

**Methods for enabling collective employee participation
in strategic change**

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ABSTRACT

Much research has been conducted regarding the significant role of leadership, particularly top and senior-level leadership, in the development and implementation of strategic change within organisations. In addition, strategic change research also tends to focus on the methods for enabling individual preparation and commitment to strategic change initiatives. Little is therefore known about the methods that enable collective employee participation in strategic change. In a business environment that is increasingly dynamic, complex and unpredictable, the collective participation of employees in strategic change presents an opportunity to increase the effective delivery of strategic change and enhance an organisation's ability to adapt to and compete in this fast-moving world.

Research evidence recommends that employee participation in strategic change needs to be embedded in dialogical or social mechanisms, supported by organisational behaviours that endorse interpersonal relationships that are founded on psychological safety and the value of diverse contribution. Within this context, this study explored the nature of methods utilised within organisations to enable collective employee participation in strategic change and gained a deeper understanding of the factors that influenced their application and resulting effectiveness.

Through this qualitative study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 13 research participants who were members of organisations, working within various roles that required decision-making capability around the methods utilised for strategic change implementation. Valuable insights were obtained from the study through instances where organisations had adopted a participative approach to strategic change using dialogical mechanisms and behaviours that supported, or were being shaped to support, the presence of supporting interpersonal relationships. Organisations within the sample that demonstrated an absence or partial use of a participative approach also provided important insights to this study, especially with regards to the barriers that prevented the use of this approach. The study was able to gain insights into the more immediate benefits of a participative approach, but due to the nature of the study, could not establish direct evidence that confirmed longer-term strategic results of strategic adaptability.

This study makes a humble contribution to literature by providing a view of the current nature and utilisation of methods for enabling collective employee participation in strategic change within the current dynamic environment and provides evidence that

supports the use of dialogical mechanisms, founded on quality relationships for the effective implementation of this approach.

Key words:

Strategic change; dynamic environments; collective employee participation; leadership; dialogue; quality relationships.

DECLARATION

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy (Corporate Strategy) at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

Claire McKelvey

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CEOs chief executive officers

GIBS Gordon Institute of Management Science

SA strategic adaptability

SC strategic change

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

1.1 Background

The current business environment is dynamic and relentlessly evolving at lightning speed (Schwarz, Rohrbeck, & Wach, 2019; Semke, & Tiberius, 2020). This is largely due to rapidly evolving technological innovation, shifting consumer behaviour, increased business regulations, fluctuating macroeconomic variables, relentless competition, and globalisation (Cain, 2017; Durmaz & Dusun, 2016; Bucy, Finlayson, Kelly, & Moye, 2016; Petrus, 2019). A contemporary example of the impact of an unpredictable environment is the global Covid-19 pandemic. The Covid-19 pandemic unexpectedly and, with unprecedented speed, caused enormous social and economic damage and created dramatic shifts to even the most stable business models (Sheppard, Zarubina, & Jenkins, 2020; Clift & Court, 2020; Sullivan, 2020).

As these various influences relentlessly reshape the strategic landscape in which business operates (Petrus, 2019; Durmaz & Dusun, 2016), the management of continuous strategic change [SC] becomes central to enabling organisations to continuously adapt to the required shifts in strategic direction, priorities and objectives (Zeeman, 2020; Janse, 2019; Cain, 2017; Ulrich & Yeung, 2019; Boss, 2016; Smits & Bowden, 2015). To enable organisations to thrive in this dynamic environment, the manner in which SC is approached and managed should support organisations to seek out and embrace change, disruption and innovation to proactively and rapidly transform to shifting customer, environmental and market needs (Scheepers & Swart, 2020; Deloitte, 2018).

1.2 The challenges of strategic change

The achievement of SC is regarded as a significant challenge in the process of strategic execution (Hrebiniak, 2006). Despite the need for continuous, effective implementation of SC, the success rate of SC initiatives is often regarded to be low (Heckman, Steger, & Dowling, 2015; Hall, 2019; Anand & Barsoux, 2017; Bucy et al., 2016; Leonard & Coltea, 2013). The increased number of people involved in SC, managements' inability to navigate the complexity of mobilising and engaging people through SC, and the intricacy of cross-functional alignments are regarded as crucial obstacles that limit successful SC (Hrebiniak, 2006, Bucy et al., 2016). In addition to these obstacles, research evidence recommends that the ubiquitous nature of SC requires a different approach (Heckman et al., 2015). Research evidence recommends that SC

management shift from managing change as punctuated, episodic events to one of continuous change adaptability (Heckman et al., 2015).

SC literature also highlights a tendency to focus primarily on the pivotal role of leadership to drive change from the top of the organisation, without foresight given to the inclusion of employees as integrated stakeholders (Muller & Kunisch, 2018; Strativity, 2016; Kotter & Schlesinger, 2013). A dominant perception exists that strategic planning and execution decision tends to only happen at top or senior-levels of leadership and that implementation simply requires employees at the lower levels to implement the dictates of these requirements (Strativity, 2016; Hrebiniak, 2006).

The business imperative for SC, when regarded alongside the poor track record and inherent obstacles, arguably generates a need to explore alternative approaches to implementing SC. In support of this argument, strategic adaptability [SA], as a crucial outcome of effective SC, calls for the mobilisation of latent human potential from all levels of the organisation to enable the required collective employee commitment and capability to continuously and successfully navigate change within a dynamic environment (Deloitte, 2018; Hrebiniak, 2006).

1.3 Research problem and purpose

To enable SA, academic research calls for increased employee participation in SC across all levels of the organisation (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017; Teece & Linden, 2017). Strategy literature, however, focuses predominantly on the role of top and middle management to enable SC, with the role of the employee often relegated to change recipient (Muller & Kunisch, 2018; Heyden, Fourne, Koene, Werman, & Ansari, 2017). Although SC literature provides extensive recommendations for developing individual integration or commitment in SC (Surtly & Scheepers, 2019; Naotunna & Arachchige, 2016; Heyden et al., 2017; Mantere, Schildt & Silience., 2012; Sonenshein & Dholakia, 2012), little is known about the methods that enable the collective participation of employees in SC across all levels of the organisation (Muller & Kunisch, 2018).

Given the need for organisations to effectively implement continuous SC in a dynamic environment (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017), it is therefore a relevant imperative to explore and build insight into the various methods that enable collective employee participation in SC to ultimately deliver on required SA outcomes.

Academic literature that supports a participative organisation approach to SC regards dialogue as a crucial method to achieving high levels of participation to enable the flexible

configuration of organisational resources and the creation of inimitable competitive advantage (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017). The outcomes of dialogue are described as increased connectedness and solidarity among employees, the courage to challenge the status quo and take risks, thereby enabling organisations to leverage diverse views and shared knowledge (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017; Stefania, Grazia, & Chiara, 2014; Hinson & Osborne, 2014).

In summary, the dominant leadership and individual commitment focus on SC (Muller & Kunisch, 2018; Surty & Scheepers, 2019; Naotunna & Arachchige, 2016) means that little is known about how a collective participative employee approach, using dialogical methods, can contribute to the effectiveness of SC. The purpose of the research was therefore to explore the various methods utilised within organisations to enable collective employee participation in SC to enhance the organisation's ability to navigate and address the SA required in a dynamic environment. To further contribute to an expanded view and understanding of the methods enabling collective employee participation in SC, this study also explored the factors that support employee participation in SC within an organisational context.

Furthermore, the study explored the benefits of these methods towards strengthening SA. In instances where organisations did not utilise mechanisms to enable employee participation in SC, the underlying rationale was explored to build a deeper understanding of barriers to collective employee participation in SC.

1.4 Significance of research for business and theory

In an appraisal and evaluation of more than three decades of empirical research in SC, Muller and Kunisch (2018) recognised that the most unexplored role of organisational actors, other than middle management, may have a significant impact on the effectiveness of SC. Increased insight into the value and benefits of collective employee participation in change, as an enabler for SA, is regarded to provide an organisation with a competitive advantage in navigating relentless environmental disruption (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017). The potential of a largely untapped source of thinking and creativity within an organisation (Deloitte, 2018), especially one that is difficult to replicate, may prove to be an essential contributor to sustained competitive advantage (Teece & Linden, 2017). In this light, collective employee participation in SC, as a means of increasing SA, was explored. The research study also revealed important factors that are required for effective adoption of methods to enable employee participation in SC and therefore

provides insight into possible preparatory actions required prior to engaging employees in SC.

From a theoretical perspective, the exploration of collective employee participation in SC challenges a dominant theme in SC literature, namely that SC is required to be primarily driven by top or senior-level leadership, with the role of the employee relegated to that of change recipient (Muller & Kunisch, 2018; Salvato & Vassolo, 2017; Heyden et al., 2017). The broad base of existing knowledge regarding how organisations attempt SC predominantly covers the actions of top managers, together with a prevailing assumption that employees are often resistors to change (Sonenshein & Dholakia, 2012). Supporting research in strategic management adaptability calls for the expansion of the role of employees in the strategic management process (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017; Sull, 2007; Teece & Linden, 2017). Little knowledge exists on how increased change agency of collective employee participation in SC can be realised and the benefits to SA. Through this exploratory study, a contribution is made to the theory of SC through a deeper understanding of methods that enable an effective participatory approach within SC and the benefits of collective employee participation in SC to enable SA.

1.5 Research scope

An exploratory study was undertaken to gain an understanding of the various methods adopted by organisations to enable collective employee participation in SC to strengthen SA. To provide a clear scope of this study it is important to clearly define key concepts within this study and to clarify the context within which the study took place.

SC, although often used interchangeably with the terms change, transformation, or radical change, refers in this study to a significant shift or adjustment in an organisation's purpose, scope, priorities and goals in response to environmental threats or business opportunities (Muller & Kunisch, 2018; Gioia, Thomas, Clark, & Chittipeddi, 1994; Fiss & Zajac, 2006). SC in the context of this study does therefore not include reference to incremental change that takes place within an organisation in response to operational requirements for change.

Furthermore, it is important to distinguish between the concepts of individual preparation and readiness for change and collective employee participation in change. SC literature describes individual preparation and readiness action required by leadership as the management change actions to facilitate sense-making or meaning-making for employees, and enabling the presence of psychological resources within individual employees to cope with this change (Sonenshein & Dholakia, 2012; Mantere et al., 2012;

Surty & Scheepers, 2019; Naotunna & Arachchige, 2016). In the scope of this study, collective employee participation in strategic change refers to the collective, collaborative or participative employee practices in SC that are proposed to bring about organisational level SA (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017).

It is also important to note that this study does not challenge the research evidence regarding the important role of top or senior-level leaders in influencing SC (Muller & Kunisch, 2018). This study has aimed to augment this research evidence with additional insight into the value of a more participative role for collective employees in contributing to and participating in SC within an organisation.

SC research also supports the importance of individual commitment and readiness through action, cognition and affect in contributing towards SC (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017, Scheepers & Swart, 2020). This research study does not challenge individual change commitment or integration as an essential factor in building SA; instead, the focus is on the contribution of collective employee participation in SC for a contribution towards the emergence of dynamic capabilities at an organisational level (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017).

This study therefore explored the methods that enable employees (managerial and non-managerial) to collectively participate in SC and contribute to an organisation's SA. The following section of this research report reviews academic literature that underpins the relevance and contribution of this study through the presentation of relevant theories, academic discourse and research gaps that shaped this study's research questions.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

As stated in previous chapter of this report, organisations are having to compete in a dynamic business environment which continuously re-shapes the strategic landscape and calls for an alternative, supplementary approach to the way in which SC is implemented on all levels of an organisation (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017). This alternative approach may form one of the critical levers in SC to support an organisation to continuously capitalise on opportunities and navigate threats with speed and assurance to remain relevant and competitive (Teece, Peteraf, & Leih, 2016). The aim of the literature review is to provide evidence and arguments from academic literature to support the theoretical need for the research and provide the theoretical foundation upon which the study was conducted (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The literature review is structured to present scholarly research that establishes the importance of SA within the current strategic landscape. Recent scholarly research is also reviewed to illustrate the increasing call for and emergence of collective employee participation to strengthen SA. The call for greater collective employee participation in SC is then reviewed against the backdrop of dominant SC perspectives and their influence on this research topic. As the primary purpose of this study was to explore the various methods being utilised to enable participation of employees within SC, the literature review provides relevant dialogical theories that provide a foundation and theoretical lens through which to discuss these methods in the context of SC within organisations.

2.2 Strategic adaptability and employee participation in strategic change

SA is regarded as the capabilities within an organisation that enable a fitness within the environment in which it operates (Schwarz et al., 2019; Semke & Tiberius, 2020; Carmeli, Jones, & Binyamin, 2016; Teece, 2007). SA is also referred to as organisational agility or flexibility required within organisations driven by the need for continuous organisational transformation (Teece et al., 2016). Teece (2007) and Teece, Pisano, and Shuen (1997) described this construct as the dynamic capabilities within the organisation resulting in an organisation's ability to develop, combine, or reconfigure internal competencies and resources in response to changes in the competitive environment.

This capability has become increasingly important in determining an organisation's success in a complex, hypercompetitive, digitised, uncertain and unpredictable business environment (Semke & Tiberius, 2020). A current example that demonstrates the urgency of building this capability can be seen from the unexpected devastation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. To date, economies across the globe have been placed in various levels of lockdown in the hope of reducing deaths, causing significant damage to national economies, businesses and individual employment (Pantano, Pizzi, Scarpi, & Dennis, 2020). The fabric of business has also been impacted in unprecedented ways from changes in fundamental internal ways of working to dramatic shifts in consumer behaviours (Crick & Crick, 2020).

SA enables organisations to continuously attend to diverse environmental dynamism by creating the appropriate response or configurations, at the right time (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017; Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000). A critical source of this flexibility or agility is regarded as participation (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017) as it enables diverse employees to combine their existing knowledge resources and to build new knowledge resources required to deal with complex and uncertain circumstances. (Tsoukas, 2009). Constructive interpersonal dialogue is regarded as the mechanism through which participation is manifest as it equips diverse employees with critical skills required to observe and acknowledge a range of views and possibilities, to anticipate and resolve problems and to collaborate with others to achieve results (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017). Through the continual use of this dialogical practice of interaction and mutual adaption amongst employees, a repository of innovative knowledge and capability is created, enabling the organisation to continuously increase adaptative effectiveness (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017).

SA, based on the intricate process of employee participation, also presents unique sources of competitive advantage within an organisation (Ployhart & Moliterno, 2011; Teece et al., 1997). Unlike the structured building blocks of an organisation's adaptability, such as skills inherent in individuals, the intricate patterns and processes of interpersonal relationships and dialogue are highly inimitable and therefore difficult to replicate by competitors (Ployhart & Moliterno, 2011; Salvato & Vassolo, 2017).

There are a variety of management concepts and techniques proposed to enable organisations to build this capability to remain relevant and deliver better performance within a dynamic and unpredictable environment (Semke & Tiberius, 2020). Schwarz et al. (2019) argued that traditional processes alone will not be sufficient to ensure lasting business success in an environment where competitive advantage is easily lost and they

recommended the review of traditional processes to ensure foresight and rapid adaption of an organisation's resources to build and retain a competitive advantage.

This argument is supported by Scheepers and Swart (2020) within the field of strategic change. Their research supports the review of organisational change processes to address the complexities within a dynamic environment more effectively (Scheepers & Swart, 2020). Similarly, research by Surty and Scheepers (2019) demonstrated the moderating effect of environmental dynamism on leadership practices for change. This research provided evidence that environmental dynamism determines the context in which change in an organisation takes place and that leadership actions for successful change have a greater impact on employee response during this time (Surty & Scheepers, 2019).

It can therefore be argued that the challenges presented within a dynamic environment for the increased necessity for SA (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017; Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000), together with the additional requirements and challenges it presents to change processes (Scheepers & Swart, 2020; Surty & Scheepers, 2019), provide sufficient evidence for the review and alignment of methods applied in SC within organisations. This argument therefore supports the relevance to explore collective employee participation in SC as one of the mechanisms to increase SC delivery and enhance an organisation's SA.

To successfully explore a participative role for collective employees in SC, it is important to understand how this approach is currently viewed and positioned within the current strategic management landscape within which SC unfolds.

2.3 The current strategic management landscape

Strategic management is a process that entails two integrated constructs: strategic formulation and strategic implementation, both of which are deemed equally crucial for organisation success (De Oliveira, Carneiro, & Esteves, 2019). Increased environmental dynamism requires strategic adaptive practices to embody continuous cycles of information gathering, interpretation, and adaptation (Hallin, Andersen, & Tveteras, 2017). In the micro-foundations of dynamic capabilities, these continuous actions are described as three sequential capacities for change: sensing, seizing, and reconfiguring (Teece, 2007; Sull, 2007).

In their research examining the link between strategic misalignment and corporate failure over time, Heracleous and Werres (2016) indicated they regard the management of

change as a significant strategic challenge in the constant realignment between strategy and an unforgiving external environment.

Given therefore that strategic adaptive practices require continuous cycles of information gathering, interpretation and adaptation (Hallin et al., 2017) and that the management of the resulting change is a critical process in ensuring the alignment between strategy and the environment (Heracleous & Werres, 2016), this further supports a review of the supporting SC process to establish how this process can better support a strategic management process in a dynamic environment. In the context of this research, the topic and significance of collective employee participation in the SC management process is presented.

2.3.1 The role of employees in the strategic landscape

In recent studies, scholars have highlighted the vital contribution of employees in the context of SA (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017; Sull, 2007; Teece & Linden, 2017). As organisations strive to create and capture value in an increasingly digitised world, the importance of proactive sensing capabilities across all organisational structures is proposed as well as the need for employee engagement in new learning as a means of closing capability gaps or building new capabilities (Teece & Linden, 2017). In addition, the importance and value of engaging employees at all levels in conversations that support a circular and continuous cycle of strategy development and implementation is also proposed (Sull, 2007). Salvato and Vassolo (2017) reinforced the importance of equipping and supporting all employees in the organisation to contribute their expertise and creativity to improved organisational performance as a critical prerequisite for SA.

Research conducted by Lynch and Mors (2019) further supports the need for organisations to continually adjust and renew their strategy to deliver on constantly changing demands, but the study highlighted the need for management to consider the larger social structures within the organisation as these hold the employee networks which influence the success of transformational (strategic) change.

Similarly, Heracleous and Werres (2016) referred to the case study at Lufthansa and Swisscom to illustrate the influence of the collective action of employees in networks that enabled employees within these organisations to facilitate organisational change successfully. Furthermore, in a study by Hallin et al. (2017), frontline employee sensing capabilities were shown to be strong predictors of organisation performance.

Greater employee participation in building SA was also described by Sull (2007) who proposed that increased SA will be garnered through strategy as a continuous, iterative loop to allow for new insights to be rapidly incorporated into an organisation's strategic process. Sull (2007) recommended that integrated strategic discussions take place at every level of the organisation to enable strategic adaptation and flexibility. In Sull's (2007) approach, management is held responsible for continuously facilitating strategic discussions with employees across all strategic steps of making sense of a situation, making choices about strategic priorities, making strategic action happen and making revisions based on new information. In addition, McGrath (2010) emphasised the need for critical conversations within an organisation to ensure early identification of threats to business model viability and thereby overcome the challenge of employees having little interest or incentive to reach out to business leaders with information that might constitute bad news from a business perspective.

Salvato and Vassolo (2017), through a proposed multi-level theory of dynamic capabilities, however, recognise the contribution of both individual and organisation level approaches to developing dynamic capabilities to navigate change. Their research highlighted the crucial contribution of collective employee participation, through dialogical mechanisms, to allow dynamic capabilities to emerge on an organisational level (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017). Salvato and Vassolo (2017) argued that the determinants of how organisations build new capabilities within a dynamic environment, cannot only be found at the micro or organisation level. Salvato and Vassolo (2017, p.1729) stated that "the micro-level emphasis on key individual capabilities, factors out patterns of collective action that can function independently of the actors who enact them."

A further argument for increased participation of employees in SC can be made using the evidence in research conducted by Scheepers and Swart (2020) that showed employees, without formal leadership or management positions, had played an influencing role in SC. These findings support the expanded definition of leadership to include employees who demonstrate influence towards achieving goals rather than exclusively linking leadership with organisational hierarchy (Northouse, 2001). Likewise, Agboola and Salawu (2011) described the importance of management working together with employees as partners during a change process. Scheepers and Swart (2020) have also argued that involvement of employees, even during the initial planning phase of SC, increases chances of successful implementation. Lastly, Pitelis and Wagner (2019) acknowledged, within their research on the dominant leadership coalition within strategic

management, that other stakeholders – such as middle management and employees – play a role in strategy co-creation and they recommended this as an opportunity for further research.

In summary, the increased need for effective SC to strengthen SA, primarily driven by increased environmental dynamism, has placed significance on the value that the collective influence of employees in SC may deliver. In summary, the influence of employees in SA is reflected in research supporting the role of extensive employee social networks as an important influence in strategic adaptation (Lynch & Mors, 2019), as an essential mobilisation force within strategic implementation (De Oliveira et al., 2019; Heracleous & Werres, 2016; Hallin et al., 2017), and as a collective unit within an organisation to support dynamic capabilities (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017; Teece & Linden, 2017).

Considering the abovementioned research, the role of employees for effective delivery of SC can certainly be regarded as a valuable mechanism for consideration in the delivery of SC objectives. The significant research evidence supports further exploration and investment in finding pragmatic methods for enabling collective employee participation in SC as a source for continuous intellectual learning and creative capital required to support SA.

Research evidence therefore strongly supports the primary focus of this study to explore the methods utilised by organisations which enable participation of employees in SC. To further support the aim of this study, it is important to present literature in SC perspectives and to position their critical relevance to this study.

2.4 Strategic change

2.4.1 Background

SC, although often used interchangeably with the terms change, transformation, or radical change, refers to a significant shift or adjustment in an organisation's purpose, scope, priorities and goals in response to environmental threats or business opportunities (Muller & Kunisch, 2018; Gioia et al., 1994; Fiss & Zajac, 2006). SC management can, therefore, be regarded as the culmination of actions required within an organisation to support the implementation of an organisation's strategy (Muller & Kunisch, 2018).

Although SC perspectives differ concerning the antecedents and processes of SC, there is a general agreement around the contribution of SC to an organisation's long-term performance and survival (Muller & Kunisch, 2018). As previously mentioned, this general agreement extends to the increasingly ubiquitous nature of SC as environmental influences relentlessly reshape the strategic landscape in which business operates (Sull, 2007; Heracleous & Werres, 2016; Hallin et al., 2017; Lynch & Mors, 2019; Surty & Scheepers, 2019). Against this backdrop, the current role and positioning of collective employee participation within SC takes shape and provides a lens for application opportunities and challenges within the corporate environment.

2.4.2 Strategic change perspectives

Muller and Kunisch (2018) identified three schools of thought emerging from their review and appraisal of three decades of SC research. The deterministic perspective largely attributes SC to externally-driven factors caused by institutions and the environment, with a limited role given to managers (Muller & Kunisch, 2018). On the other end of the scale, the voluntaristic perspective emphasises a more active role of the manager, especially top management, to significantly shape strategic decisions and actively influence the environment and organisational structure (Muller & Kunisch, 2018). The dialectical perspective attributes the result of SC as a function of both management and environmental pressures (Muller & Kunisch, 2018).

In summary, the three dominant perspectives emphasise the influence of the external environment and internal strategic leadership actions as key factors for influencing SC (Muller & Kunish, 2018). Significant to this study is that all perspectives largely dismiss the possibility of a formative role that employees could play in influencing SC. All perspectives work from the reference point that SC can only be initiated and implemented from the top down, with emphasis of the employee as change recipient or resistor to change (Muller & Kunisch, 2018; Heyden et al., 2017; Sonenshein & Dholakia, 2012; Nag, Corley, & Gioia, 2007; Mantere et al., 2012; Knight & Paroutis, 2017; Gover & Duxbury, 2017).

Research also indicates that top managers are not always receptive to initiators of SC emanating from below (Friesl & Kwon, 2017) and assume that a lack of strategic awareness limits the contributions from the lower levels in SC (Armenakis & Harris, 2002). The downward cascade of SC is also supported in traditions such as the Upper Echelons theory where SC is regarded as a top management activity and is rarely challenged (Hambrick, 2007). Due to this, the predominant focus in academic literature

around SC adopts an exclusive approach on executive leadership to impact strategic choices and outcomes and their sole responsibility to select and implement change-orientated strategies and explore new opportunities for adaptability (Surty & Scheepers, 2019).

When the role of the employee in SC literature is recognised, it is within the context of managers engendering support from employees in SC (Heyden et al., 2017; Mantere et al., 2012). In research that acknowledges the supportive role of the employee in SC, the focus centres around management tactics to facilitate sense-making or meaning-making for employees, and enabling the presence of psychological resources within individual employees to cope with this change (Sonenshein & Dholakia, 2012; Mantere et al., 2012).

Furthermore, research evidence describes the responsibility for employee change readiness and adoption as an important requirement for the success of SC and provides evidence that this is essentially driven by the leaders in the organisation (Surty & Scheepers, 2019; Naotunna & Arachchige, 2016). Leadership behaviour is therefore largely required to elicit the required employees' response to change which is measured in terms of commitment, valence and efficacy (Surty & Scheepers, 2019).

Commitment to change is referred to as affective commitment, which refers to the emotional attachment of an employee to remain within the organisation; continuance commitment which refers to the employee's need to avoid leaving an organisation due to the perceived personal consequences of this action; and normative commitment which speaks to the employee's need or obligation to remain within an organisation. (Surty & Scheepers, 2019). Change valence refers to the employee's perception of the change which may be influenced by external or internal rewards or benefits (Surty & Scheepers, 2019). Efficacy is described as an employee's perception around how confident they are to implement new changes in their work and their inherent belief that the change will improve the organisation (Surty & Scheepers, 2019).

Interestingly, the requirement for individual capacity building to support SC in a dynamic environment is described as critical to support a participative approach to SC involving the development of individual integration to manage change through action, cognition and emotion (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017). Salvato and Vassolo (2017), however, stated that this capability in individuals alone will not be sufficient to enable participative practices in SC that will bring about required organisational dynamic capabilities.

In summary, the focus of SC research has placed the role of leadership as central to influencing the direction and outcomes of SC (Muller & Kunisch, 2018) and the overwhelming accountability to influence employees' beliefs and behaviours with regards to this change (Heyden et al., 2017; Mantere et al., 2012). As noted earlier, this study does not aim to challenge the significant influence of leadership on the outcomes of SC and their importance in influencing how employees perceive and respond to change. Rather, the argument is that because research focuses largely on the role of leadership, this has limited investigation around how collective employees may positively influence SC when given the space and opportunity to do so. This overriding top-down leadership perspective within SC has narrowed the possibility of viewing a more proactive or influential role for collective employees in the successful implementation of SC.

Within the context of this study, however, it is relevant to review literature that provides evidence of the nature and characteristics of a supportive leadership role in enabling collective employee participation in SC.

2.4.3 Leadership perspectives in strategic change

As previously identified by Muller and Kunisch (2018), a predominant view remains that top or senior-level leadership comprise the most important influencers of successful SC as they primarily set the purpose and direction of the organisation. Supporting research evidence furthermore highlights the disproportionate role of leaders to bring about successful change (Burke, 2008; Owen & Dietz, 2012; Uhl-Bien, Marion & McKelvey, 2007).

Of significance to this study is research evidence that shows the importance of leadership actions in SC to ensure employees have an understanding of the business strategy and how it closes the gap between the current situation and future vision of the organisation (Martins & Terblanche, 2003). In addition, the importance of trust between leadership and employees is also regarded as an important influencing factor in the successful implementation of SC (Lines, Selart, Espedal & Johansen, 2005).

In support of a more participative approach to SC, however, research evidence also suggests that top or senior-level leadership should not only involve other levels of leadership in SC, but that managers should treat employees within the organisation as partners in the facilitation of change process (Scheepers & Swart, 2020; Agboola & Salawu, 2011). Scheepers and Swart (2020) argued that the involvement of employees, even during the initial planning phase, would increase the chances of successful SC implementation. Furthermore, research evidence shows that employee participation in

change decision-making is one of the critical factors that influence employee reaction to change (Wittig, 2012). Research by Bamford and Forrester (2003) argued that in order to create an environment of experimentation and risk taking, management need to move away from the traditional management approach of planning, informing and monitoring to one that enables employees to be involved in the identification, ownership and implementation of change.

As research evidence demonstrates the importance of leadership in the successful implementation of SC, the characteristics and style of leadership which are regarded as supportive of employee participation in SC also need to be considered. Uhl-Bien et al. (2007) argued that in a dynamic environment, the traditional, bureaucratic forms of organisations need to be replaced with forms that require more informal, entrepreneurial leadership characteristics. Scheepers and Swart (2020), although in support of leadership styles that match the context within an organisation, also argued that in dynamic environments, leadership needs to focus on relationship building and inspirational aspects during times of SC to enable an organisational environment that is conducive to experimentation and risk taking.

Furthermore, in a dynamic environment, this type of collective leadership approach nurtures relationships of trust, influence, and adaptability to successfully implement change (Scheepers & Swart, 2020). It is, however, recommended that the challenge for leaders of SC remains to thoroughly understand the scope and impact of change in relation to an organisation's context so as to align the appropriate leadership style required and, where needed, allow others to take the lead (Liden & Antonakis, 2009).

Given the research evidence that confirms the significant role of leadership in SC (Burke, 2008; Owen & Dietz, 2012; Uhl-Bien et al., 2007) and its formative influence on the employee response to change (Scheepers & Swart, 2020; Liden & Antonakis, 2009), collective employee participation in SC therefore needs to be planned and positioned taking cognisance of this evidence. It can therefore be argued that the levers of leadership influence, together with an appropriate style of leadership, are given important consideration for the successful implementation of a participative approach to SC.

In addition to understanding the influence of predominant SC perspectives on employee participation in SC, it is important to provide a supportive theoretical lens through which the methods for a more participatory approach to employee involvement in SC can be explored. The next section of the literature review therefore presents relevant supporting

theories regarding proposed methods and supporting factors to enable collective employee participation in SC.

2.5 Participation to enable strategic adaptability

Several research studies support the implementation of a more inclusive approach to employee participation in SC to enhance SA in a dynamic environment (Sull, 2007; Heracleous & Werres, 2016; Hallin et al., 2017; Lynch & Mors, 2019; Surty & Scheepers, 2020; Salvato & Vassolo, 2017). Although a predominant top-down approach to SC may have limited the exploration of this mechanism, appropriate leadership actions to enable and support employee response to change remain an important consideration in the context of this study (Surty & Scheepers, 2019; Salvato & Vassolo, 2017). This section of the literature review continues to extend the theoretical lens upon which this study is viewed through the review of additional theories that support the methods and factors enabling collective employee participation in SC. This section therefore presents and discusses the multi-level theory of dynamic capabilities developed by Salvato and Vassolo (2017) and supporting relational engagement and dialogical theories, that provided a theoretical foundation for this study.

2.5.1 A framework for employee participation in SC

The multi-level theory of dynamic capabilities presents dynamic capabilities as “effortful social accomplishments emerging from employees’ capacity to leverage interpersonal relationships conducive to productive dialogue” (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017, p.1728). The propositions within the research paper (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017) provided a theoretical foundation upon which to explore the methods and supporting factors for enabling collective employee participation within SC within this study. Salvato and Vassolo (2017) proposed that strategic adaptation and the ability to create sustainable innovation is attainable when people within an organisation are connected through meaningful relationships, founded in productive dialogue.

Figure 1 illustrates the multi-level patterns of managerial response to environmental dynamism and positions the individual and social phenomena that are critical in the delivery of organisational dynamic capabilities through collective employee participation in SC, as proposed by the Salvato and Vassolo (2017). This model provides a holistic view of the proposed dialogical method and supporting enablers that culminate in higher levels of collective employee participation (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017).

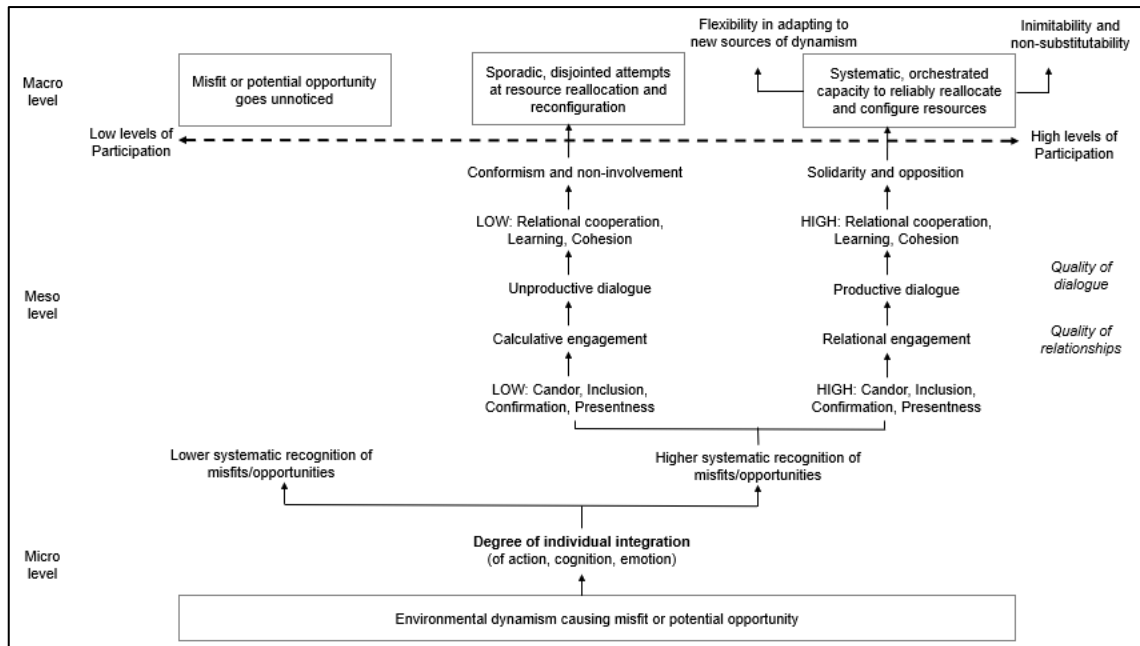


Figure 1: Multi-level patterns of managerial response to environmental dynamism
 Source: Proposed by Salvato and Vassolo (2017)

2.5.2 Quality of relationships

As proposed by the multi-level framework of dynamic capabilities and additional supporting literature, a foundation for enabling collective participation of employees in SC rests on the quality of relationships within an organisation (Teece, 2012; Tsoukas, 2009; Salvato & Vassolo, 2017). This approach to enabling participation is centred on the philosophy of Personalism, a philosophic tendency built on the infinite uniqueness and depth of each person (Tsoukas, 2009). Personalism describes that people establish two distinct types of relationships with other people – as “subjects or objects” (Tsoukas, 2009; Salvato & Vassolo, 2017, p.1737). Relationships as subjects are referred to as I-You relationships where individuals feel comfortable and safe to propose and accept improvements and they feel an emotional connection with each other, which is proposed to make it easier for them to find shared solutions to environmental changes (Tsoukas, 2009). Relational engagement is manifest when individuals participate in deep interpersonal I-You relationships (Tsoukas, 2009). Relationships as objects are referred to as I-It relationships where the other person is approached as a means to an end, interpersonal relationships are strained and any type of creative process is limited (Tsoukas, 2009). Calculative engagement is an outcome of these types of relationships where individuals confine themselves to minimal cooperative behaviours or behaviours that aim to maximise individual gains rather than collective welfare (Tsoukas, 2009).

Relational engagement enables cooperative relationships which supports the process of SC in that employees take responsibility for improving the collective space in which they work (Tsoukas, 2009). Relational engagement is also regarded to encourage employees to propose shared solutions to environmental changes and generate higher information sharing and cooperative behaviours (Tsoukas, 2009; Sonenshein & Dholakia, 2012; Sears, Shen, & Zhang (2018). Salvato and Vassolo (2017) stressed the importance of I-You relationships and the outcome of relational engagement as the critical link between micro and macro levels of dynamic capabilities within an organisation.

Furthermore, as described in the multi-level framework (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017), relational engagement becomes evident in relationships when the behaviours of candour, inclusion, confirmation, and presentness are evident in social interactions (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017; Berkovich, 2014). Candour can be described as authentic communication between people characterised by honest, open and sincere narrative (Berkovich, 2014). Inclusion involves the demonstration of genuine empathy within interactions where people make a truthful effort to understand another's viewpoint (Berkovich, 2014). Confirmation is described as the acceptance of the difference of others throughout interactions which includes seeing all people and their differing viewpoints as valuable (Berkovich, 2014). Presentness refers to a sense of togetherness that is invoked through active listening and responsiveness within interactions (Berkovich, 2014). In contrast, when people are engaged with the primary intention of achieving an outcome, meaningful relationships are repressed, resulting in cautious, individually centred, controlling, and less cooperative behaviours (Tsoukas, 2009).

Considering the importance of relational engagement as a foundation for effective participation, it can be argued that the methods utilised for enabling collective employee participation in SC cannot be implemented without prior evaluation of the current nature of relationships within an organisation.

2.5.3 Trust and psychological safety

Salvato and Vassolo (2017) stated that the demonstration of relational engagement supports a unified approach to challenges and a sense of helpfulness which may be brought about within a psychologically safe environment. In support of this research evidence, Surty and Scheepers (2019) described the importance of a climate of trust and support as preconditions for an organisational environment to support effective change. This environment of trust was referred to by Edmondson (1999) as a psychologically safe environment where employees feel safe to share their ideas, seek out and provide

honest feedback from others, collaborate, take risks and experiment. The research around psychological safety demonstrates an alignment to the description of quality relationships (Tsoukas, 2009) as it also allows employees to feel that they will not be rejected for bringing their true selves and thoughts to the workplace due to a strong sense of respect, interest and positive intention between people which enables engagement in constructive conflict, experimentation and the taking of risks (Edmondson, 1999; Newman, Donohue, & Eva, 2017). In research conducted by Cross, Edmondson, and Murphy (2020), psychological safety is also described as an important hygiene factor in that it cannot create high levels of interpersonal collaboration on its own, but if it is not present with teams and across an organisation, it is not possible to take a positive step towards facilitating collaboration.

The theory of psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999) therefore supports the theory of relationship engagement (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017; Tsoukas, 2009) which represents the critical link between micro and macro levels of dynamic capabilities within an organisation. This provides further support for the argument that if an organisation is willing to explore increased employee participation in SC, the honest evaluation of the quality of relationships to support psychological safety needs to occur prior to the investment in this approach.

2.5.4 The neuroscience of change

An additional theory, supported by new insights into the functioning of the brain, provides additional considerations for the implementation of methods to enable collective employee participation in SC. Neuroscience is the study of the nervous system and its effects of how we think and behave which has enabled the fields of psychology and neuroscience to be integrated (Rock & Schwartz, 2006). This field of study provides important insights into the individual response to change and the implications of the nature of the environment on people's response to change (Scheepers & Swart, 2020).

The relevance of this field of study to collective employee participation in SC can be drawn from the insight provided through neuroscience that people are primarily motivated by the need to survive which causes a significant amount of our energy and attention to be centred around sensing potential dangers and reacting quickly to these (Rock & Schwartz, 2006). Of significance is that the brain will light up far more intensely when something is perceived as dangerous than when it senses a reward (Rock & Schwartz, 2006). As we are programmed for survival, the brain seeks to minimise danger

and maximise reward which represents the fundamental organising principle of how the brain functions (Rock & Schwartz, 2006).

Employees will therefore perceive a change proposal as either a threat or a reward (Scheepers & Swart, 2020). If they see the change as something that might harm them, or something they might not be able to do, or that it might be too difficult to cope with, they will metaphorically run away from the change and resist it in a number of ways (Scheepers & Swart, 2020). Interestingly, the perception of change as a threat or a reward is largely determined by leaders and the nature of their existing relationships with employees (Scheepers & Swart, 2020).

Within this study, therefore, the understanding of the fundamental operating processes of our brain further supports the theories of relational engagement and psychological safety. Both these theories provide evidence of the importance of creating an environment of acceptance and trust through quality relationships as a prerequisite for constructive participative behaviour (Berkovich, 2014; Salvato & Vassolo, 2017; Edmondson, 1999). The findings of neuroscience therefore support the presence of non-threatening relationships to enable collaboration and participation amongst employees in an organisation. If these prerequisites are not in place, change, or the opportunity to encourage employees to participate in change, is likely to cause a threat response.

2.5.5 Dialogue

If the presence of relational engagement or psychological safety exists within an organisation, a “social mechanism” is required to enable employees to participate in SC (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017, p.1736). Relational engagement encourages productive dialogue as it enables open-minded discussion and a desire to understand each other’s ideas and positions, and a willingness to combine ideas into mutually acceptable solutions (Tjosvold, Wong, & Chen, 2014; Stefania et al., 2014). Dialogue is therefore regarded as a source of aligned intention, understanding, and interaction, regardless of differences in opinion (Gratton & Ghoshal, 2002; Tsoukas, 2009; Garrod & Pickering, 2009; Bourgoin, Marchessaux, & Bencherki, 2018). Higher levels of productive dialogue are considered to support openness towards making and accepting changes through the increased spirit of cooperation, solidarity, and shared learning (Okhuysen & Bechky, 2009; Grigoriou & Rothaermel, 2014; Lindenberg & Foss, 2011; Willer, Flynn, & Zak, 2012; Dyne, Graham, & Dienesch, 1994; Organ, 1997; Tjosvold et al., 2014). Barrett (2002) also emphasised the importance of meaningful communication or dialogue to

ensure that employees, at all levels, are effectively informed about and understand an organisation's change strategy.

In summary, research evidence supports dialogue as a central method through which employees are enabled to collectively participate in SC. It is therefore through the creation of dialogical opportunities within organisations that makes collaboration and increased levels of participation possible.

2.5.6 Participation as an outcome of dialogue

The desired result of dialogue is participation (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017). Participation is defined as a dynamic interpersonal capability enabling all people within an organisation to work together to align those capabilities and resources required to achieve organisational goals (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017). Participation is also regarded as a source of adaptability and innovation in that it progressively supports a diverse group of people to mutually share and create new insights within dynamic environments (Tsoukas, 2009; Eisenhard & Martin, 2000; Teece, 2007). The interrelationship between relational engagement and dialogue enables collective employee participation in SC by enabling participation through a spirit of collaboration and solidarity, encouraging openness to the ideas of others, and the willingness to share information (Tsoukas, 2009; Salvato & Vassolo, 2017). As relationships and social interactions are intricate, complex, and unique, organisation level dynamic capability outcomes, derived from participation, will become a valuable potential of sustainable competitive advantage (Ployhart & Moliterno, 2011; Teece et al., 1997).

2.6 Conclusion

In summary, the literature review has presented scholarly research that establishes the importance of SA within the current strategic landscape and provided examples of recent research to illustrate the increasing emergence of employee participation to strengthen SA. SC perspectives and their influence on the current gap in literature regarding participation of employees in SC were also reviewed. Finally, the literature review presented theories that support participatory mechanisms to enable SA within organisations. The literature review has provided theoretical support of the relevance and importance of the study and a theoretical foundation upon which the study was conducted.

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

3.1 Introduction

This study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge as it has explored the methods used within organisations that enable increased collective employee participation in SC. Scholars have highlighted the value of employee participation in SC as a method to enable SA required to continually adjust and renew strategy in dynamic environments (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017; Sull, 2007; Teece & Linden, 2017; Lynch & Mors, 2019). Strategy literature, however, focuses predominantly on the role of top and middle management to enable SC, with the role of the employee often relegated to change recipient (Muller & Kunisch, 2018; Heyden et al., 2017).

3.2 Main and sub-questions of the research

The main research question therefore aimed to explore the various methods utilised within organisations to enable collective employee participation in SC to contribute insight and in-depth understanding into a more effective approach to SC given the continuous nature of this change within dynamic environments.

Research Question 1:

What are the methods utilised within organisations to enable collective employee participation in SC?

To further contribute to an expanded view of the methods used to enable employee participation in SC, the aim of the following sub-question was to explore additional understanding of important factors that facilitate the adoption and implementation of these methods within an organisational context.

Research Question 2:

What are the factors that enable the adoption of methods for collective employee participation in SC?

An additional sub-question was intended to build further insight into the organisational value of these methods with regard to building SA in the organisational context.

Research Question 3:

How does collective employee participation in SC strengthen SA?

CHAPTER 4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This study makes a humble contribution to the existing body of knowledge of SC after exploring the methods that enable increased collective employee participation in SC. Scholars have highlighted the value of collective employee participation in SC as a method to strengthen SA required to continually adjust and renew strategy in dynamic environments (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017; Sull, 2007; Teece & Linden, 2017; Lynch & Mors, 2019, Scheepers & Swart, 2020). Strategy literature, however, focuses predominantly on the role of top or senior-level management to enable SC, with the role of the employee often relegated to change recipient (Muller & Kunisch, 2018; Heyden et al., 2017, Surty & Scheepers, 2019).

Figure 2 provides a conceptual framework of the aim of the study and the interrelationship between the literature review and the proposed research questions.

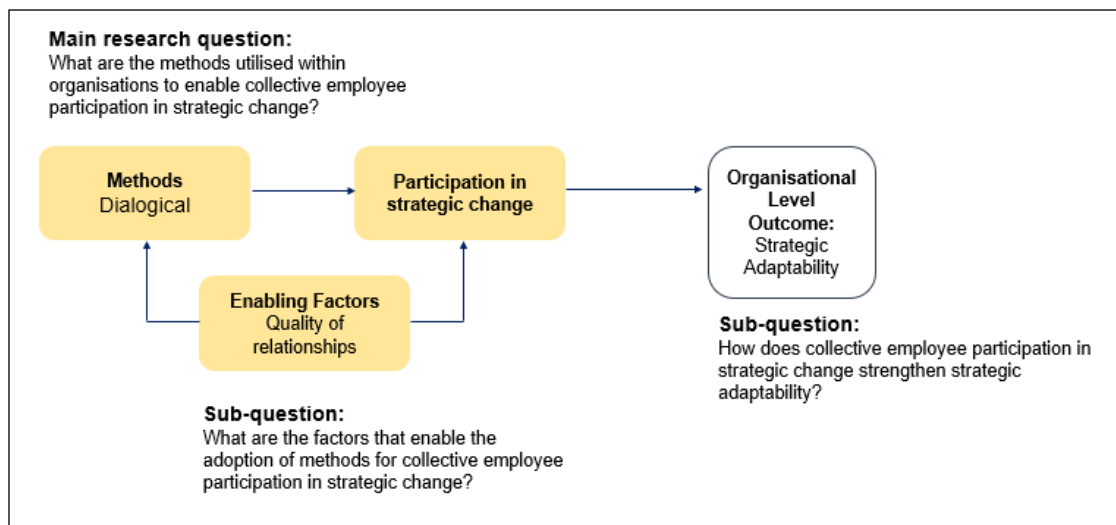


Figure 2: Conceptual framework: The literature review and proposed research questions

The next section describes the research methodology and research design approach that were adopted to achieve the purpose of this study. A consistency matrix is provided in Annexure A to provide an overview of the methodological coherency across the research.

4.2 Choice of research methodology

The purpose of ontological underpinnings of research is to provide an understanding of the underlying philosophical assumptions upon which a study was conducted (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A constructivist ontological philosophy underpinned this research study to explore a rich understanding of the phenomena of collective employee participation in SC from the belief that there is no one truth or reality and that reality is formed through multiple sources in a subjective manner by the people that live them (Cuthbertson, Robb, & Blair, 2019; Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2019). The ontological philosophy of constructivism points to an epistemological consideration about how this study gained knowledge about the phenomenon (Bell et al., 2019). An interpretivist epistemological position supported the study of collective employee participation in SC through the underlying belief that knowledge is gained through understanding the value of unique human behaviour and that meaning can be generated from socially constructed perspectives which requires a personal and flexible approach of interpretation and interaction between the researcher and the research participants (Bell et al., 2019; Cuthbertson et al., 2019).

The ontological and epistemological philosophical orientation of this study supported the adoption of a qualitative research methodology (Creswell, & Creswell, 2018). A qualitative research methodology supported the exploration of the social phenomenon of collective employee participation in SC as understood from a participant's viewpoint and enabled the researcher to build an understanding of how this unfolds within the context of workplace settings. (Yin, 2016). In addition, this methodology supported the use of words and narrative in the collection and analysis of research data (Bell et al., 2019).

To achieve its intention, this study adopted a phenomenological research design in order to explore the experience of collective employee participation in SC and build an understanding of this phenomena by engaging research participants who live and make meaning of this experience (Hopkins, Regehr, & Pratt, 2017). In addition, a phenomenological research design supported the process of gaining insight into an expanded view of collective employee participation in SC and enabled consideration that this meaning was gained throughout the research process, together with the presence of the researcher's own values (Errasti-Ibarrando, Jordan, Diez-Del-Corral, & Arantzamendi, 2018).

4.3 Population

The population for this study was defined as organisations, and accountable people within those organisations, that had been required to implement SC to meet the continuous demands of a changing business environment or adopt new strategies to remain or enhance competitiveness. The sampling strategy for this study therefore aimed to match an appropriate sample, research method and research instruments to enable collection of the right quantity and rich quality of data (Gentles, Charles, Ploeg, & McKibbin, 2015; Campbell et al., 2020). A purposive sampling strategy was therefore used for this study to support the phenomenological research design, as it utilised research participants' lived experiences as the primary data source to gain insight into an expanded view of employee participation in SC (Campbell et al., 2020).

4.4 Unit of analysis

The unit of analysis of this study comprised the individual perceptions and experiences of individuals who had experienced the phenomena of SC in a dynamic environment. The study aimed to select individuals within organisations that represented the characteristics, experience and ability that would provide valuable insight into the phenomenon (Gentles et al., 2015). In addition, organisational information that was publicly available was utilised, when required, to support an understanding of the nature of the organisations within the study. This documentation formed part of the strategy to provide appropriate credibility of the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

4.5 Sampling method and size

To provide the study with the best opportunity to obtain data both rich in quality and quantity (Fusch & Ness, 2015), the selection criteria for participants and the sample size were considered. As the study aimed to obtain in-depth personal insight into collective employee participation in SC, data analysis and interpretation were drawn from a homogenous sample to ensure increased confidence levels regarding the accuracy of data obtained (Campbell et al., 2020). The selection criteria for the homogenous group of research participants within this study were therefore defined as follows:

- a) To have been currently working within in an organisation that experienced SC over the last two years or was currently undergoing SC.
- b) To have been currently occupying a formal contractual or permanent position within the organisation that required decision-making in either the design and/or implementation of SC.

- c) To have had exposure to the organisation's methods through which the impact of SC was measured.
- d) To have had working experience within SC in an organisation within South Africa

The roles within organisations representing the sample criteria described were situated either within senior, strategic leadership roles or within leadership roles within change management functions, situated within the Organisational Development function. In addition, roles pertaining to contractual consultants within organisations were also included. To ensure that the study obtained rich and descriptive data, all these roles within organisations were included in the data collection process. This formed part of the strategy to ensure the reliability of the study (Creswell, & Creswell, 2018).

The commonly proposed criterion for determining when a sufficient sample size has been reached in qualitative research is saturation; when additional data collection does not contribute anything new to the study (Gentles et al., 2015; Fusch & Ness, 2015). In line with the academic requirements and scholarly literature that provide guidance on qualitative sample saturation (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006), a sample of 13 participants across different organisations was selected to provide the best opportunity for the study to reach data saturation in line with the aim of the study.

4.6 Measurement instrument and data collection tool

The selected participants were interviewed through the use of semi-structured interviews as a method for enabling the researcher to explore participants' individual experience within a particular context (Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson, & Kangasniemi, 2016). These semi-structured interviews were conducted with the guidance of an interview questionnaire, not intended to inhibit the researcher from probing the participants' thoughts, opinions and feelings when appropriate (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Kallio et al., 2016), but to allow for a structured foundation upon which to demonstrate data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Interview questions were structured to facilitate asking multiple participants the same questions as a benchmark for assessing research saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). This was achieved through the use of a saturation table which tracked topics and themes against data obtained through participant interviews (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

The interview guide was field tested with a potential study participant through simulation of a real interview situation. This field testing was conducted in order to ensure that the participant understood the interview questions, that the questions were relevant and to

assess whether the questions evoked the required participant perceptions and experiences to achieve the aim of the study (Kallio et al., 2016). Based on feedback from the field testing, the interview guide was reviewed and refined as required (Kallio et al., 2016). The interview guide is attached as Annexure B in this research report. After the researcher had obtained ethical clearance from the Ethics Committee of the Gordon Institute of Management Science (GIBS), the selected research participants to be interviewed were asked to complete an Informed Consent form prior to the interview. A proforma copy of this form is attached as Annexure C and the ethical clearance obtained is attached as Annexure D.

4.7 Data gathering process and collection method

The interview guide was the key instrument for collecting data in this study and was prepared based on the retrieval and use of knowledge gained through an extensive literature review supporting the aim of the research and the research questions (Kallio et al., 2016). The interview guide was structured with four contextually-orientated questions, to put the participant at ease and obtain important background information, six open-ended main questions, and five prompting questions to guide the interviewer to probe for more in-depth information when the participant's response to the main initial questions did not cover certain topics of interest (Kallio et al., 2016). The questions in the interview guide were designed to enable participant understanding, and were structured in an open-ended manner to generate answers that were spontaneous and reflected the participant's unique feelings and stories, while still allowing data required by the study to emerge (Kallio et al., 2016).

To further ensure the collection of quality information through the interview process, the interviewer utilised clarification questions, when required, to ensure understanding of the participants' responses. In addition, the participants were encouraged to also use clarification questions when they were unsure of the nature of responses required from a particular question (Kallio et al., 2016).

The interview guide was divided into the following three domains of enquiry to enable the researcher to comprehensively cover all informational aspects required to cover the research questions:

- a) The methods in which employees are enabled to participate in SC.
- b) The factors that enable employee participation in SC.
- c) The ways in which employee participation in SC benefits the organisation in adapting to challenges and changes in the environment.

The interviews were conducted in English and an interpreter was not required as all the research participants were comfortable to be interviewed in English and the researcher was certain that there would be no language barriers to a clear and accurate understanding between the researcher and the research participants. Post the interview, the researcher asked the research participants if they had any additional questions relating to the experience of the interview and whether any additional questions or concerns needed to be raised. Each interview was recorded with the consent of the research participants and transcribed using standard transcription tools.

All survey data collected as part of the research study will be retained for a minimum period of ten years, stored in a secure folder within the researcher's personal Microsoft OneDrive file repository, password-secured with two-factor authentication.

4.8 Data analysis approach

An inductive data analysis approach was selected to enable exploration of meaning making from research participants and to explore the similarities and differences of perceptions or experiences across the sample (Miller, Chan, & Farmer, 2018). The researcher collected the views of the research participants and identified the commonalities running through the narrative, being careful to use the words and phrases as expressed by the participants (Kallio et al., 2016). Each interview transcript was examined independently, highlighting key words that held meaning or contained attributes that were important to the study in order to derive codes (Rogers, 2018). The systematic classification process of coding and the identification of themes were followed in order to develop the final code book to increase trustworthiness of the study (Rogers, 2018). A copy of the code book is presented as Annexure E in this research report. The coding process was repeated for each transcript before moving on to explore patterns or themes between interview transcripts and identifying similarities and differences between the research participant views and experiences (Rogers, 2018). Following these systematic steps in the data analysis procedure enabled the researcher to demonstrate that the study had reached a point of saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). This approach sufficiently demonstrated data saturation as only one instance of coded data was required to ensure that it was considered as part of the analysis (Fusch & Ness, 2015). With a holistic description of the essence of the individual experiences, the researcher then wrote a description of the phenomena aligned to the topic of the research. This was then utilised to build an interpretation of alternative narratives for collective employee participation in SC (Miller et al., 2018).

The research report was submitted to an editor for review and is attached as Annexure E in this report.

4.9 Strategies to ensure quality of data

Creswell and Creswell (2018) stated that strategies are required to ensure the quality of data throughout the steps in the research process, and that several strategies should be adopted to ensure quality of the data. To ensure the trustworthiness of the research, the researcher included strategies in the research design and ensured the application of these strategies during the research (Pratt, Kaplan, & Whittington, 2020). Trustworthiness was demonstrated by clearly showing how the research had been conducted and the manner in which conclusions were made from the data analysis process (Pratt et al., 2020).

To ensure the credibility of the study, the semi-structured interview guide was pilot tested prior to the research interviews and adapted according to findings in this process. Interviews were conducted until it was evident that no new codes were being identified (Fusch & Ness, 2015). To ensure the transferability of the study, the phenomenological research design provided the best opportunity to obtain data that was both rich in quality and quantity (Fusch & Ness, 2015). A purposive approach to sampling was applied to deliberately select participants with characteristics, experience and ability that provided valuable insight into the phenomenon (Campbell et al., 2020). To ensure dependability of the study, other forms of publicly available documentation were utilised to build a deeper understanding of the organisations and the context of SC and this formed an important data triangulation which enhanced the reliability of the results (Fusch & Ness, 2015, Pratt et al., 2020). Confirmability of the research was ensured through the researcher's reflective commentary throughout the data collection and analysis process in the form of field notes and analytical memos available as part of the secured data collected (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Rogers, 2018).

4.10 Research limitations

The following limitations to the study have been identified:

4.10.1 Researcher biases

An important aspect of qualitative research is the reflexivity of the researcher to clarify and limit biases and assumptions introduced by the researcher that may affect the results (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The researcher's assumptions regarding the outcome of the study could be described as follows: firstly, that dialogical mechanisms in

organisations would enable collective participation of employees in SC; and secondly, that collective employee participation in SC will strengthen an organisation's SA. To address this limitation, the researcher commenced the study with an in-depth literature review to explore whether dialogical theories supported collective participation in SC. The second assumption was addressed through the research questions and interviews conducted to either confirm or dispute this assumption in the final research analysis and interpretation.

4.10.2 Time horizon

A cross-sectional study was conducted due to time limitations. Interviews were conducted at one point in time during 2020. As individual and organisation behaviour constantly changes, no interpretations can be made for future periods.

4.10.3 Sample size

The size of the sample could benefit from a larger sample of research participants. Although the researcher felt that no new codes were being identified within this sample, a larger sample may have provided additional insight with regards to SA as an outcome of collective employee participation in SC. The researcher found it challenging to obtain access to research participants that met the requirements of this study. The findings of the study within this sample, however, provided valuable insights and themes with regards to the current utilisation of methods to enable collective employee participation in SC.

CHAPTER 5. RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

This section of the report presents the key findings obtained through the semi-structured interviews conducted with research participants working in the field of SC. Thirteen individual research interviews were conducted to explore the various methods used within organisations to enable collective employees to participate in SC. At the time of the interviews research participants cumulatively worked in a diverse range of business sectors. The research participants all held decision-making accountability for the implementation of SC either within a permanent employee role, or in a consultative role for client organisations. The presentation of the research findings is guided by the research questions and supported by the themes identified through an inductive research approach that was adapted to this study.

This section begins by providing important background information with regards to the research sample that summarises the SC roles and representative industries in which the participants worked in at the time of the interviews. This section is followed by a discussion of the findings that present an important context, as described by research participants, from which to view the methods being utilised to enable employee participation in SC as required by the first research question.

This section will then present the findings as obtained through the research process regarding the various methods used within organisations to enable employee participation in strategy change as required by the main research question within the report.

Research Question 1: What are the methods that are utilised within organisations to enable collective employee participation in SC?

The finding as required by the sub-question 2 will then be presented. Sub question 2 required an understanding of the factors that enable adoption of the methods to bring about employee participation in SC. Research participants provided insight regarding several factors that specifically enabled employee participation in SC.

Research Question 2: What are the factors that enable the adoption of methods to enable employee participation in SC?

The final section within these findings presents the benefits of employee participation within SC, with specific reference to SA in dynamic environments. A description of all the

benefits of an enabling approach to employee participation in SC is presented in support of SA. This section relates to the final research sub-question for this study.

Research Question 3: How does employee participation in SC strengthen SA?

5.2 Interview participants and context

A total of 13 semi-structured interviews were conducted with research participants who were directly involved in the decision-making and implementation of SC within organisations. Seven of the interviewees were consultants working in a contractual capacity for several different organisations to implement SC. Six of the interviewees were permanent employees representing a specific organisation undergoing various SC projects. During the interviews, the research participants were asked to share the nature of their current role in SC and information about the industries that they worked in.

The consultants that were interviewed, at the time of the study, worked in areas such as organisational psychology, emotional intelligence and management consulting and, in different ways, facilitated and guided organisations within the areas of strategic planning, execution and the implementation of SC. The permanent employees of organisations that were interviewed, were all involved in the areas of strategic planning, execution and implementation of SC within their respective organisations.

Table 1 summarises the SC roles of the research participants in consultant positions and the sectors in which they worked in accordance with what they were willing to share during the interview. As requested by the research participants, their names and the names of the organisations are not listed in line with confidentiality requirements and relevant pseudonyms are used in reference to the research participants.

Table 1: Role of consultants within SC and industries where they consulted

Consulting service	Description of SC service provided	Industries
Psychologist	Strategic facilitation and SC management	Public Private NGO
Change Marketer	Support Executives and Organisational Development representative to drive transformation and SC	Mining Financial services
Consultant- Emotional Intelligence (EQ)	Support leadership in identifying and managing strategic issues	Financial services
Management Consultant (1)	Developing leadership and organisational culture as enablers to realise strategic intent of an organisation	Mining Energy and petroleum Financial services Health Telecommunication Transportation SOE NGO
Management Consultant (2)	Assist organisation to embed different types of SC with a focus on implementation	Mining Energy and petroleum Financial services Health Telecommunication Transportation SOE NGO
Management Consultant (3)	Assist organisation to drive SC	Financial services NGO
Management Consultant (4)	Focus is on strategic and organisational effectiveness, providing transformational services and driving SC	Mining Energy and petroleum Financial services Health Telecommunication Transportation SOE NGO

Table 2 summarises the SC roles of research participants in permanent employment positions and the sectors that they worked within at the time the study was conducted.

Table 2: Role of employees within SC and industries in which they worked

Position	Role in SC	Industry
Group CIO	Initiate and develop strategy initiatives across the Group, including governance and group risk investments	Information technology
Head: Product Card CVP	Develop and implement product CVP in line with company strategy	Financial services
Solution Architect	Investigate and implement strategic solutions across the business	Mining
Head: Talent Management and Organisational Effectiveness	Deliver on matters of transformation and the strategic people agenda and culture to deliver on strategy	SOE
Head: Product strategy and digital transformation	Strategic planning, formulation, and implementation to enable product strategy delivery	Information technology
Head of Customer	Transformation of sales division to deliver on strategy for culture	Information technology

5.3 Types of SC

During the interviews, research participants were asked to share the nature of SC projects that they were currently working in. A key theme that emerged from this question was that a large number of these SC projects were borne from the unexpected consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Covid-19 pandemic was described as the cause for strategic projects such as increasing organisational resilience, cost cutting and restructuring, largely in response to the need for organisational survival due to the economic impact of the pandemic. Research participant comments that reflected the nature of these strategic projects were stated as follows:

“And the other part I think, that is hitting people is, is how do you cope with the day-to-day survival because this is what Covid-19 has brought. It's very much a survival mode.” (Psychologist).

“I think it's doing more with less. So, in one way or another, regardless of how they how they frame it. It is really about efficiencies. So, I think most of the

businesses we work with are all in a space where revenue is under pressure.” (Change Marketer).

“I'm just seeing more and more, where no matter how they describe it, it's really, how do we downsize, right size, restructure, call it what you will.” (Consultant – EQ).

“...how do you reorganize your business to be more resilient. I think that is probably if I were to summarise what I imagine is keeping most chief executive officers (CEOs) up at night in terms of SC.” (Change Marketer).

A second theme that emerged was the number of SC projects involving different degrees of digital transformation. The nature of strategic projects described in this theme related to projects involving the implementation of new systems to support digitisation or projects involving cloud migration to provide better customer service, cost saving and data-driven decision-making. These projects were also linked with the need for supporting people or organisational culture transformations to support digitisation. Research participant comments that reflected strategic projects involving various degrees of digitisation were stated as follows:

“We recently just deployed an ERP project.” (Group CIO).

“We are migrating all of our users away from our on-premises infrastructure onto a more cloud based, collaborative kind of environment.” (Group CIO).

“We have launched digitisation within the company.” (Solution Architect).

“So, it's not just a technology change. The technology, in general tends to be a large part of the digital transformation. But technology is a very small part of it. It's all about the people, the culture, the way that the users are going to start engaging with each other, sharing information, collaborating, and engaging once we've migrated onto these new digital platforms.” (Group CIO).

“Well, I think the biggest one especially in the coal industry as well, is the change in the markets, and the availability of not just data, but actually using it for information to make decisions and pre-empt market trends for instance, that is one of our biggest projects.” (Solution Architect).

“And, and it's a large organisation and what we didn't realise was actually the extent of a change that was going to be needed to actually move people from

using a multitude of systems to one system - the behavioural change that comes with that is things like moving towards a culture of self service.” (Management Consultant 3).

“They need to deliver the best services that they can, because otherwise they are actually not going to be able to continue.” (Management Consultant 3).

A third theme emerging from this question was that of strategic projects supporting the requirements for internal organisational transformation relating to innovation or new ways of working, of support innovation, culture transformation and change agility. Research participant comments that reflected the nature of such strategic projects were as follows:

“So, the key thing is to get people's mindsets on a bit of a reboot. And one of the big contracts that I am doing currently for one of the banks, is to reboot for 2021. Because while people are thinking in the same old ways, it is impossible to innovate or to think innovation.” (Consultant – EQ).

“We are embarking on a huge culture change in the organisation.” (Head – Talent Management & Organisational Effectiveness).

“And so that's the transformative agenda in general and it goes beyond what you see in private entities - we're taking this a step further. Most private entities focus on the employment equity numbers. And that is not an issue for us. The issue for our organisation is around what we call unconscious bias.” (Head – Talent Management & Organisational Effectiveness).

“We need to create what we call a change agile organisation - and this tends to be a problem for many organisations - anyway we need people to be better at adjusting or adapting to change.” (Head – Talent Management & Organisational Effectiveness).

The fourth theme emerging from this question was that SC is driven around the need for organisational compliance to legislative requirements largely driven by individual and consumer protection and cybersecurity relating to increased digitisation. Research participant comments that reflected the nature of these strategic projects were stated as follows:

“POPIA and GDPR are becoming a bigger priority for our various business units, we're running a quite a big compliance project across all 19 subsidiaries, to

implement various IT and non-IT platforms policies and processes to ensure that you are compliant by next year June.” (Group CIO).

“We are shoring up our cybersecurity efforts, partly because of POPIA and GDPR, but I think Covid-19, specifically has kind of highlighted several deficiencies in our current infrastructure and setup. And as we now have the bulk of our 3000 users, working remotely. It's a whole new kind of shift and focus on your security considerations and how you protect these guys now accessing all your corporate resources from unsecured and untrusted networks.” (Group CIO).

“In the last two years, our book of work development has been incredibly slow because we've had to focus on regulatory changes like DebiCheck and things like that.” (Head – Product | Card CVP).

5.4 Approach to SC

To meaningfully understand the nature of methods used in organisations to enable collective employee participation in SC, the researcher asked research participants about their overall approach to SC or key principles utilised when implementing SC. In response to this question, some of the research participants focused on a description of the key drivers for SC. In other words, the factors which drive decision-making around whether to adopt certain SC initiatives. These descriptions referred to considerations regarding the bottom line such as whether a project would reduce costs, improve margins or increase revenue. A research participant comment that reflected this theme was the following:

“First and foremost, are profit and revenue. So how do you know how these projects and initiatives result in reduced costs or improved margins, or more revenue for the businesses?” (Group CIO).

Research participants also referred to the importance of regulatory compliance as a key driver for decision-making regarding the adoption of SC projects, as stated by this participant:

“I think the second largest motive is probably around compliance and regulatory kinds of constraints and POPIA and GDP I think are a prime example of that.” (Group CIO).

Lastly, a research participant commented on the drivers of SC in conjunction with competitive advantage through the improved delivery of products and services to meet customer needs:

“I think a lot of the change initiatives, specifically if I look for example at the ERP project that we're running, are largely driven and informed by customers. And what is it that our customers want, what do the customers need?” (Group CIO).

Through additional probing questions, the researcher gathered information regarding key principles applied to strategic projects with specific reference to how SC management was implemented. Research participants expressed different approaches with regards to the implementation of SC. Three themes emerged from this data. The first theme described an approach that involved top or senior-level management developing a strategic execution plan and informing impacted employees about this. In addition to informing employees about the change, some supporting enablement activities were to assist employees in the adoption of the change with little input from employees about their needs or opinions regarding the change. Research participant comments that reflected this approach to SC were as follows:

“It's definitely a far more top-down approach than anything else.” (Group CIO).

“Primarily in the engagement, involvement, kind of decision-making is, is almost exclusively happening at the board level and potentially one level below board so you know your C suite, and your senior managers.” (Group CIO).

“It's not collaborative. Yeah, it's, not consultative at all, we're not particularly interested in the user, the people who would need to, you know, use this change in the lives.” (Head – Product | Card CVP).

“I think, you know, some of the top talent in the business, were taken to the workshop, probably just to ratify that thinking was correct. But then the rest of us got an email to say here's the strategy. (Head – Product | Card CVP).

“I don't believe in decision making by democracy. An organisation cannot always be run through decision making by democracy. I think that's an abdication of leadership above anything else.” (Head – Customer).

“So, if there is a specific change going to happen. Yeah, it involves the change team, where they will then build your deck for you, and push that down all the way to the different BUs and different mines.” (Solution Architect).

The second theme described an approach where senior management decided on a strategic execution plan and actively implemented SC actions to create employee buy-in and enabled employees to adapt to the change where required. The overriding approach acknowledged the need to bring employees along on the SC journey. There were instances where employees were requested to provide feedback on the change process being implemented. Research participant comments that reflected this SC approach were as follows:

“Then there is the need to enable leadership levels to share that information. A key principle is to ensure that this happens. You have to also get people’s insight and feedback to monitor and check that the right messages are being relayed.” (Management Consultant 4).

“Change can only happen if people are brought along. You cannot address the fluidity of SC without bringing people along with a degree of fluidity. So, it starts with people.” (Management Consultant 4).

“The first thing is to understand and empathise with employees, that would be the first thing.” (Change Marketer).

“So although you've got the top down message that this is how we're going to be dealing with it, it should actually be your role to include the end users and make them feel included in the change. It shouldn't just be basic communication; this is the new way of working.” (Solution Architect).

“Ultimately they are going to be the ones that have to execute things. So, if you have their buy in right from the beginning, you are in a much better place.” (Solution Architect).

The third theme described examples of where a more participative or co-creative approach to SC took place which involved deliberate collective employee participation in the SC process. In these examples, groups of employees were engaged in the strategic execution planning and encouraged to participate throughout the entire SC process in various ways. Research participant comments that reflected this approach to SC were stated as follows:

“Business has a based intended strategy, and it gets brought to life by the people who have to deliver on that strategy on a day-to-day basis.” (Management Consultant 1).

“The biggest principle that I think we did for this particular project that I think worked exceptionally well was that of collaboration.” (Management Consultant 4).

“But we thought the role that people played on the ground was actually critically important to, and that their ability to be able to contribute and collaborate in terms of what we need from a systems and processes perspective was really, really important for us.” (Management Consultant 4).

“If you think about it – leaders are naturally associated with strategy and it’s about saying maybe we should include the people that deliver a strategy. If you don’t do this, it’s not going to be successful.” (Management Consultant 4).

“It’s not the responsibility of the line manager to help you change it is just as much your responsibility to help yourself to change. And that is the narrative that must cut, cut across the organisation.” (Head – Talent Management & Organisational Effectiveness).

5.4.1 How are employees informed of SC in a top-down approach to SC?

The research participants that referred to a predominantly top-down, decide and inform approach to SC explained that employees were most likely to be informed about SC through email communication sent to the different levels of employees in the organisation and through intermittent CEO employee information updates – as indicated by the following input:

“It generally gets communicated to lower levels in the organisation in two ways. In the different subsidiaries the different CEOs either have monthly or quarterly staff updates. These initiatives are also communicated currently via email. Where the guys will send out a weekly or monthly update to the various initiatives and processes. And that’s been sent off to all of the staff.” (Group CIO).

“If head office staff need to know things - there’s no structure, you can deliver what you like anytime, and they just hope people have really done the assessment.” (Head – Product | Card CVP).

“But then the rest of us got an email to say here’s the strategy. And there were a couple of town halls for all the rest of us.” (Head – Product | Card CVP).

In one instance, a research participant who described a top-down approach to SC mentioned the use of employee surveys by the audit department to obtain feedback on a change that was listed in the risk register. The feedback from employees was not always considered to be important and dismissed by senior executives. The following research participant comments reflected this action:

“I think it's just a question of risk, internal audit only got involved with the ERP project because of the risk of that initiative failing.” (Group CIO).

“There were some business units where the responses and replies, were not as positive, and were not as encouraging and there were you know constant requirements coming through from some of the lower levels that there was additional training required. Those considerations were kind of taken on board, in other instances the guys just said, you know what, we've done about as much as we can, you know, we are making an executive decision to override and just continue.” (Group CIO).

5.4.2 Reasons for adoption of a non-participative approach to collective employee participation in SC

In instances when research participants described a top-down approach to SC, the researcher asked probing questions to understand the reasons behind this approach and any factors that prevented a more participative approach to SC within the organisations in which they were working.

One of the reasons given by research participants was the challenge of finding the time required to facilitate SC using a more participative approach given the demands of day-to-day, or business as usual, requirements. Research participant comments that reflected this finding were as follows:

“...because they're often very busy with doing many, many things – and the last thing to happen is the co-creation - is the collaboration in the change management, it becomes very black and white. Rather than a collaborative journey that's taken with a whole host of stakeholders into account.” (Head – Product | Card CVP).

“But all they are really worried about is the presentation in a month where somebody's got to deliver the numbers and they're not as great as what they want. I do really empathise with the guys because that's the reality they face. We

have to perform to be able to transform. And it's incredibly hard." (Head – Customer).

"But then you have 10 teams, and each team has outcomes. And each team forgets that business still has to run, that there are other business as usual activities. And then we push out all these amazing emails and great infographics that no one ever consumes." (Management Consultant 4).

One of the research participants explained that their organisation did not have a centralised change management function that could provide the types of support to enable a more participative approach to SC. SC management was essentially placed on the shoulders of project managers who were also balancing several different business as usual and additional strategic projects. A research participant's comment reflected this finding:

"So we have to do everything ourselves, and we used to have a change management team before the restructure that took place, but 18 months ago...they're basically your project managers that sit within that structure, and they manage change – so if these changes impact, you know on our systems they will make sure they do that. And then they would basically send an email to you to say well you know it's landed." (Head – Product Strategy and Digital Transformation).

A research participant also described the focus on shareholder return on investment as an important factor that limited the possibility of any type of employee involvement or participation in SC. There was a sentiment that the complexity required for participation of employees in SC would increase the direct and indirect costs of the project and essentially add very little value to the outcome. Research participant comments that reflected this finding were stated as follows:

"I mean, the reality is this, unless you can prove at board level to the guys that doing it any other way is going to cost them more money, it's going to be incredibly difficult to get that commitment." (Group CIO).

"A lot of times the current approach is taken, because the perception exists that if we do it the other way will cost us more so if we engage with employees if we give time for them to give us feedback and we have to consider all the inputs and make changes based on their feedback, it's going to cost us, way, way more than if we just make the decisions and push them down." (Head – Product | Card CVP).

“I think the main reason is complexity. So, it's just the burden on having to include people - the right people - taking that feedback.” (Head – Product | Card CVP).

“It slows down the whole process - it might make it more effective at the end - because they've been taken along on the journey - but if I had to think about the work that we're doing now and I had to choose, like, I'd say sponsors when the different areas to bring them along. Yeah, it's just, it would take longer.” (Head – Product | Card CVP).

“Yeah, I think there's also some just logistical things as well. Yep, time. Because, because this kind of thing is not people's day jobs and they don't see it as their day jobs. So people have to be willing to give up all the time.” (Change Marketer).

An additional reason given by a research participant regarding the non-participation of employees in SC was the fact that they felt that employees on lower levels did not necessarily have much value to add to the process of SC. A research participant's comments that reflected this finding were as follows:

“So they haven't been involved in project meetings, and all that kind of thing, because you almost think, well how are they going to help you with the business case, and they almost don't need to be there.” (Head – Product | Card CVP).

“And, you know, often, you know the ideas wouldn't be financially feasible.” (Head – Product | Card CVP).

“Yeah, and they would, you know, we often find that you know the sellers of products are very negative and they are going to tell you, you know, things that you don't want to hear so they might say, forget about value added services - customers just want to use the product.” (Head – Product | Card CVP).

“And then we go – no, no, no, that's not what we believe. So, we don't actually want to listen to you because you're going to push back and then also honestly I think it's because we feel that we don't need them.” (Head – Product | Card CVP).

Another factor that research participants indicated as hindering a participative approach to SC was a non-supporting organisational culture. Research participants explained that because of a non-supporting culture within the organisation at the time, employees were either not encouraged to participate or expressed an unwillingness to participate. The following research participant comments reflected this finding:

“What I mean by toxic culture is the behaviours are erosive and destructive.”
(Management Consultant 4).

“...like staff almost have an inner cynicism and resistance to your propaganda bullshit.” (Change Marketer).

“Depending on your culture entropy in the organisation, so the higher that score is, the more difficult it is. Meaning there is fear in that organisation of victimisation, which makes it not easy for me to talk with you. So, I may, I may start to talk, but then I may be victimized.” (Head – Talent Management & Organisational Effectiveness).

“Because of this level of toxicity, people would have gotten into a blame mentality, and to complain mentality. So, it was more blaming, complaining and not taking responsibility for themselves, certain things that they were saying they're not even aware that they were actually the cause of those things.” (Head – Talent Management & Organisational Effectiveness).

“So, it was that hard, and they would say, you know, we have done these things before and nothing worked, it did not.” (Head – Talent Management & Organisational Effectiveness).

Certain research participants referred to a lack of psychological safety which forms a part of the fabric of organisational culture as a key limiting aspect for enabling employee participation in SC. Research participant comments that reflected this finding were as follows:

“So, people put in time and effort. Because not because they are engaged, but because they're afraid.” (Psychologist).

“Now if there is no psychological safety built into the contract you can't expect people to participate because the contract has become one sided in those organisations.” (Consultant – EQ).

So how safe do employees feel because if they don't feel safe, they can't think straight. And so safety underpins everything and I'm not talking about industrial safety. I'm talking about psychological safety.” (Consultant – EQ).

“Or, you know, if they want to keep their job - they just shut up. So, there's a lot of fear. I do it, but if I raise my hand or object. I get slapped on the knuckles, or

I'm usually the next in the retrenchment line. So, there's that fear of, you know, doing something different or going against the grain." (Head – Product | Card CVP).

"They were fearful because they felt they didn't have any power in this company – they were saying that I don't even have power to breathe." (Head – Talent Management & Organisational Effectiveness).

"So, a culture that truly values, a daily basis, and is all about values, innovation has to be based on safety. Because nobody's going to come up with a new idea if they themselves, think that they may be called stupid or ridiculous or unproductive, which is often what happens in a power-based culture." (Consultant – EQ).

"And trust is the glue that binds all relationships together. So if I'm not trusted, then I'm going to kind of behave very differently from if I really feel that you as my manager, trust me, not like me, but trust me to actually give of my best and you value my best, even if we don't agree about what my best is, it is about trust and being and feeling valued." (Consultant – EQ).

"Your employees are going to say, hang on here, this is a threat, this is not an opportunity, there's no ways I'm going to ask a question or share an idea. Within this situation, people will be more cynical about any intervention." (Psychologist).

So, the defence mechanism kicks in. That defence mechanism is when you fight. People often become passive aggressive in that fighting as well. So, they do what you want them to do. But they kind of do it reluctantly and/or they do it, but there are often excuses." (Psychologist).

"Or they just go into pure lock down mode in their heads. And they cut the world out. And they fight internally with themselves, they begin to doubt their competence, they begin to doubt they're able to their job, not realising that they've been putting in 14/15/16 hours a day, and not being able to draw those boundaries. And then the frustration level builds up, because how do you lash out? You can't lash out at your boss, because it's got complications, implications. And of course, when you freeze, what do you do, you just do what you're told." (Psychologist).

Research participants also described instances when participation was encouraged but because it was not measured or recognised in some way, this limited employee willingness to demonstrate supporting and participative behaviours required from SC initiatives. The following research participant comments reflected this finding:

“I think it's the short-term incentives, that drive this behaviour.” (Head – Customer).

“You know the executives of the companies spoke at length, all the time around the need to collaborate and work together and all this. But at the end of the day when you've got a salesperson, the company will be chasing their financial metrics.” (Head – Customer).

“So then work cultures, those that speak to nose to the grindstone, productivity measures of this, measures of that, then that's when people will respond to - what they're being measured on. Are people being measured on innovation and playfulness and adaption anyway? That's not happening in big corporate companies.” (Consultant – EQ).

Several research participants provided comments and insight regarding the limiting nature of a predominantly hierarchical structure or power-based management model or mindset that prevented a participative approach from being explored in organisations. These comments reflected this finding:

“That is how the business has always been, and we've got a bit of a problem, the response is, this is how we've always done it, and this is the way we're going to do it. It's not really looking at different ways.” (Group CIO).

“But we can craft a solution quite easily and within the business the whole idea is you know, it's our role to inform you of change and it's your role to accept it and absorb it.” (Head – Product | Card CVP).

“You know, in our organisation you know hierarchy is more important – so because of this you are not very actively encouraged and not expected that you have an opinion.” (Head – Product Strategy & Digital Transformation).

“Really I think there is still the prevailing mindset of leadership at the top making the decision on what the strategy is and then they inform people.” (Psychologist).

“So, this is what we have decided and don't ask too many questions. We've made the decision.” (Head – Product Strategy & Digital Transformation).

“This is the way companies have been run and the way change is driven and has been very Newtonian. You know everything is cascaded top down. We still do it today, so I'm not judging. It's kind of the lingua franca of driving change - you cascade it through the organisation.” (Change Marketer).

“It's a power base and hierarchical still, no matter how they claim to have flat structures. It's the hierarchical model of power, so everybody's scrambling to get into leadership. And because the scramble is for power, as opposed to for expertise, we need lots more experts, we need like a lot fewer leaders, and a lot more experts in the field.” (Consultant – EQ).

“If you research the old-fashioned models of how business is managed, and what business rewards, and what business unwittingly rewards is compliance and obedience. Because if you step out of line, you'll get your head smacked with a ruler.” (Consultant – EQ).

“It's such an interesting management paradigm, to my mind, that is the pulled out of, out of the Industrial Revolution where it was appropriate to see people as cogs in a system.” (Management Consultant 1).

“We're constantly aware of things that are being checked. And when I'm constantly being checked, I shut down. And I can't be innovative.” (Management Consultant 1).

“And then it's pretty much decisions are made up front, it's cascaded down and the employee gets to know about it when they have to implemented it.” (Head – Product | Card CVP).

“You can't change people that have been doing something for 30 years. It's ingrained in them after 30 years. It's almost, if you want to have change you almost need to get rid of that whole leadership team and get fresh blood. They need to be believable as well. You know it's not going to be people that have done something for 30 years but suddenly get to be in the morning says, so guys, I'm going to do it that way. You've been on a course and now you're going to do it that way.” (Head – Product Strategy & Digital Transformation).

“What we still seeing a typical Theory X leadership model, where it's top down, you know, it's leaders who are – they hold on to the knowledge – they hold on to the insights - they hold on to the you know the secrets of the business. So, because they have so much power, it's left in their hands to really define the direction that that organisation is taking.” (Head – Product | Card CVP).

“And so, there is an economic toll around speaking up and creating turbulence in an organisation because the consequence may be that you lose your job. But you cannot find another one somewhere else. So, there is a notion of adherence, and obedience – these are successful tactics for an employee to have tenure within an organisation like ours.” (Head – Product | Card CVP).

A few of the research participants stated that a very large organisation may also present logistical limitations with regards to enabling participatory employee practices in SC. Research participant comments that reflected this finding were as follows:

“Absolutely in terms of the size of organisation. I don't think it helps in co-creating strategies and very effective change management practices.” (Head – Product | Card CVP).

“I don't know organisations that have processes in place to harness the voice of 20,000 people on the ground.” (Management Consultant 2).

5.5 Methods for enabling employee participation in SC

As the focus of this study was to explore the methods used within organisations to enable employee participation in SC as required by the main research question, the researcher asked the research participants to provide examples of these methods. This section provides information with regards to research participants that firstly invested time in methods for engaging and enabling some degree of participation of employees in SC to create buy-in and enable adoption of the change; and secondly, research participants that actively applied methods that involved and enabled employees with the purpose to co-create the SC from the outset of the SC initiative.

5.5.1 Methods used to create employee participation for purposes of employee buy-in and enablement for SC

A common theme that emerged from the research participant narratives was that employee buy-in and enablement concerning the change was critical for successful delivery of SC requirements. This section presents the description of the methods to

enable employee participation in SC with the purpose to create employee buy-in and enablement.

One of the methods highlighted by various research participants was the development of easily consumable information or communication to allow employees to create sufficient awareness and insight regarding the SC. This often involved translating strategic messages and objectives in such a manner that employees could understand how these messages related to their individual roles and the strategic direction of the organisation. Without relevant and meaningful information, employees would regard messages around SC as abstract and confusing and not be able to participate in a meaningful manner around this change. Research participant comments that reflected this theme were stated as follows:

“Here are the easy mechanisms which is to send an email or send a meme or send a post and get people to participate.” (Change Marketer).

“So, what we try to do avoid that is, is we try to create a layer between that dense jargon. And something that's a little bit more accessible.” (Change Marketer).

“So that might be a fable that might be a story. It may just be a concept.... And that changes the entire trajectory of the conversation.” (Change Marketer).

“And then obviously what we do is we campaign that as if it were an advertising campaign.” (Change Marketer).

“And as we've moved on, the comms pieces are what makes people pay attention. And engagement as well - so engagement activities which is another option of getting that vibe right and getting them excited about something.” (Management Consultant 3).

An additional method to enable employee participation in SC for the purposes of buy-in and enablement, as described by research participants, was the creation of meeting platforms through which employees could engage with senior leaders and be provided with an opportunity to ask questions and share their opinions and concerns. To a large degree, these meeting platforms were to inform employees about SC, with very little room for employees to influence the strategic direction already agreed. These methods ranged from large townhall meetings to smaller discussion groups, depending on the nature and scope of the SC. These sessions were most often held with members of the

C-suite or senior leadership team members. Research participant comments that reflected this finding were as follows:

“Determine all of your business-as-usual activities, when people get together in groups - it is an opportunity to introduce change – it doesn't mean that a change requires you to have a dedicated session - leverage existing rituals that take place. (Management Consultant 4).

“If it's something that has the potential to be a disruptive change, every communication must be followed through some form of a personal interaction.” (Management Consultant 4).

“Clearly you need to network, you need to create a platform and have integration with all players. Upfront.” (Psychologist).

“It's also not about one-way communication to these people. It is engaging them, making it interesting, it's, it's getting them involved, it's asking for their input.” (Change Marketer).

“Okay, I want you to just turn to your colleagues around you, form little pods of threes. And I want you to just discuss for the next 10 to 15 minutes. What you will have, what is the key points that are sticking up for you. What are your hopes around this, what are your concerns, and what are the questions, burning questions around this that you think are important to deal with?” (Change Marketer).

“It generates energy and generates conversation that generates, and that's where the emotional mind starts to happen, because until then it's been purely rational, clearly cognitive.” (Change Marketer).

“We create platforms for people to have conversations about the change at different levels and then we try and ensure that the insight from these conversations is listened to.” (Management Consultant 2).

“But we would also be having conversations for meaning making, I guess, meaning of something we'd be having conversations. Now what does this mean, how are we going to be changing and changing to deliver on this? And those conversations would run through the organisation and have a cascade format.” (Management Consultant 2).

“Start by stopping, pausing, reflecting and giving people the time and effort to voice their concerns, and then you've got to be credible about it, you've got to be able to see that there are times that we can hear you. But we can do nothing further.” (Management Consultant 4).

Research participants also described continuous engagement of employees as a method to encourage employees to participate in SC with the purpose of creating buy-in. The participants stated that the methods were the creation of competitions, change champion networks in various departments and recognition initiatives to encourage continued adoption of the SC. The following research participant comments reflected this finding:

“We created some toolkits for team leaders in branches, we asked them to do roleplays, we had competitions where they did role plays on this conversation, we gave the best people some prizes. Lots of recognition. So, when people are actually doing what you're asking them to do from a change point of view, don't ignore it. Positively reinforcement it.” (Change Marketer).

“I've had champions in all of those areas I've got about 10 of them. And what we did was when we designed the system, you know, going through all the business requirements. I had them at a session so we had a lot of workshops where they could actually voice, the changes that they need, and their requirements as well as I think that will help with the buy in because essentially, they already know what they're getting, and they could contribute to the final product if I can put it that way.” (Management Consultant 3).

An additional method used to sustain employee participation in the SC for the purposes of buy-in and employee enablement was described as the development and application of middle manager leadership toolkits to encourage the continuation of required change messaging or conversations through this layer of leadership. This method needed to be conducted in conjunction with follow-up actions to ensure that these conversations were happening and that insights from these conversations were gathered, acknowledged and where possible, acted upon through various listening posts and surveys. Research participant comments that reflected this finding were stated as follows:

“So you can't do it without bringing the people along. What you've got to do is you've got to empower the leaders, equip them to have the right conversations, at the right time.” (Management Consultant 4).

“Everything you do is the enable the line manager to now become a change facilitator throughout that process. So that's the mechanism, the practical mechanism.” (Management Consultant 4).

“And is it really around providing line managers with certain tools. Those tools are focused around the nature of conversations that they should be having, how often they should have them.” (Management Consultant 2).

In certain instances where SC involved the development and launch of a new product, or product features within the market, methods were used that enabled employees to test these products and complete customer surveys to provide insight into how the product would meet potential customer needs. The methods were regarded by the research participants as predominantly useful to enable buy-in for SC. A research participant comment that reflected this finding was as follows:

“I have done surveys, with the teams that sell the product – to say, what do you think is the strongest part of the product, what do you think customers are most interested in. Yeah, because I know it's important otherwise when they get it, they're going to get these new features and they're going to say it will never work, we can't use it - as a reason to fail, you know, to actually not sell it.” (Head – Product | Card CVP).

In a few instances when SC involved digitisation in some form, employees were asked to attend demonstrations of the systems or digitised services and provide feedback regarding the application and utilisation of the relevant system. In one instance, a senior leader in an organisation deliberately spent time with the users of a proposed system prior to selling the system to senior management. In this way, the leader was able to ensure practical application and prior buy-in of the new system before the system was implemented. Research participant comments that reflected this finding were as follows:

“Just as an example is we've got staff meetings every Friday and as they are building the system. We demo the system to them and we bring them up to speed at this point for about a half an hour in our meeting. And it's very broad. So it's not necessarily everybody that will use the system, but it's to get people excited.” (Head – Product Strategy & Digital Transformation).

“And also, it's almost like a UAT. So, if they see at that point that there's something that may to be changed or added they can give you immediate

feedback on it. So it's essentially what I'm trying to do is to get them involved.” (Head – Product Strategy & Digital Transformation).

“I start a little bit different. If I know there's an overall big change coming, I involve my end users first. Then I'll go one level up to management, and then finally to the Board as well. I just find that it's easier to get buy in, and again the project being a success, if you start from the bottom and you work up instead of from up down.” (Solutions Architect).

“I just find that it's easier to get buy in, and again the project being a success, if you start from the bottom and you work up instead of from up down.” (Solution Architect).

5.5.2 Participation methods used for purposes of co-creation of strategic change

This section presents instances when research participants described methods that enabled employee participation in SC for the purposes of co-creating sustainable SC solutions in support of the organisation's strategy. In each of the instances described, a slightly different process was followed and is therefore presented separately. Of importance to note is that in each of the examples presented in this section, the research participants mentioned the use of methods for creating employee buy-in for SC as described in the previous section. The methods that are described in this section were applied over and above those methods with the purpose of co-creating the SC solutions.

In an organisation that required transformation of the organisational culture, the SC emanated from the people vision which was articulated by the phrase “people first.” Prior to the application of methods for enabling employee participation to co-create the solution, executives in the organisation and senior leadership were engaged by a central change management representative and committed to the objectives and process of the SC.

The first method used to enable employee participation in this transformational change was to create face-to-face forums for employees across all levels of the organisation to share the results of a recent culture survey and to then ask employees to contribute their perspectives regarding the reasons for the current description of the culture. Next, the employees were asked to describe their own desired vision about the nature of the organisational culture. Lastly, employees were asked to contribute their opinions and ideas regarding how they could contribute to building the desired culture, within their

respective mandates. Research participant comments that reflected this method were stated as follows:

“So we went on a huge process of wanting to then understand why is the culture of the organisation a problem, and for you to understand you need to speak to the people themselves, because that's where the interactions are happening.” (Head – Talent Management & Organisational Effectiveness).

“So, you better get the people on the ground to tell you what is working and what is not working for them.” (Head – Talent Management & Organisational Effectiveness).

“We're then went into different sessions where we unpacked – within each division – the results for them, and you say, okay, you say as an example – that there is bureaucracy in the company, into which we then said - if you say there is bureaucracy, what does this look like for you?” (Head – Talent Management & Organisational Effectiveness).

“And so, then you get to get a sense of okay these are the issues. So, once they've have unpacked those issues, then you have to work on changing the mentality – because it is very easy to complain. So, we then asked them to tell us, what is it that you want to see? Yeah, and then put side by side, what they believe is the issues and then they tell you what they want to see. Okay, so this is the problem, this the desired outcome that we want to see, then that's that to fill in the gap to say okay so who is responsible for this and unpack what will you be doing to get to that. So, then they start to tell you to say okay this executive leadership must do this, meaning that is beyond their mandate.” (Head – Talent Management & Organisational Effectiveness).

“If you don't spend a lot of time looking at the desired state and what needs to happen to create it, it will remain as it is because that's where the real change happens.” (Head – Talent Management & Organisational Effectiveness).

“Mainly face to face. It was to face to face engagement with sometimes a supplementary comms, but then the comms must also allow you to solicit feedback from people.” (Head – Talent Management & Organisational Effectiveness).

“Because if you just send an email and you don't really give people a chance to give you feedback – then there is very little engagement possible. We find it more effective to engage them face to face.” (Head – Talent Management & Organisational Effectiveness).

These ideas were then collated and implemented across the organisation by leadership and employees. This method was supported by a consistent narrative of ownership and accountability which was continuously reinforced in all subsequent communication.

“So sometimes in the process, when now you need to, now, implement, all of these things, they will become resistant, not because they don't want the desired state – but because it's uncomfortable for them to move from the current to the desired state – it's not easy. that's why I need to identify what is the cause of that discomfort.” (Head – Talent Management & Organisational Effectiveness).

“So, we then invited people within the project, department or division – here we rely on you, business to volunteer and to then help us, and how we get there.” (Head – Talent Management & Organisational Effectiveness).

“It means a lot for them, and someone's more likely to go and support you on the ground, and you're secure enough to speak on your behalf on the ground, when they realise that my, this is my idea, or when to say it has been committed to the organisation.” (Head – Talent Management & Organisational Effectiveness).

Visible actions of change were required by leadership and employees through the various agreed mechanisms in the face-to-face forum so that employees could see that change was taking place as agreed.

“But then then you need to get aligned and ownership with management. Because remember, accountability and ownership are important here. So, you need to equip them and say now here are the tools, here is how we need you to engagement with your people. Then you then manage and monitor whether these things are happening on the ground or not, if you do this for them all the time, they will think you are the magic pill in this process.” (Head – Talent Management & Organisational Effectiveness).

A unique engagement model was designed and implemented across the organisation that supported ownership and the equipping of leaders and employees to take ownership and accountability for actions in line with the desired vision.

“We have therefore created an engagement model. So, the engagement model...starting from the CEO. And in terms of how often the CEO needs to engage with what audience. And then we don't really dictate you know you allow the CEO to customise it for himself.” (Head – Talent Management & Organisational Effectiveness).

In another example, methods used to create participation of employees in SC for the purpose of co-creation were required as part of an organisation-wide digitisation process. From the initiation of the project, employees were enabled to participate in defining the requirements and scope of a new centralised system, the appointment of a vendor and the respective customisation and implementation of the system. This participation involved representatives from all levels of the organisation and from all divisions within the organisation. The following research participant comments reflected this change approach:

“So, I'd like to say I think collaboration was such a, such a strong principle. And it was consistent throughout. It wasn't just collaborate at the beginning. I think that's another really important thing to consider in systems collaboration. So, we didn't consult them at the very beginning, go away, build, and then come back. (Management Consultant 3).

“The biggest principle that I think we did for this particular project that I think worked exceptionally well was that of collaboration.” (Management Consultant 3).

“But we thought the role that people played on the ground was actually critically important to, and that their ability to be able to contribute and collaborate in terms of what we need from a systems and processes perspective was really, really important for us.” (Management Consultant 3).

“So, collaboration and consultation was the fourth critical part in it, making sure that the ultimate outcome was going to be successful and, and it's what people needed.” (Management Consultant 3).

Firstly, face-to-face workshops were held with employees across the organisation to establish the need for a new system and to agree on the delivery aspects of the particular system. In addition, employees were able to provide insight into the foreseeable challenges that may arise during the process. A participant's comments were as follows:

“Considerable amount of time conducting workshops across the different areas of the business. So, the business has got a multitude of very, very different areas and have very specific needs that are very different to each other.” (Management Consultant 3).

“So, before we really started with the solution, we spend a lot of time in a consulting sort of conversation. You know lots, lots of workshops, you know, lots of trying to understand what the business need is per area.” (Management Consultant 3).

“And with that came understanding what the big potential challenges were, you know, with regards to changing. You know, understanding the current status quo. And what would prevent people from changing. You know what are the psychological barriers that are in place, what are some of the operational barriers that are in place.” (Management Consultant 3).

“And I think that contributed significantly towards people, understanding the need for change. And buying into the change.” (Management Consultant 3).

Once the specifications of the new system were agreed, representation of employees across the organisation and divisions was increased to be involved in the vendor selection process. The same research participant as above commented as follows:

“We took different parts of the business - we had representation from different parts of the business - and actually included in the process of going like this is what it looks like this is what we need from a systems and processes perspective – and then actually involve them in the tender process so right down to the detail of, you know, okay great we know we need to change our systems, what is the system and then the vendor that we're going to use.” (Management Consultant 3).

“So they actually had representation across the business that participated in the pitches, even into depth, the different systems that are out there, what they can do for us. I mean, who could be the best partner with, with this, and that kind of stuff. Voting is done.” (Management Consultant 3).

Employees' participation was then increased to enable involvement in the design of the supporting process and the system delivery requirements.

“And actually, then workshopping, and playing out the different scenarios. So, because we are looking at things that can cause financial commitments, but we act on the payments. What's actually practices, I should say so. So basically, designing, what the system should be able to do, what it cannot really do, because the whole idea right was that, to be fair processes, and because our current system was so antiquated what we needed to do was adopt what's best, best in class practice.” (Management Consultant 3).

“We understood whether they would meet our needs, and then work in a way so see what we needed to adapt - adapting and tailoring that everybody around business was both in that process of understanding what the system can currently do, and what, what were the gaps that we then needed to customise, so that collaboration was, was represented as literally across the business from that level of detail.” (Management Consultant 3).

Lastly, the next level of methods for employee participation involved including the entire organisation in demonstrations and systems walkthroughs which provided employees with opportunities to test and play with the system prior to the go-live. In addition to the walkthrough sessions, training sessions were also held to enable employees to utilise the system.

“It was a really a side-by-side partnership, if you will, with the business. And we basically went back to the people so that they've got something which they, which we call a AWT – which basically stands for a walkthrough.” (Management Consultant 3).

“We started engaging bigger groups of people, and actually go to them and say – this is what this is, what we're thinking this is what's needed – what the system looks like. And then starting to give them demos, and share the benefits, and let them know the differences between what they're experiencing today and what they're going to experience – features – to start to widen that pool of collaboration.” (Management Consultant 3).

“And then as we moved along the journey, we then got another mixed group of people in where we were at a point where we could demonstrate the system – this is what it can do – and go back to the groups we collaborated with and feedback as to where we are now. The system is not fully built, but this is now

your opportunity to say this is what it looks like. What it does? What can you change?” (Management Consultant 3).

“So that pool of collaboration, just got bigger and thicker and thicker – as we were building the system.” (Management Consultant 3).

“Once we've gotten to particular points, we now needed to start to educate the rest of the business you know because obviously our pools of collaboration, got bigger and bigger and bigger and then we got to the point where, okay now we need to bring the rest of the business on board. And so, what we did, then is when we ran a series of connection sessions that were very tightly packed together I have to say.” (Management Consultant 3).

“Starting to teach - so training I think that's going to be part of getting people to change - giving them the skills that they need to do what they need to do. You know what matters today – the question is to activate really simplistic things so. So now, that's the phase we are in – what we are doing is the training all around. And, and using a multitude of methods - so lots of face-to-face training, and when I say face to face I mean virtual sessions.” (Management Consultant 3).

5.6 Factors enabling the participation of employees in SC

A supplementary research question required an exploration of the factors that support the utilisation of methods to enable collective employee participation in SC. Research participants that described the various methods utilised to enable employee participation in SC were asked to describe what they felt were factors that supported these methods and enabled successful participation. Several themes were identified from the data and are presented within this section.

5.6.1 A supporting working environment or culture

Several research participants described the type of working environment or culture required to support participation of employees in SC, whether for the purposes of creating buy-in for SC or enabling co-creation of SC. The ideal culture for enabling employee participation in SC was described as a working environment that placed people first, and thus empowered, enabled, and energised people around a shared vision for the future. Research participants stated that this type of culture provided permission and meaning for people to contribute to a bigger purpose. Research participant comments that reflected this supporting factor were as follows:

“The way they're going to achieve those strategic aspirations are through largely through leadership and culture.” (Change Marketer).

“Organisations have to create a culture that is empowering, enabling and energising, focussed on the future.” (Psychologist).

“The research shows that people who have been engaged, have meaning in what they do - that they can make a contribution and make a difference.” (Psychologist).

“People feel free not to be judged. They don't always have to have the right answer the first time around. That culture allows people to open up.” (Consultant – EQ).

“Give people meaning. They allow people to come up with options. And they allow people to build mastery around those options.” (Consultant EQ).

“You get it through people living into the brand, you get it through people kind of putting the purpose of the organisation forward.” (Management Consultant 1).

The two research participants who provided insights into examples of where employee participation was utilised to co-create SC solutions, described the culture of the respective organisations in the following manner:

“Our culture is very, very people orientated.” (Management Consultant 2).

“We are seeing, whenever you are working with people, you need to answer this question for yourself – are my people willing, ready, and able? If there is none of those things then you need to address them first – so in that way you will be thinking about people.” (Head – Talent Management & Organisational Effectiveness).

Although covered in a previous section regarding factors that prevented employee participation in SC, it is interesting to note that several research participants referred to how a psychologically safe culture could support employee participation in SC. A psychologically safe culture was described as one that enabled employee participation in SC in that it supported a safe and trusting working environment that enabled collaboration and continuous innovation required in SC, especially in dynamic environments. Research participant comments that reflected this supporting factor were stated as follows:

“And so, safety underpins everything and I'm not talking about industrial safety. I'm talking about psychological safety.” (Consultant – EQ).

“We've currently embarked on a whole cultural change as well, where we want to, we want to get employees to speak up and create a safe environment for them to be involved a bit more.” (Head – Product Strategy & Digital Transformation).

I think your culture needs to be open to that and people must trust that you are genuinely interested.” (Management Consultant 2).

“Cultures where you feel that you're safe, and you are asked to innovate, or show initiative, that it will be valued more immediately, not a once a year in annual awards of innovation.” (Consultant - EQ).

“A culture that truly values, on a daily basis, and is all about values, innovation has to be based on safety. because nobody is going to come up with a new idea if they themselves, think that they may be called stupid or ridiculous or unproductive, which is often what happens in a power-based culture.” (Management Consultant 1).

“Whereas if you have an organisation where the culture is based on psychological safety, then you have a culture where people feel safe enough to play, and you can't innovate unless you are allowed to play - play frees up our thinking mind.” (Consultant – EQ).

A few of the research participants commented on the effect that takes place when people are asked to participate in SC in the absence of a psychologically safe environment. This effect was described as the flight, fright, and freeze response. The following research participant comments reflected this theme:

“That culture allows people to open up but if you haven't created that culture, and you ask me to come up with ideas, those defence mechanisms kick in.” (Consultant – EQ).

“That defence mechanism is when you fight. People often become passive aggressive in that fighting as well. So, they do what you want them to do. But they kind of do it reluctantly and/or they do it, but there are often excuses. Yeah, but you don't understand I have a family, I've got my kids etc, etc. And they are very valid reasons. But they begin to use that - that was my child was in a crisis. I could not get access because the power was out. That's a passive aggressive

side of the fighting. Or they just go into pure lock down mode in their heads. And they cut the world out. And they fight internally with themselves, they begin to doubt their competence, they begin to doubt they're able to their job, not realising that they've been putting in 14/15/16 hours a day, and not being able to draw those boundaries. And then the frustration level builds up, because how do you lash out? You can't lash out at your boss, because it's got complications, implications. And of course, when you freeze, what do you do, you just do what you're told." (Psychologist).

The relationship between a psychologically safe working environment was also described as an environment required to enable employees to collectively and continuously collaborate and innovate across an organisation. Research participant comments that reflected this theme were stated as follows:

"A collaborative space is a psychological safe space." (Head – Talent Management & Organisational Effectiveness).

"But it depends then on the overall culture. Because often the innovations are encouraged at lower levels. And then those people have to go and sell those notions to management, when it should be a driver that the entire business, no matter how large and unwieldy it is, actually must be driven by is this kind of transformation into the new." (Consultant – EQ).

"They want to create a culture for people to speak up so people, people would need to, to bring ideas that we need to say something is wrong, the unit needs to be safe enough that they, they feel comfortable to do that." (Consultant EQ).

5.6.2 The role of leadership

An additional factor creating a supportive and psychologically safe working environment in which employees could participate in SC, according to the participants, was leadership. In a previous section that dealt with the reasons for organisations adopting a non-participative approach to SC, a hierarchical or power-based model of leadership was indicated as the limiting factor. In this section, the importance of leadership in creating a psychologically safe environment was emphasised by research participants. In addition, research participants stated that this type of leader needed to show up and behave to enable employee participation in SC. The following research participant comments reflected this supporting factor:

“Because one of the biggest stumbling blocks to any form of transformation or change or SC is leadership.” (Consultant – EQ).

“Only leaders could create that because it is people’s habit to respond to what the leader acknowledges. And that, from an emotional intelligence point of view, we know that. So only leaders can create the psychological safety, sadly.” (Consultant – EQ).

“So, it is it has to come from leadership. And that’s why it cannot coexist with the hierarchical management.” (Consultant EQ).

“And trust is the glue that binds all relationships together. So if I’m not trusted, then I’m going to kind of behave very differently from if I really feel that you as my manager, trust me, not like me, but trust me to actually give of my best and you value my best, even if we don’t agree about what my best is, it is about trust and being and feeling valued.” (Consultant – EQ).

“People know what they need to do, they can think for themselves, they have the expertise, very often more than the leader, and which is what happens very often. But what is leadership? It’s a monitoring device to make sure that people are working.” (Psychologist).

“But today people resent being monitored and people resent being the micromanaged as it were, or what else is leadership got to do? If leaders are inspired themselves, they will be innovators. But if they’re not inspired themselves, what else can they do? They have to micromanage. With innovative leaders, the teams manage themselves.” (Consultant EQ).

A few of the research participants also discussed the current need for leadership to undergo a change in mindset at all levels of the organisation in order to build and sustain a supportive culture and psychologically safe working environment that enabled employee participation in SC. The participants described the new leadership mindset as one of heart-centred leadership that empowered and enabled employees to bring their expertise to work and thereby enjoy the work that they do and the contribution that they make. Research participant comments that reflected this finding were stated as follows:

“People are still stuck. They still don’t understand that the world has changed and that the organisation fundamentally has to change...The thinking that created the problem cannot solve the problem” (Psychologist).

“So, truth is that, you know, we need leaders, the truth is that we need people to be monitored. The truth is that most people can't manage themselves. These are traits that are terrible falsehoods that leaders hang on to because that's the impression they've been given in most of the training, that we are taught by leaders who believe this, so we are just passing down the same falsehoods in terms of what people need. So, for me working with leaders is about changing their mindset about who they think they are. And therefore, they can change their minds then about what the role is needed.” (Consultant – EQ).

“I think heart centred leadership is going to be the word of the future. You have to use the language of love, and I guess. Love is an obstruction is so strange to people and it's certainly something you never invite into the workplace, and its ironic right because people that bring the best of themselves and produce the best of themselves will tell you, I love what I do. I love what I'm doing with them I love what I'm doing for you. It is too. It's too a radical abstraction for people they get all hysterical.” (Management Consultant 1).

“And so, you need to really get to a point where they own this thing and that is that takes a lot of work – it's easier said than done. Because remember you need to change the mindset and you need to get people who are business oriented to now think of people.” (Head – Talent Management & Organisational Effectiveness).

A number of participants also described how the new ways of working brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic had illustrated that this new leadership mindset was possible.

“And that's why I think that COVID presents us as a great opportunity worldwide. That is being forced on us. Yes, and often I suppose that's when we make the changes that we have to when we sometimes forced to get out of our comfort zones.” (Consultant – EQ).

“During Covid-19, in the cases where they are effective managers they set clear goals and set clear standards. They set clear expectations and people can run and they get on with it.” (Psychologist).

A research participant added to the above description of the role of leadership, by emphasising the importance of the relationship between leaders and employees as a means for effective employee participation in SC. The research participant said that the

proximity of these relationships could either support or hinder successful employee participation in SC.

“I need to stress the importance of real personal relationships that we build and how we need to leverage those relationships in order to deliver the SC.” (Management Consultant 4).

“As an employee I have a direct relationship with my line manager. Now that might be if, as an as an executive, maybe as a call centre agent, for example, the relationship rests with my immediate team. And my immediate line manager. Why, because they own the relationship with the people that are impacted by those high degree of disruptive changes.” (Management Consultant 4).

Research participants also discussed the role and importance of leadership conversations at all levels of the organisation to support employee participation in SC, as indicated by the following:

“It is it is management, middle management responsibility to get that message across efficiently.” (Management Consultant 2).

“What you've got to do is you've got to empower the leaders, equip them to have the right conversations, at the right time.” (Management Consult 4).

“Our approach is first of all is to empower leaders to empower their people.” (Management Consultant 1).

“Therefore, you've got to empower the line manager to have the right conversations that will bring about the results.” (Head – Talent Management & Organisation Effectiveness).

“The common factor - if the leadership team themselves are impacted by the change - you've got to start with them – if they themselves are constituents of the change you have to bring them along.” (Management Consultant 4).

5.6.3 Change management approach

At the core of enabling employees to participate in SC, a specific change management approach was indicated as an important consideration prior to implementation of a participative SC process. This was to ensure that there was a clear understanding of the nature of the SC and the context within which the SC was unfolding in order to apply appropriate participative methods to the change process.

“If the change is a disruptive change. You need to be careful how you bring people along. You must meet people where they're at, it's got to start with a complete understanding of the degree of change, and the size of that change. And the degree, the speed at which people are going to move through that change curve is a direct function of the size of change.” (Management Consultant 4).

“Secondly, to bring them along, you've got to ensure that they understand the full impact of what is changing. We might not always know what the final outcome of the change may be, but this is the impact along each stage of the change.” (Management Consultant 4).

In addition to a clear understanding of the context and nature of SC, research participants also stated that the people driving the change approach need to be persistent around the issue of doing things differently, obtaining the required support from the right people, including the project management team and always applying learning from past experiences. Interestingly, these comments were made by the research participants that provided examples of employee participation in SC for the purpose of co-creation.

“And when people are averse to change, you are not going to be liked. And you have to stand your ground, you speak facts and you are clear – and to keep on connecting why things are not working, you need to go back there – eventually you are going to be listened to.” (Head – Talent Management & Organisational Effectiveness).

“We had to make noise, over and over again. I guess we got the attention of the right people.” (Head – Talent Management & Organisational Effectiveness).

“The project management the office, and everyone's talking change management, made it very clear that you cannot have a project without change management embedded in it, especially in this strategic project.” (Head – Talent Management & Organisational Effectiveness).

“And I think that is probably a big driver behind - and to be honest, our past experiences. Yeah, because they had tried quite hard to do systems change within the nursing side of the business – and this had not gone successfully at all. And the key thing that they didn't do there was consult. So they're really learned from past experiences.” (Management Consultant 3).

In addition to understanding the nature of the SC and the determination of change representatives to do things differently, a research participant emphasised the importance of ensuring that a language of ownership and accountability was driven through the SC process in order to support employee participation in SC.

“And then, then cascade, the same method, down to the business heads and senior leadership - but the language must – when it goes down, it must be the language of ownership, right through to the, to the, to the lowest paid individual in the organization. And not lowest paid but the lowest position in the organization to say, you need to own this thing. It's not the responsibility of the line manager to help you change it is just as much your responsibility to help yourself to change. And that is the narrative that must cut, cut across the organisation.” (Head – Talent Management & Organisational Effectiveness).

“You were talking around the fact that the change in mindset had to happen on a leadership level, but it also had to happen on an employee level in terms of accountability on both sides. To start, demonstrating different behaviours.” (Head – Talent Management & Organisational Effectiveness).

5.6.4 Guiding coalition

Several research participants also stressed the importance of master influencers, especially including executives and senior leadership to drive the SC process. They also mentioned that in order to achieve this, it was critical to firstly ensure that there was alignment between the SC process and the key strategic objectives. In other words, to demonstrate how the people agenda was in alignment with the outcomes of the SC.

“The head of the business needs to be front and centre. Leading the charge. And I think where CEOs, or senior execs miss the point is it doesn't mean they have to do everything. It just means they have to be incredibly conscious of the symbolic nature of their action.” (Change Marketer).

“The head of change spent an enormous amount of time at upfront, having hundreds of conversations with executives and including the CEO, and then quite craftily and deliberately used the language they were throwing out and reflected this back at them. In this example. In this example, a big driver is what they call the leadership code. Okay, it's so much of the language enclosed in the leadership code is basically, whether they're conscious of it or not and I suspect they wouldn't consciously pick it up. She reflected their own aspirational

language. So then when drama happens when things go wrong or change starts to slow. She can just say, but guys, I thought you were the ones to say we want to be ABC. So now you can't put this back on me." (Change Marketer).

"The main principle is you cannot embark on this transformative journey, without having an alignment with your chief executive officer, your CEO in the business." (Management Consultant 4).

"We are not an organisation that is run by machines which means for you to achieve the strategic objectives of the organisation, financial and operational performance, you need people. So that's when you bring in the people agenda and that's where you kind of outline, high level, how you as human capital, will enable this – which is what we tend not to do as human capital – we tend to jump in and we say we are subject matter experts We will do this for you. And that's a wrong way of doing it, because then they don't take ownership of the change. That's the first thing." (Head – Talent Management & Organisational Effectiveness).

"Unless that leadership, the senior most leadership team buys into it, it will not pass." (Head – Talent Management & Organisational Effectiveness).

5.6.5 Translation of the strategy

Research participants emphasised the importance of taking a strategy and meaningfully translating this into something that employees could work with from the perspective of their role and contribution. They explained that without employees having access to a meaningfully translated strategy, participation in strategy change becomes limited, if not impossible. Research participant comments reflecting this supporting factor were as follows:

"And it's usually boring, jargon filled. And even when you ask the execs, you know what exactly does that phrase mean, you realise that they actually haven't fully grasped this themselves but you know when the boss says it and then the next guy says that, then when the poor soul puts up their hand in a town hall and says what does it actually mean to put the client at the centre of everything we do. When I can give you 400 examples of when we don't do that. It's quickly shoved aside." (Change Marketer).

“It's about taking the meaningless words away, and really creating something that people can connect with and understand, rather than a document that just has words that people really don't connect with, and are so vague that people you know, don't can't really give concrete behaviour to those words.” (Change Marketer).

“And then what is important for you is that you make it real for people so that they're able to understand and buy in and endorse at all levels in the organisation, not just the C suite.” (Management Consultant 2).

“The single biggest differentiator is that that range from officiating at the highest level and, and the strategic thinking that we bring to the boardroom table.” (Management Consultant 1).

“That's got to come through with the people. And it's not just about the ability or the skill or even their attention, it's about them how they work the process and when that process is different, or they challenge that process it, that the latitude and the extent to which they're empowered to change that process and the extent to which they have a voice because, you know, largely strategy is actually done devoid of both the customer and how the customer might feel about it, and devoid of the people who are going to execute it or the loss of the business and be the interface with a customer. (Management Consultant 1).

5.6.6 A shared vision

Several research participants also discussed the importance of creating a shared vision or purpose for employees that they could understand and embrace within the organisation as an important supporting factor for enabling employee participation in SC. Research participant comments that reflected this finding were as follows:

“They need to be very clear on what the shared desired outcome is within the business, and they need to agree on that. So, if you want, whether that's the value proposition or the purpose or the vision, call it what you like. But if it's not a shared desired outcome, then everybody runs in different directions. And when that doesn't happen, when there is not a shared desired outcome, people tend to interpret what they need to do, and then they drive it.” (Psychologist).

“What we are seeing is that people are not sharing a compelling vision that answers the question, why are they doing this?” (Consultant – EQ).

But a prerequisite for this engagement is the ability to envision where this is going to take you. If you can't create a picture of this, it's not going to work." (Change Marketer).

"If people have purpose, and meaning to their contribution in the organisation, organisations have better return. The increased stats are very clear." (Management Consultant 1).

5.7 Benefits of employee participation in SC

To explore how and when employee participation in SC strengthens SA, the researcher asked the research participants questions regarding the benefits that had been realised from a participative approach and whether they had seen a strengthening of SA as a result. This section supports the second sub-question of the research study, namely:

Research Question 3: How does collective employee participation in SC strengthen SA?

In response to this question, a few of the research participants referred to the benefits resulting from the creation of an empowering culture and psychologically safe working environment supported through leadership. They stated that these benefits were an overall increase in employee willingness to participate in the process of SC, the willingness to bring more energy or discretionary effort and the contribution of the "whole person" to work rather than only those aspects that are formally measured. Overall, these employee behaviours resulted in an increased productivity resulting from the meaningful relationships, trust, and enjoyment of the work to be done. Research participant comments that reflected this finding were as follows:

"You've got the whole person who comes to work, so you've got somebody really being present at work or pitching up with their whole self is pitching up because they like what they do... have a very different energy level, and energy is the essence of productivity." (Consultant – EQ).

"Your staff will give you discretionary effort." (Head – Talent Management & Organisational Effectiveness).

"What they're finding is that more engaged people are more productive and greater productivity and discretionary effort leads to higher performance results." (Management Consultant 2).

In addition to increased positive energy and productivity as a result of an enabling culture and supporting leadership approach, research participants also stated the following which indicate an increase in innovative ideas and contributions coming from employees:

“And so you get much more productivity, much more energy, much more innovation, when the whole person shows up to work, rather than just the bit that is being measured.” (Consultant – EQ).

“They will be more innovative and as in a private company with other ways of how we can do things better.” (Head – Talent Management & Organisational Effectiveness).

“So after that I suppose it would be new insights. Different things - you are asking new questions that you've never asked before, insights that you've never had before.” (Management Consultant 2).

Through a supporting organisational culture that enables employee participation in SC, the benefit of greater buy-in to SC by employees took place as a result of employees realising the value of their voice or contribution in this process, developing a greater understanding of the need for the change as a result of their participation and hereby developing a greater positive affective commitment towards the change. In summary, research participants expressed that the more employees were involved in shaping and contributing towards the direction of the change, the more support the employees engendered for the change.

“If people involve themselves more in the strategy, they are more aligned naturally ... that my voice was taken into account right up front.” (Management Consultant 2).

“And so there was a lot of consultation upfront, and as I said also from a methodical support perspective. And I think that contributed significantly towards people, understanding the need for change. And actually, buying into the change.” (Management Consultant 3).

“It means you win the hearts and minds of people. You've got to win the hearts first before you're going to win their minds. And that experience the very moment that matters which you create in that moment.” (Management Consultant 4).

Research participants also described the resulting benefit of this increased productivity, energy, willingness and innovation when directed towards the intended outcome of SC

such as increased customer satisfaction, increased performance results and profitability within the organisation.

“Research shows that...those companies, outperform other organisations.”
(Psychologist).

“So, the answer is very simple, if you have created that culture you will get performance.” (Psychologist).

“But the real rubber hits the road when you engage the person for the customer to have a great experience - that drives loyalty and drives value.” (Management Consultant 1).

“It drives referral, which then kicks into your revenue and your growth benefits and all shareholders looking for revenue growth and profit benefits.”
(Management Consultant 1).

“They will speak of the organisation as if it is their own – therefore they will worry about the profits. So, you are likely to see an improvement in the financial performance of your organization your balance sheet... the graphs are starting to pick up starting to go into the right direction” (Head – Talent Management & Organisational Effectiveness).

“They will make your customers happy because they themselves are happy.”
(Head – Talent Management & Organisational Effectiveness).

“Yes, and our ability to satisfy our customer, you know, so how efficient and how good we are with our processes and our systems, has an impact on how a customer experiences us.” (Management Consultant 3).

The research participants described the cumulative effect of these benefits as contributing to the SA of the organisation. In addition to the increased productivity and financial and performance results, the resulting change competence that was developed by employees who were given the opportunity to participate in SC was seen to support the organisation’s overall SA. This was described as an important future skill that would continuously need to be developed to enable competitive advantage in a dynamic environment.

“There's no need to resist change, because change doesn't threaten me because I am engaged.” (Consultant – EQ).

“If we want to reduce it to a competence, it is a learned competence within the business right so you can teach leaders to be change resistant, teach them about managing change, you can teach people to be change resilient and you can teach people that method to manage change, and the more you teach and the more inclusive you are, you're building what is effectively a muscle.” (Management Consultant 1).

“I really do believe one of the top 10 competencies of the future is exactly that – SC management, and it doesn't reside in the C suite, it has to be pervasive to the whole business where the business builds the collective muscle to respond to change.” (Management Consultant 1).

“People learn the skills of working with and being part of a change. This enables them to build and use these skills into the future. This helps the organisation to build future capability to change more effectively.” (Management Consultant 3).

One of the research participants stated that the benefits of employee participation should extend beyond a limited singular view of return on investment. Firstly, the research participant explained that the concept of return on implementation needed to be articulate and considered in relationship to the investment gained by effective implementation through the required participation of employees in the SC.

“What's the return on implementation? You say it's going to take 2 years but what's the risk of trying to do it in 1 year? But you also know that organisation often have time frames that are often crazy, unrealistic. They're not talking to the specialist. So, so they're not looking into the risk of the limitation. Okay, so what's the risk of forcing you to do it within with everybody knows this is unrealistic?”. (Psychologist).

The return on implementation can be viewed against other research participant descriptions of SC that failed to be implemented within the prescribed time using a non-participative approach and the singular measurement of return on investment.

“I actually have seen some of the wastage that has come out of some of these projects because we didn't do that. I sincerely believe that there's a very strong case, argument to be made for the inputs, is that by not engaging with employees lower down, and my sense is that it actually ends up costing companies, a heck of a lot more to then go back and rework and redo, and re-conceptualize and reconsider some of the assumptions that they've made up front.” (Group CIO).

“It's like you know okay well that's it. You know the spreadsheet makes sense and therefore the project should make sense to everyone.” (Group CIO).

“Everyone was deeply surprised that in the month post the ERP go live, that the productivity in the warehouse, just bottomed out.” (Group CIO).

“At one of our bigger mines we did implement oil sample labelling solution. And they bought the handheld scanners, they bought the printers, they bought everything. And they tried for six months to get the project off the ground, and at the end we had 50 scanners lying in a cupboard, not being used. For the simple fact that the end user, thought first of all, that they are being tried to be replaced. Or that that they were not trusted with what they were doing.” (Solution Architect).

Secondly, the research participant explained that the concept of return on innovation also needed to be articulated and considered in relationship to the investment gained by effective implementation through the required participation of employees in the SC.

“What's the return on this innovation? How will that innovation, make us more competitive. But also, what's the risk of innovation that they because they say, well, this sounds great. But they also need to consider the return and risk on investment and implementation. But it's when they don't consider the return on innovation that they begin to bulk against any new initiatives, because the focus is on the day to day because they've got a business plan to drive.” (Psychologist).

Thirdly, the research participant explained that the concept of return on interpersonal relationships also needed to be articulated and considered in relationship to the investment gained by effective implementation of SC through the participation of employees.

“It's also difficult because you're focusing so often on the return on the investment. What's it going to cost, what what's it going to bring us etc, etc, that they forget there is a whole engagement process that becomes critical. What's the risk of not investing in the interaction with the stakeholders?” (Psychologist).

5.8 Conclusion

In summary, this section of the research report has presented the findings of the study obtained through semi-structured interviews with members of the identified sample. The results provided context to the nature of industries and roles in SC in which research participants currently worked. It also provided context with regards to the interviewees'

overall approach to collective employee participation in SC. This foundation provides a view upon which to regard the various methods utilised by organisations to enable employee participation in SC, the enabling factors supporting these methods and the benefits of this approach in line with strengthening SA of an organisation.

CHAPTER 6. DISCUSSION

6.1 Introduction

The results from the analysis of data collected from the semi-structured interviews as presented in the previous chapter are discussed in this section. The discussion follows the sequence of the research questions posed and collectively provides insights into methods enabling employee participation in SC, the enabling factors for this participation within an organisation and how this participation supports SA. Results are compared to existing literature in order to illustrate the contribution to the body of knowledge on employee participation in SC. A summary of the research findings as compared to literature is provided in Annexure G of this report.

Thirteen representatives of SC were interviewed to explore the various methods used to enable employees to participate in SC. Although this is a small sample, each of the research participants worked in a diverse range of different sectors. The group of research participants also held decision-making capacity for the implementation of SC within a permanent employee role, or in a consultative role across a diverse range of client organisations.

6.2 Discussion: Research Question 1

Research Question 1: What are the methods utilised within organisations to enable collective employee participation in SC?

The first research question explored the various methods utilised within organisations to enable collective employee participation in SC. Prior to a discussion of findings that pertain directly to the methods used by organisations to achieve this outcome, it is important to discuss the findings relating to the current nature of SC experienced by the research participants and the different approaches taken in adapting to the SC. This discussion provides valuable context upon which to discuss the various methods used by organisations to enable collective employee participation in SC.

6.2.1 The nature of SC

Literature describes the current environment in which organisations operate as increasingly complex, hypercompetitive, digitised, uncertain and unpredictable (Semke & Tiberius, 2020). Within this dynamic and unpredictable environment, organisations are under significant pressure to capitalise on opportunities and navigate threats to remain relevant, deliver better performance and build competitive advantage (Semke & Tiberius,

2020; Teece et al., 2016). A current example, which is illustrative of the intricate relationship between organisations and the environment in which they operate, is the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic (Pantano et al., 2020).

Although the sample in this study only comprised 13 participants, the sample represented a broad range of industries in the economy. In addition, the findings showed that cumulatively the sample was managing a set of complex and significant strategic projects that involved the implementation of supporting SC initiatives. The findings reflect that the organisations represented in this study operate in a dynamic environment where opportunities, presented through digitisation and cultural transformation, and threats, brought about through regulatory requirements and Covid-19, are continuously being navigated. Although the SC projects described contained unique characteristics linked to the nature and scope of the change, the overriding purpose of these projects was to survive the impact of environmental threats, improve ways of operating and working to enable better business performance and to build competitive advantage.

It could therefore be argued that the organisations represented in this study are grappling with ways to build inherent SA in order to continuously realign their strategy to the unforgiving external environment in which they operate (Schwarz et al., 2019; Semke & Tiberius, 2020; Carmeli et al., 2016; Teece, 2007). As described by Heracleous and Werres (2016), the manner in which SC is therefore implemented poses significant consideration within the projects described (Heracleous & Werres, 2016). As supported by Surty and Scheepers (2019), environmental dynamism influences the context in which change in an organisation takes place and is therefore an important consideration for the implementation of actions for successful change outcomes.

In summary, the sample is representative of organisations operating in a dynamic environment, implementing complex strategic projects that could determine their demise, survival, or growth. The approach towards implementation of SC in these organisations is therefore a critical consideration with regards to the success of the projects described. Against this context, the study explored the methods that these organisations utilised to enable employee participation, as a lever to building longer-term SA.

6.2.2 A decide and inform approach to SC

As mentioned earlier, the different approaches to the implementation of SC will be discussed prior to the methods used by organisations to enable employee participation in SC. This section therefore provides additional context upon which to discuss the methods used by organisations to enable employee participation in SC. This section

discusses the findings with regards to the decide and inform approach that was identified through this study.

The dominant scholarly perspectives of SC emphasise the influence of the external environment and internal strategic leadership actions as the key factors, individually or in combination, influencing the nature and response to SC in organisations (Muller & Kunisch, 2018). The nature of SC and the role of leadership in response to this change, as described by the findings of the study, reflect acknowledgement of the environmental influence on SC and the significant role and importance of leadership in providing strategic direction and implementing SC. The findings of this study therefore represent a dialectical approach to SC (Muller & Kunisch, 2018).

The overall approach to SC within the sample, however, showed differences in the role of leadership within the SC projects. Four of the research participants mentioned a predominant decide and inform leadership perspective towards SC that can be likened to the traditional plan and inform approach described by Bamford and Forrester (2003). In this sample, senior leadership, mostly executive and board members, decided on strategic direction and the way that SC would be implemented and informed employees about this. The methods utilised to inform employees about the change were mainly through email communication, CEO presentations or surveys.

The findings of the study showed that the reasons for a predominant top-down leadership approach to SC in these organisations was due to several reasons which are reflected by research evidence in the literature review.

6.2.2.1 Lack of return on investment

The inability to justify the return on investment of the increased time and costs associated with a participatory approach to SC was described as one of justifications of a non-participatory approach to SC. As described in the findings, the urgency to demonstrate rapid return on investment, deprioritised any additional, direct, or indirect costs of a participatory approach as an unnecessary expense. This finding is reflected in literature that laments the common trend for business investment in planning SC with little investment in employee support to cope and adapt to the change (Scheepers & Swart, 2020).

6.2.2.2 Lack of capacity

The lack of investment, as described above (Scheepers & Swart, 2020), can also be regarded as a reason for the lack of investment in the required capacity within roles

responsible for driving SC initiatives. This was described in the findings as an additional reason for the inability to plan and execute a participatory approach due the volume of additional day-to-day responsibilities and resulting lack of capacity for responsible change roles to implement a participative approach to SC. The logistical implications and complexity of implementing a participative strategic approach within a large organisation were regarded as an approach that could not be practically implemented.

6.2.2.3 No value in employee participation

Employee participation in SC was perceived as an approach that would add little value to the strategic process due to a lack of necessary foresight and understanding of the larger strategic landscape. This is a reflection of the predominant top-down approach to SC driven by the perception that SC can only be initiated and implemented by top or senior-level leadership (Muller & Kunisch, 2018; Heyden et al., 2017; Sonenshein & Dholakia, 2012; Nag et al., 2007; Mantere et al., 2012; Knight & Paroutis, 2017; Gover & Duxbury, 2017). This limitation is also reflected in research evidence that highlights the leadership belief that employees lack the strategic awareness and receptiveness to contribute to SC (Armenakis & Harris, 2002; Friesl & Kwon, 2017; Hambrick, 2007).

6.2.2.4 Absence of a supporting environment

The absence of a working environment or culture that encourages, supports, and values the contributions of employees in SC was also provided as a reason for a non-participative approach to SC. This is supported by research evidence which supports the requirement of quality relationships, based on trust and mutual respect, throughout an organisation to support a participatory approach to SC (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017; Surty & Scheepers, 2019; Edmondson, 1999; Tsoukas, 2009).

6.2.2.5 Power-based leadership

A predominant hierarchical or power-based leadership model that in essence encourages obedience and compliance rather than collaboration and constructive disagreement is reflected in the findings as a limitation to the implementation of a participative approach to SC. This is reflected in research evidence which highlights the need for a leadership style that reflects relational and inspirational dimensions to enable the required participation, experimentation and risk taking required in SC (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007; Scheepers & Swart, 2020; Bamford & Forrester, 2003). Where a participatory approach to SC was implemented without the supporting leadership style, findings also showed that there was a lack of supportive measurement and supplementary recognition mechanisms to enable and sustain a more participatory approach to SC.

Regardless of the current dynamic environment in which organisations within this sample are operating, this study demonstrates the continued prevalence of a predominant, top-down leadership approach to SC as described in SC literature (Muller & Kunisch, 2018; Heyden et al., 2017; Sonenshein & Dholakia, 2012; Nag et al., 2007; Mantere et al., 2012; Knight & Paroutis, 2017; Gover & Duxbury, 2017). It can be argued that leaders within these organisations are following the traditional processes that have always been in place and are limited by the accepted leadership norms or practices within the organisation. Due to any previous experience in a participatory approach to change, the value of this approach is therefore not known and therefore not regarded as a positive contributor to the bottom line. A non-participatory approach to SC could therefore be described as a self-reinforcing cycle as the existing reasons for not investing in this approach discourages or even prevents initiatives from employees to contribute their insights and ideas. This perceived unwillingness or inability of employees to participate in SC in turn confirms the view of employee participation as an additional cost with no added value to the process of SC.

6.2.3 Participatory approaches to SC

In addition to the decide and inform approach to SC, the findings of the study identified two additional approaches to SC. One approach focused on a top-down approach but broadened the intention to building the willingness of employees to adopt the change, with a certain degree of employee participation. Another approach focused on a working on a co-created SC solution with a large degree of employee participation.

6.2.3.1 Building commitment to change

The SC approach that followed a largely top-down approach with the intention to create employee willingness and commitment to the change, can be compared to the SC literature that recognises the importance and accountability of managers to engender support and commitment from employees for SC (Heyden et al., 2017; Mantere et al., 2012). In research that acknowledges the supportive role of the employee in SC, the focus centres around management tactics to facilitate sense-making or meaning-making for employees, and the requirement of psychological resources within individual employees to cope with this change (Surtly & Scheepers, 2019; Sonenshein & Dholakia, 2012; Mantere et al., 2012).

The group of research participants that provided examples of this approach involved senior leadership, mostly EXCO and board members, deciding on the strategic direction and change approach and then implementing various actions to ensure employee buy-

in to the change and implementing additional actions to ensure that employees have the relevant capabilities to adopt and implement the required change. Research participants referred to change actions that involved middle management cascading the messages to lower levels and having the required conversations to create buy-in and obtain employee feedback. A significant outcome of this approach was that it enables people to be a part of the change process. Research evidence supports the change intention and process described in the findings, namely the importance of individual integration to change (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017) and the leadership actions required to build individual commitment, valence and efficacy or meaning-making (Surty & Scheepers, 2019; Naotunna & Arachchige, 2016; Sonenshein & Dholakia, 2012; Mantere et al., 2012).

6.3.2.2 A co-creative approach to employee participation in strategic change

There is, however, literature that acknowledges the importance of employees playing an even greater participatory role in strategy co-creation (Pitelis & Wagner, 2019; Salvato & Vassolo, 2017; Sull, 2007; Teece & Linden, 2017). The influence of employees in SA is reflected in research supporting the role of extensive employee social networks as an important influence in strategic adaptation (Lynch & Mors, 2019), as an essential mobilisation force within strategic implementation (De Oliveira et al., 2019; Heracleous & Werres, 2016; Hallin et al., 2017), and as a collective unit within an organisation to support dynamic capabilities (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017; Teece & Linden, 2017). Literature calls for strategic practices to embody continuous cycles of information gathering, interpretation, and adaptation particularly in dynamic environments (Hallin et al., 2017). As organisations strive to create and capture value in an increasingly digitised world, the importance of proactive sensing capabilities across all organisational structures is proposed as well as the need for employee engagement in new learning as a means of closing capability gaps or building new capabilities (Teece & Linden, 2017). In addition, the importance and value of engaging all employees at all levels in conversations that support a circular and continuous cycle of strategy development and implementation is also proposed (Sull, 2007). Salvato and Vassolo (2017) reinforced the importance of equipping all employees in the organisation with the space to contribute their expertise and creativity to improved organisational performance as a critical prerequisite for SA.

There was no evidence in the findings that described mechanisms within an organisation that demonstrated collective employee participation in a continuous and proactive process of sensing, seizing and reconfiguring resources together with management to build SA. The few research participants that mentioned increased employee participation

provided examples which intended to co-create solutions in a particular SC project. In these examples, senior leadership proposed or bought in a broad strategic implementation approach, but enabled employees to become involved and participate in the process of how the SC would be implemented. In essence, these examples describe a SC implementation process that was co-created between a change management team, leadership, and employees.

Collective employee participation is regarded in literature as a critical source of flexibility or agility to enable organisations to continuously adapt to diverse environmental dynamism by creating the appropriate response or configurations, at the right time (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017; Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000). The research findings in this study therefore illustrated a predominantly top-down approach to SC which influenced the change actions regarding employee participation in SC (Muller & Kunisch, 2018; Heyden et al., 2017; Sonenshein & Dholakia, 2012; Nag et al., 2007; Mantere et al., 2012; Knight & Paroutis, 2017; Gover & Duxbury, 2017). There were, however, instances of employee participation in the leadership approach that intended to create employee commitment and buy-in to the SC. In addition, increased employee participation was described in the examples where a co-creation approach was followed. This participation was ring-fenced isolated to strategic projects with no evidence of this approach having been applied in a continuous cycle of sensing, seizing and reconfiguring resources for SA (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017; Teece & Linden, 2017; Hallin et al., 2017; Sull, 2007). The understanding of this overall approach to SC within the study's findings therefore sheds light on the context upon which the methods of employee participation in the findings can be discussed.

6.2.4 Methods for enabling employee participation in SC

The previous sections in this discussion confirmed that organisations within this study are operating in a dynamic environment and implementing concurrent and complex strategic projects. The findings also showed evidence that within this environment, organisations are predominantly adopting a traditional, top down-approach to SC. Although the study findings reflect a limited approach to employee participation in SC, the methods identified through this study provide a valuable foundation for understanding ways in which employees are participating in SC in the current circumstances.

6.2.4.1 Methods used to create employee participation for purposes of employee buy-in and enablement for SC

In the findings that described implementation of SC for the purpose of creating employee buy-in and commitment there were specific examples that illustrated a degree of employee participation. It is important to discuss these methods in the context of this study as research literature demonstrates a strong relationship between employee commitment, valence and efficacy and the success of SC outcomes (Surty & Scheepers, 2019; Naotunna & Arachchige, 2016). Similarly, the requirement for individual capacity building or individual integration to support SC in a dynamic environment is critical to support a participative approach to SC (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017). Salvato and Vassolo (2017), however, stated that this capability in individuals alone will not be sufficient to enable participative practices in SC that will bring about required organisational dynamic capabilities.

In the findings of management tactics for employee buy-in and commitment to SC, the importance of a leadership approach that trusted, valued, and empowered employee contributions in SC was emphasised. These findings are supported by literature that highlights the requirement for a leadership approach that builds relationships of trust, influence, and adaptability to successfully implement change in a dynamic environment (Scheepers & Swart, 2020).

The findings indicated the following methods to enable a supporting leadership approach in SC to build commitment, valence, and efficacy (Scheepers & Swart, 2020):

- Face-to-face workshops and conversations with all levels of leadership to create an understanding and commitment to the SC. These conversations were augmented with supporting communication in certain instances.
- Providing middle management with practical toolkits for enabling SC conversations with employees at all levels in the organisation.
- Creating mechanisms for employee feedback to be filtered to higher levels of management for consideration and response.

Literature also emphasises that meaningful communication with employees regarding SC enables increased employee understanding and buy-in to change (Barrett, 2002). In support of this research, the findings in this study identified additional methods that aimed to increase employee understanding about the SC, summarised as follows:

- The provision of consumable information and communication in the form of emails, infographics or visual maps that can assist employees to understand the nature of the change and their role in the change.
- The creation of face-to-face meeting platforms to provide an opportunity for senior and middle management to inform employees about the change and to provide opportunities for employees to ask questions.
- The implementation of continued engagement activities such as change champion networks, competitions and recognition for employees that demonstrate required change behaviours.
- The creation of opportunities for employees to test products and systems prior to the planned launch dates to enable employees to test and provide feedback with regards to these initiatives.

Although these methods represent a limited degree of collective employee participation in SC, it is important to note that in examples that provided more evidence of employee participation for the purposes of co-creation of SC, many of these methods were utilised in conjunction to participatory methods to ensure commitment of employees to the change. It can therefore be argued that the call for collective employee participation in SC still requires supporting change methods for individual integration. To increase collective employee participation in SC, however, these methods alone will not ensure collective participation as a resource for SA (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017).

6.4.2.2 Methods used to create employee participation for purposes of co-creation of SC

Literature calls for an increased collective employee participation in SC (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017; Teece & Linden, 2017; Hallin et al., 2017; Sull, 2007). To support this, additional research conducted by Scheepers and Swart (2020) showed that people without formal leadership or management positions were able to play an influencing role in SC. Likewise, Agboola and Salawu (2011) described the importance of management working together with employees as partners during a change process. Scheepers and Swart (2020) also argued that involvement of employees, even during the initial planning phase of SC, would increase chances of successful implementation. The findings of the study identified methods to increase collective employee participation in specific strategic projects to elicit valuable ideas and recommendations from employees about the change solution, to enable employee ownership of the change in future implementation, and to increase the effectiveness of the change outcomes.

The various methods proposed in literature through which to accomplish collective employee participation in SC primarily use dialogical mechanisms or conversations (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017; Tjosvold et al., 2014; Lindenberg & Foss, 2011; Sull, 2007; McGrath, 2010). In support of this research evidence, findings from both examples in this study that implemented a participative approach to change, described the use and importance of face-to-face dialogue to enable collective employee participation in the process. In the first example, employees participated in face-to-face workshops, or dialogue sessions, from the inception of the project, right through to the implementation of the proposed system. These workshops were used to discuss employee ideas and opinions about the nature, scope, selection, customisation, and implementation of the system. The sizes of the groups involved in the workshops were representative of all the divisions and levels of employees across the organisation and increased in size and representation as the project progressed. In this project, other methods such as email communication, engagement activities and training were conducted to support the change process, but the face-to-face method of dialogue was deemed as the key method for enabling a participative and collaborative approach to the change. This decision was taken based on past learning within the organisation when previous SC initiatives did not work due to a non-participatory approach to the change.

In the second example, the focus of the project was on transforming the culture of the organisation from a “toxic” to a productive culture to support the mandate of the organisation. Face-to-face workshops or dialogue sessions were also used as the primary method for enabling employee participation in this change. Employees across levels and divisions were requested to provide their ideas and opinions regarding the current state of the organisational culture, the future desired state of this culture, and the key actions required to close this gap. Although other methods were used to communicate information to employees during this process, the face-to-face dialogical method was the primary method utilised.

In support of literature, the findings from this sample illustrated the value of using dialogical methods to enable employee participation in SC, especially with regards to sharing information and ideas and reaching group consensus on future actions (Stefania et al., 2014). The overall sentiment within the findings was that the owners of the SC projects believed that the success of the projects was critically dependent on the collective employee participation in the SC process. In both examples, change owners presented positive feedback with regards to the value contributions by employees to the SC process. These findings support literature that showed how increased levels of

employee collaboration through dialogue enabled the meaningful development of ideas into mutually acceptable solutions (Tjosvold et al., 2014).

Although represented through a small sample, these examples of collective employee participation in SC provided evidence that a participative approach to SC is possible within an organisation in order to strengthen the probability of project success and lay a foundation for the application of learning from this approach into future SC projects. In summary, the findings of this study support dialogue as an important method which creates opportunities for employees to meaningfully collaborate and add value in a SC process (Okhuysen & Bechky, 2009; Grigoriou & Rothaermel, 2014; Lindenberg & Foss, 2011; Willer et al., 2012; Dyne et al., 1994; Organ, 1997; Tjosvold et al., 2014).

6.3 Discussion: Research Question 2

Research Question 2: What are the factors that enable the adoption of methods for collective employee participation in SC?

The second research question explored the various factors that supported the adoption of methods for collective employee participation in SC. This section discusses how the research findings compared to literature with regards to the factors enabling collective employee participation in SC.

6.3.1 Quality of relationships

Literature describes various factors regarding the nature and quality of relationships within an organisation that are required to support a participative approach to SC (Teece, 2012; Tsoukas, 2009; Salvato & Vassolo, 2017). As illustrated in the multi-level framework of dynamic capabilities (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017) and found in research conducted by Teece (2012) and Tsoukas (2009), a foundation for enabling collective participation of employees in SC rests on the quality of relationships within an organisation (Teece, 2012; Tsoukas, 2009).

The findings of the study support the importance of quality relationships in the co-creation digitisation project where a participative employee approach was adopted. The existing culture in the organisation was described as people-centred and conducive to allowing employees to propose and discuss solutions to the change. This finding aligns to the productive I-You relationships as described by Tsoukas (2009). Existing relationships were regarded as collaborative as employees demonstrated responsibility for improving the system and processes that they needed to work with in the future and were willing to

share their knowledge and ideas (Tsoukas, 2009; Sonenshein & Dholakia, 2012; Sears et al., 2018).

The findings of the study also support the importance of quality relationships in the co-creation culture transformation project. The findings were that the existing culture in the organisation was toxic which made it very difficult to initially implement a participative approach as employees questioned the authenticity of the process and the possibility of victimisation if they spoke up. The change management process in this regard proved to have positive effects when proposed change by employees was made visible after the initial dialogue sessions took place. This example therefore supports the literature that describes the outcome of calculative engagement in the absence of quality relationships to support participation in SC (Tsoukas, 2009).

Tsoukas (2009) posited that calculative engagement is an outcome of relationships that are unsupportive and are expressed as I-It relationships. These relationships cause individuals to confine themselves to minimal cooperative behaviours or behaviours that aim to maximise individual gains rather than collective welfare (Tsoukas, 2009). This theory is supported by findings in the neuroscience of change where people are likely to perceive the change brought to them by change leaders as a threat if there is an absence of authentic relationships of trust and mutual respect (Scheepers & Swart, 2020). If they see the change as something that might harm them, or something they might not be able to do, or that it might be too difficult to cope with, they will metaphorically run away from the change and resist it in a number of ways (Scheepers & Swart, 2020).

The findings in this sample support the literature in this regard and provide insight into the reason why organisations do not see the value of investing in this approach. The findings in the study demonstrated instances where leadership did not regard employee participation as valuable or perceived employees as being unwilling to participate in SC in line with research evidence (Friesl & Kwon, 2017; Armenakis & Harris, 2002). It could be argued that this particular employee response is due to the absence of quality relationships which causes employees to resist participation in SC as it is perceived as a threat and therefore, they withhold their contribution.

Findings in the research study also support the research evidence that calls for the preconditions of authenticity and trust for the development of quality relationships (Berkovich, 2014; Edmondson, 1999; Newman et al., 2017; Cross et al., 2020). An important prerequisite for the development of quality relationships, as described by Berkovich (2014), is the behaviours of candour, inclusion, confirmation, and presentness

evident in social interactions. Salvato and Vassolo (2017) argued that the demonstration of all these behaviours enables a unified approach and sense of helpfulness which may be brought about within a psychologically safe environment. This state of trust is referred to by Edmondson (1999) as a psychologically safe work environment where employees feel safe to share their ideas, seek out and provide honest feedback from others, collaborate, take risks and experiment. Various findings in this study highlighted the importance of an environment of trust to enable relationships that support meaningful participation in SC as supported by the theory of psychological safety and relationship engagement (Berkovich, 2014; Edmondson, 1999).

6.3.2 The role of leadership

Leadership is an important lever in the successful delivery of SC and the nature of leadership that is supportive of employee participation in SC is one that focuses on relational and inspirational dimensions of leadership and also creates an organisation environment that is conducive to experimentation and risk taking (Scheepers & Swart, 2020). In a dynamic environment, this type of leadership approach builds relationships of trust, influence, and adaptability to successfully implement change (Scheepers & Swart, 2020).

The findings in this study support the literature in this regard as leadership was described as a pivotal means through which authentic relationships and psychological safety were created and nurtured within organisations. The nature of relationships as supporting participation in SC was described as the antithesis of a power-based leadership approach that demanded compliance and obedience. Supporting relationships were described as empowering and enabling which encouraged employees to bring their creative energy into the workplace through the sharing of ideas, the willingness to question the status quo and engage in collaborative problem solving.

The quality of relationships and a supportive leadership framework can therefore be regarded as critically connected and mutually important factors to enabling collective employee participation in SC. However, as recommended by Scheepers and Swart (2020), the challenge for leaders of SC is to thoroughly understand the scope and impact of change in relation to the organisation's context so as to align the appropriate leadership style and, where required, allow others to take the lead.

6.3.3 A change management approach

Literature discusses the importance of understanding the nature and scope of SC, and the context in which this change is taking place (Scheepers & Swart, 2020; Liden & Antonakis, 2009). The findings of this study support this as a factor to enable employee participation in SC as research participants referred to the importance of a context in which buy-in from top management was obtained and supported with regards to methods of employee participation and that ownership and accountability of this change was also supported at all levels of the organisation. The findings in the study also indicated that a particular context of SC in an organisation may imply that a participative approach to SC may not always be the appropriate method to ensure change success, especially in a crisis. This further supports the need for alignment between the SC approach and the context, nature, and scope of the change (Scheepers & Swart, 2020; Liden & Antonakis, 2009).

6.3.4 Alignment to strategic objectives

The findings of this study support the need to ensure the alignment between organisation's strategic objectives and the SC approach as an important factor to enabling employee participation in SC (Scheepers & Swart, 2020; Liden & Antonakis, 2009). Findings in this study showed that if a participative change approach is adopted, the value of this approach needs to be articulated in line with the delivery of the strategic objectives. This was regarded as an important enabling factor as it created an important anchor for senior leadership buy-in and support and enabled a measurement framework against which the outcomes of a participative approach could be measured.

6.3.5 Translation of strategy and creation of a shared vision

The findings of this study support the translation of the strategy and its link to a shared vision as an important enabling factor for employee participation in SC (Scheepers & Swart, 2020; Barrett, 2002). In instances where a non-participatory approach to SC was described, research participants stressed the lack of understanding and identification with the strategy as a limiting factor. As previously mentioned, literature emphasises that more meaningful communications can enable employees at all levels to be informed about, as well as understand the organisation's change strategy, ensure less resistance and more support from employees (Barrett, 2002). This enabling factor, however, was described as communication that ensured employees could relate to the strategy from an individual as well as a collective perspective. Employees also needed to be able to integrate the strategy to the broader purpose or vision of the organisation and be able to

identify with this. It can be argued that without this understanding, a fundamental enabling building block for effective employee participation in SC is not possible.

It is apparent that to enable employee participation in SC, a number of critical factors need to be in place within the organisation. Together, these factors can be regarded as supporting a meaningful contribution of employees not only to achieve SC objectives, but also to enable a participative process that supports the organisation's ability to adapt effectively to threats and opportunities within a dynamic environment.

6.4 Discussion: Research Question 3

Research Question 3: How does employee participation in SC strengthen SA?

The third research question explored the ways in which employee participation in SC strengthens an organisation's SA. This section discusses how the research findings compared to literature with regards to the evidence that employee participation in SC strengthens SA.

Research evidence indicates that SA enables organisations to continuously attend to diverse environmental dynamism by creating the appropriate response or configurations, at the right time (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017; Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000). Literature states that through the continual use of this dialogical practice of interaction and mutual adaptation between employees, a bank of innovative knowledge and capability is created enabling the organisation to continuously increase adaptive effectiveness (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017).

The findings of the study did not identify any evidence to support the notion that collective employee participation in SC delivered an increase in the organisation's SA. As previously highlighted in this discussion, the examples provided by research participants did not illustrate a continuous participation of employees in cycles of strategic conversations around sensing, seizing and reconfiguring as required by the theory of dynamic capabilities (Teece & Linden, 2017; Hallin et al., 2017). Findings that supported employee participation in SC more appropriately placed in the stage of reconfiguring where employees in one scenario were asked to participate in the scope, selection, customisation, and implementation of a new system across the organisation and in another scenario, where employees were involved in participating in reconfiguring resources in support of a supportive culture. In addition, both projects were still in progress at the time when the research interviews were conducted which further

prevented direct evidence of how the participation of employees strengthened the organisation's SA.

The evidence provided by this study's findings did, however, indicate that the current utilisation of the methods to enable employee participation in SC had provided a foundation upon which to continue enhancing the organisation's ability to strengthen future change capability. Another benefit of employee participation was the decrease in employee resistance to change which decreased the longer-term costs of implementing change which supported an organisation's long-term SA.

Research literature also found that SA, based on the intricate process of employee participation, will present unique sources of competitive advantage within an organisation (Ployhart & Moliterno, 2011; Teece et al., 1997). This research argues that, unlike the structured building blocks of an organisation's adaptability such as skills inherent in individuals, the intricate patterns and processes of interpersonal relationships and dialogue are highly inimitable and therefore difficult to replicate by competitors (Ployhart & Moliterno, 2011; Salvato & Vassolo, 2017).

Although the findings in this study did not provide direct evidence of competitive advantage resulting from employee participation in the SC, the research participant that discussed employee participation in the culture project indicated that the required business performance indicators had improved since the inception of the project and that this was regarded as a result of increased buy-in to the change which, in turn, had resulted in more employee discretionary effort and increased employee ownership to improve on performance outcomes and business profitability.

The research findings of this study were therefore able to provide short-term benefits for the use of collective employee participation in SC with regards to increased employee commitment to the change, opportunities to practise the methods of participatory change methods and improved productivity and business performance due to increased discretionary effort. Due to the implementation of the ring-fence approach in the study and transitory nature of the project, it was not possible to provide direct evidence as to how the application of these methods contributed to overall SA in the long term.

CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the methods utilised within organisations to enable collective employee participation in SC as little is known about the inclusion of employees in SC given the predominant top-down approach to SC in academic literature (Muller & Kunisch, 2018). As a dynamic environment is dramatically re-shaping the strategic landscape that organisations operate within (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017), organisations are being required to build the flexibility to constantly reconfigure resources to seize opportunities and navigate threats (Semke & Tiberius, 2020; Hallin et al., 2017; Teece, 2007; Sull, 2007; Salvato & Vassolo, 2017). The process of employee participation within SC is considered an important mechanism to enable this flexibility or SA within a dynamic environment. (Heracleous & Werres, 2016; Salvato & Vassolo, 2017; Pitelis & Wagner, 2019; Scheepers & Swart, 2020).

Within this context, this study explored methods used by organisations to enable collective employee participation in SC to improve SC outcomes and ultimately SA. Although the study sample demonstrated a predominantly top-down leadership approach to SC as reflected in academic literature (Muller & Kunisch, 2018), the study findings identified instances where organisations utilised methods to enable collective employee participation in SC as reflected in the dialogical dimension of the multi-level framework of dynamic capabilities as proposed by Salvato & Vassolo (2017) and additional supporting dialogical theories (Tjosvold et al., 2014; Stefania et al., 2014; Gratton & Ghoshal, 2002; Tsoukas, 2009; Garrod & Pickering, 2009; Lindenberg & Foss, 2011).

In addition, insight was gained with regards to factors that enabled the effective implementation of these methods as reflected in the multi-level framework of dynamic capabilities as proposed by Salvato and Vassolo (2017) and supporting SC theories (Scheepers & Swart, 2020; Agboola & Salawu, 2011; Martins & Terblanche, 2003; Lines et al., 2005). The study findings unexpectedly, however, also gained a deeper understanding of the barriers to the adoption of employee participation in SC, supported by SC literature (Scheepers & Swart, 2020; Surty & Scheepers, 2019; Bamford & Forrester, 2003; Liden & Antonakis, 2009; Friesl & Kwon, 2017; Tsoukas, 2009).

The study findings were able to identify associated benefits of employee participation in SC but was not able to provide direct evidence that these methods strengthened SA to achieve the outcome of “systematic, orchestrated capacity to reliably reallocate and

reconfigure resources” (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017, p.1734). The lack of this evidence may be due to a combination of methodological challenges such as the size of the study sample which presented a limited number of examples relevant to this study the fact that the examples identified represented projects that were still in progress. Hence, this area of within this study presents opportunities for further exploration and future research opportunities.

This chapter will present a summary of this study’s research findings and discuss the implications for theory and business. This section will also describe the realised limitations in this research study and suggest future areas of research with regards to this topic and field of study.

7.2 Research findings

The main purpose of this study was to explore the methods that organisations were utilising to enable collective employee participation in SC, as little is known about this topic due to a predominant top-down leadership approach to SC (Muller & Kunisch, 2018). The research purpose was articulated through the main research question as follows:

Research Question 1: What are the methods utilised within organisations to enable collective employee participation in SC?

The study also explored, through two sub-questions, the factors that enabled these methods to be implemented within organisations and the effect of these methods on strengthening SA.

Research Question 2: What are the factors that enable the adoption of methods for collective employee participation in SC?

Research Question 3: How does collective employee participation in SC strengthen SA?

The study findings provided evidence of the utilisation of methods for enabling collective employee participation in SC and the factors that supported the adoption of these methods. An area that requires further exploration and evidence is the relationship between collective employee participation in SC and evidence that these methods strengthen long-term SA.

7.2.1 Relevance of employee participation in SC

Organisations are faced with unprecedented, complex and continuous change, largely driven by the presence of a dynamic environment (Scheepers & Swart, 2020; Schwarz et al., 2019; Semke & Tiberius, 2020). To survive, grow and build sustainable competitive advantage within this environment, organisations are required to build inherent capability to rapidly adapt within a dynamic environment (Teece & Linden, 2017; Salvato & Vassolo, 2017). Literature calls for the increased participation of employees at all levels of the organisation to contribute to an organisation's SA in a continuous cycle of sensing trends and threats; seizing emergent opportunities; and, at the right time, rapidly reconfiguring organisational resources to build sustainable competitive advantage (Teece et al., 2016; Hallin et al., 2017, Sull, 2007).

The study findings confirmed that the organisations represented in the study sample were operating within a dynamic environment through the presence of multiple and complex SCs required to adapt to challenges in the environment in which they were operating. Each of the research participants, as an example, provided descriptions that showed how the Covid-19 pandemic had created complex financial, structural and operational challenges that were being addressed, in parallel to existing SC required by legislative, technological and social environmental factors.

Research evidence, within the context of the increased complexity and uncertainty created by macro-environmental variables, recommends that SC processes will only extend relevant value and required support within organisations if they are analogous to the complexity within the environment (Scheepers & Swart, 2020).

In line with academic literature, increased employee participation at all levels of the organisation, and within the SC process, can therefore be regarded as one of the mechanisms to enhance the value and support required to enable organisations to meet the challenges within this environmental context (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017; Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; Hallin et al., 2017). The research participants within this study, even those that admittedly recognised the absence of employee participation in SC within their organisations, expressed the relevance and value of further exploring this approach to more effectively meet the complex and uncertain challenges of the current environment.

One of this study's research participants stated that the most important limitation in organisations today is that "we continue to do the same things, in the same way and expect different results" (Psychologist). This statement is particularly pertinent given that

the findings of this study showed very little use of collective employee participation in SC, despite the research evidence that supports its relevance and value.

7.2.2 A predominant top-down approach to SC

Although there was evidence in this study of methods to enable collective employee participation in SC, the findings showed a predominant top-down approach to SC implementation. Firstly, the findings showed that organisations in the study still adopted a decide and inform approach to SC with little evidence of collective employee participation in SC. Research findings also showed that organisations within the study also adopted a decide and obtain buy-in approach to SC which is described as a means to enable individual preparation and engagement in SC (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017; Scheepers & Swart, 2020). Although there was some degree of employee participation in these instances, predominant leadership action moulded the direction and solutions to the SC processes.

As described within the scope of this research report, this study does not challenge the importance of leadership action in SC. However, it can be argued that the unquestioned acceptance of traditional leadership actions may limit leaderships' consideration and exploration of possibilities to adopt more participative approaches to SC.

7.2.3 Perceived lack of value

The findings of this study identified additional concerns that prevented the implementation of collective employee participation in SC. These concerns were expressed as the perceived incommensurate relationship between the time, cost, and logistical complexity associated with this approach against the return on investment of implementing this approach. The researcher acknowledges that the methods associated with this approach may increase the time and costs of implementing SC; however, respectfully notes that these findings were expressed by research participants in the sample that utilised the traditional, decide and inform approach to SC.

As research evidence shows, increased employee participation in SC holds extensive organisational benefits (Scheepers & Swart, 2020; Bamford & Forrester, 2003; Wittig, 2012; Agboola & Salawu, 2012; Lynch & Mors, 2019; Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000). It can therefore be argued that organisations stuck in a traditional leadership approach to SC need to explore more participatory approaches using supporting instruments to measure the full value of this approach.

7.2.4 Methods for a participative approach to SC

Where the study findings showed instances of collective employee participation in SC, the purpose of this approach was to enable the co-creation of SC solutions and their implementation. The methods utilised in these instances were predominantly dialogical in nature. Face-to-face workshops were utilised in both instances as vehicles to initiate discussion with employees to share ideas and concerns, and collaboratively find solutions to the implementation of SC. Evidence from both examples demonstrates how the use of dialogue enabled constructive participation of employees for the intended outcomes as the implementation of these strategic projects were built upon the ideas and recommendations of the employees themselves. Interestingly, in these particular examples, both the organisations were experiencing financial challenges due to environmental and internal operation challenges, yet deemed the investment required for this participative approach as critical to the projects' success and organisations' long-term viability.

This evidence supports the use of dialogical mechanisms to enable participation with organisations, as proposed by Salvato and Vassolo (2017), in the multi-level framework for dynamic capabilities and supporting dialogical theories (Tjosvold et al., 2014; Stefania et al., 2014; Gratton & Ghoshal, 2002; Tsoukas, 2009; Garrod & Pickering, 2009; Lindenberg & Foss, 2011). It can therefore be argued that a collective employee participative approach in SC is possible within organisations despite the associated costs, time and logistical complexities that may be required.

The study findings, however, also demonstrated the importance of several factors that supported the successful implementation of this approach and that raises important considerations prior to its implementation.

7.2.5 Factors enabling collective employee participation in SC

The findings in this study showed a common set of factors that enabled and supported the implementation of collective employee participation in SC. These factors were identified as important prerequisites and supporting change processes to enable the successful implementation and SC outcomes.

In line with the multi-level framework for dynamic capabilities (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017) and supporting SC theories (Scheepers & Swart, 2020; Mantere et al., 2012; Sonenshein & Dholakia, 2012; Naotunna & Arachchige, 2016), the importance of individual preparation and readiness for change as a prerequisite for the application of dialogical

mechanisms was demonstrated in the study findings. In the study findings that demonstrated collective employee participation, individual commitment and readiness methods were utilised in conjunction with this approach as research participants explained the importance of these methods for successful change outcomes. The following specific change actions in this area were identified in this study's findings to critically support the implementation of employee participation in SC:

- To develop a shared purpose or vision within the organisation as a central guidepost to building employee willingness to participate in the SC (Martins & Terblanche, 2003).
- To align the leadership people agenda within SC and the measurable business performance outcomes to ensure sustained leadership support (Scheepers & Swart, 2020).
- To create employee understanding of the business strategy that underpins the change process through a language that is accessible and meaningful on an individual and departmental level (Agboola & Salawu, 2011).
- To invest in the capacity and resources required to support the planned change management process to ensure that intentions are not overridden by business-as-usual requirements or deliverables (Scheepers & Swart, 2020).

One of the most consistent set of factors identified across much of the sample in this study were foundational leadership behaviours of authenticity, empathy, acknowledgement of value and acceptance of differences of opinions within the working environment, to support constructive relational engagement for the presence of quality relationships within organisations. The study's findings therefore support the propositions of the multi-level framework for dynamic capabilities with the foundational behaviours of candour, inclusion, confirmation and presentness (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017; Berkovich, 2014) that are a prerequisite for quality relationships to support constructive dialogue.

The presence and importance of trust as an outcome of a psychologically safe environment was also highlighted in this study's findings as an important factor that enabled authentic dialogue between organisational actors and required collaboration to deliver on organisational outcomes. These findings are also reflected in the proposition of Salvato and Vassolo (2017) and supporting theories (Edmondson, 1999; Tsoukas, 2009; Newman et al., 2017; Cross et al., 2020) that describe psychological safety and trust as a foundational requirement for effective dialogue, collaboration and constructive participation.

The central role of collective organisational leadership in building individual readiness for SC, a psychologically safe environment and foundational behaviours supporting relationship engagement is supported in Salvato and Vassolo's multi-level theory of dynamic capabilities and in supporting leadership and change theories (Scheepers & Swart; 2020; Surty & Scheepers, 2019; Burke, 2008; Owen & Dietz, 2012; Uhl-Bien et al., 2007; Martins & Terblanche, 2003; Lines et al., 2005; Edmondson, 1999).

The findings in this study, as described in instances of the decide and build buy-in and co-creation approaches to SC, acknowledged the formative and relational influence of collective leadership to enable successful SC outcomes. The study findings, in instances of employee participation for co-creation of change solutions, identified the presence of leadership support for participative methods and aligned leadership actions that supported the change process.

The prerequisite factors, as described above, raise an important consideration regarding the absence of these factors within organisations. Research evidence shows that in the absence of these prerequisite factors, employees will perceive an invitation to participate in SC as a threat and respond in alignment with behaviours of calculative engagement (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017; Berkovich, 2014; Scheepers & Swart, 2020; Rock & Schwartz, 2006). The observed behaviours of calculative engagement (Berkovich, 2014) provide a possible explanation for the leadership perception that employees were unwilling to participate in SC and could provide little value to the process. The presence of these prerequisite factors is therefore dependent on the leadership characteristics and behaviours that support a conducive environment for collective employee participation in SC across the organisation (Scheepers & Swart, 2020).

Collective employee participation in SC cannot, therefore, be regarded as an extemporary approach to SC. Collective employee participation in SC needs to be regarded systemically within the organisational context and the external environment (Liden & Antonakis, 2009). If applied, without the presence of these identified prerequisite factors, the time, cost, and effort of applying this approach will unlikely yield a positive contribution to the delivery of SC objectives.

7.2.6 Strategic adaptability

The findings in this study did not provide direct evidence that instances of collective employee participation in SC strengthened long-term SA in line with the requirements of resource configuration and sustained competitive advantage (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017). The lack of this evidence may be due to a combination of methodological challenges

such as the size of the study sample which presented a limited number of examples relevant to this study and the fact that the examples identified represented projects that were still in progress. Hence, this area within this study presents opportunities for further exploration and future research opportunities.

The findings did, however, show evidence that a participative approach had provided an increased willingness of employees to share ideas and contribute to the SC solution within the projects. In addition, findings indicated that supportive leadership and conducive working environment increased overall energy, discretionary effort, productivity and employee ownership towards the delivery of business performance outcomes.

7.3 Theoretical and methodological implications

The findings of this study have theoretical and methodological implications that provide considerations for future research in this field. These implications are described in this section within the prescribed purpose and scope of this study.

The findings in this study provided evidence to support the multi-level theory of dynamic capabilities (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017) and the additional supporting theories as described in the literature review. This study, therefore, provides a humble contribution to the theoretical body of knowledge through confirmation of research evidence supporting the utilisation of methods to enable collective employee participation in SC. As the study findings were not able to demonstrate the longer-term outcome of SA, a practical methodological implication of this study points to the need for a longitudinal study to provide opportunities to identify the relationship between increased employee participation in SC and the outcomes organisational flexibility in adaption of new sources of dynamism and the development of competitive advantage through this capability (Salvato & Vassolo, 2017).

This study's methodological approach did not consider the specific nature and size of the organisation in the study sample. The size of the organisation and the nature of its operations may influence the success of methods utilised to enable collective employee participation in SC. Furthermore, this study did not consider or differentiate between the scope, complexity, and impact of SCs within the sample. This consideration may also influence the selection of methods utilised to enable collective employee participation in SC. This study has, however, provided a foundation upon which to further explore the methods for enabling collective employee participation in SC to enable SA within a dynamic environment.

7.4 Implications for management

This study's findings have demonstrated the relevance of collective employee participation in SC, especially for organisations that are faced with complex and uncertain environmental challenges. This study therefore provides implications and considerations for management in the implementation and measurement of collective employee participation for SC.

Due consideration needs to be given to the enabling factors that support collective employee participation in SC. The existing leadership characteristics and styles predominant within an organisation need to support a conducive environment and behaviours that support quality relationships. In conjunction, the context and nature of the SC also need to be considered to ensure that sufficient capacity and resources can be invested in this approach. These considerations will influence the level of contribution of more methods for employee participation in SC in the delivery of SC outcomes.

To ensure the long-term viability and future investment in a participative approach to SC, management should consider the development of a measurement framework to track and monitor the outcomes of a participative approach and the benefits to long-term SA.

Finally, management may consider extending collective employee participation as a continuous SC process to constantly identify opportunities and implement on initiatives, instead of limiting these methods to specific SC projects.

7.5 Limitations

7.5.1 Researcher biases

An important aspect of qualitative research is the reflexivity of the researcher to clarify and limit biases and assumptions introduced by the researcher that may affect the results (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The researcher's assumptions regarding the outcome of the study could be described as follows: firstly, that dialogical mechanisms in organisations would enable collective participation of employees in SC; and secondly, that collective employee participation in SC will strengthen an organisation's SA. To address this limitation the researcher commenced the study with an in-depth literature review to explore whether dialogical theories support collective participation in SC. The second assumption was addressed through the research questions and interviews conducted to either confirm or dispute this assumption in the final research analysis and interpretation.

7.5.2 Time horizon

A cross-sectional study was conducted due to time limitations. Interviews were conducted at one point in time during 2020. As individual and organisation behaviour constantly changes, no interpretations can be made for future periods.

7.5.3 Sample size

The size of the sample was not ideal as the researcher found it challenging to get access to research participants that met the requirements of this study. The findings of the study within this sample, however, provided valuable insights and themes with regards to the current utilisation of methods to enable employee participation in SC.

7.6 Suggestions for future research

Different configurations of individual integration and methods of participation may determine the organisation's ability to adapt to SC. Future research may therefore explore the suitability of various dialogical methods to enable employee participation in SC and their applicability to strengthen different types of SC.

As context matters in the implementation of SC, future research may therefore also explore the various environmental and inherent contextual factors that may have a moderating effect on the implementation of employee participation in SC. In addition, the size of the organisation can be included as an additional moderating factor to be considered.

As dialogical methods of participation are perceived to be more time consuming, and therefore costly, future research could explore the possibility and effectiveness of dialogical methods that make use of digital platforms to enable employee participation. To further support the viability of this approach, the value of employee participation could also be explored as part of a measurement framework that enables the measurement of various dimensions to demonstrate the outcome of this approach on long-term SA.

7.7 Conclusion

An overriding challenge facing organisations today is to find ways in which to stay competitive amidst continual change and turbulence (Schwarz et al., 2019; Semke & Tiberius, 2020). Traditionally structured organisations are not inherently built for SA or flexibility and are finding that conventional ways of formulating strategy and aligning organisational transformation are no longer delivering results as required (Teece et al., 2016). Possibilities of an inclusive and continuous role for employees, at all levels of the

organisation, to contribute in the processes of SC as a function of a dynamic strategic process that seeks opportunities, identify initiatives to realise opportunities and deliver on these swiftly and efficiently (Sull, 2007; Hallin et al. 2017; Teece, 2007; Salvato & Vassolo, 2017). Methods that can realise inclusive employee participation in SC present an opportunity to realise this mechanism to enable required SA.

Therefore, the primary purpose of this study was to explore the methods utilised within organisations to enable collective employee participation in SC as little is known about the inclusion of employees in SC given the predominant top-down approach to SC in academic literature (Muller & Kunisch, 2018).

Although the study sample demonstrated a predominantly top-down leadership approach to SC as reflected in academic literature (Muller & Kunisch, 2018), the study findings identified instances where organisations utilised methods to enable collective employee participation in SC as reflected in the dialogical dimension of the multi-level framework of dynamic capabilities as proposed by Salvato and Vassolo (2017) and additional supporting dialogical theories (Tjosvold et al., 2014; Stefania et al., 2014; Gratton & Ghoshal, 2002; Tsoukas, 2009; Garrod & Pickering, 2009; Lindenberg & Foss, 2011). In addition, insight was gained into factors that enabled the effective implementation of these methods as reflected in the multi-level framework of dynamic capabilities proposed by Salvato and Vassolo (2017) and supporting SC theories (Scheepers & Swart, 2020; Agboola & Salawu, 2011; Martins & Terblanche, 2003; Lines et al., 2005). The study findings were also able to identify associated benefits of employee participation in SC but were not able to provide direct evidence that these methods strengthened long-term SA.

In summary, this study humbly contributes to understanding the methods, enabling factors and benefits of collective employee participation in SC to meet the continuous challenges presented within a dynamic environment. In essence, this topic reflects the growing recognition of untapped human potential within organisations and the value of trusting the contribution of this potential in the creation and mobilisation of an organisation's strategy.

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Annexures

Annexure A: Consistency Matrix

Research Questions	Sections in Literature Review	Literature References	Data Collection Tool	Analysis
<p>Research question 1: What are the methods utilised within organisations to enable collective employee participation in SC?</p>	<p>2.2.1 The role of employees in the strategic landscape 2.4.1 A framework for employee participation in strategic change 2.4.5 Dialogue</p>	<p>Agboola & Salawu, 2011 Bamford & Forrester, 2003 Barrett, 2002 Berkovich, 2014 Bourgoin et.al., 2018 Dyne et.al., 1994 Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000 Garrod & Pickering, 2009 Gratton & Ghoshal, 2002 Grigoriou & Rothaermel, 2014 Hallin et al., 2017 Heracleaou & Werres, 2016 Lindenberg & Foss, 2011 Lynch & Mors, 2019 McGrath, 2010 Okhuysen & Bechky, 2009 Organ, 1997 Pitelis & Wagner, 2019 Salvato & Vassolo, 2017 Scheepers & Swart, 2020 Stefania et al., 2014 Sull, 2007 Teece, 2007 Teece & Linden, 2017</p>	<p>Interview Guide Questions 5–8</p>	<p>Thematic Content Analysis</p>

Research Questions	Sections in Literature Review	Literature References	Data Collection Tool	Analysis
		Tjosvold et al., 2014 Tsoukas, 2009 Willer et.al., 2012 Wittig, 2012		
<p>Research question 2: What are the factors that enable the adoption of methods for collective employee participation in SC?</p>	<p>2.3.2 Strategic change perspectives 2.3.3 Leadership perspectives in strategic change 2.4.2 Quality of relationships 2.4.3 Trust and psychological safety 2.4.4 The neuroscience of change</p>	<p>Armenakis & Harris, 2002 Burke, 2008 Cross et al., 2020 Edmondson, 1999 Fiss & Zajac, 2006 Friesl & Kwon, 2017 Gioia et al., 1994 Gover & Duxbury, 2017 Hambrick, 2007 Heyden et al., 2017 Knight & Paroutis, 2017 Liden & Antonakis, 2009 Lines et al., 2005 Mantere et al., 2012 Martins & Terblanche, 2003 Muller & Kunisch, 2018 Nag et al., 2007 Naotunna & Arachchige, 2016 Newman et al., 2017 Owen & Dietz, 2012 Rock & Schwartz, 2006 Salvato & Vassolo, 2017 Sonenshein & Dholakia, 2018 Scheepers & Swart, 2020</p>	<p>Interview Guide Question 9–10</p>	<p>Thematic Content Analysis</p>

Research Questions	Sections in Literature Review	Literature References	Data Collection Tool	Analysis
		Surty & Scheepers, 2020 Uhl-Bien et al., 2007		
Research question 3: How does collective employee participation in SC strengthen SA?	2.1 Strategic adaptability and employee participation in strategic change 2.4 Participation to enable strategic adaptability 2.4.6 Participation	Carmeli et al., 2016 De Oliveira et al., 2019 Hallin et al., 2017 Heracleous & Werres, 2016 Lynch & Mors, 2019 Pitelis & Wagner, 2019 Ployhart & Moliterno, 2011 Schwarz et al., 2019 Semke & Tiberius, 2020 Teece, 2007 Teece et al., 2016 Teece et al., 1997 Salvato & Vassolo, 2017 Sull, 2007	Interview Guide Question 10–11	Thematic Content Analysis

Annexure B: Interview Guide

No.	Question Guide
Contextual Questions	
1.	Can you give me a brief overview of your company?
2.	Can you describe your role within the organisation?
3.	Can you describe how your current role supports the implementation of SC within the organisation?
4.	Can you describe the most recent or current SC that your organisation is experiencing?
SC and Methods of Employee Participation	
5.	How does your organisation generally approach the implementation of SC?
6.	Can you describe the different ways that employees are engaged to participate in SC?
6 a	Probing question: At what levels of the organisation does this happen?
6. b	Probing question: At what stage of the SC process are the method(s) used?
7.	What are the challenges experienced when engaging employees in SC?
7. a	Probing question: What are the ways that you have adapted to these challenges?
8.	What are the positive results or benefits that you have experienced from engaging employees in SC?
Factors enabling the adoption of employee participation in SC	
9.	What do you believe are the factors that made it possible for your organisation to engage employees in SC?
10.	What would you change in your organisation to improve current level of employee engagement in SC?
Employee participation in SC and the benefits for SA	
10.	How do you believe that the engagement of employees in SC allows your company to adapt to continuous demands and changes from the environment?
11.	Can you provide specific examples of how the engagement of employees in SC has supported your organisation to successfully adapt to challenges and changes from the environment?

Annexure C: Informed Consent Form



Informed Consent

I am Claire McKelvey, a research student conducting research on the methods that organisations utilise to enable collective employee participation in SC and the benefits that this provides in the strengthening of SA. During an interview, I would ask you few open-ended questions and have a dialogue with you to understand your views and experiences. If you agree, I will lead this interview based on the questions I have prepared. You do not have to answer all the questions, but it would be appreciated if you can, since it would lead to better results for the study. ***Your participation is voluntary, and you withdraw at any time without penalty.***

Your answers will be treated confidentially, and you will not be asked for any information that will identify yourself. The interview will last for about 1 hour and 30 minutes depending on how the discussion proceeds. In order to analyse your responses at a later stage, will you allow me to record our conversation (Yes/No). All data will be stored and reported without identifiers. If you have any concerns, please contact my supervisor or myself. Our details are provided below.

Researcher: Claire McKelvey

Supervisor: Hayley Pearson

Email : 19405848@mygibs.co.za

Email : Pearsonh@gibs.co.za

Phone : +27 82 412 9690

Phone : +27 76 930 2170

Signature of participant: _____

Date: _____

Signature of researcher: _____

Date: _____

Annexure D: Ethical Clearance

**Gordon Institute
of Business Science**
University of Pretoria

**Ethical Clearance
Approved**

Dear Claire McKelvey,

Please be advised that your application for Ethical Clearance has been approved.

You are therefore allowed to continue collecting your data.

We wish you everything of the best for the rest of the project.

[Ethical Clearance Form](#)

Kind Regards

Annexure E: Confidentiality Letter



Confidentiality Agreement

This agreement is between:

Claire McKelvey

(Researcher)

and

Jeanne Enslin

(Language Editor)

For Research Project:

Methods for enabling collective employee participation in strategic change

Summary of editorial services:

1. General language usage and style
2. Coherence and cohesion
3. Sentence structure
4. Tenses and concord
5. Punctuation
6. Unnecessary capital letters
7. British instead of American spelling
8. Consistency of all usage throughout

9. Ensure all usage is in keeping with the requirements and standards of GIBS (University of Pretoria)

I agree to:

1. keep all the research information shared with me confidential.
2. not discuss or share the research information with anyone other than with the Researcher or others identified by the Researcher.
3. keep all research information secure while it is in my possession.
4. return all research information to the Researcher when I have completed the research tasks or upon request, whichever is earlier.
5. destroy all research information regarding this research project that is not returnable to the Researcher after consulting with the Researcher.
6. comply with the instructions of the Researcher about requirements to physically and/or electronically secure records (including password protection, file/folder encryption, and/or use of secure electronic transfer of records through file sharing, use of virtual private networks, etc.)

If you have any concerns, please contact the researcher, or the research supervisor directly. Contact information can be found below:

Researcher name: Claire McKelvey
Email: 19405848@mygibs.co.za
Phone: +27 82 412 9690

Research Supervisor: Hayley Pearson
Email: Pearsonh@gibs.co.za
Phone: +27 76 930 2170

Signature of language editor: 

Date: 08 January 2021

Signature of researcher: _____

Date: _____

Annexure F: Thematic Map

Research Question	Code Groups	Number of Codes	Themes
RQ 1	Industries	25	
RQ 1	Role in SC	26	Relevance
RQ 1	Types of SC	26	
RQ 1	Top down	10	
RQ 1	Individual integration	23	SC Approach
RQ 1	Co-creation	20	
RQ 1	Frequency	5	
RQ 1	Methods	92	Methods
RQ 1	Positive view	8	
RQ 1	When not appropriate	3	
		238	
RQ 2	Change management	4	
RQ 2	More than ROI	3	
RQ 2	Culture	25	
RQ 2	Empowerment	9	
RQ 2	Enablement	2	
RQ 2	Energise	6	
RQ 2	Guiding coalition	10	
RQ 2	Impact of Covid-19	1	Enabling Factors
RQ 2	Ownership	2	
RQ 2	Leadership conversations	8	
RQ 2	New leadership mindset	5	
RQ 2	Relationships	4	
RQ 2	Role of leadership	13	
RQ 2	Shared vision	9	
RQ 2	Translation of strategy	7	
RQ 2	Business as usual	7	
RQ 2	Culture	13	
RQ 2	No value	5	
RQ 2	Hierarchical culture	5	Barriers
RQ 2	Impact of Covid-19	5	
RQ 2	Cascade of strategy	8	
RQ 2	Middle management	5	
RQ 2	Senior leadership	12	

Research Question	Code Groups	Number of Codes	Themes
RQ 2	Psychological safety	30	
RQ 2	Power-based leadership	12	
RQ 2	Retrenchments	4	
RQ 2	Size of organisation	7	
RQ 2	Top-down leadership mindset	24	
RQ 2	ROI	13	
		251	
RQ 3	Buy-in to SC	4	
RQ 3	Increased productivity	15	Outcomes
RQ3	Increased performance	10	
RQ 3	Strategic adaptability	5	
		34	

Annexure G: Summary of Research Findings compared to Literature

Supporting Literature	Research findings that supported literature	Research findings that added to literature
<p>Research Question 1: What are the methods utilised within organisations to enable collective employee participation in strategic change?</p>		
<p>Theory: Multi-level framework of dynamic capabilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dialogue as a social mechanism to enable participation 	<p>Dialogue was utilised as the primary method for employee participation in strategic change</p> <p>Dialogue enabled employees to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share ideas Combine ideas to co-creation change solutions Collaborate to implement change solutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practical methods utilised to enable dialogue across divisions Practical methods utilised to enable dialogue at different stages of the change process
<p>Theory: Strategic change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Influence of non-managerial employees on strategic change Influence of employees in the planning phase of strategic change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive influence of non-managerial employees in strategic change planning and implementation 	
<p>Research Question 2: What are the factors that enable the adoption of methods for collective employee participation in strategic change?</p>		
<p>Theory: Strategic change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic change perspectives Top-down approach to strategic change Employees as recipients to change Individual integration for strategic change Role of leadership Communication of strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dialogical strategic change perspectives Influence of top-down leadership perspectives in strategic change Employees as recipients of strategic change Role of individual integration in strategic change The critical role of supportive leadership Importance of strategy 	<p>Barriers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traditional approach to leadership Perceived lack of value of employee participation in strategic change

Supporting Literature	Research findings that supported literature	Research findings that added to literature
Theory: Multi-level framework of dynamic capabilities	<p style="text-align: center;">communication and understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of individual integration to support employee participation • Requirement for relationships of trust and reciprocal value • Role of psychological safety to support relational engagement • Calculative engagement responses in the absence of a supportive environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee participation may at times be limited to individual integration
<p>Research question 3: How does collective employee participation in strategic change strengthen strategic adaptability?</p>		
Theory: Multi-level framework of dynamic capabilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental dynamism causing misfit or potential opportunity • Systematic, orchestrated capacity to reliably reallocate and reconfigure resources • Flexibility in adapting new sources of dynamism • Inimitability and non-substitutability of resources to build competitive advantage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisations coping with the challenges and opportunities of environmental dynamism 	<p>Short-term benefits of employee participation in strategic change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased individual integration • Discretionary effort • Productivity • Increased ownership of business performance measures