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Organizational variables influencing female advancement in South Africa

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Variables which affect female advancement in South African organizations, such as aspects of the organization structure, i.e. the power hierarchy, composition of levels in companies and the reward structures, are discussed. Analyses of organization processes such as selection and promotion of organizational members provide examples of pre-market discrimination and disparate treatment. Group structure and processes such as informal networks, the exclusion and inclusion of select members can also create subtle obstacles. Solutions to the slower advancement of women in organizations should be sought in both personal action plans formulated by career-oriented women and creation of enabling conditions in companies.

Die opwaartse mobiliteit van vroue in Suid-Afrikaanse ondernemings word deur 'n veelvoud van faktore beïnvloed. Die effek van organisasiestruktuur op personeelbeleid, magsbasisse en vergoedingsbeleid word bespreek. 'n Analise van organisatoriese prosesse soos seleksie en bevordering toon dat sekere vorms van diskriminasie wel voorkom. Groepsprosesse en strukture soos byvoorbeeld marginaliteit, sosiale uitsluiting en stereotipering veroorsaak ook hindernisse. Oplossings vir die stadiger vordering van vroue kan gevind word in die formulering van beroepsvroue se persoonlike loopbaanbeplanning en deur die skep van bemagtigende toestande in ondernemings.

Introduction

Adler & Izraeli (1988), in analysing the plight of women managers worldwide, note that although women constitute over half of the world's population, the proportion of women holding managerial positions falls far short of that of men and that women have been negated as a source of managerial talent. They emphasize that no systematic evidence occur to prove that women are ineffective as managers and conclude that the barriers to female advancement are both structural (legal, educational, cultural, social and historical) and psychological. Although many of the barriers are similar across the eleven countries investigated by these authors, each society differs as to the relevant importance they ascribe to each constraint. This again influences perceptions regarding the most important strategies to stimulate change.

The *theoretical model* which is used to structure this article is one developed by Rosener (1989, see Figure 1) to investigate the organizational variables which influence female advancement in different cultures.

Rosener (1989) postulates that women's progress in organizations can be impeded by a number of organizational factors. The *structure* of the organization influences the power hierarchy, personnel policies and reward structures which in turn affect careers. Certain *organizational processes* which are relevant to career progress are selection, retention and promotion procedures. Organizational structure and -processes influence the *structures* and *processes* among *working groups*. These four factors, separately and in conjunction, create an organizational *climate* which can be conducive to women's career progress or can create impediments. The aforementioned factors also provide the basis for *solutions* to problems. Certain solutions, given the organizational climate, may be more acceptable to one company than another (see Figure 1).

The first aim of this article is to use the Rosener model (1989, see Figure 1) to systematize South African research on the variables which influence female advancement in our organizations. The second aim of this article is to focus

only on organizational structure, organization processes, group structures and -processes (see the model by Rosener, 1989, Figure 1) within South African organizations which impede and enhance female career development. Thirdly, organizational and personal solutions to the current problems are proposed.

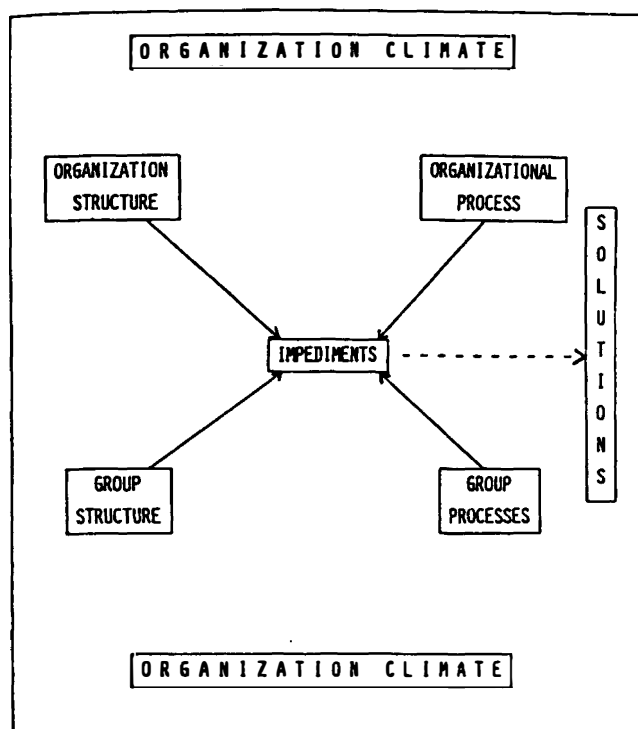
Occupational structure

In order to appreciate the career development of South African women, the population distribution and occupational structure must be taken into account.

There has been a significant increase in the employment rate of women in South Africa — from 23% in 1960 to 36,3% in 1985. Participation rates vary with racial groups and are currently 36% for black women, 41% for coloured women, 28% for asian women and 36% for white women (Central Statistical Services, 1988). Participation rates for women show certain trends which are linked to the women's age group and race group (see Figure 2, Van der Walt, 1991).

White women enter the labour force after completing school or tertiary education and work for a significant portion of their lives. A small portion of white women leave the workforce between the ages of 20 to 30 to raise their children. The majority, especially the more educated, never leave the workforce and others with prior work experience re-enter the workforce. Therefore, white women in the age group 30 to 50 years form a consistent source of experienced human resources (see Figure 2).

Black women are a few years older when they enter the workforce and most fill unskilled, clerical or sales jobs. Due to the escalating divorce rate, many black women are single parents who have to support extended families, which contributes to a significant increase in the participation rates between the ages of 35 to 45 years. Coloured and asian women are the most traditional groups — they enter the market but with marriage or the birth of a first child they leave the workforce, if their circumstances allow



C PROF J ROSENER

Figure 1 A model for formulating position papers

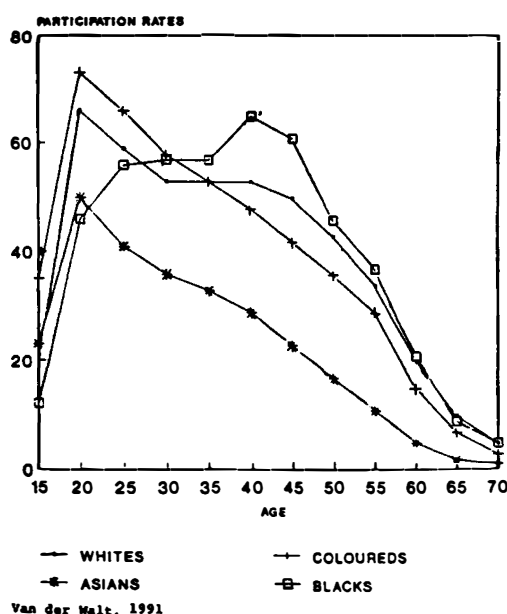


Figure 2 Participation rates by age group — women in 1985

it, to be supported by their husbands and to raise their children (see Figure 2).

The level of occupational segregation by gender is high. In 1980, 55% of all working women could be grouped into four traditionally female occupations: nursing and paramedical occupations, teaching, clerical and sales occupations (Van der Walt, 1984).

Between 1980 and 1985 the proportion of women has increased significantly in the following fields: sciences 15.9% to 19.4%; medical doctors 8.8% to 14.5%; paramedical

careers 47.2% to 62%; legal careers 8.2% to 11.5%; other professions 23% to 25% (Central Statistical Services, 1988). Black women are upwardly mobile in certain professional and white-collar occupations namely, college lecturing, psychology, sociology, personnel, market research, public relations, medical auxiliaries, library science and management (Prekel, 1989).

Women constitute 17.4% of all managerial, executive and administrative posts. White women constitute 17.4% of white managers, coloured women 27.7% of coloured managers, asian women 10.5% of asian managers and black women 16.5% of black managers (Central Statistical Services, 1988). One must bear in mind that the administrative component of these categories is substantial and creates an illusion that South Africa has many women managers.

Education

A partial explanation for the low percentages of women in certain occupations is their level of education and vocational choices. In 1985 it was estimated that women constitute 30% of graduates with Bachelor degrees, 17.1% of graduates with Masters degrees and 14.4% of doctoral candidates (Central Statistical Services, 1988). Women still tend to choose traditional fields of study at university level as can be seen from the percentage of female students in specific faculties in a large university: arts — 65%; business administration — 21.8%; commerce — 27.6%; dentistry — 20.9%; engineering — 5.6%; architecture — 24.3%; education — 66.5%; law — 35.9%; medicine — 49.5%; science — 38.4%; (Bendix & Morrison, 1988).

The first 'Women as Executives' programme at a South African university was launched in 1989 by the Graduate School of Management, University of Pretoria, with the aim of developing the leadership potential of women in management. The profiles of the 80 1989 and 1990 participants give an indication of the characteristics of managerial women. The majority (42%) is aged between 30 to 39 years of age, with 26% under thirty and 32% over forty years of age. Most of the women are married (56%), but a large percentage (54%) of the women do not have any children. Most (57%) attained a degree or a diploma after leaving school. Many are personnel or training managers (32%), but financial-, marketing-, general management, administrators and researchers are well represented (Erwee, 1990b).

As can be seen from the profile, the women executives can be classified as 'high level manpower', but many are clustered in traditionally female managerial categories (e.g. personnel), receive relatively low pay (average salary R60 000 per year) and have to work hard (50 hours per week minimum) to maintain their positions in the organizations.

Organizational structures

There are a number of theories of discrimination which may be used to explain the aforementioned occupational structure — only the Internal Labour Market (ILM) theory (see Pillay, 1986: 5) is relevant to this article as it focuses on factors within organizations. The ILM concept emphasizes

that although certain posts are filled by external recruitment, most jobs are filled from the internal labour market through specific promotional ladders or career routes. Pillay points out that:

'the occupational distribution differences between men and women may, to some extent, reflect employer decisions to exclude women from certain entry-level positions and their associated promotion ladders or to promote and upgrade women more slowly than men' (1986: 5).

An employer's beliefs regarding the capability of a female applicant may affect the types of jobs offered to her and future promotional opportunities.

Personnel policies

Surveys in 1982 and 1984 regarding employment conditions in companies employing professional women, show that the companies provide inadequate career planning, discrepancies in fringe benefits between men and women occur, women experience a lack of access to training programmes as well as fewer promotional opportunities (Erwee, 1984).

A recent survey of the career development practices of 58 manufacturing, financial and consulting companies (Erwee, 1990a), found that only some companies (34%) offer supervisory training for women and even fewer (23%) provide career management programmes for them. In contrast to these meagre training opportunities for women, 'black advancement' programmes are in vogue — conducted by 66% of the companies surveyed. The main beneficiaries of the black advancement programmes are however, black men.

Datnow & Birch (1988) investigated the advancement of women lawyers and advertising executives in legal and advertising companies in a specific region and find clear evidence of differences between espoused and practised policies in the firms. This evidence is found in the extent to which the companies believe in the principle of equality and the extent to which this is not reflected in pay scales and the promotion of women as partners (legal firms) or directors (advertising companies).

The abovementioned research regarding career advancement policies for women in companies, should be compared to the results of an investigation of the extent of management training in South Africa (National Manpower Commission, 1986). A sample of 2.187 private sector

companies (construction, mining, manufacturing, wholesale, retail, financial) was surveyed; at the time, altogether 87% of these companies did not do any management training.

The 98 largest companies show the following trends: firstly general management training (i.e. organizing/planning/control) is emphasized while little attention is given to human relations training; secondly only half of the companies indicate that they use manpower plans or evaluate their training programmes; and finally only 40% of them had a written training policy or a separate budget for training. Similar results are obtained by Owens & Nema's (1988) survey on the role of manpower planning in the corporate planning process.

What are the implications of these findings for equal employment opportunities, especially for women? If white male managers in large private sector companies are not adequately trained, and stereotypes abound regarding women's career commitment, the women in the high-level manpower category have little chance of being provided with training or developmental opportunities (Erwee, 1989).

Power hierarchy

Van Rooyen (1989) suggests that one of the reasons why so few women are in executive positions in organizations, relates to women's lack of insight into power and their inability to effectively play organizational politics. Research is cited which indicates that many women in middle management positions may have reward power but they may lack expert power because of the nature of the work they do, and 'attributions of power are strongly influenced by the context in which individuals are embedded' (Van Rooyen, 1989: 19). She explains that women experts find that their expertise is often not substantiated further by authority or inclusion in power coalitions and their power base is therefore of limited value in terms of future career development.

One of the results of these training policies is the lack of penetration of women into the seats of power in companies. An example of the few women in executive positions is provided by a small sample of companies (South African Federation of Business and Professional Women, 1988). These companies were nominated by their female employees for a 'Gold Award' given to companies which optimally use their women employees (see Table 1).

Table 1 Gold award nominees (1988): Percentages of male and female workforce (all races) on three organizational levels

Level	Utility company		Manufacturing petroleum		Travel agency		Computer company		Retail: food		Bank		Educational institution		Property company	
	% Male	% Female	% Male	% Female	% Male	% Female	% Male	% Female	% Male	% Female	% Male	% Female	% Male	% Female	% Male	% Female
Executive	100	0	100	0	64	36	91	9	90	10	92	8	60	40	50	50
Senior personnel	95	5	90	10	38	62	85	15	54	46	66	34	40	60	55	45
General personnel	95	5	93	7	22	78	36	64	38	61	32	67	33	67	62	38

Source: S.A. Federation of Business and Professional Women

The property company, educational institution and travel agency have the highest percentages of women on an executive level. However, the general situation for women in the country, even among these award-winning companies, is reflected by the low percentages of women on the executive levels in the retail company, bank and computer company, and the lack of women on the executive level is reflected by the utility and manufacturing companies.

Reward structures

Datnow & Birch (1988) find that as male advertising executives are becoming more scarce they are also becoming expensive, and therefore, advertising companies are employing more females but are paying them less than male executives. This is inferred from the data on salaries and from salary/length of service correlations which are the weakest for female advertising executives. The researchers note that such practices are not possible in legal firms as a professional body ensures that visible discrimination in pay is minimized (Datnow & Birch, 1988).

Salary surveys indicate that pay differentials between race and sex occur. Brehm (1989) cautions that the anomalies between male and female salaries (and white and black salaries) are a consequence of factors both internal and external to the organization. Factors such as the economic climate, type of industry, level of competition in the industry, all influence the company's ability to pay certain salaries. Gender wage differences may also reflect differences between men and women in education, continuity of job experience, labour market continuity, absenteeism or turnover.

In Table 2.1 the current differences are shown in pay between white males and females of all races, as well as female pay as a percentage of male pay by race group (Brehm, 1989: 21 and 1991). It can be noted that the pay gap between white males and females of all race groups in supervisory and departmental manager positions has narrowed considerably between 1984 and 1990. Brehm (1989) observes that women have moved into job categories previously held by men (e.g. supervisory levels) where they receive salaries closer to those of their male counterparts in the same jobs rather than 'traditionally female' salaries. Brehm (1991) confirms that the gender differences in salaries between white males and females have been much less of a problem to rectify than the differences in salaries between the races. She cautions that respondent companies tend to provide information about white male scales and merely indicate that pay parity exists in most cases but that promotion into managerial ranks and higher salary scales are difficult to achieve.

When female pay as a percentage of male pay is compared by race group (see Table 2.2), women in all race groups fare reasonably well in comparison to their male counterparts. The exception is black women in the C Lower Paterson band who are earning salaries which are higher than black men. Brehm (1989) explains that in these categories black women moved into jobs which were previously viewed as 'white female' jobs. The black women start their jobs on lower pay than white females, but these pay levels

Table 2.1 Female pay as a percentage of white male pay

Year and group	Paterson Band					
	C lower			C upper		
	Junior management Professional persons			Department heads		
	1984	1988	1990	1984	1988	1990
White males	100	100	100	100	100	100
White females	79	91	100	96	92	98
Asian females	74	74	84	79	80	84
Black females	—	65	70	—	69	70
Coloured females	60	77	73	—	—	70

Source Brehm (1989 and 1991)

Table 2.2 Female pay as a percentage of male pay by race groups

Year and group	Paterson band	
	C lower	C upper
	Junior management Professional persons	Department heads
1988		
White males	100	100
White females	91	92
Asian males	100	100
Asian females	93	91
Black males	100	100
Black females	104	94
Coloured males	100	100
Coloured females	95	—

Source: Brehm (1989)

are higher than those traditionally offered to blacks, even men.

The 1981 amendments to the Labour Relations Act made wage discrimination on the basis of race, sex and religion illegal. Some companies however continue to practise covert discrimination by renaming certain jobs, where the vast majority of employees are female, and are paying the women at a lower rate (Bendix & Morrison, 1988).

Organizational processes

Moerdyk (1987) maintains that workplace discrimination generally involves three different processes namely:

- premarket discrimination where people have restricted access to opportunities;
- disparate treatment whereby different groups doing the same jobs are treated differently in terms of pay, benefits and conditions of service; and
- adverse impact where some policies may have a negative impact on people by virtue of their backgrounds.

Selection

An example of premarket discrimination is provided by an analysis of advertisements for business men and women (Bendix & Morrison, 1988). The vacancies for male accountants or assistant accountants have higher salary scales than when the same jobs are placed in the sections for women accountants. These trends occur in many other occupations — positions are designated 'for men' or 'for women' and pay discrepancies occur.

In contrast to the aforementioned examples, Moerdyk concludes that most companies do attempt to be fair in their selection and promotion policies but that it is clear that

'different conceptions of what the term "fairness" means are possible, and that different policy implications flow from the particular set of assumptions adopted' (in Taylor, 1987: 7).

The role of psychometric tests in achieving fair selection is investigated by Taylor (1987). He concludes that when race or class differences are examined

'test scores do not have the same meanings for different groups; the use of biased psychometric tests for shortlisting from a multiracial pool of applicants will not result in fair selection' (Taylor, 1987: 9).

Group structure

Marginality

In their analysis of the advancement of women in the legal and advertising professions, Datnow & Birch (1988) discuss social closure as a mechanism through which members of a profession maintain their status as the 'in-group' and exclude others (such as women). Certain indices of social closure such as type of school attended, father's profession and number of relatives in a profession are relevant in the study. The results indicate that social closure (to exclude women) operate in both professions but that the evidence of social closure is stronger for the legal profession.

The marginal position of a black manager is described by Human & Hofmeyr. Black managers state that they have to function, as:

'a white in a white world during his working day. This is in spite of the fact that he may have had little previous exposure to white informal networks, in spite of the fact that he may confront tokenism in the work setting; in spite of the fact that he may receive inadequate exposure and consultation; unequal remuneration; hostility from the shop floor; a top management policy of non-discrimination but discrimination at lower-management levels; unwilling secretaries; poorer promotion opportunities; little forward career planning; discrimination on a social level and encouragement to be individualistic while at the same time being reminded of his ethnic background' (1984: 20).

Prekel's (1989) analysis of the progress of black women seems to indicate that some of the aforementioned comments regarding the marginal position of black managers, may still apply to black females in the workforce but she argues that black women have many strengths which help them cope with marginality.

Group processes

The way in which individuals relate to each other in a work situation is, to some extent, related to the way in which they perceive each other. Human & Allie (1989) investigated the attitudes of white English-speaking male managers to the upward mobility of women and contrasted it to prior research regarding the advancement of blacks. They find that although the white male managers accept the principle of equal opportunity, agree that women can acquire managerial skills and believe that women's contributions should be valued, some of the males question the ability of women to compete on equal terms with men. Approximately a third of the male managers hold one or more of the following beliefs: women are less objective, less aggressive, less capable of contributing to organizational goals, less ambitious, less self-confident and less capable of learning mathematical and mechanical skills than their male counter-parts. It is clear that this subgroup of male managers attribute women's lack of career advancement mainly to the women's internal dispositions and underestimate the impact of situational factors.

The effect of these perceptions of male managers is illustrated by Human & Allie's (1989) finding that only a third of their respondents state that the top managements in companies which they represent are committed to developing and advancing women and only 12% believe in affirmative action with regard to women. Furthermore, the researchers find that there is no clarity on affirmative action policies which are applied to women of different race groups:

'the respondents have not seriously contemplated the position of black women in present day South Africa. Alternatively, they could perceive black women as a group to be classified with black men and feel that affirmative action should be practised in relation to this group but not towards white women who, it may be tacitly assumed, can progress without any affirmative steps being taken' (Human & Allie, 1989: 23).

The stereotypes which some male managers hold regarding women's capabilities, can create self-fulfilling prophesies. Moodley (1986: 4) postulates that failures of minority members at the workplace are often due to their internalised low self-concept — 'the stigmatised internalise their own stigmatisation by overconforming'. If women internalise the negative stereotypes, they may underperform, which may in turn confirm male stereotypes of women and perpetuate discriminatory practices.

In order to study the influence of perceptions on group processes, Watts (1988) examined the perceptions of black managers and of their work colleagues (boss, peer, subordinate) in regard to black advancement. She states that fundamental interpersonal perceptual discrepancies emerge between the black managers and their work associates. The black managers' colleagues are inclined to overestimate dispositional causes of the black managers' behaviour, and underestimate situational factors (Watts, 1988). Many of the black managers' peers state that the black managers lack assertiveness, initiative and drive. Watts (1988) argues that the peers fail to perceive that the behaviour of the manager may reflect an adaptation to an unresponsive, unsupportive

environment which provide little opportunity for assertiveness. By contrast, the black managers are inclined to attribute their work behaviour and problems to external factors (e.g. racial discrimination), often to the complete exclusion of attributions of internal causality preventing them from examining their own shortcomings (Watts, 1988).

Watts's (1988) research has not been replicated for women managers and their colleagues. However in studies by Erwee (1984) and Bendix & Morrison (1988) the perceptions of female managers were investigated. In both studies the women managers note that they view themselves as career-orientated and do not expect differential treatment. They admonish some women for being directionless and unprofessional which confirms male stereotypes and urge each woman to set goals, seize opportunities and actively take responsibility for own career development.

Conclusions

Women's career choices are gradually changing as the younger generations are choosing non-traditional fields of study and more women are reaching higher educational levels. White and black women are staying in the workforce for extended periods and are a reliable source of loyal workers.

Although pay parity is being achieved between salaries of white males and females, gender gaps in salaries between other race groups occur. Certain organizational selection and promotion policies cause concern. The most significant impediments to women's career advancement seem to be negative stereotypes held by managers regarding women's potential and lack of access to further training opportunities.

Organizational and personal solutions

Results of the aforementioned studies indicate that solutions to the slower advancement of women in South African organizations should be sought in both personal action plans formulated by career-orientated women and the creation of enabling conditions in companies. The model by Rosener (1989, see Figure 1) is used as a basis to structure the recommendations.

Personal solutions

Career choice

Young women should carefully study the current occupational structure to identify careers in which shortages of human resources exist e.g. managerial posts, most paramedical occupations, technicians and technologists, engineers, accountants and auditors. Greater emphasis should be placed on non-traditional career choices which could open new career routes to women and the few available vocational guidance information bases should be used (National Manpower Commission, 1988).

Women who are currently employed should utilise the basic steps in career planning to plot their future career. A self-analysis of values, needs, competencies and goals should be the first step which is followed by an investigation into the existing career routes in her organization and an identification of possible positions. The

next step will be to match the self-analysis with the key performance areas and competencies needed for each position. Her perceptions of the current and possible future posts which she may aspire to should be discussed with a mentor, a competent personnel specialist or counselor.

Training

In order to eliminate premarket discrimination, women should regard training at a university or college as a priority to gain a competitive advantage. In cases where managers assume that a woman is not interested in further advancement, she should correct this perception in personal interviews by indicating which internal training programmes in the organization would enable her to develop her competencies. If her access to internal training opportunities is still limited, she should identify external training courses at universities or other institutions and apply for sponsorship.

As many training and personnel managers are women, they can ensure that access to training is available to all competent individuals. Furthermore these women can form an internal peer-training network to assist all women to share their expertise and train each other. More relevant training may help to staunch the brain drain of underdeveloped professional women out of companies.

Organizational solutions

Structure and policies

Rosabeth Moss-Kanter, in *The Change Masters*, discusses five building blocks of organizational change namely, a) encouraging departures from traditional rigid practices; b) using crises as galvanising events to introduce change; c) ensuring that strategic decisions in favour of change will be made; d) identifying managers who will act as 'champions for change'; and e) formulating specific action plans. Women can use these guidelines to act as internal champions for change to help equalise opportunities (see Erwee, 1989) e.g. by serving on the labour union or personnel society in their company. In one university this strategy was followed to change policies on maternity leave, realising that introducing policy changes takes a long time and concerted effort.

Internal investigations, regarding job segregation and closed promotion procedures, can be sparked off by using an external incentive such as nominating the organization for the coveted 'Gold Award' of the South African Federation of Business and Professional Women. Secondly progressive companies can be identified by means of their reporting on personnel and social responsibility issues for the Financial Mail Top 100 Companies award. A third strategy to affect employer decisions can be to utilise congresses of professional societies (e.g. Institute of Personnel Management) as a vehicle to highlight the successful advancement policies for females in progressive organizations. Finally, female employees could request their companies to provide access to research institutions, such as the Human Sciences Research Council, to investigate the differences between espoused and practiced policies in a variety of companies to provide an overview of the current situation.

Kanter (in Erwee, 1989) notes that in most cases too few programmes are launched to introduce equal employment

opportunities. She cautions that EEO programmes should not be an isolated action on the periphery of other human resource issues, but should be adequately integrated into existing programmes.

Power hierarchy

As Van Rooyen (1989) indicates, the power balance in organizations is difficult to decipher and to change. Research should be done in the South African context and this information can then be utilised in programmes, such as in the *Women as Executives* course, to create an awareness among managerial women of the dynamics of power.

Reward structures

The trend towards the equalisation of remuneration (Brehm, 1989) is encouraging, but there are great differences between companies regarding pay policies. Organizations tend to keep information regarding remuneration confidential, and the individual has to research trends in her organization and encourage colleagues to share information. When discrepancies are discovered, she has to ask for clarification.

Each female employee should negotiate the best possible remuneration package, not only at the start of a career but at each next move up the corporate ladder. Many women do not renegotiate remuneration at promotional points and thereby place all females which subsequently follow the career route, at a disadvantage. Educated black women should be encouraged to negotiate wages on the same level as their white counterparts which will contribute to creating upward pressure on salaries.

Selection and promotion

Companies which practise premarket discrimination by placing discriminatory advertisements, can be targeted. The attention of business publications can be drawn to the negative effect of such practices and they can be requested by their women readers not to accept such advertisements. Researchers at the HSRC will be able to advise companies on the use of psychometric tests to ensure fair selection practices. However, certain tests have to be validated and in this regard the researchers will need the co-operation of personnel managers to obtain samples for research. Joint research programmes, between the HSRC and companies, can be launched to replicate Charoux's (1988) study on the cognitive, leadership and behavioural criteria for the selection of supervisors, specifically on female samples.

This research will have the 'complementary contributions model' (Adler & Izraeli, 1988) as a basis to describe the unique contributions which women can make in the workplace.

Specific incidences of premarket discrimination, disparate treatment and inequality in conditions of service may be regarded by trade unions as unfair labour practices. These examples can be drawn into the ongoing negotiation process between labour and management.

Induction programmes

Moerdyk (1985: 38) notes that many organizations have introduced extended induction or 'bridging education' programmes to address a variety of educational, socio-cultural

and motivational 'deficits/differences' that are seen as barriers to effective managerial performance. Some programmes are successful, but others need to be adapted to create a better fit between individual and organizational needs. The extent to which women are drawn into these programmes, should be investigated.

Group processes

Watts (1988: 38) recommends that organizations should address the issue of perceptual discrepancies between black managers and their colleagues by implementing 'racial awareness programmes', role playing as well as informational and experiential learning. In addition she discusses the value of informal communication exercises (social meetings after work) as well as some forms of attributional training.

Watts' (1988) analysis of the perceptions of black managers and their work colleagues (bosses, peers, subordinates) can be replicated with female managers. Team building sessions can discuss the implications of the research in order to build cohesion in the work team and to correct attribution errors and biases.

Quality circles should not only be used to solve work related problems in organizations, but also to facilitate mutual understanding between males and females of all races. During the work-focussed discussions, the team members can develop appreciation for each other's competencies and contributions. From the quality circle as basis, male-female partnerships can evolve to solve particular problems which have been identified.

Some consultants have experimented by holding career network seminars for black and white professional women to build bridges between these groups. This concept can be extended to male-female career networks within companies.

Conclusion

An attempt was made to indicate solutions which can be formulated by women in companies to create positive changes in equal employment opportunities. The emphasis should not be on 'blame the system' but 'change the system'. Women can take personal responsibility to identify inadequate practices and co-operate in professional networks to stimulate change. Many strategies can be implemented when joint ventures between internal and external champions for change are evolved. Female advancement can then be ensured by a combination of personal and organizational action plans.

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