the bank, most of the participants indicated that English was the dominant language in the bank; however, a few of them indicated that Afrikaans is also used. It was also evident that some of the terminologies used in the bank are unique to the banking industry and to this specific bank. This was noted by Sindiswa when she explained, “if you don’t work for this bank, you might not know what some of the terms mean. Some of the participants felt that people communicate in their own languages with people that can speak that language. One of the respondents, Vusi, agreed with this statement by saying, “I find that within the professional level where work is related English obviously, but within the social environment, people are pretty much comfortable with whatever language they feel, you know.”

When the participants were asked about the history of the bank, most of them did not know much about how the bank actually started, some of them did not even show interest, others just had a vague idea of what it was called before and how it got to change its name. One of the participants, Thami, said the following, “I know just about enough, how it started, as you know it was started by three individuals.” In terms of the well-known stories and jokes, the respondents spoke about different stories which were also jokes, however, most of the well-known stories and jokes were related to their mission statements. Most of the jokes and well-known stories are usually based on how customers question the bank’s mission statement when they do not receive adequate customer service.

Perceptions and Experiences of Organisational Culture

People and Space

The sub-theme is mainly concerned with the underlying assumptions of nature of space and the nature of human relationships which are outlined by Schein (2004). The nature of space is defined by Schein (2004) as being related to shared assumptions about space or area and its distribution, the symbolic meaning of space around the person, and the role of space in defining aspects of relationships. Schein (2004) described the nature of human relationships as shared assumptions that provides direction to employees on how to relate to each other.

In relation to the kind of place the bank is to work in, all participants said that they enjoy working for this bank as it has treated them well so far. This view was supported by Sindiswa, who said, “I’ve enjoyed working in this bank, I guess it’s because of the environment that I am in, in my team.” Although they described the environment as being pleasant, they stated that their ‘average day’ at work differs from day to day with most of the days being described as being busy, stressful, hectic, and unpredictable. None of them seemed to have a problem with this type of environment. Jeffrey supported this view by stating: “It depends on a daily basis, you know, some other days are hectic and some are relaxed.” Furthermore, Tumi avowed: “I mean we slave, we work hard, we really work hard and nobody tells you to, 12, 13 hours.”

Vusi, a learner who had been working in the bank for ten months, said, “you get that sense of, of been taken care off. There’s a sort of a family feel, it’s very cosy, and you

feel that even if I make a mistake, I will still get an opportunity to be taught the right way, so you don't feel that pressure of working. Jeffrey, who has been working for the bank for fourteen years agreed with this, by saying "here, we're like a family, we help one another." Although all the respondents like working for the bank because of the environment, some of them felt that there is still a division between the different race groups. Sifiso stated that, "I would say that people stay in their groups, go to the lunch hall for instance, you're gonna find White senior managers, whatever positions they hold, you will see them together having discussions, you would find younger Blacks sitting in their tables having their discussions."

When the respondents were answering questions, the researcher noted that they see their departments as separate business from the entire organisation. One of the respondents, Anna stated this and indicated that it was a limitation to her work, she was quoted saying, "Every segment sees itself as a totally different business; it makes it very difficult especially with me where I'm working on a project that overlaps between different segments."

The way things are done: "Power and Control"

Organisational culture is commonly defined as "the way we do things around here" (Deal and Kennedy, 1982). This definition incorporates how employees do their work to how decisions are made on a daily basis. This sub-theme is meant to examine if the way things are done within this Bank are contributing positively or negatively to the process of transformation. This includes understanding who in the Bank has the power to influence

the major decisions and if the EE candidates are comfortable with how the Bank allows them to do their work. Furthermore, Human et al. (1999) stated that “the way things are done around here” is likely to influence the policies, practices and procedures within an organisation’s culture which will in turn impact on the meaningful implementation of employment equity.

In terms of how they do their jobs and how things are done in the bank, fourteen of the participants felt that they are left to do their jobs according to how they see fit as long as they do it. In this regard, they used the term ‘owner-manager’ culture frequently. Robert emphasised this statement by saying, “We are not forced to do it in a certain way by our managers, they prefer that we are comfortable with the way we are working.” Lisa summarised this point by stating: “It’s an owner-management culture. They give you something to do and it’s up to you to see how you do it, we don’t have people standing behind you moaning and groaning.”

Even though there is an owner-manager culture in the bank, participants agreed that the major decisions in the bank are made by management. They acknowledge that they are allowed to give their opinions with regards to decision making; however the final decisions are made by the executive committee. Also, they are allowed to make decisions that affect their daily work but not the strategic ones which have major effects on the profits of the bank. Sifiso summed up this point as follows: “I can make decisions as someone in a team leader role, but if it’s not a decision that’s gonna affect profits for the year. If it’s a R20 000 decision I can make it, but if it’s a 10 million rand decision it’s

gonna go to the manager." A small number of the participants felt that even though the decisions are made by the executive committee, it is still democratic. Vusi was one of those participants and this is what he said: "I feel it's really democratic, you know it filters through but obviously at the end of the day the decision comes from the top, but they take time to find out."

Demographic Representation: Race and Gender

Seeing that race and the representation thereof in South African organisations is the main factor in employment equity practices, this particular theme was as a result chosen as one of the sub-themes. Being an employment equity candidate is also based on ones race and therefore it is important to discover what these candidates feel about the representation of the different racial groups in their bank.

All participants concurred that there is a diverse culture of people working at this bank; however, most of them felt that there are certain groups which are not fully represented in terms of the demographic profile of the country. Jeffrey declared: "In terms of the whole bank, it's all kinds of people. Different views, different perspectives, it's a multicultural company." Most of the participants felt that not all groups were fully represented in all divisions. Sifiso summed up this argument: "If you're talking of our demographics of South Africa, definitely not. As Black people, we form 75 percent of the country, you look at management, within any organisation of this magnitude and what percentage of those managers are Black people, it's the other way around, it is 10 percent, 20 percent and the other 80 percent is previous managers, is White faces." In terms of female

representation in the top positions within the Bank, participants feel that it is improving, however, at a slow pace. Lisa said, “They are promoting more women now, I suppose we are getting there, give us another ten years.”

Espoused Beliefs and Values: Ubuntu

Schein (2004) defined espoused beliefs and values as a sense of what ought to be as opposed to what is. These beliefs and values are at a conscious level of employees and they serve to predict the behaviour that can be observed at the artifacts level. Also, Schein (2004) claimed that these beliefs and values are initially disseminated by either the founders or the leaders of an organisation. Given that Deal and Kennedy (1982) emphasised that people care about values, and as a result they have the power to be constructive and/or destructive, it is important to include this theme because it can indicate if the bank is promoting values and belief systems that contribute positively to the transformation process and that are inclusive to everybody working within it.

All participants knew of some of the bank’s explicitly stated values. The values that came up frequently, is the value of *Ubuntu* and *Respect* and the participants also felt that they identify with these values as they are similar to their values outside of work. All African participants indicated that they identify with the value of Ubuntu as being part of their cultures and that they have lived by this value their entire lives. Sifiso asserted the following: “I was very happy to hear that’s one of the values in the bank. I’d say that Black counterparts in the environment would understand what Ubuntu actually means …

we don’t have to constantly think, there’s a spirit of Ubuntu today, it’s with you everyday, it’s our culture.”

Some of the participants felt that the cultural values of organisations and banks tend to be similar; however, what separates this bank from other banks is their customer service and employee well-being. The words ‘helping’ and ‘family’ came up when the participants were describing what separates their bank from others. With regards to customer service Lerato said, “because all banks sell the same product, the only thing that distinguish them is customer service and slightly how they treat their products. But for me, all the banks have the same products so there isn’t really something distinctive except that the customer services are different.” Lerato also made an argument that even though there are good values in the bank, people in the bank are guilty of not practicing these values. She summarised her argument as follows: “We’ve got respect and Ubuntu, but do you practice that. For me, I do believe in them, it’s things that I do in my family, it’s the way that I’ve been brought up, but my question is, I walk into a lift, and I don’t say good morning.”

Regarding employee well-being, Sibusiso was quoted saying, “the reason I stayed in this bank for so long is because this bank looks after its employees.” In terms of identifying with the values, Lebo summarised this point by stating, “Our values at this bank as a whole, I can relate to, because it’s something I can live by outside the organisation. I can’t believe I was not rated on Ubuntu because I am an African, I should understand, I should be an example of what Ubuntu is.”

The participants believe that the values were formulated by the leaders of the organisation, however, they felt that the employees also participated in the process of coming up with the final ones through surveys and workshops. This view was supported by Jeffrey who said, I think the current ones that we have, there was a survey which was done to understand the staff perspective. Also, Sifiso agreed with this statement by saying, “the CEO is not gonna sit and say these are the values, you know, it’s gonna be a weekend discussion where they’ll go on a strategy breakaway somewhere and as a bank what kind of culture do you wanna have.”

The Psychological Contract between the Bank and its employees

A psychological contract is an unwritten agreement that exists between an employer and its employees, and it sets out mutual expectations from each party (Robbins, 1987). This theme is related to what Schein (2004) calls “the nature of human relationships”, which in this instance refers to the psychological contract.

In terms of employees’ perceptions on how the bank views the employees, two of them agreed that the Bank values its employees. For instance, Anna says, “They realise that people have value, hence they employ them.” The majority of the participants felt that different managers view employees differently. One of the participants, Jeffrey agreed with this and he went as far as to say: “It differs from senior to senior, the bank perceives everyone as highly motivated, but if you go down to a specific department, that head of department might not tell you that everyone is motivated.” The participants seemed to have different views on the type of people who become successful within the bank. Some

of them believed that hard working individuals make it to the top. However, the majority of the participants believed that to make it to the top depends on who you know within the Bank with a close association to race.

Some of the participants viewed this in a negative way, for instance, Lisa said the following: “to be honest, those are the people that suck up to the managers that visit them over the weekend. The blue-eyed boys and girls. They say in Afrikaans term ‘gatkryp’.” Sifiso supported this view by saying, “I’ve only been here for two years, but the people who make it to the top, it’s who you know. You might have the qualifications but if someone at the top doesn’t believe in you or value you, you’re not gonna get to the top.” Others viewed it in a positive way like Sindiswa who said, I think to get to the top in most cases it really depends on who you know. It’s about networking really; I mean the organisation is made up of people so you need to get to the top through people.”

Since one of the company’s values is *innovation*, some of the participants felt that diversity of opinions is viewed as a strength in the Bank. Lerato agreed with this statement by saying, “I think they view it as a strength, we’ve got a magazine where people ask difficult questions.” Others felt that it depends on who you are and what level you are working at. Lebo summarised it as follows: “I feel it does, yet again I just feel like who are you to give input, you are Lebo and it’s a good point that you’ve made but why give her credit. It depends who you are.”

Perceptions of Employment Equity and Affirmative Action

Merit versus Tokenism

All participants thought that employment equity in the form of affirmative action was a good concept and it was necessary to redress past imbalances in the country's organisations, however, they felt that it is not executed properly across South African organisations. Sifiso expressed his views in the following manner: "for me, the concept is right, it's what this country needs to go through, the execution, the management thereof is not enough, and I'm not just talking within this company."

Although they all agreed that employment equity was important and necessary, most of the participants said that they would want to benefit from employment equity practices only if it is also based on merit. Vusi agreed with this by saying, "Being a young Black man, I welcome it, but there are limitations to that. I would prefer to be given an opportunity because of the colour of my skin, but also on merit." Several participants said that it is important that employment equity candidates work hard once they have accepted the job to show that they can do it.

Some of the participants went as far as to describe it as a 'numbers game.' Lerato affirmed this by stating: it's a numbers game; everyone wants to have a Black person within their departments. We've got to groom people because I have got a feeling that a lot of people are trying to make a point out of affirmative action, as I'm saying it's unfortunate. I think it's a good concept, because of our past, but I think it must be done properly." One of the participants strongly felt that the employment equity is a good thing

but it threatens White people, she declared, “I feel that the word employment equity or affirmative action is harsh, it’s scary when someone says affirmative action. It’s threatening to White people, and if it’s threatening to White people, it makes Africans, Coloureds or Indians look bad. I need to know that I’ve got the job because of what I can do and what I can contribute, the colour of my skin is then going to fall away very soon.”

When the participants were asked if they have benefited from employment equity practices, some of them strongly believed that they would have never had their current jobs if it was not for employment equity. Others believed that they have not benefited from employment equity practices because they worked hard to get where they are. Sindiswa was one of the people who believed that she has benefited from employment equity practices and she said, “I’m glad that there is employment equity, because I don’t know if I would have gotten this job.”

When voicing their opinions about employment equity, most of the participants placed a lot of emphasis on merit and indicated that they did not want their jobs to be seen as ‘token’ positions. Lerato felt strongly about this and she said, “I do not want - ‘she made it there because she’s Black,’ because that’s what people say, people say she, *ke* token position. I’ve heard people say it to people, I think it’s the most hurtful thing should you hear it.” Some of the participants who believed that they have not benefited from employment equity practices said that they will never apply for jobs that look for affirmative action candidates because they want to get the jobs on merit only. Anna supported this by saying, “no, because I have worked very hard. If I apply for a job, I

never look whether it's affirmative action; EE candidate and to be quite honest with you, 90 percent of the time, I don't go for those positions."

In terms of feeling stigmatised, most of the participants felt that they are not stigmatised for having benefited from employment equity practices, however, they said that they are only stigmatised by people who do not work with them closely. Thami concurred with this by saying, "I think the people who would stigmatise me are the guys who won't understand the level of contribution I've made in this company." Some of the participants voiced out their opinions on White females benefiting from employment equity practices; as a result the researcher asked the other participants what their feelings and thoughts were on this issue.

They expressed that they had mixed feelings about this issue, because White females were also discriminated against in the past, however, they believed that by virtue of having benefited economically from the apartheid government, they should not benefit from employment equity. One of the participants, Sibusiso, went as far as to say, "wherever there's a loophole, people will always exploit that hole and currently the loophole exists and probably White people will exploit it as long as they can until somebody wakes up and smells the coffee and amends the constitution."

Slow Pace of Employment Equity in South Africa

None of the participants thought that the transformation process at managerial level was adequate across the country. They felt that the pace of transformation was faster in the

public sector than the private. Tumi articulated what she thought was happening by stating, “the private sector, they make it difficult for people to come in. I mean they would look for two three people and then they would train them, what about the other ten. All you’ve got, there are two people they are in these positions, meanwhile there’s lots of positions out there where people can be placed to go into.”

A few of them felt that the pace in the banking industry, including this bank, was moving at a medium pace, nevertheless, the majority thought that the pace was very slow and they claimed that it is still predominantly White individuals who are still in higher positions. All of the participants were concerned that there is an imbalance in the representation of Blacks in junior positions and senior positions. Participants also pointed out that the transformation is very slow in the private sector. Jeffrey summarised this point by saying, “in the private sector, it’s controlled by shareholders or different people; they decide the fate whether they’re gonna be quickly or slower or how they wanna implement it. In terms of the general staff, the figures are fine, you go to junior management, the figures are also fine, middle management, it starting to become skewed, senior management, skewed and then the executive level more skewed.”

The Bank’s commitment to transformation

Most participants felt that the bank was taking transformation seriously. Some believe that top management have the right attitude about it, however, the people at the bottom are not taking it seriously. A majority of them do however believe that the bank is only taking this seriously because they are under a lot of pressure from the government to

reach the targets. In terms of being committed to meeting the demographic profile of the country in representation, the bank received an average rating of 6, some participant rated them higher than that and some lower. To sum up the two points Tumi said, "They do realise that and maybe because they are really not given a choice. But the company's culture is geared towards that, it's just that people are refusing to let go. I shall give it a 6, I can see we're getting there, but still, there's this 40 percent that needs to happen."

Participants felt that although the bank is taking transformation serious, it is not a priority to them, Vusi went as far as to say, "it pays lip service, because you sit on road shows, strategic sessions, you sit on general forums of discussions and you just hear how this is gonna happen, it's exactly the same tone, same voice, as the same forum you were sitting on six months back, so you don't see it coming through, you sense it, you feel it but I don't see it."

Culture's influence on the Transformation process

Both the males and females felt that the culture of the organisation is starting to embrace women, but the progress is slow. Most of them did not feel that Blacks were neither excluded nor included. Some of them believed that this was the case because Black people do not speak for themselves. Tumi summarised this by saying, "they try to embrace women, although like I said the progress is too slow. To me I think they treat us the same, as well as the Black, we have to be assertive and ensure that they don't walk all over you, and once you do, they respect you."

None of the participants felt that White males were excluded, a majority of them emphasised that they are the group that is mostly embraced by the bank because they are the ones in high positions. Vusi expressed his thoughts by saying the following: “White men, I think they have always been embraced and the nature of things is such that it perpetuates that a White man will take over and so forth.” Lisa also felt strongly about this by saying, “It embraces them 100 percent no doubt about that. Because they are the people that go forward, they are the people that get the promotions; they are the people that get the increases.” Sarah believed that it depends on the leader, she was quoted saying, “I was just thinking the other day that you work in a division where the CEO is Black, Black people will get more embraced, if you work in the department where a White male is heading, then White people will be more embraced.”

Initial Experiences of the Bank’s culture

Generally, participants felt that they had to adapt to the culture of the bank, however, they felt that this is a natural process that any new employee has to go through, as the culture of the bank is more important than the individual’s culture. Some of the participants felt that this bank’s culture was not different to their culture and this made it easy for them to adapt to the culture. Thami concurs with this: “you must understand the organisational culture before anything else, before being employed.”

Most of them claim that they did not have a mentor. Some had a problem with this while others did not seem to have a problem with not having a mentor. Lebo avowed to this: “I struggled, I came in as a secretary and I struggled. It was frustrating when I began but

once you find your feet you on the go, there's always somebody to talk to and somebody to support you." Vusi on the other hand said, I have to say it was very accommodating for me, I was allowed to sort of find my footing."

In terms of experiencing any form of discrimination, most of the participants said that they have never experienced overt racism in this bank; however, some of them said that they have experienced it covertly. Most of these people said that they have felt this during meetings whereby individuals will speak Afrikaans in their presence even though it is not the primary operating language in the company. Thami was quoted saying; "about racism, meetings carried in Afrikaans, it's a racial connotation." Some of them claimed that they felt that their work has been questioned because they are Black. Sifiso provided an example when he said, "I've had quarrels, big quarrels with other business units, who try and resist change that is happening within the bank. I think if they understood why the business exists, and maybe it was a White face that was imposing these changes to them it would have been a different story." None of the participant reported having experienced gender discrimination within this bank.

The need for a change in culture: A change in mindset

All participants believed that culture does have a role to play in the transformation process. Vusi supported this notion, and he said, "Yes, for sure because it's exactly that culture that creates the environment and it's from that environment that you would have people stepping up to positions and creating that environment, if the environment is conducive to all of that, then it's sort of a natural process." Some of the participants felt

that it is the mindset of the people within the organisation, particularly the mindset of management, that play an important role in transformation. Sibusiso agreed to this by saying, “It’s the mindset of the executive committee of big corporations. If they saw transformation in the broader South African community sense, they will probably push it.” Lerato also added to this point when she said, “We need a buy in from everybody to see the importance of this and they don’t see the bigger picture that it is nice to see diverse culture within a boardroom, how much we need that in organisations.”

Consequently, all of the participants thought that the culture of South African organisations including, this bank, has to change to ensure the smooth process of transformation. This point was summed up by Thami when he said, “I think it has to change, culture is people, people of the organisation, and there are certain values, and philosophies and what modus operandi and all these ethos which are very important and which are driven by people, the organisation needs to change for all these other initiatives to be successful. There are camps within organisations which is very hard to penetrate for Black individuals and there is number of excuses which can be given in terms of breaking let’s say that ceiling to go into a certain level.”

“Job hopping”: A consequence of organisational culture

An overwhelming number of participants said that most young employment equity candidates are frustrated by the lack of growth opportunities being offered to them by the South African organisations, and as a result they tend to move around a lot between organisations, a phenomenon known as ‘job hopping’. Sifiso explained this phenomenon

in the following manner: “The way you grow as a Black person is, if someone else is more willing to take you on than someone where you are at is more willing to promote you.”

The issue of mentorship and grooming surfaced a lot during the interviews, whereby, the participants believe that there is a lack of grooming and mentorship within organisations in general and this bank in particular. The participants believed that this was one of the main reasons why Black individuals do not reach the top levels within the bank. Lerato expressed her feelings about this by saying, “There are a lot of opportunities, but a lot of people, they are scared to apply for those positions, because you don’t want to fail, so groom people, mentor people, rope them in, teach them, that’s how they’ll feel comfortable once they get there.”

The participants felt that there was a lot of resistance to change and that the leaders of organisations including the bank play an important role in that. Tumi asserted the following: “I think it’s still slow because there’s a lot of resistance. See the main problem is that the top structure is so male dominated and White, so until we get like strong personalities up there, then I think it will move faster. If that structure can be infiltrated, I think it will go faster because that’s where it happens, that’s where the decision-making happens. Culture plays a vital role, but it starts at the top, that’s where you change it.”

Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter seeks to provide a theoretical interpretation and analysis of the results outlined in the results chapter. In this regard, it goes beyond the preceding descriptions and 'evidence' of what was said; towards making meaning of the nuances and contradictions that are inherent in qualitative endeavours. The participants 'voices' are also given prominence so that they tell their own stories albeit via the researchers biases in selecting what she regards as important in a particular instant.

Although a number of themes form the basis to this discussion, the theoretical backdrop against which it occurs can be located within the theories of Organisation Culture such as Schein and other Organisation Culture theorists; as well as the canon of work from social asymmetries and redress in race and gender.

Artifacts

Hatch and Cunliffe (2006) pointed out that since artifacts appear in tangible forms, they are therefore the most accessible elements of culture and as a result, they lie furthest from the sources of culture. Berg and Kreiner (1990) claim that an organisation's architecture and other symbols of corporate identity can also offer interesting insights into its cultural life, such as explaining employees' behaviours and how they interact with each other.

"If you look at one of our values is respect, so the way you communicate to people, you must at all times respect them." This statement by Thami indicates that the bank

encourages respectful language. Language reflects culture, the values of people, and their characteristic activities (Sathe, 1985). Most of the offices, about 80 percent, in this bank are open plan offices with partitions. This type of design encourages open communication because employees share space. This is in congruence with Berg and Kreiners (1990) findings that architectures of buildings have a significant influence on employee behaviour and how they communicate.

In addition, Martin, (1992) described open office spaces as reinforcing egalitarian themes. Robbins (1987) stated that the design and physical layout of the spaces and buildings, furniture, executive perks, and dress attire are material symbols that convey to employees who is important, the degree of egalitarianism desired by top management, and the kinds of behaviours; such as authoritarian, participative, individualistic, social; that are appropriate. According to Hatch and Cunliffe (2006), occupants of open offices have the greatest degree of accessibility to one another and the least privacy.

By having open offices, the Bank appears to be promoting social type behaviours, such as open relationships and quick flow of information between employees. Individuals who occupy closed offices could be interpreted as having more status within the Bank, and also less accessible. Therefore, since most of the line managers inhabit closed offices, they may seem inaccessible to individuals at the lower levels. From table 1 and the statements by the participants in terms of representation at senior levels; it is evident that most line managers are White, and therefore, employees at the lower levels, especially in

designated groups, might believe that the Bank views White managers as more important and therefore deserving the privacy that they do not receive.

The story-telling within the bank is mainly associated with how customers question the bank's mission statement when they do not get what they want. A mission statement is often used to make reference to the purposes of the organisation, its primary business aims and the key beliefs and values of an organisation (Schein, 2004). Seeing that most of the stories within this bank told about the mission statement are associated with unpleasant events that the customers have experienced and consequently, it appears that the bank's intentions are questioned by its customers.

These artifacts are very important in terms of teaching new employees about the culture of the bank. Robbins (1987) claims that culture can be transmitted to employees through things such as stories, material symbols and language. The enormity of the stories told about how customers question the bank's services can have a negative impact on the image of this bank. The bank could have a reputation of being unreliable as a result of the negative image created by the stories told by its customers.

It is important to note that artifacts are easy to observe but are difficult to interpret, (Schein, 2004). This is because symbolic-interpretive organisation theorists believe that meaning does not exist in the symbol itself, it is rather constructed around symbols when people interact, hence, people who share the same symbols will interpret them differently

and even in contradictory ways sometimes. For this reason, one cannot infer the deeper assumptions from artifacts alone (Schein, 2004).

Perceptions and Experiences of Organisational Culture

People and Space

"This is a very good place to work in. I think other people who haven't worked here, I think they should try it; it's a very nice place". This statement by Jack is an illustration of how most of the participants perceived the environment of the Bank. The family metaphor was used frequently by different participants. Schein's (1991) findings showed that people who are comfortable with their work environment and enjoyed working in it found themselves feeling like members of a family. It is quite paradoxical that the participants feel that the atmosphere is family like but there is still a division between the different racial groups. Although this depiction of the environment, the family feeling and divisions is seen as conflicting, it could be an illustration of how these employees view family.

The employees could view family members as being helpful to one another, but at the same time being divided. Sarah explained this by stating the following: "I perceive people getting along with people they identify with, people of the same race." This statement suggests that there are still racial divisions amongst employees in the Bank. It has been argued that for employment equity to work there needs to be diversity management (Thomas, 1996; Human et al., 1999). Stockdale and Crosby (2004) stated that diversity programs improve the interaction between individuals from diverse

backgrounds. Considering that some of the participants feel that racial groups are still estranged within this Bank, one may argue that the diversity management processes within the Bank are not effective. Stockdale and Crosby (2004) suggested that effective diversity programmes are those that bring people together with the aim of reconstructing peoples' versions of reality by promoting social interaction.

Failure to implement effective diversity management programmes could have negative implications to the success of employment equity practices. This is because employment equity and its component, affirmative action, are part of the process of managing the country's diversity (Crosby and Stockdale, 2004). Several authors do however warn against the confusion between managing diversity and employment equity. They claim that employment equity is a diversity encouragement programme, while diversity management on the other hand, is taking this new found diversity and managing it and integrating it to the advantage of the organisation (Crosby and Stockdale, 2004).

To ensure that transformation runs efficiently, organisations have to integrate employment equity programmes with diversity management and the business strategy as a whole (Human et al., 1999). The segregation between individuals from different racial groups may reinforce the differences which exist between different races and a failure to understand this may entrench existing racial stereotypes. Bowman-Falconer et al. (1997) asserted that gender and racial stereotypes reinforce and 'us and them' environment which may contribute to underperformance. In terms of employment equity practices, an 'us and them' environment might slow down the process because White managers might

see EE candidates as a threat. They might also fail to recognise the value that these candidates might bring into the Bank that might result in the further success of the Bank.

Martin (1992) argues that race and ethnicity are types of subcultures and she termed them demographic subcultures. Due to racial segregation in South Africa which resulted in Whites being in managerial positions and Blacks in lower positions, these subcultures could possibly coincide with occupational subcultures. Martin (1992) noted that these demographic subcultures often receive certain types of labels, either derogatory or positive, usually by those who are not members. This is evident in the following statement made by Sifiso, "…White senior managers, whatever positions they hold, you will see them together having discussions, you would find younger Blacks sitting in their tables having their discussions." In his statement Sifiso is associating demographic identities with occupational groupings, where senior managers are mostly White men, and Blacks are mostly young.

The different divisions of the Bank view themselves as separate business entities. Based on literature these divisions have subcultures and Robbins (1987) claims that they have developed to reflect common problems, situations, or experiences that members face. The Differentiation perspective describes subcultures as islands of localised clarity where attention is restricted to cultural manifestations that either are or are not inconsistent with each other (Martin, 1992). Alvesson (2002) contends that the existence of subcultures within organisations, even those with dominant cultures is an indication that management's influence is limited.

The existence of subcultures within this Bank can have a negative influence on the implementation of employment equity practices. For instance, if White managers identify more with their subculture (race) and do not identify with the Bank's culture which promotes transformation, they might possibly slow down the implementation of employment equity as they may feel that it is threatening to their subculture. Based on the participants' statements indicating the segregation between racial groups, it is evident that racial subcultures are still quite strong and they might possibly act as countercultures by not implementing employment equity fast enough.

The way things are done: "Power and Control"

The participants felt that the bank is flat structured and as a result, it provides them with a lot of autonomy with regards to their daily tasks. In spite of being allowed to make decisions with regards to their daily work, they indicated that they are required to liaise with their managers and that they are not allowed to make decisions on a strategic level and it is the executive committee who makes those decisions. By providing its employees with a great deal of autonomy, the bank seems to be utilising the organic style of management, however; it also has some elements of a mechanistic management style because the important decisions lie with top management.

There was consensus amongst the participants with regards to White males being in top management positions. As a result, it is evident that they are the ones that make the important decisions regarding what is important within the Bank. To illustrate this Lisa states that, "most of our decision makers are White, it would be males or females, as I

said females are very limited within the bank. The minority are the Blacks, well they say that majority rules." Jeffrey also supported this argument by stating the following: "It's mostly White males and those are the ones that determine, there might be one Black guy involved, but in terms of decisions made, you know they can overrule that one person."

These two statements show that the power is being held by White males still. They are the ones who have the influence over policies and procedures of the Bank, including those that involve transformation and employment equity. Feminist writers such as Eisenstein (1995) and Gherardi (1995) argue that a White male dominated form of an organisation is a type of bureaucracy which privileges hierarchy and justifies it by claiming that power and position are based on objective and rational criteria associated with technical competence (cited in Hatch and Cunliffe, 2006). They further argue that the White-male centred perspective induces the domination of women and people of colour.

Based on these arguments, one may argue that a White-male perspective on how to implement employment equity practices in a meaningful way might not be beneficial to the transformation process within most South African organisations. This is related to the notions of both self-interest and collective interest (Kluegel and Smith, 1983). Because they have already advanced into senior positions, these White males might oppose employment equity practices due to a collective-interest, as it threatens the welfare of the group to which they belong, that is, White males who stand to lose as a result of these practices.

The bank seems to be utilising the organic style of management because it grants some deal of discretion to employees performing tasks seeing that they are not bound by strict rules and procedures in terms of how to perform their daily tasks (Burns and Stalker, 1961, cited in Hatch and Cuncliffe, 2006). Also, in terms of the decision making process, it is highly decentralised with respect to work-related decisions. Tumi supported this assertion by saying, “I do make decisions pertaining the projects that I’m busy with, but the overall decisions are normally made by the project manager.”

There seems to be a paradox with regards to the decision making in this bank, because the bank is highly centralised with respect to strategic decisions. The bank does however, accept participation from employees, this is noted by Vusi in the following statement: “I feel it’s really democratic, you know it filters through but obviously at the end of the day the decision comes from the top, but they take time to find out.” This statement indicates that while the strategic decision making is highly centralised, there are some elements of decentralisation involved.

Demographic Representation in terms of Race and Gender

The pool of employees working in the bank is of a diverse nature, people from all walks of life, across all races and ethnic groups. It has been argued that employees bring their ethnic or national culture into the organisation (Hofstede, 1997). Human, Bluen and Davis (1999) highlighted that it is important for organisations to define themselves in terms of a culture in the sense of a 'way of being' or the characteristics the members of that organisation have in common.

There is a common assumption that the more homogeneous, in terms of race, gender, ethnicity; the members of a particular organisation are, the more they will share in common, the better they will work together and the more effective that organisation will be (Denison, 1990). This is because when individual members share a sense of belonging and identification, they will feel 'at home' and comfortable, and they will also have high levels of self-confidence, motivation and productivity. As a result, they will tend to share a commitment to the mission and goals of an organisation and they will be motivated to ensure that it achieves its goals (Denison, 1990).

Human et al. (1999) contested this assumption by stating that an organisation can consist of a highly heterogeneous group of people in terms of race, sex and national origins, yet, these people can still share certain values and a common commitment to organisational goals. Organisational culture is developed by a shared set of relevant values and meanings in terms of end-goals; it is not necessarily created by the same skin colour or the same national origins.

As stated in the previous section, participants feel that their bank is still White male dominated especially in senior positions. They concur that all races are represented in the bank; however, the representation is not equal across all levels and divisions. Lerato supported this statement: “the lower level guys, there’s lots of Black people, Black might be Coloured and Indians as well. When you go to management, we are very few Black people, especially when you’re going to top management. “It’s poor representation of Black people, it’s male dominated, White male dominated. So, there’s different cultures,

pink and blues and what not, but if you break it down at different levels I think the reality is actually quite sad."

Representation of previously disadvantaged groups has been under scrutiny since the inception of the EEA in organisations and on the national platform. There has been an ongoing national debate with regards to the representation of EE candidates in senior positions in South African organisations. In his annual report of 2006-2007, the chairperson of the Commission for Employment Equity (CEE) Jimmy Manyi revealed that the implementation of employment equity at senior and top management has been moving at a very slow rate (see literature review for the statistics) (CEE, 2007). It is therefore not surprising that even within this Bank there is a slow transformation process at senior levels.

Espoused Beliefs and Values: a sense of Ubuntu

Even though customer service is not a stated value of the bank, it was believed to be one of the factors distinguishing this bank from other organisations and banks in South Africa. Jeffrey attested to this by saying, "taking that the customer is the most important part of the bank, because if you don't have the customers you don't have the bank."

Ivancevich, Lorenzi, Skinner and Crosby (1997) asserted that performing organisations are those that ensure that their organisational culture is aligned to satisfying their customer requirements. It is therefore important that managers are responsible for developing a culture in which service employees have the training, knowledge and freedom to meet customer needs.

Employee well-being was also one of the important values that the participants felt that the bank promotes. As stated earlier, the word family was used to describe the bank's environment. The family metaphor was used because it also describes how the bank takes care of its employees. Vusi said, "you get that sense of being taken care of, a family feel, you can feel that even if I make a mistake, I will still get an opportunity to be taught the right way." The family metaphor is similar to Trompenaars (1993) proposition of a family culture. According to Trompenaars (1993), the family culture is personal, with close face-to-face relationships, but also hierarchical.

This culture is thus power-oriented whereby the leader is seen as a caring and benevolent father who knows better than his subordinates and who knows what should be done. Vusi's statement affirms this notion for the reason that he regards himself as a 'child' who needs to be taken care of, and who will be taught the right things with regards to doing his job. It is important to note that the level at which he came into the bank is important as it can have an influence on how Vusi expects the culture to be and how he perceives it. He joined the bank through a learnership programme and as a result he came with an expectation of being taught and learning from his seniors. One could also argue that this statement enforces feelings of dependence by Vusi. This dependence may reinforce the patriarchal and somewhat patronising asymmetries that characterise White father and Black 'boy' relationships.

The most frequently espoused values were Ubuntu and Respect. These values were related to the idea of family because they felt that these values are also practiced within their family contexts. The concept of *ubuntu* has been used in business literature to suggest a movement towards African management practices (e.g. Binedell, 1993; Khoza, 1993; and Christie, 1996). Ubuntu is an African humanism, which places great emphasis on concern for people, as well as on good behaviour and working for the common good (Mbigi and Maree, 1995, cited in Maré, 2001).

In relation to how the participants identify with the values of the company, African participants indicated that the values of Ubuntu and Respect are associated with their ethnic cultures. Sifiso summarised this viewpoint by saying, “Black counterparts in the environment, would understand what ubuntu actually means. Us Blacks, we don’t have to constantly think, ag, there’s a spirit of ubuntu today, it’s with you everyday.” Schein (1985) claimed that values define what members of a culture care about most and are revealed by their priorities. He further asserted that values guide cultural members in their evaluations of what is right and what is wrong and thus they are sometimes equated with the moral codes of that culture. In terms of individuals’ source of identity, Taylor 1989, p.27) stated that, “My identity is defined by the commitments and identifications which provide the frame or horizon within which I can try to determine from case what is good, or what ought to be done. It is the horizon within which I am capable of taking a stand.” According to Taylor (1986) a person can view their identity as defined by some moral or spiritual commitment or tradition they belong to.

Ubuntu has for centuries provided Africans with a framework within which people could live and define themselves and it also instil a sense of what is good and admirable or of value. The following statement by Lebo indicates how important it is for individuals to want to be associated with what is seen as 'good': "I can't believe I was not rated on Ubuntu because I am an African, I should understand, I should be an example of what Ubuntu is." Lebo and Sifiso's statements insinuate that the value of ubuntu belongs to African people and as a result it is what separates them from other ethnicities and as a result it is used as a frame of reference for Black individuals.

The bank like most South African organisations operated for many years under apartheid laws. It thus excluded the previously disadvantaged groups especially the majority populations, Blacks. By including the ubuntu value as part of the company's values appears to be an attempt on the part of the bank to move away from its past practices and try to accommodate its Black employees. The inclusion of this value was to ensure that the bank principles and values include Black people so that everyone in the organisation would feel included. However, based on the statements made by some of the Black participants, this value seems to be utilised to emphasise the differences that exist between Africans and Whites, rather than something that could unify them. This is noted especially in the way the African participants identify with this value, and how they believe it is a value that exists in their African culture.

Although the concept of ubuntu is associated with what is good and concern for people, Black individuals might find it is patronising to believe that White employees have an

understanding of what it means to have the value of ubuntu, especially taking into consideration that Black culture was perceived as inferior in the apartheid era. In Lebo's case, it appears that she is shocked that a non-African individual was given an award for practicing ubuntu. In his statement, Sifiso argues that ubuntu is not something that a person can learn and think about. He argues that it is at the unconscious level, rather than conscious. In this sense, it seems that it is more of a basic assumption that individuals belonging to the African subculture have. Also it appears that Whites, Coloureds and Indian counterparts are excluded from understanding what ubuntu means and what it stands for.

Even though these Africans are happy that ubuntu is part of the bank's values, their responses indicate that it places too much emphasis on racial differences, rather than being useful for making African individuals feel included by the culture of the bank. This could cause further racial divisions and can imply discrimination within the bank. Maré (2001) pointed out that, characteristics of "traditional African communities", such as ubuntu, found in literature (e.g. Mbigi, 1997; Koopman, 1993) tend to focus on what distinguishes one race from the other(s). Furthermore, Human (1996) argued that the problem with diversity management in organisations has been the emphasis on what makes people different rather than what they share in common. In sum, for an organisation that wishes to be accommodating to everyone, it is evident that the value of ubuntu can do more harm than good to the company's efforts if its application is not sensitive to the complexities involved. Moreover, it also begs the question why an

organisation would value ubuntu in the context of no real transformation in relation to its demographic makeup.

In terms of who came up with the values in the organisation, there is an understanding amongst the participants that the executive committee proposed possible values and the employees were asked to vote on the values they found to be suitable. Based on organisational culture theories, it is expected that the executive committee came up with the bank's values. To support this view, Schein (2004) noted that the leader of the organisation creates the culture of the organisation based on their personal visions, goals, beliefs, values, and assumptions about how things should be. Moreover, the leader will impose these on the members of the organisation and select members on the basis of their similarity of thought and values. Although, they felt that the executive committee came up with the values, most of them felt that they were included, through initiatives such as workshops and surveys, in determining the final values. None of the participants had a problem with the way these values transpired.

The Psychological Contract between the Bank and its employees

The manner in which an organisation perceives its employees is one of the dimensions in Schein's (1985) typology of basic assumptions, which he termed 'the nature of human nature'. At the organisational level, the basic assumptions about "the nature of human nature" are often expressed most clearly in how workers and managers are viewed (Schein, 2004). Participants believe that the bank views its employees as highly self-motivated hence it operates under the concept of owner-manager, whereby individuals

are accountable and responsible for their own jobs. This view is congruent with McGregor's (1960) Theory Y, where managers have an assumption that people are self-motivated and therefore need to be challenged and channelled, not controlled (cited in Schein, 2004).

While the bank as a whole holds this view of its employees, it was noted that not all managers view their employees this way and that some managers micromanage their employees. Tumi emphasised this view when she said, "I think it depends on management, I mean there are others that are actually positive about their staff and the way they do things; others are insecure, they are so insecure that they want to push people." Lisa also concurred with Tumi by saying, "it depends on area to area, you get areas that just think that people are just lazy." From these two assertions it is evident that there are countercultures within this bank. Martin (1992) defined countercultures as pockets of resistance to the views espoused by top management. Furthermore, Hatch and Cunliffe (2006) maintained that countercultures hold values and beliefs that actively challenge corporate culture. In this case, it seems that the top managers in the bank encourage and promote an 'owner-manager culture'; however, there are certain managers that tend to challenge or resist what the banks culture promotes.

There was a division in terms of how the bank views diversity of opinions, where some participants felt that it was viewed as a strength and others did not think so. Some individuals felt that the manner in which the bank will view ones opinion will depend on that individual's position within the bank. Sarah summarised this viewpoint by saying the

following: “it depends on where you are at. You will get maybe not even at supervisory level, the lower level, they might be perceived as trouble makers, whereas if it’s a manager, they might view it differently.”

Regarding how people attain promotions within the bank, a vast majority of participants felt that it depends on who you know and who knows you within the bank. Some people went as far as to state that it is those who suck up to the managers that receive promotions. Vusi said, “it’s someone who is a teacher’s pet, but not really, but who goes to the manager’s office even if it’ not necessary.” Not only did the participants believe that it is people who suck up to the managers who become successful, but they also felt that race also played a major role in determining who gets promoted. The following assertion by Sifiso demonstrates this point: “If someone is making the decision let me say would be a White face to bring someone at their level or below them, they’re gonna want a White face, if you are a Black person who’s got the right qualifications, the right experience, they’re gonna use more criteria to judge you before you can get to that position, that’s just how it is.”

Sifiso feels that Black individuals have to prove themselves first before they can be eligible to receive promotions while Whites are not required to do the same. It would therefore appear that the informal networking where they “suck up” to management largely occurs outside the workplace in spaces that Black employees do not have access to. Lisa was particularly hurt by this when a cohort of White males that she had trained when they first joined the bank were promoted many years before her despite her longer

tenure and experience. She asserted: “it’s just that guys that actually joined after me, you train them and they move on, 90 percent were men, they went into management positions before me.”

This reflects a paradox in that, while the legislation advocates preferential treatment of Black people; first preference is actually given to White people with regards to promotions.. Morrison and Von Glinow (1990) argue that the dominant Whites tend to feel that they are entitled to be rewarded, for example, by advancing to high positions. They further asserted that Blacks and women are often denied top positions because White males have a belief that Blacks and women are not competent to assume management positions. The status quo is maintained by prejudiced gate keepers that control access to employment and promotion.

Perceptions of Employment Equity and Affirmative Action

Merit versus Tokenism

Employment equity was viewed as a positive and necessary tool for redressing the imbalances that were imposed by the apartheid regime. Based on this view, all participants perceived employment equity and affirmative action as being fair and just. This result is similar to findings on how individuals perceive affirmative action practices. A study by Konrad and Linnehan (1995) illustrated that non-Whites tend to accept affirmative action policies than White counterparts (cited in McMillan-Caperhart and Richard, 2005). Kluegel and Smith (1983) claimed that this positive perception and attitude towards affirmative action policies on the part of Black individuals is associated

with self-interest. Sarah attested to this by saying, “I think it’s a positive thing, it really opened doors for a lot of us. A lot of people are getting a lot of opportunities that I doubt would have been here if it was not for employment equity.” She evidently admits to be supportive of employment equity practices and based on her statement it is obvious that she feels it is a good thing because she has benefited from it, so she supports it based on self-interest.

As much as they are supportive of the concept, it was evident that some of the participants felt that they have not benefited from employment equity practices and affirmative action. Perhaps the reason they do not feel that they have benefited from employment equity practices and affirmative action due to the stigma that is attached to it. A study by Heilman, Block, and Stathatos (1997) showed that the association with an affirmative action effort stigmatizes intended beneficiaries, who are inferred to be incompetent.

Heilman et al. (1997) asserted that qualifications are crucial in selection decisions and as a result, the perception that they did not play a central role is likely to lead to an assumption that the individual in question is not competent. Pettigrew and Martin (1987) went as far as to emphasise that if this individual were truly qualified, the reasoning goes, he or she would not have needed the help of affirmative action (Heilman et al., 1997).

The stigma of affirmative action tends to make individuals who benefit from it, feel a need to prove their competence. Sindiswa emphasised this point by stating, “I think we as

EE candidates, we should take advantage of employment equity, but once we are inside the organisation we need to really show what we are really worth." This statement is a clear indication of the pressures that employment equity candidates are faced with on a daily basis within South African organisation. They do not want to be viewed as being given "token" positions. The EE candidates felt that the stigma of being a token position came from individuals who have not worked with them closely before, however, they seemed to be afraid of experiencing the stigma associated with being an employment equity beneficiary.

The main concern for the employment equity candidates was the belief that it is not correctly implemented and it is sometimes badly used. One of the issues indicated was related to employment equity being a numbers game. Human et al (1999) argue that focusing only on the numbers game is a common error in implementing employment equity. They further noted that "organisations which have played the numbers game at the expense of other aspects of employment equity initiatives have tended to do no more than ice the rotten cake, especially when they have gone for numbers, irrespective of the competence of particular job applicants," (Human et al. 1999, p. 2). Furthermore, Human et al. (1999) highlighted that these forms of tokenism or window-dressing are invidious as they set Black people up for failure and often reconfirms the already negative stereotypes many White people have of them.

There was a sense of wanting to obtain the job based on merit on the part of the EE candidates. Also due to the stigma associated with benefiting from employment equity,

most of the participants stressed the fact that they have worked hard to get where they are in their careers and they do not believe that they only received their jobs as a result of employment equity and affirmative action. For instance, Thami said, “I think if I was working for this group in the 1970s, I don’t think I would have been accelerated to the point where I am. Obviously it was not a platter given, the opportunities were there, but it was up to me to grab those opportunities.”

Individual’s self-esteem has been proven to influence how people perceive the fairness of initiatives such as employment equity and affirmative action. Crosby and Clayton’s (1990) study indicated that individuals that have a positive self-esteem will be less likely internalise the expectancies of others due to their belief that their success is based on their own abilities and skills. Individuals with a negative self-esteem on the other hand will likely judge their lack of success in relation to other’s expectancies and would be likely to have negative perceptions of AA policies (Crosby and Clayton, 1990).

One can therefore argue that EE candidates that feel that they have not benefited from employment equity practices and that they have to continuously prove their worth have a low self-esteem. However, it can also be argued that the low self-esteem that these EE candidates have is a result of the stigma that is attached with employment equity and affirmative action. The constant feeling of one’s competence being under surveillance could possibly have the effect of chaffing away at one’s sense of self worth and lead to uncertainty especially in instances where feedback is not forthcoming.

There has been and there currently is a national debate about whether or not White females should also benefit from employment equity practices. There was a general feeling that it was a difficult issue to debate because they did not benefit as much as White males in the past, however, there is an argument that they benefited through access to education and economically. Some participants felt that including White females as employment equity beneficiaries is a loophole in the Act because a lot of companies employ White females over Blacks, Coloureds and Indians in order to boost the EE ratings without necessarily employing the other categories. In its 2006-2007 report, the Commission of Employment Equity indicated that White females are now over-represented at all management levels and as a result it raised the question of whether or not this group should remain designated (Commission of Employment Equity, 2007).

Slow Pace of Employment Equity

Based on the CEE report, it is evident that the implementation of the employment equity is still moving at a slow pace. This was articulated by the Chairperson of the CEE when he said "Progress in implementing the Act by employers is still too slow. This snail paced movement only perpetuates and entrenches the racial and gender disparities that exist" (Commission of Employment Equity, 2007, pg. 4). The pace of transformation in the public sector has been arguably faster than in the private sector (Department of Labour, 2007). Organisations in the private sector have provided numerous reasons why there is still a slow pace of transformation, ranging from skills shortages and a lack of Black people in certain sectors. The chairman of the CEE, Jimmy Manyi, controversially disagreed with this view and he emphasised that there is no shortage of skills; rather,

there are a lot of racist employers who refuse to give Blacks 'the break they deserve' (CEE, 2007).

On the subject of the level of representation of EE candidate in senior levels, most participants felt that transformation at senior levels was very stagnant. They felt that EE candidates were represented at junior levels, but were not represented at senior levels. Precious described this phenomenon in the following manner: "I will rather describe it as "mocha", you get the white foam, then you have the chocolate up there, just a little bit of chocolate on your cappuccino." In this example, Precious compares the level of representation with a type of coffee, where she illustrates that there is a lot of representation of EE candidates ("chocolate") in the lower levels but Whites are still over-represented in senior levels ("white foam").

With regards to the banking industry specifically, participants felt that there has been an improvement on the part of the banks in general including this one to actually employ EE candidates. Nonetheless, there was a common feeling that not all sectors within the bank have a fair representation of EE candidates. It was widely suggested that to ensure that EE candidates are fully represented across all sectors in any organisation, they need to look at the numbers of individuals at different levels rather than the organisation as a whole. To illustrate the unbalanced representation of EE candidates, Sibusiso said, "In certain divisions, they will flood those divisions with Blacks to make up their numbers, in certain divisions they'll just keep them out as much as they could." Sibusiso's statement

also illustrates the earlier argument that in most cases the implementation of employment equity is mostly just a numbers game.

The Bank's commitment to transformation

Transformation pace within the bank

There is a wide belief that the bank takes transformation seriously, however, there seems to be a sense that not all divisions within the bank are committed to transformation. This view indicates that the dominant culture is supportive in terms of increasing the number of EE candidates within the bank; however, there are sub-cultures or even counter-cultures that seem to be resistant to the views espoused by top management and as a result resisting change. Based on the aim of employment equity practices, it would appear that the resistance comes from White managers and this statement was supported by Lebo when she said, "I've seen a lot of discrepancies, a lot of things could be done better, they are just being slowed down by the people who have been in senior positions for so long and they don't want to be shaken or moved, are quite comfortable, 'don't disturb me'."

The commitment of the bank to transformation was questioned by some participants. They felt that the bank is not taking it as seriously in practice as they claim to be on paper. Lerato stated the following: "My problem with this EE thing, I don't hear it, it's only when there is a crisis or something when you hear about it in the paper. I mean we have an EE forum here at this bank, I don't know what they talk about, I don't get notices, we don't get told, now and again you see a poster." In defence of the EE forum, Precious who is a member stated the following: "I think it takes it seriously, I'm one of

the members on the transformation committee. We've gone through the teething processes and we are into the rollout section, the transformation committee is no longer a talk show as people used to label it." When she was asked to rate the bank in terms of its commitment to meet the demographic levels of the country, she contradicted her previous statement by giving the bank an average rating of 5. This indicates that it is moving at a medium pace, which contradicts her statement that the Bank is taking it seriously, because if this was the case the pace would be moving faster than it is currently.

It was suggested that the leaders of the bank have a great influence on the pace of transformation. For example, Sifiso said, "Change takes long, really it does, as long as the people that are still running the bank are those previously in the apartheid days, it will only be very slow for them to start doing that. For them it's like a threat, it is like giving away an empire." Based on the study conducted by Smith and Kluegel (1984), it is expected that the Whites in senior positions will feel threatened by the outcome of employment equity. This is related to the self-interest perspective which argues that individuals tend to oppose policies that threaten their own well-being and to support policies that benefit them (Smith and Kluegel, 1984).

Other participants believe that top management has the right attitude about it; however, the people below them who have to ensure that change does take place are the ones slowing the process down. Lisa said, "They do take it seriously, it's just that further down the line, people are not taking it seriously." The people that are in charge of running the process further down within the organisation are middle or line managers. "The

traditional definition of line management implies that there is a scalar chain of authority within the organisation from senior management, through ranks of middle and first line managers to individual employees (Morgan, 1997, p. 26, cited in Holden and Roberts, 2004).” It is through this chain that directives will be communicated from the higher echelons to the lower (Holden and Roberts, 2004). According to Holden and Roberts (2004), a middle manager as an individual who implements strategies, ensures that operations are successfully carried out and creates a working environment that is conducive for its subordinates. This view of middle managers illustrates that they play a very important role in ensuring that transformation policies are managed properly. Moreover, Human et al. (1999) stated that employment equity can only succeed if the line managers willingly employ, develop and promote individuals from previously excluded groups.

They have an important role to play in the transformation process as they are the ones that are responsible for employing and promoting EE candidates since they are the ones that have to work closely with them. Lebo was quoted saying, “Middle managers are experiencing this very think layer of a system to say you know I’m just a manager from here I don’t know how I’m going to move forward. The junior managers are saying I know definitely I will be there, I will take so and so’s job whatever case it may be, these middle managers within this organisation, they either leave or they cause such a resistance to junior managers to get into middle management.”

Culture's influence on the Transformation process

There is an understanding amongst participants that the bank embraces females and White males. Females are believed to be embraced because there has been an increase in their representation in senior levels within the bank. Also the bank has initiatives such as women's day celebration to show them how much they are valued within the company. Some participants feel that Black women are not fully embraced because they are given positions but they are not supported once they are in those positions. Lebo voiced out her frustration by saying, "I will speak for Black females as an organisation and as the country, there is no support, there is no support!"

Social Psychology refers to Black females as double minorities. This refers to their double oppression that they face both in terms of living in societies that have a history of discrimination against Black people and systems of patriarchy. It would therefore appear that some participants such as Lebo agree that there is not sufficient redress for their double minority status (Morrison and Von Glinow (1990).

The need for a change in culture: A change in mindset

It was indicated that there is a need for the cultures of South African organisation to change especially the mindset of senior (strategisers) and middle management (implementers). It is believed that transformation should be seen as benefiting the South African community and the socio-economic status of the country. In terms of a need for a change in the mindset of people Anna said, "The change of mindset is not coming through, we employ people at different levels based on equity, based on race, but you are

putting people in positions where you are not enabling them because the mindset does not change."

Cultural change occurs when assumptions are symbolically challenged within what Hatch and Cuncliffe (2006) call the interpretation process. For instance in a culture that assumes that Blacks are not competent, the success of a Black senior manager within the organisation could possibly challenge that basic assumption and could bring new meaning into the culture.

"Job hopping": A consequence of organisational culture

Popular media and anecdotal accounts are propagating the view that Black professionals are unreliable job hoppers. While this was initially conceptualised to be a result of chasing higher salaries because of their premium status, it is now becoming apparent that there are other factors that have motivated this trend. The lack of support was also seen as being one of the contributing factors to "job hopping" amongst Black individuals. A lack of responsibility and opportunities for growth were also seen as important factors that make Black individuals move from one organisation to another.

Human et al. (1999) supports this assertion with this by stating that there are Black individuals who job hop in search of better pay, however; most of them look for career opportunities elsewhere when development opportunities are not forthcoming or when they are marginalised or treated as tokens. Thami encapsulated the misconception by saying, "they will come and say Black people job hop, Black people don't job hop

because of money, they mainly job hop because of lack of adequate responsibility, worth, trust and lack of contribution which they can make at that level, it's just that the opportunity is not there." This statement illustrates the frustrations that Black individuals are currently faced with in South African organisations. All these issues that frustrate Blacks are reproduced within the culture of an organisation. It would therefore follow that if the organisational culture of most organisations was accommodating and adapting rather than assimilating, the phenomenon of job hopping would be marginally less.

A significant number of the participants felt that there was a lack of mentorship and grooming within the Bank, and this also contributed to the slow process of transformation. The lack of mentorship programmes within this Bank was also exposed when participants claimed that they did not have mentors when they first joined the bank. It is apparent that participants believe that individuals require mentorship in order to be effective leaders within the bank. However, it is quite perplexing when one considers that White males are in leadership positions and continue to advance to leadership positions, while Blacks continue to be deprived of those positions. This confusion resides in the fact that White managers and Blacks work within the same Bank; however, Whites are "groomed" for top positions. Lerato supported this argument by saying, "even if you hired a White person, you would groom and teach the person, that's why there's a lot of White people in senior positions today."

The lack of mentorship and advancement by Blacks are a clear indication of the barriers that still exist within an organisation's culture that could have a negative impact on the

implementation and management of employment equity. Having said that, organisations that want to succeed in the transformation process, have to make sure that they do not just employ people to increase their numbers, rather; they should also ensure that those people are developed within the culture.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Labour legislation, such as the Employment Equity Act, addressing the inequalities created in the Apartheid Era has evidently resulted in an influx of previously disadvantaged groups (Africans, Coloureds, Indians and Females). The culture of South African organisations has however, been questioned in terms of whether it is accommodating to these individuals. This culture has been accused of resisting change which results in the slow pace of transformation processes. Investigating how employment equity beneficiaries perceive these cultures is important as it would reveal if indeed these cultures are supportive of the transformation process that promote equity and if they are accommodating to those who benefit from this process.

The current study explored how employment equity candidates perceive their organisation's culture in terms of whether it is accommodating to them and consequently promoting the transformation process. Even though employment equity in South Africa is a contentious issue, this area has been under explored in Organisational Culture research, with past research generally focussing on perceptions of employment equity as impinging on the transformation process, and not on the role that cultures of organisation play in determining the success of this process.

The outcomes of the study indicated that employment equity beneficiaries working within a bank feel that there is an effort on the Bank's part to accommodate them. This is apparent in how they try to integrate their family and cultural values in their operations.

This Bank also seems to be providing autonomy to its employees, which they felt that was an indication that they are trusted to do their work effectively without being micro-managed. There is therefore a sense of family within this Bank. However, there seem to be divisions between different racial groups. These divisions are contradictory to this sense of family and the values such as Ubuntu and Respect as these values promote unity. These divisions could have a negative impact on the transformation process, and could therefore result in the failure thereof.

Furthermore, the Bank is perceived as not being fully committed to the transformation processes. There is a general feeling that Whites, especially males, are receiving preferential treatment over Blacks and females. They are perceived as having more opportunities to advance to senior levels as they are being earmarked for these positions within the private spaces of people's homes and after hours which Black people do not have ready access to. This seems to be in conflict with what the Employment Equity Legislation endorses, as it promotes the preferential treatment of Blacks and females. Consequently, although it is seen as being committed on paper, there is still a great deal of resistance from those who are responsible for the implementation of employment equity policies.

The ubuntu value comes into question when one reflects on the activities or lack thereof occurring with regards to employment equity practices and transformation. If this value was in use within this Bank and many other organisations in South Africa that endorse it,

transformation would be seen as having a greater benefit for the country as a whole, rather than just certain groups.

In conclusion, the findings of this study provide a clear indication that the transformation process within South African organisations still has some way to go before attaining the desired results. Also, it is evident that the transformation process will only be successful if there is an increase in the numbers of employment equity candidates. It is however, important to note that successful and meaningful transformation also requires that the environment in which these candidates work is sufficiently accommodating and encouraging so as to ensure that they perform to their best abilities and as a result add a great amount of value into South African organisations. This can only occur within a climate of all employees feeling valued, having meaningful sense of ownership of the organisations culture as well as adequate representation at all tiers of the managerial decision making hierarchy.

Limitations for current research

According to Patton (2002), qualitative research is filled with ambiguities and uncertainties as it is not bound by methodological rules but, it is rather comprised of strategies that are purposeful. Qualitative research is also made up of inquiry approaches instead of statistical formulas, which makes it difficult to generalise the findings to a larger sample. Data collected from interviews were coded and themes were extracted by the researcher and discussed with the supervisor, and as a result this process allowed for

consistency in the method, however, this method was unsuccessful in providing multiple perspectives from a variety of people with differing expertise.

The choice of the bank under study was based upon a convenience sampling process that can be considered to be subjective and it is possible that the sample is not truly representative of the population of Banks in South Africa. Only 15 EE candidates were included in the study and this may not be representative of all EE candidates across all South African companies. Also it is important to note that organisational culture in South African organisations is different and therefore one cannot generalize the experiences and perceptions of employees from one organisation to a wider population of EE candidates in South African organisations.

The current research did not include EE candidates such as the White females and people with disabilities, therefore, more studies on organisational culture should include the perceptions of culture by these groups. The information obtained from the participants constitutes their perceptions of organisational culture in accommodating them and perceptions of the transformation processes within the country and the Bank, therefore employee subjectivity in reporting cannot be excluded.

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