

**THE MANAGEMENT OF POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR IN  
ORGANISATIONS**

**BY**

**RIAAN JOHAN PIO**

**Paper submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of  
Master's Diploma in Technology : Management Practice at the Port  
Elizabeth Technikon.**

**PROMOTER:        NORMAN KEMP**

**DATE:             JUNE 2000**

---

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The successful completion of this research would have been impossible without the support, assistance and encouragement of others. I would like to record my thanks and appreciation to the following:

- Prof N D Kemp who provided persistent guidance, useful clarifications and constructive criticism during the course of my efforts.
- Mr J Bosma for his assistance in analysing the research data.
- Staff of the Port Elizabeth Technikon library for courteous and efficient service.
- All the respondents to the questionnaires, for their willingness to respond.
- My friends for their continued encouragement, assistance and support during my academic studies.
- My wife, Theresa, for typing the document.
- My Heavenly Father for the ability to persevere and complete my research.

Riaan Johan Pio  
Port Elizabeth  
JUNE 2000

## **DECLARATION**

“I, Riaan Johan Pio, hereby declare that:

- the work in this paper is my own original work;
- all sources used or referred to have been documented and recognised;  
and
- this paper has not been previously submitted in full or partial fulfilment of the requirements for an equivalent or higher qualification at any other recognised “education institution”.

Opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at, are those of the researcher.

## SUMMARY

In this research paper, the constructive management of political behaviour in organisations was investigated. A general overview of relevant aspects which specifically relate to the constructive management of political behaviour in the automotive industry was presented.

The literature study included a discussion of the nature of political behaviour and guidelines for the management of political behaviour in organisations.

The research methodology consisted of three phases:

Phase 1: A literature study to determine guidelines to manage political behaviour in organisations constructively.

Phase 2: An empirical study to determine the effectiveness of these guidelines in practice by means of a survey amongst role players in the automotive industry in South Africa.

Phase 3: The findings from the literature study and empirical study were integrated into guidelines of how managers can manage political behaviour constructively.

The study identified nine main strategies for managing political behaviour.

They are:

- \* **Open communication.** Communication must be open to keep all parties informed and to prevent distrust.
- \* **Reduction of uncertainty.** This involves preventing employees being unsure of what the future holds.

- \* **Awareness.** The aim of awareness is for managers to be sensitive to and aware of situations that could elicit political behaviours. Furthermore, they must recognize political behaviour for what it is.
- \* **Setting an example.** Managers must set an exemplary example and not engage in political behaviour.
- \* **An understanding of the reason/motivation for the formation of informal (political) groups or cliques.** Having established the reason why political groups form will enable a manager to manage them more effectively.
- \* **Confront political game players.** Managers must address all forms of possible political behaviour in a serious manner.
- \* **Understanding the organisation's strategy, goals and action plans.** All employees need to know exactly what direction the organization is moving in and what is in it for them. It is management's task to ensure this open and clear communication, to prevent fears and political behaviour.
- \* **Tie resource allocation and rewards to strategy.** This can be achieved by ensuring that the criteria for the allocation of rewards is straight forward and understood by all. Reward systems must, furthermore, be directly linked to performance. There should also be transparency in decision-making.
- \* **Isolate resource acquisition from internal operations.** It is necessary to clearly specify the conditions and ground rules for the acquisition of resources to ensure that the process is transparent.

The conclusion reached is that political behaviour in organizations can be managed constructively to build win-win relationships.

**CONTENTS**

	<b><u>PAGE</u></b>
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	(i)
LIST OF TABLES .....	(viii)
LIST OF ANNEXURES.....	(ix)

**CHAPTER 1****PROBLEM STATEMENT AND DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS**

1.1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.2 MAIN PROBLEM.....	1
1.3 SUB-PROBLEMS.....	2
1.4 DELIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH.....	2
1.4.1 Level of management.....	2
1.4.2 Organisational size.....	2
1.4.3 Industrial delimitation.....	3
1.4.4 Subject of evaluation.....	3
1.4.5 Theoretical demarcation.....	3
1.5 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS.....	3
1.5.1 Management.....	3
1.5.1.1 Management as a process.....	3
1.5.1.2 Management as a hierarchical dimension.....	4
1.5.2 Political behaviour.....	4
1.6 ASSUMPTIONS.....	5
1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH.....	5

(ii)

1.8	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	6
1.9	PROVISIONAL PROGRAM OF THE STUDY.....	7

**CHAPTER 2**

**THE NATURE OF POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR IN ORGANISATIONS**

2.1	INTRODUCTION.....	8
2.2	MINTZBERG'S VIEW ON THE SYSTEM OF POLITICS.....	8
2.3	THE ORIGIN OF POLITICAL GAMES: DISPLACEMENT OF LEGITIMATE POWER.....	10
2.3.1	Distortions in objectives.....	10
2.3.2	Sub-optimization.....	12
2.3.3	Means-ends inversion.....	13
2.3.4	Group pressure.....	15
2.3.5	Direct links to external influencers.....	15
2.3.6	Intrinsic needs of the insiders.....	16
2.4	POLITICAL MEANS OF INFLUENCE.....	18
2.4.1	Political will and skill.....	18
2.4.2	Privileged information: gatekeeping and centrality.....	19
2.4.3	Privileged access to the influential.....	20
2.4.4	Potential to exploit legitimate systems of influence .....	22
2.5	POLITICAL GAMES.....	22
2.5.1	Insurgency games.....	23
2.5.2	Counter insurgency games.....	24
2.5.3	Sponsorship game.....	25
2.5.4	Alliance-building game.....	26
2.5.5	Empire-building game.....	27
2.5.6	Budgeting game.....	29
2.5.7	Expertise games.....	30

2.5.8	Lording game.....	31
2.5.9	Line versus staff game.....	32
2.5.10	Rival camps game.....	35
2.5.11	Strategic candidates game.....	36
2.5.12	Whistle-blowing game.....	39
2.5.13	Young Turks game.....	39
2.6	GRIFFIN AND MOORHEAD ON POLITICS.....	41
2.6.1	Reasons for political behaviour.....	43
2.6.1.1	Ambiguous goals.....	43
2.6.1.2	Scarce resources.....	43
2.6.1.3	Technology and environment.....	44
2.6.1.4	Non-programmed decisions.....	44
2.6.1.5	Organisational change.....	45
2.6.2	The techniques of political behaviour.....	45
2.6.2.1	Controlling of information.....	45
2.6.2.2	Controlling lines of communication.....	46
2.6.2.3	Using outside experts.....	46
2.6.2.4	Controlling the agenda.....	47
2.6.2.5	Game playing.....	47
2.6.2.6	Image building.....	48
2.6.2.7	Building coalitions.....	48
2.6.2.8	Controlling decision parameters.....	49
2.7	BARON AND GREENBERG ON POWER IN ACTION.....	50
2.7.1	Why political action occurs.....	50
2.7.2	Political tactics: gaining the power advantage.....	51
2.7.2.1	Blaming and attacking others.....	51
2.7.2.2	Controlling access to information.....	52
2.7.2.3	Cultivating a favourable impression.....	52
2.7.2.4	Developing a base of support.....	53



2.7.2.5	Aligning oneself with more powerful others.....	53
2.7.3	Playing political games in organisations.....	54
2.7.3.1	Authority games.....	54
2.7.3.2	Power base games.....	54
2.7.3.3	Rivalry games.....	55
2.7.3.4	Change games.....	56
2.8	SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS.....	57
2.9	CONCLUSION.....	63

### **CHAPTER 3**

#### **GUIDELINES FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR IN ORGANISATIONS**

3.1	INTRODUCTION.....	64
3.2	GRIFFIN AND MOORHEAD ON CONSTRAINING THE EFFECTS OF POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR.....	64
3.2.1	Open communication.....	65
3.2.2	Reduction of uncertainty.....	66
3.2.3	Awareness.....	66
3.3	WAGNER AND HOLLENBECK ON MANAGING DESTRUCTIVE POLITICS.....	67
3.3.1	Set an example.....	67
3.3.2	Communicate openly.....	68
3.3.3	Reduce uncertainty.....	68
3.3.4	Manage informal coalitions and cliques.....	68
3.3.5	Confront political game players.....	69
3.3.6	Anticipate the emergence of damaging politics.....	69
(v)		
3.4	NEWMAN, WARREN AND SCHNEE ON CHANNELING POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR.....	69
3.4.1	Sharpen strategy of the enterprise.....	71
3.4.2	Tie resource allocations and rewards to strategy.....	71

3.4.3	Punish deviant power-seekers.....	73
3.4.4	Isolate resource acquisition from internal operations.....	74
3.5	BARON AND GREENBERG ON TECHNIQUES FOR COPING WITH ORGANISATIONAL POLITICS.....	75
3.5.1	Clarify job expectations.....	76
3.5.2	Open the communication process.....	76
3.5.3	Be a good role model.....	77
3.5.4	Do not turn a blind eye to game players.....	77
3.6	GUIDELINES TO MANAGE POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR IN ORGANISATIONS.....	78
3.6.1	Guidelines to implement open communication.....	78
3.6.2	Guidelines to implement the reduction of uncertainty.....	79
3.6.3	Guidelines to create a greater sense of awareness.....	79
3.6.4	Guidelines in setting an example.....	80
3.6.5	Guidelines to manage informal coalitions and cliques.....	80
3.6.6	Guidelines to confront political game players.....	81
3.6.7	Guidelines to sharpen strategy of the enterprise.....	81
3.6.8	Guidelines to tie resource allocations and rewards to strategy..	81
3.6.9	Guidelines to isolate resource acquisitions from internal operations.....	82
3.7	SUMMARY OF GUIDELINES TO MANAGE POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR IN ORGANISATIONS.....	82
3.8	CONCLUSION.....	83

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND EVALUATION OF AN INTEGRATED MODEL IN THE MANAGEMENT OF POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR**

4.1	INTRODUCTION.....	84
	(vi)	
4.2	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	84
4.3	SURVEY METHOD.....	85
4.4	SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE.....	86
4.5	ADMINISTRATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE.....	86
4.5.1	Questionnaire construction.....	86
4.5.1.1	Question content and format.....	87
4.5.1.2	Question type.....	87
4.5.1.3	Wording of the questions.....	87
4.5.1.4	Question sequence.....	87
4.5.3	Population to be surveyed.....	88
4.5.4	Completion of the questionnaires.....	88

4.6	CONCLUSION.....	89
-----	-----------------	----

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **RESULTS OF THE EMPIRICAL STUDY**

5.1	INTRODUCTION.....	90
5.2	RESULTS OF THE SURVEY.....	90
5.2.1	The response rate.....	90
5.2.2	Analysis of the results.....	90
5.2.2.1	Open Communication.....	91
5.2.2.2	Reduction of Uncertainty.....	93
5.2.2.3	Awareness.....	94
5.2.2.4	Set an example.....	96
5.2.2.5	Manage informal coalitions and cliques.....	98
5.2.2.6	Confront political game players.....	99
5.2.2.7	Sharpen the strategy of the enterprise.....	101
5.2.2.8	Tie resource allocations and rewards to strategy.....	103
5.2.2.9	Isolate resource acquisitions from internal operations....	104

(vii)

5.3	CONCLUSION.....	106
-----	-----------------	-----

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

6.1	INTRODUCTION.....	107
6.2	SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS.....	107
6.3	SUMMARY OF THE EMPIRICAL FINDINGS.....	109
6.4	RECOMMENDATIONS.....	112
6.5	CONCLUSION.....	114
	REFERENCE LIST.....	115

**LIST OF TABLES**

Table 5.1	<u>Results of Question 1</u> (Open communication).....	91
Table 5.2	<u>Results of Question 2</u> (Reduction of uncertainty).....	93
Table 5.3	<u>Results of Question 3</u> (Awareness).....	95
Table 5.4	<u>Results of Question 4</u> (Set an example).....	91
Table 5.5	<u>Results of Question 5</u> (Manage informal coalitions and cliques).....	98
Table 5.6	<u>Results of Question 6</u> (Confront political game players).....	100
Table 5.7	<u>Results of Question 7</u> (Sharpen the strategy of the enterprise).....	102
Table 5.8	<u>Results of Question 8</u> (Tie resource allocations and rewards to strategy).....	103
Table 5.9	<u>Results of Question 9</u> (Isolate resource acquisitions from internal operations).....	105

**LIST OF ANNEXURES**

		<b><u>PAGE</u></b>
Annexure A	Survey of the Guidelines for Managers to manage Political Behaviour in Organisations constructively	117

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **PROBLEM STATEMENT AND DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS**

#### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

Smit and Cronje (1982 : 350) state that it is people who give life to an organisation and they can be regarded as the organisations most important resources.

Various elements can influence this relationship. One of these factors is political behaviour. Political behaviour plays an important role in the behaviour of both leaders and subordinates when decisions are to be made and specific people in the organisation show a preference on how things should be done (Smit and Cronje, 1982 : 368).

Kakabadse, Lindlow and Unicombe (1987 : 251) use managers' attempts at promotion as an example to emphasize the influence of political behaviour. Those who had failed in their attempts, blamed political behaviour. The reason indicated for this is that they were in disfavour. It is furthermore mentioned that most people in organisations realized that good work performance is not sufficient for success. It can, therefore, be understood why people fear political behaviour and choose not to participate in such behaviour. The individual's decision is, however, irrelevant as there will be certain times when political motivated behaviour is deemed necessary.

#### **1.2 MAIN PROBLEM**

Political behaviour is often seen as dirty and back-stabbing, but it is a reality which cannot be denied.

This leads to the following question which will represent the main problem of the study:

## ***(How) Can political behaviour be managed constructively in organisations?***

### **1.3 SUB-PROBLEMS**

The following sub-problems are identified in order to address the main problem:

- (a) What is understood by political behaviour?
- (b) What are the guidelines to manage political behaviour?
- (c) Do managers apply these guidelines in practice?

### **1.4 DELIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH**

The boundaries of the subject of research will now be defined. The purpose of this is to make the subject of study manageable in terms of research.

#### **1.4.1 Level of management**

Political behaviour is prevalent at all levels of management. The study is not restricted to top management and will include all levels of management (top, middle and lower) which are influenced by political behaviour.

#### **1.4.2 Organisational size**

Political behaviour is easily recognisable in big organisations characterised by hierarchical structures. The study will, therefore, focus on established organisations with a personnel of more than two hundred workers.

#### **1.4.3 Industrial delimitation**

The empirical component of the study is restricted to organisations in the automotive industry.

#### **1.4.4 Subject of evaluation**

The study is restricted to the determination of guidelines which can be used by management to manage political behaviour constructively.

#### **1.4.5 Theoretical demarcation**

The study proposes to determine guidelines by utilising existing theory and to supplement it with guidelines obtained from practice.

### **1.5 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS**

For the purpose of this study, the following meanings are given to the terms used in the title and statement of problem.

#### **1.5.1 Management**

The following two meanings are given to the term management in the literature, namely, management as a process and management as a hierarchical dimension.

##### **1.5.1.1 Management as a process**

The management process comprises of the planning, organizing and control of attempts of members of the organisation and the use

4

of all other organisational resources to attain set organisational aims (Stoner, 1982 : 8).

##### **1.5.1.2 Management as a hierarchical dimension**

Management as a term, is also used to refer to the number of people responsible to lead and direct the organisation (Certo, 1983 : 9).



For the purpose of this study, the term management will have a broad definition and refer to all levels of management (top, middle and lower management) related to the control of political behaviour.

### **1.5.2 Political behaviour**

Political behaviour according to Ivancevich and Matteson (1987 : 358) can have various meanings:

- (i) Behaviour which occurs outside the legal, recognized system of power.
- (ii) Behaviour designed to benefit an individual, often inspite of the organisation in general.
- (iii) Behaviour which is intentional by nature and designed to obtain and hold on to power (Gibson, Ivancevich and Donnelly, 1988 : 353 and Ivancevich and Matteson, 1987 : 358).

Political behaviour, in this study, is seen as the gaining and exercising of power from within the recognised system of power by individuals in order to obtain a specific outcome.

## **1.6 ASSUMPTIONS**

The assumption is that sufficient guidelines exist in theory to manage political behaviour in order to set new meaningful guidelines.

## **1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH**

It is assumed that political behaviour is a universal phenomenon. This statement is supported by research on how managers perceive political behaviour (Smit and Cronje, 1982 : 318).

Cherrington (1994 : 678) has the following comments on how managers perceive political behaviour. In an examination of 428 managers, 90 % agreed that successful executive managers must be good politicians and 70 % believed that it is necessary for managers to act in a political manner to obtain promotion.

The logical question that originates from this: "Why does this topic not receive more attention?" Kakabadse et al. (1987 : 252) write: "Politics is action-based, it is individually determined and the actions can be practised in any organisational setting, limited only by the norms, values and foresight of each individual. However, certain actions, such as influencing others principally for selfgain or deliberately withholding information from others, are likely to be considered unethical. Hence an inability to agree on basic principles, coupled with the taboo of the nature of the subject, has made politics an underexamined area of study".

The importance of this subject is underlined by Kakabadse et al. (1987 : 252) when it is categorically stated that politics in organisations have the most important influence on a manager's development. People participate in organisational politics to benefit themselves, to protect themselves or simply to gain and exercise power (Smit and Cronje, 1982 : 368). It is common practice

## 6

that personal contacts play a more important role than formal applications in applying for professional and management posts as the criteria used are not explicit. The same principle applies to promotions (Smit and Cronje, 1982 : 368).

Additional criteria like social background and contacts play a bigger role than work performance. The person must be able to "fit in". The question that arises from this is: "How many victims of political behaviour can be found today?".

The importance of this study is emphasised by the fact that political behaviour is a universal phenomenon, is prevalent in any organisation and affects every individual at some stage in his or her career. It is, therefore, imperative that political behaviour be identified in order to control it. The guidelines contained in this study can be used to control political behaviour to a big extent.

The purpose of this study is to complement existing guidelines in the literature with guidelines from practice to develop a model for the constructive management of political behaviour. This study may also provide the ground work for further research.

The model to be developed for the management of political behaviour as well as the results of the empirical component can make an important contribution to the management of political behaviour in all geographical areas.

## **1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The following procedure will be followed to promote a logical solution to the set sub-problems:

(a) Firstly, a literature study was undertaken to explain the concepts of political behaviour and the related concepts.

7

(b) Secondly, a model was developed to identify guidelines for the management of political behaviour.

- (c) Thirdly, a questionnaire concerning the management of political behaviour was compiled.
- (d) Fourthly, the questionnaire was sent to role players in the automotive industry to evaluate the guidelines.
- (e) Lastly, the results of the theoretical model were analysed by means of the feedback from the statistical analysis.

## **1.9 PROVISIONAL PROGRAM OF THE STUDY**

In order to facilitate this research, the following chapters will be used.

- Chapter 1: Problem statement and definition of concepts.
- Chapter 2: The nature of political behaviour in organisations.
- Chapter 3: Guidelines for the management of political behaviour in organisations.
- Chapters 4 and 5: The evaluation of an integrated model in the management of political behaviour.
- Chapter 6: Conclusions and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **THE NATURE OF POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR IN ORGANISATIONS**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the nature of political behaviour in organisations.

The chapter starts with the viewpoint of Mintzberg (1983 : 173-212) on the system of politics and the following issues are discussed:

- The origin of political games. (The displacement of legitimate power).
- The political means of influence.
- Political games in organisations.

Mintzberg's work is then compared with the viewpoints of two other authors. Griffin and Moorhead (1986 : 399-406) lay special emphasis on how to deal with politics and political behaviour. They highlight the reasons for political behaviour and common techniques for engaging in political behaviour. Baron and Greenberg (1989 : 422-423) discuss political tactics in order to gain the power advantage. A summary of four groups of political games is also discussed.

The chapter concludes with a determination of the most important deductions from this comparison.

## **2.2 MINTZBERG'S VIEW ON THE SYSTEM OF POLITICS**

Mintzberg (1983 : 172-212) has the following viewpoints on what he labels the system of politics.

9

Politics, according to Mintzberg (1983 : 172), usually means three things:

1. Behaviour outside of the legitimate systems of influence (or at least outside their legitimate uses), often in opposition to them, in other words, behaviour that is technically illegitimate, and often clandestine.
2. Behaviour designed to benefit the individual or group, ostensibly at the expense of the organisation at large.

3. As a result of points 1 and 2, behaviour typically divisive or conflictive in nature, pitting individuals or groups against the organisation at large, or against each other.

Politics, therefore, refers to individual or group behaviour that is informal, ostensibly parochial, typically divisive, and above all, in the technical sense, illegitimate- sanctioned neither by formal authority, accepted ideology, nor certified expertise (though it may exploit any one of these). The system of politics arises either by default, in the weakness of the systems of influence, or by design, to resist (or in some cases to exploit) them. The organisation is seen as a mass of competing power groups, each seeking to influence (organisational) policy in terms of its own interests, or, at least, in terms of its own distorted image of the organisation's interest. Formal power flowing down the chain of authority (or ideological or expert power flowing throughout the organisation) gets blocked or sidetracked - in the formal terms of organisation theory, it gets displaced. In its place is substituted political power, in the form of a set of political games that the insiders play with each other - unofficial, non-sanctioned processes by which inside influencers seek to satisfy ostensibly parochial needs (Mintzberg, 1983 : 172).

The system of politics is discussed in three parts. Why political games arise in the organisation, why legitimate power gets displaced and then the equipment these

10

games are played with- the political means of influence. Finally, a number of political games are discussed.

### **2.3 THE ORIGIN OF POLITICAL GAMES: DISPLACEMENT OF LEGITIMATE POWER**

A system of politics arises in the organisation to displace legitimate power. This system would seem to arise in the presence of (a) problems or gaps in the other systems of influence, and (b) influencer needs are not satisfied within these

systems. The problems and gaps give rise to discretion in work and unsatisfied needs stand ready to exploit that discretion.

According to Mintzberg (1983 : 175) there are six basic reasons discussed for the displacement of legitimate power by politics. The first two describe common problems in the system of authority - distortions in the system of objectives and in the design of the superstructure. The last four describe the sources of parochial insider needs, some of them exclusively personal, others abetted by the systems of authority or expertise -job characteristics, group pressures, direct links to external influencers and the intrinsic needs of the insiders themselves.

### **2.3.1 Distortions in objectives**

One major purpose of the system of bureaucratic controls is to operationalize the formal goals of the organisation down the hierarchy so that each unit knows exactly what is expected of it. The most direct way to do this is through the system of objectives, which provide each unit with quantitative measures of its performance. However, the system of objectives is inevitably incomplete - and thereby misdirects some effort toward those goals that can be operationalized, and even for those that

can, the process of operationalization is inevitably imperfect, leading to other forms of distortion.

To be operational, goals must be agreed upon, they must be stable, and they must be translatable into quantitative terms - and the top managers must be willing to do the translation. In these points lie the reasons why many goals do not find their way into the system of objectives. Even for a goal that can be quantified, the CEO may hesitate to operationalize it for fear that it is not shared by all of the major external influencers: doing so might bring it to their direct attention and evoke conflict.

Sometimes, there is an incentive to operationalize goals, but this cannot be done because the goals are unstable. A dominant external influencer, for example, may be unsure of which goals he or she wishes to favour for a given period of time. Then there are the goals which, however clearly stated and stable, simply cannot be expressed in operational terms. For example, the mission of a psychiatric hospital is to cure the mentally ill. How then, is anyone to measure its performance when psychiatrists themselves cannot even define mental health, let alone illness?

When an organisation can operationalize virtually none of its goals, its system of authority is weakened and expertise takes over, or else ideology or politics. What is sometimes worse is the organisation where some goals can be operationalized while others - equally important ones - cannot. In that case, even the most dedicated employee - the one who stands ready to support authority to the hilt - is driven to favour those goals that are operationalized, in effect to displace some formal goals in favour of others.

Even when all the relevant goals can be operationalized, problems remain and when the process of operationalizing a goal in the system of

objectives appears to be simple, it is inevitably imperfect. That is, no goal can ever be completely translated into an objective; something is always lost in the process of measurement. Every measure is an approximation; a surrogate. Take the case of the goals that seem most easily operationalized - profit. A time period must be chosen. How long? A long period may make it impossible to detect downturns and correct them in time. But a short term may enable the manager being measured to play games - for example, to cut costs that are really investments, in, for example, maintenance or advertising, and thereby to trade off long-term profits for those in the short run. If such problems can arise in the operationalization of profit, consider what can happen with other goals.



To conclude, every system of objectives is inadequate in two respects. Firstly, it is inevitably incomplete, often operationalizing only some goals and thereby driving even dedicated employees to attend to those at the expense of others. Secondly, whatever goals are operationalized, they are imperfect. The result is that the formal goals of the organisation become partially displaced (Mintzberg, 1983 : 174-176).

### **2.3.2 Sub-optimization**

Not only the design of the control system but also that of the superstructure drives insiders - even those with the best of intentions - to displace legitimate power. By virtue of the division of labour and departmentalization, the overall mission of the organisation is divided into a series of tasks. Each is then assigned to a specific position, and then to a unit. Moreover, organisations with multiple goals and missions often use the superstructure to assign responsibility for each of them.

In effect, the organisation is designed as a chain of means and ends in which the ultimate ends - basic missions and the formal goals - are

13

partitioned into a series of means and then assigned to units as the ends or goals that they are to pursue. Each unit, and finally each position, is then expected to pursue its goals to the exclusion of all others. In other words, it is expected to sub-optimize - to do the best it can on its goals and forget about the rest.

The assumption behind sub-optimization is that if everyone contributes, the overall mission will be accomplished and the organisational goals achieved. The interdependencies will take care of themselves, through the design of the superstructure. But a good deal of evidence suggests that this is a crude assumption. The design of the superstructure is imprecise, and because units naturally over-emphasize their own goals, organisational performance deteriorates.

No superstructure can be perfectly designed. Therefore, when the balance of power tilts in favour of one unit, as it inevitably must, sub-optimization

can produce major distortions in the goals pursued by the organisation (Mintzberg, 1983 : 176-177).

### **2.3.3 Means-ends inversion**

The phenomenon known as the inversion of means and ends is close to sub-optimization, except that the reason for it is different and its effect is usually more pronounced. In means-ends inversion, the employees treat their own tasks as ends in themselves, for personal advantage. In other words, whereas sub-optimization is described as an inadvertent distortion of goals, means-ends inversion is seen as an intentional one. Whereas sub-optimization maintains the assumption of the dedication of the employee, means-ends inversion drops it. Organisational power is displaced because it suits the employee to do so. At this point, the employee enters the discussion as an independent influencer, one who has

14

neither been successfully bought off by the incentive-contributions contract nor developed some overriding form of identification with the organisation.

The employee is taken with a task to the point where it becomes an end in itself rather than a means to accomplish some broader organisational end. As such employees displace the goals of the organisation, even those of their own unit, in favour of those of their own work, for example the bureaucrat who is more interested in the form to be filled out than the client to be served.

Means-end inversion is common among unskilled operators, often, ironical, because they follow bureaucratic procedures to the letter. Such procedures must always be interpreted with some flexibility. Where means and ends get inverted so that the rules become ends in themselves, that flexibility disappears and the purpose which the organisation is supposed to serve gets displaced. This phenomenon has been discussed in the literature in organisations under a number of different labels, like "sanctification", "ceremonialism", "traditionalism" and "red tape".

Sanctification, for example, can refer to the emotional dependence placed on bureaucratic symbols and status. They are made "holy".

The inversion of means and ends is perhaps even more common among skilled operators and staff specialists, because the system of expertise within which they work frees them from the controls of authority and grants them so much discretion in their work. In other words, these people invert means and ends not because of powerlessness but because of power.

The source of this power, the professional skills, become more important to the worker than what the skills are supposed to accomplish. The rule of the tool comes into play: "Give a little boy a hammer and it will just so happen that everything he sees needs hammering". The inversion of

15

means and ends can infuse not only a single individual but also a whole department and even an entire organisation. The mission gets forgotten (Mintzberg, 1983 : 177-179).

#### **2.3.4 Group pressure**

A fourth reason for the displacement of legitimate power is the emergence of social pressure within the organisation to satisfy the needs of particular groups. Here there is a more direct and conscious subversion of organisational interests in favour of personal ones, especially the social and belonging needs of the individual - the ones often satisfied in groups. It is said that there is power in numbers. Even the best control system or ideology cannot counter a large group that chooses to resist it. This was the message of the first intensive study of the role of the group in factory work, the famous Hawthorne studies of a half-century ago.

Group pressure develops, not independent of the superstructure, but as part of its design. Departmentalization creates groups based on function,

location, line, staff and level in the hierarchy. "We-they" relationships inevitably emerge. These often lead to stereotyping.

Stereotyping can lead to all kinds of conflicts in the organisation. Well known are those that arise between groups of staff specialists and line

managers. Also common are the conflicts between groups at different levels of the hierarchy. Hierarchy introduces status differences among insiders that bind them together at given levels but separates them between levels (Mintzberg, 1983 : 179-180).

### **2.3.5 Direct links to external influencers**

Inherent in the division of labour and in the factoring of the organisation's mission and goals into a means-end hierarchy is the creation of units to look after specific functions, markets and goals. In theory, each of these

16

units is supposed to look up to one centre of authority for guidance. In practice, however, many of these units work directly with external influencers and come to represent their interests in the organisation. The chain of authority from the organisation through the board of directors to the CEO and then down the hierarchy is bypassed by direct links between insiders and outsiders. Instead of the CEO reconciling the demands of the external influencers, that reconciliation comes instead to be accomplished by various internal influencers, who negotiate with each other in political processes. The result is often a displacement of formal goals, as the demands of certain external influencers get more weight than the senior management prefers to give them. The sales department sees its role as the protection of the customer, the research department as representing the interests of the scientific community, and the purchasing department as reflecting those of the suppliers. Whichever happens to be most influential in the system of politics ensures that its "clients" in the organisation get preferential treatment. Similar direct links are created by the system of expertise. Each group of experts may have a corresponding professional society outside the organisation, whose interest it represents inside of it. The frequent result is politics and goal displacement. The effect of these links between internal and external influencers can be akin to sub-optimization: the employees displace broader organisational goals in their enthusiasm for carrying out the roles assigned to them, although direct links can also arise due to personal interest. The insider may consciously favour the goals of some outsider, or simply be paid to do so, and so seek to subvert those of the organisation (Mintzberg, 1983 : 181-183).

### **2.3.6 Intrinsic needs of the insiders**

In each of the five reasons for goal displacement so far discussed, something beyond the employees contributed to the rupturing of legitimate organisational process in favour of politics. Distortions in the system of objectives or in the superstructure drove them to it; they become carried away with the importance of their own work; some internal or external

17

influencer got to them. In this final point political power in its rawest form is looked at: the employees displace legitimate power simply because it serves their own personal interests to do so.

That all kinds of intrinsic personal needs exist for insiders is a foregone conclusion. Some people rise to positions beyond their level of competence- a phenomenon known as the "Peter Principle" and then do whatever they can to hang on. Others struggle for personal autonomy by resisting authority per se, or else for power by trying to build personal empires within the organisation. One individual may have a grudge against the organisation, and so seek to displace its formal goals by holding back his efforts. Another may be caught up in personal rivalry, and take the attitude that "I'm against it because he's for it". Finally there are the whole host of very private needs - the woman who works in a travel agency so that she can pursue her goal of building up a stamp collection and the man who works there so that he can pursue his goal of pursuing that woman.

In general, the organisation represents to most insiders the most important place to satisfy their intrinsic needs. Unlike most external influencers, to whom the organisation is an incidental place to pursue their goals - one place among many - to the insiders who spend their working lives there, it is the place. In this manner they bring to it a great many of their most important needs for fulfilment through the work they do. In the process, they displace the more legitimate forms of power designed to serve the organisation at large (Mintzberg, 1983 : 182-183).

To conclude, six reasons have been discussed as to why legitimate power becomes displaced in organisations. Any one of these can often suffice - for example, a distortion in the systems of objectives can force even the

most well-meaning employee to distort formal goals, while a strong personal need can be sufficient for an ill-meaning employee to displace legitimate power, given the incompleteness of the control systems. These six reasons, of course, typically work in concert.

18

Organisations are complex places where all of these forces - distortions in objectives, tendencies to sub-optimize and to invert means and ends, the direct pressures of the group as well as those of external influencers, and the intrinsic needs of the internal influencers - all blend together to give rise to a system of politics which often acts in contradiction to the system of authority, ideology and expertise.

## **2.4 POLITICAL MEANS OF INFLUENCE**

What equipment do the inside influencers use to play their political games?

It should be emphasized at the outset -in light of the fact that the system of politics represents, by definition, the illegitimate use of power - that the inside influencers turn to whatever means of influence they can get their hands on. At one extreme, those who can rely on nothing else make use of the personal will and political skill they have; at the other, those who have access to the more legitimate systems of influence try to exploit them politically, that is, illegitimately. In between are those who can make use of privileged information and privileged contacts with the influential to enhance their political power. Mintzberg (1983 : 183-187) discusses four political means of influence:

### **2.4.1 Political will and skill**

Will and skill as bases for all forms of power in and around the organisation merit a special place in this discussion of the internal political means of influence, for two reasons:

First, players with no other means of influence can nevertheless turn to these - to their will to act, their capacity to expend energy, and to the skills they possess to win at politics (Mintzberg, 1983 : 183).

Second, even for those who can use other political means of influence, will and skills are typically crucial ingredients to facilitate their use. The player who can rely on the power of authority or ideology or expertise - in other words on legitimate or widely accepted forms of power - is half way getting his or her way. With authority, one sometimes need only give an order to get something done; with ideology, things tend to happen by themselves; and in many cases the player who has technical expertise can easily come to dominate those who do not. Those forced to rely on one of the political means of influence, such as privileged information or access - are less sure of their power and more likely to provoke resistance because they are not legitimate - the player must try that much harder and be that much smarter. In other words, the player must show more will, and possess more skill of a political nature. The player must be adept at persuasion, manipulation, negotiations, and must have a special sense of how power flows in the organisation - where the formal and informal influence lies, which issues arouse attention, what friendships and rivalries exist, what the implicit and explicit rules of the organisation are, and which of these can be broken and which evoked to win an issue (Mintzberg, 1983 : 184).

It should be added that the players who control the more legitimate systems of influence are only "half" way there because they, too, must often possess skill and exert will of a political nature in order to make use of their non-political powers. Even the legitimate power of the President of the United States is worth little without the incumbent's energy and ability to back it up through political means.

So, whilst will and skill are found wherever power is exercised in or around the organisation, they assume an especially important role in the system of politics of the organisation (Mintzberg, 1983 : 184).

#### **2.4.2 Privileged information : Gatekeeping and Centrality**

Mintzberg (1983 : 184) states that power lies in information. Just as

technical knowledge generates expert power, so too does privileged non-technical knowledge generate political power. This power arises in two ways: (1) from controlling an important flow of information into the organisation, by playing a role known as "gatekeeper" and (2) from standing at the crossroads of important flows of information within the organisation, by playing a role sometimes called "nerve centre", or by being in a position of "centrality".

The gatekeeper serves as the channel through which some important type of external information flows into the organisation. This information may be of a technical or expert nature, but it need not be. When it is not, what produces the power is the access to the information. That means that the power is only as good as the channel; as soon as the source is lost, or as soon as others can establish parallel access to equivalent channels, the political power dissipates (Mintzberg, 1983 : 185).

Akin to gatekeeping, but within the organisation, is centrality and the role of the nerve centre. Here an insider sits at the intersection, or "node" of important flows of internal communication and so gains political power.

The insider can withhold important information from some people and filter what they send to others, transmitting only what benefits themselves. (Another trick available to the nerve centre is the release of too much information in a channel, thereby hopelessly overloading the person at the end of it).

Sometimes centrality is just a matter of physical location. The post of receptionist, for example, is typically valued for its access to information (Mintzberg, 1983 : 185).

### **2.4.3 Privileged access to the influential**

Mintzberg (1983 : 185-186) discusses the third means of influence.

Direct and unique access to those with an important means of influence is a means of influence in its own right in the organisation. Although a player may lack own means of influence, personal links to those who possess them- insiders or outsiders, with important



external, formal, ideological, expert, or political means of influence - may be enough to attain a position of power.

The best insider to have access to is, of course, the chief executive. Those people who have the best of it are the ones who serve the individual personally, every day. Hence the CEO's secretary and "assistant to" inevitably emerge as centres of power in their own right in the organisation.

Of course, not everyone can work directly for the top manager, but any powerful manager can generate power for those around him. Being "sponsored" by someone with influence means sharing that influence.

An insider can also gain power by having privileged access to the places where the powerful sit, where important decisions are made. We talk about "visibility", the "chance to be noticed," as a source of power which may be gained "through participation on task forces and committees".

Privileged access to influential outsiders can also be a source of power in the organisation. Such access may grow out of a personal friendship, a family relationship, or simply a long association. Privileged access provides power not primarily for the information it brings - but for the resource that can be made available, the decision that can be swung by a word dropped at an opportune moment, the favours that can open up, all the crumbs that fall around those with power. This political means of influence, like the others, is a vulnerable one, worth nothing the day the connection is broken.

#### **2.4.4 Potential to exploit legitimate systems of influence**

Finally, among political means of influence must be counted the legitimate means of influence when they can be used in political ways. In other words, authority, ideology, and expertise become political means of influence when they are drawn upon in illegitimate ways - ways not sanctioned in the normal manner of behaviour. They are exploited, for ostensibly parochial ends, not the ends intended.

Managers, in turn, flaunt their authority in order to extend their control over the operators or staff personnel, just as the operators flaunt the authority they have over the clients. In all these cases, legitimate power is used illegitimately, that is, politically.

To conclude, political power inevitably requires political will and political skill; in addition, it may draw on privileged information or privileged access to those with any kind of power, and it may exploit in illegitimate ways the legitimate systems of influence (Mintzberg, 1983 : 186-187).

## **2.5 POLITICAL GAMES**

Mintzberg (1983 : 187-212) is of the opinion that the best way to characterize the system of politics of the organisation seems to be as a collection of goings on, a set of "games" taking place throughout the organisation - "intricate and subtle, simultaneous, overlapping", a kind of multiple-ring circus. These political games are neither as unstructured nor as independent of each other as they may seem. Games proceed neither at random nor at leisure. They are guided by rules.

Some rules are explicit, other implicit. Some rules are quite clear, others fuzzy. Some are very stable; others are ever changing, but the collection of rules, in effect, defines the game. First, rules establish the positions, the paths by which people gain access to positions, the power of each position, the action channels.

23

Second, rules constrict the range of decisions and actions that are acceptable. Third, rules sanction moves of some kinds - bargaining, coalitions, persuasion, deceit, bluff, and threat – while making other moves illegal, immoral, ungentlemanly, or inappropriate.

The games are categorized under the following groups: those played to resist authority, to counter its resistance, to build a power base, to defeat a rival, and to effect a change in the organisation. In all, thirteen types of political games are discussed.

### **2.5.1 Insurgency games**

The insurgency games are usually played in order to resist authority, and although they may also be played to resist expertise or ideology, they may also be used as a means to effect a change in the organisation. These games range from mild resistance of legitimate power and distortion of its goals to outright mutiny, from protest to rebellion. They are often played in the execution phase of decision making, when someone down the hierarchy is instructed to carry out some action - to implement a decision taken higher up (Mintzberg, 1983 : 188).

The insurgency games can be played by anyone subjected to the weight of any form of legitimate power: by professional operators against authority, by unskilled operators against professionals and by whole sections of an organisation against central authority, as when the long-tenured civil servant seeks to impede the reforms of a new government.

The insurgency games can be played in two very different ways: subtly by individuals or small groups, which is the preferred approach of line managers and professionals, or aggressively by large groups which is the approach usually taken by the less skilled operators. While these operators have little power as individuals, they are still the ones who perform the organisation's most critical function - producing its basic

24

products and services. Moreover, it is they who are in the most intimate touch with the organisation's daily functioning. So, when they are willing to act in concert - a whole work force cannot easily be replaced - and to spend the effort required to resist authority, they can develop a good deal of political power (Mintzberg, 1983 : 188–189).

These mass movement insurgency games can, of course, only be played occasionally, since no organisation can tolerate perpetual disruption of its operations. They tend to occur when senior management seeks to impose some change on the operators that threatens their established social relationships, or perhaps threatens an ideology dear to them.

Often these games are fought shortly after a transition in senior management, because the new chief executive does not understand, or accept, the compromises made by his predecessor for the sake of peace in the organisation. The operators test out the new executive's political power.

Insurgency by unskilled operators can take a variety of forms. Sometimes the operators exploit the system of authority by turning the bureaucratic rules back on their superiors, for example in working-to-the-rule. "If (the rules) restrain the freedom of the subordinates, they do likewise for the zone of discretion of the superior". More common forms are the restriction of output, the disruption of operations, and the outright refusal to work. Workers stage slowdowns or seize plants, prisoners riot, soldiers desert, and sailors mutiny (Mintzberg, 1983 : 190–192).

### **2.5.2 Counter insurgency games**

Commonly, those in authority fight back when faced with insurgency. In imperial China, three solutions were tried: (a) increasing the severity of punishment for proven misconduct; (b) expanding the likelihood of detection and exposure of wrongdoers; and (c) improving methods of

25

supervision and control to prevent or discourage clerical knavery. In other words, the attempted solution to resistance to authority was more authority, a tightening of the controls (Mintzberg : 192).

So too in this day and age, the natural inclination is to fight resistance to authority with more authority, to increase the controls, tighten the rules, and levy the penalties. Such tactics can sometimes work in extreme cases of insubordination. The roots of the problem often go beyond insubordination, and that authority often proves inadequate to counter political resistance, even by unskilled operators.

### **2.5.3 Sponsorship game**

Next a series of political games played to build power bases are discussed. The first three to be discussed use people in different places to do so - in the first, superiors; in the second, peers; and in the third, subordinates.

The sponsorship game is a simple one, about which little need be said. The individual attaches himself or herself to a rising star - or one already in place - and professes loyalty in return for "a piece of the action". In other words, sponsorship involves an implicit contract - service in return for a share of the power. The sponsor is typically one's official boss, but need not be, although subordination is always implied for the player.

Sponsorship is not a contract among equals, but of a more powerful influencer with a less powerful one. The former gets the lion's share of the power, the latter the crumbs (which can, nevertheless, be substantial).

Sponsors are often thought of as teachers or coaches whose functions are primarily to make introductions or to train a young person to move effectively through the system. Sponsors in fact provide three other important services. First, they fight for their protégés, stand up for them in meetings and promote them when opportunities arise. Second, they

26

enable them "to bypass the hierarchy: to get inside information, to short-circuit cumbersome procedures, or to cut red tape". Third, "sponsors also provide an important signal to other people, a form of 'reflected power'. Sponsorship indicates to others that the person in question has the backing of an influential person, that the sponsor's resources are somewhere behind the individual". This lasts only so long as the relationship is maintained, which makes sponsorship a very vulnerable means of power.

Anyone can play the sponsorship game, although it is probably most common in the middle line, where managers attach themselves to others on the move. It is also commonly played by professionals at different places in the pecking order, as noted, and, of course, by personal staff,

such as secretaries who attach themselves to managers (Mintzberg, 1983 : 193–194).

#### **2.5.4 Alliance-building game**

This game to build a power base is played among peers - often managers of the middle line, sometimes professionals in the staff or operating functions - who negotiate implicit contracts of support for each other.

The middle manager attempts to develop a network of social relations with others in strategic positions and to surround himself with allies in a position to supply him with resources such as information. With the help of allies, the middle manager is able to expand his influence and thus overcome the structural limitations of his role (Mintzberg, 1983 : 194).

The process of building an alliance, which requires a good deal of political skill and the expenditure of much effort, as well as the exploitation of legitimate means of influence, would seem to proceed as follows: an individual develops a concern for an issue, and seeks supporters. Alternately, a group of individuals concerned about an issue, seek out an informal leader around whom they can coalesce, someone who can

adequately represent their interests. In this way, the nucleus of an interest group is formed. Many interest groups are only temporary. They form over specific issues and disband when the issue is resolved. However, others endure, because the players have a number of issues in common. These groups are sometimes referred to as factions. (When the faction forms around a leader – due to the leader’s charisma or political ability - rather than around an issue, with the followers willing to be taken wherever he or she sees fit, then the leader may be said to have a constituency, a loyal group whose support is more or less guaranteed, and it reverts back to the sponsorship game).

Often the interest group - whether it focuses on one issue or emerges as a more permanent faction - lacks the power to win an issue by itself and so it must enlist other adherents to its cause - other individuals, but more importantly, other interest groups or factions - in order to enlarge its power base. As it grows, it becomes an alliance. Some groups are easily persuaded to join, others must be enticed, through the threat of reprisal if they do not join, or more likely, the promise of reward if they do - a share in the winnings or perhaps a modification in the stand of the alliance (Mintzberg, 1983 : 195).

The alliance may continue to grow until it runs out of players willing to join; until it becomes large enough to dominate, or at least to win the issues of importance to it; or until it meets head on with another alliance. Over time, as issues are won and lost, new members join the alliance and old ones leave it. The concept of alliance, however, implies some stability in membership. A core of individuals and interest groups hold together over time to provide mutual support across a number of issues (Mintzberg, 1983 : 195).

### **2.5.5 Empire-building game**

Mintzberg (1983 : 195–197) mentions the following under the empire-

28

building game. Whereas alliance building is a mutual game played in cooperation with peers, empire building is one played by single individuals, typically managers in the middle line, who set out to enhance their power bases by collecting subordinates and sub-units.

The empire-building game - the attempt to create independent sovereignties with spheres of influence, makes use of all the political means of influence. Especially favoured is privileged access to the influential, notably those who design the superstructure. Also important is privileged information through gatekeeping and centrality, exploitation of the legitimate systems of influence, as well as the political skills of the player and especially the effort the player is willing to expend to build the empire.

The empire-building game is fought over territory. Territory in the organisation consists of positions and the units that contain them. Not only are salaries based on the number of subordinates a manager has, but resources are allocated and decisions delegated on the basis of the positions he or she controls. Moreover, positions and units provide managers with built-in constituencies of political supporters. Political battles require armies; position and units supply them. The empire-building game is played under departmental barriers, in the course of the design of the superstructure.

Managers can be gentlemanly when fighting over a new function or position. Especially in organisations with slow growth, empire building also requires the takeover of existing ones. It is difficult, however, to remain polite when the object of the game is control of one another's sphere of influence, or, more to the point, of one another. So empire building can become among the riskiest and most highly politicized of the games played.

#### **2.5.6 Budgeting game**

This game is similar to empire building - in some sense a subset of it - except that here the method of building the power base is not to acquire new positions and units, but simply to expand those the manager already has. In other words, the object of this game is to get more - more positions, more space, more equipment, more resources of any kind, and especially more money. Such resources are usually allocated through financial devices called budgets and therefore those budgets - whether capital or operating - become the central focus of the game (Mintzberg, 1983 : 197).



The budgeting game is perhaps the best-known of the political games, and the one most extensively studied, probably because it must be played more overtly and with more clearly defined rules than any of the others. Managers must make their cases explicitly and formally, in accordance with set procedures at set times of the year. This results in open bargaining - horse-trading as it can be seen in no other political game. Thus budgeting is the most formalized kind of empire building (Mintzberg, 1983 : 197).

The tactics of the budgeting game are simple. In the case of operating budgets, use every trick available to gain the largest possible allocation for the unit; always ask for too much in the knowledge that a given percentage will be cut; evoke all the "rational" arguments that support a large budget and suppress those that do not, if need be distorting the truth about the real needs of the unit; and finally, when the budget is determined, make sure that every last penny is used up that year end, even if some of it must be wasted, for whatever gets turned back will be subtracted from the next year's request. In fact, it is wise to hide some of the excess as slack in the unit, so that it can be drawn on when there is a financial squeeze.

30

Capital budgets are manipulated in similar ways. In particular, the costs of the capital project are biased on the downside and the benefits on the upside (Mintzberg, 1983 : 198).

### **2.5.7 Expertise games**

If a political base of power cannot be built with superiors, subordinates, or peers, then one can always try to fall back on expertise, exploiting it as a political means of influence. This can take two forms: the flaunting of expertise by the professional and the feigning of expertise by the non-professional (Mintzberg, 1983 : 198).

Professionals - those who really have highly developed skills and knowledge - play these games offensively by exploiting their assets to the limit, emphasizing the uniqueness of their skills and knowledge, the importance of these to the organisation, and its inability to replace them. At the same time, they play defensively by seeking to ensure that all of this is in fact true, specifically by keeping their skills and knowledge to themselves and above all by discouraging any attempts to rationalize it. In other words, experts do what they can to build mythologies around their skills, to render them inaccessible to ordinary mortals (Mintzberg, 1983 : 198).

According to Mintzberg (1983 : 199– 200), non-experts have two choices when faced with these games. Those with some other kind of legitimate power who feel threatened by the experts - notably the managers who sense a challenge to their authority - seek to rationalize the expertise. They try to reduce it to easily learned steps so that anyone can do it. This would make it easily substitutable, and no longer a basis for power. Non-experts with no legitimate basis of power sometimes try to do the opposite. They seek to join the experts rather than fight them, in other words to have their own work declared professional so that it will be put under their control and removed from the influence of the managers, analysts, and even the

31

real experts in the operating core. After all, if they too are certified experts, then no one can tell them what to do.

Such use of pseudoprofessionalism - professional-type power in the absence of professional-type expertise - has been a powerful means of influence in such trades as plumbing and carpentry, used especially to restrict entry. To conclude, it should be stressed that this means of influence is political based not on the technical knowledge or skills of the workers but on the political will they exert and the political skill they possess to have it declared expert.

### **2.5.8 Lording game**

Mintzberg (1983 : 200) classifies the lording game as the last of the games to build power bases, the one in which insiders "lord it over" those subject to their influence. This is a game in which legitimate power is exploited in illegitimate ways. A boss may lord authority over a subordinate to force him or her to do something or an operator, at the bottom of the hierarchy of authority, may lord whatever formal power he or she has over the clients by evoking bureaucratic rules or by threatening to take disputed issues to his boss, who has more authority. Experts, too, play a form of this game, by lording their expertise over their clients, as do members of organisations with strong ideologies, who lord their norms and beliefs over outsiders.

Lording is really the game favoured by those who feel the full weight of the bureaucratic controls, namely the unskilled operators and the line managers close to them in the hierarchy. In part, lording is encouraged by these controls. The rules, designed as means, emerge as ends unto themselves. There is, however, more to lording than just a direct reaction to the controls. Lording is the favoured game of the powerless, the game by which players with the least influence in the organisation consciously try to enhance their own positions. When a person's exercise of power is thwarted or blocked, when people are rendered powerless in the large

32

arena, they may tend to concentrate their power needs on those over whom they have even a modicum of authority. There is a displacement of control downward. Thus lording, as the simplistic tactic of falling back on authority in the face of resistance, while giving the player a sense of control over someone, is no way to build a substantial power base (Mintzberg, 1983 : 200).

### **2.5.9 Line versus staff game**

From the games to build power bases, there is a move to two games of sibling-type rivalry, played not so much to enhance personal power - although this is always a factor - as to defeat rivals. In effect, movement is into the realm of what are known formally as "zero-sum games", in which, by definition, one player wins because another loses. The first of these games pits line managers against staff specialists, while the second describes the clashing of two rival camps (Mintzberg, 1983 : 201).

Line versus staff is a classic power conflict, pitting managerial decision makers in the middle line with formal authority against staff advisors in the technostructure with specialized expertise. (Note that the managers' authority is here by definition not direct. That is, the staff specialists do not report to them directly but rather into the line hierarchy at levels above them. Hence the two are in some sense peers). The object of the game is to control choices - the line managers by trying to retain their discretion to make choices, the staff analysts by trying to preempt it. This the analysts can do in two ways: as advisors they can try to control the information that guides choices, or as designers they can try to enact bureaucratic rules that limit choices. The nature of the confrontation, and the opposing interests of the players, soon reduce it to a game of rivalry between peers (Mintzberg, 1983 : 201).

In a basic sense, the line versus staff game is a clash of formal and informal power. The managers seek to invoke their authority as members

33

of the line hierarchy, while the analysts try to counter by exploiting their expertise. In other words, one tries to play the game of lording, the other various games of expertise. Line versus staff is, however, much more than that. It is a clash of personalities as well. The two sets of rivals tend to differ in age, background, and orientation. The line managers are typically older, more experienced, more pragmatic, and more intuitive, while the staff analysts tend to be younger, better educated, and more analytical. The managers tend to identify more strongly with the organisation (and more subject to sub-optimization tendencies), while the staffers tend to identify with their professions (and so are more apt to invert means and ends). All of these differences strengthen cohesion within each group and aggravate the conflict between them. The result is that the game heats up, and draws on all the political means of authority and expertise (Mintzberg, 1983 : 201).

As noted earlier, the line manager is supported not only by the weight of the organisation's system of authority - which gives the line manager the

right to make certain choices, but also some potent political means of influence. Being the nerve centre of a unit and being directly linked to the operating functions through the formal hierarchy, the line manager develops a certain centrality in the flow of information. Moreover, of the two, the manager probably has the greater will to fight the political battles - not to mention the greater skill at doing so - for power is part and parcel of the job. Staff analysts are often lost in the world of organisational politics.

In the other corner, the staff analysts should not be underestimated. Their expertise is a potent force, especially to the extent that it can be used to pull the wool over the manager's eyes. Staff analysts too have a kind of centrality in information flows, since as advisor, they often move freely about the hierarchy (Mintzberg, 1983 : 202).

#### 34

While expertise and privileged information may be necessary means of influence to the staff analysts, they are not sufficient to win this political game. To the specialist interested in the acceptance and implementation of ideas, political access [to insiders of high authority] is likely to be critical, as is "assessed stature with the appropriate figures in the political network" as well as support from other staff groups. Ironically, it is sometimes the staff analysts who can, in a sense, lord authority over the line managers, at least indirectly. The analysts, being outside the line hierarchy, can "often go to management to seek support for the proper execution of their plans", whereas the line managers often cannot even make direct contact with managers above their own bosses. Indeed, as seen earlier, top managers sometimes plant staff analysts into line units in order to provide them with alternate channels of information (Mintzberg, 1983 : 202).

Where is the line versus staff game played? One major field of play is in the adoption of systems of bureaucratic control. In establishing such systems to control the operating of work, the analysts not only formalize the

work of the operator but also "institutionalize" the job of that worker's manager. In other words, impersonal bureaucratic controls replace the personal controls of the managers, and so reduce their discretion, and their influence over their subordinates. Thus, although the analysts have no formal authority themselves, ironically they are the ones who mediate between the two major systems of formal authority. Each time they put in a system of bureaucratic control, they weaken the system of personal controls, thereby reducing the power of managers lower down in favour of those higher up. As a result, the establishment of each new system of bureaucratic control becomes a zero-sum game between analysts and managers, with one pushing hard for its adoption and the other doing what they can to block it (Mintzberg, 1983 : 203).

More generally, the line versus staff game is played on a field of change. The staff analysts find their *raison d'être* in smooth operations, which means a minimum of disruption. Managers "have quotas to reach,

35

deadlines to meet and empires to protect"; they have a "vested interest in relative stability". So, they resist change. Thus line versus staff battles often arise over issues of change (Mintzberg, 1983 : 203).

Much of the actual conflict of the line versus staff game revolves around the issue of rationality. Analysts have no special personal affinity for the profit an organisation earns or whatever other measure of economic efficiency it uses, but that is the goal that serves them. It provides the operational criterion by which they can support their proposals for change, enabling them to "prove" their advice is right. Economic efficiency becomes the analyst's "rationality" and in the line versus staff game, they use it as a club to support their proposals.

The analysts flaunt their brand of rationality, accusing the line managers of being empire builders and sub-optimizers whose parochial departmental interests harm the organisation at large. The managers who reject their advice are accused of being "political", "self-serving", or - the ultimate insult, "irrational." After all, the analysts have "hard data" - the

facts - to back up their arguments. Of course, both players use their respective rationalities to cheat a little in the bargain. The staff analysts exploit their command of the facts to state them in ways favourable to themselves and the managers can attribute any conclusion they like to their intuition (Mintzberg, 1983 : 203–204).

### **2.5.10 Rival camps game**

The building of alliances or empires cannot continue forever. Either one alliance or empire takes over the organisation and dominates it, or else it is stopped by others. When those others are reduced to one - in other words, when the settling of the dust after alliance and empire building leaves only two major power blocks facing each other - then entry is provided into the realm of the rival camps game, N-person games become two-person,

36

zero-sum games, in which there must be losers whenever there are winners (Mintzberg, 1983 : 204).

In the rival camps game, because two opponents are clearly pitted against each other, all the stops are generally pulled out, and some of the most divisive political infighting takes place. The game itself can take a variety of forms - between units, between personalities, between those for or against a major change. Sometimes sub-optimization tendencies in the superstructure put units against each other. Marketing and production are old rivals in many manufacturing firms, each a centre of power, one favouring the goals of growth and customer service, the other of efficiency and stability. The game frequently develops around rival personalities.

Proposed changes of a significant nature can also lead to the rival camps game as the organisation splits into two factions - and "old guard" against the change and the "young Turks" for it. Such rivalry is common when the change involves a shift in mission (Mintzberg, 1983 : 205).

How do these rival camps games work out? In the case of a personality clash, typically one individual wins and the other leaves. Organisations that must be hierarchical cannot long afford to be split in two by warring camps. Similarly, in the battles between young

Turks and old guards, normally the issue will then be settled in favour of one or the other, and the organisation will get on with its work. In some cases, however, no side can win decisively. So while the balance may sometimes tilt to one side or the other, the war goes on, although on a more subdued scale, and small battles continue to be won and lost (Mintzberg, 1983 : 205).

### **2.5.11 Strategic candidates game**

The final three types of games, according to Mintzberg (1983 : 205–212), are played primarily to effect some change in the organisation. In the first, an individual or group seeks a strategic change by promoting through the system of legitimate power its own proposal or project - its "strategic

37

candidate". In the second, called "whistle blowing", the change is usually of a non-strategic nature, but legitimate power is questioned, to the point where internal influencers go to the organisation for support. In the third, legitimate power is also questioned, but here the change is fundamental. A group of "young Turks" seeks to change the basis of the organisation's strategy or structure or even to overthrow its central authority or ideology.

The central playing field of the system of politics is the decision-making process itself, for here is where the organisation commits itself to taking specific actions. This is where the great political battles take place, especially when decisions are "strategic", that is, important - committing large amounts of resources or setting important precedents. If a decision is a commitment to action, then a strategic decision is typically a commitment to a great many actions. Thus, a player is far wiser to try to influence a strategic decision in the making than to try to resist the many actions that result from it. In other words, those who can save the game of insurgency as a last resort. Moreover, power in the organisation is significantly redistributed during periods of strategic change, and that power tends to flow to those who proposed the change in the first place (Mintzberg, 1983 : 206).



Finally, the processes by which strategic decisions get made are fundamentally unstructured ones - that is, they follow no formal or set procedures - and so are filled with ambiguity and inevitably involve considerable discretion. Hence they invite political gamesmanship, as different groups or alliances promote or "champion" their own pet projects - their candidates for strategic change.

The strategic candidates game combines elements of all the other games. Strategic candidates are often promoted in order to build empires, and they often require alliances; rivalries frequently erupt between line and staff or between rival camps during the game; expertise is exploited in this game and authority lorded over those without it; and sponsorship is often a key

38

to success in this game. In other words, a good deal of the action of the system of politics focuses on the promotion of strategic candidates (Mintzberg, 1983 : 206).

Anyone can play the strategic candidate's game, that is, can assume the role of "sponsor" or "champion". All it takes is a candidate to propose and a significant means of influence, although clever players have been known to succeed with no more than an immense amount of effort and a good deal of patience. They just keep pushing until someone finally listens. In this game, staff analysts have been known to form temporary alliances with line managers to push a candidate both favoured. Even chief executives get involved in these games. In professional organisations, for example, where they know they cannot execute their wishes without the support of others, they promote their own strategic candidates politically before they do so formally.

How does a strategic candidate's game develop in the system of politics? The first step is the "generation of the strategic candidate", which may originate inside or outside the organisation. The second step involves "the attachment of values to candidates". Different power groups in the organisation have a "go" at the candidate, deciding to support him or her,

oppose him or her, or modify it to support their own ends. Gradually, the candidate may develop support, while being modified. What is known as the "bandwagon effect" occurs when it becomes evident that a candidate will be successful, and all the as yet uncommitted influencers rush forward to support him or her (Mintzberg, 1983 : 206–207).

The third and final step is the selection of a candidate. In organisations the selecting body is often a single person or a small group of decision-makers. They accept the candidate if they believe the values embodied in him or her are sufficient consistent with their own. When selection is not by a central authority where certain specialists may have considerable power, or in a highly ideological organisation, where everyone must agree with the

39

proposal, then the processes of gaining consensus or negotiating sufficient support become the direct means to selection (Mintzberg, 1983 : 207).

#### **2.5.12 Whistle-blowing game**

This is a very specific game, typically brief, designed to use privileged information to effect a particular kind of change in the behaviour of an organisation. In essence, the player - usually an insider low in the hierarchy of authority, often an operator, sometimes a staff specialist - perceives a behaviour taking place in the organisation that he or she believes violates some social norm and, usually, a formal constraint as well, such as a law. So the player "blows the whistle" on the culprits, that is, informs an external influencer who can remedy the situation. Since the informed is bypassing legitimate power - the chain of authority, certified expertise, or accepted ideology - and is questioning its legitimacy with respect to this behaviour, his or her action can bring retribution. Hence the player usually attempts to make the contact secretly, sometimes even anonymously, for example, through an unsigned letter (Mintzberg, 1983 : 210).

#### **2.5.13 Young Turks game**

The game is played for the highest stakes. For here the intention is not to effect one simple change, nor to counter authority, but to effect a change so fundamental that it throws the legitimate power itself into question. The

"young Turks", as the proponents of such changes are sometimes called, may wish to reorient the organisation's basic strategy, to displace a major body of expertise, to replace its ideology, or even to overthrow its leadership directly. Thus, while these are games played to effect change in the organisation, they also resemble insurgency, although in many cases the term is too mild; rebellion or even revolution would be a better one (Mintzberg, 1983 : 210).

40

Young Turks are often rather highly placed in their organisations, sometimes right up to, but of course never including, the chief executive officer, at least so long as that person is perceived to be the problem. Also they tend to constitute a small group, at least at first, since the game must be played very secretly. In fact, we might expect that the greater the power of the young Turks, the fewer they need to accomplish their aims. Indeed, a last resort of unsuccessful young Turks - short of exiting the organisation altogether - is to try to turn their conspiracy into an outright rebellion.

Social movements in organisations are described as unconventional opposition or unconventional politics. Whereas the organisation defines legitimate mechanisms for attempts to reach decisions and allocate resources, social movements must operate in the zone of "prescribed" behaviour or at least behaviour not specified by organisational authority. In other words, the young Turks must rely on the political means of influence (Mintzberg, 1983 : 211).

One of the forms of the games are organisational coup d'état - the infiltration of a small but critical group from within the organisation's structure to effect an unexpected succession. As in nation-states, the purpose is not to overthrow the system of authority but rather the holders of authority, keeping that system intact for the new leaders. Here the young Turks need direct access to board members who have the power to replace the CEO, or else to dominant external influencers who control the board.

Another form of this game is designed to change some aspect of the organisation's functioning. Whereas coup d'état usually involves higher level executives, this form usually range[s] deeply into the organisation, throughout middle management and even down to the operating core when it is staffed with professionals (Mintzberg, 1983 : 212).

41

The young Turks games are perhaps the ultimate ones of zero-sum, because the intensity of the challenge is such that the organisation can never be the same again. Should the existing centre of legitimate power yield to the wishes of the young Turks, it will have difficulty retaining its previous status. Only with great skill at reversing its stand - making accommodation after resistance seem perfectly natural - might it maintain its position. Otherwise it is quite possible that one of the young Turks will eventually take over the leadership. On the other hand, should the challenge be completely squashed, it is the young Turks who are permanently weakened. In these circumstances, they frequently exit, sometimes effecting a schism by taking a piece of the organisation with them. This last of the political games is frequently all or nothing.

In this section Mintzberg discussed the system of politics in three parts, namely the origin of politics in organisations, the political means of influence and political games played in organisations (Mintzberg, 1983 : 212).

## **2.6 GRIFFIN AND MOORHEAD ON POLITICS**

Griffin and Moorhead (1986 : 442-443) define organisational politics as the activities carried out in organisations to acquire, develop, and use power and other resources to obtain one's preferred outcomes in a situation in which there is uncertainty or dissensus about choice. Decisions ranging from the location of a manufacturing plant to the location of the company coffee pot are subject to

political action. In any given situation, individuals may engage in political behaviour to further their own ends, to protect themselves from others, to further goals they sincerely believe to be in the organisation's best interests, or simply to acquire and exercise power. Power may be sought by individuals, by groups of individuals or by groups of groups.

42

A survey conducted provided some interesting insights into how political behaviour is perceived in organisations. Some 33 % of the respondents (428 managers) felt that politics influenced salary decisions in their firms, and 29 % felt that it influenced hiring decisions. The respondents also felt that the incidence of political behaviour was greater at the upper levels of their organisations and less at the lower levels. Well over half of the respondents felt that organisational politics was bad, unfair, unhealthy and irrational. On the other hand, most suggested that successful executives have to be good politicians and that one has to be political to "get ahead". Rather than ignoring or trying to eliminate political behaviour, managers should learn when and how organisational politics can be used constructively (Griffin and Moorhead, 1986 : 443).

How then does one deal with politics and political behaviour? Two different approaches are to use organisational politics for one's own purposes and to minimize its potential for damaging the organisation. An ambitious manager might use political behaviour to get salary increases and promotions. At the same time, however, unbridled political behaviour can do great harm to an organisation. Some boards of directors spend months or even years squabbling over the choice of new top managers. During this time the organisation may lose its sense of direction or fail to keep pace with its competitors. Politics is often assumed to be synonymous with dirty tricks or backstabbing, and therefore something distasteful and best left to others. Survey results, however, demonstrate that political behaviour in organisations is pervasive.

How then, should managers approach the phenomenon of political behaviour? Trying to eliminate political behaviour will seldom, if ever, be successful. In fact, such action may well increase political behaviour because of the uncertainty and

ambiguity it creates. At the other extreme, universal and free-wheeling use of political behaviour will probably lead to conflict, feuds and turmoil. In most cases, an intermediate position is best: the manager does not attempt to eliminate political activity, recognizing its inevitability, and may try to use it effectively. At the same time, the manager can take certain steps to minimize the potential dysfunctions of abusive political behaviour.

43

Managing organisational politics is no easy task. The very nature of political behaviour makes it tricky to approach in a rational and systematic way. Success will require a basic understanding of the reasons for political behaviour and common techniques for engaging in political behaviour (Griffin and Moorhead, 1986 : 443).

### **2.6.1 Reasons for political behaviour**

Political behaviour according to Griffin and Moorhead (1986:399-402) occurs in organisations for five basic reasons: ambiguous goals, scarce resources, technology and environment, non-programmed decisions and organisational change.

#### **2.6.1.1 Ambiguous goals**

Most organisational goals are inherently ambiguous. Organisations frequently espouse such goals as increasing their presence in certain new markets or increasing market share. The ambiguity of such goals provides an opportunity for political behaviour because a wide range of behaviours can be construed as being appropriate for goal accomplishment. In reality, of course, many of these behaviours may actually be designed for the personal gain of the individuals involved. For example, a top manager might argue that the corporate goal of entry into a new market should be pursued by buying out another firm instead of forming a new division. In reality, the manager might own some of that firm's stock and stand to make personal gains as a result of the merger or acquisition (Griffin and Moorhead, 1986 : 400–401).

#### **2.6.1.2 Scarce resources**

Whenever resources are scarce, some people will not get everything they believe they deserve or need. Thus, they are likely to engage

44

in political behaviour as a strategy to maximize their share of resources. For instance, a manager seeking a larger budget might present accurate but misleading or incomplete statistics to inflate the perceived importance of his or her department. Seeing that no organisation has unlimited resources, incentives for this kind of political behaviour are always present (Griffin and Moorhead, 1986 : 401).

### **2.6.1.3 Technology and environment**

According to Griffin and Moorhead (1986 : 402), the third reason is that technology and environment may influence the overall design of the organisation and its activities. The influence stems from the uncertainties associated with the non-routine technologies and dynamic, complex environments. These uncertainties favour the use of political behaviour since in a dynamic and complex environment, it is imperative that an organisation respond to change. An organisation's response generally involves a wide range of activities ranging from true responses to uncertainty to the purely political. A manager might use an environmental shift as an argument for restructuring his or her department, thus increasing his or her own power base.

### **2.6.1.4 Non-programmed decisions**

Political behaviour is likely whenever many non-programmed decisions need to be made. Non-programmed decision situations involve ambiguous, ill-defined circumstances that allow plenty of opportunity for political manoeuvring (Griffin and Moorhead, 1986 : 402).

45

### **2.6.1.5 Organisational change**

Changes in organisations occur regularly and can take many shapes and forms. Each such change introduces some uncertainty and ambiguity into the organisational system, at least until it has been completely institutionalized. This period usually affords ample opportunity for political activity. For instance, a manager worried about the consequences of a re-organisation may resort to politics to protect the scope of his or her authority (Griffin and Moorhead, 1986 : 402).

## **2.6.2 The techniques of political behaviour**

Several techniques are used in the practice of political behaviour. Unfortunately, since these have not been systematically studied, our understanding of them is based primarily on informal observation and inference. This problem is further complicated because the participants themselves may not even be aware that they are using particular techniques. Griffin and Moorhead (1986 : 402-406) discuss eight techniques of political behaviour.

### **2.6.2.1 Controlling of information**

One technique of political behaviour is to control as much information as possible. The more critical the information and the fewer people who have it, the larger the power base and influence of those who do. A top manager, for example, may have a report compiled as a basis for future strategic plans. Rather than distribute the complete report to peers and subordinates, only parts of it are shared with those few managers who must have the information. Due to the fact that no one but the manager has the complete picture, he or she has the power and is engaging in politics

46

to control decisions and activities according to his or her own wishes (Griffin and Moorhead, 1986 : 402-403).

### **2.6.2.2 Controlling lines of communication**

Similarly, Griffin and Moorhead (1986 : 403) state that some people create or exploit situations so that they control lines of communication, particularly access to others in the organisation. Secretaries, for instance, frequently control access to their bosses. The secretary may put visitors in contact with the boss, may send them away, or may delay the contact by having phone calls returned promptly, and so forth. People in these positions often find that they can use political behaviour quite effectively. For instance, a secretary with a personal grudge



against a manager in another department may use such tactics to hamper the manager's ability to get work done.

### **2.6.2.3 Using outside experts**

Using outside experts, such as consultants or advisors, can be an effective political technique. The manager who hires a consultant may select one whose views match his or her own. Since the consultant realized that the manager was responsible for the selection, he or she may feel a certain obligation towards the manager. Although the consultant may truly attempt to be objective and unbiased, he or she may unconsciously recommend courses of actions favoured by the manager. Given the consultant's presumed expertise and neutrality, others in the organisation may accept the recommendations without challenge. By using an outside expert, the manager ultimately attains the preferred outcome (Griffin and Moorhead, 1986 : 404).

47

### **2.6.2.4 Controlling the agenda**

Griffin and Moorhead (1986 : 404) regard controlling the agenda as a common political technique. A manager for example wants to prevent a committee from approving a certain proposal. The manager might first try to keep the decision off the agenda entirely, perhaps claiming that it is not yet ready for consideration, or try to have it placed last on the agenda. As other issues are decided, the manager might side with the same set of managers on each of them, building up a certain expectation that they are a team. When the controversial item comes up, he or she may be able to defeat it through a combination of fatigue (if the meeting has been long and draining) and the support of his or her carefully cultivated allies. This technique, then, involves group polarization. A less sophisticated tactic is to prolong discussion of prior agenda items so that the controversial one is never reached.

Finally, the manager may raise too many technicalities and new issues concerning the decision that the committee decides to table it. In any of these cases, the manager will have used political behaviour for his or her own ends.

### **2.6.2.5 Game playing**

A complex technique that may take many different forms is game playing. When playing games, the manager simply works within the rules of the organisation to

increase the probability that a preferred outcome will come about. Suppose a manager is in a position to cast the deciding vote on an upcoming issue. The manager may not want to alienate either side by voting against it. One game which might be played would be to arrange to be called out of town on a crucial business trip when the vote is to take place. Assuming that no one questions the needs for the trip, the manager will have

48

successfully maintained a position of neutrality and will not have angered either of the opposing camps. Another game might be to employ combinations of the other techniques in a purely manipulative sense. For example, a manager making recommendations about pay raises might tell each subordinate, in strictest confidence, that he or she has recommended the subordinate for the largest raise in the department, when in truth everyone will be getting exactly the same increase. Here, the manager is using his or her control over information to play games with subordinates (Griffin and Moorhead, 1986 : 404-405).

#### **2.6.2.6 Image building**

Image building is a subtle form of political behaviour. In most cases, it is a means of enhancing one's power base for future activity. The methods discussed earlier for enhancing and using expert power are effective image-building techniques. Such activities increase an individual's power base and thus their opportunity for political activities. Another, more manipulative set of techniques also falls under this heading. Working hard to be associated only with successful projects, taking credit for the work of others, and exaggerating one's personal accomplishments may all lead to an enhanced image (Griffin and Moorhead, 1986 : 405).

#### **2.6.2.7 Building coalitions**

The general goal of this technique is to convince others that everyone should work together to get certain things accomplished. For example, a manager who feels he or she does not control enough votes to pass an upcoming agenda item may visit with other managers before the meeting to urge them to side with him or her. If the manager's preferences are in the best interests of the organisation, this may be a laudable strategy to follow. However, if

49

the manager is the principal beneficiary, the technique is not desirable for the organisation's perspective.

This technique is frequently used in political bodies. At its extreme, coalition building may take the form of blatant reciprocity. In return for Manager B's vote on an issue that concerns him or her, Manager A may agree to vote for a measure that does not affect his or her group at all but is crucial to Manager B's group. Depending on the circumstances, this practice may benefit or hurt the overall organisation (Griffin and Moorhead, 1986 :405).

#### **2.6.2.8 Controlling decision parameters**

This technique can be used only in certain situations and requires a high degree of subtlety. Instead of trying to control the actual decision, managers back up one step and tries to control the parameters by which the decision is made. This allows them to take a less active role in the actual decision but still achieve their preferred outcome. For example, suppose a district manager wants a proposed new factory to be constructed on a site in a certain region. If the manager tries to influence the decision directly, the arguments will be seen as biased and self-serving. Instead the manager may take a very active role in defining the criteria on which the decision will be based, such as target population, access to rail transportation, tax rates, distance from other facilities, and the like. If the manager is a skillful negotiator, he or she may be able to influence the decision parameters in such a way that the desired location subsequently appears to be the ideal site – which it may well be as determined by the criteria the manager has helped shape. Hence, the manager brings about a desired outcome without playing a prominent role in the actual decision (Griffin and Moorhead, 1986 : 405–406).

50

In this section Griffin and Moorhead (1986 : 405–406) described the reasons for political behaviour and the common techniques for engaging in political behaviour. An understanding of these two factors can lead to a more successful management of organisational politics.

## **2.7 BARON AND GREENBERG ON POWER IN ACTION**

Baron and Greenberg (1989 : 420-427) refer to political behaviour as power in action. Organisational politics are described as actions not officially sanctioned (approved) by an organisation taken to influence others in order to meet one's personal goals. Organisational politics does involve placing one's self interests above the interests of the organisation. Indeed, it is this element of using power

to foster one's own interests that distinguishes organisational politics from uses of power that are approved and accepted by organisations.

Organisational politics is widespread. According to statistics done, the most likely area of political activity involved those in which clear policies were non-existent or lacking, such as interdepartmental co-ordination, promotions and transfers and delegation of authority. However, when it comes to organisational activities that had clearly defined rules and regulations, such as hiring and disciplinary policies, political activities were lowest. Political activity is likely to occur in the face of ambiguity. Organisations were also perceived to be more political at the lowest managerial and non-managerial levels of the organisation. Politics is most likely to occur at the top where the stakes are highest and power may corrupt.

### **2.7.1 Why political action occurs**

Baron and Greenberg (1989 : 425-427) mention the following:

Political behaviour is likely to occur when uncertainty exists. In the organisation which has not clearly prescribed priorities about policies and

51

procedures, political activity is likely to occur, in other words political activity is likely to occur in the face of ambiguity.

Secondly, this is clearly a matter in which large amounts of scarce resources are at stake. There is a direct relationship between the amount of politics and how critical and scarce the resources are. Also, politics will be encouraged when there is an infusion of new, "unclaimed" resources.

Thirdly, when organisational units have conflicting interest. This provides an opportunity for political behaviour as personal gain can be accomplished from areas of uncertainty.

Lastly, when organisational units have approximately equal power. Units may engage in political behaviour in order to further goals believed to be in the organisation's best interest.

### **2.7.2 Political tactics: Gaining the power advantage**

To understand organisational politics, it is important to recognize the various forms political behaviour can take in organisations. In other words, what are the techniques of organisational politics. Baron and Greenberg (1989 : 422-423) identify five techniques:

### **2.7.2.1 Blaming and attacking others**

One of the most popularly used tactics of organisational politics involves blaming and attacking others when bad things happen. A commonly used political tactic is finding a scapegoat, someone who could take the blame for some failure or wrongdoing. A supervisor, for example, may explain that the core of a sales plan he or she designed was based on the serious mistakes of one of the supervisor's subordinates - even if this is not entirely true.

52

Finding a scapegoat can allow the politically astute individual to avoid association with the negative situation. Although this practice may elicit serious ethical questions, it is important to note that it goes on quite frequently in organisations (Baron and Greenberg, 1989 : 422).

### **2.7.2.2 Controlling access to information**

Information is the lifeblood of organisations. Therefore, controlling who knows and does not know certain information is one of the most important ways of exercising power in organisations. Although outright lying and falsifying information may be used only rarely in organisations, there are other ways of controlling information to enhance one's organisational position. For example, one might (a) withhold information that makes you look bad (for example, negatives sales information), (b) avoid contact with those who may ask for information you would prefer not to disclose, (c) be very selective in the information you disclose, or (d) overwhelm users with information which may not be completely relevant. These are all ways of controlling the nature and degrees of information people have at their disposal. It is important to note how critical such information control can be (Baron and Greenberg, 1989 : 422).

### **2.7.2.3 Cultivating a favourable impression**

It is not all uncommon for persons interested in enhancing their organisational control to engage in some degree of "image building", an attempt to enhance the goodness of their impressions on others. Such efforts may take many forms, such as (a) "dressing for success", (b) associating oneself with the successful accomplishments of others (or, in extreme cases, taking credit for others' success), or (c) simply drawing attention to one's own successes and positive characteristics. These are all ways of

53

developing the "right image" to enhance one's individual power in organisations (Baron and Greenberg, 1989 : 423).

### **2.7.2.4 Developing a base of support**

To be successful in influencing others, it is often useful to gain the support of others within the organisation. Managers may, for example, "lobby" for their ideas before they officially present them at meetings, ensuring that others are committed to them in advance, thereby avoiding the embarrassment of being publicly rejected. The norm of reciprocity is very strong in organisations, "you scratch my back, and I'll scratch yours", and "one good turn deserves another".

When someone does a favour for you, you may say, "I owe you one", suggesting that you are aware of the obligation to reciprocate that favour. Calling in favours is a well-established and widely used mechanism for developing organisational power (Baron and Greenberg, 1989 : 423).

### **2.7.2.5 Aligning oneself with more powerful others**

One of the most direct ways of gaining power is by connecting oneself with more powerful others. There are several ways to accomplish this. For example, lower-power persons may become more powerful if they have very powerful mentors, more powerful and better-established persons who can look out for them and protect their interests. As another example, people may also agree in advance to form coalitions - groups that band together to achieve

some common goal. Research has shown that the banding together of relatively powerless groups is one of the most effective ways they have of gaining organisational power. Two relatively powerless individuals or groups may become stronger if they agree to act together, forming a coalition. It is also possible for people to align

54

themselves with more powerful others by giving them "positive stakes" in the hope of getting more powerful persons to like them and help them - a process known as ingratiation. Agreeing with someone who is more powerful may be an effective way of getting that person to consider you an ally. Such an alliance, of course, may prove to be indispensable when you are looking for support within an organisation. To summarize, having a powerful mentor, forming coalitions, and using ingratiation are all potentially effective ways of gaining power by aligning oneself with others (Baron and Greenberg, 1989 : 423).

### **2.7.3 Playing political games in organisations**

Many people or groups may try to influence many other people or groups by playing games. Baron and Greenberg (1989 : 423-425) identify four major categories of political games:

#### **2.7.3.1 Authority games**

Some games are played to resist authority-insurgency games - while others are played to counter such resistance to authority - counterinsurgency games. Insurgency can take forms that are quite mild (such as intentionally not doing what is asked), to those that are very severe (such as organizing workers to mutiny or sabotage their workplaces). Companies may try to fight back with countersurgency moves. One way they may do so is by invoking stricter authority and control over subordinates (Baron and Greenberg, 1989 : 424).

#### **2.7.3.2 Power base games**

These are all games played to enhance the degree and breadth of one's organisational power. For example, the sponsorship game

55

is played with superiors. It involves attaching oneself to a rising or established star in return for a piece of the action. Both benefit as a result. Similar games may be played among peers, such as the alliance game. Here, workers at the same level agree in advance to mutually support each other, gaining strength by increasing their joint size and power.

One of the riskiest power base games is known as empire building. In this game, an individual or group attempts to become more powerful by becoming responsible for more and more important organisational decisions. Indeed, a sub-unit may increase its power by attempting to gain control over budgets, space, equipment, or any scarce and desired organisational resource (Baron and Greenberg, 1989 : 424).

### **2.7.3.3 Rivalry games**

Some political games are designed to weaken one's opponents. For example, in the line versus staff game, managers on the "line", who are responsible for the operation of an organisational unit, clash with those of "staff", who are supposed to provide needed advice and information. For example, a foreman on an assembly line may attempt to ignore the advice from a corporate legal specialist about how to treat a certain production worker, thereby rendering the staff specialist less powerful. Another rivalry game is the rival camps game, in which groups or individuals with differing points of view attempt to reduce the power of the other. For example, the production department of an organisation may favour the goals of stability and efficiency whereas the marketing department may favour the goals of growth and customer service.



The result may be that each side attempts to cultivate favour to those allies who can support it, and who are less sensitive to the other side's interests. Of course, because organisational success requires the various organisational sub-units to work in concert with each other, such rivalries are considered potentially disruptive to organisational functioning. One side or the other may win from time to time, but the organisation loses as a result (Baron and Greenberg, 1989 : 425).

#### **2.7.3.4 Change games**

Several different games are played in order to create organisational change. For example, in the whistle blowing game an organisational member secretly reports some organisational wrongdoing to a higher authority in the hope of righting the wrong and bringing about change. A game played for much higher stakes is known as the young Turks game. In it, camps of rebel workers seek to overthrow the existing leadership of an organisation - a most extreme form of insurgency. The change sought by persons playing this game is not minor, but far-reaching and permanent. In government terms, they are seeking a "coup d'état".

On review of these various games, it is clear that some political activities may readily co-exist with organisational interests (for example, the sponsorship game), while others are clearly antagonistic with organisational interests (for example the young Turks game). As such games are played out, it becomes apparent that although the existence of political activity may sometimes have little effect on organisations, more often they are quite harmful (Baron and Greenberg, 1989 : 425).

In this section the reasons for political activities in organisations were discussed as well as political tactics to gain the power advantage. Lastly, four types of political games in organisations are mentioned.

## **2.8 SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS**

This section contains a brief summary of each author's work and discusses the similarities in respect of each topic discussed.

### **How politics arise**

According to Mintzberg (1983 : 174-183), political behaviour arises in organisations to displace legitimate power due to problems or gaps in the other systems of influence and influencer needs not satisfied within these systems. The problems and gaps give rise to discretion in work and unsatisfied needs stand ready to exploit that discretion. Six reasons were discussed:

### **Distortions and objectives**

Every system of objectives is inadequate in two respects. First, it is inevitably incomplete, often operationalizing only some goals and thereby driving even dedicated employees to attend to those at the expense of others. Second, whatever goals are operationalized, they are imperfect. The result is that the formal goals of the organisation get partially displaced.

### **Sub-optimization**

The design of the superstructure is imprecise and because units naturally overemphasize their own goals, organisational performance deteriorates. No superstructure can be perfectly designed. Therefore, when the balance of power

tilts in favour of one unit, as it inevitably must, sub-optimization can produce major distortions in the goals pursued by the organisation.

### **Means-ends inversion**

The employees treat their own tasks as ends in themselves, for personal advantage, in other words, means-ends inversion can be described as an intentional distortion of goals. Organisational power is displaced because it suits the employee to do so. The mission gets forgotten.

### **Group pressure**

Here there is a more direct and conscious subversion of organisational interests in favour of personal ones, especially the social and belonging needs of the individual – the ones often satisfied in groups. Group pressure develops, not independent of the superstructure, but as part of its design. “We-they” relationships inevitably emerge which often lead to stereotyping and cause conflict in organisations.

### **Direct links to external influencers**

Inherent in the division of labour and in the factoring of the organisation’s mission and goals into a means-end hierarchy is the creation of units to look after specific functions, markets and goals. In theory, each of these units is supposed to look up to one centre of authority for guidance. In practice, however, many of these units work directly with external influencers and come to represent their interests in the organisation. The frequent result is politics and goal displacement.

### **Intrinsic needs of the insiders**

Employees displace legitimate power simply because it serves their own personal interests to do so. The organisation represents to most insiders the most

important place to satisfy their intrinsic needs. In the process, they displace the more legitimate forms of power designed to serve the organisation at large.

In conclusion, the first two reasons describe common problems in the system of authority-distortions in the system of objectives and in the design of the

superstructure. The last four describe the sources of parochial insider needs, some of them exclusively personal, others abetted by the systems of authority or expertise – job characteristics, group pressures, direct links to external influencers and the intrinsic needs of the influencers themselves.

The work of Griffin and Moorhead (1986 : 399-402) state that political behaviour in organisations occurs for five basic reasons:

### **Ambiguous goals**

Most organisational goals are inherently ambiguous. A wide range of behaviours can be constructed as being appropriate for goal accomplishment. The result is that personal gain can be disguised as pursuit of goals.

### **Scarce resources**

Whenever resources are scarce, some people will not get everything they believe they deserve or need. Political behaviour occurs as a strategy to maximize their share of resources.

### **Technology and environment**

Technology and environment influence the overall design and activities of organisations due to uncertainties associated with technology and complex environments. These uncertainties favour the use of political behaviour as it is imperative that an organisation responds to change.

60

### **Non-programmed decisions**

Non-programmed decision situations involve ambiguous, ill-defined circumstances that allow plenty of opportunity for political manoeuvring. A possible result is parochial decision-making.

### **Organisational change**

Each change in the organisation introduces some uncertainty and ambiguity into the organisational system. This period usually affords ample opportunity for political activity.

Baron and Greenberg (1989 : 425-427) state the following reasons for the occurrence of political action. Political behaviour is likely to occur when

uncertainty exists. Secondly, this is clearly a matter in which large amounts of resources are at stake. Thirdly, when organisational units have conflicting interests which provide opportunity for personal gain over the pursuance of organisational goals. Lastly, when organisational units have approximately equal power.

Mintzberg regards the displacement of goals as the reason why political behaviour occurs. Something beyond the employees contributed to the rupturing of legitimate organisational process in favour of politics. Griffin and Moorhead ascribe uncertainty and ambiguity as reasons for the opportunity for political behaviour in organisations. This leads to the pursuit of goals for own gain. Baron and Greenberg's work also focus on uncertainty as reason for the occurrence of political behaviour with the pursuit of own goals as the result.

### **Political means of influence**

According to Mintzberg, inside influencers turn to whatever means of influence they can get their hands on, as political behaviour represents the illegitimate use of power. On the one side of the extreme, are those that can rely on nothing else.

61

They make use of their personal will and political skill. To rely on legitimate forms of power is only half way of reaching your goal. The use of illegitimate means can, however, provoke resistance. This necessitates that the player shows more will and possesses more skill of a political nature. The player must be adept at persuasion, manipulation, negotiations, etc.

On the other side of the extreme, are those who have access to more legitimate systems of influence. These systems are, however, politically exploited (illegitimately) not for the ends intended.

In the middle of the equation are these who can make use of privileged information and privileged contacts with the influential to enhance their political power. Power lies in information. Power can arise through what is termed as gatekeeping (controlling an important flow of information into the organisation) and centrality (position at the intersection of important flows of internal communication). Although a player may lack own means of influence, personal links or access to places where the powerful sit, may be enough to attain a position of power.

The work of Griffin and Moorhead on political means of influence relate to the equation which Mintzberg mentioned above. On the one side of the extreme, Griffin and Moorhead discuss the building of coalitions as a means of influence which corresponds to the use of personal will and political skill discussed by Mintzberg. Five of the eight techniques of political behaviour discussed by Griffin and Moorhead can be classified to the middle of the equation, namely the controlling of information, the controlling of lines of communications, controlling agendas and image building. Mintzberg ascribed the use of privileged information and privileged contacts, for example gatekeeping and centrality, to the middle of the equation. The other side of the extreme focus on access to legitimate systems of influence which are politically exploited (illegitimately) not for the ends intended. Under this extreme, Griffin and Moorhead mention the use of outside experts and game playing as means to obtain influence. These means are used

62

within the rules of the organisation to increase the probability of a preferred outcome.

Baron and Greenberg regard the controlling of access to information as a very important factor. Controlling who knows and does not know certain things are of the most important ways of exercising power in organisations. The cultivation of a favourable impression (image building) and aligning oneself with more powerful others (having a powerful mentor and using ingratiation) are also examples of the middle of the equation described by Mintzberg.

The developing of a base of support is used as an example to support by what Mintzberg refers to as the use of personal will and political skill (last side of the extreme).

### **Political games**

Mintzberg identified thirteen different political games and categorized them according to those played to resist authority (insurgency game); those to counter the resistance to authority (countersurgency game, alliance-building game, empire-building game, budgeting game, expertise game and the lording game); those to defeat rivals (line versus staff and rival camps games) and those to effect organisational change.

Mintzberg expresses these games in three broad forms, namely:

- Games that co-exist with the legitimate systems of influence.
- Games that are antagonistic to the legitimate systems of influence.

- Games that substitute for the legitimate systems of influence in their weakness.

Some of these games, such as sponsorship and lording, while themselves technically illegitimate, can nevertheless co-exist with strong legitimate systems of influence; indeed, they could not exist without these systems of influence. Other

63

political games, such as insurgency and young Turks - usually highly divisive games - arise in the presence of legitimate power but are antagonistic to it, designed to destroy or at least weaken it. They work against configurations such as the machine. Still others, such as rival camp games, often arise when legitimate power is weak and substitute for it, for example, in the professional and innovative configurations.

The implication of this is that politics and conflict may exist at two levels in an organisation. They may be present but not dominant, existing as an overlay on a more conventional organisation, perhaps a kind of fifth column acting on behalf of some challenging power. Or else politics may be the dominant system of influence, and conflict strong, having weakened the legitimate systems of influence or having arisen in their weakness.

Baron and Greenberg refer to Mintzberg's work on political games and supports his deductions.

## **2.9 CONCLUSION**

A comparison of the work of Mintzberg, Griffin and Moorhead and Baron and Greenberg indicated the commonalities that can be found in the reasons why political behaviour occurs in organisations and the political means of influence in organisations.

**CHAPTER 3****GUIDELINES FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR IN ORGANISATIONS****3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this chapter is to determine the guidelines for the constructive management of political behaviour in organisations in order to present a model which can be empirically tested.

The chapter starts with the viewpoint of Griffin and Moorhead (1986 : 407-408) on constraining the efforts of political behaviour. The work of three other authors are also discussed, namely Wagner and Hollenbeck (1995 : 460-461) on managing destructive politics, Newman, Warren and Schnee (1982 : 443-446) on channeling political behaviour and lastly, Baron and Greenberg (1989 : 427-428) on techniques for coping with organisational politics.

The guidelines identified from the literature are then supplemented by guidelines obtained from practice in order to develop a model to be empirically tested to determine if political behaviour in organisations can be managed constructively.

The chapter concludes with a summary of the most important guidelines on the management of political behaviour in organisations.

**3.2 GRIFFIN AND MOORHEAD ON CONSTRAINING THE EFFECTS OF POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR**

Griffin and Moorhead (1986 : 400) ask the question of how managers should approach the phenomenon of political behaviour.

Trying to eliminate political behaviour will seldom, if ever, be successful. In fact, such action may well increase political behaviour because of the uncertainty and ambiguity it creates. At the other extreme, universal and freewheeling use of political behaviour will probably lead to conflict, feuds and turmoil. In most cases an intermediate position is the best: the manager does not attempt to



eliminate political activity, recognizing its inevitability and may try to use it effectively. The manager can also take certain steps to minimize the potential dysfunctions of abusive political behaviour.

Managing organisational politics is no easy task. The very nature of political behaviour makes it tricky to approach in a rational and systematic way. Success will require a basic understanding of three factors: the reasons for political behaviour, common techniques for using political behaviour, and strategies for limiting the effects of political behaviour. Griffin and Moorhead (1986 : 407-408) discuss three techniques to constrain the efforts of political behaviour in an organisation, namely open communication, reduction of uncertainty and awareness.

### **3.2.1 Open communication**

Open communication is one effective technique for constraining the effects of political behaviour. Open communication can, for instance, make the basis for allocating scarce resources known to everyone. This knowledge, in turn, tends to reduce the propensity to engage in political behaviour to acquire those resources. Open communication also limits the ability of any single person to control information or lines of communication (Griffin and Moorhead, 1986 : 407).

### **3.2.2 Reduction of uncertainty**

A related but distinct technique is to take appropriate steps to reduce

66

uncertainty. Several of the reasons for political behaviour – ambiguous goals, non-routine technology and an unstable environment and organisational change as well as most of the political techniques themselves are related to high levels of uncertainty. Political behaviour can be limited if the manager can reduce uncertainty. For example, suppose an organisation is about to transfer a major division to another, less desirable location. Many people will be concerned about the impending change and may resort to political behaviour to forestall the possibility of their own transfer. If the manager in charge of the move makes the relevant decisions before news of the change spreads through the company, political behaviour related to the move may be curtailed (Griffin and Moorhead, 1986 : 408).

### **3.2.3 Awareness**

The adage “forewarned is forearmed” sums up the final technique for controlling political activity. Simply being aware of the causes and techniques of political behaviour can minimize their effects. For instance, a manager might anticipate that due to several impending organisational changes, the level of political activity is likely to increase. As a result, the manager might infer that if a particular subordinate is lobbying for the use of a certain consultant, it may be because the subordinate has reason to think the consultant’s recommendations will be in line with his or her own. Attempts to control the agenda, engage in game playing, build a certain image and control decision parameters are often transparent to the knowledgeable observer. Recognizing such behaviours for what they are, an astute manager may be able to take appropriate steps to limit their impact.

To conclude, these guidelines are a lot easier to list than they are to implement. The point is that the well-informed manager should not assume

67

that political behaviour does not exist or, worse yet, attempt to eliminate it by issuing orders or commands. Instead, the manager should recognize that political behaviour exists in virtually all organisations and that it cannot be ignored or stamped out.

It can, however, be managed in such a way that it will seldom inflict serious damage on the organisation. It may even play a useful role in some situations (Griffin and Moorhead, 1986 : 408).

### **3.3 WAGNER & HOLLENBECK ON MANAGING DESTRUCTIVE POLITICS**

Think of some of the consequences when people band together, hoard resources, or belittle each other for no other reason than to get their own way. Morale may suffer; battle lines between contending individuals or groups may impede important interactions; energy that should go into productive activities may instead be spent on planning attacks and counterattacks if politicking is left uncontrolled. For this reason, controlling political behaviour is a big part of every manager’s job. Wagner and Hollenbeck (1995 : 460-461) identify six techniques to manage destructive politics.

#### **3.3.1 Set an example**

The first way, according to Wagner and Hollenbeck (1995 : 460), to manage destructive politics is to set an example. Managers who do not tolerate deceit and dirty tricks and refuse to engage in politics themselves make it clear that political tactics are inappropriate. Subordinates are thus discouraged from engaging in destructive political activities. In

contrast, managers who engage in politics – blaming their mistakes on others, keeping critical information from others – convey the message that politics are acceptable. It is little wonder that subordinates in such situations are themselves prone to politicking.

68

### **3.3.2 Communicate openly**

By sharing all relevant information with co-workers and colleagues you can alleviate destructive politics. Managers who communicate openly with their peers, superiors and subordinates eliminate the political advantage of withholding information or blocking access to important people. Information that everyone already knows cannot be hoarded or hidden.

In addition, open communication ensures that everyone understands and accepts resource allocations. Such understanding eliminates the attractiveness of political manoeuvres intended to bias distribution procedures. Shrinking the potential benefits of destructive politicking acts to lessen the incidence of political behaviours (Wagner and Hollenbeck, 1995 : 460).

### **3.3.3 Reduce uncertainty**

A third way to minimize destructive political behaviour is to reduce uncertainty. Clarifying goals and responsibilities makes it easier to assess people's behaviours and makes politics difficult to hide. Opening up decision-making processes by consulting with subordinates or involving them in participatory decision processes helps to make decisions understandable and discourages undercover politicking (Wagner and Hollenbeck, 1995 : 460).

### **3.3.4 Manage informal coalitions and cliques**

Wagner and Hollenbeck (1995 : 461) argue that managing informal coalitions and cliques can also help reduce destructive politics. Influencing the norms and beliefs that steer group behaviours can ensure that employees continue to serve organisational interests. When cliques resist

69

less severe techniques, job re-assignment becomes a viable option. Group politicking is abolished by eliminating the group.

### **3.3.5 Confront political game players**

A fifth approach to managing politics is to confront political game players. When people engage in politics despite initial attempts to discourage such activities, a private meeting between superior and subordinate may be enough to curb the subordinate's political pursuits. If not, it may be necessary to resort to disciplinary measures. Punishments such as a public reprimand or a period of layoff without pay ensure that the costs of politicking outweigh its benefits. If this does not work, managers having to cope with damaging politics may have no choice but to dismiss political game players (Wagner and Hollenbeck, 1995 : 461).

### **3.3.6 Anticipate the emergence of damaging politics**

In any effort to control political behaviour, awareness and anticipation are critical. If managers are aware that circumstances are conducive to politicking, they can try to prevent politics altogether. Detection of any of the personal characteristics or favourable conditions discussed earlier should be interpreted as a signal indicating the need for management intervention *before* destructive politics crop up (Wagner and Hollenbeck, 1995 : 461).

To conclude, Wagner and Hollenbeck emphasize that controlling political behaviour is a big part of the manager's job. The manager should therefore be pro-actively involved to prevent politics from getting rooted into organisational activities.

## **3.4 NEWMAN, WARREN & SCHNEE ON CHANNELING POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR**

Newman *et al.* (1982 : 442) note political behaviour as one of the facts of organisational life and focus on some of the motivational benefits of politics and the positive contributions such behaviours can promote, for example commitment to causes which can create great enthusiasm, drive and personal loyalty which can be a practical motivation and often satisfies a psychological need. A few debilitating effects of political behaviour are also mentioned.

Unless it is carefully channeled, however, intra-organisation politics can undermine the effectiveness of an enterprise. Four influences call for specific attention:

1. Pursuit of the personal goals of politicians (either self-selected causes or personal drive for power or promotion) usually detracts from the central strategy of the enterprise. To the extent that political action succeeds in diverting resources from and/or blocking efforts towards target results, effectiveness suffers.
2. If internal politics escalate into a major power struggle, a substantial amount of attention and energy is devoted to the internecine warfare itself. Service rendered to customers will ultimately suffer.
3. The company incentive mechanisms directed toward company strategy may be undermined by the rewards and punishments meted out by those with political power. The more imprecise the company measurement-and-reward system, the more vulnerable it will be to counterproductive internal political pressures.
4. Politics often focuses on short-run tradeoffs. In this process long-run programs tend to be sacrificed because both the measurements and payoffs from long-range programs occur well into the future.

71

The preceding analysis indicates that, although some features of political behaviour can be beneficial, there is serious danger that it can dissipate the concerted effort that an organisation is intended to deliver. Needed, then, are ways to harness and direct the energies of people who have a bent for politics.

Newman et al. (1982 : 443) discuss four measures to channel political behaviour to the benefit of the organisation, namely sharpen the strategy of the enterprise, the resource allocations and rewards to strategy, punish deviant power-seekers and isolate resource acquisition from internal operations.

### **3.4.1 Sharpen strategy of the enterprise**

Trouble starts when political pressures pull away from the central strategy of an enterprise. Consequently, the results sought by the enterprise (or department) and the balance between them should be clear and agreed upon. Numerous supporting activities (and political manoeuvring) can then be evaluated in terms of their contribution toward achieving these strategic goals.

Such sharpening of strategy is easier to propose than to do. Strategic thrusts are multiple and sometimes competing; they shift over time; the optimum way of attaining them is always uncertain; and in subdividing necessary work we often create conflicting sub-

objectives. Nevertheless, mechanisms exist in an organisation (that is, in a well-organized bureaucracy!) for identifying the strategy which, for a given period, carries official endorsement. This must be articulated if undesirable political activity is to be flagged and checked. With approved thrusts and targets known, the company can hope that political efforts will be directed toward their achievement. What is wanted is congruence in the results sought by politicians and by the enterprise (Newman, et al., 1982 : 443).

### **3.4.2 Tie resource allocations and rewards to strategy**

Newman et al. (1982 : 444) state that the capacity to give or withhold resources and rewards is a foundation of political power. The key modification that management must introduce here is to structure the allocation and reward processes so that the best payoffs clearly go to people who are actively contributing to achievement of official goals- and not to mere political allies. Note that again the ideal arrangements is one in which political payoffs and rewards - as well as company rewards - support the enterprises's strategy because the same results are being sought.

**To tie approved strategy into resource allocations and rewards, these procedures and criteria must be carefully watched.**

1. For standard, repetitive situations the steps to be taken to obtain resources and rewards and the criteria that will be used in allocating them should be known in advance. Thus, the procedures and the standards used in extending customer credit or in granting an extra week's vacation should be explicitly stated. Then individual discretion - aside from assessing the facts in each case - is reduced to a minimum. There is then little occasion for intramural politics.
2. Budget allocations, promotion, assignment to high-potential project teams, provision of R & D support, personnel quotas and the like cannot be treated in the "programmed" manner as just suggested in
  - (1). The possible alternatives and the criteria used to choose among them are too numerous and shifting to fit a single model. However, decisions on such matters can be made jointly and openly - that is, several executives and/or staff people should participate, opportunities for suggestions from even more people should be provided, and final approval should be given by a senior executive after he or she is informed of the disagreements or doubts of qualified people. Such open consultation provides opportunities to

check political manoeuvring and to test the compatibility of proposed action with approved strategy. In those situations where conflict has been deliberately built into the organisation's decisions on resource allocations and rewards must be approved at least by a common superior who is aware of the inherent potential for "politicking".

3. Even more subtle is tying rewards to informal co-operation in achieving company goals. Co-operation here refers to the flow of key information, the energy applied to unexpected problems, a willingness to make changes that primarily aid some other division, the provision of minor but necessary services such as duplication and supplies, and the like. The measurement of such co-operation or the lack of it is difficult, and no specific decision warrants the kind of review suggested in (2) above. So, a formal measurement-and-reward system is unwarranted. Nevertheless, persons who can grant or withhold such aid may use this power politically. Whenever possible, procedures and jobs that give people power to interrupt communication and work flows should be avoided, even at some extra expense, thereby reducing the potential for a strong political base.

However, if power positions are unavoidable, then such jobs should be filled by individuals who are loyal to overall company strategy.

The underlying aim of these various arrangements is to create a situation in which virtue is rewarded and crime does not pay – "virtue" being decisions contributing to target results and "crime" being decisions calculated to enhance political strength even though they are dysfunctional.

### **3.4.3 Punish deviant power-seekers**

Newman *et al.* (1982 : 445) regard this as a secondary step. The primary way to avoid undesirable political activity is to create a setting in which the desired results are known and the major sources of power are administered in support of those goals - as recommended above. However, in spite of these positive influences, some individuals will occasionally become so obsessed with promoting their private goals that they resort to politics that run contrary to company interests. Specifically, they reward and punish and start building coalitions for actions inconsistent with recognized company strategy.

When such behaviour is discovered, it should be promptly and openly reprimanded; if continued it should be punished by more severe measures - such as transfer to a powerless position or by dismissal. Every organisation develops a climate - a set of traditions, values and standards - that subtly shape behaviour.

Tolerance or intolerance toward independent power bases is part of this climate. If a company wishes to avoid becoming infested with petty power-players, the practice must be explicitly frowned upon. Just as people sense (and anticipate in their decisions) the existence of political pressures, so too will they sense firm disapproval of private politics contrary to company interests.

#### **3.4.4 Isolate resource acquisition from internal operations**

According to Newman et al. (1982 : 445) every company must attract a variety of resource suppliers - people of different skills, capital, materials and services, government support, customers and the like. Although these groups find association with the company beneficial, there is inevitably some bargaining over the terms of co-operation. This bargaining is very similar to the political process we have been examining - an exchange of

75

favours and mutual help, the development of relative power positions and perhaps informal coalitions in concluding agreements.

If this external bargaining with resource suppliers gets mixed up with internal decision-making, the likelihood of deviant internal politics jumps sharply. For instance, if a banker is given a veto on expenditures or a union leader controls work assignments, each becomes a member of the decision-making apparatus; then, if either pushes for the parochial interest of the bank or union when decisions are being made within the organisation, we find ourselves in the same fix as with a self-centered politician.

To keep internal politics adequately channeled, arrangements for resource inputs should be set for a year or more, and once set, team behaviour should be expected. After ground rules for contributing the resource have been established, integrated company action takes over. The concept of "no-divided interests" becomes paramount. This does not mean that company decisions are indifferent to the need to reach future agreements with resource contributors. It does mean that the two categories of decisions are separate.

To conclude, this set of proposals for channeling intra-organisation politics proposes bureaucratic devices to prevent political behaviour from upsetting



the organisational model. Using political analysis as a tool, a manager can channel intra-organisation politics, thus preventing political behaviour from interfering with the attainment of organisational objectives. It is imperative that potential deviant behaviour be harnessed. Some political motivations may be turned to constructive purposes if the manager is able to identify them with organisational objectives being pursued.

Managers should view intra-organisation politics as an added dimension to the planning, organizing and motivating systems. The harnessing of political behaviour calls for an understanding of, and a commitment to,

76

company strategy, and for the kind of measurement in control. The challenge for each manager is to put all these parts together in a way that best suits his or her own opportunities.

### **3.5 BARON AND GREENBERG ON TECHNIQUES FOR COPING WITH ORGANISATIONAL POLITICS**

Given how fundamental the need for power appears to be among people, and how differences in power between employees are basic to organisations, it is save to say that organisational politics is inevitable. This is not good news, however, as many of the effects of organisational politics are quite negative. Indeed, lowered corporate morale and diversion from key organisational goals (as employees pay closer attention to planning their attacks on others than to doing their jobs) are expected to result from political activity. In view of this, it is critical for managers to consider ways of minimizing the effects of political behaviour. Although it may be impossible to abolish organisational politics, there are several things managers can do to limit its effects. Baron and Greenberg (1989 : 427-428) identify four elements, namely clarify job expectations, open the communication process, be a good role model and do not turn a blind eye to game players.

#### **3.5.1 Clarify job expectations**

Political behaviour is nurtured by highly ambiguous conditions. To the extent that managers help reduce uncertainty, they can minimize the likelihood of political behaviour. For example, managers should give very clear, well-defined work assignments. They should also clearly explain how work will be evaluated. Employees who know precisely what they are supposed to do and what level of performance is acceptable to do will find it unnecessary to play political games to assert their power. Under such conditions, recognition will come from meeting job expectations, instead of from less acceptable avenues (Baron and Greenberg, 1989 : 427).

### **3.5.2 Open the communication process**

It is difficult for people to try to foster their own goals at the expense of organisational goals whenever the communication process is open to scrutiny by all. Compare, for example, a department manager who makes budget allocation decisions in a highly open fashion (announced to all) and one who makes the same decisions in secret. When decisions are not openly shared and communicated to all, conditions are ideal for unscrupulous individuals to abuse their power. Decisions that can be monitored by all are unlikely to allow any one individual to gain excessive control over desired resources (Baron and Greenberg, 1989 : 427).

### **3.5.3 Be a good role model**

It is well established that higher-level personnel set the standards by which lower-level employees operate. As a result, any manager who is openly political in his or her use of power is likely to create a climate in which his or her subordinates behave the same way. Engaging in dirty political tricks not only teaches subordinates that such tactics are appropriate, but also that they are the desired way of operating within the organisation. Managers will certainly find it difficult to constrain the political actions of their subordinates unless they set a clear example of honest and reasonable treatment of others in their own behaviour (Baron and Greenberg, 1989 : 427).

### **3.5.4 Do not turn a blind eye to game players**

Suppose you see a subordinates attempting to gain power over another by taking credit for that individual's work. Immediately confront this individual and do not ignore the incident. If the person believes there is a chance of getting away with it, the chance will be taken. What's worse, if the subordinate suspects that you are aware of the actions, but didn't do

anything about it, you are indirectly reinforcing the person's unethical political behaviour (Baron and Greenberg, 1989 : 428).

To conclude, it is clear that political behaviours enacted in organisations are both varied and complex. Political behaviour provide some important challenges to managers.

## **3.6 GUIDELINES TO MANAGE POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR IN**

## **ORGANISATIONS**

In this chapter, the viewpoints of four different authors have been discussed on ways in which political behaviour can be managed constructively in organisations. From the literature-based study it was evident that certain guidelines for the constructive management of political behaviour in organisations were common amongst all the authors. Nine different guidelines were identified.

The purpose of this section is to complement the identified nine guidelines in literature with guidelines from practice to develop a model for the management of political behaviour.

The reasons for developing these guidelines were motivated by the fact that political behaviour is a universal phenomenon, is prevalent in any organisation and affects every individual at some stage of his or her career. It is therefore imperative that political behaviour be identified in order to control it. This model can also be used for further research.

### **3.6.1 Guidelines to implement open communication**

- Honest communication.
- Speaking to the person who can help instead of complaining to others about the matter.

79

- Involving people in decision-making so that they know where the decisions come from.
- Regular feedback on matters affecting people, productivity and profits.
- Determine fixed channels of communication.
- The management-employee relationship should be based on trust, humility, integrity and mutual respect.
- Management should propagate an "open- policy".
- An environment of tolerance should be fostered to facilitate different viewpoints and to generate new ideas.

### **3.6.2 Guidelines to implement the reduction of uncertainty**

- Goals must be specific, measurable, attainable and realistic.
- Stay in pace with technological changes in order to respond to change.
- Apply a system of participative management to deal with a constant changing organisational environment.
- Ensure that every employee is familiar with and fully understands his or her role, tasks and responsibilities in the organisation through clear job descriptions.
- Reactions to changes in the organisation must be decisive, true and explainable to employees.

- A system of checks and balances to be built-in by management to ensure the actual implementation of goals is fully understood.

### **3.6.3 Guidelines to create a greater sense of awareness**

- Be on the look out for possible situations or circumstances that can be conducive to political behaviour.
- Get to know the main causes and techniques of political behaviour in order to recognise such actions.

80

- Analyse the reactions and behaviour of subordinates in the work place through regular informal interaction.
- Examine your own behaviour to guard against possible participation in political behaviour.
- Awareness of political behaviour should be regarded as just an important management function as for instance the exercise of control.
- Do not deny the existence of politics in your organisation.
- Introduction of individual staff meetings to create a platform for individuals to voice concerns/problems.
- Formation of a healthy intelligence network to access potential problematic areas.

### **3.6.4 Guidelines in setting an example**

- Ensure that all actions and behaviour can be fully motivated and explained to subordinates.
- Be honest, fair and reasonable in treatment of subordinates.
- Give subordinates the opportunity to evaluate managerial behaviour in general and behaviour which might be regarded as controversial.
- Make employees aware of the fact that political behaviour will not be tolerated and that you are on the look-out for it.
- Handle differences and conflict openly.

### **3.6.5 Guidelines to manage informal coalitions and cliques**

- Plan the lay-out of your section by placing employees where political behaviour can be less rigid. Consider the rotation of staff to prevent zones.
- Use informal coalitions and cliques where it can benefit the organisation and promote "esprit des corps".
- Try to understand the reasons/motivation for forming the informal groups or cliques. Try to determine what unifies them.

- Be consistent and consequent in dealing with all employees.
- Grant adequate autonomy and responsibility to subordinates with regular feedback and not “feedback by exception”.
- Employees should use a system of rotation for lunch hours, breaks, etc.

### **3.6.6 Guidelines to confront political game players**

- Make employees aware of the fact that you are serious in addressing all forms of possible political behaviour.
- Deal with political behaviour openly and immediately for others to be aware of the consequences.
- Address all forms of political behaviour, even those regarded as inconsequential.
- Specify the punishments for being involved in political behaviour.

### **3.6.7 Guidelines to sharpen the strategy of the enterprise**

- The strategy of the organisation, the goals to be achieved and the action plans to implement goals must be fully understood by all employees as well as their respective roles.
- Employees must be aware that they will be rewarded and will benefit from pursuing a common goal.
- Evaluate the activities on a continuous basis and not “feedback by exception”.
- The strategy must be broken down into small, simple and attainable steps.
- Planning to sharpen the strategy must be regarded as just as important as the strategy itself.

### **3.6.8 Guidelines to tie resource allocations and rewards to strategy**

- Good work must be rewarded.

- The criteria for the allocation of rewards must be simple and be understood by all.
- Transparency in decision-making.
- Management systems to evaluate subordinates must be realistic.
- Reward systems must be directly linked to performance.
- Restrictions must be placed on competition amongst managers in respect of resource allocation, etc.

### **3.6.9 Guidelines to isolate resource acquisitions from internal operations**

- The bargaining process over terms of co-operation, etc. must be done by employees who will not benefit from it directly or indirectly.
- Specify the conditions and ground rules clearly for acquisition of resources.
- The process should be transparent.

### **3.7 SUMMARY OF GUIDELINES TO MANAGE POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR IN ORGANISATIONS**

This section contains a summary of the guidelines identified by the various authors to manage political behaviour in organisations.

The following commonalities are identified by comparing the work of the four different authors:

- Griffin and Moorhead (1986), Wagner and Hollenbeck (1995) and Baron and Greenberg (1989) identify open communication, the reduction of uncertainty and awareness of political behaviour as ways to manage political behaviour constructively.

83

- Wagner and Hollenbeck (1995) and Baron and Greenberg (1989) regard the setting of an example as crucial to this process.
- Wagner and Hollenbeck (1995) mention two further strategies, namely to confront political game players and manage informal coalitions and cliques. Baron and Greenberg (1989) also mention the clarification of job expectations as crucial to the constructive management of political behaviour in organisations.
- Newman et al. (1982) added another three strategies to this process namely, to sharpen the strategy of the enterprise, to tie resource allocations and rewards to strategy and to isolate resource acquisition from internal operations.

### **3.8 CONCLUSION**

Trying to eliminate political behaviour may well increase political activity. The other extreme is that the use of political behaviour will lead to conflict, feuds, and the like. The intermediate position is therefore to recognize the inevitability of political behaviour and attempt to use it effectively.

Controlling political behaviour is a big part of the manager's job. The manager should be pro-actively involved in managing political behaviour.

The nine different guidelines can be used by managers to manage political behaviour to the benefit of the organisation.

## **CHAPTER 4**

# **THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND EVALUATION OF AN INTEGRATED MODEL IN THE MANAGEMENT OF POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR**

## **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

Several guidelines have been identified as effective strategies to manage political behaviour in organisations constructively. The guidelines identified from the literature were then supplemented by guidelines obtained from practice. The guidelines identified are as follows: open communication, reduction of uncertainty, awareness, set an example, manage informal coalitions and cliques, confront political game players, sharpen the strategy of the enterprise, tie resource allocations and rewards to strategy and isolate resource acquisitions from internal operations.

The assessment of these guidelines in practice will be discussed in this chapter.

## **4.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

In order to promote the logical solution of the stated main problem and sub-problems, the following procedure was followed:

- (a) A literature study to describe the nature of political behaviour in organisations and to determine the guidelines for the management of political behaviour in organisations.

The first sub-problem was answered by discussing the viewpoint of Mintzberg (1983) on the system of politics in terms of the origin of political games, the political means of

influence and political games in organisations. Mintzberg's work was then compared to the viewpoints of Griffin and Moorhead (1986) and Baron and Greenberg (1989).

85

The second sub-problem was addressed by discussing the viewpoint of Griffin and Moorhead (1986) on constraining the efforts of political behaviour and comparing it to the work of Wagner and Hollenbeck (1995) on managing destructive politics, Newman, Warren and Schnee (1982) on channeling political behaviour and Baron and Greenberg (1989) on techniques for coping with organisational politics. The guidelines identified from the literature were then supplemented by guidelines obtained from practice to develop a model to be empirically tested.

- (b) A survey was conducted to determine whether political behaviour can be managed constructively in organisations by means of a questionnaire.
- (c) The findings of (b) will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the identified strategies.

#### **4.3 SURVEY METHOD**

The survey method used was the survey questionnaire by means of postal despatch.

The reasons for using a postal survey are as follows:

- **Cost and ease of application**

This is the least expensive of all survey methods. Distance of location does not affect the cost involved in collecting the information as postage is standardised within the borders of the country (Welman and Kruger, 1999 : 151).

- **Anonymity**

Of all the survey methods this one provides the greatest possibility of anonymity, as no personal details of the respondent is provided (Welman and Kruger, 1999 : 152).

86

#### **4.4 SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE**



This can be applied to obtain the following types of information:

- biographical particulars;
- typical behaviour;
- opinions, beliefs and convictions; and
- attitudes.

In order to conduct a typical postal or mail survey, the questions to be included in a structured questionnaire are collected, the questionnaires are posted to the respondents with the request to complete them and then mail or fax it back.

This survey of the different role players in the automotive industry in South Africa was conducted by means of a questionnaire, as this was the best way to collect information from the different companies around South Africa.

#### **4.5 ADMINISTRATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE**

The recommended manner of distribution of questionnaires is posting it. This is not the most secure and rapid manner of distribution as the postal services are not always reliable. The writer was, however, abroad at this point in time and had no other alternative.

##### **4.5.1 Questionnaire construction**

When constructing a questionnaire several aspects have to be considered. Some aspects are more applicable when opinions and beliefs are assessed and others are more applicable when biographical details and typical behaviour is researched (Welman and Kruger, 1999 : 171).

The following are the more important aspects to consider when constructing the questionnaire: content and format, type, wording and sequence of the questions. A brief discussion of each of these aspects will be given below.

##### **4.5.1.1 Question content and format**

The questions included in a questionnaire may be open-ended, giving the respondent the opportunity to express his/her opinion, or provide factual information for example the age, gender or geographical location of the respondent, or closed-ended, where the respondent is provided with a number of choices from which the most appropriate response must be chosen (Welman and Kruger, 1999 : 172).

Closed-ended, opinion-seeking questions were used in this questionnaire. Respondents were asked to choose from a five point Likert-type scale with one (1) being strongly agree, two (2) being agree, three (3) being uncertain, four (4) being disagree, and five (5) being strongly disagree.

#### **4.5.1.2 Question type**

The questions included in the questionnaire were formulated to take the minimum time to complete and to determine to what extent experts felt that the guidelines identified were effective to manage political behaviour constructively.

#### **4.5.1.3 Wording of the questions**

The questions must be constructed in such a manner as to not offend or underestimate the respondents intelligence level. Preference should be given to concise and unambiguous which clearly states the essential information required to correctly understand and interpret the questions and then provide an accurate reply. Care should be taken not to suggest or imply a particular response when constructing the questions (Welman and Kruger, 1999 : 175-177).

#### **4.5.1.4 Question sequence**

The questions should be sequenced to ensure that if preceding responses affected the subsequent items these follow each other.

It is recommended that the questionnaire should start with a few easy and non-threatening items which are related to the stated

purpose of the questionnaire. These are then followed by more involved questions.

A topic should clearly be identified and connected to the overall aim of the questionnaire (Welman and Kruger, 1999 : 178-179).

The purpose of the research was to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies identified as guidelines to manage political behaviour in organisations constructively.

#### **4.5.3 Population to be surveyed**

The questionnaires were sent to role players in the automotive industry in South Africa. These companies were:

- Volkswagen of South Africa (Pty) Ltd
- Delta Motor Corporation
- Toyota South Africa (Pty) Ltd
- Toyota South Africa Motors (Pty) Ltd
- Hyundai
- BMW South Africa (Pty) Ltd
- Samcor Ltd
- Mercedes-Benz of South Africa (Pty) Ltd
- Nissan South Africa (Pty) Ltd
- Auto Imports

#### **4.5.4 Completion of the questionnaires**

The response time was limited to one month from date of receipt of the questionnaires.

The completed questionnaires were returned to Port Elizabeth for analysis. The responses to the questionnaires were recorded by the researcher, using a spreadsheet, Microsoft Excel version, to facilitate the statistical analysis.

## **4.6 CONCLUSION**

The research methodology followed was in the form of a literature study to describe the nature of political behaviour in organisations and to determine the guidelines for the management of political behaviour in organisations. A survey was conducted to determine whether political behaviour can be managed constructively in organisations by means of a questionnaire. The findings will then be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the identified strategies.

The survey method used was the survey questionnaire by means of postal despatch. The question content and format was that of closed-ended and opinion-seeking questions. Respondents were asked to choose from a five point Likert-type scale. The questionnaires were sent to role players in the automotive industry in South Africa. The response time was limited to one month from date of receipt of the questionnaire.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **RESULTS OF THE EMPIRICAL STUDY**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

In the previous chapter the proposed research methodology, survey method and construction of the questionnaire was explained.

The purpose of this chapter is to present and analyse the results of the empirical study.

## **5.2 RESULTS OF THE SURVEY**

The questionnaires were posted to the participants identified in paragraph 4.5.3 in order to gather the information required to evaluate the effectiveness of the guidelines for managing political behaviour in organisations in a constructive manner.

### **5.2.1 The response rate**

A total of twenty five (25) questionnaires were sent and fifteen (15) questionnaires were returned. This results in a 60 % response rate. More than one questionnaire was sent to companies in the Eastern Cape as this region forms the heart of the automotive industry in South Africa.

### **5.2.2 Analysis of the results**

All the role players in the automotive industry in South Africa were included in the survey as to omit any of these organisations may result in the results of the survey being distorted.

The respondents were required to respond to the questions by indicating with an X their choice in determining the effectiveness of the strategies by using the following scale – strongly agree, agree, uncertain, disagree and strongly disagree. A numerical value was allocated to each category (Annexure A).

#### **5.2.2.1 Open communication**

It is proposed that the opening of the communication process will reduce political behaviour in organisations. This means

that the basis for allocating scarce resources should be known to everyone and that everyone understands and accepts resource allocation.

The respondents had to indicate the degree to which they agreed/disagreed that the following guidelines with regards to open communication will manage political behaviour in organisations constructively.

**Table 5.1**

**Results of question 1 (Open communication)**

		Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1.1	Involving people in decision-making so that they know where the decisions come from.	73,3	20	-	-	6,7
1.2	Determine fixed channels of communication.	40	46,7	6,7	6,7	-
1.3	An environment of tolerance should be fostered to facilitate different viewpoints	60	40	-	-	-
1.4	The management-employee relationship should be based on trust, humility, integrity and mutual respect	60	40	-	-	-
1.5	Regular feedback on matters, people, productivity and profits	66,7	33,3	-	-	-
1.6	The ability of people to control information/lines of communication should be limited and decisions must be monitored by all	13,3	46,7	26,6	6,7	6,7
1.7	Other. Please add any guidelines you believe is essential. .....					

The results indicated that 73.3 % and 20 % strongly agree and agree respectively that people should be involved in decision-

making so that they know where the decisions come from. Only 6.7 % strongly disagreed.

A further 40 % strongly agreed that fixed channels of communications should be determined whilst 46.7 % agreed. Only 6.7 % of the respondents were uncertain or disagreed.

The fostering of an environment of tolerance to facilitate different viewpoints was supported by 60 % (strongly agree) and 40 % (agree) of the respondents. None of the respondents were uncertain, disagreed or strongly disagreed. The same result was obtained under the strategy that the management-employee relationship should be based on trust, humility, integrity and mutual respect.

None of the respondents were uncertain, disagreed or strongly disagreed that regular feedback in matters, people, productivity and profits is necessary - 66.7 % strongly agreed and 33.3 % of the respondents agreed.

The ability of people to control information/lines of communication should be limited and decisions must be monitored by all, was not as strongly supported as the previous strategies - 13.3 % of the respondent's strongly agreed and 46.7 % agreed - 26.7 % of the respondents were uncertain and 6.7 % disagreed or strongly disagreed.

From the above it is therefore clear that involving people in decision-making, fixed channels of communication, the fostering of an environment of tolerance, a management-employee relationship based on trust, humility, integrity and mutual respect and regular feedback on matters, people, productivity and profits are the best strategies to manage

93

political behaviour in organisations constructively through open communication.

#### **5.2.2.2 Reduction of uncertainty**

It is proposed that the reduction of uncertainty by clarifying goals, responsibilities and job expectations will reduce political behaviour in organisations.

The respondents had to indicate the degree to which they agreed/disagreed that the following guidelines designed to reduce uncertainty will enable the manager to manage political behaviour in organisations constructively.

**Table 5.2**

**Results of question 2 (Reduction of uncertainty)**

		Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
2.1	Goals must be specific, measurable, attainable and realistic.	73,3	26,7	-	-	-
2.2	Ensure that every employee is familiar with and fully understands his/her role, tasks and responsibilities in the organisation through clear job descriptions.	73,3	26,7	-	-	-
2.3	Reactions to change in the organisation must be decisive, true and explainable to employees.	40	60	-	-	-
2.4	A system of checks and balances to be built in by management to ensure the actual implementation of goals is fully understood.	53,3	46,7	-	-	-
2.5	Apply a system of participative management to deal with a constant changing organisational environment.	46,7	46,7	6,7	-	-
2.6	Other. Please add any guidelines you believe is essential. .....					

The results indicated that all the strategies were either strongly agreed or agreed too. Only 6.7 % of the respondents were uncertain as to whether a system of participative management

to deal with a constant changing organisational environment should be applied. The following percentages were obtained under the sections “strongly agree and agree”:



- Goals must be specific, measurable, attainable and realistic – 73.3 and 26.7 % respectively.
- Familiarisation with role, tasks and responsibilities by employees through clear job descriptions – 73.3 % and 26.7 % respectively.
- Decisive, true and explainable reactions to change in the organisation – 40 % and 60 % respectively.
- The creation of a system of checks and balances to ensure the implementation of goals is fully understood – 53.3 % and 46.7 %.
- The application of a system of participative management to deal with a constant changing organisational environment – 46.7 % each.

### **5.2.2.3      Awareness**

It is proposed that there should be a greater awareness of the causes and techniques of political behaviour (activities) in organisations.

The respondents had to indicate the degree to which they agreed/disagreed that a greater awareness will enable the manager to manage political behaviour in organisations constructively.

**Table 5.3**  
**Results of question 3 (Awareness)**

		Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
3.1	Be on the look out for possible situations or circumstances that can be conducive to political behaviour.	13,3	80	-	6,7	-
3.2	Get to know the main causes and techniques of political behaviour in order to recognise such actions.	13,3	66,7	6,7	13,3	-
3.3	Analyze the reactions and behaviour of subordinates in the work place through Regular informal interaction.	33,3	60	-	6,7	-
3.4	Examine your own behaviour to guard against possible participation in political behaviour.	33,3	60	-	6,7	-
3.5	Do not deny the existence of politics in your organisation.	53,3	46,7	-	-	-
3.6	Managers should be aware of the fact that certain employees will regard some of their activities as political even if this is not true.	26,7	46,7	20	6,7	-
3.7	Other. Please add any guidelines you believe is essential. .....					

The majority of the respondents, 13.5 % (strongly agree) and 80 % (agree), supported the fact that awareness of possible situations or circumstances that can be conducive to political behaviour, will enable the manager to manage political behaviour in organisations constructively - 6.7 % of the respondents disagreed.

The results of the other five strategies are basically similar to the first one. The percentages of respondents being uncertain or disagreeing are 6.7 % except for the strategy to deny the existence of politics in your organisation (0 %) and to be knowledgeable about the main causes on techniques of political behaviour in order to recognize such actions – 13.5 % of the respondents disagreed. 13.3 % and 66.7 % of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed.

The strategies to analyze the reactions and behaviour of subordinates in the work place through regular informal

interaction and examination of a manager's own behaviour to guard against possible participation in political behaviour, elicited the same response for the categories strongly agree and agree, namely 53.3 % and 60 %.

The strategy not to deny the existence of politics in your organisation elicited the strongest sense of agreement of all the stated strategies, namely 53.3 % strongly agreed and 46.7 % agreed. As mentioned before, the scale for the other categories was 0 %.

26.7 % and 46.7 % of respondents strongly agreed and agreed that managers should be aware of the fact that certain employees regard some of their activities as political even if this is not true.

It can therefore be concluded that all the strategies listed under the heading of awareness can be used to manage political behaviour constructively in organisations.

#### **5.2.2.4 Set an example**

It is proposed that managers should set an example and not engage in covert behaviour, eg. acts of deceit, dirty tricks, game playing, etc.

The respondents had to indicate the degree to which they agreed/disagreed that setting an example by managers will reduce the appearance of political behaviour in organisations.

		Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
4.1	Ensure that all actions and behaviour can be fully motivated and explained to subordinates.	33,3	60	6,7	-	-
4.2	Be honest, fair and responsible in treatment of subordinates.	66,7	33,3	-	-	-
4.3	Give subordinates the opportunity to evaluate managerial behaviour in general and behaviour which might be regarded as controversial.	46,7	33,3	20	-	-
4.4	Handle differences and conflict openly.	40	60	-	-	-
4.5	Other. Please add any guidelines you believe is essential. .....					

The notion that all actions and behaviour be fully motivated and explained to subordinates was strongly supported by respondents – 33.3 % strongly agreed and 60 % agreed. The respective percentages for the categories strongly agree and agree were as follows; 66.7 % and 33.3 % for honest and fair treatment of subordinates, 46.7 % and 33.3 % for the opportunity by subordinates to evaluate managerial behaviour in general and behaviour which might be regarded as controversial and 40 % and 60 % for handling differences and conflict openly. The only results classified as “uncertain” was 6.7 % and 20 % for the first and third strategy.

It can therefore be concluded that all the strategies mentioned under the heading of “setting an example by managers” can be regarded as ways to reduce the appearance of political behaviour in organisations.

It is proposed that influencing the norms and beliefs that steer group behaviour can ensure that employees continue to serve organisational interests.

The respondents had to indicate the degree to which they agreed/disagreed that the managing of informal coalitions and cliques will serve organisational interests and reduce political behaviour.

**Table 5.5**  
**Results of question 5 (Manage informal coalitions and cliques)**

		Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5.1	Try to understand the reasons/motivations for the forming of informal groups or cliques and what unifies them.	13,3	80	6,7	-	-
5.2	Be consistent and consequent in dealing with all employees.	60	40	-	-	-
5.3	Grant adequate autonomy and responsibility to subordinates with regular feedback and not "feedback by exception".	60	40	-	-	-
5.4	Plan the lay-out of your section by placing employees where political behaviour can be less rigid. Consider the rotation of staff to prevent "zones".	40	20	33,3	6,7	-
5.5	Other. Please add any guidelines you believe is essential. .....					

The respondents indicated that 13.3 % strongly agree and 80 % agree with the strategy to understand the reasons/motivation for the forming of informal groups or cliques and what unifies them. Only 6.7 % were uncertain.

The results for the next two strategies, namely to be consistent and consequent in dealing with employees and to grant adequate autonomy and responsibility to subordinates with

regular feedback rather than “feedback by exception”, were identical with 60 % strongly agreeing and 40 % agreeing.

The strategy to plan the lay-out of sections and rotate staff to reduce the likelihood of political behaviour resulted in a more contradictory response, with 60 % in some form of agreement and 40 % either uncertain or disagreeing.

An understanding of the reasons for forming informal groups or cliques, the treatment of all employees in a consistent and consequent manner, granting adequate autonomy and responsibility to subordinates with regular feedback can be regarded as the most effective way to manage informal coalitions and cliques resulting in a reduction of political behaviour.

#### **5.2.2.6. Confront political game players**

It is proposed that political game players should be confronted by making use of disciplinary measures, eg. reprimands, dismissals, etc.

The respondents had to indicate the degree to which they agreed/disagreed that confronting political game players will enable the manager to manage political behaviour in organisations more constructively.

		Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
6.1	Make employees aware of the fact that you are serious in addressing all forms of possible political behaviour.	20	53,3	13,3	13,3	-
6.2	Deal with political behaviour openly and immediately for others to be aware of the consequences.	40	26,7	20	13,3	-
6.3	Address all forms of political behaviour, even those regarded as inconsequential.	13,3	40	20	26,7	-
6.4	Specify the punishments for being involved in political behaviour.	33,3	20	26,7	13,3	6,7
6.5	Other. Please add any guidelines you believe is essential. .....					

Based on the results, these guidelines revealed a similar tendency. This means that the response was very diversified amongst the various categories.

The respondents agreed (53.3 %) that employees should be made aware of the fact that the manager is serious in addressing all forms of possible political behaviour, while 20 % strongly agreed. 13.3 % indicated they were uncertain and a further 13.3 % disagreed.

The strategy to deal with political behaviour openly and immediately for others to be aware of the consequences was strongly supported by 40 %, agreed too by 26.7 %, with 20 % being uncertain and 13.3 % disagreeing.

Addressing all forms of political behaviour, even those regarded as inconsequential, elicited a response a bit more inconclusive than the previous strategies – 13.3 % strongly

agreed, 40 % agreed, 20 % were uncertain and 26.7 % disagreed.

The last strategy under this heading (specify the punishments for involvement in political behaviour) elicited the most negative response. Only 33.3 % and 20 % strongly agreed and agreed respectively with 26.7 % uncertain, 13.3 % disagreeing and 6.7 % strongly disagreeing.

To conclude, only the first two strategies mentioned can be regarded as conclusive ways to manage political behaviour constructively in organisations.

#### **5.2.2.7      Sharpen the strategy of the enterprise**

It is proposed that political pressure should not pull away from the control strategy of an enterprise and the results sought by the enterprise and the balance between them should be clear and agreed upon.

The respondents had to indicate the degree to which they agreed/disagreed that the sharpening of the strategy of the enterprise will allow the manager to manage political behaviour in organisations more constructively.



		Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
7.1	The strategy of the organisation, the goals to be achieved and the action plans to implement goals must be fully understood by all employees as well as their respective roles.	60	40	-	-	-
7.2	Employees must be aware that they will be rewarded and will benefit from pursuing a common goal.	60	40	-	-	-
7.3	The strategies of the organisation must be broken down into small, simple and attainable steps.	60	40	-	-	-
7.4	Planning to sharpen the strategy must be regarded as just as important as the strategy itself.	53,3	46,7	-	-	-
7.5	Other. Please add any guidelines you believe is essential. .....					

The respondents were decisive in their responses to this question. The categories of “strongly agree” and “agree” received a 100 % response.

A clear understanding of the organisation’s strategy, goals to be achieved and action plans to implement goals were strongly agreed upon by 60 % and agreed upon by 40 % of the respondents. The same percentages were received for the break down of the organisation’s strategies into small, simple and attainable steps and employees’ awareness that they will be rewarded and will benefit from pursuing a common goal.

The sharpening of strategy in the organisation must be regarded as important as the strategy itself. This showed support from respondents and this is demonstrated by 53.3 % strongly agreeing and 46.7 % agreed.

It can therefore be concluded that this guideline, with its relevant strategies, will play an important role in managing political behaviour constructively.

**5.2.2.8 Tie resource allocations and rewards to strategy**

It is proposed that the allocation and rewards processes should be structured that the best payoffs go to those who actively contribute to the achievement of official goals – and not to more political allies.

The respondents had to indicate the degree to which they agreed/disagreed that the undermentioned guidelines will enable the manager to manage political behaviour in organisations more constructively.

**Table 5.8**  
**Results to question 8 (Tie resource allocations and rewards to strategy)**

		<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Uncertain</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
8.1	The criteria for the allocation of rewards must be simple and understood by all.	86,7	13,3	-	-	-
8.2	Reward systems must be directly linked to performance.	66,7	33,3	-	-	-
8.3	There must be transparency in decision-making.	60	40	-	-	-
8.4	Management systems to evaluate subordinates must be realistic.	66,7	33,3	-	-	-
8.5	Other. Please add any guidelines you believe is essential. .....					

All the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with the strategies mentioned.

The strategy that criteria for the allocation of rewards to be simple and understood by all received the highest response for “strongly agree”, namely 86.7 %. The response for “agree” was 13.3 %.

Percentages of 66.6 % (strongly agree) and 33.3 % (agree) were allocated to the strategies that reward systems must be directly linked to performance and management systems to evaluate subordinates must be realistic.

The notion that there must be transparency in decision-making was strongly agreed upon by 60 % and agreed upon by 40 % of respondents.

It can be concluded that all the strategies mentioned under this guideline can be utilized to manage political behaviour constructively in organisations.

#### **5.2.2.9 Isolate resource acquisitions from internal operations**

It is proposed that external bargaining with resource suppliers should not get mixed up with internal decision making.

The respondents had to indicate the degree to which they agreed/disagreed that the implementation of the undermentioned guidelines will enable the manager to manage political behaviour in organisations more constructively.

**Table 5.9**

**Results to question 9 (Isolate resource acquisitions from internal operations)**

		Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
9.1	The bargaining process over terms of co-operation etc. must be done by employees who will not benefit from it directly or indirectly	33,3	33,3	20	13,3	-
9.2	Specify the conditions and ground rules clearly for acquisition of resources.	46,7	53,3	-	-	-
9.3	The process should be transparent.	60	40	-	-	-
9.4	Other. Please add any guidelines you believe is essential. .....					

The strategy that the bargaining process over terms of co-operation must be done by employees who will not benefit from it directly or indirectly, elicited a mixed response with 33,3 % of the respondents strongly agreeing, the same percentage agreed, 20 % were uncertain and 13,3 % disagreed.

The respondents were more conclusive in responding to the next two strategies. The clear specification of conditions and ground rules for acquisition of resources were supported by 46.7 % of the respondents who strongly agreed and 53.3 % who agreed.

60 % of respondents strongly agreed that the process should be transparent while only 40 % agreed.

It can therefore be concluded that it is necessary to specify the conditions and ground rules clearly for acquisitions of resources and to ensure that the whole process should be transparent in order to manage political behaviour constructively in organisations.

### **5.3 CONCLUSION**

The results of the empirical study were presented and analysed. The response rate and analysis of the questionnaire was discussed. It revealed that all the guidelines identified and vast majority of the strategies listed under each guideline can be utilised as means for managing political behaviour in organisations in a constructive manner.

The final chapter will present a summary of the findings of the study followed by concluding remarks and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

## **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

“The management of political behaviour in organisations” is the subject researched in this dissertation.

This chapter contains a summary of the preceding chapters, including an overview of the empirical findings. Finally, recommendations will be made to assist in the management of political behaviour in organisations in a more constructive manner.

## **6.2 SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS**

### **Chapter One (Problem statement and definition of concepts)**

The aim of this chapter was to present the main problem to be addressed and to outline how the researcher intends to solve the main and sub-problems. Important concepts were identified to ensure clarity and consistency throughout the paper.

### **Chapter Two (The nature of political behaviour in organisations)**

This chapter aimed at finding a solution to the first sub-problem, namely what is understood under political behaviour.

In order to resolve this, the nature of political behaviour in organisations was explained. The work of Mintzberg (1983) was discussed and then compared

to the viewpoints of two other authors, namely Griffin and Moorhead (1986) and Baron and Greenberg (1989). The issues discussed are the origin of

political games, (the displacement of legitimate power), the political means of influence and political games in organisations.

### **Chapter three (Guidelines for the management of political behaviour in organisations)**

This chapter aimed at finding a solution to the second sub-problem, namely, the guidelines to manage political behaviour in organisations.

The chapter starts with the viewpoint of Griffin and Moorhead (1986) on constraining the efforts of political behaviour. The work of three other authors are also discussed, namely Wagner and Hollenbeck (1995) on managing destructive politics, Norman, Warren and Schnee (1982) on channeling political behaviour and lastly, Baron and Greenberg (1989) on techniques for coping with organisational politics.

Existing guidelines from the literature were examined and the most critical guidelines applicable to the management of political behaviour in organisations were identified and included in the model to be empirically tested.

### **Chapter four (The research methodology and evaluation of an integrated model in the management of political behaviour)**

This chapter gives a description of the empirical study. In order to promote the logical solution of the stated sub-problems, the following broad research procedure was followed:

- (a) A literature study to determine the guidelines for the management of political behaviour in organisations.

- (b) A survey was conducted to determine effectiveness of the guidelines identified to manage political behaviour in organisations constructively by means of a questionnaire.
- (c) The findings from (a) and (b) will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the guidelines to manage political behaviour in a constructive manner in the automotive industry in South Africa.

## **Chapter Five (Results of the empirical study)**

The results of the empirical study were presented and analyzed in this chapter.

### **6.3 SUMMARY OF THE EMPIRICAL FINDINGS**

The results of the survey were presented in Chapter Five. The purpose of this section is to summarise the empirical findings and to provide concluding remarks about the findings.

#### **Open Communication**

The results indicated that 73.3 % and 20 % strongly agreed and agreed respectively that people should be involved in the decision-making process. A further 40 % strongly agreed that fixed channels of communication should be determined whilst 46.7 % agreed. The fostering of an environment of tolerance to facilitate different viewpoints were supported by 60 % (strongly agree) and 40 % (agree) of the respondents. None of the respondents were uncertain, disagreed or strongly disagreed. A further 66.7 % strongly agreed and 33.3 % agreed that regular feedback in matters including people, productivity and profits, is necessary. The ability of people to control information/lines of communication should be limited and decisions to be monitored by all, were not as strongly supported.



### **Reduction of uncertainty**

The results indicated that all the strategies listed were either strongly agreed or agreed too. Only 6.7 % of the respondents were uncertain as to whether a system of participative management to deal with a constant changing organisational environment should be applied.

### **Awareness**

All the strategies listed under the heading of awareness can be used to manage political behaviour constructively in organisations. The strategy not to deny the existence of politics in organisations elicited the strongest sense of agreement of all the stated strategies, namely 53.3 % strongly agreed and 46.7 % agreed.

### **Set an example**

The notion that all actions and behaviour be fully motivated and explained to subordinates was strongly supported by respondents – 33.3 % strongly agreed and 60 % agreed. This trend was similar for the other strategies. The only results classified as “uncertain” were those which stated that all actions and behaviour be fully motivated and explained to subordinates (6.7 %) and opportunity for subordinates to evaluate managerial behaviour in general and behaviour as controversial (20 %).

### **Manage informal coalitions and cliques**

An understanding of the reasons/motivations for forming informal groups or cliques (93.3 % sense of agreement), the treatment of all employees in a consistent and consequent manner (100 % sense of agreement) and the granting of adequate autonomy and responsibility to subordinates with regular feedback (100 % sense of agreement) can be regarded as the most

effective ways for a manager to manage informal coalitions and cliques to reduce the likelihood of political behaviour.

### **Confront political game players**

The results of these guidelines elicited a very diversified response amongst the various categories. Only the two strategies, namely to make employees aware of the fact that management is serious in addressing all forms of possible political behaviour and to deal with political behaviour openly and immediately for others to be aware of the consequences, can be regarded as effective strategies. The strategy of specifying the punishments for involvement in political behaviour elicited the most negative response (46.7 %).

### **Sharpen the strategy of the enterprise**

The respondents were very conclusive and decisive in their responses. The categories of “strongly agree” and “agree” received a 100 % response.

### **Tie resource allocations and rewards to strategy**

All the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with the strategies mentioned. The strategy that the criteria for the allocation of rewards must be simple and understood by all, received the highest response - 86.7 % strongly agreed.

### **Isolate resource acquisitions from internal operations**

The strategy that the “bargaining process” over terms of co-operation must be done by employees who will not benefit from it directly or indirectly, elicited a mixed response with 33.3 % of the respondents strongly in agreement, the same percentage agreed, 20 % were uncertain and 13.3 % disagreed.

The respondents were more conclusive with the following two strategies, namely, the clear specification of conditions and ground rules for acquisition of resources (46.7 % strongly agreed and 53.3 % agreed) and for a transparent process to be in place (60 % strongly agreed and 40 % agreed).

#### **6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

##### **Recommendation 1: Open Communication**

The management-employee relationship is of paramount importance. Organisations should get employees more involved in the decision-making processes and encourage face-to-face communication. This will create a relationship based on trust, integrity and mutual respect. A spin-off from this could well end up in higher productivity amongst employees.

##### **Recommendation 2: Reduction of Uncertainty**

The best way to reduce uncertainty is the empowerment of people to participate in the process. Employees should also be actively involved in goal setting. Through these two means employees will feel that they are not alienated from the activities within the organisation.

##### **Recommendation 3: Awareness**

One method of increasing awareness and reducing political activity is through transparency. Employees who become aware of transparency in the activities of the organisation will therefore be more analytical in their own behaviour and those of fellow employees. It is furthermore imperative that political behaviour should be eradicated on detection.

**Recommendation 4:      Set an example**

The manager should always act in the interest of the team/group/organisation. The manager should therefore guard against any action that can contribute to the promotion of political activity, for example favouritism.

**Recommendation 5:      Manage informal coalitions and cliques**

It is important to identify the problem or reasons leading to the formation of informal groups and cliques and to address these problems appropriately. The employee should always feel part of the team.

**Recommendation 6:      Confront political game players**

The results of the strategies listed under the guidelines showed a very diversified response. It is clear that punishment was not always regarded as the correct method to manage political behaviour.

It is therefore recommended that negative political behaviour should be discouraged by positively enforcing/rewarding preferred behaviour. The modification processes to deal with political behaviour should also be specified. Involvement in political behaviour can be made part of disciplinary measures.

**Recommendation 7:      Sharpen the strategy of the enterprise**

The respondents were very conclusive and decisive in their responses by strongly supporting the strategies.

It is important that the strategy should be preceded by a strong vision and fully communicated and accepted by all employees. Employees should

therefore participate in the strategic process i.e. planning and implementation. Employees must see the set goals as part of their own.

**Recommendation 8: Tie resource allocation and rewards to strategy**

Organisations should create a culture of achievement and not a culture of payment. Goal setting, performance measurement and reward systems must be linked and extend to all levels in the organisation.

**Recommendation 9: Isolate resource acquisitions from internal operations**

The conditions and ground rules for acquisitions of resources must be clearly specified. The whole bargaining process should also be transparent.

## **6.5 CONCLUSION**

This chapter viewed the dissertation as a completed project and reviewed the primary aspects covered in the preceding chapter. A number of recommendations were proposed.

## REFERENCE LIST

1. Baron, R.A. and Greenberg, J. 1989. Behaviour in organisations : Understanding and managing the human side of work. Massachusetts : Allyn and Bacon.
2. Certo, S.C. 1983. Principles of modern management: IOWA: William C. Brown.
3. Cherrington, D.J. 1994. Organisational behaviour: The management of individual and organisational performance. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
4. Fairholm, G.W. 1993. Organisational power politics: Tactics in organisational leadership. London : Praeger.
5. Gibson, J.L., Ivancevich, J.M. and Donnelly, J.H. 1988. Organisations. Texas: Business.
6. Griffin, R.W. and Moorhead, G. 1986. Organisational behaviour. Boston : Houghton & Mifflin.
7. Heckscher, C. and Donnellon, A. 1994. The post-bureaucratic organisation : New perspectives on organisational change. London : Sage.
8. Ivancevich, J.M. and Matteson, M.T. 1987. Organisational behaviour and management. Texas : Business.
9. Kakabadse, A. Lindlow, R. and Unicombe, S. 1987. Working in organisations. Cambridge : Gower.

10. Mintzberg, H. 1983. Power in and around organisations. New Jersey : Prentice Hall.
11. Newman, W.H. Warren, E.K. and Schnee, J.E. 1982. Process of management. New Jersey : Prentice Hall.
12. Schmerhorn, J.R. Hunt, J.G. and Osborn, R.N. 1982. Managing organisational behaviour : New York : Wiley.
13. Smit, P.J. and Cronje, G.J de J. 1982. Bestuursbeginsels : 'n Eietydse Suid-Afrikaanse uitgawe. Cape Town : Juta.
14. Stoner, J.A.F. 1982. Management. New York : Prentice-Hall.
15. Wagner, J.A. and Hollenbeck, J.R. 1995. Management of organisational behaviour. New Jersey : Prentice-Hall.
16. Welman, J.C. and Kruger, S.J. 1999. Research methodology for the business and administrative sciences. Cape Town : Oxford University Press.

**Private Bag X152  
(Box 2069, Mumbai)  
PRETORIA  
0001**

**Mr X  
Delta Motor Corporation  
Port Elizabeth  
6001**

Dear Sir/Madam

**QUESTIONNAIRE : POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR IN ORGANISATIONS**

I am currently employed in India and studying towards a MBA from the Port Elizabeth Technikon. The title of my subject of study is: "The development of a model for the constructive management of political behaviour in organisations". The empirical component of the study is limited to the automotive industry in South Africa, with specific reference to the Port Elizabeth and surrounding areas.

The purpose of this questionnaire is to obtain your valued opinion on the effectiveness of the guidelines stated in order for a manager to manage political behaviour in organisations constructively. As a manager in a company that can be regarded as a leader in the automotive industry in South Africa, your input will be highly appreciated and valued.

The questionnaire should take about 15 minutes of your time. Be assured that your responses will be held in the strictest confidence and used only for the purposes of this study.

Please take a few minutes to complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it in the envelope provided within ten (10) days from date of receipt hereof.

Your cooperation is highly appreciated.

Riaan Pio

**Annexure A**



**Survey of the *G*uidelines for *M*anagers**

**to manage**

***P*olitical *B*ehaviour in *O*rganisations**

**constructively**

***Questionnaire***

**SECTION A : BIOGRAPHICAL DATA**

Please supply the following information with regard to your organisation, by indicating with an “X” in the appropriate box.

1. How many employees does your organisation have in total?

0 to 400	1
401 to 500	2
501 to 600	3
601 to 800	4
801 to 1000	5
1001 to 1500	6
1501 to 3000	7
3001 to 5000	8
5001 and more	9

2. In what geographical area is your organisation situated?

Western Cape	1
Eastern Cape	2
Northern Cape	3
Free State	4
North West Province	5
Gauteng	6
Mpumalanga	7
Northern Province	8
Other (Specify)	9
.....	

3. What is the nature of the post you hold?

Junior Management Level	1
Middle Management Level	2
Senior Management Level	3
Other (Specify)	4
.....	

4. What is your gender?

Male	1
Female	2

## 5. Your age group?

21 - 30	1
31 - 40	2
41 - 50	3
51 - 60	4
Over 60	5

**SECTION B : INTRODUCTION**

The study deals with political behaviour in organisations that can be defined as the exercising of power in organisations in order to obtain a specific outcome.

It is expected that political behaviour is a universal phenomenon, prevalent in every organisation and will influence every individual at some or other stage of his or her occupational life.

The purpose of the study is to determine whether political behaviour can be managed constructively in organisations. Several guidelines have been identified as effective strategies to manage political behaviour in organisations constructively. The questionnaire is designed to test the effectiveness of these guidelines.

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING SECTION B OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE:**

In order to determine the effectiveness of those strategies, please complete the questionnaire using the following scale:

- 1 = Strongly agree
- 2 = Agree
- 3 = Uncertain
- 4 = Disagree
- 5 = Strongly disagree

**1. OPEN COMMUNICATION**

It is proposed that the opening of the communication process will reduce political behaviour in organisations. This means that the basis for allocating scarce resources should be known to everyone and that everyone understands and accepts resource allocation.

Please indicate the degree to which you agree/disagree that the following guidelines with regards to open communication will manage political behaviour in organisations constructively.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1.1 Involving people in decision-making so that they know the source of decisions.	1	2	3	4	5
1.2 Determine fixed channels of communication.	1	2	3	4	5
1.3 An environment of tolerance should be fostered to facilitate different viewpoints.	1	2	3	4	5
1.4 The management-employee relationship should be based on trust, humility, integrity and mutual respect.	1	2	3	4	5
1.5 Regular feedback on matters including people, productivity and profits.	1	2	3	4	5
1.6 The ability of people to control information/lines of communication should be limited and decisions must be monitored by all.	1	2	3	4	5
1.7 Other. Please add any guideline you believe is essential. .....	1	2	3	4	5

## 2. REDUCTION OF UNCERTAINTY

It is proposed that the reduction of uncertainty by clarifying goals, responsibilities and job expectations will reduce political behaviour in organisations.

*Please indicate the degree to which you agree/disagree that the following guidelines designed to reduce uncertainty will enable the manager to manage political behaviour in organisations constructively.*

	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
2.1 Goals must be specific, measurable and attainable.	1	2	3	4	5
2.2 Ensure that every employee is familiar with and fully understands his/her role, tasks and responsibilities in the organisation through clear job descriptions.	1	2	3	4	5
2.3 Reactions to change in the organisation must be decisive, true and explainable to employees.	1	2	3	4	5
2.4 A system of checks and balances be built in by management to ensure the implementation of goals is fully understood.	1	2	3	4	5
2.5 Apply a system of participative management to deal with a constant changing organisational environment.	1	2	3	4	5
2.6 Other. Please add any guideline you believe is essential. .....	1	2	3	4	5

### 3. AWARENESS

It is proposed that there should be a greater awareness of the causes and techniques of political behaviour (activities) in organisations.

*Please indicate the degree to which you agree/disagree that a greater awareness will enable the manager to manage political behaviour in organisations constructively.*

	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
3.1 Look out for possible situations or circumstances that can be conducive to political behaviour.	1	2	3	4	5
3.2 Identify the main causes and techniques of political behaviour in order to recognise such actions.	1	2	3	4	5
3.3 Analyze the reactions and behaviour of subordinates in the work place through regular informal interaction.	1	2	3	4	5
3.4 Examine your own behaviour to guard against possible participation in political behaviour.	1	2	3	4	5
3.5 Do not deny the existence of politics in your organisation.	1	2	3	4	5
3.6 Managers should be aware of the fact that certain employees will regard some of their activities as political even if this is not true.	1	2	3	4	5
3.7 Other. Please add any guideline you believe is essential. .....	1	2	3	4	5

### 4. SET AN EXAMPLE

It is proposed that managers should set an example and not engage in covert behaviour, eg. acts of deceit, underhand tactics, game playing, etc.

*Please indicate the degree to which you agree/disagree that setting an example by managers will reduce the appearance of political behaviour in organisations.*

	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
4.1 Ensure that all actions and behaviour can be fully motivated and explained to subordinates.	1	2	3	4	5
4.2 Be honest, fair and responsible in treatment of subordinates.	1	2	3	4	5
4.3 Give subordinates the opportunity to evaluate managerial behaviour in general and behaviour which might be regarded as controversial.	1	2	3	4	5
4.4 Handle differences and conflict openly.	1	2	3	4	5
4.5 Other. Please add any guideline you believe is essential. .....	1	2	3	4	5

## 5. MANAGE INFORMAL COALITIONS AND CLIQUES

It is proposed that influencing the norms and beliefs that steer group behaviour can ensure that employees continue to serve organisational interests.

*Please indicate the degree to which you agree/disagree that the managing of informal coalitions and cliques will serve organisational interests and reduce political behaviour.*

	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5.1 Try to understand the reasons/motivations for the forming of informal groups or cliques and what unifies them.	1	2	3	4	5
5.2 Be consistent and consequent in dealing with all employees.	1	2	3	4	5
5.3 Grant adequate autonomy and responsibility to subordinates with regular feedback and not "feedback by exception".	1	2	3	4	5
5.4 Plan the lay-out of your section by placing employees where political behaviour can be less rigid. Consider the rotation of staff to prevent "zones".	1	2	3	4	5
5.5 Other. Please add any guideline you believe is essential. .....	1	2	3	4	5

## 6. CONFRONT POLITICAL GAME PLAYERS

It is proposed that political game players should be confronted by making use of disciplinary measures, eg. reprimands, dismissals, etc.

*Please indicate the degree to which you agree/disagree that confronting political game players will enable the manager to manage political behaviour in organisations more constructively.*

	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
6.1 Make employees aware of the fact that you are serious in addressing all forms of possible political behaviour.	1	2	3	4	5
6.2 Deal with political behaviour openly and immediately for others to be aware of the consequences.	1	2	3	4	5
6.3 Address all forms of political behaviour, even those regarded as inconsequential.	1	2	3	4	5
6.4 Specify the punishments for being involved in political behaviour.	1	2	3	4	5
6.5 Other. Please add any guideline you believe is essential. .....	1	2	3	4	5

## 7. SHARPEN THE STRATEGY OF THE ENTERPRISE

It is proposed that political pressure should not pull away from the control strategy of an enterprise and the results sought by the enterprise and the balance between them should be clear and agreed upon.

*Please indicate the degree to which you agree/disagree that the sharpening of the strategy of the enterprise will allow the manager to manage political behaviour in organisations more constructively.*

	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
7.1 The strategy of the organisation, the goals to be achieved and the action plans to implement goals must be fully understood by all employees as well as their respective roles.	1	2	3	4	5
7.2 Employees must be aware that they will benefit from pursuing a common goal.	1	2	3	4	5
7.3 The strategies of the organisation must be broken down into simple and attainable steps.	1	2	3	4	5
7.4 Planning to sharpen the strategy must be regarded as just as important as the strategy itself.	1	2	3	4	5
7.5 Other. Please add any guideline you believe is essential. .....	1	2	3	4	5

## 8. TIE RESOURCE ALLOCATIONS AND REWARDS TO STRATEGY

It is proposed that the allocation and rewards processes should be structured so that the best payoffs go to those who actively contribute to the achievement of official goals – and not to political allies.

*Please indicate the degree to which you agree/disagree that the undermentioned guidelines will enable the manager to manage political behaviour in organisations more constructively.*

	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
8.1 The criteria for the allocation of rewards must be simple and understood by all.	1	2	3	4	5
8.2 Reward systems must be directly linked to performance.	1	2	3	4	5
8.3 There must be transparency in decision-making.	1	2	3	4	5
8.4 Management systems to evaluate subordinates must be realistic.	1	2	3	4	5
8.5 Other. Please add any guideline you believe is essential. .....	1	2	3	4	5

## 9. ISOLATE RESOURCE ACQUISITIONS FROM INTERNAL OPERATIONS

It is proposed that external bargaining with resource suppliers should not be confused with internal decision making.

*Please indicate the degree to which you agree/disagree that the implementation of the undermentioned guidelines will enable the manager to manage political behaviour in organisations more constructively.*

	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
9.1 The bargaining process over terms of co-operation, etc. must be done by employees who will not benefit from it directly or indirectly	1	2	3	4	5
9.2 Specify the conditions and ground rules clearly for acquisition of resources.	1	2	3	4	5
9.3 The process should be transparent.	1	2	3	4	5
9.4 Other. Please add any guideline you believe is essential. .....	1	2	3	4	5

**Thank you for your co-operation. Please place the questionnaire in the self-addressed, franked envelope that is enclosed and post back to the researcher.**