

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION

In this final chapter the results of the research are examined and conclusions are drawn. The latter part of the chapter focuses on final comments.

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between specific flexibility indicators and labour productivity in the South African motor manufacturing industry.

The study indicated that labour productivity is higher in those motor manufacturing organisations where:

- (i) the operators can perform a greater number of tasks;
- (ii) the operators participate in maintenance and problem-solving;
- (iii) there is a greater percentage of operators that are multi-skilled;
- (iv) an efficient skills matrix is used;
- (v) job categories are not experienced as restrictive;

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- (vi) operators are responsible for detecting quality defects;
- (vii) operators are more eager to undergo training in other tasks;
- (viii) more holistic training is given and where operators are stimulated to use both their cognitive and motor skills;
- (ix) less absentee cover is used to deal with absenteeism; and
- (x) companies do not have to consult with unions about technological changes or production process changes that could influence manning levels.

#### 7.1. Final comment

The reason why relationships between certain flexibility indicators and labour productivity could not be found could be ascribed to the fact that many other factors which could not be isolated from the study, could impact on the companies. These factors include amongst others the nature of the ethnic groups geographically available to the companies; the culture of the organisation; the militancy and influence of union representatives; the age and type of physical facilities of the different companies; the degree of sophistication of the cars built in the

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various companies; the extent to which other productivity improvement programmes (such as quality circles, green areas, teamwork programmes) are utilised; the ownership and international connections of and pressure on the various companies, and the complex nature of labour productivity itself.

No doubt people would be more willing to implement flexibility if it could be proved beyond doubt that flexibility improves productivity. However, all the factors mentioned above could have an influence on both labour productivity and flexibility making it unrealistic to prove that a causal relationship between flexibility and labour productivity exists. Therefore the aim of the research was not to prove a causal relationship but to investigate whether a relationship existed.

The impact of flexibility on aspects such as job satisfaction, employee morale and commitment, labour turnover, absenteeism, strikes and stayaways needs to be further investigated.

Furthermore, seeing that this study is only exploratory in nature, more detailed investigations need to be done to develop a workable model for the implementation of complete flexibility within the work situation.

As can be seen from this research the qualitative research method has many advantages, one of the main ones being the fact that it presents the opportunity for investigating complex relationships and being

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able to reach meaningful conclusions without narrowing or simplifying the research subject to such an extent that the final conclusions are irrelevant and meaningless.

#### INTERVIEW GUIDE

Seeing that this study has shown that a relationship between flexibility indicators and labour productivity exists it is hoped that companies will opt for flexibility and a progressive strategy which reflects the realities of work in the 1990's and the role that employees can play between now and the end of the century.

#### ROLE OF JOBS AND MULTI-SKILLING

1. How many different tasks do you estimate your average worker can perform?

2. When you observe to see what happens when a small technical problem occurs on the assembly line where the worker is working?

Does he fix the problem himself?

Does he call for assistance?