

Editor's comment

This is the second issue of the SAJLR for 2015, and I would like to thank our Editorial Committee, Professors Erasmus, Booysen, Anstey and Horwitz, the respected academics and practitioners in the field who serve on our Reviewers' Panel and all our authors who contributed to this edition for their vision and insightful contributions.

Employment relations in South African organisations are characterised by high levels of mistrust and increasingly adversarial relations between employers, employees and the State as a result of high levels of poverty, inequality and unemployment as well as unmet expectations. Increasingly, questions are being asked about the discrepancies between the "have's" and the "have not's" and trade unions' ability to bring about the necessary change. The effectiveness of the various structures established and promoted by the Labour Relations Act is being questioned. For instance, it has been argued by some that the promotion of collective bargaining at centralised level contributes to the failure of businesses (especially SMMEs) and thereby unemployment in some industries. Retrenchments and industrial action, often unprotected and characterised by violence and intimidation, are commonplace. Events at Marikana have raised questions about the effectiveness of trade unions in representing workers' interests. Trade unions in South Africa are also facing a myriad of challenges resulting, inter alia, from poor economic conditions and high levels of unemployment. It is believed, however, that the situation could improve through the influence of strong leadership and continued conversation. The *South African Journal of Labour Relations* provides a platform for discourse on matters that affect all parties and their relations in the workplace and it is hoped that we may, in this way, contribute to the national conversation about the current and future state of the South African democracy and economy. In this issue we focus on collective bargaining and remuneration practices, interventions to achieve employment equity objectives, employee empowerment (or disempowerment), organisational commitment, work engagement, job satisfaction, turnover and the competencies necessary to effect change in organisations. We also propose an instrument for measuring perceived employment relationship quality. In the *Forum Section*, we look at the emergence of the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU), especially in the South African mining sector.

In our first article, ***Representivity: The Achilles heel of bargaining councils***, Holtzhausen focuses on the legislative requirement of representivity of parties to bargaining councils and the challenge that this requirement creates for these institutions. She argues that when trade unions and/or employers' organisations are deemed to be unrepresentative, this could lead to the ultimate collapse of the bargaining council, or result in collective agreements not being extended to non-parties – thereby defeating the purpose of centralised collective bargaining. This research has thrown light on representation levels by demonstrating that they are not stagnant, but change constantly. The research indicates that today private sector councils especially are often faced with unrepresentative parties, mainly because of economic and political challenges and significant changes in the world of work. Examples are given of how councils deal with these challenges, if they do so at all. The research indicates that even though representivity remains a huge challenge for councils, collective agreements are still in the main extended to non-parties. Nevertheless, there is evidence that the extension of agreements has been challenged. This article therefore throws light on and improves our understanding of non-representivity matters in certain bargaining councils, and by extension our understanding of non-representivity in other bargaining councils as well. It concludes with certain recommendations. Hence, this article contributes to existing knowledge by providing a more inclusive and integrated view of non-representivity and its consequences, thereby enriching the broader employment relations management context.

In his article, ***Factors driving changes to remuneration policies in South Africa***, Bussin reports on a study that was conducted in 2012 and replicates Bussin and Huysamen's (2004) work, carried out in 2003, on remuneration policies. This article investigates the factors driving remuneration policy in South Africa and determines whether these factors have changed since 2003. Anonymous e-mail questionnaires were received from 131 senior company representatives. All participating companies were members of the South African Reward Association (SARA) or clients of a large remuneration consulting firm. Data were analysed using a chi-squared test and factor analysis. Results support Bussin and Huysamen's study, which found that the two main drivers of policy change were the retention of talented staff and the financial results of the organisation. However, three components of remuneration have become more prominent than they were in 2003: governance in the organisation, merit pay and retention strategies. These findings suggest a greater shareholder expectation that pay should be linked to performance, and that pay acts as a retention strategy for critical staff.

Marais and Van Wyk focus on employment relations in the domestic sector in their article, ***Domestic workers' lived realities of empowerment and disempowerment within the South African labour legislative context: Two sides of the same "coin"***. They argue that South Africa is heralded as a global ambassador for the rights of domestic workers. Empowerment, however, remains an elusive concept within the sector. Fear-based disempowerment still characterises the employment relationship, resulting in an absence of an employee voice. The dire need to survive renders this sector silent. This article explores the role that legislative awareness can play in the everyday lives of domestic workers. By means of a post-positive, forward-looking positive psychological and phenomenological research design the researchers sought to access the voiced experiences of domestic workers within their employment context. Consequently, purposive, respondent-driven self-sampling knowledgeable participants were recruited. In-depth interviewing generated the data. The distinct voice of each participant was noted during an open inductive approach to data analysis. Findings indicated that empowerment was an unknown construct for all participants. They lacked the confidence to engage their employers on employment issues. Nevertheless, domestic workers should embrace ownership and endeavour to empower themselves. This would sanction their right to assert their expectations of employment standards with confidence and use the judicial system to bring about compliant actions. The article concludes with the notion that legislative awareness could result in empowered actions through informed employee voices.

The next two articles report on research conducted in the retail sector. Firstly, Roman and Mason, in their article ***Employment equity in the South African retail sector: Legal versus competence and business imperatives***, report on a 2013/14 study entitled "Interventions to achieve employment equity objectives in the wholesale and retail sector" that was conducted by the Wholesale and Retail Leadership Chair (WRLC) at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology on behalf of the W&RSETA (Sector Education and Training Authority). Objectives included assessing the impact of implementation of the Employment Equity Act (EEA) on retail organisations, and determining what supportive action regulatory authorities (the Department of Labour and the W&RSETA) and businesses could take to achieve employment equity (EE) goals. The study is therefore useful across the spectrum of the W&R industry, especially for employment relations practitioners and those tasked with EE implementation. The study followed a mixed-methods approach, using questionnaire surveys, in-depth interviews, case studies, focus groups and secondary data. Results indicated that EE tends to be numbers-driven at the expense of competence and talent management. Most respondents' perceptions of EE implementation were negative, which implies that a different approach is needed because the pace of change and transformation in the South African workplace is too slow. Although the small sample size

limits generalisation of the findings, the study provides insight and direction for further research. This paper acknowledges that because EE is currently driven largely by the need to meet mandated targets for demographic change, the development of talent – in essence, competence – is lacking or inadequate. Thus, the recommendations propose a competency model linked to a performance management system, which could lead to an efficient EE talent management process. This process will enable organisations to develop, within the shortest possible period, competent individuals able to perform adequately in their positions, thereby maintaining or improving productivity; it also addresses effective succession planning.

In the following article Coetzee, Schreuder and Clinton-Baker discuss ***Career anchors, organisational commitment and employee turnover intention in the retail sector***. The study explored the link between the career anchors, organisational commitment and turnover intention of a sample of individuals employed in the South African retail sector. A non-probability purposive sample (N = 343) of employees from an organisation in the South African retail sector was utilised. The participants were represented by predominantly women (72%) and black people (94%) between the ages of 25 and 45 years (80%). Following a cross-sectional quantitative research approach, correlational and stepwise regression analysis was performed to achieve the objective of the study. The results showed that the entrepreneurial creativity-anchored individuals were likely to have low organisational commitment and high turnover intention, while the lifestyle-anchored individuals had high levels of organisational commitment and high turnover intention. The dominant affective/normative commitment profile of the sample of participants significantly predicted low turnover intention. The findings and practical implications of the study provide useful information to managers interested in retaining staff in the retail sector.

In their article, ***Job satisfaction, organisational commitment and work engagement in an insurance company***, Sehunoe, Viviers and Mayer emphasise the importance of retaining talented employees and keeping them healthy and contented. Organisations are interrogating aspects such as the reasons why some employees are more satisfied, committed and engaged with their organisations than others. Another question is: what should managers do to ensure employee wellness within their organisations? This study explores the relationship between job satisfaction, organisational commitment and work engagement. Spector's (1997) Job Satisfaction Survey, Allen and Meyer's (1990) Organisational Commitment Questionnaire and Schaufeli and Bakker's (2004) Utrecht Work Engagement Scale were administered to a sample of 220 employees from a South African insurance company. The findings show mixed results with regard to significant correlations between job satisfaction, organisational commitment and work engagement. The majority of the findings suggest that there are significant correlations, of a large and medium effect, between scales, including a number of positive relationships of varying strength between job satisfaction, organisational commitment and selected components of work engagement. The findings could benefit organisations as they could contribute to a better understanding of what motivates their workers, particularly regarding levels of satisfaction, commitment and engagement, and what the combined effect of these might be on the retention and wellness of employees.

Rautenbach, Sutherland and Scheepers, in their article ***The process by which executives unlearn their attachments in order to facilitate change***, suggest that the ability to unlearn an attachment has become a critical change competence for executives. Although attachment behaviour in the workplace is ubiquitous, there is a scarcity of empirical research on the processes executives follow in order to release their dysfunctional attachments to systems, routines, ideas, divisions and certain members of staff. By unlearning attachments, executives can embrace new concepts, methods and processes and thereby enable their

organisations to be more competitive. This qualitative research investigated executives' experiences of unlearning an attachment, through the pre-unlearning, unlearning and post-unlearning phases. A de jure model was formulated from concepts that emerged during the literature review and this model was the basis of in-depth interviews with 10 change experts and 10 executives who had unlearned attachments. The executives and change experts shared real-life experiences during each of the unlearning phases. The findings informed a de facto model of the experiences of executives unlearning their attachments. This process model makes a theoretical contribution by depicting the major types of attachments, influences on, processes of, actions required by and outcome of the executives' unlearning. The model should contribute to change practitioners' facilitation of executives' unlearning processes and executives' insights into their own attachments.

Finally, Potgieter, Olckers and Ehlers propose a tool that can be used to measure the quality of various aspects of the employment relationship in their article, ***Development of a measure for perceived employment relationship quality (PERQ)***. They argue that studies have shown that employees react negatively towards negative supervisory behaviour and that such an instrument could therefore be a useful tool for managing and promoting healthy employment relationships. In the light of this, the aim of this study was to develop a questionnaire that measured the perceived quality of the employment relationship from the employee's perspective. A quantitative cross-sectional survey was conducted on a non-probability convenience sample of 248 employees from various organisations and sectors in South Africa. Although a 39-item questionnaire was developed across four theoretical dimensions, namely trust, fairness, good faith and justice, the analysis revealed that only two dimensions, labelled social factors and compliance factors and measured by 20 items, were sufficient to measure the desired construct. This questionnaire, which measures the perceived employment relationship quality, could be used as a diagnostic tool by management and HR professionals to determine the state of supervisory relationships in an organisation, and to address any problems brought to the fore, thereby avoiding turnover costs related to negative workplace relationships.

In the *Forum Section*, Mathekga provides information on a trade union that has played a prominent role in South African employment relations in recent years. The article entitled ***Fighting the battles of the mine workers: The emergence of the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU)*** describes the formation of the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU) in post-apartheid South Africa. AMCU provides organised representation to workers in the mining and construction sector. The importance and relevance of AMCU in democratic South Africa should not be de-emphasised, given the high levels of labour exploitation by mining companies. The mining sector is regarded as a crucial engine for economic growth and social development. AMCU, as the mining and construction labour movement, plays an important role in ensuring that its members are well represented, work in decent working conditions and are not exploited by but instead are protected from the capitalist system in which the global economy operates. However, in the post-apartheid era, trade unions have not been forceful enough in advancing the interests of their members; instead they have been accused of being too close to employers and of having been co-opted by the new government. They are faced with the challenges of outsourcing, labour brokering and contracting-out of services by employers. Trust in trade unions has also decreased. This paper examines the emergence of AMCU and its rise in the mining sector.

My warmest appreciation to Ms Louise Oberholster, who does the layout and the general administration of the journal, as well as to the Language Editor, Ms Sandra Mills, for your contributions to this issue of the journal.

I hope you find this edition not only a valuable scholarly resource but also an interesting and thought-provoking read. Employment relations in South Africa are generally perceived to be at the crossroads following large-scale industrial action and far-reaching amendments to labour legislation. We would like to use the journal as a platform to engage with academics and practitioners in the field and stimulate discourse on employment relations and therefore we encourage you to send us your contributions.



Ms Monica Kirsten
Associate Editor: *South African Journal of Labour Relations*