

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this chapter is to conclude the results of the literature review discussed in Chapter 2 and the empirical study discussed in Chapter 3 and 4. Conclusions are drawn with regard to the research objectives. Limitations of the study are outlined and recommendations are made for mining organisations and future research opportunities.

#### **5.2 CONCLUSIONS**

The main objective of this research was to determine the experiences and perceptions of women working in gold and platinum mines in South Africa, regarding the perceived discrimination of women in the mining industry.

##### **Concluding remarks on the literature review:**

The objective of the literature review was to find out more about the history of women discrimination in the mines in South Africa and to ascertain the level of transformation in the industry in terms of eliminating this behaviour. The findings of the literature review revealed that although the industry had transformed tremendously, women discrimination was still a major problem in the mines of South Africa. There is currently still a subtle resistance to change, particularly from the beneficiaries of the status quo. Some employees do not support the fact that women are currently working in the mines. Assumptions are still made about the roles, behaviour, abilities and needs of women, and these assumptions prompt organisations to prioritise the issue of sex stereotyping (Whittock, 2002). Male miners hold preconceived notions that women are physically weaker, less intelligent, and promiscuous (Lazcano, 2002, Whittock, 2002). Some men still believe that women will contaminate work processes (Lazcano, 2002), while other men even promulgate stereotypical beliefs to legitimise women's exclusion from the

mines. As a result, women still endure physical and verbal harassment. The literature review furthermore revealed the perception that white women were benefiting more from Employment Equity policies than black women. White women were perceived to be getting privileged treatment compared to black women.

### **Concluding remarks on the empirical research:**

It also emerged from the empirical research for this study that women discrimination in the mining industry in South Africa, is not a myth, but a reality. The interviews with the female respondents revealed that women were treated unequally to their male equally qualified counterparts. The research revealed that women have to, on a daily base, deal with men's negative attitudes that are grounded on stereotypical beliefs. Women are thus daily subjected to downgrading and harassment. Harassment is endured physically, verbally (in the form of derogatory remarks) and through asserting dominance and/or discouraging efforts. Sex segregation is common practice when it comes to the appointment or placement of individuals into positions. This type of discrimination was found in all employment levels (low level, middle management level and top management level) and in all divisions. Furthermore, the empirical research revealed the perception that white women and black women were not treated equally. There was a tendency of white women getting more privileges than their black female counterparts and being employed in professional and elite positions, while the tendency of with black women was perceived to remain unskilled.

The general perception amongst respondents was that most discrimination incidences remained unreported and that this was why this form of discrimination was still prevalent in the industry.

### **Overall conclusion:**

The overall conclusion drawn from both the literature review and empirical study is that effective implementation and management change are the core issues that mining

organisations are faced with. While mining organisations mainly focus on meeting Mining Charter women employment targets, they overlook the importance of properly managing the change process that all employees have to go through in order to change their behaviour and the way males relate to female colleagues.

### **5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recommendations are made for mining organisations related to this study, as well as for future research:

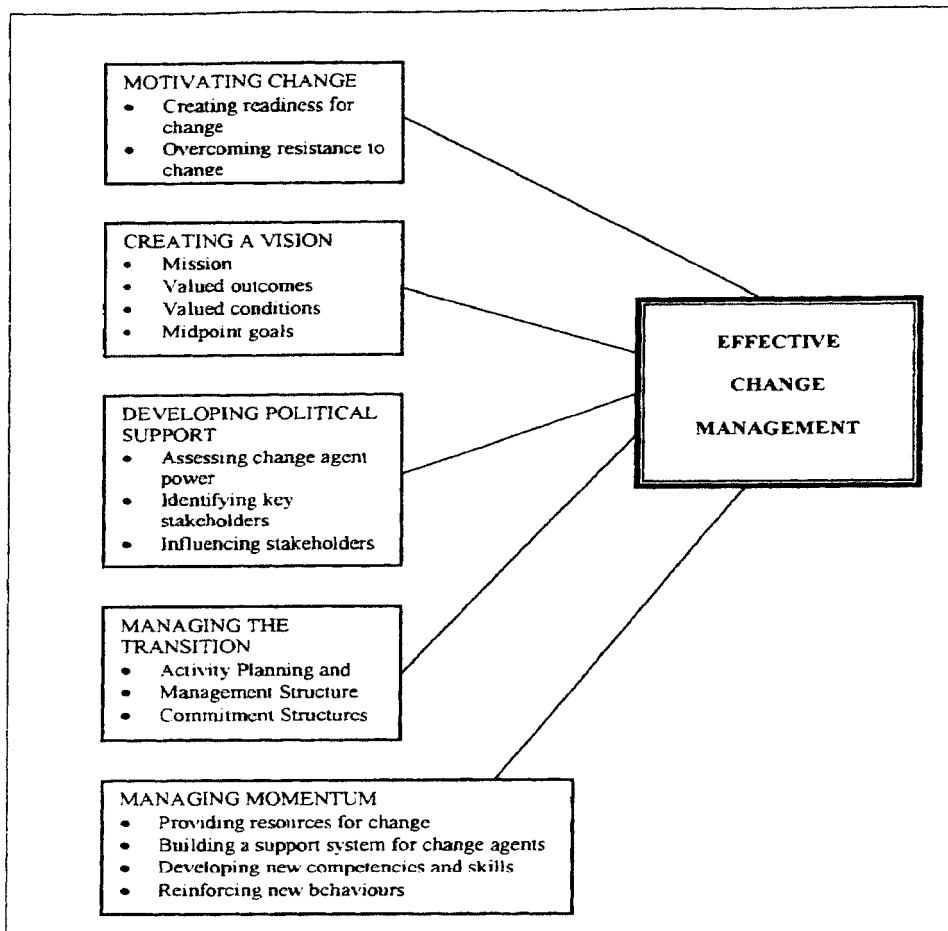
#### **5.3.1 Recommendations for mining organisations**

In light of the above conclusions, it is recommended that measures be put in place to create a climate to promote the elimination of women discrimination within South African mining organisations. Mining organisations should put measures in place to ensure that the work environment is free from all forms of discrimination. One of the required measures would be to conduct basic change management training for all staff and to equip all management staff with relevant change management skills.

Cummings and Huse (1989) suggest that the diversity of practical advice for managing change is organised into the following five major activities (see Figure: 5.1):

- The first activity: Motivate change and create readiness for change among organisational members. Assist them in overcoming resistance to change.
- The second activity: Create a vision for a desired future state of the organisation.
- The third activity: Develop political support for change.
- The fourth activity: Manage the transition from the current state to the desired future state.
- The fifth activity: Sustain momentum for change so that it may be carried out to completion.

**Figure: 9** Activities that contribute to effective change management



Source: Cummings and Huse (1989:108)

In an attempt to transform the industry, organisations focus mostly on implementing the first two activities while they pay less attention to the last three activities. However, organisations should start to emphasise the proper implementation of the last three activities. This may be executed as follows:

- Management should develop political support for change from powerful individuals, (e.g. line managers) and groups (e.g. unions) who can either block or promote change. Getting the buy in of middle and lower management may be critical since these parties would be the ones to drive the transformation process. They would

represent the driving force in actively implementing the policies. Getting the buy in of unions would also be vital because they essentially form the driving force within the labour movement.

- To successfully manage the transition from the current state to the desired future state, organisations should properly implement labour legislation and policies that intend to eliminate women discrimination. Mining organisations should create a women friendly atmosphere within the work environment and a workforce that is more flexible in its work practices and attitudes towards women. Internal monitoring, evaluation and verification systems should also be put in place.
- The organisation should identify women who have already succeeded in the industry and solicit act as mentors to female employees who are struggling to adapt in this industry.
- More women should be employed in senior positions or in positions of power.
- Organisations should introduce more skills development programmes that would accelerate women skills development relevant to the mining industry.
- There is a perception that jobs are segregate according to skin colour and that white females are currently placed in "elite jobs", while black females are occupying the harsh underground occupations. Organisations should investigate the truth behind this perception and come up with possible solutions to redress and prevent future occurrences of this problem.
- Organisations should offer wider support to women. The support should be in the form of encouragement, advice, resources, influencing behind the scenes (Wickham, 2004) and encouraging women to report all discrimination incidences.

The promotion of women's rights and gender equality is fundamental to combating economic poverty and sustainable development because women comprise half of the world's population and the majority of the poor? Unless it is actively ensured that the rights of women are promoted, economic poverty will only get worse.

### **5.3.2 Recommendations for women employed in mining organisations**

Women should start being agents of change. They should stop running away from this industry when things get tough since running away would not transform the mining industry. Change has to be brought about by the women themselves. They should strive to break through the shackles of negative stereotypes and prejudice that have become part of our social fabric. They should internalise the positive stereotypes and build on them.

Women should learn to carry their own weight and ask men to carry theirs. They should start to understand what they are getting into when they join the mining sector. This is a tough industry, which needs tough people who would carry their own weight. Women should accept their situation and stop thinking that they would get easy work by abusing the company policies (such as falling pregnant frequently to be relieved of underground duties -- since mining policies requires that pregnant woman do not work underground due to radiation). Women should learn to become accountable for their actions and not victims of their circumstances (Jodi, 2008).

### **5.3.3 Recommendations for future research**

Despite the limitations of this study, its findings may have significant implications for future research. Future research should continue to focus on the experience of women in the mining industry, without focussing only on the gold and platinum mines.

The following future research should be considered:

- The role of women employment in the mining industry in eliminating or reducing poverty – in other words, the ripple effect that women employment in the mines may have on community development.
- The glass ceiling in the mining industry (its origin, how it is introduced, and ways to overcome it).
- Comparative studies on female related issues in different mining industries.
- Comparative studies on female related issues within the mining industries of different countries.
- Identifying the positions (surface and underground) in which women would be productive and promoting the employment of women in these positions.
- Career development paths for women in the mining industry.
- Factors influencing female work wellness, e.g. personality characteristics, etc.

#### 5.3.4 Research application

This research could prove useful to the following interest groups:

- ***Executives, Transformation Managers and Human Resources managers:*** These people are responsible for planning and implementing transformation within their respective companies and therefore should acquaint themselves with the issues which were identified as being important, and significantly important in the research.
- ***Transformation Consultants:*** Consultants can find the research findings useful.
- ***Policy Makers:*** The research has identified the problem of women discrimination in the mining industry and has also identified important issues needing attention which would be valuable in the decision making process. Policy makers should take note and look at reforming policies to incorporate some of these issues.