

**THE DEMOCRATISATION OF THE WORKPLACE IN  
SELECTED SOUTH AFRICAN ORGANISATIONS**

BY

**RUAN VON MOLTKE VAN DER WALT**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	i
Table of Contents	ii
List of Tables	x
List of Figures	xiv
Summary	xv

### **CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION AND THE AIMS OF THE STUDY**

1.1	Introduction	1
1.2	The study in historical perspective	1
1.3	The research problem	8
1.4	Definitions of concepts	9
1.5	Outline of study	10

### **CHAPTER 2. METHOD OF RESEARCH**

2.1	Introduction	11
2.2	Validity and reliability: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability	13
2.2.1	Credibility	13
2.2.2	Transferability	14
2.2.3	Dependability	14
2.2.4	Confirmability	15
2.3	Research paradigm and method of qualitative analysis	15
2.3.1	Data collection	16
2.3.2	Data reduction	17
2.3.2.1	Focussing and bounding the collection of data	17
2.3.2.2	A conceptual framework	18
2.3.2.3	Research questions	19

2.3.2.4	Sampling: bounding the collection of data	20
2.3.3	Data display	21
2.3.4	Data analysis: conclusion drawing/verification	22
2.4	Measuring instrument	23
2.5	Problems encountered	23
2.6	Summary	24
<b>CHAPTER 3. DEVELOPMENT OF DEMOCRATIC SOCIETIES</b>		
3.1	Introduction	25
3.2	Ancient times to the Middle Ages	25
3.3	Medieval civilisation c.1300 - c.1450	26
3.4	The Renaissance c.1475 - c.1625	30
3.4.1	Economic revival, Business techniques, Industry and Mining	30
3.4.2	Capitalism and the Capitalistic Spirit	31
3.4.3	The origins of the Renaissance Humanism	31
3.5	The seventeenth century crisis c.1560 - c.1715	32
3.5.1	The economic crisis and its social effects	32
3.5.2	The Constitutional Crisis in England	33
3.5.3	Science and thought	34
3.6	The Age of Egalitarian Revolutions c.1715 - c.1850	35
3.6.1	The Era of Enlightenment c.1715 - c.1800	36
3.6.2	Capitalism and the Industrial Revolution c.1760 - c.1850	37
3.7	The Age of Romanticism c.1815 - c.1850	39
3.7.1	Liberalism and Nationalism	40
3.7.2	The Protest of Labour and Utopian Socialism	41
3.8	The Age of Reform: Great Britain c.1815 - c.1850/65	42
3.9	The Re-emergence of Western Civilisation c.1850 - c.1914	43





3.9.1	The triumph of Liberalism	43
3.9.2	Joint-stock companies and combinations	44
3.9.3	Labour unions	45
3.9.4	Marxist socialism	46
3.10	The Growth of the Democratic form of Government in Britain	47
3.11	A brief history of South African Labour Relations	48
3.12	Summary	54

**CHAPTER 4. DEMOCRACY, INDUSTRIAL DEMOCRACY AND WORKER PARTICIPATION**

4.1	Introduction	57
4.2	Democracy	57
4.2.1	The theory of direct or participatory democracy	58
4.2.2	The theory of indirect democracy or the liberal democratic view	59
4.3	Industrial Democracy	62
4.3.1	Industrial Democracy defined	62
4.3.2	Arguments for industrial democracy	66
4.3.3	Weber, Marx and Durkheim's ideas of industrial democracy	68
4.3.4	Different views of democracy and industrial democracy	70
4.3.4.1	Utopian democracy	70
4.3.4.2	The protective creative perspective of democracy	71
4.3.4.3	The developmental perspective of democracy	71
4.3.4.4	The equilibrium perspective of democracy	72
4.3.4.5	The participatory perspective of democracy	73
4.3.5	Models of Industrial Democracy	74
4.3.5.1	Utopian socialism	76
4.3.5.2	Proletarian socialism	76

4.3.5.3	Fabian socialism	77
4.3.5.4	Guild socialism	78
4.3.5.5	Workers' participation in management	78
4.3.5.5.1	Joint consultation	80
4.3.5.5.2	Workers' management	80
4.3.5.5.3	Co-determination	80
4.3.5.5.4	Collective bargaining	81
4.3.5.5.5	Human Relations	82
4.4	The recurrent interest in workers' participation	83
4.5	Summary	88
<b>CHAPTER 5. DISCLOSURE OF BUSINESS INFORMATION</b>		
5.1	Introduction	90
5.2	Information disclosure in the United States, the United Kingdom and South Africa	92
5.2.1	The United States	92
5.2.2	The United Kingdom	93
5.2.3	South Africa	95
5.3	Disclosure of information under the LRA 66 of 1995	98
5.3.1	Relevance of information	99
5.4	Limitations to disclosure	101
5.4.1	Legally privileged information	101
5.4.2	Prohibitions imposed on the employer by any law or order of the court	101
5.4.3	Private personal information	101
5.4.4	Confidential information that may cause substantial harm to an employee or employer	102
5.5	Sufficient disclosure	103

5.6	Disputes regarding business information disclosure	104
5.7	Summary	105

## **CHAPTER 6. COLLECTIVE BARGAINING**

6.1	Introduction	107
6.1.1	Collective Bargaining in Europe and Britain	109
6.2	Definitions and theories of collective bargaining	113
6.3	Development of collective bargaining in South Africa	116
6.3.1	The period 1652 - 1870	116
6.3.2	The period 1870 - 1924	116
6.3.3	The period 1924 - 1956	117
6.3.4	The period 1956 - 1979	118
6.3.5	The period 1979 - 1995	119
6.3.6	Collective bargaining structures: 1995 to present	122
6.4	Centralised bargaining	123
6.5	Voluntarism	125
6.6	The duty to bargain	127
6.7	Bargaining units	129
6.8	Summary	131

## **CHAPTER 7. WORKER PARTICIPATION, JOINT CONSULTATION AND JOINT DECISION-MAKING**

7.1	Introduction	132
7.2	Worker participation	132
7.2.1	Direct worker participation	133
7.2.1.1	Japan	133
7.2.1.2	The United States of America	133
7.2.2	Indirect worker participation	135



7.2.2.1	Germany	135
7.2.2.2	India	138
7.2.2.3	Australia	138
7.3	Involvement	141
7.4	Perspectives on worker participation	143
7.5	Joint consultation	145
7.5.1	Reasons for consultation	148
7.5.2	Functioning of a consultative structure	148
7.5.3	Matters for consultation in terms of the Labour Relations Act of 1995	151
7.5.4	The meaning of the duty to consult	152
7.6	Joint decision-making	155
7.6.1	Matters for joint decision-making in terms of the Labour Relations Act of 1995	157
7.6.2	Reaching consensus through joint decision-making	158
7.7	Summary	160
<b>CHAPTER 8. WORKPLACE FORUMS: A SOUTH AFRICAN MODEL FOR INDUSTRIAL DEMOCRACY</b>		
8.1	Introduction and background to Workplace Forums	162
8.2	Parallels between the development of German Works Councils and South African Workplace Forums	163
8.2.1	The development of Works Councils in Germany	163
8.2.2	South African Workplace Forums	164
8.3	Description of terminology	167
8.3.1	A workplace	167
8.3.2	An employee	167
8.3.3	A representative trade union	168



8.4.	General functions of a Workplace Forum	168
8.5	Launching a Workplace Forum	170
8.5.1	Types of Workplace Forums	173
8.5.2	Requirements for the constitutions of Workplace Forums	176
8.6	Meetings of Workplace Forums	177
8.6.1	Meetings of members of a Workplace Forum	178
8.6.2	Meetings between a Workplace Forum and the Employer	178
8.6.3	Meetings between a Workplace Forum and Employees	179
8.7	Review of decisions	180
8.8	Matters affecting more than one Workplace Forum	180
8.9	Full-time members of the Workplace Forum	180
8.10	Removal of members of the Workplace Forum	181
8.11	Time-off, payment and experts	181
8.12	Dissolution of a Workplace Forum	182
8.13	Summary	182

## **CHAPTER 9. RESULTS OF THE INVESTIGATION**

9.1	Introduction	184
9.2	Results of the investigation regarding the disclosure of information	184
9.3	Results of the investigation regarding collective bargaining	199
9.4	Findings of the investigation regarding worker participation, joint consultation and joint decision-making	205
9.5	Results of the investigation regarding workplace forums	215
9.5.1	Organisations that do not have WPFs	216
9.6	Summary	231

responses regarding collective bargaining 200

Practice and frequency:

Table 9.13 Management representatives' responses 202

Table 9.14 TU/worker representatives' responses 202

Bargaining structure:

Table 9.15 Management representatives' responses 203

Table 9.16 TU/worker representatives' responses 203

Table 9.17 Compilation of management representatives' responses  
on worker participation, joint consultation and decision-making 205

Table 9.18 Compilation of trade union (TU)/worker representatives'  
responses on worker participation, joint consultation and  
decision-making 207

Increase in worker participation since 1995:

Table 9.19 Management representatives' responses 209

Table 9.20 TU/worker representatives' responses 209

Matters on which consultation has taken place:

Table 9.21 Management representatives' responses 211

Table 9.22 TU/worker representatives' responses 212

Consultative structure:

Table 9.23 Management representatives' responses 212

Table 9.24	TU/worker representatives' responses	213
------------	--------------------------------------	-----

Matters on which joint decision-making has taken place:

Table 9.25	Management representatives' responses	214
------------	---------------------------------------	-----

Table 9.26	TU/worker representatives' responses	215
------------	--------------------------------------	-----

Table 9.27	Compilation of management representatives' responses of organisations without WPFs	216
------------	--	-----

Table 9.28	Compilation of trade union (TU)/worker representatives' responses of organisations without WPFs	216
------------	---	-----

Table 9.29	Responses of management representatives' of organisations with WPFs	220
------------	---	-----

Table 9.30	Responses of trade union (TU)/worker representatives' of organisations with WPFs	221
------------	--	-----

Reasons for the establishment of WPFs:

Table 9.31	Management representatives' responses	222
------------	---------------------------------------	-----

Table 9.32	TU/worker representatives' responses	223
------------	--------------------------------------	-----

External help in drawing up the WPF constitution:

Table 9.33	Management representatives' responses	224
------------	---------------------------------------	-----

Table 9.34	TU/worker representatives' responses	224
------------	--------------------------------------	-----

Frequency of WPF meetings:

Table 9.35 Management representatives' responses 227

Table 9.36 TU/worker representatives' responses 227

Topics discussed at WPF meetings:

Table 9.37 Management representatives' responses 227

Table 9.38 TU/worker representatives' responses 228

Frequency of the WPF meeting with the employees:

Table 9.39 Management representatives' responses 228

Table 9.40 TU/worker representatives' responses 229

Use of external experts by WPF:

Table 9.41 Management representatives' responses 230

Table 9.42 TU/worker representatives' responses 230



## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1	Components of Data Analysis: An Interactive Model	15
Figure 2.2	Conceptual Framework of the Study	19
Figure 4.1	Development periods of different forms of Industrial Democracy	75
Figure 7.1	The development of different models of co-determination in Germany	137
Figure 7.2	A model of different forms of employee involvement and participation	143

## SUMMARY

### THE DEMOCRATISATION OF THE WORKPLACE IN SELECTED SOUTH AFRICAN ORGANISATIONS

BY

RUAN VON MOLTKE VAN DER WALT

PROMOTOR : Prof D. de Villiers  
DEPARTMENT : Human Resources Management  
DEGREE : D Com (Human Resources Management)

Since 1994 the government has steadily been moving the South African society towards democratic practices. One of the areas of society identified for transformation is the workplace. One of the earliest acts passed by government to achieve this objective is the Labour Relations Act (LRA) (No 66 of 1995).

Ascertaining the views and attitudes of employers and employees towards the undermentioned four aspects of workplace democracy form the research problem of the investigation. The four aims of the investigation are as follows: to determine the views and attitudes of management and workers towards information disclosure; to determine the views and attitudes of management and workers towards collective bargaining; to determine the views and attitudes of management and workers towards worker participation, consultation and joint decision-making. The views and attitudes of management and workers on the above topics were obtained by means of questionnaires and in-depth interviews.

In order to understand the labour movement and industrial democracy, the social and economic conditions that gave rise to these social and economic phenomena need to be examined. As a result of the historical roots and influence which Britain and Europe had on the development of South Africa, this brief survey focussed primarily on developments in Britain and Europe.

An explanation of what is meant by the term "democracy" is presented. Both the direct and indirect forms of democracy are discussed. From democracy the discussion turns to industrial democracy. Various forms and models of industrial democracy are

organisations were engaged in collective bargaining.

Both groups of respondents viewed consultation as discussions and/or an exchange of views. Some management representatives noted that their understanding of what is meant by consultation differed from the trade unions' views that consultation is synonymous with negotiation. It further appears that both groups consider joint decision-making as referring to workers participating in the decision-making process with their employers.

The representatives of management and representatives of workers in organisations that do not have Workplace Forums (WPFs) agreed that WPFs were not established as the trade union had insufficient representivity and that existing representation structures were adequate.

In the case of organisations with WPFs it was found that both management representatives and worker representatives indicated that they followed the requirements for constitutions as prescribed in section 82 of the LRA of 1995 in drawing up the WPF constitution for their respective organisations.

Very little research information on the views and attitudes of both management and the workers in the same organisations in South Africa are available. The current study has contributed insight into the views of both management and workers on the disclosure of information; collective bargaining; worker participation, joint consultation and joint decision-making as well as workplace forums.

Based on the experience of the current study it is recommended that future research include respondents from all nine provinces or at least two or more provinces to ensure greater representivity of South African organisations, management and workers. It is further recommended that future research attempts to include even more than the seven sectors of the economy used in the current study.