**INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT**

**DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**

Union Position: Union Official

Age: 36

Gender: Male

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| **INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT** | |
| **SPEAKER** | **DIALOGUE** |
| **INTERVIEWER** | Hello, how are you? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | I’m good thanks and you? |
| **INTERVIEWER** | Great. So yeah, before we get started I just like to make you with the interview will be recorded and transcribed for academic purposes. |
| **PARTICIPANT** | Okay, that’s okay. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | All right. Great. So before we start, can you please introduce yourself for me in terms of your union position, age and gender? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | All right. My name is Mr. M. I'm a union official with NUMSA inside an automotive company at the plant. I am a 36-year old male. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | Okay, great. Thank you. So we're starting off with my first question. I want to know, what is the level of importance given to green transitioning and sustainable practices in the automotive sector? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | I am largely unaware of the whole sector as a whole, but I know the practices within my company. A class leading in the South African context, in that we look at our footprint as a whole and should be that everything is recycled or has it’s own recycle plan. And we've even gotten to the extent of where the company has an understanding of how much energy is used. And they're trying to also create, you know, ways of making energy available to the grid, in order to offset the amount of energy that's been used in their production.  So all of those factors brought together it means that it's a more sustainable way of actually producing cars. So I only know basically of the operations within the plant being really green, in terms of how they take into account of the situation of pollution that normally happens to the water supplies and the streams around companies and they've taken measures to make sure that they are not part of the problem. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | Right, so just based off you said, can I say there’s a high level of importance given to sustainability? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | Yes, within the plant there’s a high importance that has been given to it. But walking around and seeing the rest of the industrial side you know, there’s stark differences in how we as a company considers the environment as compared to other plants, which aren't necessarily in the auto sector, but others could be in a roundabout way, part of the environment of it.  In the sense that there would be part of the people, who perhaps are in charge of other materials who could be later used. So you just see on the periphery that perhaps it could be situations that are better managed, based on what you see on the periphery. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | Okay. I now want to move on to green initiatives or practices. Again, no pressure in answering this question, but can you perhaps tell me what specific green strategies or practices are currently being implemented by the union to promote environmental sustainability? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | I'm not currently aware of any union-based things, being that my time has been very short and now as I was, for the first time, a worker leader just last year. So obviously, expanding my horizons is a part of my point my tenure right now. It's at that part where I'm just still expanding my horizons and trying to see just how far the union activities actually span, in my limited view. At this point, I have not seen any green practices that have been championed by my union. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | No problem, then can you perhaps speak to if you haven't mentioned any already what's happening in the plant? Because I know you touched on a few things that are happening in terms of going green. |
| **PARTICIPANT** | Yes, well, also the bigger part of going green has been that we are building up towards PF, which will be another option as opposed to ice engines which are internal combustion engines. We are building up to being able to produce plug in hybrids. For the rest of the company, we’ll be producing the extreme plug in hybrid here in South Africa. And that is also part of the bigger strategy globally. For going, more green because we are avoiding emissions that way. So that's the big thing that is under development for us adding to how green the plant is going. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | Thank you. I want to move on to challenges and barriers. What would you say are the main challenges or barriers faced by unions in the automotive industry in implementing green transition strategies, or perhaps just going green? In general? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | Going green should be everybody. I mean, when I say everybody, I mean all stakeholders. It should be everyone's objective since we can see that climate change and all the other knock-on effects of pollution are really happening now. It's not something that's on our doorstep. It's something that's with us right now.  The race towards being in a situation where our infrastructure is actually going to match our raw materials in Africa, is something that needs to be taken into serious consideration based on the fact that we have all the ingredients that we need for where development of battery technology is headed in Africa, and we need the infrastructure to match and actually have, you know, plants where we can produce the latest and greatest forms of, you know, lithium batteries and any other sources that will be more sustainable.  But our Achilles heel, as it were, would be the government buy-in on something that they may not want to actually, you know, get along with. Based on the fact that they may not be able to quickly get any, you know, profits that they see the one from such large sums of investment. So, really we are working with a lack of willpower from certain, you know, stakeholders and it’d be pointed towards government.  If government was to see that this is the new wave towards as us being, you know, competitive in the future as Africa, to say that we are really meaning meaningfully contributing to the auto sector and to power generation and alternative sources that aren’t based on you know, fossil fuels. We would really be jumping to towards heavily investing in infrastructure that would help the production of batteries that would suit our future purposes of going green in the in the auto sector. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | So, based off your response, I noticed that there's a lack of infrastructure and a lack of support from government. Would you say those are the only barriers or challenges faced when going green by unions? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | Going green has also got another facet of it that needs to be taken into account. South Africans must be capacitated to be at the forefront of this. If we are not quickly, you know, beefing up what is being taught to our future employees within these sectors, we are going to find ourselves again., further behind, because if we have to look at what's going on now, there's another industrial revolution at hand and everyone is looking to Africa as a lynchpin, again, to maintain profitability.  And if somehow Africa was to come to the party with a willingness to equip it’s many citizens we’d be in a better place for it at the end of whatever industrial revolution would call this. So capacitation or lack of rather, is also another thing that we have to really look into and stop the narrative that it will take. As it were, automotive companies, to actually see the importance behind teaching the many citizens out there who could be a meaningful part of the sector, how to actually engage and grow within the sector in terms of electrification. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | Okay, so can I take it from capacitation as you put it, would that be training and skill development? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | It could be training, skill development. It could also be an exchange program, things similar to what doctors in South Africa and Cuba are doing currently between ourselves and the rest of Europe. That might be something that's necessary. That together with the standards that we know, the German and American counterparts for having and a clear understanding of what it will take for an industry to be sustainable, will be things that we should be looking towards, not only capacitation but an understanding of how to make the ecosystem itself.  You know, when I talk about an ecosystem in this instance, I mean, that the companies you know, the tier one companies that’d be supporting the auto manufacturers, there needs to be a certain percentage of those in order for us not to just be a group of buyers, but to also be you know, well within what we need to be in order for our GDP to not just be, you know, a hole that people don't know how to invest into. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | Okay. So, from everything you’ve said, I take it as educational challenges as well as economic constraints. |
| **PARTICIPANT** | Yes, economic constraints that are born really from our lack of willpower. I'm talking in the sense of, of the governments of, not only the SADAC region, but I'm also including Africa as a whole in terms of us needing to have our own standards to say, if you want to be in this market, you must contribute in this way. And also, you know, giving promises that will then be kept from the various governments of these territories to say, this economic structure that we're putting up and reforms that we're putting up, will then be followed and it would bring more certainty to people who are willing to invest in these territories. To say that it will be sustainable even if we invested heavily in towards you know, battery plants and everything that's towards electrification. industrial policies must really be made for that growth and sustainability.  And they must be also followed. And I mean, I'm talking based on certain things from adjusting bonds having contributed to a lot of, you know, writing of industrial policies that were ultimately in the SADAC region, not effectively followed and thus failed, including South Africa in terms of what's written. Comparing that with what is actually followed, is something that the authors of these industrial policies actually feel like is a failure. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | So I just want to touch on industrial policies, because I know that takes quite a bit of collaboration from a few parties and that leads into my next question. Are there any collaborative efforts between trade unions, automotive companies and other stakeholders to drive green transitioning in the industry? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | So far, the presentations we've been to about what NUMSA has been looking at in terms of the research department, is more about the sustainability of the sector. The auto and motor sectors really, need to just be sustainable. So we are not even worried about them being more green. It's more about them just surviving in being sustainable at this point. So that just shows how dire the situation is.  If also you look at things like retrenchments, just happening around the corner, you know, you’d really see that green is something that we should aspire to, but our current problems really important towards the sector needing to be more sustainable before we can also put the edit, you know, responsibility of being green altogether. And right now, I think the biggest, the biggest contributors towards being green, are the OEMs themselves. And what they'll tell their suppliers would need to do as a bare minimum |
| **INTERVIEWER** | You mentioned NUMSA and government. I want to know are there other parties involved in collaborating to drive sustainability? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | It wouldn't make sense to exclude all of the people who are the major players in the sector itself, and then write a policy that would then speak to how everyone engages and makes the whole sector sustainable. We have to also include the people who are the major players within every sector in order to make a proper representation of where the whole sector needs to go. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | And within the automotive industry, who would you say are the main players? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | Well it's the OEMs and well, if you look at the OEMs, you'd also see that with it, they carry the jobs of all these tier ones who, who are trying to stay afloat within the market, trying to supply them companies. You know, all these smaller companies that are suppliers to the auto manufacturers, are directly affected by anything that happens to the OEMs.  So I'd say the OEMs and other automotive companies. Those are the major players, who have the whole ecosystem that they are supporting, each of them really having a whole ecosystem of companies who are there just to cater to their needs. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | Thank you. I know we touched on it earlier, which was a lack of training and skills development. But now I want to ask, how is the union supporting its members in adapting to the changing industry requirements? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | Well there's a lot that's been done through collective bargaining and we are trying to say, within how the remuneration packages, the benefits and the new ceilings that they’re trying to make for all these levels. We try to include things that we can agree on. Of course, we need help from other major players, you know, like merSETAs to come on board. What we are trying to do is to say that, if you are going to go in a certain direction, capacitate people, pay them well for it.  But at the end of the day, we're going to give you also, the extra you know benefit of knowing that this is the minimum of which each person must know. You know, in anything that you say is perhaps an N-course or an NQF, in order for the standards to also over time improve not only the wages to improve, so it's a whole thing.  Sometimes when we talk about negotiations, people only think about money, but also the big factor is we get everyone else to think a bit harder about what it is that they want from the employees so that we agree on something that would actually mean that the whole industry moves in terms of training, things like that are gone from, you know, collective bargaining in terms of the necessary trainings in order to get to different levels. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | So, collective bargaining is where, how do I phrase it? Basically discussions are held about what training is suitable to the members at that present point in time. |
| **PARTICIPANT** | It's … the biggest part of collective bargaining is to get better conditions for employees, who are already with these companies. But it's also an opportunity to say, we surely do understand that we want to get paid more. But what would you be paying for?  If now the OEMs have the opportunity to say, well, I'll be really happy if my employees were able to do such and such a function. It brings more capacitation to each individual at the end of the day, because in as much as we want to get paid more, we should be able to be more of an asset each of us. As employees for these companies and as such, we always say that we have to agree that certain jobs should be able to do just that and the other at the end of the day. So it begins to be a better value proposition for your OEMs as well. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | I'm just taking everything that you said about training and skill development. I want to know, has there been any training initiatives in terms of providing members with training specifically catered to sustainability and going green? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | Well we are. I would say this is like the beginning stages of trying to understand how we could actually, you know, do our own in-plant things that would go a long way to helping everyone else do their own in-plant things or perhaps something that could be an industry standard in the future, but yes, there are a few things that collaboratively the company and NUMSA committee is trying to bring about for the few people who will be you know, working on the electrification part.  You know, there's also going to be things like high voltage, you know, trainings that we want to be, you know, given to more people than they already have, because obviously the company itself has its own, you know, standards that all its associates who are dealing with those aspects of electrification have to actually know in order for them to, you know, work relatively safely and work efficiently. There's also going to be other things that we are going to propose that the government help us with in the future in terms of our training center, but that is something that has not yet been achieved. So that wouldn't be something that would be of value for the context of this interview. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | So basically, I can phrase it in the way of discussions are being held about perhaps piloting training with regards to electrification? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | Yes, something that will be for the South African context, a thing that we will probably be able to take forward. So obviously, with certain things you'd need, them to be something that merSETA can take and actually give value to and other things would be something that perhaps, would be more of an e-learning between, you know, the company’s associates and other institutions within the company would make those things available over cloud, but obviously, the bigger picture would be us saying that we are moving infrastructure and we're moving capacitation towards electrification. That will be the bigger goal for the South African context of the industry of auto. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | Okay and I know we spoke about merSETA and other types of programs and qualifications. So I'm just going back to our discussion we had earlier when you said to basically a really race against time in terms of going green but also not forgetting employees at the end of the day. And at the pace the discussions are happening about like it could be members in terms of electrification, how long do you think that would take if I can probe for an answer in terms of equipping them in order to adapt to going green? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | Well if you're asking for the industry as a whole, its many factors that will make me have a very bleak view of how far behind we’d find ourselves if we relied on, you know, the buy-in from all the parties that would need to be present for the whole industry to move. But in terms of the company, I feel like they are moving rather quickly, because they themselves have actually, apparently, you know, put out the money that's needed for the new building, that we are building for the Plant in connection with electrification.  So, that actually shows the pace at which the OEMs could probably be able to move if it was part of their plan, to actually build infrastructure for such things.  Obviously, it is going to be a bigger impact if you have a buy-in from government because you will be able to put a lot more money towards it and you would be able to affect many more people meaningfully. If you were to go that direction with government. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | I just want to pick up on government for a second and talk about policies and regulations. How would you say government policies and regulations influenced the adoption of green practices? Within the automotive industry? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | As with any government regulation, when we say regulate, we mean to you know, give structure and control and enforce certain things in other instances. So, that in itself requires, that there must be a budget for something that you want to regulate. And it's going to also mean that you have things that you're trying to achieve. There will be literature behind things that you're trying to achieve.  Everyone who becomes a person who's compliant with that literature, would probably be in a situation where they'll be getting some sort of financial aid, in order to capacitate or in order to build towards in some sort of other form of way towards being compliant or towards, you know, meeting the current target as it were. So that's just the nature of policies. That's just the nature of things like no regulations. And regulatory bodies, what they'll do is just make sure that everyone finds the help they need to reach the objectives. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | So in terms of sustainability, would you say these policies provide a blueprint in I guess, do's and don'ts or requirements that companies should abide to in terms of going green? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | Well, they are more of what the government is willing to promise and put money behind. What they will do also, is they will give room for feedback and engagement from, you know, the industry players themselves.  If you have no one to actually speak to, and you have no one to actually approach about a document that doesn't exist, then you won't have any recourse if things are going left. So I'd say an industrial policy is something that the government and all the other, you know, stakeholders of any industry can engage around. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | And what would you say is the role of trade unions? What role do they play in advocating for sustainable policies? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | We it's like the difference between intelligence and wisdom. What we help with is to say, this thing affects these many faces that we see every day. And if no one is going to speak to how everything that is promulgated, actually affects them on a daily basis, whereas, they’re the people who are bringing the value on a daily basis, we would then be missing the mark.  And anything that a government brings about is largely supposed to be for the people in the first place. So that's the important work, that any union should be doing. It should be helping all the other stakeholders understand how whatever they bring about affects the people who are supposed to work under it. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | Thank you. Um, we're almost at the end of our interview, I just have a few more questions. My next question is with regards to technology. So I want to know are there any specific technologies, that the trade union sees as critical for a sustainable future in the automotive sector? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | We understand that it is going to be important for all of us to understand just how far AI would go in terms of all industries. Because in terms of how AI is being used, in the future, it will be more, you know, relied on as it were because of how quickly how relatively quickly the tasks that are made by such a thing would actually be completed.  So now, it will be very prudent for us earlier on to all sort of come to an understanding of how far the scope of AI would actually be, you know, useful, rather than harmful. In the context that we are also going to be in any industry dealing with people and their needs, dealing with the morality of how certain things that are efficient, are actually supposed to be brought about. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | Just to touch on AI, I know that some of the production line is consisting of robotics so would you also say robots are a technology? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | Robots are a technology that, I'm afraid different people have a different expectation or different hopes behind and it is the job of all the major players coming together. And understanding and conceding here and there, how robotics would be used. Look, anything that gives efficiency, then people will look at efficiency now going to mean that people are being laid off, you know, those questions?  And if I now give the proposition to say, where you want to include these things, you must also look at capacitating more people, to actually be able to be qualified to use those robots. It would then mean that more people are being trained and more people are working with better conditions than before. Instead of just the expectation being that more people will be laid off and production will remain relatively the same with a few you know, increases in terms of production.  Look, people want productivity. People also want profits. I'm talking about all major players being looked into. So obviously you're going to have to have something that speaks to everyone's needs. And it's just about a balance of what you're trying to achieve. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | I just noticed there's a bit of conflict with regards to robotics because as you said it could be taking people's jobs at the end of the day. Would this mean that unions aren't really for robots? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | No, no, I’ve just explained that we are for sustainability, but we are also for sustainability with that aspect of the morality behind it. If it was for profit sake, it would be something that is not like a trade union, it would be more of a capitalist point of view. So now if we were to look at saying such and such a person, let’s say a person started working in 2012, in an automotive company and has shown aptitudes and has actually gotten his NQF levels to such an extent that he would qualify for something in line with robotics.  How about take that person and train him so that when the line that he's working at becomes optimised, he will be able to use those robots. That will be a more sustainable solution on both ends because it will be more efficient, but you’d retain and tenure is something that is very, very good for a company even though people who are just chasing profits will not see it in the short-term.  Tenure creates that stability for things that are intangibles like company culture, like the value proposition of knowing that if a company sustains me for close to 40 years, I will have an innate respect and love for that company. Rather than just being you know, tossed from place to place because things are becoming more efficient and I'm getting fired everywhere. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | Just a follow up question to the robots. And I know that's currently being implemented, or it's presently existing. What else would you say are other technological advancements or innovations that are currently being integrated into green transitioning strategies? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | Well, I’d be afraid to speak anymore. I felt like I was already out of my depth talking about transitioning towards green so I've only given what I would say, I've seen a bit of literature about but all other technologies and they are good and bad pros and cons. I haven't looked at.  I’d hazard also to say us being, you know, more dependent on infrastructure that is that falling behind, has led us to uncertainty when it comes to, you know, newer technology like let's say for example, looking at all our service providers, certain people would be, you know, falling behind in terms of how they keep us connected with our service. Perhaps I'm looking at the situations that we had with our plants being affected by, you know, our service and not working optimally based on our service provider for cyber security.  So obviously, we're looking at things like, you know, people farther away from us, who in the normal scope of things to be seen as, look an open market that is competitive is always good for the customer. But I’d also, you know, risk saying I believe that a tailor made solution that is in conforming with the local laws would be better than an international solution that has its own knock on effects that you may not see coming because of, you know, geopolitics perhaps, and other things that are existential threats, that are not in the same territory as you. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | Alright then we've come to the end of our interview, I just have one more question, which is, from your perspective, what can be done to enhance transitioning and sustainability within the automotive industry? |
| **PARTICIPANT** | Well, there needs to be a greater move towards localisation, of all the parts and all the suppliers that it would take for an auto manufacturer like us to produce a vehicle because right now, when you look at the footprint, you know, in terms of emissions alone, shipping everything to South Africa, it would make sense for South African based companies to have a larger percentage of the parts being produced right here in the same territory that they'll be assembling at.  So that is the biggest push that also NUMSA has always been behind, localisation. The biggest slice of the cake for the auto sector really resides outside of South Africa, whereas you find plants in South Africa. A lot of parts are made elsewhere in other territories and as a result, people are being employed, and we are their direct customers. So it would be much better if all the bells and whistles that come with this car were manufactured right here in South Africa.  Looking at unemployment, obviously that's the first immediate change and the knock-on effects such as, you know, looking at the emissions, throwing all these things over here. It would be another knock on effect, but yes, indeed it would a more sustainable thing. To say that the industry doesn't have to be under such strain based on the fact that not enough parts are in South Africa. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | All right. Thank you. I've gone through all my questions and I want to once again thank you so much. For the time, I really appreciate it. |
| **PARTICIPANT** | Alright, I hope I wasn't too confusing in my answers, because I think I answered in a roundabout way I'm still trying to improve. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | When I probed, I got the specifics and I guess the essence of what I needed. |
| **PARTICIPANT** | Alright, I'd really like for you if it is possible, to if you're going to publish to just send me a link so that I can see basically, the bigger picture on what you've been getting. Because I don't think I'm only interested in my answers. I think I'd be interested in everyone else's answers to the same questions. |
| **INTERVIEWER** | Yeah, of course. I'm going to be submitting at the end of September so when it’s published, I'll also send you a link. |
| **PARTICIPANT** | Alright, thank you very much for everything. |