

## **Affirmative Action in the Bela-Bela and Dr JS Moroka Municipalities: Traipsing Towards Goalposts**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Government made a clarion call to redress the imbalances of the past by affirming people who were previously disadvantaged by the legacy of ugly apartheid laws of inconsistencies in South Africa. Many employers took cognisance of this call and affirmed women, including the white women, and also people living with various disabilities as well as blacks into managerial positions. In some other quarters, this clarion call fell on the deaf ears of the government and private sector employers. The legacy of inequality and the injustices of the past had to be addressed by all hiring sectors. These hiring sectors needed to commit themselves to this cause and empower their staff who had their hands tightened up even though they had a potential. This article looks at a comparative study between Dr JS Moroka Municipality in Mpumalanga and Bela-Bela Municipality on their perception of affirmative action. The question is: have we arrived or are we still traipsing towards goalposts? In trying to answer this question, the article starts by revisiting the rationale for affirmative action in South Africa. This is intended to build a context. Thereafter, the focus is placed on two municipalities: Bela-Bela and Dr JS Moroka. Questionnaires and interviews were used to collect data. The following was discovered: The respondents felt very strongly that affirmative action addresses the injustices of the past. It eliminates unfair employment by giving other groups of people a chance of being considered for employment opportunities. Because of this, it must be continued until the majority of those who were previously disadvantaged because of the colour of their skin have landed themselves jobs.*

**Keywords:** *Affirmative action, municipalities, goalposts, employment, South Africa*

DOI: [URL:https://doi.org/10.36758/ijpamr/v6n4.2021/01](https://doi.org/10.36758/ijpamr/v6n4.2021/01)

### **INTRODUCTION**

This article is based on the study the author conducted to establish the perception of municipal employees at the two municipalities (Bela-Bela and Dr JS Moroka) about the extent of the success or failure of affirmative action – a means to pursue equity. This intervention has been pursued for almost two decades already. Lately, not much is said about affirmative action, compared to earlier years. Does this suggest that it is no longer an issue, as much has already been achieved? This question prompted this article. In other words, have we arrived or are we still traipsing towards goalposts? The literature on affirmative action appeared largely in the early years of the democratic dispensation. Especially in the context of South Africa, it is adequately conceptualised and theorised. Insights from this literature are used to contextualise the pursuits of the article, which focuses on Bela-Bela and Dr JS Moroka's demographics. Thereafter, affirmative action as a concept and a means to achieve equity is discussed, including the legislative framework. Against this background, empirical data on the question of the article is analysed. Although the data does not explicitly indicate traipsing towards the goalposts, the fact that the majority of respondents strongly agitate that it must be continued is implicit of the semblance of it.

### **DEMOGRAPHIES OF BELA-BELA AND DR JS MOROKA MUNICIPALITIES**

Bela-Bela Municipality is located in Waterberg District Municipality of Limpopo in South Africa. Tourism is the main source of income in this municipality, which is not a very big municipality.

	Females	Males	Total
Ward councillors	3	4	7
PR councillors	4 (3 black and 1 white)	3	7
Total	7	7	14

The following represents the population in Bela-Bela Municipality.

	Whites	Africans	Coloured	Indians	Total
Total population	14492	44136	705	224	59557

### DR J.S. MOROKA MUNICIPALITY

Dr JS Moroka municipality is relatively vast and has a larger population than Bela-Bela. The total population of this municipality is 249 705. There is a slight dominance of females at 52.95 percent as in comparison to 47.05 percent of males. The African communities are still dominating at 99.94 percent with about 0.27 percent Indians and Asian as well as 0.27 percent whites. The following are the figures representing Dr J.S. Moroka Municipality.

	Females	Males	Total
PR councillors	15	11	26
Ward councillors	8	23	31
Total	23	34	57

The demographics show that there are more males in Dr JS Moroka than females.

### BACKGROUND ON AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

Affirmative action (AA) has been preached like a sermon from time immemorial. It is one of the most topical issues in South Africa (Quanta, 1995:1). Not everybody wanted to be heard speaking about it in the past. Visagie (1999) contends that AA is a proactive, conscious effort to redress the disadvantages of the past and to increase the representation of marginalised groups of the population. Blacks, Indians and white women were discriminated against in employment opportunities in the past. The status quo needed to be changed to allow those people to achieve equal opportunities in employment set ups. According to Visagie (1992:154), the concept of AA is used positively by writers (Fisher) 1995: 22-25. (Mafuna,) 1993:18-19 (Coldwell), 1995:7) to describe a dynamic compensatory process whereby corrective measures and efforts are introduced to include victims and targets of previous discrimination and deprivation. Wrongs of the past are corrected through AA. People should be treated equally. Rankhumise (2000:13) echoes the same sentiments that equal opportunities mean to provide all people with exactly the same opportunities with regard to employment practises. The main aim of AA was to deal with the imbalances of the past and bring parity or equality people in order that no one should be discriminated against when it comes to issues of employment. The purpose of AA is not to revenge and redo discrimination as some people would perceive it. It is also not meant to compensate people that were previously oppressed by inequalities. In trying to show that AA is not a reverse discrimination, people that were already advantaged by it would not be made to lose their jobs and positions. The injustices are corrected by putting AA strategy in force. As and when the vacancies arise, the organisation must take strides to fill that vacancy by recruiting the under-utilised, previously disadvantaged black males and females. The other way of redressing the imbalances of the past, is to give people access to economic activities.

Quanta (1995:2) asserts that AA is about economic and social empowerment of black people. To empower the South African people who were previously disadvantaged, it is necessary to acquire and create major corporations that are significant for the improvement of the economy of the country. It is a way of compensating for all the damage that was brought about by discrimination and apartheid. Visagie (1999:154) stresses that AA is a temporary (not temporal) bridging mechanism aimed at eradicating desperate discrepancies. Affirmative action has led to

inequalities. The apartheid regime prepared people for what they are. Blacks, on one hand, could not access proper education to make them suitable for the job market and whites, on the other hand, have been fully prepared by the education system to be marketable. This country, as Mwirigi (2010:12) perceives it, is a complex country with an even more complex past. South Africa is characterised by very serious extremes of opulence and poverty. The wealthy people stay in the Waterkloofs and Sandtons of this world while the poor are found in overcrowded squatter or informal housing camps, including the subserviced squatter camps of Marapyane and Malamulela. The disparities can be addressed through AA. The gap existing between the extremes of society should be narrowed. What still remains the million-dollar question is whether public and private organisations have ears to listen to the call and do what is expected of them by doing the correct thing.

## CONCEPTUAL AND CONTEXTUAL UNDERPINNINGS

### Affirmative action

Affirmative action implies both giving of preference and putting right what has previously been wrong/unfair (Charlton & Van Niekerk: 1994: xviii). These authors furthermore state that the term AA is used to refer to overcoming barriers to opportunity in general, and equal employment opportunities in particular primarily with respect to the integration of blacks and females into managerial positions. The injustices of the past mainly hit females and black men. These injustices led to people getting degrading menial positions that offered them meagre salaries. This, as Coetzee (2004) points out, does not only lead to poverty but also destroyed their spirit. The inferior groups developed inferiority complexes. Van Jaarsveld (2000) echoes the same sentiments that “AA is intended to restore diversity in situations where previous discrimination practice excluded it”. Affirmative action is a concept that became topical with attempts in South Africa to increase participation of previously disadvantaged groups in the workplace (Tladi, 2001: v). AA is seen as an “auditing system” that alerts organisations to the discrepancies between qualified citizens and their utilisation in the organisation while demanding the correction of racial imbalances that the system has pointed out” (Van Jaarsveld, 2000:6). After the organisations have done the audits, they are expected to comply. Qunta (1995: 1) echoes the same sentiments, stated that AA is described as a systematic, and planned process whereby the effects of colonialism and racial discrimination are being reversed in all areas of life. It is wrong for people to see AA as reverse discrimination. It is just a means to bring parity among people in the workplace. This symbolises that people should be treated equally. As Cloete (1997:123) posits, the *Constitution of South Africa*, 1996 (Act 200 of 1996) section 8 states that: “(1) every person shall have the right to equality before the law and to equal protection of the law.”

AA is a purposeful and planned placement or development of competent or potentially competent persons in or to positions from which they were barred in the past in an attempt to redress past disadvantage... (Bendix 2001, in Coetzee: 2004). This agrees with what Chapter 2 of EEA, 55 of 1998 states that “no person may unfairly discriminate, directly or indirectly, against an employee in any employment policy or practice on one or more grounds including race, gender, pregnancy, marital status, family responsibility, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, HIV status, conscience, belief, political opinion, culture, language and birth”. The Constitution protects everybody from any form of discrimination. The Act further states that “AA measures are measures intended to ensure that suitably qualified employees from designated groups have equal employment opportunities and are equitably represented in all occupational categories and levels of the workforce”.

### Equality

Equality is about treating everyone in the same way despite their religious affiliation, sexual orientation, race, gender, or creed. Blakemore and Drake (1996) add that the emphasis in such equality policies is on sanctions, legal or otherwise, against behaviour that is defined as

discriminatory; for example, racist or sexist behaviour. Van Jaarsveld (2000) perceives it as a subjective state of mind, in which individuals should be offered equality without the need to demand it.

### **Discrimination**

Discrimination is the tendency where people, particularly employees, are treated differently from the rest of the group. Employees should be treated fairly. It is not fair to treat people badly because of their race, the colour of their skin, caste, belief, sex, or language. Tladi (2001) believes that AA would have to grant preference to those disadvantaged by discrimination.

### **BRIEF LITERATURE REVIEW**

The misconception that AA must be implemented and targeted to advance those who are genuinely poor (Gumede, 2012:149) has to be demystified. There are people falling under the category of advantaged by the previous oppression and apartheid laws, and it would be shocking if the same were to be considered for AA. There is, however, a need, as Gumede (2012:155) clearly states, that AA should be handled well and if not well handled, it could lead to racial polarisation, not only between black and white but also between black communities themselves. Some black people would develop a feeling that AA favours certain 'blacks' and not themselves.

Threads holding together racial stereotypes deserve to be cut. Reaching that would mean that employees regard themselves as equal. The most needed thing was to deal precisely with skewed representation. In implementing AA, measures need to be employed even in institutions of higher learning where the majority of workers are white rather than black. It is not surprising that Qunta (1995) vehemently states that "the criterion for employment opportunities should no longer be skin colour but ability. Strauss (1995) adds that many people perceive AA as a demeaning exercise to minority groups by sending the message that they are "not capable enough to be considered on their own merit". South Africa has a legacy of discrimination against blacks, women, and the disabled (Meyer, 2014:1046). The time is ripe for those people who endured discrimination and oppression to be compensated through AA. If AA is implemented, certain things would be free for everyone. Also, the entitlement to education, health facilities, and recreational facilities such as shelter would be free for the disadvantaged. According to DPSA (2007), as shown in Meyer (2014:1046) in 1995, a year after the democratic elections, there were 274 women against 3175 men in management positions in the public service. This picture was a shocking one – it is indeed not a good state of affairs. It is for this reason that AA was introduced so that the public service could be transformed and made more representative of the whole South African citizenry. This form of discrimination of blacks and females was legislated and made an "accepted" phenomenon.

At the inception of democracy in 1994, things started to change for the better. Representativeness and equity became buzzwords. What led to development of AA was the number of landmark court cases as well as pressure from government to consider people who were previously disadvantaged. Some companies were expected to comply. Implementing AA provides the opportunity to reduce poverty and to improve life in general. This is justified by the fact that the oppression and ugly laws of the past denied good opportunities to black people in particular. It is not surprising that this group of people are characterised by poverty, unemployment and appalling conditions. The concept of AA was written into law in 1995 part of Executive Order 1/246 (as amended by order 1/375), which was issued by President Johnson of America. This order requires certain government agencies and employers (and their subcontractors) to ensure AA and equal employment opportunities (De Simone & Harris, 1998:485). Many people offer some justification for giving people and other groups preferential treatment for the following reasons:

They believe that AA corrects patterns of discrimination.

They believe that because of institutional racism, minorities have been subjected to inferior conditions (e.g. lack of good education and qualifications) and that blacks were not given a chance to compete against whites. This is why blacks are poor, unemployed at an alarming rate even today. To add to the above, Green, Knight and Green (2014: 244) AA is designed to perform the following and ensure that:

- appropriate action is taken to eliminate discrimination by the relevant employer against women in relation to employment matters,
- measures are taken by relevant employers to promote equal opportunity for women in relation to employment matters.

The following are the eight steps of an affirmative action programme (AAP).

Step 1. Development and communication, to all employees of the organisation's policy statement on AA.

Step 2. Appointment of senior manager who will assume corporate responsibility for the development.

Step 3. Consultation with trade unions on the development and implementation of an AAP.

Step 4. Consultation with employees, particularly women, in the programme.

Step 5. Establishment and analysis of employment profile of the workforce on a gender and job classification system.

Step 6. Review of personal policies and practices.

Step 7. Setting objectives and forward estimates within the programme.

Step 8. Monitoring and evaluation of the AAP

The volatility of the topic lies in the fact that people do not freely want to discuss AA issues. Many feel that certain groups of people are advantaged over the others. Some see it as a black advancement that lowers standards in the workplace. However, lowering standards is not the intention. If people feel very strongly that new appointments lower standards, as they purport, it is incumbent upon the appointing organisations to hone the skills of their new appointees, reskill them and make them ready for the challenges of the job.

What many people believe is that it is a numbers game, that the end results will be rotten cake or icing on the rotten cake, that their children's future is in jeopardy, that they will lose their jobs, and be replaced by incompetent token appointments (Human, Bluen & Davis, 1999:14). De Simone and Harris (1998:486) put forth the following arguments:

- People vehemently oppose AAP and feel that they go beyond providing equal employment opportunities by allowing employers to give preference to members of protected groups at the expense of the majority group members who themselves are not guilty of illegal discrimination. They see this as reverse discrimination.
- Second, AAP's have created feelings of animosity between individuals and groups that have been perceived to have benefited from them.
- Thirdly, they can stigmatise qualified minorities and women who have been hired or promoted based on their achievement.

The above assertions are not completely true. Any mention of AAP will create an impression that those in big positions are there as the result of AAP, while that is not always the case. There are those who earned their positions through hard work and effort to educate and skill themselves to become successful. Others were inherently lazy and wanted to be spoon-fed. To add to this, the

issue of job reservation as part of AA is not correct. It is also illegal to do so". The issue of AA is greatly misconstrued. It is always the case that people from disadvantaged backgrounds are preferred over the white minority. Candidates are given the opportunity to compete and be assessed against predetermined criteria but an additional weighting can be placed on AA considerations (Coetzee: 2004). This means that AA candidates are given slight, but not unreasonable, advantage over other candidates (Charlton & Van Niekerk, 1994) as quoted by Coetzee, 2004).

The (AAP's) are there to bring members of underrepresented groups, usually groups that have suffered discrimination, into a higher degree of participation according to De Simone and Harris (1998). The willingness on the part of organisations to affirm people that were previously disadvantaged goes a long way. Schermerhorn (2010) adds that organisations are expected to show affirmative action in setting goals and having plans to assure equal employment opportunities for members of protected groups, those historically underrepresented in the workplace. The following table shows the beneficiaries and targets of AA.

### BENEFICIARIES OF AA

Beneficiaries	Target
Blacks at Management level	50% by 1999
New women recruits at Management level	30% by 1999
People with disability	2% by 2005

**Source:** DPSA, 1995 (As quoted by Meyer, 2014:1050)

The targets serve as the goals for the organisation. They are so critical that they 'push' the government departments and private sector to work towards a specific vision that aims to change the status quo. These targets, as Meyer (2014:1050) correctly states, provide a benchmark to assess the progress towards representation. The cabinet revised the targets set in the WPTPS and stated that by March 2009 women managers should constitute 50 percent of the public service. This applied to the whole public service and not just the management level. AA has some disadvantages as well as advantages. Charlton and Van Niekerk (1994) perceive the following as the benefits for severely disadvantaged groups:

- Economic empowerment (improved education, the generation of employment opportunities)
- Access to resources (transport, crèches, social welfare)
- Political rights (the vote)
- Psychological growth (instilling confidence, improving quality of life, repairing human dignity, providing confidence and a sense of responsibility to effect change).

Worrisome is the fact that a culture of dependence has been created where the 'haves' would provide hand-outs the 'have nots', which is not sustainable. Charlton and Van Niekerk (1994: xvii) posit that this is a positive action but it also serves to affirm the power and privilege of those people/countries that helped to create the problem... They further state that giving money and material resources is the easier option (1994: xvii). AA requires that blacks should be considered for senior positions and that rewards be given to the companies complying.

AA has to be done with good intentions to correct what was not done correctly in the past. Adams (1993:186) perceives AA as racial preferential treatment for good reasons. Schermerhorn (2010; 300) echoes the same sentiments when intimating that group members. The main intention of AA is to always to ensure that black' males, and women, are fully represented and protected. This would mean that they would be given preferential treatment when posts are filled.

### LEGISLATIVE, THEORITICAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

- AA is promoted by quite a number of policies and frameworks. These policies were regarded as the bridge that formed the transition from oppression to democracy where all people are to be treated equally. The *Employment Equity Act* (EEA) of 1998 (Act 55 of 1998) as quoted by

Meyer (2014:1051) vehemently stresses that employers should treat their employees well. It promotes equal opportunities and prohibits different forms of discrimination. The WP/PS and the EEA provided conceptual clarity as well as the rationale for affirmative action reform as the only two documents that conceptualise the term (Meyer, 2014:1051). Equity theory is the theory of motivation. This suggests that motivation is strongly influenced by the desire to be treated fairly and people's perception about whether they have been treated fairly or not (De Simon & Harris, 1998: 34). De Simon and Harris (1998:34) believe that equity theory as applied to the work motivation (Adam, 1993) is based in the three key assumptions: People develop beliefs about what is fair for them to receive in exchange for the contributions they make to the organisation.

- People determine fairness by comparing their relevant returns and contributions to those of others.
- People who believe that they have been treated unfairly, (called inequity) will experience tension, and they will be motivated to find ways to reduce it.
- Equity theory proposes that people who feel they are treated fairly will be motivated to continue with their present performance and behaviour patterns, whereas employees who believe they are victims of inequity will search for ways to reduce the feelings of unfairness (De Simone & Harris, 1998:34)

Equity theory was developed by J. Stacy Adams. He proposed that employees are what they get from the job (outcomes) in relation to what they put in (inputs) and compare their inputs-outcomes ratio with the outputs-outcomes ratio of relevant others (Robbins, De Cenzo & Coulter, (2015:305). When doing comparisons and it is found that the ratio is inequitable, the employee views himself or herself as under-rewarded or over-rewarded. Equity theory stresses that the state of negative tension provides the motivation to do something to correct it. This is exactly what AA intends doing (Robbins, 2015: 48). The following are the general recommendations offered by equity theory:

- Managers should be aware that equity is based on perception, which may not be correct. Possibly managers can create equity or inequity.
- Rewards should be equitable. If employees feel that they are not treated equally, their morale suffers and performance problems occur.
- High performance should be rewarded.

According to the Constitution, unfair discrimination in the workplace on irrelevant grounds (sex, race, disability, etc.) is illegal (Idasa, 1995) Any person, who feels he has been unfairly treated, is at liberty to seek relief through the Equality Commission, the constitutional court or other courts. The courts will rule in his favour if he has been found to be unfairly treated.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

### **Research approach and ethics**

Quantitative and qualitative research methods have been used in this study. Quantitative methodology is associated with analytic research and its purpose is to arrive at a universal statement (Mouton, 1983:128), as quoted by Brynard, Hanekom and Brynard (2014:39). According to Brynard, Hanekom and Brynard (2014:39), Leedy and Ormrod as quoted by Mncube (2008), qualitative research method refers to research that produces descriptive data – generally, the participants own written or spoken words pertaining to their experience or perceptions. The permission to conduct the research was sought and obtained from the municipalities in question. Respondents were not forced to take part in the research. Respondents were also assured of the confidentiality of their responses.

The two municipalities do not have an equal number of employees. About 40 (N=40) respondents were sampled but only 34 returned the questionnaires. Semi structured interviews were also conducted with officials from each municipality. The interview is a more natural way of

interacting with people to get their views. The sampling was done in a way to include all the municipal employers at all levels. All accessible managers and junior officials were used for this research. The researcher used the respondents that were within reach and were accessible during the data collection.

### OBJECTIVES

1. To analyze the perception of AA of municipal employees.
2. To determine whether the municipalities in question have complied with requirements and affirmed their employees.
3. To recommend ways on how to handle AA

### LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

No generation can be made about the results obtained from this study as it was only based on two municipalities, one in Limpopo (Bela-Bela Municipality) and the other one in Mpumalanga (Dr JS Moroka). Therefore, the results cannot be used as a blanket conclusion that municipal workers see AA as being like this and not like that. So, the issue of transferability of the results to the entire country cannot be taken for granted. The other limitation of the study is that AA is an on-going process that still stands a chance of being improved. The picture obtained in the two municipalities can be improved in future. There will continue to be changes in a way organisations deal with AA. Lastly, many employees were not interested in taking part in the survey.

### DATA ANALYSIS

The section concentrates on the analysis as well as interpretation of collected data for the two municipalities. The data obtained from the municipality in question has been collapsed in one as the two have common characteristics. Bela-Bela Municipality has employed few whites while Dr JS Moroka does not have whites working there permanently. This picture then brought about the decision to do an investigation.

**Table 1: Gender of the respondents**

GENDER		
Males	Females	Total
20 (59%)	14 (41%)	34 (100%)

There are about 59 percent female employees and 41 percent male from these two municipalities that took part in the study. This suggests that the number of females in the employ of the municipalities has risen and leaves the impression that females are being affirmed, which matter is gratifying to note.



**TABLE 2: Feelings and perceptions about AA.**

	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE	TOTAL	FISHER'S EXACT TEST
Redress	26 83.87%	5 16.13%	-	31 100%	0.134
Empowerment	26 83.87	5 16.13%	-	31 100%	0.134
Unfair	13 40.63%	11 34.38%	8 25.00%	31 100%	0.596
Resistance	13 39.39%	6 18.18%	14 42.42%	33 100%	
Blacks benefitting	15 56.56%	4 14.81%	8 29.63	27 100%	0.150
AA appointment	19 67.86%	9 32.14%	-	28 100%	0.670
Strategic appointment	17 58.62%	3 10.34%	9 31.03%	29 100%	0.646
Whites less supportive	15 55.56%	5 18.52%	7 25.93%	27 100%	0.222
Threats	17 56.67%	5 16.67%	8 26.67%	30 100%	0.345
Job satisfaction	17 68.00	1 4.00	7 28%	25 100%	0.636
Previously disadvantaged people	19 79.17%	5 20.83%	-	24 100%	0.047
Practised a long time ago	10 38.46%	4 15.38%	12 46.15%	26 100%	0.876
Qualifications	14 56.00%	5 20.00%	6 24%	25 100%	0.298
AA assists blacks	9 32.14%	11 39.29%	8 28.57%	28 100%	0.477
AA operational	8 25%	3 9.38%	21 65.63	32 100	0.735

There were 16 respondents at Bela-Bela Municipality and 18 at Dr JS Moroka Municipality. In these two municipalities, 59 percent were female and 41 percent male. Out of these, there is a greater number of females in management position than males. Affirmative action has always been aimed at redressing the imbalances of the past, and it has become evident in the responses that the two municipalities have registered a lot of progress towards achieving this. It is pleasing to note that even the number of females employed surpasses that of males. The Constitution has given impetus and has to a large extent laid a good foundation for matters dealing with issues of equity and equality in the work environment. According to Sadie, (1999:216), to operationalise South Africa's vision of gender equality in the public service, the White Paper on Transformation of the Public Service, the White Paper on Transformation of the Public Service, (1995), (WPTPS), the White Paper on Affirmative Action in the Public Service (1998) (WPAAPS) and the Employment Equity Bill serve as the most important guideline. These documents are intended to guide public and private organisations in their quest to redress the imbalances of the past. It is therefore important that they be used without fail. What has been picked up in the study is that 2 (6 percent), 14(41 percent), 11 (32 percent) 4 (12 percent) and 3(9 percent) of the respondents were in the age groups 15 to 20 years, 21 to 35 years, 36 to 45 years, 46 to 50 years and 51 years and above, respectively. This suggests that the employees at these municipalities are between 15 and 35 years old. There are few young employees employed by these Municipalities. The municipalities are manned by qualified people. It is pleasing to note that 26.4 percent of the

respondents have a degree, and 6 percent an honours degree, while people without qualification and those with a diploma stand at 29 percent. The level of education guarantees the understanding of affirmative action issues.

**Table 2: Fisher’s exact test on age of respondents**

	AGREE	DISAGREE	NOT SURE	TOTAL	FISHER’S EXACT TEST
Redress of imbalances	26 83.8%	-	5 16.13%	31 100%	<b>0.405</b>
Empowerment	26 83.8%	-	5 16.13%	31 100%	<b>0.405</b>
Unfair labour practise	13 40.63%	11 34.38%	8 25.00%	34 100%	<b>0.678</b>
Resistance	13 39.39%	6 18.18%	14 42.42%	33 100%	<b>0.292</b>
Blacks benefitting	15 55.56%	4 14.58%	8 29.89%	27 100%	<b>0.075</b>
AA appointments	19 67.86%	9 32.14%	-	28 100%	<b>0.677</b>
Strategic appointments	17 58.62%	3 10.34%	9 31.03%	29 100%	<b>0.052</b>
Whites less supportive	15 55.56%	5 18.52%	7 25.93%	27 100%	<b>0.982</b>
Threats	17 56.67%	5 16.67%	8 26.67%	30 100%	<b>0.687</b>
Job satisfaction	17 68.00%	1 4.00%	7 28.00%	25 100%	<b>0.109</b>
Previously disadvantaged	19 79.17%	-	5 20.8%	24 100%	<b>0.214</b>
Practised a long time ago	10 38.46%	4 15.38%	12 46.15%	26 100%	<b>0.544</b>
Qualifications	14 56.00%	5 20.00%	6 24.00%	25 100%	<b>0.568</b>
AA assists blacks	9 32.14%	11 39.29%	8 28.57%	28 100%	<b>0.004</b>
AA operational	8 25.00%	3 9.38%	21 65.63%	32 100%	<b>0.653</b>

It has been shown in the above table that the results on Fisher’s exact test have it that there is no significant relationship between the age group and opinions on whether or not AA redresses the imbalances of the past. Fisher’s exact test gave 0.813 as result to check whether there was any relationship between age and opinion. This therefore indicates that age does not have any influence whatsoever on the perception of the employees from the two municipalities. The same goes for empowerment, where it was revealed the results from Fisher’s exact test (were 0.405). Here also there is no significant relationship between the perception that AA is intended to empower black people but to address the injustices of the past. It ensures equality among people along racial lines. Tladi (2001:60) stresses that “AA is needed to ensure equality...”

The table further shows that all the variables except for one do not have any significant relationship. There is, however, a significant relationship between age and opinion on whether AA strategy is intended to assist blacks only. This means that the proportion of responses differ significantly by age group. About 1 (50 percent) and 1 (50 percent) of those aged between 15 and 20 years agree and are unsure respectively that AA is a strategy intended to assist blacks only, 1(10 percent), 7(70 percent) and 2 (20 percent) of those aged between 21 and 25 years agree, disagree and are not sure respectively, 6(67 percent) and 2(33 percent) of those aged

between 36 and 45 years of age agree and disagree respectively, 1(25 percent) and 3(75 percent) of those respondents aged between 46 and 50 years agree and are not sure respectively and none of those aged 51 years and above agree, 1(33 percent) and 2(67 percent) disagree and are not sure respectively that AA strategy is intended to assist blacks only. The assertion is not true that AA is for blacks. The literature has it that it was not only blacks who have endured the atrocities of oppression in the labour market. White females were excluded from the strategic positions and well-paying jobs, as same were strictly for white males.

## RESULTS OF THE INTERVIEWS WITH SOME MEMBER

The following were taken into consideration when conducting interviews

- (i) The aim of the research was explained to the respondents
- (ii) Anonymity of interviewees and confidentiality of their responses were confirmed. Only three questions were asked and each was dealt with separately.

### **Question 1:** *What do you think is the main purpose of Affirmative Action?*

Some respondents indicated that it is a means to deal with the imbalances of the past. They felt that what was done wrongly had to be corrected. Some of the respondents viewed AA as reverse discrimination. This may not be so as AA is expected to be handled in a level-handed manner. Tladi (2001:76) posits that AA is not revenge or reverse discrimination because it does not repeat what has happened in the past. A few respondents did not quite clearly understand what AA is all about.

### **Question 2:** *Does your municipality affirm its employees?*

Some of the respondents answered in the affirmative. AA is in place in their place of work. Many felt that a lot still needs to be done to bring about equality in the workplace. As shown when this paper was introduced, a municipality such as Dr JS Moroka still has more males than females. It is not surprising that there are those with the feeling that females still need to be recruited to the higher positions. It therefore goes without any saying that not all the employees have been affirmed as it is required,

### **Question 3:** *Should AA be stopped?*

Almost all the respondents have very strong reservations as to the cessation of the AA strategy. They intimated that AA has not been adequately implemented. Their feelings are that more people, particularly blacks and white women still need to be pushed to the top. The greater number of respondents believed that AA has not reached its targets.

## FINDINGS

- To some people, AA is still Greek. In the two municipalities, there were people who did not have inkling what AA is all about.
- From the look of things, government does not have a database of organisations that are compliant as well as those that do not comply.
- Many respondents agreed that AA addresses the imbalances of the past.
- Some respondents do not see AA as a way of benefitting blacks at the expense of other racial groups, particularly those that
- Corners of the country. Advocacy has to be heightened so that people and companies know what their rights are.
- There are still many more males occupying higher positions in the two municipalities than females.
- The municipalities have not appointed white in higher positions except in Bela-Bela, which boasts an employment of one white female.

## CONCLUSION

The study has shown that people, particularly those employed by municipalities, perceive affirmative action as an important tool to address the oppression and other ills of the past. It is only a fraction (about 5 (15 percent) who assert that they are not sure whether AA redresses the imbalances of the past. AA has not been developed to benefit black who do not have the requisite qualification to be in particular jobs. This was shown by 20(58 percent) responses stating that AA is not intended to benefit blacks unnecessarily. It has been shown that AA has very good intentions and people embrace it. However, it is evident that more positions in one municipality are held by males than by females. The paper brought to light some facts that municipalities have to comply with affirming previously disadvantaged people. It is pleasing to indicate that since the first democratic elections, South Africa has undergone major legislative changes to ensure that there is redress of the injustices of the past (Penciliah, 2005:341). This is a milestone that the country has reached. Therefore, South Africa needs to pat herself on the shoulder for the milestone.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Organisations should display the information about employment equity and have them within reach for everybody to see. People from disadvantaged groups employed in strategic positions have to undergo intensive training and attend clinics to make them combat ready. These in-service training sessions would close the gaps these new appointees might have. It is recommended that all previously disadvantaged people that have minimum requirements for their jobs be appointed with an understanding that they would be exposed to crash workshops intended to hone their inadequate skills. Government should develop a database that indicates the companies that are complying as well as those that do not comply in so far as AA strategy is concerned.

The companies should develop a detailed AAP that shows the average percentage of men, women and minorities employed in the company, as well as availability analysis indicating availability of men, women and minorities in labour markets, identification of problem areas listing any inequalities between available an actual representation of men, women and minorities in the company, as well as corrective actions with goals and time-tables that show all the plans the employer's plan to arrive at parity in employment.

The misconception that the system should compensate people who were previously disadvantaged has to be corrected. When people with less experience are employed, they have to be taken through workshops and clinics to hone their skills. This should be intentionally done to fill existing gaps. The number of white females has to be increased as they were also previously disadvantaged by the oppression that ravaged South Africa. In the same vein, the number of males employed by the municipality must be reduced and the advocacy about AA is intensified.

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