

Editor's comment

This is the first 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.

In the first two articles, we focus on gender issues in traditionally male-dominated work environments. Firstly, Botha and Cronjé, in their article **Women in mining: A conceptual framework for gender issues in the South African mining sector**, investigate the experiences of women employed in the mining sector. New mining legislation aims to rectify previous inequalities and disadvantages in the mining sector and specifically provides for the inclusion of women in core mining activities. Although there is no lack of good will, the achievement of gender equality in the male-dominated mining sector remains one of the biggest equity challenges in the country and numerous problems accompany the deployment of women in core mining activities. The main objective of the study was to critically analyse gender issues in the mining sector and then to develop a conceptual framework that will enable the mining sector to contribute to and ensure the sustainable employment of women in this sector. A literature review was carried out to gain an in-depth understanding of the variables that have an impact on women in the mining sector specifically. This was followed by an empirical study aimed at identifying and investigating relevant gender-related issues in the mining sector. Quantitative and qualitative research paradigms were used. The research revealed that various factors need to be considered for the successful and sustainable deployment of women in the mining sector. The study concludes by making recommendations and offering a conceptual framework that could be implemented and used by various stakeholders in the mining sector.

This is followed by Du Plessis and Barkhuizen's article, **Exploring the career path barriers of women professional engineers in a South African context**, which focuses on the inequalities and barriers faced by women in engineering despite various initiatives to address these issues. They point out that apparently once women engineers enter the workforce, they tend to leave engineering faster than their male colleagues, despite having worked so hard to qualify. The aim of this study is to explore the barriers to the career advancement of women in the engineering profession that exist despite the enforcement of labour equity, and try to determine why women engineers go into management rather than staying in the profession. The results and findings revealed various barriers, of both a professional and a psychological nature, to the advancement of women engineers in South Africa. Gender issues, a lack of training and real exposure to engineering practice, poor talent management and a lack of mentorship were the most prominent career barriers highlighted. The majority of the sample group of women engineers were considering management as a career option as opposed to engineering. Recommendations are made on how organisations could address these barriers.

Gender differences are only one of the many aspects that contribute to the diversity of the South African workforce. This diversity is further explored in the next two articles, which focus on some of the consequences of implementing legislation aimed at ensuring employment equity. Both these studies were conducted at higher education institutions, focusing on different levels and categories of employees. Senne and Nkomo focused on lower level employees, typically recruited through labour brokers, in their article **The influence of labour brokering practices on employment equity in South Africa: A case of two universities**. The purpose of their article is to highlight the influence of labour brokering on employment practices, particularly those related to the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998. The research reported on in this article is based on a larger research project that investigated the barriers to and enablers of gender equity within two higher education institutions. Utilising a qualitative case study at the two South African universities, the

findings demonstrate the contradictions between the intentions of employment equity policies and practices and the adoption of a labour brokering employment strategy. Employment equity policies and practices did not include employees in the cleaning and gardening job categories recruited through labour brokers. Most importantly, the practice has serious implications for the economic survival and development of the lowest level of employees at the universities. The implications of these findings are discussed in the light of the Labour Relations Amendment Act 6 of 2014.

In their article, **The psychological contract in relation to employment equity legislation and intention to leave in an open distance higher education institution**, Snyman, Ferreira and Deas focus on higher level employees and the impact of employment equity legislation on their experiences in the workplace. They argue that, in recognition of the injustices of South Africa's apartheid past, employers have a responsibility to ensure that employment equity practices are implemented, without harming important aspects of the employment relationship, such as the psychological contract and the intention to leave. The aim of this study was to determine the relationship between the psychological contract, employment equity legislation practices and the intention to leave (as measured by structured questionnaires comprising standardised scales) in an open distance higher education institution. In this regard, special attention was given to the influence of employment equity on employees' intention to leave, which forms an important part of the psychological contract. The study also focused on the differences that exist between the three different social groupings (Africans, white males and white females, coloureds and Indians), gender and qualification levels regarding their perceptions about how the psychological contract influences employment equity legislation practices and intention to leave. A quantitative survey was conducted on a stratified random sample of employees (N = 339) who were white (58.4%), male (50.1%) and between the ages of 31 and 60 and were all employed at an open distance higher education institution. Correlational statistics and multiple regression analyses revealed a number of significant relationships between the three variables. In the South African employment equity context, the findings provide valuable information that can be used to inform managers and human resource practitioners on employment equity strategies. The practical implications of the findings also add new insights in terms of the psychological contract, intention to leave and management of the employment relationship.

The fifth article also focuses on the higher education sector, but in this instance on the employability of students graduating from selected higher education institutions. In his article, **The value of graduate destination survey data in understanding graduate unemployment: Focus on the universities of technology**, Kraak contributes graduate destination survey (GDS) evidence to the debate about graduate unemployment in South Africa. There has been lively contestation on the topic for several years, including several contributions from the commercial press arguing that graduate unemployment is very high. In contrast, academic evidence (based on national labour force data for the period 1995–2011) has been presented which suggests that the unemployment of graduates in South Africa is minimal, on average only 4.9% in 2011. New evidence has emerged from two recent GDSs – one a comprehensive survey of all 2010 graduates across all qualification levels at all four universities in the Western Cape, and a second focusing only on the 2012 Bachelor of Technology (BTech) graduates at the Vaal University of Technology (VUT) in Vanderbijlpark, Gauteng. These two studies, using the same methodology and online questionnaire, provide a more accurate picture of the graduate unemployment problem in two important economic regions of the country. The results show that although rates of unemployment are low at the elite University of Cape Town (UCT) and Stellenbosch University (SU) (graduate unemployment is between 3 and 6%), rates are much higher at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) – a former historically disadvantaged technikon – with 15.8% unemployment among CPUT students. African unemployment at CPUT reached 20.2% among all first-time entrants (as compared with 4% for whites),

suggesting the continuation of a racially stratified labour market for highly skilled labour long after apartheid's demise. Similarly, unemployment rates among the BTech VUT graduates of 2012 reached 18%. This is an extremely high rate for fourth-year graduates of a polytechnic-type institution whose primary mandate is to place qualified graduates in jobs in the mainstream economy.

The focus then shifts to organisational change and the facilitators of such change in South African workplaces. The main aim of the research project reported on in Van der Linde-de Klerk, Martins and De Beer's article entitled **The factorial validity and reliability of a change agent identification assessment tool** was to validate and test the reliability of the developed change agent identification assessment tool to be used by organisations to identify change agents more effectively in large organisations undergoing change, with a view to providing improved support to employees and ensuring more effective change management in such organisations. An initial change agent identification framework was developed by Van der Linde-de Klerk (2011) and this served as the foundation for the development of an assessment tool. Because minimal research has been conducted on identifying change agents in large organisations, it was deemed important to provide organisations with a tool to help them identify these individuals correctly. A sample group comprising 239 change agents participated in the quantitative research and completed the newly developed change agent identification questionnaire. The proposed questionnaire consists of three dimensions, namely willingness, commitment and personality traits. Participants indicated the ideal attributes in each dimension that they require to operate as change agents. The dimensions are based on the theoretical change agent identification framework that was developed. The results of the validity and reliability analysis indicated that the questionnaire can be used with confidence to select change agents. Change agents can typically be employees, managers, personnel practitioners, organisational development consultants or employee or union representatives. The developed scale showed positive reliability and validity results.

Finally, in their article **The relationship between personality and the capacity to think strategically**, Crawford, Hofmeyr and Price argue that effective leaders who have the capacity to solve complex, strategic business problems are a key differentiator in the new world of work. As external environmental changes converge with internal organisational shifts, the need for a strong bench of leaders becomes critical in driving profitable growth. This study explores the relationship between personality and the capacity to think strategically, an important component of managing the complexity of the emerging environment. Based on the California Psychological Inventory and Career Path Appreciation assessments of 256 managers and executives, the existence of relationships between a number of personality factors and the respondents' future potential capability (FPC) were tested to identify which personality factors are predictors of the potential to think strategically. Anchored in Complexity Leadership Theory (CLT), this research builds on the leadership functions of CLT to provide new insight into the role of individual characteristics in the ability to think strategically. The consolidated findings identified Dominance, Flexibility, Achievement via Independence, Psychological Mindedness and Self-Acceptance as key constructs in the ability to think strategically. These outcomes sharpen the new leadership profile and enable the development of tools that can directly improve the organisation's ability to identify, attract, select and develop leaders who are proficient in the emergent, complex context.

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.

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