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Gender employment practices amongst small and medium scale enterprises: A comparitive study of different industries in Gauteng

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The research explored the gender employment practices and conditions of work among Small and Medium Scale enterprises (SMEs) in Johannesburg and Benoni. Practices in the selected productive and service industries were compared in order to ascertain the extent of gender equality practices in those companies.

Chapter one discusses the aims and rationale of the research. The relevant literature and, the theoretical framework for the research also form part of this chapter. It further discusses the method for the research and the instruments for data collection. The limitations of the study as well as the profile of the four companies studied are also included in this chapter.

The aim of the study as indicated in this chapter is to find out the extent to which Small and Medium Scale enterprises (SMEs), contribute to job equity or inequity among male and female employees in Gauteng. This will be investigated by looking at the employment practices and conditions of work in the selected productive and service-oriented SMEs.

The section on the rationale highlights the specific need for the study which, among other things, is the fact that finding out about the role of SMEs in gender equity in employment would indicate the extent to which this important sector of the economy contributes to improving the socioeconomic status of women and bridging the inequality gap in employment between males and females. As indicated above the relevant literature for this study is fully discussed in this chapter. Reference has been made to some works done in South Africa like those of Rogers, (1998); Kesper, (2000); Mabasa, (2001); Sawaya, 1995; Levy, (1993) and so on. Their findings help to form the basis for this research.

The theoretical framework clearly highlights the use of gender as an analytical tool for the study. Here, particular reference is made to the theories put forward by Marini and Fan (1997) and Ridgeway (1997). They both provide explanations for gender differences in employment. Marini and Fan, for instance, saw gender – role socialization and gender discrimination, which offer men and women different skills and credentials as the main explanation for assigning men and women to different jobs in the work place and thus the

existence of gender inequity. Ridgeway explains persistence of gender inequality in the workplace from interactional perspective. She indicates that sex categorization and gender stereotyping arise from interactional processes. Actors are classified as male or female on the basis of physical sex criteria and on the basis of personal presentation. She concludes that employer's discriminatory preferences come from interactional processes.

Case study is the method chosen for the research, and structured questionnaire and open-ended interviews are the specific instruments for gathering the relevant data. A total of four industries were investigated in the study: two from the productive sector (manufacturing), and the remaining two from the service sector. Issues that were targeted in the interview include recruitment procedure, job mobility, salary, benefits, gender practices, sexual harassment, and type of employment, number of workers by sex, time of work, overtime payment, and affirmative action. The limitations of the study as indicated in this chapter include, among other things, the few number of industries examined. Studying large number of industries was not feasible considering the short period of time allocated for a research report. Nevertheless, quite a good number of relevant pieces of information on the issue studied were gathered from the few industries.

The profile of the four companies in the study as indicated above is another major part of this chapter. In this case issues like the ownership of the company, the age, the size, the product and the number of employees by sex in each company are clearly stated. The last paragraph of this section is devoted to the comparison of the profile of the different companies in the case study. It shows that the two productive industries have group ownership, have been operating for at least 50 years and have very large number of employees. On the other hand, the two service industries are both family businesses by husband and wife. They are young establishments and have very few workers compared to the productive industries, but the ratio of females to males employed in the service industries was greater than that of the productive industries.

Aims

This study investigated gender employment practices among small and medium scale enterprises in Gauteng. It specifically looked into the extent to which small and medium scale enterprises contribute to job equity or inequity among male and female employees.

Employment conditions and work environment as they affect male and female employees were also considered. Other specific areas that were investigated include provision of facilities such as day- care centres for nursing mothers and women with young children, separate toilets and changing rooms for male and female workers; who did and who did not receive employment letters; who is and who is not registered with the unemployment insurance fund (UIF); entitlements such as annual leave, maternity leave and study leave. Others include workers upward mobility in terms of promotion, in-service training, job performance recognition and salary levels; and issues that relate to harassment, dismissal and victimization in small and medium-scale enterprises. The study also investigated the type of employment (whether part-time, temporary, casual, full-time) of male and female workers and whether there is any difference in the respective jobs (cleaning, administrative, secretarial, messenger, cashier, machine operation and so on) they do or shift in the industries traditionally considered males or females. How the above practices differ from productive industries to service industries was particularly highlighted in order to identify the type of industry that is more sensitive to gender equity by creating jobs for males and females or providing better condition of work for both men and women. The study further looked into some of the gender issues that exist in the different work places like gender discrimination, gender preference in employment and other gender biases. Knowledge of and compliance with affirmative action was also introduced in the study considering its relevance in any study of employment equity or inequity.

Rationale

The achievement of gender equality in employment and other spheres of life is essential for any meaningful transformation and development in South Africa. The South African Labour Force Survey (LFS) (2003) revealed significant gender differences in employment. Of the total male workforce, 79 percent was employed in the formal sector and 19 percent in the informal sector. By comparison only 67 percent of the female workforce was employed in the formal sector and 18 percent in domestic service. Both sexes were equally represented in the informal sector. However, it is not merely a question of quantity but also of the quality of employment. It is in the latter respect that women continue to lag far behind their male counterparts. The ‘Employment Equity Act’ of 1998 was designed to address these issues through ‘Affirmative Action’ and ‘protection’ against ‘unfair discrimination’. Under this provision “every employer must

take steps to promote equal opportunity in the workplace by eliminating unfair discrimination in any employment policy or practice" (Employment Equity Act, Section 5). Clearly, legislation and government commitment to gender equity does not guarantee the implementation of gender equity practices in the workplace. Evidence shows that the number of women occupying top positions in 7000 companies only rose from 12.4 percent to12.7 percent during the period 2000 – 2003 (This Day, 15 July, 2004 p10).

Research on gender equity in the workplace is important for development purposes. It is widely recognized that gender equity in employment would contribute hugely to improving the socio-economic status of women and thus contribute to the achievement of equity in society as a whole. The role played by women's labour force participation in the family, community and society at large has been found to be very crucial for development especially with regard to their contribution to household income, women's autonomy and to the overall production of the society and economic development (Sevakami, 1997; Tulasidher, 1993). Again the level of women's income has been found to influence the quantity and quality of nutrition, goods, services and assets available to the child and other members of the household (Mosley and Chen, 1984; Wery, 1987; Willie, 1959; Stockwell, 1962; Markides and Barnes, 1977; Kumar, 1977; Hope, 1992). The role of SMEs in any effort to achieve gender equity in employment is considered crucial to this study. It is argued by development economist and policy makers that the SME sector creates jobs and helps reduce poverty and is also a driving force in economic growth (ADB News Release, 2001; Cant and Stanford, 2004).

In line with effort to combat high unemployment including gender gap in employment, the South African Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) came up with the proposal to develop the small, medium and micro-enterprise sector in South Africa which is based on the assumption that "small and medium sized businesses provide employment opportunities in both developed and developing countries" (Economic Reform Today, 1995*)*. In South Africa, SMEs took effect as a government development strategy in 1996 under the National Small and Business Act (President's Office: No. 1901.27 November 1996). The DTI is charged with the responsibility of implementing the National Small Business Strategy. The strategy aims at contributing to the creation of job, generation of income, redistribution of wealth and to the overall economic growth of the country (DTI). One area of economic activity that is emphasized in the act is job creation but it is unclear

whether gender equity features as an objective. It is therefore on this basis that this study sees it as an imperative to introduce the issue of gender in the job creation function of small and medium scale businesses.

Investigating gender- specific conditions and needs of men and women employed by these enterprises is in line with CIP/SED (Craft Industry Production/ Small Enterprise Development) issue Paper 1 (April, 1999), which stresses the Gender Approach in Small Enterprise Development. The paper argues that, "Gender sensitivity in relation to small enterprise is concerned with the promotion of gender-balanced development (equality of development for both women and men), in terms of social equity, economic efficiency, and efforts to foster sustainable development" (CIP/SED ISSUE PAPERS1 1999 p.2). Considering the points mentioned above, there is therefore, a great need to carry out this research. How SMEs in particular are addressing the gender question is particularly important. Most important is the place of women employees in these enterprises and how they contribute to reducing the gender inequality in employment.

The share of microenterprises and small-scale enterprises is quite large in many developing countries and as a result they tend to be among the largest employers of labour in these countries. Their low technology in developing countries makes them labour intensive and therefore agency of job creation (Hallberg, 2000). It is also believed that promoting the growth of SMEs may lead to a more equitable distribution of income and poverty reduction. Thus it is often treated as a redistribution or poverty reduction measure (ibid). SMEs have been found to be a necessary measure to empower people especially those at the grassroots and through it the capacity of private individuals; group of individuals; companies, and communities to organize themselves for development is enhanced (Adams, 2001).

In South Africa, SMEs took effect as a government development strategy in 1996 under the National Small Business Act. The Act is "to provide for the establishment of the National Small Business Council and the Ntsika Enterprise Promotion Agency; and to provide guidelines for organs of state in order to promote small business in the Republic; and to provide for matters incidental thereto" (President's Office: No. 1901. 27 November 1996). The South African Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) is charged with the responsibility of implementing the National Small Business Strategy and it does this

through the Centre for Small Business Promotion (CSBP). The strategy aims at contributing to the creation of job, generation of income, redistribution of wealth and to the overall economic growth of the country (DTI)). The DTI through this centre has embarked on a number of "assistance strategies' to boost and develop small businesses in the country. The support provided include business advice, relevant information, training and financial services. In addition to the DTI's Centre of Small Business Promotion (CSBP), agencies that engage in Small and Medium Enterprise Development Programme are the State-owned Ntsika Enterprise Promotion Agency (Ntiska) and State-funded Khula Enterprise Finance. Others are Business Partners (BP); National Empowerment Fund (NEF); Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) and Business Referral and Information Network (BRAIN) (Ibid). All are aimed at creating an enabling environment for the development and growth of SMEs, which is hoped to contribute in turn to the socioeconomic development of the country.

SMME development strategy, as it implies, supports sustainable development from below and it is at the same time a market driven development strategy supported by Neo-Classical economists. It is based on the assumption that 'small is beautiful' and encourages individual and local initiatives and participation. Although SMME development strategy is an aspect of 'participatory development', the state plays active role. In South Africa this is done through the DTI which runs a number of support programmes as has been indicated above aimed at encouraging interested individuals and groups and exposing them to the discipline of the market by offering them a range of financial services; loan and equity capital, counseling; advice and technical support; skills training; tender advice; access to technology; savings and investment promotion (SOUTHAFRICA INFO)

Although there exists an extensive body of literature on SMEs in South Africa such as Rogerson, (1998); Kesper, (2000); Mabasa, (2001); Sawaya, (1995); Levy, (1993); Pyke, (1992); Mead, (1994); Storey and Johnson, (1989); Loveman and Sengenberger, (1990); Snodgrass and Biggs, (1996); Birch, (1987); McCormick et al, (1997); there is still a dearth of studies on gender equality practices. This study therefore hopes to make a contribution towards the understanding of gender employment practices in such an important area of socioeconomic development, the SMEs.

The study will also, to a large extent, contribute to the available literature on small and medium enterprises and development and to the large and growing comparative literature on gender equality in the labour market. Specifically, it will reveal the role of SMEs in gender equality and inequality and in creating a suitable working environment for both male and female workers. It is believed that by introducing a gender perspective in the study of SMEs, their role in facilitating or militating against gender equality will be determined.

The comparative aspect of the research is considered very valuable in the sense that by indicating the particular industries with more gender equality or inequality, it will highlight the industries to be targeted in policy.

Literature Review

Gender and Employment

The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe observed gender asymmetry in the privatization process and employment cuts among what is termed the transition countries such as Armenia, Macedonia, Albania, Lithuania, Russia, Slovenia, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan and so on. It was found that access to formal and informal networks in all sectors of the economy and access to new jobs in the private sector favoured men more than women in the transition countries after 1989. In contrast, women's share in part-time and atypical forms of employment that attract no social entitlement and benefits like maternity leaves, pension, and low wages compared to full time jobs was higher than men. This is also the case in Western Europe (Ewa Ruminska-Zimny, 2002). It was further observed that after 1990, more men than women were affected by the employment cuts in many of the transition countries. The explanation for this was seen to be structural changes which no longer protected men's job in the industry and the ability of women to adjust to labour demand and accepting low status jobs. Also women earned about 20-25 percent lower than men because of their concentration in the less paid and lower sectors of the economy (Ibid).

Gender inequality in employment was also found in Canada where over 70 percent of employed women concentrate in the female-dominated sector as health, teaching, clerical, sales and service as opposed to 31 percent of men in 1994. Again more women than men were represented in part-time, temporary and contracted jobs. Only about 9 percent of men were in part-time jobs and women who wanted full-time jobs could not find it (United Nations, 1996).

Considerable cross-national variation in the gender gap in workplace authority was found in seven countries – US, Canada, UK, Australia, Sweden, Norway, and Japan. Evidence suggests that these variations across countries are explained by the interaction between the availability of managerial positions and the capacity of politically organized women's movements to challenge barriers to women gaining authority in the workplace. Family responsibility and personal attributes or employment settings did not account for the gender gap in authority (Erik Olin Wright; Janeen Baxter; Gunn Elisabeth Birkelund, 1995).

In their study of the gender differences in pay in the United States, Francine D. Blau and Lawrence M. Kahn (1999), observed substantial convergence of gender earning disparities between 1978 and 1999. It was found that the weekly earnings of women full-time workers increased from 61 percent to 76.5 percent of men's earnings. This increase in the gender earnings ratio is explained by the entry of new cohorts into the labour market, each one better prepared and possibly encountering less discrimination than previous ones or an upward progression over time in the gender ratio within given cohorts or some combination of the two.

A comparative study of these disparities in seven industrialized countries, on the other hand, found that public sector workers in most of the welfare states earn more on average than workers in the private sector. Workers on the low end of the earnings distribution are found to be at advantage than others. No significant effect of public employment on the overall gender gap in wages was found in most of the countries (Janet C. Gornick and Jerry A. Jacobs. 1998). Focusing on the explanation of gender differences in wages at career entry, Marini and Fan (1997), analysed data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth between 1979 and 1991 and found that at "career entry women earn 84 cents for every dollar men earn" (Marini and Fan, 1997 p. 588). Gender differences in occupational aspirations were found to have the most significant effect on gender wage gap than gender differences in worker characteristics, gender differences in job-related skills and

credentials. No significant direct effect was found between gender wage gap and gender differences in adult family roles. External influences of employing organizations and network processes on gender differences in occupational and industrial placements at career entry accounted for about 42 percent of the wage gap (ibid).

Similarly it was indicated that in South Africa, women are drawn into atypical work as opposed to full-time, permanent, and regular employment and their unemployment rate is astronomically high compared to that of men. Many of them are in low paid jobs and have less job security and at the same time face discrimination and other disadvantages such as access to land, capital, credit and technology (COSATU). A South African gender profile shows that majority of the workers in all sectors are men. It is only in the service sector that women's share and that of men are about the same. There is however an increasing trend in female labour participation in South Africa since the 1960s. The range is between 23 percent in 1960 to 38 percent in 1999. By 2000, 70 percent of South African women are employed in the formal workplace with wage and salaries compared to 78 percent of men. But when the comparison is between races, white women seem to be a lot better than African, Asian or Coloured women. A large proportion of African and Coloured women work as domestic workers while only 2 percent of African women were managers as opposed to more than 20 percent of white women in 1999. Again, about 49.6 percent and 48 percent of white males and females respectively are employed in the managerial/professional positions. In the elementary (unskilled) occupations like cleaning, a greater percentage of African women (56 percent) and Coloured women (41 percent) than Whites and Indians fill up the positions and about 48 percent of African males work in the Artisan/Operator occupations (Statistics South Africa, 1999, p 53).

The general set up is that in spite of the rising trend, women in South Africa have lower incomes, and worse jobs than men. But on the average, white South African women earn more than black South African men (INC- Gender Profile, South Africa, 2001). It may be difficult to explain the disparity in employment between men and women in South Africa from differences in educational attainment because generally this is relatively equal for both men and women. In 1997, the illiteracy rate was 15 percent for men and 16.5 percent for women although, more whites were literate than blacks. Also there is little or no difference in the primary and secondary school enrolments between males and females, although there is sharp variation between whites and blacks. For instance, result from

census shows that 3 percent of Africans, 4 percent of Coloureds, 10 percent of Indians, and 24 percent of Whites had post-secondary qualifications (INC-Gender Profile, South Africa, 2001; Maharaj, 1999; Statistics South Africa, 1999, p 41). Similarly, analysis of the South African Human Capital in the 1990s shows that "by age 19, 80 percent of white females have Matric, slightly ahead of Asian women, compared with 14 percent of African females and 33 percent of Coloureds" (Amoateng; Lucas; and Kalule-Sabiti, 2003).

From the wide variation in educational attainment between whites and blacks, the disadvantaged position of Africans in the labour force could be attributed among other things to their low level of education. This is true because only an insignificant number (1.3 percent) of African males and females with higher education are unemployed while 10 percent of males and 13 percent of females with the same qualification make up the national total employed (Statistics South Africa, 2001). The above evidence, therefore, suggests that white females are more likely to get work than African or Coloured females and males, and white males seem to be more favoured than all others.

Small and Medium-Scale Enterprises and Job Creation

The employment creation capacity of SMEs seems to have a global acceptance and this is why between the 1970s and 1980s when the large enterprises in the industrialized countries started experiencing economic difficulties and shedding employment, small firms became the quickest alternative to job creation. A study by Birch, (1987) found that small firms created most new jobs in the United States. Similarly, a tendency towards concentration of workers in small firms was found in many OECD member states (OECD, 1985). Furthermore, a review of data on employment share by enterprise size in nine industrialized nations shows a rising trend in employment in small firms (Loveman and Sengenberger, 1990).

Contrary to the above, an analysis of the role of small manufacturing firms in job creation in the United States between 1973 and 1988 found that they did not consistently create more jobs on a net basis than large firms (Snodgrass and Biggs 1996*).* The explanation is that their higher gross job creation rate is tempered by their high destruction rate and as such they offer less job security.

As indicated earlier, in Bangladesh small firms accounted for 58 percent of employment in 1986 and Ecuador, 55 percent of employment in 1980 (Hall berg, 2000). Similarly, in South Africa, about 60 percent share of employment was located in the micro, small and medium-scale enterprises (Nsika, 1999). A similar situation is found in most other African countries where majority of the small-scale and medium-scale ventures are micro- enterprises that are one-person operations and no capacity to graduate to small-scale businesses because of lack of appropriate technology and resources (Mead, 1995). A survey of five Sub-Saharan African countries – Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Kenya, and Zimbabwe revealed that employment in SMMEs rose by 40 percent and most of the employment (75-80 percent) happened at the start up phase of the firms. A higher rate of job loss was equally found among the new firms, and firm expansion was not accompanied by increase in employment (Mead, 1994; McCormick et al, 1997). Storey and Johnson (1989) expressed concern over the type and quality of jobs created by SMMEs and the share of their contribution to total employment. They are of the view that because many small businesses remain small, it is only the few, which grow that make noticeable contribution to total employment. Again many jobs created by small businesses are of lower quality, unstable and lower pay than those of the larger firms. Similarly, a tendency towards hyper-exploitation of workers is more likely among SMME owners and most times they 'hire and fire' at will because of relaxed labour standards and lack of job security. Other reasons advanced for the exploitation of workers include the need to meet cutthroat competition from larger firms with higher technology and more efficient labour subcontracting condition and vulnerability to changing economic, political and environmental factors (Pyke, 1992).

A study by Kesper (2000) reveals the contribution of formal manufacturing SMMEs to employment growth in three South African regions – Gauteng, Western Cape and the Vaal Triangle. Using both primary and secondary research strategies, she describes the general and common trend in the three regions as 'jobless growth'. Specifically it was found that 41 percent of the firms in the Western Cape sample increased while 38 percent decreased their labour force between 1994 and 1998. A 65 percent increase in sales reported by these firms was accompanied by only a marginal employment growth. In the Vaal Triangle, a situation of jobless growth worse than that of the Western Cape was found, although, many firms in the sample reported experience of positive growth in their turnover and profits in the 1994 and 1999 period. Only about 15 percent of the firms

increased the number of their labour force as against the 35 percent that decreased in 1999. In Gauteng also, increase in turnover was not accompanied by a corresponding increase in job creation. The general phenomenon amongst all the firms in the regions seems to be downsizing the labour force. The study further shows that majority of the successful manufacturing SMMEs in the Witwatersrand like clothing, furniture and metalworking were more inclined to going capital intensive by investing a good share of their profit in buying new and modern equipment instead of increasing their labour input. A number of factors were found to be responsible for the jobless growth across the three regions. Running through the three regions are problems attributed to external factors such as increased competition, labour regulations, market development and labour and other input costs. In Gauteng, import penetration was identified as a major constraint. Kesper's finding is consistent with Mead (1994) that small enterprises do not grow and those that do only grow by small amounts.

In contrast, a study by Rogerson found that SMMEs owned and managed by immigrants contribute significantly to employment creation for many South Africans. Specifically, the result shows that Southern African Development Community (SADC) immigrants and others created an average of 3.33 jobs per SMME. Non-SADC immigrants created more jobs (4.06 per enterprise) than SADC immigrants and employed more native South Africans. The result further indicates that most of the SMMEs are in the retail or service business and only a few are in the production sector like cloth making. Factors such as finance, access to credit facilities, permits, crime and police harassment were identified by immigrants as some of the major obstacles to the start –up and growth of SMMEs. A study of SMMEs and employment sustainability in Braamfontein, South Africa by Mabasa, (2001) revealed that they actually do create jobs in South Africa and have the potential to create sustainable employment if adequate support is provided. The prevailing situation at the time of the study is an increasing growth of employment among SMMEs from the start- up period in the restaurant, stationary, liquor, petrol, pub and cleaning businesses but they were basically on temporary, flexible, shift and casual basis. It is likely that the employers favoured temporary and short- term employment to avoid increased labour costs and to have the freedom to 'hire and fire' at will. The study further found a tendency towards both employment increase and employment reduction as a common feature of the SMMEs. They respond according to need and the temporary

nature of the employments makes it possible for the owners to go up or down in employment.

The studies by Kesper and Rogerson present different pictures of the role of SMMEs in job creation in South Africa. The difference could be as a result of the type of enterprises considered in the two studies. While Rogerson's study of immigrants reflected mostly service or retail sector, Kesper specified to study manufacturing industries. Again Kesper's industries were mainly small and medium- scales that have operated in South Africa for about three years. Rogerson's enterprises were more of microenterprises, run by immigrants for survival in Johannesburg and there was no specification of the age of the businesses. A common feature that runs through the two studies is that there is no analysis of the relative share of males or females in the jobs created in the Rogerson's work and lost or retained in the Kesper work. Obviously, the two studies lack a gender perspective and it is this that the present study hopes to include and investigate. Again, Rogerson's result highlights the need to encourage the growth of small businesses especially micro-enterprises as future employer of labour in South Africa and the need to encourage foreign entrepreneurs to invest in South Africa. The two studies clearly reveal major obstacles to SMME growth and the need for policy intervention.

Mabasa's finding presents an additional feature of the employment practice of SMMEs in South Africa. They are mainly temporary and flexible, indicating the employer's attempt to avoid implications of labour laws and legislations. Like Rogerson, they were all service enterprises. Mabasa's conclusion that the SMMEs have the potential for sustainable employment is not consistent with her finding of high rate of flexibility of employment unless what was meant was sustainability on the part of the owners and the self-employment it offered them. Job that is temporary, casual, and attracts no long-term benefit, cannot be said to be sustainable.

Theoretical Framework

With regard to any development exercise, the concept gender is treated as an analytical tool. It actually assumed this capacity in the 1980s after an increasing awareness of inequalities due to institutional structures (ILO, 2000). As an analytical tool, it does not focus specifically on women as a homogenous group but also on the roles and needs of

men. The emphasis is that for any meaningful gender equality or advancement of the status of women to be achieved in society, an approach that concentrates on the relative position of both men and women in access to societal resources and benefits is most suitable. This is one of the reasons that gave rise to the emergence of Gender and Development (GAD) approach. Gender issue was therefore formally established as a global strategy for promoting gender equality in the Platform of Action adopted at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, in Beijing, in 1995.

Several authors have attempted to provide an explanation for gender differences in employment. Typical amongst them and relevant to the present study are Marini and Fan (1997) and Ridgeway (1997). Marini and Fan focused on five micro-level mechanisms by which individual women and men are sorted into positions in the labour market offering different levels of reward. Firstly, women and men enter the labour market with different skills and credentials or different amounts and kinds of human capital. Secondly, women and men are in different family situations at career entry because of gender differentiation in adult family roles. Thirdly, as a result of gender-role socialization and gender discrimination prior to labour market entry, women and men have different work and family aspirations, which cause them to aspire to different occupations in the labour market. Fourthly, upon entry into the labour market, employers allocate women and men to jobs with different wage rates, primarily because they are allocated to sex-typed jobs. Fifthly, because women and men have different social networks, receive different information, and have different access to influence through those social networks, women and men learn of and apply for jobs with different wage rates (Marini and Fan 1997, pp. 589-590).

Ridgeway (1997) used interactional processes to explain the persistence of gender inequality in the workplace. She indicates that sex categorization (the process by which actors classify one another as male or female on the basis of physical sex criteria and on the basis of personal presentation for example, clothing, hairstyles) and gender stereotypes (what behaviour can be expected from a person of a given category) are the outcomes of interacting which cause men and women to judge differently the rewards available to them. With reference to workplace relations, Ridgeway indicates that interactional processes "conserve inequality by driving the gender-labelling of jobs, constructing people as gender-interested actors, contributing to employers' discriminatory

preferences, and mediating men's and women's perceptions of alternatives and their willingness to settle for given job outcomes" (Ridgeway, 1997, p.218). Sex - categorization, which, is deeply rooted in the cultural rules that organize interaction, has the capacity to activate a number of gender processes that may recreate gender hierarchy in interacting situations such as employment. Every aspect of the employment process from hiring, job searches, placement, performance evaluation, task assignment, promotion, and dealing with customers, clients, bosses, coworkers and subordinates all involve direct or indirect interaction with a concrete other. In each of these situations, actors sex categorise one another which may eventually lead to sex labeling of jobs, to the devaluation of women's jobs, to forms of sex discrimination and other forms of gender based behaviours.

It is argued that employment inequality persists despite the flattening effects of the market because it is continually being recreated anew through interactional gender mechanisms (England, 1992). Factors such as household division of labour, socialized internal constraints as well as employers' prejudice are considered mechanisms that continually recreate gender inequality in paid employment (England and Browne, 1992*).* Again Reskin and Roos (1990) are of the view that gender inequality in employment is maintained through the transformation of labour queues into gender queues. In which case employers rank males as more valuable workers than females and subsequently begin a process of sex labeling of jobs. Strober and Arnold (1987) refer to cultural system of patriarchy in which employers give men the first pick of the best jobs. Jacobs (1989) suggests a "revolving door" process by which occupations remain predominantly the territory of one sex despite a great deal of individual movement. Ridgeway, (1997, p.224), on the other hand specifies, "The culprit is a diffuse system of gender social control involving socialization and employment practices in the workplace"

Ridgeway suggests that an attempt to reduce gender inequality in employment should involve an understanding of the multilevel nature of gender processes and the role of interactional processes in maintaining gender inequality. He considers affirmative action policy an appropriate intervention at both the structural and the interactional level because it can change the interpersonal configuration of actors, and create more stereotype-disconfirming experiences for all. With commitment to affirmative action, greater accountability among workplace decision makers and reduction on the impact of gender

stereotype on their judgements and evaluations are expected (Fiske and Neuberg, 1990). As indicated above, affirmative action is considered a worthy policy in South Africa and elsewhere with the goal of reducing or eliminating all forms of discrimination or disadvantage. Affirmative action on employment is one of them and it involves reducing racial, gender and other forms of social disparity (USAIDSA, 2002). The aim of Affirmative Action in South Africa is to provide socio-economic opportunities such as skills development or employment to the individuals who have been historically denied opportunities and to see that such discriminations are not continued in future (Shakantu, Kaatz and Bowen, 2003). As one of the instruments of its socioeconomic policy, the South African government uses affirmative action to target small business as an engine of employment generation and more equitable income distribution (DTI, 1995). The assumption is that SME programme works in both rural and urban centres as an efficient source of job creation (USAID, South Africa, 2002). The link between small and medium scale enterprises and the gender equity issue especially with employment practices is crucial for development. It is this link that has been found missing in the works of Rogerson, (1998); Kesper, (2000); Mabasa, (2001); Rogerson, Sawaya, (1995); Levy, (1993); Pyke, (1992); Mead, (1994); Storey and Johnson, (1989); Loveman and Sengenberger, (1990); Snodgrass and Biggs, (1996); Birch, (1987); McCormick et al, (1997). This study hopes to fill the missing link by considering the issue of gender employment practices in different small and medium scale industries in Gauteng.

Methodology

The study was conducted using a case study method. The use of interviews during the case study provided detailed information on the gender employment practices and the underlying gender bias in the different industries. Moreover, the choice for the case study method is considered over other methods because of the proliferation of SMEs and the unavailability of consistent SME statistics. The case study method made it possible to capture detailed information on the gender employment practices and the conditions of work in the selected industries. Again this method is considered relatively cheap and time saving than survey for instance which is both expensive and time consuming to conduct. Howeve,r the choice for the case study method is not without the recognition of the limitations of such method of inquiry. Realizing the difficulty in arriving at a

representative sample using the case study method and the few industries studied, the findings of this research are not and will not be used as a basis for generalisation on gender employment practices of SMEs. But at the same time, the findings provide useful insight into such aspects of SMEs and may be used as a basis for further research in this area of study.

In carrying out the research, structured and open-ended questionnaire and interview schedules were designed and administered on the employer/his or her representative and the workers and or their representative. This aspect of the research served as instruments of primary data collection. Some relevant documents like salary structure, policy papers, samples of letters of employment, and some training certificates were also presented as reference by some of the productive industries during the interviews and they served as the sources of secondary data. Apparently the two service industries don't seem to have any formal document for reference. Face to face interviews were conducted and the management of the different industries ensured confidentiality by making separate offices available for only the interviewer and the interviewee. This created a cordial and well-relaxed atmosphere for both parties to ask, answer and express opinions freely. I did all the interviews alone and each session lasted approximately one hour. The privacy I was given with the interviewees gave me the opportunity to probe deeply on gender, and sometimes on racial issues when they arose from the responses. All the responses were noted down with pen and paper since all the companies prohibited tapes. The notes taken were read back to the interviewee for cross-checking and necessary amendments were made. Again the companies all asked to remain anonymous and this explains why they are classified as companies 1 to 4 instead of their real names.

Four SMEs, two service and two productive industries were studied. The industries selected are located in Johannesburg and Benoni. The two productive industries are in Benoni while the two service industries are situated in Johannesburg. This outcome is not purposeful but by chance. A number of industries were contacted but only the four agreed to be studied. The first is a company that manufactures gears for mines and it is known in this study as company 1 (gear industry). The second, which is known as company 2 (clothing outfit), is a service industry that engages in the wholesale and retail of clothing. Company 3 (restaurant) is a service industry that runs a restaurant and company 4

(bakery), which is also a manufacturing industry, produces bread and other confectionaries. Details of the profile of the companies are provided later in the chapter.

In company 1, the human resource person who is a woman and nine employees were interviewed. Among whom are the works manager and the head of mechanical engineering. On the whole, five males and four females representing the workers were interviewed. In company 2, the male co-employer was interviewed in addition to three female and two male employees. In company 3 the female co- employer and 1 male and 2 femaleemployees were interviewed. The male co-employer of company 3 initially refused that the workers be interviewed for the reason that they are too busy. He also expressed the fear that his company is not big enough for any kind of research. After some persuasion by his wife and clarifications from me, he yielded. The interview with his workers went well and was made confidential like all others.

In company 4, a total of 7 people were interviewed. They include the General Manager (GM) and the Human Resource Manager (HRM). The HRM is a woman and was interviewed together with the GM. They represented the company in the interview. Five workers, made up of 3 females and 2 males were also interviewed. Two of the males are factory workers. One is a supervisor and the other is a machine operator. Of the 3 females interviewed, none is currently working in the factory but one of them has an office in the factory. The Human Resource Manager selected the workers I should interview and when I pressed that a female factory worker should also be interviewed she said that they are in production and she could not take them away from their job. When I insisted and stressed the need to interview at least one female factory worker, she then invited one whom although not currently a factory worker but has previously worked in the factory and is now promoted to an office staff. The interview with her represented the interview with a female factory worker and it was quite informative because she talked from her previous experience in the factory. All the workers interviewed have worked a minimum of five years in the company.

It is important to note that each of the companies is assigned a number with the sector in parentheses. This is in order to protect the privacy of the companies and to keep to the assurance given during the interview that their company's names will not be revealed in the report. Again there is no separate analysis of the separate interviews from the

management and the employees but any variance in their responses is indicated accordingly. A total of 22 workers were interviewed for the entire research and they include12 females and 10 males. Among the workers interviewed in company 1 are two managers. Representing the companies in the interviews were the male co-owner for industry 2 (service) and a female co-owner for industry 3 (service). Representing Industry 1 (productive in the interview was the Human Resources Manager (a female). The General Manager (Male) and the Human Resources Manager (female) represented Industry 4 (productive).

Specific areas targeted in the interview include company information such as age of the company, type of product, ownership and number of males and females employed and those that occupy managerial positions; employment procedure such as formal advertisement, formal applications, formal/informal interviews, negotiation and formal contract, factors determining who is employed and type of job; conditions of employment such as salary, overtime, category of workers, whether full- time or part- time or casual, posts/duties, job security; availability and knowledge of benefits such as insurance with the providence fund, unemployment insurance fund, worker protection such as the workman compensation, leave, bonus, gratuity, retirement benefits, sick leave and study leave; worker mobility such as training; promotion; salary increment, further education. Others include consultations and union membership; sexual harassment; grievance procedure, availability of facilities such as toilets, changing rooms, day- care, tea rooms and restaurants. How males and females are affected by the above conditions was determined. Above all, probing questions on gender practices and whether or not affirmative action and in particular affirmative action on women is observed in the industries were specifically asked.

Limitations of the Research

This research is generally considered a success that is made possible by the full cooperation got from the representatives of the companies and the employees interviewed. Basically all the parties interviewed judging from the privacy and cordial atmosphere provided in all the companies did not withhold much information. The critical supervision and attention from the supervisor coupled with the determination of the researcher also contributed immensely to the success.

The above not withstanding, a number of limitations have been identified with this study. Prominent amongst them is the few number of industries included in the case study. This makes it almost impossible to generalize from the findings of the research. Nevertheless, the findings are very relevant and should form the basis for further research in this area with a larger sample. The lack of systematic and reliable statictics on the number of SMEs registered in Gauteng also made it difficult to carry out a random sampling of the companies. Thus the selection was basically purposive. The limited time allotted for a research report also reduced the amount of time that should be devoted to a more extensive research on the issue in question.

The wide differences in the size, age and ownership of the productive and service industries selected for comparison introduces yet another major flaw in this study. These differences were identified during the course of the interviews. It was impossible to have knowledge of how wide the differences could be prior to the interviews. The general enquiry when making appointments through the telephone was whether or not the company sees itself as belonging to SMEs. All the industries visited were classified as SMEs but the variation in the size, age and ownership that was found during the course of the interviews was quite evident and is considered a limitation to the study. Probably a comparison between productive and service industries with little variations in size, age and ownership would give a different result and should be explored.

Profile of the Companies

Company 1 (Productive)

This is a manufacturing industry that specifically produces gears for mines. It is more than 50 years old and was originally owned by a man whose name the company still bears. The company was bought over by a foreign company 10 years ago and has branches in other countries like Zimbabwe, Australia. It is therefore a multinational cooperation in South Africa. The parent company is in the United States. The branch in South Africa is situated in Benoni, East of Johannesburg and has 200 workers. There are 127 factory and 73 office workers. The males constitute the majority of the workforce, as

there are only 18 females out of the total employees. Out of the 18 female workers, four work in the factory and the rest work in the office or as staff.

Company 2 (Service)

The company is a service company that deals with the retail and wholesale of clothing and other fashion related products like shoes, bags, boxes and so on. It is jointly owned by a man and his wife, and has been in operation for 9 years. They are immigrants to South Africa and have since obtained their permanent resident permits. Currently, under the employ of the company are 28 employees, 13 males and 15 females. The company started with 1 female and 2 male workers. As the management indicated, 5 males and 3 females are regarded as senior staff and among the junior staff are 8 males and 12 females. Some of the employees interviewed stated that they do not know of such classification.

Company 3 (Service)

A man and the wife who are also immigrants and permanent residents in South Africa jointly own the company. Its specific product is food. It serves a large group of people in the central Johannesburg area. They cook and serve a wide range of food for both locals and foreigners. It has been in operation for 5 years and has shown good signs of progress. The company started with 4 employees but now has 8. There are 3 males and 5 females currently employed by the company. Majority of the employees are also foreigners, most from other parts of Southern Africa who are either temporary or permanent residents in South Africa.

Company 4 (productive)

This fourth company is an indigenous company that has a group ownership. The management says it is part of Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) because there are a number of blacks that have shares in the company. Its specific product is bread and it is more than 60 years of age. The company employs about 350 people although some are contract workers who are excluded from this study. There are 60 female and 290 male employees. 47 females work in the factory and they are all blacks. 13 females work in the

offices, 3 blacks and 10 white females. Only 4 males work in the offices and none is black. Of all the males, 186 are in delivery and are regarded as contract workers and 100 work in the factory. Because the contract workers are excluded from this study, it is taken that the total number of workers employed in this company is 164. Thus there are 60 female and 104 male workers. The workers confirmed this when they also excluded the contract staff in their calculation of the number of workers in the company.

The above profiles show that the productive industries are very large establishments compared to the service industries. Although they all fall within SMEs, the two productive industries employ more than 100 employees each while the highest amongst the service industries employs 28 workers. Again while the two productive industries have been operating for more than 50 years, the service industries are both under 10 years in existence. The ownerships of the two sectors are also different. The two productive industries are group businesses, one is actually a multinational corporation and the other, though local is one of a group of companies. The service industries are all family businesses by a man and the wife.

CHAPTER TWO: EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

Introduction

This chapter discusses employment practices, including issues like; recruitment, affirmative action, gender issues and worker's upward mobility. Recruitment practices such as method of advertisement, application process, interviews, negotiation, contract of employment and considerations for employment are focused here. It is assumed that these issues are very crucial in any discussion or study of employment equity and most especially gender employment equity. Proper recruitment practices such as advertisement in the national dailies should be non-discriminatory and give all prospective employees an equal opportunity to apply for job vacancies and thus create possibilities for fair and equitable distribution of jobs across race and gender in South Africa. The recruitment practices found in the different industries as will be discussed in this chapter will highlight those industries whether productive or service that are conforming to the legislation on job equity in South Africa.

The ways affirmative action, and issues relating to gender are handled in the different companies are other important aspects of this chapter. Affirmative action as gathered from the rationale is an important ingredient of the Employment Equity Act of 1998. It comes against the background of unfair discrimination by race, gender or geographical location. It is an avenue for blacks and women to have access to employment. In other words it is a means for the redistribution of job in South Africa. Although the research is not about evaluating the observance of the act by the industries, identifying the way to which companies are conforming or not conforming to the act forms a necessary part of this research and, is therefore considered relevant in this chapter. It is therefore assumed that companies that have established equity programmes are more likely to be sensitive to gender discrimination and less biased than companies that do not consider such programmes necessary. This point leads to how nature of work, type of employment, training, promotion, salary raise and further education, are treated according to gender in the industries.

Worker's prospect of employment advancement (or system of upward mobility) is another major area that will be used to ascertain the practice of gender equity in the

industries. Particular attention will be paid to areas such as training of workers, promotion, salary increment, and further education. These issues are assumed to be relevant ways of enhancing the employment status and income of workers and thus an appropriate means of ensuring equity in the job place. Equity is not just about number or reducing the gap in the numbers of males and females employed. It also involves how opportunities for upward mobility in the workplace are distributed equitably among male and female workers. It is certain that industries that offer opportunities for training, promotion, salary increase, and further education that help both male and female workers to improve their standard and quality of living are conforming to employment equity. If a company adopts a policy of employing equal number of males and females or more females than males without creating proper avenues for worker improvement, there is a shortfall in the practice of equity.

How the companies differ in these respects is also explored in the discussion. It concludes on the note that the productive industries tend to follow a legal procedure in employment than the service industries. It further reveals that although all the four companies acknowledge the existence of inequality between males and females, none considers the inequality as a problem that requires immediate attention. Again, while the two productive industries show some level of proper organisation, the two service industries could well be described as half-hazard and completely disorganized. There are no proper books and documentations found in the service industries. Most agreements between workers and employers were done verbally. The productive industries follow some formal procedures in dealing with their workers.

Recruitment

Company 1(gear industry), engages in formal advertisement for vacant positions but most often this is not done through the national dailies but in-house and sometimes through an employment agency. The problem with this medium of advertisement is that not the general public gets to know about the vacant job and therefore competition is very minimal. In- house advertisement means that only the workers and their kind, their friends and relatives will get to know about the existing job. Again, only those who registered with the very employment agency that provides services to the company will be informed by the agency. To register with an agency, one should know about them and

have the resources. The lady electrician, in this company for instance, got her job through an agency and thinks it was a share stroke of luck because the company has demanded for a female artisan in 1998 as part of the fulfillment of the affirmative action.

This method of calling for job applications in this company underplays the role of advertisement as one of the ways to achieve equity in the workplace as stipulated in the Employment Equity Act. Invariably, it means only the same kind of employees that have been traditionally employed – whites and males are more likely to fill the vacant positions. This was confirmed by one of the women interviewed, who indicated that her company has been employing for the past four years but no black, male or female has been employed. She sees the company as racists but not sexist as she has not experienced any discrimination in the treatment of male and female workers. For her, the company only acts when there is new government legislation, just as some kind of 'window dressing', after which they go back to their traditional racial discrimination. On the contrary, the management of the company gave the impression that both colour and sex are not issues in employment. Any qualified person is taken according to the management. Well, there is no problem with taking the most qualified person but the company's method of announcing for a vacant job does not make it possible for qualified men and women to apply and compete for the job. It rather limits the opportunity to a few who are mostly whites and probably males. Thus unless job availability in companies is made known to the general public through the daily papers, gender and racial differences in the workplace will persist and affirmative action will just be one of those rhetoric exercises by policy makers.

After the job vacancy has been released, mainly the company workers who consider themselves fit for the job make formal applications. The major considerations to fill up any position are the skill and job experience of about ten years. Education, colour and sex are not very strong factors for employment, although the works manager stated that women are given preference when they have the same qualification as the men. As indicated earlier, this point was disputed by one of the females interviewed. In theory what the works manager said may be true but in practice the female interviewee may be more correct considering the method of advertisement and the fact that there may not be females who are similarly skilled and experienced as the men. This is supported by the response of the head of mechanical engineering in the company, who indicated that it

might be difficult to have a situation where a man and a woman who have the same skill and experience will be applying for the same job at a time. In most cases it is usually men competing amongst themselves for most jobs in the factory for instance. The other problem is that women may not have the same experience (for historical reasons) and therefore are placed at a disadvantage. Historically, women are disadvantaged and denied opportunities to acquire competitive job skills due to family's preferences to train and educate male children.

The foregoing therefore reveals the need to create opportunities for women to have access to such skills that will make them compete on equal footing with their male counterparts. The fact that there are women turners and electricians in this particular company shows that women can do the job originally considered males'. Also the fact that the employers here expressed no bias against women is a positive sign, which now shifts the effort to reduce gender inequality in employment to women themselves, the government, family and the society at large.

Negotiation of salary according to the management is done during the course of the interview until both parties agree, after which a formal contract is signed. This point was disputed by one of the female employees who stated that she was just told what her salary will be and she accepted because it was better than what she was earning in her previous place of work. According to one of the female workers interviewed, the company is very smart because during negotiation, it tries as much as possible to find a middle course so that it does not give one too much or too little. A letter of contract is usually given to successful applicants and it specifies the company's policy and conditions of employment, which, according to the Human Resources Manager, is in line with the government labour act and the Main Agreement for factory workers.

In company 2(clothing outfit), no formal advertisement is made on vacant positions. Employment is done through recommendations from friends of the employers and prospective employees make no formal applications. Something that may be regarded as resembling informal interview are few questions asked during the course of the introduction and at the same time they are informed of what they are expected to do. Majority of the workers did not make any formal applications for job. Level of education is not a major consideration for employment but sometimes job experience may be an

advantage. Some people have been employed without prior experience and they learnt on the job. Because there are no formal interviews, there is no room for negotiation of the salary and conditions of work. Prospective employees are informed of what salary they could be paid and those who accept it start work. There is no formal contract of agreement between the employers and the employees. Two cases where a contract was signed were those between the employers and the operations manager and the employers and the general manager. All others start and work without any documentation.

The employment procedure as observed in this company shows that the employees - both men and women - have little or no power, and their job security is threatened. As feared by the employees, the employers can 'hire and fire' at any time and they too feel no obligation towards the company and can quit anytime without notice. It is not surprising that this is the practice in this company and may be, many other SMEs around Gauteng. The existence of a large number of unemployed people and very few employers reduce the power of employees to bargain and ask for fair treatment from their employers. Most people settle for any available job in order to put bread on the table for the family. Many of the women in the company are single mothers and just need income to support their young children. According to a number of them, it is better than staying at home. Both the males and females interviewed expressed salary raise as their major concern in the company but lack the will to ask for it. Although employers of this type are creating jobs for both men and women, they equally recognize the weak position of the employees and therefore ignore to follow the proper procedure. A situation like this brings to focus the question of sustainability of jobs for both men and women employed in SMEs that engage in such employment practices. It is unlikely that jobs will be secured in such pracices where the employee has no say and where government employment procedure is not adhered. This finding therefore calls for further research on the employment practices and sustainability of jobs for workers employed in SMEs.

Company 3(restaurant), advertises for a vacant position on the boards/notices and prospective applicants can apply by direct application or introduced by people known to the employers. Although no formal letter of application is asked, their curriculum vitae are considered.

Interviews are conducted whereby they present their identity documents. Employment is basically on work experience and ownership of a valid identity document.

There is no formal negotiation of salary and other conditions of service; successful candidates are informed of the salary that the company could pay during the interview. On employment they are told to start work without any formal letter of contract or employment issued.

Like company 2, this particular company falls short of putting the appropriate employment procedure in place. Although there is some kind of advertisement like using their notice boards and some informal interviews, lack of negotiation with the prospective employees and issuance of contract of employment means that there is very little job security for the workers. A worker without any document to cover his employment in a particular company is as good as unemployed because there is no legal bond between him and the employer. This in other words is an indication of the exploitation of the workers on the part of the employer, which is unlikely to coexist with true practice of employment equity. To achieve equity, the necessary recruitment procedure as highlighted above should be put in place irrespective of the size, age and ownership of the company.

Company 4(bakery), advertises internally and sometimes makes use of employment agencies. The management indicated that because they do not always have many vacancies, they usually have enough internal applicants to fill the vacant positions. The company does not just create vacancies because according to the General Manager (GM), if they do, the company will go bankrupt. Thus they advertise for job only when somebody has left the job.

Formal applications are made mostly by the existing staff or by anybody informed of the vacant position by the workers. One of the female workers interviewed who is now a management assistant stated that she knew about a vacant position in the company through a male friend who was working in the company and had to apply. She started as assistant clerk. A second female interviewee indicated that the company approached her school; National Computer College (NCC), which then recommended her for the job. She is currently an order clerk but was initially employed as a Van Sheet Clerk. One of the male interviewees did not respond to any advertisement, but just came and was employed immediately. Someone who is working in the company informed a second male interviewee that is now a supervisor of the available position.

Interviews are formally conducted and all the workers interviewed confirmed this. According to the GM, knowledge, experience and qualification are the major considerations for employment. For him sex does not matter at all. It was emphasized that being part of BEE, in most cases preference is given to the black. It is only in rare cases that a female may be considered over a male and this happens when the job is considered suitable for the female. This therefore demonstrates that the company thinks that there are jobs that are not suitable for women and those that are more suitable for males. This point is contrary to the GM's response that both males and females do the same kind of job in the company. A further discrepancy is when he stated that physical jobs like lifting are reserved for males. A differential assignment of jobs to males and females in this company seems to be the general pattern especially in the factory. This was confirmed by the responses from the workers. The female interviewee who had worked in the pre-mix department of the factory indicated that both males and females worked in that department but jobs were assigned according to sex. While the males mix the bulk, which was considered too heavy for females to do, females scaled the bulk. Although the males could also scale the bulk, the supervisor who is a female, used her discretion to divide the jobs between males and females. Another male interviewee, who is a supervisor in the Woolworth department of the factory indicated that he also has both males and females working in his department but that males are more in number as a result of the job description in the department. Also in this department although males and females do the job of packaging the bread, females are excluded from truck driving. But on the whole more females do packaging than males. Asked why, he indicated that he considers packaging lighter for females than truck driving. He further noted that females can assist the truck drivers to deliver the goods but at present there is none. For him safety of the women is the major consideration for assigning lighter jobs to women. The male interviewee who works in the plant maintenance department revealed that there are no females in his department because according to him "only males can do the work we do there". He further informed that many females work in the factory but not in his department.

The management indicates that they do not necessarily engage in negotiation with the prospective employee during interviews but offer the person their employment package for him/her to accept or refuse. All the workers confirmed this. Four of the workers interviewed confirmed that they did receive formal letter of contract from the

management. A male worker who started as a driver and is now a supervisor indicated being interviewed but no letter of employment was issued to him. He actually asked me whether it is necessary to have an employment letter. I answered by saying that it is a legal document and the only proof of his employment in the company. I gathered that he was ignorant of the implications of such letter of contract. It was further found that his promotion to supervisory position was not with any letter.

Affirmative Action on Employment

The management of company1 (gear industry) is very much aware of affirmative action and by law is affected by the act. Both the management and the employees very well understand the provisions of the act but the findings show that what is in practice is contrary to the act. The company has put in place equity and schools development committee in the spirit of affirmative action but record still has it that there is only one black manager and one black supervisor (all are males). An addendum to this is that this manager and supervisor are considered not because they are blacks but because they are the right candidates for the jobs. This then confirms that they were not appointed in order to conform to affirmative action. Little wonder, then, there is only one black male manager out of 18 male managers. The ratio is 1:17 (blacks to whites). This finding is in line with the response of one of the black females interviewed who affirmed that she has heard about affirmative action but has not seen it in action in the company. It is on record that the company has been recruiting workers for the past four years but none is black. Again, of the 73 staff (office workers) only one woman who is casual is black.

It was further highlighted by the works manager that a female was made the financial manager on recognition of the disadvantaged position of women as managers. This is also contestable because it was gathered that all the workers in the accounts department are females. It is not certain whether she would have been considered if there were male counterparts. Financial management is seen in the company as a dominant female occupation.

Although the majority of the workers in the management positions and in the offices are whites (mainly males), the management still feels that colour and gender are no considerations for employment but rather skill and experience. It is certain that where skill and experience are the criteria for employment, both blacks and women will be

disadvantaged because of historical reasons of apartheid and male preference in a patriarchal society. This means that all the equity committees put in place by the company are window dressings to impress government officials and the reduction of racial and gender employment inequity is not in sight.

In company 2 (clothing outfit), the management knows about affirmative action and understands it as 'taking the job of a white man and giving it to the black man or giving space to the underprivileged like the black man and depriving people of their positions in order to create job for others'. Employment in this company is not based on affirmative action and according to the male employer; the company is not affected by the act. The above observation shows that the management understands affirmative action as basically racial and excludes women. This understanding and what is seen in company 1 which basically has an equity committee shows that generally there is lack of proper understanding of affirmative action on women across sectors. This may be as a result of lack of emphasis on the implementation of gender equity in employment by government and the department of labour. Management further comments that jobs should be created not only by the public sector or owners of businesses but also through a government programme that undertakes the training of the unemployed in certain practical skills like carpentry, plumbing, sewing and other artisan work in order to acquire necessary skills for self-employment. Although the company is black based, it has no policy against employing whites. There have actually been white employees in the past like the operation manager who was dismissed on the grounds of fraudulent activities and some white female securities from security companies.

The female employer who was interviewed in company 3 (restaurant) has no idea of affirmative action but stated that their business is a black business. Not knowing what affirmative action is, shows that employment in this enterprise is not in any way guided by the need to bring about gender equity or bridge the racial gap in employment. It also shows that the legislation on employment equity has not reached all and sundry and calls for the need to properly educate people on the provisions of the act.

In company 4 (bakery), the management claims that the company is part of Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) and therefore adheres strictly to what the law says on affirmative action. It stated that in line with affirmative action, there is Equity Committee

in the company that meets regularly. There is also a Health and Safety Committee which meets monthly. According to the General Manager "affirmative action has failed and is now being replaced by BEE." One striking finding in this particular company is that, in practice there doesn't seem to be evidence of Black Empowerment unless their idea of BEE is having some black shareholders and employing some blacks to work in the factory, which is what, is obtainable.

Although the GM and the Human Resource Manager (HRM) who are whites portrayed the picture of black empowerment, the workers interviewed who are all blacks disputed it. The racial spread of the workers tends to support the views of the workers. The company has 10 white and 3 black females working in the offices. None of the 4 males working in the offices is a black. Out of the 8 male managers employed by the group, only one is black and out of the 4 female managers none is black. The workers in the factory are all black (men and women). All the workers interviewed stated that there is racial salary difference in the company. The whites earn a lot more than the blacks. This is not surprising since most of the whites work in the offices and occupy positions like GM and HRM that attract fat salaries. Factory workers have to rely on overtime to boost their earnings. Although 4 out of the 5 workers interviewed complained that blacks are being discriminated against in the company, one of them said the contrary. All confirmed the existence of Equity Committee in the company. The male employee who disagreed with others on the issue of racial discrimination in the company explained that he has never experienced any form of discrimination in his own department, which is maintenance. According to him, his boss is white and they work as a team. There is mutual respect and he is happy with his job. He has not experienced any form of harassment and does not believe there is any discrimination by colour or sex in the company.

The different experience of the male worker in the maintenance department goes to explain that discrimination, whether gender or racial, may not necessarily be a group stereotype. It could be an individual personal prejudice, which therefore accounts for why one person may feel that he/she is different from the other and treat him/her accordingly. That this young man who is in fact the least educated of all the people interviewed experienced positive attitude from his white boss shows that level of education or colour does not always determine how others treat one. The fact that more whites than blacks work in the offices could be explained by the racial gap in education between whites and

blacks. Management or office positions are occupied by people with a certain level of education and it may happen that most of those who qualify and apply for such positions are mainly whites. This is different from factory position that may not necessarily require formal education. As such more blacks than whites are likely to fill them. Again the method of advertisement adopted by this company is likely to sustain the racial difference because one is more likely to inform his relatives or friends of any existing vacancy in the areas he/she works. But if affirmative action or BEE is strictly adhered to, the Employment Equity Committee in the company should identify this racial and gender differences and make necessary effort to address them. There are a lot of blacks and females out there that are qualified and may not have access to such positions because they have no insider to inform them when such vacancies arise. Thus in addition to the current in – house advertisement, the media should be used as a means to advertise vacant positions. The media have a wider coverage and are therefore a more equitable means of recruiting workers.

The finding that the productive industries are conforming to the affirmative action than the service industries could be explained by the fact that not all industries are by law affected by the act. An employer in one of the service industries clearly stated that they are not affected by affirmative action. Another reason why this could be observed in the research may be attributed to the difference in the sizes, ages and ownerships of the productive and the service industries studied. It could well be that service industries of the same size, age and ownership as the productive industries in the study may also be conforming to the act. This discrepancy also reveals a major limitation of the research, which is the wide variation in the sizes, ages, and ownership of the productive and service industries selected for comparison in this study. It is equally important to observe that the inclusion of the industries in the study is not by choice or design. They happen to be the only ones out of about six industries contacted that granted permission to be studied. One thing they all have in common is that they fall within SMEs.

Inasmuch as the research is not about racial differences in employment, this aspect continued to resurface and featured prominently during the interviews with both management and staff. Even when questions are posed in gender terms, most of their responses are presented in racial terms. Categorizing males and females in terms of race was very common among them. It is on this note that the issue of race has been found to

be an important aspect of this research. This is not surprising considering the troubled history of South Africa and the role race played in fashioning it. In short, racial differences are ubiquitous and are difficult to ignore in any study of equity or inequity in South Africa.

Gender issues

The question that arose during the interview in company 1 was; 'if a woman and a man have the same qualification, skill and experience and apply for the same job, will she be chosen over her male counterpart in order to fill the gender gap? The works manager of the company in question answered yes to this question but the head of the department of mechanical engineering saw it as a very tough question but did reiterate that engineering is not necessarily a male or female job. It is not a matter of physical prowess but more a mental activity and both males and females are equally endowed for the job. He therefore maintained that in a situation where the above question arises, he would assess the male or female through a mental cross-examination, and then decide who is better fit for the job. For him, there is no consideration of sex of the prospective employee. The response from the head of mechanical engineering in productive industry 1 is considered an expert knowledge and is therefore very relevant to this research. Such statement coming from an engineer and a male counteracts the previously held belief that mechanical engineering is physically related and therefore more or less a male job. It allays the fears that are attributed to engineering and reveals the need to encourage women to seek career in such areas.

An interesting finding is that the company has 1 female turner (gear cutter), which is a mechanical trade, 1 female electrician and 1 female electrician apprentice. The female electrician was interviewed but the apprentice could not be reached because she has gone back to college. Also the female turner could not be interviewed because she could not leave her job. It was revealed that the female apprentice came out best in a competition among all male and female electrician apprentices in South Africa. This means that when tested on both theory and practice of the job, she came top, indicating that electrical job has nothing to do with physical or biological differences between men and women. The fact that there are female turner and electricians in the company goes to show that

(although not in a large number) females are entering into jobs formally regarded as male areas.

The female electrician has worked in the company for six years but worked in her former job place for 12 years before she was retrenched. She started as apprentice electrician in her former workplace, not as a result of particular interest in electrical work but because there was no job and it was all she could get at that time after matric. Her elder brother who was also an electrician in the company introduced her into the job. So far she is happy with the job, the pay is good (about R2800) gross pay a week and her male colleagues respect her. She makes enough to support her family with basic necessities and extras. Her husband is also an artisan and therefore their household income is much better than the income of non-artisan couples combined. She sees herself as having benefited from affirmative action in 1998 and since then the company has employed only 2 other women although employment is on a regular basis. She is not against women going into electrical work but advises that they should rather go into softer electrical work like electronics and not work in the factory like her. Although she finds her work good and challenging, she does not see it as a job she will continue with after she is 50 years of age because of the nature and demand of the job. According to her, 'carrying a blue tool box after age 45 is too much for a female'. In other words, women should not take up a profession that will keep them working in the factory for a long time. She thinks that even if women do take up jobs in the factory, they should also undertake courses that can get them jobs outside the factory when they get older considering their physical nature. She indicated not having experienced sexual harassment in her place of work and knows of no one who had. She did have problem with a male counterpart (deceased) who was afraid of a woman doing the job. She feels that other men in the department feel threatened by her being an electrician but she gets on well with them.

The above comment from the female electrician, although, presented as a sort of advice for other women, is seen as contradictory. It conflicts with her job as a female electrician considering the fact that she is one of those who have taken a bold step into traditionally male-dominated job. It implies certain jobs are not very good for the physical nature of women and supports the view that gender division of labour is biologically determined and may not necessarily mean gender discrimination in employment. A further contradiction is the point that the female electrician was informed and encouraged to take

up the career in electrical work by her brother who is also in the same profession. This also shows that males are not necessarily against women going into jobs that are previously considered males' and that electrical work is not necessarily dangerous to women. The above contradictions raise the need to strike a balance. The female electrician talks from her experience from the job, which means that certain conditions of her work are definitely not conducive to her and may equally not be conducive to male electricians. What is therefore important is for employers to create appropriate working conditions under which men and women should work.

The company has policies against smoking, stealing, and other misconducts but none on gender discrimination. This implies that gender discrimination is not a major concern to the company. Qualification on the basis of skill and experience is considered the priority in employment and not gender or race. Both management and the employees interviewed believe that males and females should not be assigned separate jobs because both have been found to be good in the jobs previously regarded as the others'. The practice in this company is the contrary. The whole issue therefore revolves around creating opportunities for women to progressively transit into the so-called men's occupations.

There is also no policy on gender discrimination in company 2 (clothing outfit). Every employment is based on the availability of job seekers. The company actually started with more males than females but presently as more and more of the company's wares become female related, it only became natural according to the male employer that such products and the customers are attended to by females. This statement manifests the belief in gender allocation of jobs. Contrary to this, is a response from one of the male employees interviewed, that in some cases, female customers prefer to be attended to by the male floor attendants because they value their compliments. This in other words, questions the assumption by the employer, which is the influence of socialisation. If it is natural, then, no female customer will prefer to be attended to by a male floor attendant. Judging from the employer's statement, it means that, nature of product and service other than the sex of the employee accounts for why there are more females than males employed in this company. The statement from the male employee shows that there is nothing natural about a particular customer being attended to by a male or a female and if taken seriously, should reduce the emphasis on employing more females and lead to a more equitable gender employment in this company. As the employer specified, there is no deliberate

effort to consider women on the grounds of their job disadvantage. Both the management and the workers interviewed indicated that both male and female employees serve as floor attendants and do both sales and customer attendance irrespective of the sex of the customer.

Although both men and women attend to customers and do tagging, the males mainly do moving of heavy boxes. A female worker in one of the branches of the company stated that she sometimes helps the male colleague with the boxes because it is only the two of them in that branch and she does not feel good letting him do it all alone. Asked which sex should be greater in number, the workers varied in their answers but the management still maintained that any number could be greater depending on the availability of prospective employees.

The company's neutrality on sex of the employee not withstanding, the management prefers to employ more women for the reason that, they more serious with their jobs than men because many of them are single mothers and have to provide for their children. It was further indicated that women as well as men stay away from work for different reasons. While most times women absent as a result of family responsibilities, men do so mainly as a result of cold weather. Sometimes the men disappear for the reason that the job is strenuous and the boxes heavy. This reason and the fact that a female employee helps the male co- employee to move boxes therefore calls for the argument that engaging in physically demanding jobs is not naturally meant for any particular sex. If employers make machines that could help move the heavy boxes available, both men and women can carry out the same job. In the absence of such machines both sexes are likely to complain or avoid the job.

In company 3 (restaurant), the management claims that there is no gender discrimination in the company but like the companies above, there is no policy in place. Both men and women are equally treated with respect and given a place to work. Sometimes they are skeptical to recruit men for security reasons and women are given priority during employment because of the nature of the business. The company believes that women tend to do better in cooking jobs.

The foregoing shows n the first place that the management does not realize that it is actually practising gender discrimination when they give preference to women applicants and secondly that there is sign of gender bias and prejudice against men in this company.

While companies like this may promise better future for women, they are not likely to do well in fostering gender equity in employment.

In the above company, qualification or nature of job is not necessarily the primary reason to recruit a staff (after all men can be better cooks than women) but sex. The management of the company feels more at ease to work with women than men because of the fear that some men could be very hostile and violent when provoked. It also fears that some men employed could organize and rob the company. The company considers women as more committed to their job than men and less violent. This may not be true any way. Men and women are likely to engage in violent behaviours. Thus, the fear and consideration, although favour employment of women, do not permit gender equity in employment. Employers should therefore handle this problem by engaging in proper employment procedure like asking for curriculum vitae (CV) and references from the prospect employees. Putting every male in a one blanket jacket is contrary to gender equity.

It was found in company 4 (bakery) that job descriptions and allocations in the factory are gender related. Although the General Manager (GM) and the Human Resources Manager (HRM) believe that males and females should not do separate jobs, in practice certain jobs are separated and defined according to sex in the factory. All those interviewed believe that there should be no gender discrimination in employment but rather kind of job should determine whether a man or woman should be assigned to it. According to them some jobs are definitely not right for females because of their physical nature. What this implies is that both management and staff of this company understand gender discrimination as different from gender division of labour. For them gender discrimination is improper and should be discouraged but assigning tasks according to sex is welcome. This point also relates to the common finding in this study that men and women are differently fit for certain jobs. Believe it or not, assigning jobs according to sex will definitely lead to gender discrimination in employment because employers will deliberately keep women away from such jobs they consider men's. This practice in the long run will continue to maintain the status quo.

A question asked on whether the company considers the gender difference or the disadvantaged position of women in employment as an important area to address attracted very strong reaction from both the GM and the HRM. According to the HRM who is a

woman, she worked many years to be where she is; every woman should do the same. No special privilege should be given to anybody. This woman could be said to make this statement because she happened to be white and had a privileged background to be where she is. She forgot that certain groups (black and women) were deliberately prevented by the apartheid system and patriarchy from aspiring and achieving higher. She further stated that it would take time to bridge the gender gap. She feels that in 10 to 15 years time women will come up. This implies that as more and more women continue to be educated and acquire the necessary skills to seek paid employment, the gender gap in employment will begin to close up. This can only succeed if women and other blacks that have the skill and education are given the opportunity to be employed in the workplaces. The General Manager on the other hand, indicates: "doors are open to all, whether male or female. Women have to make efforts to come up". He further posed the question "What are the women doing to solve the problem?" He particularly came against some educated and higher achieved black females who, according to him, prefer to go into politics or work for government departments than in the industries. For him as long as educated black women continue to prefer politics to working in the industries, it will limit their chances in the industries and the gap will continue to be there.

The comment by the General Manager of this company 4 on educated and higher achieved black women makes an important contribution to the issue of gender employment in industries especially in South Africa. It could be a statement of fact judging from his experience as a GM and the number of black females that are actively involved in South African politics or having one political appointment or the other in the different government departments or it could be a racial statement. It may just be true that only very few of them seek career in the industries while majority run for political and government posts. This tendency to cling to politics by the higher educated and achieved black women may not be out of place. It could be explained by the fact that the government and leadership of South Africa are now in the hands of the blacks. It is likely that they will be better recognized and employed in positions befitting their educational attainment; experience less racial and gender discrimination and earn more money in politics and in government departments controlled by blacks, than in industries which are mainly owned, controlled and managed by whites. Although as indicated, the research is not about race. His statement was categorically stated in racial terms and he insisted on no other than black females.

Workers' Mobility

It was gathered that the company 1(gear industry) has opportunity for workers to move up the ladder (be promoted). Promotion is not based on sex, length of service or extra qualification but emerges only when a vacant position is to be filled up and when the pressure of work demands that more positions be created. This system means that workers are seldom promoted because it is not often that workers quit their jobs. Records show that many of the workers have been employed in the same position for more than a decade. And increased pressure of work, which requires that more positions be created and more workers employed, does not always arise. An example is the Human Resources Person who has held the post for 13 years and the works manager for 20 years. A staff was said to have received an award for 50 years of service in the company. There is no problem with workers putting many years in a particular company, it shows that they are satisfied with their job but to have people promoted only when there is a vacant position created will not encourage higher aspirations on the part of the workers. A case of promotion is that of the head of department of mechanical engineering who started as an inspector in quality control.

On the other hand the female electrician thought that she was denied promotion because she was asked whether she would like a particular position when it becomes vacant which she declined but after a year when the position was available nobody informed her of it and it was given to another person. She felt it was not fair to her because one-year time lag was enough for her to change her mind to take up the position. In her own words 'being a woman and black'; promotion is out of the question. The company is also accused of being racist because only the whites are promoted and blacks are left out. An example is a coloured who has been a foreman for over 20 years without promotion to a higher rank. The way promotion is practised in this does not give room for equity either on racial or gender terms. Remaining in the same position for many years may lead to dissatisfaction of workers and disenchantment with the place of work. Equity would encourage job satisfaction and less job turnover, which will be in the interest of both employer and employee.

The company from time to time arranges for some formal training for the workers with respect to their jobs. Experts are invited from outside and both male and female workers participate in the trainings. Workers are also encouraged to pursue personal courses/trainings and the company sponsors only when it is related to their job. The female electrician confirmed having been sponsored for a course in computer programming but indicates that the company does not like spending money on training workers and it is therefore seldom. According to her the management acts only when governments demands that workers should be trained. Currently, a female worker is undertaking two courses and is fully supported by the company. Further training does not warrant promotion or salary increase, it only seen as a staff development exercise.

Although a worker can remain in the same position or perform the same duty for many years, this does not mean that the salary remains static over the years. The salary of the factory workers varies from week to week depending on how much over time one puts in. Salary raise comes mostly when a worker gets promoted and when a worker performs well. A worker can get a salary raise when the supervisor acknowledges his/her good performance and recommends to the works manager that the salary be raised. This way of determining who gets a salary raise is based on sentiment and could undermine the practice and achievement of equity in this company. The supervisor may not recommend you if he does not like your face. It is worst if you are woman and you turn down his sexual advances. In this case women are most likely to be negatively affected. Those in the managerial position get salary raise when the set targets are met. The head of engineering stated that he agreed with the works manager that his salary will be increased to a certain percent if he achieves the target to increase safety and cut down on cost for 2004. For him more than 300% of the target has been met and he will have his salary raised at the end of the year. When the salary is raised it remains until another target is set and achieved. Setting targets and achieving them may be a fairer way of salary increment and a means of achieving gender equity because it will depend on what a worker can do as a person with the resources available irrespective of sex.

It is most likely that salary increment based on promotion will benefit men more than women because in most cases it is the men that are qualified for the vacant position since promotion is based on skill and experience. Acquisition of further training or qualification does not guarantee automatic promotion or salary raise but mainly for personal

upliftment. Any use of it for promotion or salary increment has to wait until a position is created and you are considered the best for the job not because of the qualification but for other factors that are in most cases not favourable to women like skill and experience. Also weekly workers receive additional pay when they go on leave but this is not regarded as salary raise. This monthly workers do not receive such additional pay.

In company 2 (clothing outfit), no formal training is organized for the workers but new ones learn from older workers on the job. The promotion of workers is usually done verbally and informally and depends on the employer's assessment of the performance of a worker. An example is a lady who started as a sales girl but is now told that she is a supervisor. Others are not formally or informally informed of such promotions. As one of the male employees noted, 'everything depends on the employer's state of mind on any particular day, he can promote or demote at will'. Salaries are also increased according to the way the employers feel a worker has performed. This increment is usually arbitrary and not on any percentage of the salary. The management indicates that there is plan to increase by percentage in future. He feels that the increment based on performance motivates the workers. It can be done more than ones in any particular year. The employees receive bonuses in December and each according to his/her individual performance. Some of the workers expressed the interest to further their education but the company makes no provision for that without their quitting the job. Performance as a determinant of salary raise is considered a practice of equity just like the setting of targets for managers in company 1 because the worker (male or female) will have to work very hard to merit it. On the other hand, denying employees opportunity to further their education even at no expense to the company is a gross breach of equity. This affects women more because they are more in number in this very company.

Company 3 (restaurant) has no category in terms of seniority and workers are not likely to move from one level to the other. Workers are given on - the - job training as they start work but this does not have to do with upward movement. It is just an orientation of the way things are done in the industry. There is no formal promotion to a certain position; one remains a chef or an attendant. Any upward mobility has to do with the raising of salary, which is based on performance, and progress of the business. There is evidence of progressive salary increase from R400 in 1999 to between R800 and R1300. 4 of the 5 female workers who now earn R1200 have been in the company since 1999. The

company has not experienced any labour loss since its inception. As the management indicated the male cashier had his salary cut from initial R2000 to R1300 because it became too heavy for the company to continue paying. Many of the female workers have little or no education and do not think of further education. The company does not have training programme for the employees and with little education their advancement is limited.

The workers in company 4 (bakery) confirmed the availability of training in this company as indicated by management. It includes induction courses for the new employees or those newly promoted to another job responsibility and on the job training. Others are fire fighting, first aid and course programmes that are considered relevant to the work in the company. Any course that falls within the above mentioned is fully sponsored by the company otherwise the worker sponsors himself or herself. The granting of study leave to pursue academic programmes that may benefit the company is at the discretion of the GM and if not considered, the worker has to choose between his/her job and further education. A female employee interviewed confirmed that the company has trained her in fire fighting, storekeeping and production statistics. Her training in N6 Management Assistant was fully sponsored by her without any support from the company. According to her she came in with N4 and has not been promoted after her additional certificate. A second female interviewee has received training only in fire fighting and first aid. She indicated knowledge of two male staff that have been trained by the company in further education but she has not. She also knows of no female who has benefited from the company's sponsorship to further training. One of the male interviewees indicated having been sponsored for training by the company both inside and outside the company. All are skills trainings relating to the job in the company. There is clear evidence of gender discrimination in training from this company. Although a few females have undergone company sponsored trainings, more men have benefited from such trainings. This is not unusual since there are more men employed here than women and jobs assigned to the males may require further training than the ones women do. To have gender equity, men and women doing the same job should be trained and job assignment that guarantees men more training should be stopped.

Training workers in fire fighting and first aid is good but may not be considered enough means of empowerment. It is not unlikely that most of the people that undergo

management training are whites because it is only logical that those that should qualify for such trainings are those working in the offices. The management informed that, there is competition for promotion and this takes place only when there is a vacant position. Positions are not created for promotion just because a worker has additional qualification or has worked for a long time in the company. This is true with the case of the female employee who came in with N4 certificate in management training but has not been promoted after completing her N6 management assistant training. She has been promoted from the post of Assistant Clerk to a Factory Clerk, a post not commensurate to her qualification. All the male and female workers interviewed confirmed having been promoted from one job responsibility to another and their salaries changed accordingly. Another female interviewed, started as Van Sheet Clerk with a specific responsibility of taking note of everything for the driver but has been promoted to an Order Clerk where she now captures all the orders from their different customers in the computer. The female interviewee who previously worked in the pre-mix department was promoted to a Management Clerk. One of the male interviewees started as artisan assistant and is now promoted to artisan. Another male interviewee is promoted from a driver to a supervisor. All the workers confirmed the annual increment of salaries as informed by management.

The finding that workers are not given the opportunity to negotiate their salaries and conditions of work is a clear manifestation of the unequal power relation between the management and staff. This is aggravated more by the high rate of unemployment that puts the supply for labour much higher than the demand for it. A situation like this puts workers in a vulnerable position. Women are most affected because they are more likely to settle for anything in order to put bread on the table for the children in particular. Again, salary raise based on the supervisor's recommendation or the judgement of the employer on the performance of a particular worker is likely to be subjective and biased. It is definitely not an objective way for increment and is more likely to create room for preferential treatment.

That the productive industries tend to train and promote their workers more than the service industries could be explained by the differences in the financial resources and information available to the two types of industries in the study. As indicated earlier, the productive industries are well established and are likely to consider staff development as a major goal than the service industries that are still young. While the service industries

could be excused for lack of adequate resources to train and promote their workers, there is no justification for not adopting proper recruitment procedure, which involves little or no capital. It is therefore necessary that all companies consider advertising, formal application, negotiation, contract of employment, affirmative action and, of course, worker mobility valuable ways of ensuring equity in the workplace.

This chapter has so far highlighted the variations in the different companies with regard to recruitment, affirmative action, gender issues and worker upward mobility. It found differences between the service and productive industries in each of the factors above. With regard to recruitment process, the productive industries use employment agencies and in- house advertisement to recruit workers; the service industries use personal contacts. There is not much difference within sectors. Affirmative action is well understood in the two productive industries and one service industry (company 2). Company 3 is quite ignorant of affirmative action. What is commonly observed in the two productive industries is affirmative action on race rather than gender, although the female electrician in company 1 sees herself as being employed on the basis of affirmative action. Company 2 which employed only blacks specified that they are not affected by affirmative action. Gender issue came very strong in job assignment in all the industries and the explanation is the physical and biological differences between men and women. Also upward mobility found in the productive industries is based on skill and experience, which does not always favour women because of their historical disadvantage on education and labour participation.

CHAPTER THREE: CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

Introduction

The minimum 'Conditions of Employment' is the main focus of this chapter. The labour law (Amendment Act No. 11, 2002) clearly specifies the minimum working conditions that should be met by every employer. It is therefore assumed that employers included in this study who do not comply with the basic conditions of employment are not complying with employment equity. On the other hand, compliance to the minimum conditions of work does not necessarily translate into gender equity, as this study is likely to reveal. For the purposes of this chapter therefore, the conditions that will be focused on are salary; type of employment such as full time, part time, casual or contract and posts and duties, time of work and overtime payments; benefits from the company such as insurance policy, medical aid, gratuity, retirement benefits, leave (annual, maternity, sick, casual leave) and car allowance; company facilities and sexual harassment. Others are disciplinary/grievance procedure and the right to union membership. They are regarded in this study as very important ways of ascertaining the existence of equity in the workplace

Salaries paid to workers measure the extent of equity in the company. It may be argued that companies that pay higher salaries are more sensitive to equity than companies that do not. Also a discrepancy between the salaries of males and females that do the same job on the basis of sex does not reflect the practice of equity since they buy from the same market and have family responsibilities. The type of employment as measured by the categories specified above will also give an indication of the existence of equity in a particular industry. For instance, it is more likely that those industries that employ more full-time than part-time workers are practising equity than industries that have the reverse. This assumption is based on the fact that full-time employment is more likely to attract benefits such as annual and maternity leave, job security and retirement benefits than part-time employment. Again, industry that keeps workers beyond the normal 40 to 45 hours a week and pays them overtime is practising equity than industry that does not pay for overtime. Furthermore, industry that has provisions for benefits such as accident and life insurance, medical aid, retirement benefits, car allowance, and annual or casual leave will be more likely to do better in equity than industry where these benefits are lacking.

Company facilities, sexual harassment, disciplinary/grievance procedure and union membership are also seen as important areas of measuring equity. For example, providing separate toilets and changing rooms for males and females indicate equity but where there are separate tearooms or restaurants, equity is undermined. In other words, companies where those in management positions are provided with better facilities than the rank and file equity is undermined. Again sexual harassment of women is a subtle way of discouraging women from their jobs and could lead to few women seeking employment in the industry known for it. When women are sexually harassed and discouraged from seeking paid employment, fewer women will be employed and this will continue to widen the gender gap in employment. Also where men and women are given fair hearing and justice, they will not feel discriminated against and equity is upheld. Furthermore, allowing union membership and representativeness is democratic and ensures workers' participation in company decision-making. Union membership empowers workers and offers them opportunity to negotiate with employers and to fight against unfair treatment. The way the different companies differ in these conditions and most especially how men and women are treated separately with regard to them will be the focus of this chapter. It will indicate the companies that have better conditions of work than others and how they relate to the issue of gender equity in employment.

This chapter concludes that, the conditions of work are far much better in the productive industries than in the service industries. For instance, full- time workers are paid higher and benefits such as insurance, retirement benefits, medical aid are available in the productive industries but absent in the service industries. The above not withstanding, the service industries were found to provide better prospect for creating jobs for females than the productive industries. No significant difference was found in the conditions of work of males and females employed in both sectors.

Type of Employment

In company 1(gear industry), one's post/duties are clearly stated in the employment letter and he/she can remain in that position until there is a vacancy in a higher post, which is competed for by all others who are qualified. Accordingly, duties change as posts change. The majority of the workers work full- time although the factory workers are classified as

weekly workers and the staff as monthly workers. The difference between the two has been explained above. There is one casual female staff who is the only black among the staff and one female part-time worker, which is the human resources person herself. Her job is part- time because she works three times a week and knocks off at 3 p.m. She has been in her position for 13 years. The official time of work for factory workers is from 7.30am to 4.30pm from Monday to Thursday. On Friday, they start at 7.30am and knock off at 1pm. Overtime is paid from any time above 40hrs. On the other hand, the staff works from 8am to 4.45 Monday to Thursday and on Friday 7.30am to 2.00pm. There is no overtime payment for the office workers or the staff.

At the beginning of employment, no worker in company 2(clothing outfit) is assigned any particular portfolio or post/duty. Every worker is employed as a sales person or floor attendant and can be asked from time to time to do other duties outside attending to customers like running errands, cleaning, storekeeping, moving of boxes, tagging and stocking. All the workers are employed on full- time basis. Casual workers are employed during peak periods like festive season and their jobs end as soon as the season is over. There is no official break period but workers can obtain permission for lunch or attend to other personal issues. The management does not regard any of the workers as permanent staff because they can leave at anytime. On the whole, it was gathered that in spite of the small complaints here and there, both workers and employers are happy with themselves and their jobs. According to the male employer, 'there is no boss in the business, we are all workers and I don't just give orders but balance it with action. I clean, carry boxes and do sales. We work together and I am happy with my workers'. The workers equally see the employers as both humane and caring. To them their female employer is exceptionally spectacular, kind, and generous. They work from 7am to 5.40 pm. This impression the workers have about their female employer is a credit to her as a woman and as an employer. It means that she at least cares about her workers and respects them as human beings. In other words women can be good employers. It also implies the existence of a cordial working environment in the company. If this atmosphere is accompanied by good conditions of work, the workers will be happier and put in their best and equity will be achieved. Both male and female workers interviewed have the same impression about their employers and none is treated differently.

There is no overtime payment and some of the workers stated that they have no problem with that since the nature of the business demands that it opens early and knocks off late

in order to attend to workers going or coming from work. Some of the female workers think they should be paid overtime because they consider the time too long for them. Asked whether they did not know about the work period before starting work, they said they were told to come at 7am but not when to close. They only knew of the closing time when they saw others going. This practice also reveals how the workers' desperate condition has undermined their capacity to ask for fair treatment. Sometimes shop opens on Sundays and Public Holidays and workers who come are usually paid R50 to cover transport expenses. As indicated by the management, this is not compulsory but most workers attend in order to get extra pay.

There are no specified posts like manager or supervisor in company 3 (restaurant) but the cashier is a male who is also the highest paid. The women do the cooking while the men do the service. Although the females sometimes help with service of food, the male workers don't do the cooking but some times the male employer helps with cooking. Employment is full-time from 7am to 9pm, Monday to Sunday but the time of work is rotational. There is no overtime payment for the 14 hours spent at work on a daily basis. Workers here work from 7 am to 9pm and there is no overtime payment. Starting time is also rotated among workers between 7 am and 8 am.

In company 4, the workers interviewed confirmed the management's information that posts and duties are assigned at the time of employment. Although they have all been promoted, they indicated that their jobs in the company were clearly specified at the beginning of employment. There are both full- time and 'contract staff' employed in the company but the contract staff are not regarded as company staff because they are not employed on a permanent basis but working on a fixed term for a certain time. They are therefore excluded from this study.
The permanent staff all work full – time, which is 45 hours normal time a week, and any time above this, is treated as overtime and workers are paid accordingly.

Salary

In company 1(gear industry), workers are informed of what their salaries will be during the interview. The company has a basic standard for salaries of workers (males and females) in different categories and in most cases negotiates within that framework. The

standard is provided in the Main Agreement (July, 2004). There are no separate salaries for men and women but one's skill, experience and type of job determine the salary category he/she is put. This goes to show that it is most likely that more women than men will be in the lower category and therefore lesser pay because many lack the necessary skill and experience that should move them up the salary ladder. Again salaries of the staff (office workers) differ from that of the factory or artisan workers. The basic salary of the staff is more than that of the artisan but the artisan goes home with more money because of overtime payment. Factory workers earn about R2800 gross a week because of overtime and according to the content of the Main Agreement.

It is interesting to note here that overtime earnings by factory workers gives them more take- home salary than the office employees who don't work or earn overtime. It is gathered from this company that most of the office staff are women and white and most of the factory workers are men. This therefore means that in this company, males working in the factory earn more money than the women employed as staff. It is also likely that the few females employed in the factory may not earn as much overtime payment as the men because of family responsibilities. Women are more likely to knock off earlier in order to take care of children or attend to a sick family member than men and are therefore less likely to take up overtime jobs. This also accounts for why there are variations in the factory workers' salaries from week to week as indicated by the female electrician. Thus in this company, while wage equity as specified in the Main Agreement may be observed, wage discrepancy exists in the workers' weekly or monthly take home pay between the males and the females as a result of type of job and commitment to family responsibilities. Situation such as this will maintain the gender wage gap.

The salaries of the workers in company 2(clothing outfit), range from R1000 to R3500 and are paid monthly. Workers interviewed confirmed that the company never owed them and this is why many of them still stay on the job. The company adopts an unwritten policy of same job, same pay regardless of sex. Presently, the General Manager (a man) is the highest paid and the informal female supervisor's salary is more than that of some of the men. The cashier is a lady and she also receives more than some men. That some women in this company earn more than some men shows that gender is not necessarily a determinant of pay. The function one does is a critical factor to what one gets paid. All workers interviewed want their salaries to be raised and believe they will do better with

salary increase. Salary increment seems to be the most important factor to them than other conditions of employment.

In company 3 (restaurant), the workers earn between R800 to R1300. The least paid is a female who is the cleaner and is new in the company. All the other females earn R1200. The highest paid, a male earns R1300 and the least receives R1000 per month. The salaries of the females came up to what it is because of the length of their stay in the company. The male who earns the highest has not stayed as long as the females. His higher salary could be explained from the function he performs which is that of cashier. It seems common to both company 2 and 3 that cashiers are paid higher than some other workers. The reason may be as a result of the sensitive nature of the job so as to discourage them from stealing from the company.

The management in company 4 (bakery) indicated that the least paid among the elementary occupations (cleaners, artisans, factory workers and so on) receives R3500 as gross income per month. This may be the current salary position now but at the commencement of their work some of them started with a gross of less that R3500. The factory workers are paid weekly and of those interviewed (all males); one receives R800 weekly before deductions. There is no salary difference in terms of sex. All those interviewed, males and females alike want their salaries to be improved.

The desire for salary raise runs through all the companies studied. This is not out of place considering the rate of inflation in recent times and the increase in people's tastes. It may not be enough to raise salary annually or when a worker is promoted which is seldom but following the trend in inflation may be the best measure for salary increment. Responding to inflation will at least keep the purchasing power of the salaries at a reasonable level. Again the need for salary is insatiable and no amount of pay could be considered enough for anybody because as income increases; tastes and demands increase. Thus paying male and female workers at least the basic minimum wage is considered worthwhile for gender equity. The productive companies examined in this research adhere to this more than the service companies.

Benefits

Company 1 offers certain benefits to the workers. These include; insurance, annual and maternity leave, study leave, medical aid, sick leave and compassionate/family responsibility leave. There is no gratuity paid out to the workers from the company's purse. The insurances available include the provident fund, pension fund, unemployment insurance fund (UIF), medical aid and workman's compensation fund. The provident fund pays workers six months of their salary upfront when they retire and both the employer and employee pay into this fund. On resignation, a worker claims only his/her share of the contribution and not the company's share. The company and the worker also share the pension fund. Workers contribute 6% of their salary into the fund whether weekly or monthly paid. The female electrician for instance, contributes about R150 weekly. The pension fund provides security for retirement and old age. One claims from the fund until his/ her demise. Workers claim from the UIF when they are on maternity leave or are dismissed from work. Both the employer and the employee each pay 1 percent of the employee's salary into the UIF. The amount is deducted from source. The medical aid is voluntary and the company pays 50 percent of the aid for any employee who joins the company's medical scheme, which is covered by Discovery and Sizwe. Some of the workers like the female electrician and the head of mechanical engineering are not on the company's medical aid. The female electrician for instance is covered by her husband's medical aid. The payments of benefits such as insurance and medical aid are all practices of equity and cover the workers for uncertainties. Leave is a time to have some holiday and to attend to personal matters. Therefore employers who grant workers this opportunity will be fostering equity in the workplace, most especially with granting women maternity leave or men paternity leave.

Factory workers are granted 6 months maternity leave while office workers (staff) are granted 5 months maternity leave. Maternity leaves do not come often as one of the female workers indicated that she has never seen a pregnant lady in the company. As was clarified, staff and factory workers fall under different government rules. The company complies with the employment act in addition to any other benefits it offers. The company grants other leaves like study leave and sick leave and pays them, although this is not very frequent as was gathered during the interview. Misuse of sick leave is discouraged. All the workers benefit equally from the leaves but women benefit more

from UIF as a result of maternity leave. The male workers have to wait until they are retrenched before they could claim and this does not happen often but at least it serves as some kind of security for future job lose for both men and women. Any worker who resigns on his own does not claim from the UIF. The aspects of job security that the workers enjoy revolve around the government stipulations and include any other provisions the company has made for the workers. This means that the company respects and protects the rights of all the workers.

In company 2, a discrepancy exists between the information got from the management of the company and the workers on the issue of insurance. Apparently the workers indicated ignorance of any existing insurance or any knowledge of what they mean. The employer on the other hand informed that he pays 2 percent of salaries of some of the workers into UIF. He also makes contribution into the workman's compensation fund and the public liability fund. Benefits such as pension fund, gratuity, medical aid; car allowance and so on are clearly non-existent in the company. This does not come as a surprise since proper employment procedure is not followed. Also that the employees don't seem to know what the employers are doing in terms of their welfare indicates the lack of proper communication between management and staff which could be detrimental to both. Proper communication is very crucial in any work organisation; the lack of it could undermine the practice of gender equity.

The company has unwritten provision for annual and maternity leave. Two weeks annual and one month maternity leave with full pay is granted to workers. Management indicated that some workers prefer to get paid in lieu of leave but some of the workers stated that they would like to go on leave but have not because the employer has not asked them to proceed on leave. It was gathered that there is no particular period for leave for any of the workers but those who do, go only when the employer deems it fit for them to go. Actually at the time of the study of this company, both the employers and employees interviewed informed that one of the female staff is on leave. There is also informal provision for one day off ones in a month and workers especially females with sick children are allowed to stay away from work for about 2 days. Sick leave is also granted but this is with caution to avoid abuse. The male owner sometimes doles out some financial tokens to the workers and this is not deducted from their salaries. All of the above activities are done orally. The half-hazard nature of this company is reflected in the

above behaviour of the employer. Workers can only proceed on leave at his discretion and not as an important condition of work. It also manifests the autocratic nature of this type of business and a clear evidence of the neglect of equity in the workplace.

Company 3 has no form of insurance policy in operation. No pension, gratuity or retirement benefits and both company and employees are complacent about the whole idea. Maternity leave is granted to females from 28 weeks of pregnancy and they come back to work after one month of delivery. Half of their salary is paid during the leave but most times they prefer to continue work and earn full salary until they are due for delivery. There is provision for two-day sick leave and one day off to attend social functions like funerals. The company offers the workers free feeding and accommodation but the free accommodation in the premises has been withdrawn for security reasons although not replaced with housing allowance.

In company 4, there is availability of Provident Fund, UIF and Workman's Compensation for the workers in the company. Female workers are granted maternity leave of 4 months and both males and females receive short leave for family responsibility. Every worker is entitled to 24 days annual leave and gets fully paid for it. According to management "we do what the law says and go according to the basic conditions of employment". The workers who were interviewed confirmed the absence of medical aid as indicated by management. One of the female employees interviewed confirmed going on maternity leave for 4 months during which the company paid her salary for the first month and Department of labour paid the remaining 3 months. Another female worker was paid for the 4 months she spent on maternity leave. Workers are entitled to sick leave and get paid for it on presentation of authentic medical paper.

Work Environment

In company 1 (gear industry), separate facilities for males and females provided by the company include toilets and changing rooms. According to the female electrician, this was put in place only a few years ago but is quite fantastic for artisan workers. There is no day care facility and it is not likely that the company is thinking of one. There is actually no great need for it since there are a few female employees who have probably stopped child bearing. All the workers share tearooms and restaurant. None of the

workers interviewed reported any experience of sexual harassment or heard of any other worker complain of such. Any person that feels wrongfully treated by harassment, intimidation, swearing or physical abuse in the company first reports to the immediate boss. The factory workers report to their foreman who takes appropriate steps to settle the matter. As was discovered, there has not been any formal complaint on sexual harassment and no formal dispute resolution so far. The disciplinary procedure involves first, a verbal warning, then a written warning and lastly a hearing. The company follows correct legal procedure on the discipline of workers, but this depends on the gravity of the offence. Both males and females are treated equally in this regard.

Union membership is permitted but voluntary. The unions include National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), United Association of South Africa (UASA) and SOLIDARITY. One of the employees indicated that the unions do not stand a chance against the works manager who surrounds his job with capable legal representatives. He tactfully manipulates situations in such a way that union's weight is never felt in the company. They are so carefully handled that they do not usually join in National strike of mine workers. So far there has only been one-day strike in the company about four years ago. The management stated that workers are represented in the management meetings by their shop steward on work related issues and decisions but one of the workers emphasized that they have never been consulted. A global newsletter that periodically comes from the holding company sometimes serves as a medium to circulate company information.

Although company 2 (clothing outfit), operates at park station where there - care facility and there seems not to be any great need for it since the workers send their little children to privately run crèches. That workers send their young children to private crèches is not enough reason for the employers to consider the provision of day care facilities unnecessary. This is because mothers, who live far from the place of work, are under pressure to wake up very early, first prepare their wards, send them to nearby crèche and then be at work at a particular time. Crèche facilities provided in the work premises will alleviate this problem for working mothers and also working fathers who need to drop off their children. Thus a gender sensitive company should provide crèche facilities. The fact that this company operates in Park Station where there are a number of spaces and other private enterprises will make it easier to accomplish. Employers here should therefore

come together and provide day care facilities for the children of their workers, as this will greatly contribute to gender equity in the workplace.

No case of sexual harassment was reported by any of the workers but the management indicated that sexual harassment will not be totally ruled out in a situation where men and women work together but what matters is the way it is handled. It was later gathered from management that some of the workers have actually complained of some experience of sexual harassment from fellow workers and customers but none of the workers interviewed admitted to it. This difficulty in disclosing the experience of sexual harassment by the female workers is not uncommon. Some people don't have the confidence and often feel embarrassed by the question. Some fear that they may lose their jobs when they reveal such information. This is where assertiveness training for workers especially females becomes important in the workplace and should be encouraged so that workers can speak out when they experience such misconduct in the course of their job.

The workers go to the general manager or straight to the employers to lodge their complaints or grievances. Every communication is informal and no defined steps are followed. Disciplinary measure involves firstly, a verbal warning, followed by a written warning. The management indicated that a one-month notice is usually given to both male and female employee before dismissal but on the contrary, the workers stated that most terminations are without warnings or notice. It all depends on the performance of the business. A female worker who has been stopped and recalled several times by the company confirmed that she never got any prior warning or notice and her job terminations were never on the grounds of misconduct. On the other hand, the management affirmed that workers are often paid one month in lieu of notice but most of the workers who stop work do it without any notice. In one of the cases he was urged by the department of labour to pay a female worker who left without notice on the grounds that a worker has the right to quit her job with or without notice. The employer was worried about this situation and in his words 'they can wrong you but you cannot wrong them'. The employer in this case feels aggrieved by the way the matter was handled by the department of labour. Little wonder, then, some employers are reluctant to make serious commitment to their employees. On the other hand, taking the employer to the Department of Labour shows that the worker knows her right and that law could protect her. But how many other workers know about their rights and who or where to go (when)

infringement is the question. Many are quite ignorant of the labour act and because some of them are very desperate for jobs, they are prepared to settle for any condition or tolerate unfair treatments from their employers. Equity sensitive employer should make copies of the labour act available to the workers. Efforts should also be made to educate workers and employers of their rights.

None of the workers belongs to any worker's union although there is no policy against union formation or membership. As one of the female workers said, she knew of some solidarity unions but she is afraid to join because she could lose her job for joining. This implies that protecting her job is her priority and this may be the same with other workers. Encouraging workers to join unions is one way of ensuring equity and employers that do this are sensitive to employment equity and gender employment equity in particular. The company has no opinion box but as some of the employees admitted, they are consulted from time to time on certain issues relating to their job especially on how to improve the sales. Management informed that meetings are held occasionally with the managers and supervisors to share opinions about business. In this company therefore, consultation as one way that equity is practised is observed in this company.

In company 3 (restaurant), separate toilet facilities are provided for the male and female workers. Only females are provided with changing rooms. This is the case because the females do the cooking and need to change their dresses. It also represents the recognition of the right to privacy for the females. Changing room is not considered very necessary for the males because they engage mainly in service. This is not enough reason to deny male workers such facilities because they also have the right to privacy and some of them may wish to change after work. Gender equity implies that both men and women should be considered when planning to provide certain facilities for the workers. There is no day - care facility for mothers of young children. The provision of day care facilities is essential for the same reasons given under company 2. Female workers indicated experience of sexual advances from some of the male customers but consider it as some of the risks associated with their kind of job. Their ability to speak out on the issue of sexual harassment indicates self-confidence and their relating it to the risks associated with their job means that they are managing it well.

Any form of grievance is informally reported and handled informally. Since there is no union, workers who feel aggrieved report individually to the man or the wife and an informal process of mediation is followed. Cases of misconduct like lateness, absenteeism, impoliteness to customers or abuse of other workers is handled through a verbal warning. In each case both males and females are treated the same. There has never been any case of resignation, suspension or dismissal since the company started operation. None of the workers belong to unions and some of them do not see the need for union membership. Not seeing the need to join unions indicates their ignorance of how union membership could benefit them and this ignorance could undermine the achievement of gender equity in the workplace. More so, like in company 2, it may be as a result of fear of losing their jobs. Individual consultations are done from time to time on how to improve work or idea about a particular kind of dish. Like in company 2, it looks like workers are only consulted on matters relating to their work and not on matters concerning them or their welfare.
Thus the benefit for this form of consultation may be one sided. Only the employer may stand to gain and in which case equity is undermined.

Company 4 (bakery) provides separate toilet and changing room facilities for male and female factory workers. There is no day-care facility for mothers of young children and the company does not consider the need for it since there are many places providing such services in town. Sexual harassment is not found to be common in this company. All the workers stated that they never experienced any. The management indicated that the legal code of conduct is followed in disciplining recalcitrant workers irrespective of the sex. Every complaint goes to the GM and is taken care of legally. One of the male employees interviewed who is a supervisor also stated that they handle workers' grievances at the departmental level. According to the GM, most of the complaints centre on tax deductions.

Most workers belong to South African Food and Allied Trade Union (SAFATU). The Union represents the workers especially in matters that relate to wage increase. Only one female worker out of the five workers interviewed is not a union member because according to her, union membership is optional. Members pay a monthly due of R30. The finding that some workers don't belong to unions is either unpatriotic or an attempt to evade the payment of union levy. After all, any improvement in salary or work conditions

arising from union intervention is across board without exception. Thus although union membership is voluntary, every worker employed in a company should consider it a matter of responsibility to join.

Like chapter two, variations between and within productive and service industries have been discussed so far in this chapter. Here particular attention has been paid to minimum conditions of service such as type of employment; salary; benefit; and work environment which includes provision of facilities such as separate toilets, changing rooms and day care facilities, sexual harassment, disciplinary/grievance procedure and union membership. Significant differences are found between sectors but the differences within sectors are minimal. Most of the workers in both sectors are employed on full time basis but unlike the service industries employees in the productive industries are assigned posts and duties at commencement of their job. Unlike the service industries also, workers in the productive industries are paid overtime for working outside the normal working hours of 40-45 hours a week.

The salary difference between workers in the two sectors is very noticeable. Variations also exist in the salaries of office and factory workers in the same productive industries as a result of overtime payment. Women are less likely to earn as much as men on overtime because of family responsibilities. In the two service industries, men are the highest paid but in company 2, the female supervisor earns more than some male workers. On the whole, there is no difference in the standard salary paid to men and women doing the same job. Any difference is as a result of overtime or working on public holidays. Provisions for benefits such insurance, leave, retirement, gratuity, medical aid and so on are made available to workers in the two productive industries and lacking in the two service industries. These benefits are the same for both male and female employees.

Facilities such as toilet and changing rooms are provided separately for male and female workers in the industries but none of the companies considers the provision of day care facilities necessary because of the availability of private crèches. Sexual harassment is not very much pronounced. It is only in company 3 that the female workers admitted to sexual advances from their male customers. The employer in company 2 indicated that sexual harassment couldn't be completely ruled out in a place where males and females work but it all depends on how it is handled. It is believed that the discrete way by which

the workers handled the question on sexual harassment is as a result of the sensitivity of the issue. Company 1 and company 4 (productive industries) follow some formal disciplinary and grievance procedures but the procedures in company 2 and company 3 (service industries) are quite informal. In all, the same procedure applies to men and women equally. While union membership is found in the two productive industries, it is lacking in the two service industries. The implication of this lack of union membership is lack of representativeness for workers and therefore deterrence to employment equity.

CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION

The major conclusions of this research are discussed in this chapter. The conclusions are drawn from the findings from the different companies investigated in this study. Two broad areas are covered in this study. One is the employment practice, which includes factors such as recruitment, affirmative action, gender issues and workers' upward mobility. The other is the minimum condition of employment, which includes type of employments, salary, benefits, and work environments such as facilities, sexual harassment, disciplinary/grievance procedure and union membership. Also conclusion on the number of males and females employed in the different industries would be drawn from the profile of the companies. This is important to help ascertain the sector that employs more women than men. The way these factors operate in the different industries with respect to male and female workers is used to determine the extent of gender equality in them. They are also used as measures of the differences between sectors and within sectors with regard to gender employment equity. The conclusions would therefore be critically presented in this chapter.

The study found that SMEs, in both the productive and service sectors are contributing to job creation for males and females in Gauteng. The industrial sector employs more men than women, whereas the opposite is obtainable in the service sector. The disparitity in gender employment practices in the industrial sector may be explained by the persistence of conventional sexual divisions of labour. A key finding from the research is that conventional gender employment practices continue to predominate. Employers and employees continue to perceive particular kinds of jobs as being traditionally (and to some extent, naturally) appropriate for either males or females. Even in the case where women are employed as electricians and turners, they are perceived as intruding in the male work domain. It has been contended that this view has no real basis to it. Adherence to biological determinism in the workplace is evidently outmoded. Patriarchy and gender socialization have been offered as likely explanations for the continuation of these views. Nonetheless, recognition of these factors should not imply acceptance of them. What has been found is a general reluctance to challenge the underlying perceptions about gender. The female electrician in company 1 (gear industry) is a point of reference.

Nevertheless, the employment of more females than males in the service industries than in the productive industries reveals the importance of the service industries in bridging the gender gap in employment. Especially in their being more likely to employ unskilled workers who are mainly women. This shows that this sector is more likely to create jobs for women than the productive sector. It should therefore be targeted in any policy to reduce gender differences in employment. While this may be true, it does not take care of the fact that employing more number of women does not answer all the relevant questions that arise from gender inequality in employment. Offering more women jobs in the service industries than in the productive industries without adhering to the legal recruitment procedure and worker mobility as was found common in the service industries studied amounts to exploitation which in every way runs counter to employment equity.

The findings on the employment practices of the different industries revealed that the productive industries seem to be conforming more to the labour legislation than the service industries. The productive industries tend to follow organizational procedure on employment such as adherence to the legal employment procedure of interviews and issuance of letter of contract than the service industries. However their methods of advertising for jobs do differ much from that of the service industries. The method of advertising in the productive industries is basically in-house and is singled out as one of the factors that are contributing to the maintenance of the status quo.

None observance of labour law by both the employers in the two service industries studied is considered a major problem in this sector revealed by the research. The problem is compounded by the practice of paying women lower wages. Whatever the reason, the practice shows clear abuse of the labour rights of the workers and an evidence of the low quality of jobs offered by the service industries. Women are the most affected by this because they predominate in this sector. It means that, without following the proper employment procedure women have less job security than men and their rights are infringed upon. The fact that the workers have no proper employment records and contracts or benefits means that their jobs are not sustainable. The employer can ‘hire and fire’ at will. This situation threatens the achievement of gender equity in employment and women will continue to be at a disadvantage. The solution therefore is that employers in this sector should be made to follow the labour law in employment.

The above finding is in line with Mabasa (2001) that employment practices in SMEs in South Africa are mainly temporary and flexible, indicating the employer's attempt to avoid adherence/compliance to labour laws and legislations. It also supports the view by Storey and Johnson (1989) that many jobs created by SMEs are of lower quality, unstable and lower pay than those of larger firms. It further provides support to Storey and Johnson (1989) that the tendency towards hyper-exploitation of workers is more likely among SME owners. Again the employment practices found among the service industries studied did not support Mabasa's conclusion that SMEs have the potential to create sustainable employment if adequately supported.

Furthermore, although the productive industries tend to follow organizational procedure on employment more than the service industries, the apparent consideration of sex (males) in job assignment in this sector, underplays the achievement of gender equity in these industries. This practice if continued will not only keep the number of women employed in this sector low, but will continue to maintain the status quo by discouraging women from aspiring to such jobs in the productive industries. Therefore, job offer without gender bias and accompanied by proper employment procedure and opportunities for upward mobility for both men and women should be encouraged in all the industries to ensure gender equity in employment.

Affirmative Action as gathered from the study is understood to concern filling the racial gap than the gender gap in employment. Thus any effort made by the industries to bring about equity is geared toward reducing the white and black differences and not the men and women differences in employment. What is found is a persistence of racial and gender gap in employment in most of the productive industries than in the service industries. It supports the finding by Statistics South Africa (1999) and INC- Gender Profile, South Africa (2001) on racial differences in managerial and professional positions, elementary occupations, artisan and operator occupations and racial differences in salary.

It was also found that the two productive industries have put in place Employment Equity Committees whose main function is to see to it that racial gap is filled through training and employment of blacks. This committee is found absent in the two service industries.

This invariably, shows that the productive industries are conforming to the affirmative action than the service industries but at the same time the issue of affirmative action on women in this sector is better described as theory than practice. Service industries as indicated above are found to be creating more jobs for blacks and women than the productive industries but this is not in the spirit of affirmative action on women but rather because of type of job. This again does not guarantee gender employment equity in either the service industries or the productive industries.

A highly contentious view that runs across all the companies is the point that all disapprove of gender discrimination but justify gender job assignment with the biological and physical differences between men and women. Even the female electrician in company 1 (gear industry) who has taken a giant stride into the male dominated occupation is also inclined to thinking along this line. She expressed satisfaction with her job but was concerned that she may not be physically fit for her kind of work later in life. She suggests that women should rather go into the electronic aspect of the job that does not demand much physical energy. The female electrician's point may be accepted but to relate it to her sex, as a woman is highly contentious. It implies that men are better suited for certain job especially the one that requires physical strength. There is no guarantee that men's physical make-up will sustain them in physically demanding jobs all the time. Men as well as women are likely to experience physical breakdown anytime in life when exposed to onerous tasks. This poses big question in the gender debate and major concern in the achievement of gender equity in the workplace. It seems therefore, that traditional views on gender employment remain the norm, despite gender equity legislation. More so, it's not only a question of assigning different roles but also the inherent inequality that exists in society. Her view and the views of others are as a result of the influence of socialisation, which occurs within an unequal society characterized by patriarchy. At the same time the female electrician has proved that discriminating and assigning jobs by sex is only man made. There is nothing intrinsic in a particular job that make's it males or female's. She therefore represents a contradiction that highlights an important issue about gender equality in the workplace.

The argument therefore is that employers should take the responsibility to introduce appropriate technology and machinery that would reduce the physical strain resulting from work for both men and women so that there will be no basis for rationalizing the

assignment of jobs according to sex. Doing this is expected to give women more opportunity to be employed in productive industries and will to a large extent contribute to gender equity in the workplace. Again these innovations do not require huge capital investment. SMEs committed to gender equity will not have difficulty in achieving this objective by introducing simple technologies that are less capital intensive. The state has taken appropriate measures to intervene by the establishment of programmes that provide loans, credit facilities and non-financial assistance to support SMEs in the realization of gender equity in employment. In South Africa, the DTI is doing this through programmes like Ntiska; Khula; Business Partners (BP); National Empowerment Fund (NEF); Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) and Business Referral and Information Network (BRAIN). These are laudable programmes that should boost the capacity of SMEs to achieve gender equity in job creation. It is therefore the responsibility of employers to access such opportunities so as to enhance gender equity in the workplace. Therefore proper implementation of these programmes through appropriate dissemination of information and education should be considered a very vital ingredient in achieving the objective.

Upward mobility of workers found mostly amongst the productive industries is most likely to favour men than women because the criteria for promotion are skills and experience, which many women do not have as a result of historical disadvantage. Gender gap in workplace authority was obvious in the industries. In the productive industries, there were more male managers than female managers and even in company 2, which is service, the only manager is a male and in company 3 (restaurant), the cashier who is the highest paid is a male. The finding confirmed the result of the LFS (2003) that the number of female managers remains low. In light of the above gender gap in managerial provisions and the lack of skill and experience for women to advance, education is therefore considered a necessary tool to help women acquire the relevant skill. Also creating work environment where women as well as men can be employed without prejudice to physical differences will help women be employed and gain the experience.

A comparison of the work conditions shows that the conditions in the two service industries are poor although Company 2 (clothing outfit) seems to be doing better than Company 3(restaurant). Companies1 (gear industry) and 4 (bakery) have almost the same conditions of service, probably because they adhere to the labour legislation. Generally,

industries in the productive sector have better conditions of service than the industries in the Service Sector. The employee's duties/ posts and time of work in the productive industries are well defined. The workers have access to certain benefits such as insurance, medical aid, retirement benefits and proper legal procedure in handling of grievances and discipline of workers is followed. The service industries on the other hand seem to operate on their own terms without any regard to the labour stipulations. The reason for the productive industries conforming to the labour code may be attributed to the different kinds of jobs that they do. Other reasons include their multinational nature, which is likely to bring them under close scrutiny by government agencies; well-established unions that could mount pressure on management to comply with the regulations; and historical factors such as long time in operation, which makes them, better regulated. Both the service and the productive sectors come short of providing day - care facilities for employees with young children. This is a very important neglect on the part of the employers and therefore undermines the attainment of gender equity in the workplace. Providing this should be considered a crucial way to encourage equity in the workplace because it will reduce the stress of mothers and often fathers who have to wake up very early in order to take their wards to privately run day- care centres before coming to work.

A large variation was found with the pay in the different sectors. It was found that while the least paid worker in the productive industries earned about R3000 monthly, the highest paid in the service sector earned about R3500. A point of convergence is the lack of negotiation of salaries and other conditions of work on the part of the workers in both sectors. In all, management only informs workers of what the salaries will be at interviews in the productive industries or informally in the two service industries and the worker only has the choice to accept or refuse the job not the pay.

The huge difference in the salaries that are paid by the two sectors calls to question the role of service industries in achieving equity in employment. It shows that although fewer numbers of females than males are employed in the productive industries, their adoption of proper employment procedure and payment of better and higher salaries gives them an edge over the service industries in fostering gender equality in employment. With better and higher income, both men and women can improve their standard of living by meaningfully contributing towards household income, nutrition, clothing, child health and

education. This important practice in the productive industries, therefore, calls for the need to employ more women in this sector. Again the salary disparity between the productive and the service industries does not translate to gender wage equality for men and women doing the same kind of job in the productive industries. . Huge disparity in wage exists not only between productive and service industries but also within industries between males and females as a result of overtime payment, which favours men more than women. This study therefore reveals that overtime is an important determinant of one's take- home pay as well as the cause of the persistence of gender wage gap. A gender sensitive employer should remove overtime in the work schedule so that men and women doing the same job could work equal number of hours and earn equal income.

A major conclusion that could be drawn from the research is the fact that there is a salient discrepancy between what is said about bridging gender gap in employment and what is actually practised. The law is there and most employers appear to be aware of employment equity and understand it but the practice of gender employment equity is still not very noticeable.

Compliance to the minimum basic conditions as was common in the productive industries is not enough and does not necessarily translate to gender equity. So also is the employment of more women in the service companies. The objective of ensuring gender equity requires that companies have to go beyond providing those minimum requirements. There has to be uniformity in the rhetorical support of gender equity and gender practices in the workplace. Dealing with this is quite complicated and includes challenge to patriarchy and socialization.

The lack of any attempt to observe affirmative action on women is an important finding of this study and calls for policy intervention. It means that the issue of gender differences in employment is not given as much weight as racial differences by employers. This is not surprising considering the history of South Africa and the urgent need to bridge the racial gap. If the same energy that is put in BEE is put in gender equality in the workplace, a reasonable success will be achieved. It is now ten years since South Africa became a democratically elected government. This research reveals that a lot is yet to be done in order to achieve gender equity in employment. It is therefore pertinent that bridging

gender gap in employment should be given priority attention so that it will be entrenched in the minds of employers and employees like racial gap.

The role of SMEs in job creation as a development strategy is identified in this research. The productive and service industries examined proved this. Thus, providing support to the efforts of the government to promote this sector of the economy. As a result therefore, SMEs should also play vital role in the implementation of affirmative action and achievement of gender equality in employment. Instead, the result of this study reveals that the SMEs investigated are not fulfilling the important objective of gender equity in employment. The reason is because the employers and employees in these industries seem to cling tenaciously to the traditional belief on gender division of labour. This is observed as a major barrier that requires a multifaceted approach.

The findings so far have important implications for development. It means that with continued existence of discrepancy such as was found in this study, the achievement of gender equality in employment that is an essential goal of development is not in sight and will continue to stall all efforts to achieve overall development.

APPENDICES

A1. Abbreviations

BP: Business Partners

BRAIN: Business Referral and Information Network

CIP/SED: Craft Industry Production/Small Enterprise Development

CSPB: Centre of Small Business Promotion

DTI: Department of Trade and Industry

GM: General Manager

HRM: Human Resources Manager

IDC: Industrial Development Corporation

LSF: Labour Force Surveys

NUM: National Union of Mine Workers

OECD: Organisation of European Community Development

SAFATU: South African Food and Allied Trade Union

SMEs: Small and Medium Scale Enterprises

USAID: United States Agency for International Development

USASA: United Association of South Africa

A2. Questionnaire

Dear Respondent,

I am a postgraduate student in Development Studies, University of the Witwatersrand. I am doing a research on Gender Employment Practices in Small and Medium-Scale Industries in Johannesburg as part of the course requirement. Your company is chosen among other companies to participate in the research with the hope that you will cooperate.

I would be very grateful if you could help provide answers to the questions. All responses are confidential and will strictly be used for academic purposes. Your sincere responses are requested but also feel free to leave out any question you don't feel comfortable with. To further ensure confidentiality, your company's name will not be revealed unless you wish otherwise.

Thank you
Chioma Joyce Onukogu.

INSTRUCTION: Tick the appropriate answer.

Personal Data

What is your sex?

Male

Female

Any other, specify

Tick the age range to which you belong

A. 15 – 19

B. 20 – 24

C. 25 – 29

D. 30 -34

E. 35+

What is your population group?

Black

White

Coloured

Indian

Foreigner

What is your marital status?

A. Married

B. Single

C. Divorced

D. Widowed

What is your position in the company?

Sole owner

Co- owner

Manager

Recruitment officer

Human resources officer

Any other, specify…….

Company Information

How would you classify your company?

A. Service

B. Manufacturing

C. Construction

Non-governmental

Any other, specify

What specific product does your company produce or service you deliver? Please specify

Where is your company located?

Please specify.

How is the company ownership like?

Sole- proprietorship

Joint ownership

Group business

Family business

Any other specify…..

What is the sex of the owner(s)?

Male

Female

Male and Female

What type of registration does the company have?

Closed Corporation (cc)

Limited liability (pty)

Any other, specify…….

How long has the company been in operation?

0 – 4 years

5 – 9 years

10+ years

How many people are employed in the company?

Please specify the number according to

sex of the workers

Males

Females

What type of employment does your company offer? You may tick more than one.

Full-time

Part-time

Casual

Temporary

Any other, specify

Specify the number of workers in each category according to sex

	Males	Females
Full-time		
Part-time		
Casual		
Temporary		
Any other, specify		

How many workers did your company start with? Specify according to sex.

Males

Females

Please specify the number of senior staff in your company according to sex

Males Females

Please specify the number of junior staff according to sex.

Males

Females

Has your company ever experienced labour loss?

Yes

No

If yes, specify the number according to sex.

Males

Females

Does your company have different kinds of job for males and females?

A. Yes

B. No

If yes, what type of job do you have exclusively for males? You may tick more than one.

A. Clerical

B. Production

C. Machine operation

D. Cleaning

E. Packaging

F. Security

G. Receptionist

H. Others specify…….

What type of job is exclusively for females?

A. Clerical

B. Production

C. Machine operation

D. Cleaning

E. Packaging

F. Security

G. Receptionist

H. Others specify…..

If No, what job do males and females do together?

A. Clerical

B. Production

C. Machine operation

D. Cleaning

E. Packaging

F. Security

G. Receptionist

H. Others specify

On what basis does your company recruit a worker?

A. Sex

B. Skill

C. Level of Education

D. Personal Relationship

E. Race

F. Specify any other primary basis…..

Indicate the number of your workers according to sex and population group.

	Males	Females
Black		
Coloured		
White		
Indian		
Foreigner		

What is the salary of your workers like? Specify the number of males and females in each group.

	Males	Females
A. R500 – R2000		
B. R2000 – R3500		

C. R3500 –R5000

D. Over R5000

Company Policy on Gender Employment

What is your recruitment policy like?

Strictly on merit

Strictly on race

Consideration of gender and race only

Strictly on gender

Gender and race considered but selection is on the basis of merit

Does your company specify a certain number of males or females that should be employed at any point in time?

Yes

No

No Reply

If yes to question 30, how is it done?

More males than females all the time

More females than males all the time

More males or females some of the time

Equal number of males and females all the time

Equal number of males and females some of the time

Does your company currently have any policy against gender discrimination?

Yes

No

No Reply

Does your company grant female workers maternity leave?

Yes

No

No Reply

If yes, how long?

Less than 1 month

2 months

3 months

More than 3 months

What category of female workers benefit from the maternity leave? If not all, tick the ones that are applicable.

Full-time

Part-time

Casual

Temporary

All

Characteristics of the workers

What is the highest educational level of your workers? Specify the number according to sex

	Males	Females
No schooling		
Attempted primary school		
Completed primary school		
Attempted secondary school		
Matric		
Tertiary education		

What is the marital status of your workers? Specify the number in each sex category

	Males	Females
Single		
Married		
Divorced		
Widowed		

How many of your workers fall within the following age categories. Please specify according to sex

	Males	Females
15 -19		
20 -24		
25 -29		
30 -34		
35+		

A3. Interview Schedules

Interview Schedule for the Employer/Representative

Does your company currently have any policy against gender discrimination?
If yes, what is your company doing to ensure gender equity?
If no, does the company have any plan to introduce gender equity?
Do you think it is necessary to have gender equity in your workplace?
If not, why?
Would you prefer more males or females to be employed in your company?
Why do you think the other should be less in number?
Have you heard of affirmative action on employment?
Is your company affected by the act?
If you are to bridge the racial or gender gap in the country, which will you choose first?
What do you think should be done about the other gap?
Do you think women's sex/family responsibility interfere with their job?
What is your opinion about men and women doing separate jobs?
What kind of job would you recommend for each?

Interview Schedule for the Empoyees/ Union Representatives

How long have you worked in this company?
What is your highest level of education?
What is your marital status?
How much is your salary?
Is your salary on a regular basis?
Under what condition are you employed?
How many children do you have?
Do you have other dependents?
What benefits does your company offer?
Are the males and females in your company treated equally?
Which sex do you think is discriminated against and how?
Do you think workers should be treated equally irrespective of their sex?

Do you think your level of education has an impact on your status and the type of job you do in the company?

What is your impression about the recruitment practice in your company?

Do males and females in your company do separate jobs? If so specify the jobs that are mostly done by males or females in your company.

What is your opinion about males and females doing separate jobs?

Do you think your company should have gender equity as employment policy?

If so why do you think this is necessary?

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