

ASSESSING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EMPLOYMENT EQUITY IN A CATEGORY C DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY

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ABSTRACT

The South African Public Sector is based on democratic values and principles enshrined in the Constitution. One of those crucial principles is the promotion of efficiency and the economic and effective utilisation of resources. By implication, the achievement of this principle is only possible if people with the correct skills, qualifications and knowledge are selected to lead government projects and programmes. However, the country's unrepresentative labour force, as well as their disadvantage with regard to skills, poses a challenge within the Public Sector.

The purpose of this paper is to assess the implementation of employment equity in a category C District Municipality. Focus-group discussions targeting the respective District Municipalities were conducted. The interview schedule demarcated three sections. The first focused on the respondents' awareness of legislative directives, the second on the implementation of a 2005 Employment Equity Plan, and the third on the importance of relevant legislation that was passed by the Government to address imbalances in employment equity.

Results indicate that even though some progress was evident, the implementation of the 2005 Employment Equity Plan was slow and consequently the District Municipality under investigation was unable to reach its set targets. Although several reasons are given for this state of affairs, the biggest concern is the absence of the commitment of the Municipal Council in implementing the Plan.

Key words: Employment equity, municipality, Municipal Council

1. INTRODUCTION

The South African Government perceives employment equity as a fundamental human right and a prerequisite for sustainable development in the labour force, implying that sustainable development can only be achieved when the needs and interests of men and women are fully recognised. The Government has therefore enshrined equality in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (no. 108 of 1996 – hereafter referred to as the Constitution) and has signed declarations and conventions that are geared towards eliminating inequality and discrimination. As noted by the President, 2012 marks the 16th anniversary of the Constitution of the Republic, which is meant to guide our Government's policies and actions (The Presidency, 2012: On-line).

Further commitment in addressing employment equity in the labour force is supported by the Employment Equity Act (no. 55 of 1998), the Labour Relations Act (no. 66 of 1995), the Local Government Municipal Systems Act (no. 32 of 2000) and the Skills Development Act (no. 97 of 1998).

The focus of the drive towards employment equity is to eliminate employment barriers for designated groups such as Black people, “a generic term which means Africans, Coloureds and Indians” (SA: Employment Equity Act, no. 55 of 1998), women and people with disabilities. This could be achieved by improving access to employment opportunities for designated groups and also by fostering a climate of awareness of equality in the organisation. The commitment of the Government to addressing the challenges of inequality through increased growth and job creation was again stated in the 2012 State of the Nation Address (The Presidency, 2012: On-line).

Equality refers to a situation where all individuals enjoy the same status in their relations with a government and society (SA: Constitution, 1996: 7). However, the statement that men and women in South Africa must be treated equally, does not imply that men and women are the same (SA: Commission on Gender Equality, 2012: On-line). It is evident that since 1994 there has been a significant shift in the race and gender composition in the national and provincial spheres of government. However, less attention was given to meeting employment equity goals in the local government sphere (municipalities) and, more so, appointments that were made.

While the Constitution emphasises efficient and effective public administration to be achieved through a capable and suitable human resource composition of the South African population, the Employment Equity Act (no. 55 of 1998) and its concomitant affirmative action policies concentrate on balancing the demographics. Balancing the demographics often leads to the appointment of poorly qualified and incompetent employees in particular positions. The latter two problems disregard the need for serving the public efficiently and effectively.

The implementation of strategies to address employment equity in municipalities has prompted the National Department of Labour, through its provincial and district offices, to intensify the monitoring of the implementation of the Employment Equity Act (no. 55 of 1998). New municipalities were established in 2000 and were immediately and automatically mandated to develop employment equity plans for every five-year cycle (Venter and Landsberg, 2011: 135). These plans are developed in consultation with labour unions, i.e. the South African Municipal Workers Union (SAMWU) and the Independent Municipal Applied Trade Union (IMATU), before approved by the Municipal Council. The specific council should ensure that these plans are implemented and it is compelled by legislation to provide annual reports on the progress of the implementation of these plans in the respective municipalities.

The purpose of this paper is to assess the progress made on the implementation of the 2005 Employment Equity Plan of a category C District Municipality and whether the set targets have been met by 2010. A category C municipality has municipal executive and legislative authority in an area that includes more than one municipality (SA: Constitution, 1996: 155 C). The paper focuses particularly on the nature and extent of employment equity and how it should be directed to contribute directly and indirectly to targets that are set to improve representation in the public sector. The data are presented and discussed in three sections. It focuses on the respondents' awareness of the Employment Equity Act (no. 55 of 1998), as well as the 2005 Employment Equity Plan of the District Municipality, the implementation of the 2005 Employment Equity Plan, and the significance of respective legislation that was passed by the Government to address imbalances in employment equity on the local sphere of Government.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Three focus-group discussions (qualitative method) were conducted. A pilot focus-group discussion using a draft interview schedule was performed with six respondents with similar characteristics employed by the District Municipality. Based on feedback and observations from this pilot focus-group discussion, adjustments were made to the final interview schedule. Purposive sampling (a non-probability sampling method) were used to determine the respondents. All the employees concerned were targeted, 12 male and 6 female respondents participated.

The sample was drawn based on the establishment of a category C municipality. The sample consisted of the Municipal Manager (MM) and managers appointed in terms of section 56 of the Local Government Municipal Systems Act (no. 32 of 2000), senior managers appointed at post levels 0-3 and supervisors appointed at post level 4 in the District Municipality, including the Employment Equity and the Human Resources Managers, who were coordinators of the implementation of the 2005 Employment Equity Plan.

During the commencement of the focus-group sessions, care was taken not to influence their objectivity (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delport, 2011). An interview schedule consisting of open-ended questions was used to prompt the participants into discussion. The interview schedule was divided into three sections. The first focuses on the respondents' awareness of the Employment Equity Act (no. 55 of 1998), as well as the 2005 Employment Equity Plan of the District Municipality. Part two of the interview schedule focuses on the implementation of the Plan, and addressed questions regarding weaknesses in the implementation of the Plan, the pace of the implementation and the oversight role by Municipal Councillors in the implementation. The last part seeks clarity on the significance of respective legislative directives to address imbalances in employment equity.

Descriptive statistics were used to summarise the results in terms of frequencies and percentages for categorical variables. The information was used to formulate final conclusions and recommendations.

3. BACKGROUND

The District Municipality under study came into being after the demarcation process, on 6 December 2000 (Venter and Landsberg, 2011: 135). It is called a Category C municipality responsible for providing municipal services to 10 730 households and serving a population of 425 318 in five local municipalities. In 2005, when the Municipality adopted its 2005 Employment Equity Plan, it had an overall operational budget of R114 137 878,87 and a permanently appointed staff complement of 151, excluding the councillors who did not form part of the administration of the Municipality. Since 2005, the Municipality has consisted of the following nine departments: Office of the Municipal Manager, Office of the Executive Mayor, Corporate Services, Economic Development, Tourism and Agriculture, Finance, Planning, Implementation and Management Support (PIMS), Health, Internal Audit (Shared Service) and Engineering and Infrastructure Development.

The Municipal Council adopted the 2005 Employment Equity Plan to address issues of employment equity for designated groups. In addition, it had to redress inequality in employment. It was realised that an appropriately targeted employment equity plan can assist in the process.

It is therefore appropriate to revisit the 2005 Employment Equity Plan of the District Municipality as well as the targets that were set to be achieved by 2010. Table one depicts six occupational levels within the District Municipality with its corresponding 2005 establishment as well as the target set for 2010. The 2005 numbers are portrayed first and the 2010 target next to it in the same column. The minus (-) is indicative of a decrease, whilst the plus (+) indicates an increase in the establishment for that specific occupational level.

Table 1: 2005 Establishment of the District Municipality

Occupational Levels	Male					Female				
	A*	C*	I*	W*	Total male	A*	C*	I*	W*	Total female
Top management (MM) & managers reporting to the MM	4 -3	0 +2	1 =1	2 =2	7 +8	1 +3	0 +1	0 +1	0 +1	1 +6
Senior management (levels 0 - 3)	9 -4	1 +2	0 +1	2 - 1	12 - 8	5 -3	1 +2	0 +1	0 +2	6 +8
Professionally qualified and experienced specialists and mid-management (levels 4 - 5)	14 -9	2 +3	0 +2	5 - 2	21 - 16	6 +12	0 +4	1 +2	6 -4	13 +22
Skilled technical and academically qualified workers, junior management, supervisors, foremen and superintendents (levels 6 - 8)	23 + 30	0 +8	0 +5	0 +4	23 +47	23 -20	0 +10	0 +4	1 +5	24 +39
Semi-skilled and discretionary decision making (levels 9 - 10)	16 +26	1 +6	0 +3	0 +4	17 +39	11 +16	0 +5	0 +4	0 +5	17 +30
Unskilled and defined decision-making (levels 11 - 13)	0 +10	0 +5	0 +2	0 +2	0 +19	0 +12	0 +4	0 +2	0 +2	0 +20
TOTAL PERMANENT EMPLOYEES	66 + 71	4 +25	1 +14	9 +15	80 +125	46 +66	1 +26	1 +14	7 +19	55 +124
N = 135 (2005)										
N = 249 (2010)										

(Source: SALGBC: Wage/Salary collective agreement – 2011)

Table 1 depicts that for the occupation level Top management, a reduction of one African male was envisaged, whilst appointing two Coloured males. It appears that the District Municipality was satisfied with the number of Indian and White males. With regard to the females in Top management, the 2010 target was set for an increase of five females in total and was spread across all the races. At the occupational level of Senior management, a reduction in African males and females was noted in Table 1 (row 2). The reduction also applies to White males. In total, the target was set to reduce four males at Senior management level.

With regard to females at this occupational level, the target was set to increase Coloured, Indian and White appointments. With regard to the occupational level for Professionally qualified and experienced specialists and mid-management (Table 1, row 3), the target was set to reduce African and White males as well as White females. It is, however, noted that although males in this occupation need to reduce from 21 to 16, the target was set to increase female appointments from 13 to 22 (Table 1, row 3).

The second-largest increase in appointments (39) was set for the occupational level Skilled technical and academically qualified workers, junior management, supervisors, foremen and superintendents (Table 1, row 4). Apart from a decrease of three African women it appears that the target is set to increase appointments at gender and racial levels. The focus is especially on the appointment of Coloured and Indian males and females (Table 1, row 4). Two occupation levels focused on an increase on gender as well as race, i.e. Workers at occupational level 9-10, Semi-skilled and discretionary decision making, and levels 11-13, Unskilled and defined decision making. The total of 41 appointments (males and females) at this occupational level Semi-skilled and discretionary decision making makes it the occupational level with the largest increase target (Table 1, row 5). In total, the target was set to increase the permanently appointed establishment by 114 employees (45 males and 69 females) by 2010 (Table one, 2nd-last row).

In terms of the targets in the 2005 Employment Equity Plan, the District Municipality had a very low representation of females, people with disabilities and Coloureds in the staff components, as indicated in Table 1. For example, in the top eight management positions, seven were occupied by males. Female appointments centred in lower ranks of the Municipality, such as clerks and clerical assistants. According to the Commission on Gender Equity, occupational segregation remains common, with women predominantly in jobs of inferior status, and fewer women presented in managerial, high-status roles (SA: Commission on Gender Equality, 2012: On-line). Among the 2005 staff establishment, the District Municipality had no people with disabilities.

4. NATURE AND EXTENT OF EMPLOYMENT EQUITY

Today the composition of the South African work force is strongly reminiscent of the changes that occurred in the 1890s when South Africa was faced with the challenge of changing from an agrarian to an industrial nation and accommodating thousands of immigrants who had entered the country after the discovery of diamonds and gold. Because South Africa had always been highly conscious of differences between individuals, it appeared unlikely that legislation would be sufficient to enforce equal opportunities for all. This situation was aggravated by the fact that authoritarianism and bureaucratic hierarchies had dominated many institutions in the past, and designated groups had lacked the courage to challenge their employers.

The new dispensation demands much pioneering and a dynamic move towards change by the leaders of institutions.

4.1 Significant legislation and supportive actions

Discriminatory practices in the occupational arena changed dramatically after 1994 under the Government of National Unity. Concurrent with these changes was the birth of a new Constitution for South Africa, implemented in February 1997. The Constitution, the supreme law of South Africa, directs the country in the values of human dignity, the achievement of equality, the promotion of human rights and freedom, non-racism and non-sexism. It further directs the efforts of the South African Government to restructure the Public Service so as to render more effective goods and services to the public and previously disadvantaged citizens (Budlender, 1998). The Constitution (1996), as well as political changes, has also impacted significantly on the lives of designated groups, but even more so on the work environment where changes have translated into the new Labour Relations Act (no. 66 of 1995), the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (no. 75 of 1997), the Employment Equity Act (no. 55 of 1998), the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (no. 4 of 2000) and the Municipal Structures Act 1998 (no. 117 of 1998) (Landis and Grossett, 2005).

A first important component of the new Constitution (1996) is the Bill of Rights (Chapter 2), which protects the individual against discriminatory practices in terms of equality before the law and equal protection under the law. The Bill of Rights furthermore includes a Charter of Fundamental Rights, which aims to protect all citizens against discrimination. The Charter of Fundamental Rights also addresses affirmative action by designating “persons disadvantaged by unfair discrimination” (section 8(3)(a) of the Constitution, 1996). The Equality Clause, clause 9 of the Constitution in the Bill of Rights, primarily aims to enable previously disadvantaged citizens to experience their full and equal participation in all rights and freedoms (SA: Constitution, 1996).

With the implementation of the Labour Relations Act (no. 66 of 1995), the selection and recruitment process itself has become critically important to the public sector for the redressing of imbalances in respect of race and gender (Landis and Grossett, 2005). This Act is aimed at improving the quality of life of all workers, as well as enhancing productivity in the workplace. The Basic Conditions of Employment Act (no. 75 of 1997) further ensures that designated groups and more so women have the right to perform any type of work or to practise any profession they prefer.

The Employment Equity Act (no. 55 of 1998), prohibited unfair discrimination in the workplace and compels every employer to take steps to promote equal opportunity by eliminating unfair discrimination in any employment policy or practice (SA: Commission on Gender Equality 2000: On-line). This Act focuses on the redressing of imbalances, especially with regard to designated groups.

The Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (no. 4 of 2000), on the other hand, fosters equality, prevents unfair discrimination and is applicable over a wide range of fields, including the employment sector.

The Municipal Structures Act 1998 (no. 117 of 1998) was specifically formulated to map out the way in which local governments should be formed. The Act wants to ensure that municipalities are operating in an integrated manner through integrated development plans (IDPs). It is believed that the economic and social lives of communities will be uplifted through an integrated development plan. The managers reporting directly to the Municipal Manager are appointed in terms of section 56 of the Municipal Systems Act 2000 (no. 32 of 2000) and sections 66 and 67 of the Act deal with staff establishment and human resource development.

4.2 Employment equity and improved representation in the Public Sector

It is clear that significant legislative directives were put in place to address and fast track the discriminatory practices that occurred within the public sector labour force. It can be argued, however, that finding suitably qualified individuals in absolute terms from previously disadvantaged groups in South Africa is complex. This takes into consideration disadvantages experienced by the designated groups, such as policies that led to grossly unequal educational opportunities that disadvantaged Blacks in the country, discriminatory laws that reserved specific jobs for Whites, as well as discriminatory recruitment, employment and advancement practices (McGregor, 2003). Problems further emanate from the lack of expertise, skills and knowledge.

Lack of service delivery in some municipalities is linked causally to appointments in which managers lack skills, qualifications and knowledge in their areas of work. Previous discriminatory policies did not only create a knowledge gap between Black and White South Africans, but at the same time narrowed the skills gap in the sense that it would take decades for people from the designated group to achieve the knowledge and skills comparable to their previously advantaged counterparts (Mello, 2004). In addressing the gaps, it is important to consider the lack of those skills and allow them to be developed in the process to overcome past injustices.

Thus far, the implementation of legislative directives addressing employment equity was meant to benefit the majority of South Africans. At the same time, there is an expectation that those who benefited from the previous policies will understand that it is time that designated groups should also benefit (Mello, 2004). While, in fact, people with disabilities and women across colour lines in the country are benefiting from the policy, the false impression is often created that a disadvantage of the policy is that beneficiaries of the policy are only the Black race in the country (males and females).

Bullard (2007) indicates that there is nothing wrong with the concept of addressing past inequalities in principle, but it is wrong when employment equity ignores economic realities in favour of vote-winning social tinkering. Balancing the South African labour force demographics through incompetent candidates is not only a threat to development and progress of the South African society, but also an insult to the democracy fought for by South Africans.

In ensuring that the administrations of municipalities are representative, municipal councils have to apply the provisions of the Constitution (McGregor, 2003). In the Republic of South Africa, public administration should be achieved in the most effective and efficient manner. The achievement of such administration should be through measures that ensure that suitably qualified people from designated groups have equal employment opportunities and that they are represented in all occupational categories and at all levels in the workplace.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data are presented according to the three sections of the interview guide. The first focuses on the respondents' awareness of the Employment Equity Act (no. 55 of 1998), as well as the 2005 Employment Equity Plan of the District Municipality. Part two of the interview schedule focuses on the implementation of the Plan, and addressed questions regarding weaknesses in the implementation of the Plan, the pace of the implementation and the oversight role by Municipal Councillors in the implementation. The last part seeks clarity on the significance of respective legislative directives to address imbalances in employment equity.

5.1 Awareness of the Employment Equity Act (no. 55 of 1998) and 2005 Employment Equity Plan and its mandate

It appears that in the first and second focus groups, which are dominated by senior managers (post levels 0-3), most respondents were aware of the existence of the Employment Equity Act (no. 55 of 1998). However, no one of the six respondents in the third focus group, which was dominated by supervisors (post levels 6-8), was aware of the existence of the Act. It appears that when these employees were appointed, they were not inducted in the implementation of Employment Equity Act (no. 55 of 1998). The question arises whether it is not their own responsibility to get to know the content of all legislative directives applicable at their post level? However, for the District Municipality to ensure that all employees are aware of the existence of the Employment Equity Act (no. 55 of 1998), the Municipality must develop and adopt an induction policy. In the induction policy it should be stated clearly that new municipal recruits should be inducted about local government legislation including the Employment Equity Act (no. 55 of 1998).

For the staff members currently appointed, there should be continuous opportunities seeking to promote awareness of the existence of the Employment Equity Act (no. 55 of 1998).

With regard to the existence of the 2005 Employment Equity Plan of the District Municipality, four respondents in the first focus group and five respondents of the second focus group indicated that they were aware of the existence of the Plan. However, in the third focus group, none of the respondents (n=6) was aware of the existence of the Plan. It emanated that during the developmental phase of the Plan, not all employees participated in this phase.

With regard to the mandate of the Employment Equity Plan, it could be expected that only middle and senior managers (post levels 0-5) understood the mandate of the Plan. The middle and senior managers seem to share the understanding that the mandate of the 2005 Employment Equity Plan seeks to address the absence of representativeness based on the demographics of the District Municipality.

Responding to the question whether the 2005 Employment Equity Plan was the correct tool to address the imbalances of the past, only two respondents were of the opinion that it was not the correct tool. Although the majority felt that it was a purposeful tool, the following comments were raised by the respondents:

- The organisational structure of the municipality was not designed to adhere to employment equity targets.
- The implementers of the 2005 Employment Equity Plan, at the time, did not have the authority to monitor and coordinate the implementation thereof. As an example it emanated that the employment equity officer was not senior enough to coordinate other senior managers.
- A need existed for a monitoring and evaluation system to ensure enforcement and compliance to employment equity.
- The commitment of the Municipal Council (Speaker, Executive Mayor, Members of the Mayoral Committee and Councillors) (Venter and Landsberg, 2011: 139), to the implementation of the Plan, appeared to be questioned.

From the responses so far it thus appears that middle and senior managers are aware of the Employment Equity Act (no. 55 of 1998) and the 2005 Employment Equity Plan respectively and its mandate to fast track the implementation thereof within the District Municipality. It further emanated that the supervisors (post levels 6-8) were not that much informed and also not involved in setting the targets for the Plan and did therefore not understand the mandate thereof.

5.2 Implementation of the 2005 Employment Equity Plan

The second part of the interview schedule focused on the implementation of the 2005 Employment Equity Plan, amongst others. It addresses questions regarding the weaknesses in the implementation of the Plan and the pace of the implementation process.

The major weaknesses identified with the implementation of the 2005 Employment Equity Plan appears to be the lack of commitment from the Municipal Council as well as senior managers. It is apparent that the only time that the 2005 Employment Equity Plan was mentioned was when it was conveniently used to gain political support. The lack of enforcement by the Department of Labour (DoL) in this specific province is also noted.

It is strongly felt that the Plan will never succeed unless the following are addressed: (i) the commitment of the Municipal Council to implement the 2005 Employment Equity Plan; (ii) the oversight role in implementing the Plan by the Municipal Council; (iii) the interference of the Municipal Council in the implementation of the Plan; and (iv) appointments that should be made based on skills, qualifications and knowledge of personnel, and not on political deployment. Respondents were concerned about the autocratic influence of political parties during the appointment of officials.

Although the Municipal Council is supposed to provide political leadership in implementing the 2005 Employment Equity Plan, cadre deployment by political parties is regarded as a reality. These appointments are often deployed in strategic and influential positions without considering the targets set in the 2005 Employment Equity Plan. "These officials are appointed by virtue of their affiliation with the ruling political party, not by virtue of what they are capable of doing." [sic]

Against the mentioned responses it was expected that the pace at which the implementation of the 2005 Employment Equity Plan took place was not meeting expectations. This was due to a lack of proper coordination amongst officials responsible for addressing employment equity as well as the lack of monitoring and evaluation by the DoL. The revision of the 2006 Recruitment Policy to link to the 2005 Employment Equity Plan was therefore proposed as a solution, as it is apparent that these two documents operate towards different objectives.

The lack of monitoring and evaluation by the DoL was a second reason given for the slow pace of implementations. It appeared that structures within the District Municipality that ought to support the implementation of the Plan were not in place. The respondents held the DoL responsible for not monitoring this absence of structures as well as the ultimate slow pace of implementation.

Legislative directives, such as the Employment Equity Act (no. 55 of 1998) provide for a fine of up to R500 000 if employment equity targets are not met. The DoL should hold the Municipal Council accountable. From 2005 until 2010, the DoL was furnished with employment equity reports annually, but did not enforce a fine for this District Municipality.

It is clear that the absence of leadership from the Municipal Council had an immense impact on the slow implementation of the 2005 Employment Equity Plan. In fact, the Municipal Council did not allocate finances for the implementation of the Plan. It could thus be expected that lack of proper coordination amongst officials responsible for addressing employment equity is inevitable. As these officials did not occupy influential management positions, they found it difficult to hold managers accountable for not adhering to the Plan.

5.3 Significance of respective legislation to address imbalances in employment equity

Respondents were requested to view their opinions with regard to the significance of the following Acts in support of implementation of the 2005 Employment Equity Plan. These were the Constitution, the Labour Relations Act (no. 66 of 1995), the Employment Equity Act (no. 55 of 1998), the Skills Development Act (no. 97 of 1998) and the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (no. 4 of 2000). These Acts were identified to be frequently used in Employment Equity Plans per se and not necessarily in the District Municipality.

According to the responses of respondents on the significance of the Acts in support of the implementation of the Plan, it is clear that respondents expressed no doubt about the importance thereof as well as the necessity to arrive at set targets. It appears that in all three focus groups this response to the Acts was similar. However, as was previously mentioned, not all respondents were familiar with the content of the Employment Equity Act (no. 55 of 1998). It was thus questionable whether the respondents were familiar with the detailed content of the other mentioned Acts. However, they did show an understanding for the purpose of the respective Acts. The lack of knowledge concerning the mentioned Acts will have a direct influence on the effective support it could render towards the implementation of employment equity and more so the 2005 Employment Equity Plan. The latter challenge was mentioned by the respondents as a serious problem within the District Municipality.

5.4 Targets reached in 2010

With regard to the appointment of females in top management, the 2010 target was set for an increase of five females. However, by September 2010, only one appointment had been made.

According to the targets it was envisaged that the Municipality would appoint at least three women in senior managerial positions; however, by the expiry date, September 2010, they had appointed only one. This situation prevails, despite the fact that women constitute half the South African workforce and 52% of our population (SA: Commission on Gender Equality, 2012: On-line). The Commission on Gender Equality states that women are under-represented in senior management and leadership positions in both the Public and Private Sectors, with both entities failing to reach state targets and employment equity provisions (SA: Commission on Gender Equality, 2012: On-line). With regard to the occupational level for professionally qualified and experienced specialists and mid-management, the target was set to increase female appointments from 13 to 22. By September 2010, five female appointments had been made at this occupational level.

The second-largest increase in appointments was set for the occupational level Skilled technical and academically qualified workers, junior management, supervisors, foremen and superintendents (n=39 appointments). The focus was on the appointment of Coloured and Indian males and females. By September 2010, only two African female appointments at this occupational level had been made. No Coloured or Indian appointments had been made.

Two occupation levels focused on an increase on gender as well as race, i.e. Semi-skilled and discretionary decision making and Unskilled and defined decision making. By September 2010, 15 female appointments at this occupational level had been made. In general the target was set to increase the permanently appointed establishment by 114 employees (45 males and 69 females) by October 2010.

6. CONCLUSION

This study was undertaken to assess the progress made on the implementation of the 2005 Employment Equity Plan of a Category C District Municipality and whether the set targets have been met by 2010. Focus-group discussions targeting the respective District Municipalities were conducted and focussed on three sections. The first focused on the respondents' awareness of the Employment Equity Act (no. 55 of 1998), as well as the 2005 Employment Equity Plan of the District Municipality, the second on the implementation of a 2005 Employment Equity Plan, and the third on the significance of respective legislation that was passed by the Government to address imbalances in employment equity on the local sphere of Government.

The District Municipality adopted the 2005 Employment Equity Plan to address the underrepresentation of designated groups in the establishment. The five-year Employment Equity Plan was adopted in October 2005, and it expired in September 2010. In the Plan, targets were set in terms of numerical goals to be achieved.

Although some progress was evident, the implementation of the 2005 Employment Equity Plan was too slow and consequently the District Municipality was unable to reach its set targets. Several reasons were given for this state of affairs.

Although the Plan was developed in consultation with the labour unions, i.e. SAMWU and IMATU, it appeared that there was an absence of their commitment to implement the Plan. Similar absence in the commitment and leadership was also perceived with regard to the Municipal Council. It appeared that the interference of the Municipal Council in the implementation of the Plan as well as political deployment hampered the process. A need existed for a monitoring and evaluation system to ensure enforcement and compliance to employment equity also to be supported by the DoL. Furthermore, a more coordinated effort was requested by the District Municipality to implement the Plan. A suggestion was posed to revise the 2006 Recruitment Policy in order to link to the 2005 Employment Equity Plan.

It was disputed whether the respondents were familiar with the detailed content of the mentioned Acts, although they did show an understanding of the purpose of the respective Acts. It was apparent that not all respondents in the focus groups had received training on these Acts.

It has further been commented that policy implementation is a top-down approach, which usually involves working with the leadership of the organisation. Important policies and procedures generally originate from management tiers and will always require the concurrence of management in providing resources, altering priorities or otherwise changing how things are done at the organisation. The results of this study are invaluable in highlighting areas in the organisation that could be targeted to change. Such changes are primarily the responsibility of management.

The Commission on Gender Equality congratulated President Zuma on delivering an address that speaks to the key societal and developmental challenges impacting on women, and calls upon state departments to ensure that in their policy and programmatic responses they surface and eliminate the entrenched inequality and discrimination impacting on the quality of lives of women. The promises outlined for the nation in the President's address need to be enjoyed by the majority of South Africa's population.

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