**INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT**

**DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**

Union Position: Union official

Age: 36

Gender: Female

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT** | |
| **SPEAKER** | **DIALOGUE** |
| **INTERVIEWER** | Hello! |
| **PARTICIPANT** | Hi Chloe, how are you? |
| **INTERVIEWER** | I’m good thanks and you? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | Good thanks. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | Okay maybe I should explain a bit. So yeah, the topic of my research, this is just for me to complete my master's dissertation. So, yeah, I wanna see what trade unions are doing to become green. And again, I want to thank you so much for making time for me. I've been struggling to find participants. |
| **PARTICIPANT** | Oh, okay, no problem. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | Alright, just so before we start, I think I may ask you to introduce yourself me and then we'll jump straight into the questions. |
| **PARTICIPANT** | Okay, no thank you. So, my name is Ms M, I’m working in production, auto surface inspection. I'm a former shop steward. So my years as a shop steward, I participated in different activities within the trade union and I was also a union official. I participated in automotive translational network. Yeah, that's a little bit about myself. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | Alright, great. Thank you for the introduction. Moving on to our first question, I want to ask, from your perspective, what is the level of importance given to green transitioning and sustainable practices in the automotive sector? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | So I think currently we the union still has some struggles in terms of still having workers that are not yet unionised and that poses a bit of a challenge for the unions to achieve their goals. Specifically in the automotive sector.  For example, in the company, not everyone, or not all associates, employees are union members. So it kind of creates tension when it comes to issues of bargaining issues. That has to do with industry and how the industry has to move with the changes, that are happening within the automotive sector, and how does then the union give information to workers regarding the changes that are happening in the automotive industry. Changes that are affecting the livelihood of employees, changes that are affecting the employment of employees, and changes that might influence as well the employment of employees. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | Okay, so would you say there's a high level of importance given to going green with regards to trade unions in the automotive industry? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | Yes, there is a very high level because when we look into discussions in the Trade & Industry department, the unions would always form part of the discussions in terms of the changes that need to happen within the industry. Changes whether it's introduction of new technologies within the industries, or for now, there's a big shift into hybrid vehicles, electric vehicles so the trade unions play an important role in that as well, because they do have to then have their own presentations to the Trade & Industry minister in terms of how do they see the changes?  How do they think or how do they think the changes will have a positive impact into the industry and the future of the industry as well. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | I want to talk about green initiatives and practices. So can you tell me what specific green strategies or practices are currently being implemented by the union to promote environmental sustainability? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | So there has been discussions in terms of the future of mobility and with that it included different stakeholders, we had, I think, trade unions from other countries where we met in Kigali to then discuss the future of mobility, how then will the changes in terms of the mode of transport that are being introduced.  How will that impact the future of the industry and what positive changes can that bring within the industry and also there has been discussions on having a battery manufacturing company in South Africa, and that also would need buy-in or support from the Department of Trade & Industry as well because we have mineral resources to produce those needed the batteries. However, those minerals are being exported to other countries, to then create job opportunities in other countries than in Africa itself. So those are some of the discussions that have been happening. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | So you said there’s discussions about sustainability. Are there any other actions or practices that the union is doing to become green? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | So the union would have its own meetings, workshops with stakeholders, workshops with trade union companies, competency centers. You there's this other Global Union industry all, where they will then conduct research to say how do we then meet employers in what they are trying to achieve? How do we then meet them halfway, so that we can also be able to contribute in the positive changes and sustainability that they are trying to build or they're trying to bring into the industry? |
| **INTERVIEWER** | Okay, so from what you’ve said there's discussions and research being done? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | Yes, there is. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | Okay and how do you see these discussions and research, I guess, progressing in the future? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | I think with the research team or the research department that NUMSA has, and all the alliances that NUMSA has created on the international platforms, I think that they would make a very good outcome and have a very positive impact as well in in the industry. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | Okay. Moving on, I want to know, what would you say are the main challenges or barriers faced by the unions in the automotive industry in implementing green transition strategies? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | So, one of the greatest challenges is reskilling workers. In terms of the new technologies that are being introduced in the automotive sector, the other thing is also the risk of having a low percentages of union members, due to robotics being introduced in our different manufacturing plants.  But I think the most concern for the Union would be reskilling and upskilling of workers because there are some workers who do not entirely believe that they need to be reskilled or they need to be educated in terms of the work that they're doing. They still believe that the future is going to continue, everything will continue with what they are currently doing and not understanding that things change.  Technology changes, we need new technology, we need workers who are skilled enough to then be able to work with the technology that is coming in. So that would be one of the challenges or some of the challenges that the union might be facing. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | And apart from the reskilling of workers and the low percentages of union members, would you say there are other challenges that they're facing? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | Other challenges that might be there is the unions not being able to reach out to as many members as they would want, because you know, from one company to another, there will be differences with management and the union differences with the workers and the union and management so it kind of gets difficult for the union to be able to cascade information to the workers about the changes that are coming. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | Okay. Okay, um, next question. Are there any collaborative efforts between trade unions, automotive companies and other stakeholders to drive? I mean to drive being transitioning in the industry? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | Yes, there are collaborations like currently in the automotive sector, there is a learning program that all workers must then be entitled to do which is production technology, to try and upskill every worker that is there and also give them another level of wages. After completing the entire learning outcome. So that is one of the collaborations that the trade union and the OEMs have. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | Okay and you mentioned stakeholders, can you perhaps name specific stakeholders who are working together? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | Or with a union? |
| **INTERVIEWER** | Yeah. |
| **PARTICIPANT** | So we have the IndustriALL Global Union. We also have FES. The word is a German word, so I don't even know how to pronounce it but if you can just Google FES organisation, you will see it. So those are the people that we work with.  We also work with IG Metall, one of the biggest trade unions in Germany and that's where we have this transnational network, automotive sector network where we discuss issues that are related to automotive sector, the changes that are coming and we then find ways on how to maybe make changes or influence the changes that are coming as the trade unions |
| **INTERVIEWER** | And how effective would you say have these collaborations been in achieving sustainability goals? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | So I think they have worked pretty well, because the workshops are held two times in a year, and they would go from one country to another and with those workshops. We have an opportunity to visit a certain manufacturing company, specifically the auto company, and we make comparisons of their safety standards and how do they then operate and their workforce.  How do they balance their workforce’s diversity and inclusion. Also key in those companies and we have those Plant visits with the management being present. We had one last year in the company, unfortunately, we, oh, I couldn't write an article about it due to other activities that caught up with me so we had one the transnational network came to South Africa and we organised a Plant visit. They had a chance to tour the plant, had a chance to get presentations from most of the departments that are there at work, and they had an opportunity to also to ask questions that they had, and also give their own reviews in terms of their Plant visit.  And if there were any concerns that I have highlighted or if there's anything that they needed clarity on. Like for example, they thought that our whole Bodyshop it’s automated and it doesn't have any human capital working there so bad, and they at least had an opportunity to be responded that no, we actually have a certain number of people working in in Bodyshop. The areas that are strictly robotic areas, and those areas are monitored by maintenance personnels.  However, we have areas that then the robots are then operated by your normal employee on the shop floor and we have areas that are operated by the employees only. So, those are some of the things that we do. And from there, we would go back and have a discussion on from the previous Plant visit, what are the things that we saw that are positive from the current Plant visit to the previous one?  So that's what we do and we then come up with maybe proposals, as to what can the other company improve in terms of what we have seen from them, from another company? |
| **INTERVIEWER** | And who do these proposals get pitched to? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | So because we have shop stewards from all those countries, from different companies. We then as the transnational network, we write those proposals, then the shop stewards from those companies will then take them away and present to their management and if they do want to adopt some of them, then they are welcome to do so.  But in most cases, especially for African countries, some of the proposals are quiet, challenging as they require a lot of money and they would tend to say ‘Yeah, we’ll look into it in the near future. Currently, we don't have capital to implement or even try to start with the proposals that you guys have’. So those are some of the things that are happening. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | Okay, um, just based off you said about the money would you also say that's a challenge that unions face in transitioning to become green as well? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | Yeah, that would always be a challenge because unions are not profit-making organisations. So they rely on their members subscriptions to do their day to day work, and also rely on donations from certain organisations or stakeholders. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | Thank you. I want to also now just move on to my next question. Can you please tell me how is the union supporting its members and adapting to the changing industry requirements? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | So I spoke about the production technology issue. So before the union and management could enter into an agreement the union had meetings with their members across all the Plants to explain thoroughly, what is production technology and why is it important and how is it going to work, what are the benefits, how long will it take and with that, the members would then tell us that or give us a mandate to say yes, you can go ahead and enter into an agreement with the OEMs in terms of this.  So that's how we do things. Go back to the workers give them feedback of things that are happening, the discussions that are being held in high level with the union and management. We go back we give them those feedback. They give us their own understanding in terms of what we told them, and their own proposals. We take them back again to the management and to our own circle as NUMSA to say our company said this and others. So after that meeting as the union we then have a consolidated report, that we would give to the OEMs to say this is a consolidated report from NUMSA members. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | And I know we did talk about it earlier, you said reskilling initiatives are taking place but are there other training and skills development activities that the union is doing in order to help its members adapt to the green transition. |
| **PARTICIPANT** | So for members, mostly the unions rely on the employer to assist with giving training to the workers in terms of the green transition. So what the union does is have their shop stewards given training and then those shop stewards will then be capacitated. In dealing with workers, negotiating skills, and also because you're now being a shop steward, you're dealing with a lot of things. You sometimes you find yourself being a social worker, you know, so there's a lot of things that are happening so they would give you also your emotional intelligence trainings, things that you need to understand on your basic day-to-day run of your union office and also your day-to-day encounter with workers day-to-day encounter with management.  So, if we need the entire workforce then to be trained. We would then for example, there's an upcoming Plant shutdown. So if we have a certain maybe training that we think might be essential to workers, that's when we would then with the union and management would approach the Department of Labor, to say we need to have a training layoff scheme. And this training layoff scheme will be a about this certain topic, and it will be maybe for a week or two weeks.  So once the department has had all the documentation regarding the training, and also seen the agreement between the union and the management, then the Department of Labor will then give it thumbs up and also as the employer in the union to get an accredited training company, to then give that training then that department will then pay the workers a certain amount for attending the training. And also, the company and the department will then pay the service provider. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | Okay, so, as the need arises and is identified, then training as well is set up simultaneously- |
| **PARTICIPANT** | Yes, yes. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | In terms of the sustainability, do you perhaps know what sort of training union members have gone on, with regards to that? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | Oh, no. I am not sure as to what trainings they have undergone. I think I can. I can also refer you to someone from the NUMSA research department. I'm sure she will be able to also assist you in your in your work. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | That would be much appreciated. Thank you. |
| **PARTICIPANT** | Okay. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | Okay, um, we've just got a few more questions left. My next one is, how do government policies and regulations influence the adoption of green practices within the automotive industry? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | So it's called NAMSA and NAMSA is where they take all the decisions, make all the decisions and NAMSA we have a representative from each trade union, representative from each company to be a member there in NAMSA. To ensure that the changes in policies, are influenced by both the employers and the trade unions, so that it doesn't seem as the government, is doing changes to policies or implementing policies without engaging with the employers and the trade unions. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | Okay, so the government has, can I say a meeting with NAMSA and then together that's where the decisions are made, and then the instruction is filtered down to the unions. |
| **PARTICIPANT** | So NAMSA members, there's the government, there's the OEMs and there's the trade unions. So they all, all those people they all form NAMSA and that's where everything happens. But in terms of the automotive industry, per se, the changes in terms of having your electric vehicles, green papers and all that allowed in South Africa, then the discussions would be with the Trade & Industry minster. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | Right, moving on to my next question. Would you say, are there any specific technologies that the trade union sees as critical for a sustainable future in the automotive sector? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | I believe there are, however, those technologies are also a threat to the employment of union members. So like introduction of robots in your body shops, in your paint shops, those robots have replaced people.  For example, in your paint shop, there were people who manually painted the vehicle. So they have now been replaced by robots and some of them were given different working packages. And they would then struggle to do the work because a person has been doing the manual spray painting for 15 plus years. And now all of a sudden, he has to go and work in another area. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | So that would also require retraining for the employee, as they're going to work in another area now. |
| **PARTICIPANT** | Yes, that also requires retraining. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | And what about those employees … it's such an unfortunate thing to say, but what about those employees who get replaced by robots and provision isn't made for them to work in another area? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | So we have never had such an instance luckily. Yes, everyone has been provided with alternative work packages. And yeah, I think most of those who did manual spray painting in the company, most of them are currently on pension. Most of them, only few are still at work, and they also don't have many years until their pension. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | Okay and apart from the robots, would you say there are other technologies? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | Uh currently no. I haven't seen any new technology, that I might think it might be risky or threatening the work for the union members. But we believe that more is still coming. So you can never say technology's enough. Yeah. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | All right. We've come to the end of our interview. I just have a one more question for you. |
| **PARTICIPANT** | Okay. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | Okay so from your perspective, what can be done to enhance transitioning and sustainability within the automotive industry? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | So I think the employers as well, must make it a point that workers are being taken through the changes that are happening within the industry because most workers are not even aware of that. If the world then goes straight into your electric vehicles. Some workers are not aware that there won't be a need to manufacture engines anymore.  You know, so you can imagine a person who is working in an engine manufacturing company, what will that person's future look like? So I think it shouldn't only be the responsibility of trade unions, to inform workers about the changes that are coming, but also the employers must also take part in that and also assisting, the workers to understand the importance of the changes that are coming. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | Okay. |
| **PARTICIPANT** | Yes. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | Alright, I just have a little bit of demographic information I want to collect from you. Can you please just confirm your age? And so sorry, to ask for it but gender for me. |
| **PARTICIPANT** | No don't worry. So I’m 36 turning 37 in a few days, not more than 90 days. And I’m a female. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | Thank you. |
| **PARTICIPANT** | Thank you Chloe. |