

# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

*Volume 5, Number 1, December 2006*

## EDITOR

IMOH E. UKPONG

*University of Uyo, Nigeria*

## ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Patrick Aremibong, *Nigeria*

Graham Chapman, *UK*

Leonard Baer, *UK*

Bassey Ate, *Nigeria*

Sunday Ukpung, *Nigeria*

Innocent V. Modo, *Nigeria*



## **Perceived Workers' Interest in Participatory Management: Issues and Challenges**

**E. B. J. Iheriohanma**

*Department of General Studies,*

*School of Management Technology*

*Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria*

*e-mail: inherioha2005@yahoo.com*

**ABSTRACT** - This study looked at the issue of workers' interest in participation in management in Nigeria. It demonstrated that there is a growing interest of workers in participation in management in Nigeria but observed that certain political, economic and management problems challenge the practical processes. It opined, among others, that the economic stagnation and labour unrest experienced in Third World countries are attributed to external control over such economies. The study identified an alliance of a subsidiary political and merchant class that acts as cohort to this external influence and who excludes a vast majority of the people from participation in management. The human relations theory is used as guiding framework. The analysis of degree of participation is based on the spheres and levels at which participation takes place. The study identified some basic elements for participation. These include the desire for influence, involvement and identification. It concluded that management in Nigeria should play down on rigid authoritarian management structure in order to allow meaningful participation to take place.

**KEY WORDS:** Perceived workers' interest, participatory management, issues, challenges.



## **INTRODUCTION**

All over the world today, important considerations are being given to the dominant factors that determine the work life of employees in the world of work. These considerations are perceived to have emanated from the influence of people's interest in understanding and participating in decision-making process in their work place and which have surreptitiously inflamed the burning desire to contribute to national development. It is observed that there is a burning desire that has leapt over the bounds of political processes and participation in nation building to participation and involvement in decision-making in the work place. This issue has rather directed attention to the problems of creating a more humane work environment. The new focus is rather challenging the traditional management practice that concentrated more on formulating theories and policies that provided adequate answers to the problems confronting management and control of workers in the work place (see Mayo, 1945; Bendix, 1956; McGregor, 1960; Vroom and Deci, 1970; Aderinto and Popoola, 1981).

The industrial revolution and the alienating character of industrial labour have lent credence to researches on the challenging effects of technology and industrial relations (Ohiorenoye, 2000). The researches have focused on attempts at reorganizing and transforming work to make it less monotonous, more interesting and challenging (Iheriohanma, 1986; 1997). The transformation aimed at re-organizing authority structure to give more decision-making powers to the rank and file of the organization members. This meant a movement from traditional management control system or authoritarian management style implicit in Taylorism to worker-based decision-making strategy or participative forms (Theobald, 1994). However, the search for conducive work environment and structure of good working relationship between employers (management) and employees (labour) has created more problems than anticipated. Some adherents of the traditional management principles saw this worker's interest in participation in management as a re-organization of management prerogatives instead of an attempt at providing scientific answers to problems caused by and resentment of the more traditional authoritarian management policy (Yesufu, 1984; Iheriohanma, 2002).

This study therefore attempts an investigation of Nigerian worker's interest in participating in management decision-making in their workplace. The investigation aims at identifying their basic interest in participation; the level and spheres in which their interest is higher and the implications of participation on Nigeria's policy on industrialization.

## **THE CHALLENGING PROBLEMS ABOUT WORKERS' PARTICIPATION AND WORKERS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS PARTICIPATION**

The challenge on traditional management practice of total control of workers in the workplace has created a hysteric frenzy and division among organization management. Some observers see the extension of decision-making to the lower rung of organizations as eroding traditional management prerogatives. Management see this move as a way of allowing workers to delve into areas traditionally arrogated to them. This class of traditional management theorists insist on the indolence of workers (see McGregor, 1960, Theory X).

However, the category of management that proposes workers' participation contend that reorganizing and transforming the work place make work less monotonous, more interesting and challenging as it reorganizes the authority structure. The observation indicates that the change supports and encourages employees' desires to have more control and, if they are permitted to use their intelligence, they will be made to feel "good". It implies that the reorganization improves their performance. Given the position of the proponents of this argument who posit that the intelligence of workers at the lower level is of genuine value to every organization, would it not tantamount to a transfer of part of a foreman's work-load to his subordinates and lead to elimination of supervisory personnel? The problem is therefore whether this transformation arising from the interest of workers will make for better decision since workers are assumed to know more about their own work than the foreman. This study investigates the proposition that if given more opportunities of exhibiting creativity and independence, workers can manage the work better (Ohiorenaya, 2000).

Some theorists and managers opine that workers' participation in management is seemingly becoming irrelevant to the world of our own time. The world is now dominated by such overriding and inexhaustible issues as war and peace, cold war, dominance of world powers, star wars, nuclear armaments, ozone depletion, emergence of new (powerful) independent nations, crises of economic development and depression, population explosion, environmental pollution and degradation, poverty, AIDS pandemic, terrorism; racism, division of the world into economic blocs, economic integration, liberalization, technological development and computerization, globalization, etc. It appears that those with this argument absorb the problem of workers' participation as a slogan of historical interest based on political and ideological movement now defunct and impotent to lead the world to economic progress. This argument appears as a smokescreen to misdirect attention on the prioritization of structures and processes that would install stability in the work organizations. While the search for panacea that will lead to world economic progress is on, the exploration of structures and enduring

industrial relations policies that will eventually satisfy the worker's demand for influence, involvement and identification with his organization and world of work should not be undermined.

There is the perceived opinion among Third World countries that the economic stagnation and labour unrest experienced in the developing economies are largely attributed to the external control over such economies and the activities of an essentially parasitic political and merchant class. Apart from a high percentage of illiterate population, the exercise of external control is sustained by unstable internal alliances of this parasitic political and merchant class that acts as cohorts. The sustainability of the control is backed and strengthened by subsidiaries of multinational companies and western governments that have considerable strategic and economic interests in such countries. These fan the embers of instability. Their activities not only exclude a greater majority of the people from political participation and contribution to national development but leaves an unimaginable percentage of the population impoverished (Otobo, 1986). This can only be imagined and tolerated in a society with a preponderance of illiterate population like ours (Anyia, 2002). The Nigerian labour force is but a minutest segment of the larger population. The illiteracy level affects the labour force population. However, it is assumed that a reasonable percentage of the Nigerian working population is becoming aware of the nature of the economy and they are affected by it. Given that a greater percentage of the Nigerian workforce is literate and is fast being afforded the opportunity of information technology etc. (Omo-Etu, 2000), it is expected that the increasing exposure will account for the rising shift in worker aspirations from just earning a living to interest in a more satisfying work experience, greater control over his workplace and work, greater freedom, greater chance for self development and use of self-initiative. The study therefore, investigates the relationship between the seeming rising worker's interest in participatory management and the exclusion of greater majority of Nigerian workers from decision-making process as a result of assumed perceived illiteracy level. It is observed that the rising interest in participatory management challenges the strategic economic interest of western industrialized countries and the unfavourable labour relations policies of government that have caused instability in work organizations, especially in Nigeria.

There is the indication that empowered citizens are always restless if their capabilities do not find outlets (Iheriohanma, 1997). An empowered worker is observed to be creative, innovative, independent, productive, efficient and less likely to sit on the fence watching things go wrong. An excruciating problem of this study therefore, is to investigate if the Nigerian worker is endowed with these characteristics. We assume that these characteristics also have the potentialities of driving the Nigerian worker to crave for self-esteem and self-actualization. We



also assume that Nigeria worker does not want to be kept aside, particularly where issues concerning his welfare and work are involved. He would want to make his own input because his driving force is achievement of goals. Through the processes of education, training and information acquisition, the empowerment of the worker fortifies him to desire for participation at an expected level and sphere. The foregoing assumptions are necessary to investigate the role of empowerment as a veritable foundation for a stable work environment and a catalyst for economic development in Nigeria, particularly in the process of a rapid information-driven industrialization.

## **THE OBJECTIVE**

The interest of this study is to examine the issue of perceived interest on workers' participation in management with a view to identifying its challenges and prospects on an economic environment like Nigeria's. Specifically, the objectives of this study are:

- (a) To examine the issue of perceived workers' interest in participation in management and how this is applicable to Nigeria.
- (b) To examine Nigerian employees' level of perceived interest and desire with regard to participation in management in a globalising economy.
- (c) To examine the implications and prospects of employees' interest in participation in management and suggest ways of strengthening the interest.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The methodological approach to this study is purely library research. The strength of the work is however, updated from the author's several empirical research work on participatory management in Nigeria. Reference is made to foreign countries where participation in management is institutionalized.

## **THE THEORETICAL**

### **APPROACH ON WORKER'S PARTICIPATION IN MANAGEMENT**

The Human Relations theory emphasizes that employees are better motivated if management treats them like human beings rather than any other factor of production. Where workers are treated humanly and as invaluable assets that activate other factors of production (Yesufu, 2000), they identify and contribute to industrial and organizational efficiency (Alo, 1993). The underlying emphasis of the Human Relations theory is that cooperation of workers is of utmost importance if the objectives of high productivity, efficiency and enduring industrial relations are to be achieved. Workers spend a greater percentage of their lifetime in workplace. Allowing workers to participate in determining the affairs of the industry, particularly those that affect them directly, elicits their cooperation and identification. Maslow

(1943) for instance, identified five major needs of man, which he says, are arranged in a hierarchical order. These needs are: the physiological, safety, social, esteem and self-actualization needs. Satisfaction of these needs, though not in their hierarchical order, makes the worker feel wanted and accommodated. It enables him to identify and contribute to the realization of organization's objectives. Participation in management is a need of the workers (Iheriohanma, 1986). There are workers who have the talents of initiative and creativity and wish to be recognized by management (Iheriohanma, 1997). Participation, as a need, is not desired until certain basic physiological, safety and social needs are fairly satisfied. In other words, participation is a higher order need. Workers need information, for instance, about what happens in the workplace. They also seek to know how the rules guiding workplace behaviour are formulated and wish to contribute by way of participation in this formulation. The recognition and acceptance of the workers' desire to participate in this formulation indicate the realization of their intrinsic values, which relate to self-actualization.

This theory explains the relationship between workers' interest in participatory management and demand for influence in the workplace. In this study, it explains the linkages between participatory management, workers involvement and identification with their work organizations and the possible benefits that accrue from the inter-relationship.

## **INFLUENCE FACTORS RELATING TO WORKERS' INTEREST IN PARTICIPATORY MANAGEMENT**

The effect of global interest in democratic principles and practices is a factor that will ordinarily necessitate the desire for industrial democracy. There is no doubt that the spread of democratic values and their subsequent benefits in enhancing the quality of life in virtually every society instigates the crave and desire to extend same to every other sphere of life. According to Theobald (1994:123), the theory of power-centred participation demands that a "full-fledged democracy cannot be said to exist unless the principle of meaningful participation is extended to the workplace". The application of democratic principles and values implies an instigation of the spread of the trend in other spheres of life, particularly as they affect the world of work. It is paradoxical for one to experience the benefits of globalization, information technology, new world politics and economic order etc and still live in a society infested with authoritarianism, military politics, gangstarism, racism and the like. Modern employees are confronted with the dilemma of how to cope with authoritarian management and leadership style in organizations while living in a democratic society. Nigerian workers like every other worker the world over, are aware of the good effects of democracy and its guarantee of freedom in many aspects of life. Therefore they desire this interest in their workplace (Iheriohanma, 1996; Yesufu, 2000).

The larger society is a macrocosm from where events influence processes in the microcosm, the workplace and organization inclusive. The political climate of an economy affects the industrial processes and any revolution, particularly in the area of participation, infiltrates and affects workplace behaviour, orientation, objectives and identification. While the desire to participate in global economy infiltrated the national economic processes, the citizens' (workers') interest and desire to participate in national economy receives impetus from, and is strengthened by, interest to participate in decision-making amongst workers in organizations.

Empowerment of workers stems from the structure and nature of an economy. A capitalist economy like Nigeria's that allows private ownership of factors of production and private employers of labour (Otobo, 1986) accommodates the existence and participation of trade union activities in its economy (Olutayo, 1996). Yesufu (1962) and Ananaba (1969) (quoted in Olutayo, 1996) have argued variously in their individual works that trade unionism in Africa, and particularly Nigeria, was not formed as a result of political consciousness as in developed countries or by a group of disaffected workers who wanted a platform from which to fight for amelioration of grievances or for improvement of specific conditions of employment. Olutayo argues that, contrary to the view held by Yesufu that the early trade unions were not militant because of their lack of long history of maltreatment, bad conditions of service, or other serious grievances which characterized formation of early unions, particularly in capitalist economies, the conservative posture of the early Nigerian trade union was fundamental. Either the trade unions lacked a complete understanding of the capitalist system and the antagonistic ideological opposition, which unions should constitute, or they saw their positions as a privileged one in a newly emergent capitalist society. They perceived themselves as the privileged group upon whom powers would devolve with the colonial exit. Ayandele (1974) has argued on this and opined that the rapid increase in the number of trade unions formed in Nigeria from 1938 up to independence in 1960 followed the pattern of struggle against capitalism as a system of government. But now, trade unionism in Nigeria has come to stay and has assumed its rightful position as a watchdog on the excesses of employers and vanguard to the welfare of Nigerian workers. The perceived need and advantage of the existence and membership of trade unions now have an added advantage of empowering the Nigerian worker. This empowerment has necessitated the perceived interest of Nigerian workers in participation in management in their workplace. The empowerment, through education and leadership roles, positions the workers and unionists in particular, to agitate for a more humane work environment. It helps them to contribute in decision-making.

There is hardly any day that passes without comments in electronic and print media expressing concerns about the general conditions of the Nigerian



economy, the persistence of economic stagnation and non-realization or accrual of the now orchestrated democracy dividends. Among the expressed concerns are the problems of industrial unrest, strikes and the threat of it, industrial sabotage and espionage (particularly in the area of stealing of corporate proprietary information or trade secrets), low productivity, industrial inefficiency, low degree of commitment among workers, brain-drain, worker absenteeism, high rate of labour turn-over, etc. (Adedeji, 2000; Ohiorenaya, 2000). Most industrial managers and economic observers attribute the cancer to the daunting inheritance of mismanagement, corruption (Adedeji, 2000), unbridled structure of the Nigerian economy and preponderance of a class of visionless leaders and managers, (Bichi, 2002), effects and ravages of long military rule, political instability and more importantly, the absence of or exclusion of participation of a greater majority of the citizenry in Nigeria's political and economic decision-making processes (Iheriohanma, 1997). This parlous condition of Nigerian economy puts it in a failed state. To say that the economy is in decay, in decline and in virtual complete paralysis is to say the least. The exclusion in participation as we have argued above, creates room for restiveness amongst the highly motivated workers and within the rank and file of the employees. This is particularly pronounced amongst those who wish to effect changes aimed at improving their work environment and production. Participatory management therefore, remains an instrument for eliminating or at best, curtailing such worker restiveness and bridge the gap that results to mistrust between management (employers of labour) and labour (employees). It is these observations that prompt us to argue, along with Adedeji (2000) that, in a failed economic state like Nigeria's, economic rehabilitation, recovery, development and transformation on a stable basis is highly unlikely to happen quickly and will, in fact, not take unless and until there is rehabilitation, restoration and restructuring of the work organizations and environment to give the workers opportunities to realize themselves. The restructuring creates effective working social entity where there is peace, harmony, mutual trust and understanding between the major players in Nigeria's economic organization. Adedeji posits that the social economic paradigm assumes the launching of a development process that is socially just, economically productive, politically stable and participatory in structure. A productive and efficient economy (organization) best serves the interest of the people or carries the employees along when it functions in tandem with the labour force (or its representatives) under the foundation and structural values of cooperation, sharing, trust and mutual obligations (Iheriohanma, 1997; Adedeji, 2000). Cooperation amongst management and workers elicits support and a sense of evaluation and acceptance. Trust fortifies mutual obligation and produces security and confidence. Acceptance gives the workers the impression that they are valued by management and this motivates them to involve and identify with the

organizations' objectives.

Blauner (1964), quoted in Iheriohanma (1986), contends that the perceived interest in workers' participation in management is a process to underplay the serious effects of three main aspects of powerlessness. These are:

- (a) Employees' inability to influence general managerial policies.
- (b) The workers' lack of control over the conditions of employment, and
- (c) The workers' lack of control over the immediate work process.

It is observed that the last two are of more salient interest to the manual workers as they mostly value control over those matters which affect their immediate jobs and work tasks than the more general and abstract aspects of powerlessness. This notion is evaluated when placed side by side with the issues that prompt worker discontent in Nigeria. In Nigeria, worker restiveness and threat of strikes are more pronounced when management decisions directly affect and infringe on the workers' immediate job and work load or their social and security needs are threatened by management decisions and government labour policies. It is at this point that workers run to labour unions, and make them efficient through their concerted efforts and support to influence policies on their behalf. The threat on down-sizing and right-sizing the labour force; increase in fuel pump price per litre; privatization, prolonged delay in promotion exercises and payment of salaries; restructuring of organizations, ministries and ministerial departments and parastatals that bring about retrenchment and premature retirement among others have been seen to receive oppositions from workers and have been major causes of labour unrest in Nigeria. In most cases, labour has demanded to be part of the decision-making process regarding these issues. Labour unions have criticized external influences on Nigeria's labour policies. They have also decried the implications that emanate from such denials and exclusion. Workers' involvement and participation in decisions in these issues have controlling effects on industrial unrest. They have positive relationship with motivation, worker satisfaction and high productivity. These eliminate mistrust that deter creative ability, innovative action and ingenuity (Ohiorenoya, 2000).

## **SCHEMES AND EXTENT OF WORKERS' PARTICIPATION**

This section explores what the workers really want; which aspect(s) of their work they want to influence; and how they want to influence or participate. Basically, the exploration is on the spheres and levels of participation. In exploring these, efforts are made to investigate two major issues that have remained contentious in the institutionalization of workers' participation in management. These involve the aspects and the extent to which workers want influence in their workplace on one hand and the areas and extent to which management would

want to allow workers to participate or influence on the other. Globerson (1970) assumes the existence of various degrees of participation. In some, the level is high and in some it is low. The problem of participation exists in all human operations regardless of their products, structure, legal status or even socio-political system. Whatever the nature of ownership of enterprise or the environment it operates, what is of paramount importance is participation. Globerson contends that the constant variable that makes participation universal is the sure existence of people in organizations, staffed hierarchically and performing various functions. Participation is made manifest where there are superiors directing and subordinates executing. Within the same enterprise, the level of participation might be high in one or more spheres and low in others. Participative situation is analyzed here through these two variable approaches: spheres that express participation and levels that indicates the degree or depth of [participation in each sphere. There are nonetheless connections between certain spheres and levels. This work abstracts from a modified version of Globerson's (1970) five spheres and levels of participation (Fig. 1) to suit our purpose.

Spheres of Participation	Levels of participation				
	Low		Middle	High	
	1	2	3	4	5
A Institutionalized schemes	Informal and voluntary participation	Plant level agreement	Industrial level agreement	National agreement	Government legislation/law
B Decision-making	Barely general information to personnel	Joint consultation	Passive participation in management	Active participation in management	Self-management
C Subject matter of participation	Wages, salaries, hours of labour, fringe benefits	Safety, job security and hygiene	Welfare, conditions and relations of employment	Plant operations	All subjects
D Personal participation	Individual	Selected groups/informal passive groups	Functional units	Full plant representation	Entire personnel (Congregation)
E Material gain	Basic contractual wages and salaries	Incentives, allowances, loans	Bonuses and prizes	Profit sharing	Profit and loss sharing

**Fig. 1: Spheres and Expected Levels of worker's Participation**

Adapted and modified version of Globerson, A (1970) Spheres and Levels of Employee Participation in organizations: elements of a Conceptual Model in *British Journal of Industrial Relations* Vol. VIII No. 2, July 1970, pp. 220-231.



- (a) **Institutionalized Schemes:** Minimum institutionalization of participation occurs when the parties in the organization practice informal and voluntary participation. The level of participation in a particular sphere ranges from low to high depending on how participation is accorded priority by a non-plant institution or by the national government. Maximum level is attained when participation becomes legally obligatory and there is a government legislation truly backing the practice as it is the case in some European countries (Theobald, 1994). The power-centred or German system of codetermination was adopted in the then Republic of West Germany as part of the restructuring and de-Nazifying of German labour relations after the Second World War. There were the former Yugoslav self-management and Workers Councils similar to those in Germany that exist in France and Belgium (Theobald, 1994). However, in Britain there is no statutory requirement regarding workers' participation and neither of the two main political parties has expressed support for such legislation. Theobald (1994:123) reports that on the contrary, 'the conservative party, especially during the Thatcher era, was resolutely opposed to the 'democratization-of-economic life' ethos that emanated from the European Commission and which is embodied in the social Chapter'. In Nigeria, there are institutionalized schemes but the political nature, processes, the presence of a privileged class that is manipulated by external influence and the externalization of industrial and labour relations policies in the country render these structures undemocratic and ineffective.
- (b) **Decision-making:** This is the most significant and controversial of the subject matter of participation. The lowest degree of participation in decision-making occurs when management supplies employees with only general information of plant occurrences as it is the case in most government ministries and parastatals in Nigeria, while maximum participation in decision-making is attained in a situation of self-management typical of former Yugoslav system.
- (c) **Subject matter of Participation:** The degree here ranges from the low level of subjects referring generally to items of direct concern to employees and progressing up towards items that are generally considered within management prerogative. The grouping of items may be subjective but they range from wages to high level of 'all' subjects.
- (d) **Personal Participation:** A maximum coverage occurs only when a selected few individuals by management or interested/volunteer individuals have a say in events that surpass their job responsibilities while a vast majority of employees remain passive. Maximum personal participation requires the involvement of all personnel. Low level of personal coverage

usually occurs under autocratic leadership in an underdeveloped industrial relations system. In Nigeria, low level of personal participation occurs mainly as a result of undemocratic government policies, executive high-handedness, stringent and unfavourable economic situation, unemployment and threat of loss of jobs.

- (e) **Material Gain:** The consideration here refers to how employee participation manifests itself with regard to the growth of the firm. The assumption here is that employee participation in material gains starts with the determination of basic wages, salaries and fringe benefits. This then forms level of minimum participation. The maximum level occurs when there is profit-and-loss sharing; that is, where participants bear material risks. This eventually involves a high level of involvement in decision-making in the various subjects. The basic principle underlying codetermination in Germany is that workers have a right to participate in the running of the firms they work for. However, the forms codetermination takes vary from industry to industry. According to Theobald (1994), in the coal and steel industries in Germany, employees elect one half of the members of supervisory boards with shareholders electing the other half. Theobald informs that:

*In all German industries, works councils elected by employees have the right to "codetermine" certain issues, mainly working hours, holidays and the implementation of pay scales; to veto certain others-hiring, job classification and transfers, and to be consulted over others, for example, mass redundancies and individual dismissals (Theobald, 1994;123).*

Theobald however, concludes that despite these formal provisions the degree of worker influence over company affairs is thought to be limited. This is because, outside coal and steel boards, workers are in a minority which means that they can always be out-voted by employers and shareholder representatives. In Nigeria, participation in material gains can only be feasible if a greater number of employees hold substantial shareholding in the organizations where they work, government policies on industrial relations become favourable and democratic, and management becomes accommodating.

It is admitted that for an understanding of these five major spheres of participation and their principal levels, it is important to note that the various elements included are not definite and should be regarded as a conceptual framework. The levels of participation in the various spheres indicate the participative phenomenon and do not depict the degree of achievements or quality of participative process anywhere in the world.

## **INSTITUTIONALIZING CONDITIONS FOR PARTICIPATION**

There are necessary conditions that should be seen as prerogatives for workers' participation to succeed, particularly in getting people feel willing and able to take part in higher level decision-making. It is necessary first to create the necessary self-confidence and interest through participation on the job, perhaps through work group autonomy that allows for conflict management with management.

The authority structure in the organization should be structured in a way to allow a greater number of employees to influence their workplace. This enhances the quality of working life which invariably leads to deep involvement of employees in the progress of the organization where they work. Matters relating to pay, fixing of work standards and control over job constitute areas of most explicit. They are seen to be areas where participation mostly seems to be in demand. The reorganization of authority structure should accommodate general views on wage-related issues rather than negotiating wages in a centralized form (where workers have say only through trade unions) otherwise demand for participation will be low. Essentially, perceived rigid authority structure impacts negatively on workers' interest in decision-making. Low involvement in decision-making is a function of rigid and unaccommodating managerial structure. These necessitate the need to eliminate structures that will encourage mistrust, frustration, insecurity and unnecessary increase in the leaders' work load.

In most cases, levels of education has significant relationship with perceived influence in decision-making and participation. Irrespective of poor industrial relations policies, industries and work organizations that have preponderance of educated personnel experience perceived influence in decision-making and demand and demand for participation. Organizations should provide for job redesign which emphasizes job enlargement, job enrichment and job rotation. (Iheriohanma, 2002). Apart from allowing for participation in increased number of operations and increased level of skills, job enrichment gives workers opportunity for greater responsibilities and control. It sows the seed for participation.

Basically, the following conditions enable workers' interest in participation generally.

- (a) **Objective Circumstances and Appropriate Situation:** This applies to where some objective circumstances like education, literacy level, empowerment, good leadership style etc create an interest in such a system on the part of all those concerned.
- (b) **Exercise of Pressure:** this is where a source of influence or power, whether internal or external to the system, compels the respective sides to cooperate in order to achieve or to maintain participatory management. The three main forces of globalization - technology and information science, economic liberalization and democracy exemplify the external force.

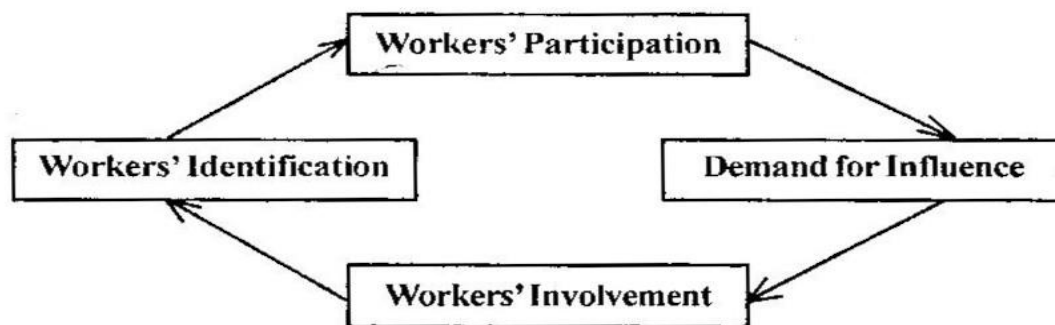


- (c) **An Enabling Legal System:** This requires the parties concerned to engage in participation, prescribing rewards for action and sanctions for non-compliance. It also implies a constitutional provision regarding the practice of participation.
- (d) **A Value System:** This motivates the establishment and unfolds the maintenance of a system of participative ethos and guidelines for such practices. This underscores the tone of the organization.

## **BASIC ELEMENTS AND IMPLICATIONS OF WORKERS' PARTICIPATION IN MANAGEMENT**

A participative situation affords employees a broader knowledge of plant circumstances and generally some opportunities to influence these occurrences directly or indirectly. Participation in management stirs up discreet observance of the canons of good management such as good decision-making, effective delegation, effective communication, effective team building, fair-play and effective change management. When the basic elements are combined effectively with other essential virtues and conditions for participation, such as the application of meritocracy, transparency, openness, accountability, accommodation, appropriate legal framework and loyalty, it will yield maximum results and benefits to the parties in participatory management.

In considering the basic elements and implications of workers' participation, a general framework or overview is enunciated here. A participative situation leads to a demand for influence and higher degree of involvement, which, in turn, fortify identification with the enterprise, as well as elimination of industrial sabotage (Globerson, 1970; Alo, 1999). This implies that participation is hardly separated from the internal psycho-sociological climate of an enterprise. It therefore, implies that the rights and opportunities of employees to influence decision-making in organization and the degree of identification are basic elements in the substance of perceived workers' interest in participation in management. The relationship linking the basic elements in the substance of participation can therefore, be represented in Fig. 2 below.



**Fig. 2: Basic Elements in the Substance of Participation**

## **CONCLUSION**

Participatory management makes a reversal of Taylorism with its central theme that workers merely 'do' whilst managers 'plan'. This shift strengthens the much current management thinking which favours movement away from the traditional authoritarian management style implicit in Taylorism to more participative forms.

It is necessary to distinguish between levels of participation. According to Theobald (1994), participation can run from employees being occasionally consulted about management decisions to the kind of highly institutionalized participation in executive decision-making that exists in some European countries. This latter is termed power-centred participation and it is illustrated by the German system of codetermination. However, to achieve a meaningful participation in Nigeria, there is need for a well-structured job redesign. Job enrichment, more than job rotation and job enlargement, offers workers greater responsibilities and ultimately greater control over the labour process. This more than anything fortifies the power-centred participation already being clamoured for. Aside this, it further pushes the desire for control from power-centred participation to a much more oriented task-centred participation. This task-centred participation unveils the global and management concern for efficiency and quality. It does not implicate the question of power and democracy. Rather, task-centred participation is seen as a means of countering the pathological effects resulting from mass production and alienation by increasing employee autonomy and responsibility at work.

From researches (Aderinto and Popoola, 1981; Yesufu, 1984; Damachi and Fashoyin, 1985; Iheriohanma, 1986; Imaga, 1990; Kaufman and Kleiner, 1991; Adewumi, 1993), Nigerian workers show interest in participation but decry management predisposition towards the practice. The political and economic environment, coupled with some government industrial relations policies and existence of cohorts are also accused as hindering factors. This study therefore, concludes that management in Nigerian enterprises should take practical steps to reverse this ugly trend. Efforts should be made to restructure the rigid authoritarian management structure which allows continuous top-down decision-making process. It is only then that the global interest in democratization can trickle down the industrial organizations and be meaningful. Government industrial relations policy should encourage workers' participation by creating conditions in line with objective circumstances and appropriate situations. There should be an enabling legal framework and an enviable value system. Participatory management improves worker's productivity and ensures rapid socio-economic development especially in industrially developing countries. In Nigeria, it is expected to give hope for a rapid information-driven industrialization, particularly in this 21st century.

## REFERENCES

- Adedeji, A. (2000) Managing the Nigerian Economy in *Management in Nigeria*. Vol. 36, Nos. 1 & 2. pp. 9 -24.
- Aderinto, A. and Popoola, D. (1981) Worker participation in Nigeria. In *Journal of Institute of Personnel Management of Nigeria* Vol. 8 No. 35. pp. 2-5.
- Adewumi, F. (1994) Industrial Relations, Economic Development and Democracy. In Osuji, E. E. (ed) *Challenges Facing Industrial Relations in Nigeria in the Context of Emerging New World Economic and Political Order*.
- Alo, O. (1999) Human Resource Management in Nigeria. Lagos, Business & Institutional Support Associates Limited.
- Ananaba, W. (1969) The Trade Union Movement in Nigeria. London, Macmillan.
- Anya, O. A. (2002) Building the African Giant - Managing The Dreams, Vision and Myth of the Nigerian Reality. In *Management in Nigeria* Vol. 38 No. 1. pp. 5-10.
- Ayandele, E. A. (1974) The Educated Elite in the Nigerian Society. Ibadan, Ibadan University Press.
- Bichi, K. M. (2002) Leadership Imperatives for More Prosperous Nigeria in *Management in Nigeria*. Vol. 38 No. 1. pp. 12-14.
- Damachi, U. G and Fashoyin, T. (1985) Contemporary Problems in Industrial Relations. Lagos, Development Press.
- Dickson, J. A. (1983) Beliefs About Work and Rationale for Participation. In *Human Relations* Vol. 38 No. 10. pp.911-932.
- Globerson, A. (1970) Spheres and Levels of Employee Participation in Organizations: Elements of a Conceptual Model. In *British Journal of Industrial Relations* Vol. III No. 2. pp. 220-231.
- Iheriohanma, E. B. J. (1986) Workers' Participation in Management: A Study of Continental Breweries (Nig) Ltd., Ijebu-Ode. Unpublished M.Sc. Thesis. University of Ibadan.
- Iheriohanma, E. B. J. (1997) Motivating Organization's Workforce: A Project Management Instrument Against Labour Turn-over in *Journal of Project Management Technology*. Vol. 1 No. 1. pp. 56-65.
- Iheriohanma, E. B. J. (2002) Contemporary Issues in Organization Theory and Management. Owerri. CREMD Publishers.
- Imaga, E. (1990) Industrial Democracy in the Third World. New Delhi, South Asian.
- Kaufman, B. F. and Kleiner, M. M. (1991) Employee Representation: Alternative and Future Directions. IIRA Series.
- Ohioorenaya, J. (2000) Management Revolution: A Panacea for Nigeria's Industrial Growth and Development. *Management in Nigeria*. Vol. 36 Nos. 1&2. pp. 21-27.



- Omo-Etu, T. (2000) Information Technology as Instrument for Management Transformation. *Journal of Management In Nigeria*. Vol. 36 Nos. 3&4. pp. 18-22.
- Olutayo, A. O. (1996) Poverty and Unionism: The Dilemma of political Participation in Nigeria in *African Journal for the Psychological Study of Social Issue*. Vol. 3 No. 1. pp. 77-90.
- Otobo, D. (1986) The new Trade Union Structure in Nigeria: Some Comments. *Nigerian Journal of Economic and Social Studies*. Vol. 28 No. 3. pp. 335-356.
- Rousseau, J. j. (1968) The Social Contract. London, Penguin Books.
- Theobald, R. (1994) Understanding Industrial Society: A Sociological Guide. New York, St. Matins Press.
- Vroom, U. H. and Deci, E. L. (1970) Management and motivation (eds) Selected readings. London, Penguin Books.
- Yesufu, T. M. (1984) The dynamics of Industrial Relations: The Nigerian Experience. Ibadan, University Press Ltd.
- Yesufu T. M. (2000) The Human Factor in national Development: Nigeria. Ibadan, Spectrum Books Ltd.