

## CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND

### 1.1 Introduction

Global events, spearheaded by technological, economic and political changes, have revolutionised communication around the world, removing national barriers to trade and competitiveness (Slabbert and De Villiers, 1998:7). According to Parker (1998: 11) all countries affected by this revolution face a major challenge of planning, implementing and maintaining political democracy. It is no wonder that the annual survey of International Human Rights by Freedom House (a United States group) indicated in 1995 that out of 191 countries in the world, 117 or 61 % are now democracies with democratic values.

Gilliomme and Schlemmer (1994:173) assert that non-democratic regimes had no choice but to democratise their countries, since failure to do so would spell out economic failure for them. Economic failure would then be used by the masses as a strong ground to challenge the legitimacy of the non-democratic leaders. Nehru in Barker (1999:28) states in this regard that *“the boundaries of democracy have to be altered so as to include economic equality. This is the great revolution through which we are passing”*.

South African political democracy has also become the criterion for business systems, processes, structures and procedures. This new focus in South African organisations is founded in the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995(LRA) and the country’s post-apartheid Constitution. Both the Act and the Constitution dictate participative practices at both organisational and national levels respectively. It is this participation that is a pre-requisite in a company's pursuit of *“world-class”* status, since it results in improved employee morale. This improved morale eventually translates in increased productivity, better quality products and enhanced service to customers.

The following questions arise:

- What is meant by “world-class”? and
- How can a business organisation evolve as a “*world-class*” competitor?

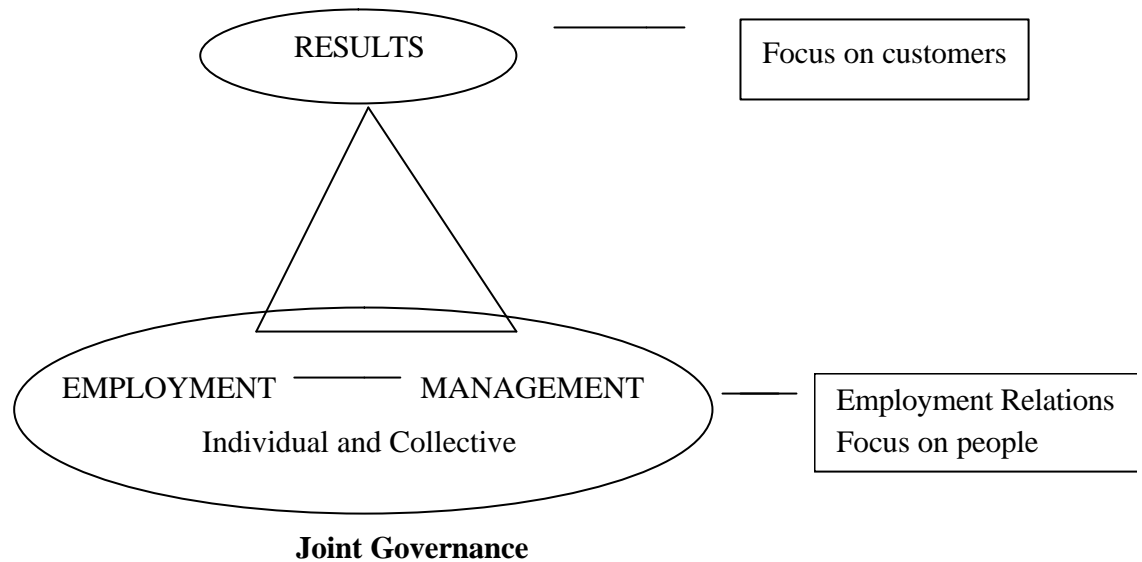
Ascending to “*world-class*” status simply means becoming globally competitive in terms of the price and quality of products offered to the customers. This implies benchmarking one’s performance against that of “*world-class*” organisations. Nel (1994) describes it as the ability to respond effectively to the prevailing challenges in a manner that surpasses that of the competitors. According to Rhinesmith (1996:9) the strategic intent of a “*world-class*” business organisation is to concentrate on delivering the highest quality product or service to the most profitable *world-class* markets at the lowest cost under changing market and competitive conditions.

R. Stringfellow, Managing Director of the Southern Sun Group Hotels, writes the following in the group’s mission and value booklet *‘The hotel that I see us bringing into being will be where customer delight is regularly reported by customer surveys. When our customers consistently confirm that we are meeting and exceeding their expectations, then we will know that we have made it’* (Parker, 1998:12). Authors like Prinsloo, Moropodi, Slabbert and Parker (1999:12-13); Cronje (1994) and Manning (1991:4) also emphasise the major role people play in the delivery of high-quality customer service.

The people referred to in this particular case are individual employees, groups and organisations with a direct interest in the existence, survival and growth of the organisation. On the other hand, customers are the clients, individuals or organisations served by the company. Parker (1998:70) indicates that it is the unique relationship between people and customers that makes “*world-class*” organisations what they are. Well-treated employees for example, will treat customers like kings. Indeed, “*world-class*” organisations focus on their customers and people.

Figure 1 illustrates the two focus points in a “*world-class*” business organisation.

**Figure 1: Integration of features that create “world-class” business organisations**



**Source: Prinsloo et al (1999:32)**

As illustrated in Figure 1 above, Joint Governance is the “cement” that bonds Management and employees in a business organisation's pursuit of “world-class” status via customer service. This is a deduction, which is in line with the thinking of Parker (1998), Swanepoel (1995) as well as that of Purcell and Ahlstrand (1994). Rhinesmith (1996:9) however, points out that in order to empower employees to such an extent that customer service of the highest standard is possible, an essential shift is necessary from the tight control of a bureaucracy to an entrepreneurial flexible rapid-response capability that is totally comfortable with cross-cultural influences. In line with this perception of Rhinesmith (1996), Wilson, George, Wellens and Byham (1994:79) are furthermore of the opinion that world-wide, “world-class” business organisations are moving away from values embedded in autocratic, low-involvement and low-commitment cultures that place a premium on empowerment and involve the work-force's true business partners.

From the aforesaid it can be seen that workplace democratisation through employee participation can be a major tool for a business organisation's global competitiveness. This is because employees get actively involved in developing and implementing decisions affecting their jobs.

Bendix (2001:655) observes that employee participation means employees' involvement in the organisation and planning of work processes by contributing towards the establishment of work procedures and by participating in decision-making at different levels in the organisation. Workers or their representatives become part of the structures, that decide the organisation's policy and are also permitted to take part in management. Hyman and Mason (1995:21) define employee participation in terms of state initiatives, that promote the collective rights of employees to be represented in organisational decision-making or initiatives by workers, possibly in face of opposition from the employers, to establish collective representation in corporate decisions.

Unlike Bendix (2001), Hyman and Mason (1995:21) make a distinction between employee participation and employee involvement and assert that while participation is state- or employee-initiated, involvement is always management-initiated; and entails all practices and policies that emanate from management or advocates of free market commercial activity to provide employees with the opportunity to influence, and where appropriate, take part in decision-making on matters which affect them. In this study employee participation/ involvement will refer to all participative practices and policies that provide workers with an opportunity to influence decisions affecting them and their jobs.

Bendix (2001:663-665) further notes that employee participation is bound to increase workers' motivation and commitment, while at the same time helping to overcome adversarial relations in the work-place. Bendix (2001), furthermore, notes that it is possible to change the organisation of work, simplify work roles, lower production costs and increase flexibility in human resource management through participative practices. This will not only increase productivity, but also the organisation's competitiveness.

Through participation employees are given the opportunity to learn managerial and decision-making skills (Mosoge, 1996:70). In the process, such employees become more aware of broader organisational issues, enhance and develop their capabilities as they exercise better judgement of their own abilities, and discover their full potential. Mosoge (1996:70) further notes that:

- Delegating tasks to employees, involving them in team meetings for planning and decision-making, equips them with capabilities that organisations can tap later.
- Groups or team processes allow employees to relate to one another, thus promoting collaborative and collegial relationships. Employees also learn to trust and rely on one other as each member's unique capabilities become apparent.
- Participation helps employees to integrate their individual goals with those of the organisation. This reinforces individuals' commitment to teamwork and towards the entire organisation.
- Participation promotes employees' self-management skills, which becomes evident as the need for extensive staff support within the organization decreases.

The relationship between participative work practices and enhanced productivity, and competitiveness is further supported by the findings of empirical research done by Dennis Kravetz of Columbia University in 1980, Ichniowski and Shaw (1995) and Kotter and Heskett (1992) in Slabbert, Prinsloo, Swanepoel and Backer (1998:13-8 to 3-10). According to these research findings, organisations that used the most progressive and participative work practices, significantly outperformed those that did not.

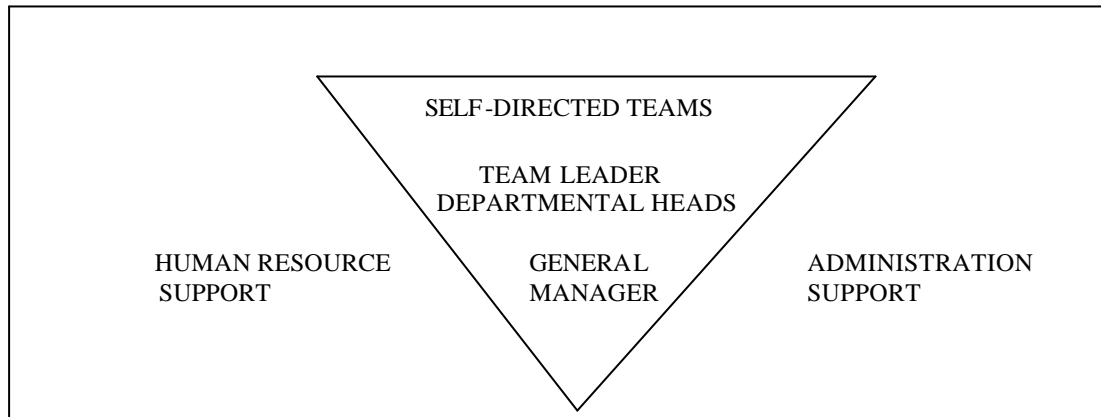
It's against the above scenario that Parker (1998:4) asserts that a need exists for major role players in the business environment (and especially Management) to realise and believe that participative work practices are essential for enhanced performance, and that

it is impossible to attain higher levels of sustainable competitiveness without initiating worker participation programmes.

However, in order to accelerate an organisation's competitiveness, participation should not be confined to substantive aspects of uncoordinated improvements in the work-place (Anstey, 1997:30). It requires a great deal of co-ordination and linkage of different work initiatives for Employee Participation to be utilised as a tool for enhancing competitiveness. In the same vein, Bendix (2001:679) reveals that uncoordinated programmes like quality circles, team building, profit sharing and other incentive schemes may not necessarily lead to increased competitiveness. Though such programmes are commendable, they have to be accompanied by a complete cultural change in the company if they have to lead to global competitiveness. According to Vroman and Luchsinger (1994:112) the new culture has to be characterised by high employee participation and empowerment. This implies that employee participation without empowerment is not complete. In line with Vroman and Luchsinger (1994), Parker (1998:3) points out that empowerment is synonymous with "*Democracy*", and indicates that it is a pre-requisite for global competitiveness. Meyer (1996:13) notes that employee empowerment naturally leads to individual growth and confidence on the part of the employees. It is necessary, therefore, that management itself, supervisors, shop stewards and employees develop new understandings, new skills and make significant value shifts if employee participation is to lead to increased productivity and competitiveness.

In line with Meyer (1996) and Parker (1998), Orsburn, Moran, Musselwhite, Zenger and Perrin (1990: X-XI) assert that no major organisational efforts in terms of enhanced productivity, competitiveness or otherwise can be successful until all employees in the organisation are empowered to contribute to the best of their abilities. These authors believe that the advantage of full employee involvement through self-directed teams can not be realised without empowerment. Parker (1998:3) adds that such participation involves a complete organisational change, breaking the traditional organisational structure pyramid and adapting the inverted organisation pyramid, illustrated in Figure 2.

**Figure 2: The inverted organisational pyramid**



**Source: Parker (1998:4)**

In an organisation such as the one illustrated in Figure 2, employees are encouraged to participate by assuming responsibility for the organisation's performance. Employees have to set priorities, organise and co-ordinate with each other as teams, assess and take corrective action and assume responsibilities that were previously reserved for supervisors and managers. These teams also have to solve problems, schedule and assign work and handle personnel issues like absenteeism. Against this scenario, employees have to make informed decisions and use good judgement as they carry out the various duties that impact on the company's performance.

Unfortunately, despite the obvious advantage of worker participation, many Business Managers throughout the world pay lip-service only to these practices (Orsburn *et al*, 1990:11 and Parker, 1998:5). According to these authors, Managers who advocate for status quo fear that:

- participative work practices may lead to their expertise not being valued;
- they may no longer perform important duties within the organisation; and
- they may lose their jobs.

Furthermore, several authors (Mosoge, 1996:73-74; Jaques, 1991:59) contend that many Managers resist employee participation on the following grounds.

- Participation is costly in terms of salary and training costs, programme support and costs associated with middle-management resistance to participation.
- Participation increases the response time of decision-making systems. Group decisions for instance, may take time to be made, and yet certain situations demand snap decisions.
- Employees may unrealistically expect to have final decision-making power, or they may even expect to participate in all decisions, even those where they lack the competency to reach quality decisions.
- Group differences and differences among participants may lower the quality of decisions reached.
- Participative management often results in the blurring of distinctions between departments, line and staff managers, management and employees.

The above authors' observations are a true reflection of the situation in post-apartheid South Africa's organisations where the adherents of the old industrial relations system are still bent on using any means at their disposal to thwart work place democratisation and employee participation.

## **1.2 Exposition of the problem**

Bendix (2001:679) states that while South African employers have realised the need to change, they have not taken concrete steps to effect it; and though Meyer (1996:12) reveals that there is hardly a South African organisation which is not undergoing second order change, the changes have merely manifested themselves in uncoordinated



programmes such as quality circles, team building, profit sharing and incentive schemes. Such uncoordinated initiatives may not secure employee commitment and motivation, the two ingredients essential for increased productivity and competitiveness.

To a great extent, therefore, South African business organisations have not yet combined and teamed up all employee participative programmes into a more co-ordinated management strategy, which Finnemore (1998:128) and Orsburn *et. al;* (1990:X-XI) maintain are essential for increased productivity and competitiveness. It is not surprising that research done by Veldsman and Harilall (1996:15) found that many South African organisations lack the zeal to co-ordinate the respective factors which make up the key variables in employee involvement. It was concluded that these organisations had not yet accepted work-place democratisation, let alone redefining the relationship between Management and employees.

In line with the findings of Veldman's and Harilall (1996:15) is the Chicago-based international survey research report as reported by Hoffmeyer (1997). The findings from a sample of 23 000 South African employees showed, among other things, that there was a lack of employee involvement in the decision-making process in their organisations. Furthermore, employees did not only rate the management styles as rigid, but also bureaucratic, intimidating and short-term oriented; factors that are detrimental to employee participation, productivity and the competitiveness of the organizations involved. The international survey research report is supported by the benchmarking study on people management in South African organisations by Ernst and Young. The study revealed among others, that a lack of readiness existed to transform people management, and that work-place management does not enhance employees' satisfaction (Veldsman, Van der Linde and Conidaris, 1998:6-9).

The above research findings are critical to this investigation, for they show that post-apartheid South African organisations have not yet developed effective mechanisms to cope with global demands and changes brought about by democratisation of the country. While still being undemocratic, these organisations operate in a democratic environment.

This has resulted in poor organisational benchmarking as reflected in Ernst and Young's report (Veldsman, van der Linde and Conidaris, 1998:6-9). It has also resulted in organisations' poor "*world-class*" status being reflected in recent world competitive reports, which show that South African organisations fare exceptionally poorly when compared to other developed and developing nations.

The following factors have also been identified as obstacles to the proper implementation of participation schemes in post-apartheid South Africa.

- **Employee and employer battle mentality**

Van Rensburg (1998:18/12) asserts that, over an extensive period of time, employers and employees in South Africa have developed and nurtured a battle mentality that is evident in the adversarial and antagonistic relations existing between the two parties. For several years the relationship between labour and management has been punctuated by conflict, suspicion, mistrust and sometimes open hatred.

This relationship has spilled over into post-apartheid South Africa, making it difficult for participative work practices to be effectively implemented. Marais and Israelstam (1996:2) note that the injustices and conflicts of the past have in many cases entrenched negative attitudes in employers and employees alike. As a result both parties view each other as self-serving, untrustworthy, disloyal and hostile, and are, therefore, unable to work together to effect the needed changes.

- **Lack of managerial and employee commitment to the process**

Bendix (2001:665), Healy (1996:4), Marais and Israelstam (1996:2) point out that employee and managerial commitment is essential for the process of implementing participative work practices in order to be successful. However, Healy (1996:4) observes that some post-apartheid managers are inwardly threatened by the process and, as a result, are not committed to it. While such managers are publicly enthusiastic about the

new pattern of worker participation, privately, they use any available opportunity to frustrate and undermine programmes meant to involve and empower workers in their organisations.

· **The "Boss-Servant" tradition in the work-place**

Johnson (1993:124) notes that Tradition could provide anchors that prevent necessary changes. This is true as far as the South African work-place is concerned, where the political system prior to the demise of apartheid nurtured and encouraged the "Boss-servant" relationship between managers and workers. During this period managers managed and workers worked; and most of the "good" ideas evolved from Management, who could see the big picture and had the education to think things through. Consequently many of today's managers still feel they should manage and think for employees, while some workers also have the mind-set that "*Bosses get paid to make decisions, so they might as well earn their money*". In the process employee participation is stifled.

· **Lack of employee empowerment through skills acquisition**

The majority of employees in post-apartheid South Africa are not empowered yet to assume joint responsibility and play a decision-making role along with Management. They lack the necessary knowledge, skills and confidence to conduct meetings, to question and evaluate managerial plans and decisions.

The implication of the above is that even in cases where managers have accepted Employee Participation Programmes, and have wholeheartedly accepted the process, they are unable to find partners among the workers with whom to make joint quality decisions. It is indeed against this background that Bendix (2001:665) and Meyer (1996:13) suggest that shop stewards, employees and managerial representatives alike need to develop the new understanding, competencies and skills needed to effect participation.

· **Presence of strong employees' and employers' organisations**

Van Rensburg (1998:18/12) observes that employees and employers alike in South Africa are fiercely loyal to their organisations. Since the two parties have divergent interests, it becomes difficult for them to focus jointly on strategies meant to facilitate participation.

While employers are primarily concerned with minimising production costs and maximising profit, trade unions focus primarily on pushing up wage levels and ensuring the improvement of their members' conditions of working. As a result both parties are at times opposed to cooperating with one other.

According to Bendix (2001:664) and Johnson (1993:124) employers normally object to participation on the grounds that it is a time consuming process, leads to lack of control and employees are not capable of making responsible decisions. On the other-hand, some unions also oppose the process on the grounds that it weakens their traditional role as challengers of managerial decisions, and dilutes their collective power since they are treated as individuals.

It is clear that managers of post-apartheid business organisations, together with their employees, seem relatively complacent with respect to the importance of work-place democratisation. The breed of managers and employees who "*succeeded*" within an authoritarian and adversarial system have to acknowledge that the system of Management can no longer provide a foundation for successful productivity and competitive work practices in post-apartheid South Africa. Ignoring the current trends will inevitably expose the country's business organisations to the danger of surrendering entire businesses to foreign competitors who have already made participative work practices a way of life for some time. Indeed as Nel (in Slabbert *et al*, 1998: 3/3) notes the importance of an organisational culture, that reflects democratic principles like leadership, accountability, transparency, information sharing, participation and freedom of expression cannot be over-emphasised.

### 1.3 Statement of the problem

From the foregoing section indications are that post-apartheid business organisations in South Africa have not yet adjusted to national and global trends. Many managers are still autocratic, workers do not trust management and the atmosphere in many work-places is still adversarial and confrontational. The organisations have not yet taken the bold step of implementing “*world-class*” participative practices. Where this has occurred, it has been in the form of loose and uncoordinated programmes (paragraph 1.2), which inevitably has resulted in low productivity and high costs.

This has exposed the concerned organisations to the danger of being outrivalled globally by foreign or local organisations who have successfully implemented participative, “*world-class*” work-place practices. Compared to “*world-class*” organisations in countries like Japan, USA, Singapore and Hongkong, South Africa's organisations are not yet globally competitive.

The research question, therefore, is: **to what extent have business organisations in post-apartheid South Africa repositioned themselves to compete globally, by means of employee participative practices?** This problem was investigated through the compilation, description and analysis of both primary and secondary sources relevant to the subject. Relevant empirical studies conducted in and outside South Africa were consulted to determine the extent to which the organisations have aligned themselves to national and global trends with the aim of becoming globally competitive.

### 1.4 Objectives of the study

The previous paragraph shows that implementation of “*world-class*” participative practices in a co-ordinated and strategic manner is necessary for any organisation to be competitive in the global economy. It was also revealed that the implementation of such practices has to be done in such a way that it facilitates the organisation's rapid response

to the marketing demands of customers. This is something that has been found to be lacking in many business organisations in the country.

South Africa has now embraced democracy, with a LRA (Labour Relations Act), which provides a legal framework for higher levels of constructive co-operation and collaboration between management and employees. Organisations in the country are therefore compelled by world and local trends as well as legislation to make fundamental shifts in their mindset.

This means that, in order to succeed in the coming decades, organisations have to do a complete retooling because nothing short of a complete break with the past will suffice. In line with this observation, post-apartheid organisations will need radical restructuring to survive and compete successfully. Those that may try to maintain the old systems face the danger of complete collapse.

The idea of complete restructuring of the entire work-place is of critical importance to South African organisations. As indicated in the previous paragraphs there is now no room for authoritarianism and adversarialism, two prominent features which characterised the work-place during the Apartheid era. The LRA now advocates reconciliation, co-operation, transparency and partnership among all stakeholders.

Against the above scenario Marais and Israelstam (1996:2) assert that successful management of the post-apartheid work-place will require the development of a participative culture through ongoing consultation, openness, broad-based involvement, accommodation of each other's problems and adoption of the Winning Approach.

There will thus be a need to institute a management programme based on

- joint responsibility;
- joint problem-solving;
- common values; and
- gain-sharing and joint wealth creation.

It is therefore the objective of this study to contribute towards the entrenchment of the democratic system in post-apartheid business organisations, as dictated by global and national trends, and to counter the shortcomings of the old system by:

- showing the extent to which organisations have aligned themselves to global and national trends with regard to the implementation of participative practices in the work-place;
- indicating how participative programmes could be implemented and managed to motivate Line employees in a bid to increase productivity and the organisation's global competitiveness;
- demonstrating how Participative Programmes could be used to build a business of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- providing a blueprint for enhancing the validity of an organisation's services or products; and
- showing how employee involvement rids organisations of adversarial relationships in the work-place and facilitates continued growth and prosperity .

### **1.5 Research methodology**

Mauer (1996:11) asserts that methods used to conduct research, range from being strictly empirical at the one end of the continuum, to strictly theoretical at the other end. However, it is not possible to classify any one research as purely empirical or theoretical. The above implies that a method used to investigate a problem is more often than not a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods. Whatever the methods chosen by a researcher, Teifel (1995:9) points out that the most important thing with regard to any academic piece of work is that it should be always scientifically valid and potentially useful.

This dissertation aims to cater for the above issues by adopting a theoretically-oriented research method. This study is a non-interactive exploratory and analytical inquiry.

### 1.5.1 Qualitative research

Schumacher and McMillan (1993:372) define qualitative research as "... a naturalistic inquiry involving the use of non-interfering data collection strategies to discover the natural flow, of events and processes and how participants interpret them." According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994:2) such research is also interpretive and descriptive. Tutty, Rothery and Grinnel (1996: 4) align themselves with Schumacher and McMillan (1993:372) who view qualitative research as "*the study of people in their natural environment as they go about their lives...*" with the aim of understanding how they live, talk, behave and what their words and behaviours mean to them. Indeed Creswell (1994:161) asserts that it "*...is an investigative process where the researcher gradually makes sense of a social phenomenon by contrasting, comparing, replicating, cataloguing and classifying the objective of the study*". By its very nature, qualitative research is:

- inductive because the researcher starts with observed data in a particular situation and then develops a generalisation between the objects observed;
- descriptive because the researcher is interested in the process, meaning and understanding, through words and pictures and not numbers;
- interpretative since it aims at understanding and interpreting the meaning and intentions that accrue to every human action;
- holistic in approach because it emphasises the whole and seeks to understand phenomena in their totality;
- primarily interested in how people make sense of their world, lives and experiences;
- discovery-oriented with the researcher as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis; and
- contextual because it focuses on specific theories that concern phenomena (Parker, 1998:102).



### 1.5.1.1 Exploratory research

Roodt (1997: 30) asserts that Exploratory Research is a study that investigates a research question on which there has been no significant research. The aim of research of this nature is to uncover generalisations, develop hypotheses, which can be investigated and tested later using accurate and more complex designs and data collection methods, while at the same time establishing a broader comprehension of the subject.

Roodt (1997), Mouton and Marais (1990:43) note that an exploratory study may have the following aims:

- to generate many ideas and develop tentative theories and assumptions about the subject;
- to formulate questions and define issues for a more systematic inquiry;
- to become familiar with the basic facts, people and issues involved;
- to develop a clear mental picture of what is involved in the subject;
- to determine the potential for further research and
- to develop techniques and directions for future research and to gain new insights into phenomena.

It is against the above background that Creswell (1994:146) reveals that an exploratory research problem has the following characteristics.

- The concept is "*immature*" due to a conspicuous lack of theory and previous research.
- There is a feeling that the available theory on the subject is inaccurate, inappropriate incorrect or biased.
- A need exists to explore and describe the phenomena and to develop theory.
- The nature of the phenomena may not suit quantitative measures.

The researcher has opted to make use of this method of investigation because, as observed by Nel (in Slabbert *et al.* 1998:13-7), no significant research, up to now, has been conducted in South Africa to determine the benefits of participative work practices. In the same vein, Parker (1998:101) observes that the concept of "*world-class*"

Employment relations practices, with ever-changing variables and theory, is seemingly unknown and there is a discernible lack of theory and previous research. Against this scenario, it is the researcher's aim to carry out research of this nature in order to generate new ideas about the subject.

#### **1.5.1.2 Analytical research**

Schumacher and McMillan (1993:442) define Analytical research as, primarily, non-interactive document research, which is also discovery-orientated, holistic and inductive with regard to data analysis, and does not interfere in the natural setting of the objects.

In this type of research the researcher does not directly observe, measure, or experiment with current issues, nor are his findings tested statistically. Instead the researcher uses logical induction to analyse the documents, collections or participants' oral testimonies. Rigorous techniques of critique are then applied to the documents and testimonies. The credibility of the study lies in the procedures inherent in the methodology, which include the search for and critique of sources and the interpretation of facts for causal explanations (Schumacher and McMillan, 1993:443).

#### **1.5.2 Data collection**

Bell (1993: 5) notes that different methods are used to collect data, depending on the research method adopted by the researcher. However, no method prescribes or rejects any particular way of data collection. Creswell (1994:148) asserts that data collection in a qualitative study involves the following aspects:

- setting the boundaries for the study;
- collecting information through observation, interviews, documents, visual materials and establishing the protocol for recording the information. This method has the following advantages:
- enabling a researcher to gauge the language and words of the informants;
- can be accessed at a time convenient to the researcher;

- represents data that is well thought through because informants have paid attention to the compilation;
- as written evidence, it saves the researcher the time and expense of transcribing;
- provides an opportunity for informants to share directly his or her "*reality*", and
- it is creative because it captures attention visually (Creswell, 1994:150-151).

In this particular case, the researcher consulted a number of relevant accessible documents, both primary and secondary. Bell (1993:68) defines a document as "*an impression left by a human being on a physical object*" and a primary source as a document which came into existence in the period under research, and a secondary source as an interpretation of events of the period under research based on primary sources. Schumacher and MacMillan (1993:447) however define primary sources as documents or testimonies of eyewitness accounts to an event, and a secondary source document as evidence of individuals who did not actually observe or participate in the event.

Primary sources can be deliberate or inadvertent. Bell (1993:68) defines deliberate sources as those, which are produced for the attention of future researchers. They could include such documents as autobiographies, memoirs of politicians, diaries and documents of self-justification. Bell (1993:68) further adds that such documents are deliberately written to preserve evidence for future purposes of self-vindication or reputation-enhancement.

On the other hand, inadvertent sources are those used by the researcher for a purpose other than the one they were originally intended for. According to Bell (1993:69), examples of such documents include among several others: records of the legislative bodies, government departments, letters and newspapers, bulletins, handbooks and prospectus.

For the purpose of this study the researcher accessed relevant primary and secondary sources from the shelves and reserve collections of both public and academic libraries. Documents accessed, include among others, books, journals, articles, abstracts, theses/

dissertations, local and national newspapers. However, more emphasis will be placed on inadvertent sources, for as Bell (1993:68) observes, they are produced for contemporary practical purposes and likely to be more straightforward than deliberate sources.

To avoid bias and to create a balanced study, the contents of all the documents used were critically analysed.

#### **1.5.2.1 Content analysis**

Content analysis refers to the classification of documentary or visual data in order to eliminate bias, subjectivity and to ensure that only genuine and authentic information is used. Bell (1993:70) asserts that critical content analysis can be done through either external or internal criticism. Through this type of criticism the authorship of documents was ascertained. The researcher ensured that forged documents and those that do not truthfully report on their subjects were eliminated.

With regard to internal criticism the contents of the documents were subjected to rigorous analysis to determine *inter alia* their authorship, the authors' aim, the type of document (whether they are statutes, policy, papers or letters), the language and terms used (is it legal, specialised or plain?) and whether the documents were altered or edited (Bell, 1993:7).

It was, therefore, the researcher's aim in this study, to try as far as possible to find out about the authors' backgrounds, their political views, aims, past experiences and time-frames of documents produced, in order to limit partisanship and subjectivity of the data collected.

### 1.5.3 Data/ Information analysis

Creswell (1994: 53) contends that in research of this nature, data analysis and data collection must be a simultaneous process. The researcher therefore analysed the data as he arranged it into a story or as the qualitative text was written.

Creswell (1994:163) asserts that qualitative data analysis primarily entails classifying things, persons, events and properties that characterise them. The researcher in this case attempted to collect all accessed data on participative work practices, organised and arranged it to match the different themes in the research.

The process of qualitative data analysis was based on data "*reduction*" and "*interpretation*". The researcher took the large quantities of information collected and reduced it to specific patterns, categories and then interpreted it using some form of schema. Creswell (1994:154) refers to this process as "*de-contextualisation*" and "*re-contextualisation*".

In order to make it easier for the reader to understand the information the researcher presented the collected data in tabular, graphical or pictorial forms. This method is in line with Creswell's (1994:154) recommendation that information be displayed in a spatial format that presents it systematically to the reader.

To arrive at a generalisation or conclusion in research, Vos (1998:90) points out that the analysis and interpretation of data can be done either through deductive or inductive reasoning. The author defines deductive reasoning as "*...reasoning where two premises are relevant - the first premise states the case and the second states the generalisation, and the deductive conclusion is drawn logically, appearing almost self evident*". In the case of induction there are also two premises under review: the case and the characteristic of the case. The conclusion is a tentative generalisation.

Being a qualitative study, the conclusions were inductively reached.

#### 1.5.4 Limitations of the study

In research of this nature the findings and generalizations drawn may be influenced by the subjectivity of the researcher. However, Mauer (1996:8) asserts that subjectivity need not necessarily be a problem if it is acknowledged well in advance. Subjectivity acknowledgement forces the researcher to keep it within reasonable limits.

Furthermore, Mauer (1996:8) observes that subjectivity may also be contained by:

- consistently and deliberately using an acceptable and tested theoretical basis for the research;
- consulting with colleagues and supervisors frequently, especially in cases where observation is required; and
- using more than one observer to ensure that observations included in the study comply with the requirements of inter-subjective reliability.

In this investigation the researcher acknowledged subjectivity beforehand, and aimed to turn it into an asset by computing and compiling detailed information, which, as Mauer (1996:8) observes, could lead to a more dynamic understanding of the phenomenon being investigated and towards a wealth of insights in the resulting dissertation.

In cases where personal views are expressed, the researcher found sources, which asserted and substantiated such points of views.

## **1.6 Exposition of the study**

### **CHAPTER 1**

The introductory chapter exposes the problem, gives the aims of the study, provides the statement of the problem, methodology and a framework of the study.

### **CHAPTER 2**

In this chapter the concept of global competitiveness is fully discussed, and it is shown how a business organisation could evolve as a "*world-class*" competitor.

### **CHAPTER 3**

In this chapter trends and tendencies, the paradigm shift in Employment Relations Management, is explained.



### **CHAPTER 4**

Employee Participation in South Africa is discussed in detail, showing the extent to which South African organisations have repositioned themselves to compete globally through the use of employee participation.

### **CHAPTER 5**

In chapter five a conclusion, summary of findings and recommendations are provided.

## 1.7 Summary

Tremendous socio-political and economic changes, resulting from the revolution in technology, economics and politics, have led to the demise of boundaries and national barriers to trade and competitiveness, thus creating one global village.

Affected countries, including post-apartheid South Africa have to face the vast challenge of implementing and maintaining political democracy. Organisations operative in these countries have had to adapt democratic styles of management as well by way of encouraging employee participation in the work-place.

Post-apartheid managers and their employees, however, have been equally complacent with regard to the implementation of participative work-place practices. This is in spite of evidence that failure to implement employee participation could lead to increased polarisation and conflict in the work-place, continued adversarial relations and an inability to compete in the global market against “*world-class*” organisations.

The conclusion to be drawn from this is that if post-apartheid managers do not implement participative programmes as a co-ordinated management strategy, and if they do not make a paradigm shift in the management of Employment Relations, their organisations face the danger of being out-competed globally by foreign organisations who have successfully implemented “*world-class*” work-place practices.