**INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT**

**DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**

Union Position: Union member

Age: 62

Gender: Male

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| **INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT** | |
| **SPEAKER** | **DIALOGUE** |
| **INTERVIEWER** | Hello, how are you? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | I’m good thanks and you? |
| **INTERVIEWER** | Good thanks before we get started can you please introduce yourself for me? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | I'm a former NUMSA member and activist. I used to work at a big automotive company in South Africa, I mean both the manufacturing plant and the retail head office in Pretoria. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | Right. Thank you and before we proceed any further, I'd just like to confirm that you are aware that the interview will be recorded and transcribed for academic purposes. |
| **PARTICIPANT** | That's no problem. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | All right, great. Alright, so my first question is, what would you say is the level of importance given to green transitioning and sustainability? Within the automotive sector? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | Given the many scientific reports that involve these areas, global organisations and as well as the automotive industry itself. It's very, very important that the- this sector of our society adapts to the demands of what global warming is, and all this type of thing and the contribution by the automotive industry to this the detriment of global warming. So it is a very, very important topic and it's a topic that has to be taken serious and discussed and solutions found to it. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | Okay, and can you please tell me what specific green strategies or practices are being implemented? By let’s say trade unions to promote environmental sustainability? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | The challenge that I've come across speaking to some of my old colleagues in the in the union environment is that don't have indirect or direct impact on global sustainability but they have indirect. In that most of the employees that are union members are union members de facto because they work in that environment.  However, the union leadership is party to a lot of discussions around this topic and their input is taken serious. They're not just employees that are affected they are also, they are family members. They are community members and it's also about not just themselves, but about their children, so and children's children. So they see this as an important topic. So hence their participation and I think around the world if you read most unions are involved. In fact, a lot of them are also protest against the automotive industry's contribution to global warming.  So as a union, as unionists it's important that they participate. It's important that they take part meaningfully and give their input. It's not just also about the global warming side of it, but they've also got to protect the industry in terms of the employees because there is a threat to employees work since sustainability. That has a great impact, especially in Africa. We, you know, employees are very concerned about these changes that are that are coming about.  So unions are interested, they participate and they want to see a clean environment. But they also want to see it introduced in a fair way. In a way that it's not just putting pressure on certain areas, especially Africa, because Africa, Africa's contribution to global warming is about the least in the world. So if you look at the stats, so the unions in South Africa, especially in Africa in general, they do have a interest as to whether other countries doing to improve this. Yeah. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | All right. Do you perhaps know what the unions are doing to become green? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | In the auto industry, most of the unions would participate directly with what the companies they work for offer or propose. The one thing that I know, especially in the NUMSA environment is there's a clamour for upskilling of people, training of the workers to be able to adapt to this. What is meant by this is that, you can see in the in the auto industry, there's a change from employees, which is warm bodies, doing certain work in in production environments, like body shops, paint shops, and all that. They bringing more robotics into there.  However, the companies, the unions are putting pressure on companies to improve or be more open about the contribution of robotics to global warming and that but at the same time, they're also pushing that the employees that work in this in this auto, the chain of production are skilled. Because obviously, the automotive industry especially, is moving from combustion engines to electrical and battery type of vehicles and in some cases, there's even gas vehicles, which have been introduced into the market. Especially on trucking environment and bus environment.  So the unions are pushing the big conglomerates especially, to provide people with skill. So as you can imagine, most of employees workers were being trained to work on combustion engines. Some of them are mechanic, some of them are auto electrical, some of them are just general workers who work on these vehicles, and so forth. So there's an adaptability that needs to take place now in terms of moving from these combustion vehicles. So that is where the unions come in. To make sure that that employees don't lose jobs, that they also equipped for the new thing because it doesn't mean that they won't be automotives on the road. There will be automotives but more clean, clean burning if you're on a quality like that.  So you're going to need people to build these vehicles and you will need people with skills to do it. Their skills to repair and all that so that's where the unions come in, is to ensure that the change over from combustion engine type vehicles, to electric vehicles is a smooth sort of transition where workers are not left behind.  And there's also to make sure that workers do not lose jobs because they don't have the skills to be able to work on these vehicles, to assemble these vehicles to repair these vehicles and so forth. So the union's are together with the management of these things, are playing a key role in identifying the types of skills that is required, and are making sure that those that are there are upskilled or differently skilled to be able to adapt. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | And I realised there could be some hesitancy in transitioning to a greener future. So I want to know from your point of view, what would you say are the barriers faced by unions, specifically in the automotive industry in implementing green strategies? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | One of the barriers definitely is a loss of jobs and that is a key concern for the unions. And obviously, when people lose jobs, they losing membership. So if they have 10,000 members today, and because of a change, they might have only 5000 members so it does impact the union as a structure, union as an organisation, because the membership is declining. And the main thing is for the union, the barriers is also trying to influence government. Trying to influence the institutions of higher learning, the technical institutions to ensure that the young people that are coming out of these institutions are equipped when they enter those environments.  I haven't seen much involvement from the unions, but in your in your education side; there are other unions which they engage the automotive unions engage with. But definitely those are the major concerns. The concerns, especially the unions in Africa, because the unions here they come from a point of view like Africa is not a major, major contributor of global warming and the answer is they don't see the critical need at this stage. Yes, they do see the need but they don't see the critical need. They hoping the change should come more in other areas, and they will adapt as they go on. So yes, I think for unions, it's about losing jobs, losing employment.  And the other thing is getting the skills whether the people are equipped to even pick up these skills because our education system, especially in South Africa is not geared to equip our young people, especially in the technical environment. The education system, which is a barrier to what is happening and this is what the unions have to engage in, with the education department in that your schooling system is based more on a academic. Maths, which is important Science is important those types of subjects. However, they're not introducing Technical Maths, Technical Science, Applied Science, Applied Maths, and those are the things that will help our youngsters to get into the technical environment.  We know that the matric system for any young matriculant going into the next level of their career. They need the education system as a point system or a rating system based on the subject which you choose and those rating systems give you University inputs and it's like that for all schools. So you go into that environment. That is what you need to, you need to choose subjects to get you to university. But that needs to change and that is one of the barriers that unions do see. I’ve now discussed this with a number of other unions, other than not just even the metal industry. Recently, we had an online discussion with the guys who come from the food and airline industry.  Where if our education system was adapting, to allowing our young people to choose more technical subjects and train more technically, because there are those that would want to go in that direction. But basically they are being forced to do subjects that will take them into university. One doesn't say that university doesn't offer technical but the basic of technical, you need to go to a TVET College or University of Technology where you can get that and obviously there's apprenticeships and stuff like that are out there on offer including some other technical training, but your schooling system is a barrier. And the unions see that as a problem. Hopefully, that will change quite soon.  I understand that the new minister is looking at the new curriculum looking at new changes in the schooling system. But the schooling system has drastically to change, to offer that and that's where the union is also seeing that the education system is actually a barrier to allow investments in the manufacturing- especially in the manufacturing environment. In that we as a country are not turning out or producing enough youngsters that are technically educated from a lower level going into the next level and a higher level.  And hence, when you bring a manufacturer into South Africa to produce say washing machines or a car engines or whatever electronic devices. They've got to train these people themselves and sometimes it's difficult because the people do not have the basic-basic knowledge of technical so those are barriers that the unions are concerned about. And these barriers can lead to job losses in our country. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | Moving on to collaboration and partnerships. Can you tell me, are there any collaborative efforts between trade unions, automotive companies and other stakeholders to drive green transitioning in the industry? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | There's a lot of collaboration going around, it happens in pockets. If you're the one that is actually leading in the automotive industry is definitely Tesla in the US, but there's also you know, there's a hesitancy to share knowledge and that is one of the biggest issues at the moment. Where industries are not comfortable to share their knowledge with one another because obviously they are in competition to sell vehicles into the same market.  So there is that sharing but I'm not sure yet, how much is it. Is it just basics of that or is it wider than that? But obviously there's a thing, my understanding in Europe you do have- there has been a lot of cross-cultural, if you want to call it discussions between companies, where they've produced some engines and stuff together. So there are collaborations between some of the auto industry then you also got the Chinese industry which is growing quite fast with their vehicles. There is also the threat of Chinese vehicles coming into other markets and obviously your car companies in Europe and US are concerned with their growth because they produce huge numbers. And they fast, they’re acting quite fast to the needs out there.  In the past obviously Chinese and Indian auto industry were not producing vehicles that were burning clean, clean energy, but rather polluting the air more than other companies’ vehicles. But now if we look at the statistics that are coming out, they adapting quite fast. Also in India, you've got a collaboration between your automotive companies. So those collaborations are bringing out better produced vehicles in terms of clean energy. So there is that taking place definitely. But I'm not sure of the scale. Is it big enough? You also if you read up you see that some companies are not prepared really to share their technical expertise.  And one can understand because at the end of the day, this is something new for the world. Everybody wants to be first in line, everybody wants to come out with the best products or the best technology with something that's gonna be there that's going to everybody else must try to emulate. So, we can see that in some of the automotive industry companies. They have been struggling with adapting, hence it's important that they do collaborate. The pressure is on from governments from and from other organisations to ensure that the vehicles on the road are complying with the standards that have been agreed upon by them, not just imposed on them but they've also agreed to these targets.  So yeah there is that collaboration. The one thing that that is quite interesting, if you just want to take it to a specific point. If you look at the electrical vehicles that are currently in South Africa there are not many of them. I've noticed that the charging points for their electrical vehicles at certain if you want to call it petrol stations, they do have these charging points. But then they've got them branded like you’ll have a certain one, then you’ll have another one. I've not really researched to see if they are compatible with one another. So that will be quite interesting to see in terms of the collaboration whether they are using the same plug points, you know that they can use each other's facilities that they have erected.  So that that's one very, very important point with that, because as you can understand and imagine if you look at South Africa and take a sample simple thing like your household electrical system, we have, we have in most cases we have either two pin plugs, which are round and we have our three pin plugs which are round for your electrical which like the simple person in the street will understand. And if you go to the UK or Europe they've got their own plug points which are different, if you go to Australia or New Zealand, they've also got slightly different and so it goes. There are probably about four, five or six even different shapes of these plugs. So when you travel, if you're a traveller, you know you've got to you've got to go with your international adapter. So those type of technologies are now important when it comes to this.  When you talk about the collaboration between these companies, I would hate to see someone driving from Limpopo to Cape Town and they get in the middle of the Free State and they need some power and then their cars, the points where they must charge up their batteries, not adapt. It's not adaptable to what's available at some of these points. So those are very important points that need to be a thing, but it's also important for government in South Africa. We do we have South African Bureau of Standards, South African Bureau of Standards they are key in these types of things. Where any vehicle comes into the country has to be homologated at South African Bureau of Standards, making sure that they meet the standards of our transport laws in South Africa. So this is where they come in to ensure that vehicles that are brought meet a certain standard that is conducive to what our people's needs are and you know in the country so that's one of the important points that they are going to have to take up and address with the auto industry and also as an important item on their agenda when they start allowing electrical vehicles in terms of homologation.  How do they accept it to the country? So yes, you know, the adaptability is important, but collaboration in terms of getting the adaptability correct, is very, very important. But once again, our government and the SABS, which is the Department of Trade, they fall under the Trade industry to check on these things because we don't want a flood of these vehicles and then we find a lot of problems. So that's one area that they will have to look at whether these companies are complying with standards out there. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | Okay. |
| **PARTICIPANT** | I think that’s what I can say there. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | Okay thanks, I realised you talked a lot about the automotive companies. I want to know is there any other parties that are involved in these collaborations to drive sustainability? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | I'm not so familiar with other companies, obviously but in the auto industry, you've got your suppliers. So some suppliers are supplying parts in various you know components to the auto industry, but they also supply similar parts to outside of the auto industry because they as suppliers and small manufacturers, they also invent and manufacture items on their own, in their own right.  So, I would take it that they will be passing on the technology that they gaining, by working with the auto industry that they are passing this on to do the environment for instance. I mean, you have like when I talk auto industry, I'm talking cars bakkies, trucks, buses, those that is from the auto industry. Obviously you've got different derivatives, you know, whether it's a small bakkie or a big bakkie or whether it's a kombi or whatever.  But then you also get other modes, which is outside of the auto industry, which is your planes, your trains, your boats, your you know, those type of modes of transport whether they're transporting goods or persons. So, in most cases, companies that are producing vehicles in automaton, they do have a finger in the pie in those industries. For instance, if you look at a certain automotive company, they own across the spectrum. They have hysters, they have earthmoving equipment, they have a lot of these things which are similar to the automotive.  They also you can say, they're part of the automotive although they not transporting people, not transporting goods but they used to provide services in this land or country, or even in the world, where they maybe produce they create roads. They build dams, they do, they work in the fishing industry in the sea. So those are those are important, other industries, but as I say they are a company if you take it, they do have a finger in the pie or they do have other interests in those things.  So you'll have a company that deals with hysters. You have one little company that deals with lifts, for example, in buildings lifts that go up and down, you know, each are automated again. A certain company also has which some people might not know that your star of their logo, which is on most of your cars, trucks and that is a three-pointed star. Now what that three-pointed star stands for every point. The top point stands for air, the bottom point on the left or right is, one is land and other one is sea. What does that denote, it denotes that they are involved in the automotive transport industry, in all those three sectors.  So, they do make planes they got a share in building planes, which is the aerospace and they got also you know, making submarines and boats as well as currently, as everybody will know the cars and trucks. So, these automotive a lot of them are involved across the sphere of wherever you can move items or use a certain automotive type of technology to operate so that it's obvious that they would have to transfer the knowledge into this to be able to assist their other sister companies, in keeping up with the global demand to improve clean air and so forth. So I don't think it's something that is not being looked at, it definitely is being looked at in these companies.  It's just the smaller companies that are maybe not involved in such a wider scale but a lot of the big companies, they've crossed the spectrum. I mean if you look at even other companies for that matter, you get that cars and all that and you even get like the ordinary person, when they go and buy a petrol generator to power electricity in the house or whatever. It's a specific one or whatever. So these all come out of the motor industry. They belong to their sister companies or those companies. So those industries are affected. They are, they have to improve their energy generation in terms of driving clean energy. I would say yes, those industries are working towards that as well. So forth. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | That's very interesting. I want to move on to training and skills development. I know we did touch on it in the beginning when you mentioned how the unions are upskilling their members with regards to robots, but I want to know how else is the union supporting its members and adapting to the changing industry requirements. |
| **PARTICIPANT** | In terms of skills the unions that should be pushing for this more than anyone is our teacher unions because they are directly in the face of ensuring that our young people are trained with skills and as I said, our current in South Africa our current education system is not geared up. Is behind in fact, worth producing enough skills for this type of environment. How do you get there? And it's something that the unions will have to think about, that I'm not sure if they've thought about this, but if we look at other companies or countries for example, you can go to Pakistan or India or any of these countries.  Any company who comes and wants to produce a small thing like a cell phone, for example. Those companies basically, they got to commit to enhance or produce skilled or transfer knowledge to the local people. So if you are a company, for example, and you want to come and sell Samsungs in India or Pakistan they basically have to do something to ensure that the young people are equipped to be able to service those items, repair them, and so forth. As you find that there's a huge amount of those types of skills. In those countries because their governments have seen the need that anybody who comes into my country wants to sell a certain product, then they need to pass that knowledge on to our young people. And I think that's where we lacked a bit here in South Africa.  In fact, it's not a bit it's quite a lot that we need to ensure that any company that's going to invest in our country, in whichever industry, that there is an immediate opportunity created by these companies for young people to be trained and upskilled in whatever they want to produce in South Africa. Let's take an example of solar panelling, solar panelling is not long in South Africa. However, I have never heard of even schools or technical schools that are offering skills for youngsters to be able to service that industry or even upskill in that environment. The people that are in the environment are people, that have got basically they've had electrical skill maybe previously and they work in that environment but new skills, because my understanding is that even your solar systems, there are different needs to be able to maintain and service those panels or even the batches that drive those things.  So is their training being given? Maybe yes, on a small scale, but we need to need to improve. Ensure that there's more and more youngsters that are skilled in that, because it can create jobs. For people it can improve the service delivery in terms of people that need these panels either replaced or serviced or repaired. Because you can imagine solars have been running for the last few years now. Not very long, I don’t think it’s a decade. Now it's coming to a point where most of these items that were affected five to ten years ago. They are beginning to need an upgrade. Have we got enough people to upgrade? I don't know, I don't think so. Hence your skills now. You've got a shortage of skills to do that.  So what gonna happen is that our people that have gone earlier into this into this power industry to provide electric power to these type of modes are now going to find themselves having to purchase new ones instead of being able to just service them or repair them. Maybe one or two items that need to be replaced. So that is actually a challenge. Whether that is happening and those are the skills that we're going to need to look at, not just for that but for every industry that's being adapted into our world today. We need to churn out youngsters, that can adapt to this and can be of service to these industries. So the unions have their work cut out, they have their work cut out. Just as the companies and the unions need to put far more pressure on industry. Yeah. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | Okay. Moving on to government policies and regulations. How do government policies and regulations influence the adoption of green practices within the automotive industry? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | This is a very important point that one that you raised now, that our government policy and laws have got to be in line with what's required globally. Because not just globally but also what our people require in our country. Because at the end of the day, if we, for instance, want to be an exporter, of some of these products, if our policies are not in line, we won't be able to export those products. In other words, we need to have policies which dictate to industry what is required globally, as well as locally.  So I know that our government has already moved in that direction and it's something that's also it's new to everybody. It's not just new to South Africa. So I take it that those policies, are policies that will be constantly changing, constantly improved, as we go along with they find new things and so forth. So yeah, I think it's something that very important. And however, I'm not sure if there's enough publicity about it, there's enough sharing, publicly and otherwise. So that's important. That is one of the points that also needs to be adapted, even in the training environment. Because the policy that you set out also needs to be shared with education or the education industry. Not just in the higher education but in schools. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | All right. Sorry about that. My mic just struggled to unmute there. We're almost coming to the end of our interview. I just got two more questions. So the first one is, are there any specific technologies that the trade union sees as critical for a sustainable future in the automotive sector? I know we touched on robotics, but are there others? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | Obviously, you’re gonna need tools that are used for this industry. Tools that are used for you know the mechanics, if I can call it of some of these technologies that are being that are being introduced now. So those, even those new tools or new facilities that are going to need people to be trained. People not just played out to use those tools and things, but they also need training to be able to repair them, be able to maintain them.  So yes, the definitely new, if you want to call them tools, new systems, new. Whatever, you know, the names of these thing are but at the end of the day, people, you can't just introduce something and people are not trained to use it. So yes, definitely. Definitely there will be new technology or new tools brought into the into the industry for sure. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | Yeah, we've come to the end of our interview. I just have one more question in closing. So that's from your perspective, what can be done to enhance transitioning and sustainability within the automotive industry? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | Definitely there needs to be more collaboration. Government needs to step up, with regards to the vehicles that are being produced and being introduced into the industry. They also themselves whoever the people that are responsible for doing these checks. They often need to be upskilled to know what to look for, because you don't want to bring vehicles into the industry and you find that this vehicle has got break problems, has got servicing problems.  It's not so long ago we in Europe we had about electric cars that are burning or catching a light. So they need to be up to date and ensure that those types of auto motors are not allowed on our roads, which can cause a danger to the people commuting in them and to other road users. You know, so to government needs to make sure that they adapt to what is coming and what is already on our doorstep. So it's very, very, very important. In my opinion that the SABS is checked. Checked up and that they ensure that whatever does come to our shores or produced in our country, is in line with what our policies laws and transport laws are saying. So I'm quite sure that they mindful about this and obviously, countries that like Germany and other European countries, including the US that are manufacturers and the OEMs.  The Original Equipment Manufacturers of these types of vehicles have got a stake in this, so they are also interested to assist our country and countries like us to improve and be able to adapt to this. So yes we need to collaborate with those OEMs and even their industries, as to how are they managing it. So across the board, we need to be able to not just talk to the automotive industry but also the other government institutions that are responsible for ensuring quality coming out of these automotive companies and OEMs. Yeah, I think that's what I think |
| **INTERVIEWER** | All right, great. Thank you so much for the valuable insight. Definitely learned a lot. I can say that for sure. If I need any other clarity, I'll definitely reach out. But yeah, once again, thank you so much for your time. |
| **PARTICIPANT** | Thanks Chloe. Have a good evening. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | You too, bye. |
| **PARTICIPANT** | Bye. |