Perspectives of Black South African Managers Regarding Advancement into Senior Corporate Management Positions: Implications for Human Resource Development.

Johannes M. Mokoele

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in partial requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Adult and Continuing Education

APPROVED

Marcie Boucouvalas, Chair
Harold Stubblefield
Gabriella Belli
Ron McKeen
Maigenet Shifferaw
Pamela Arrington

November 19, 1997
Blacksburg, Virginia

Keywords: Nation building; human resource development; black managers; black advancement; corporate management

Copyright 1997, Johannes M. Mokoele
South Africa (SA) is undergoing a transformation of governance from apartheid to a new country of inclusion and involvement of previously disenfranchised groups. The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) is an official document to guide efforts at nation-building. Human resource development (HRD) is a key component. As used in this study, HRD is broadly conceptualized as the deployment of human resources for the purposes of nation-building in SA. Consequently, an integral part of the program is the role of adult learning in this process.

Literature indicates that blacks experience slower rates of moving up the corporate ladder, especially at senior management levels, and therefore they are not represented according to their proportion. Missing is the significant understanding of the experience and perception of black managers themselves.

The purpose of this study was to gain some understanding of what black SA managers perceive to be their limited opportunities related to their corporate career. An additional aim was to determine the perceived impact that corporations and government policies, programs and legislation might play in addressing this problem.

A survey was employed and descriptive statistics were used to generate data. A sample of 488 black managers listed in the SA Directory of Black Managers and the Executive 200 was surveyed.

The results provide an understanding of factors black managers perceived as problems that impact them personally, and also have implications for corporations as well as the implementation of the RDP and therefore nation-building. This study demonstrated that black managers perceive personal, corporate- and government-related factors as serious problems contributing to their lack of corporate
career success. These were: lack of work experience; lack of planning for career development of blacks; cronyism; lack of appropriate mentors for black managers; insufficient number of black managers to fill the positions available; their own lack of technical competence; and lack of government enforcement of affirmative action. Additionally, the insight provided by the findings in this study suggest that in a situation where they were experiencing difficulty moving up the corporate ladder, the most likely action black managers would take would be to leave their companies.
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to all those who gave me the courage to pursue and support to stay on course throughout my academic pursuits. Prominent among these people is my mother, sisters as well as all my relatives and family friends both in South Africa and throughout North America.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I extend sincere gratitude and appreciation to all who journeyed with me to this end. I thank Dr. Marcie Boucouvalas, Committee Chair, whose insight led to the development and refinement of research questions for this study. Throughout the multiple iterations of this dissertation, Dr. Boucouvalas calmly drew my attention to important issues. Dr. Gabriella Belli furnished me with a good statistical foundation. Her deep understanding of diverse students’ needs tells a lot about her role in society at-large. Dr. Harold Stubblefield unwittingly cajoled me to do self-introspection and learn more of my role in human resource development. Dr. Maigenet Shifferraw, brought her experience in Africa to consolidate my study and make it as unique as possible. Dr. Pamela Arrington, cognate, has always been supportive in my academic endeavors. Her recommendations will also prove invaluable not only for me, but also for the field of adult education/HRD at large. Dr. Ron McKeen offered various suggestions regarding written presentation of this dissertation from the start through completion of this study.

A special thanks to my statistical guru, Mr. Dimakatso "Mckay" Motshabi, who in various facets of this study provided direct assistance with a computer program to finalize this study. I also extend my gratitude to Dr. Sandi Stith without whom I could not have sent my research questions across the ocean. Thanks also to my cousin Angy and my sister, Penelope, both of whom made sure that the questionnaires reached their destinations. Mr. Thabo Mofokeng, Mr. Mofasi Lekota did a good job by providing me with directories and addresses for this study.

I am especially indebted to Dr. Mildred S. Morse, and her family, without whose encouragement and assistance this study could not have been accomplished. A special thanks to the following friends and colleagues for their editorial assistance and insight throughout this study, namely: Dr. John Abrahams, Dr. Octavia Madison, Mr. Kennedy Khabo and his wife Beverly. I am also grateful for the consistent support and assistance I received from all whose names do not appear in this document.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ................................................................................................................................. Page iv
Dedication ............................................................................................................................... iv
Acknowledgments ................................................................................................................... v
List of Tables .......................................................................................................................... ix
List of Figures ....................................................................................................................... x

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM
The context .............................................................................................................................. 1
Background of the problem ..................................................................................................... 5
Statement of the problem and purpose ................................................................................... 6
Research questions .................................................................................................................. 7
Significance of the study ......................................................................................................... 8
Definition of terms ................................................................................................................ 9
Summary and organization of study ....................................................................................... 10

CHAPTER TWO: THE REVIEW OF LITERATURE ............................................................... 11
Overview ............................................................................................................................... 11
Background context .............................................................................................................. 12
Apartheid and state ................................................................................................................. 13
Education and discrimination in South Africa .......................................................................... 13
Survivorship and continuation rates ...................................................................................... 16
Field of specialization ........................................................................................................... 17
Labor market in South Africa ................................................................................................. 18
Positive strides by government and corporations ................................................................... 24
Affirmative action .................................................................................................................. 24
What other companies have done .......................................................................................... 26
The Reconstruction and Development Plan .......................................................................... 29
Conceptual/Theoretical Frame .............................................................................................. 30
Nation building: The concept ............................................................................................... 30
Adult education process in nation building ........................................................................... 33
Education and training in nation building ............................................................................ 35
Human resource development and adult education ................................................................ 37
Current research related to this study ................................................................................... 39
Reasons for the status of blacks at corporate management levels ........................................ 39
Individual/personal level ....................................................................................................... 40
Race .................................................................................................................................... 40
Education ............................................................................................................................ 43
Corporate level ..................................................................................................................... 44
Government level ................................................................................................................ 46
### Table of Contents

**CHAPTER THREE: METHOD** .................................. 49
  - Research Design ........................................... 49
  - Population and Sample ................................. 49
  - Instrumentation .......................................... 51
  - Procedures ............................................... 54
  - Data Analyses ........................................... 55

**CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION/INTERPRETATION** .... 57
  - Description of the sample .............................. 57
  - Demographic profile of the sample .................... 57
  - Perception on the Success of black in management ... 62
    - Organizational issues ................................. 62
    - Issues relevant to relationships with other people 62
    - Issues regarding preparation of black managers ... 62
    - Personal issues hindering the success of blacks ... 63
    - Government involvement .............................. 68
    - Black managers experiencing difficulty in moving up 68
  - Discussion and interpretation ......... 69
    - Personal and demographic issues .................... 70
    - Corporate context and cultural issues ............... 73
    - Government related issues ............................ 75

**CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS** 78
  - Overview ................................................ 78
  - Summary of the study .................................... 78
  - Conclusions ............................................. 81
    - Personal and demographic domain .................. 81
    - Qualifications ...................................... 81
    - Lack of relevant work experience .................. 82
    - Corporate context and culture ...................... 82
    - Career planning for blacks ......................... 82
    - Cronyism .............................................. 83
    - Government policies and procedures ............... 83
  - Implications ............................................ 84
    - Implications for practice ............................ 84
      - Personal and demographic domain ................. 85
      - Corporate context and culture .................... 86
      - Government ......................................... 87
    - Implications for theory and further research .... 88
    - Summary of Implications and nation building ...... 91
Table of Contents continued ............................... Page

REFERENCES................................................. 97

APPENDICES................................................. 107
  Appendix A: Questionnaire............................. 108
  Appendix B: Pre-notification postcard............... 112
  Appendix C: Cover letter.............................. 113
  Appendix D: Response percentages.................... 115

ENDNOTES................................................... 122

VITA....................................................... 124
LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 2.1.</td>
<td>Mean Years of Schooling by Population Groups</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2.2.</td>
<td>Black Managers in South Africa</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2.3.</td>
<td>Representation of Racial Groups in Various Occupational Categories</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2.4.</td>
<td>Race and Gender Representation in Management</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.1.</td>
<td>Summary Scores of Demographic Profile of Respondents</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.2.</td>
<td>Black Managers' Perception of Organizational Issues hindering their Success</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.3.</td>
<td>Black Managers' Perception of Preparation Issues hindering their success</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.4.</td>
<td>Black Managers' Perception of Relational Issues hindering their success</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.5.</td>
<td>Black Managers' Perception of Personal Issue hindering their success</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.6.</td>
<td>Black Managers' Perception of Government's Involvement in ensuring their Success in Management positions</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.7.</td>
<td>Possible Steps Black Managers Experiencing Difficulty Moving into More Senior Management Positions can Take</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 1. HRD Model in nation building</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>