

**MANAGEMENT AND THE DYNAMICS OF LABOUR PROCESS:
STUDY OF WORKPLACE RELATIONS IN AN OIL REFINERY,
NIGERIA**

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Abstract.

The focus of this thesis is on labour-management relations in the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), Nigeria. The study explores current managerial practices in the corporation and their effects on the intensification of work, and how the management sought to control workers and the labour process. The study explores the experiences of workers and their perception of managerial practices. Evidence suggests that managerial practices and their impacts on workplace relations in NNPC have become more subtle, with wider implications for workers' experience and the labour process.

Using primary data obtained through interviews, participant observation, and documentary sources, the thesis assesses how managerial practices are varieties of controls of labour in which workers' consent is also embedded. This embeddedness of the labour process generates new types of worker subjectivity and identity, with significant implications for labour relations. The study suggests that multiple dimensions of workers' sense-making reflect the structural and subjective dimensions of the labour process.

In NNPC, the consequence of managerial practices has been an emergence of a new type of subjectivity; one that has closely identified with the corporate values and is not overtly disposed towards resistance or dissent. While workers consent at NNPC continues to be an outcome of managerial practices, the thesis examined its implications. The thesis seeks to explain the effects of managerial control mechanisms in shaping workers' experience and identity. However, the thesis shows that while workers remain susceptible to these forms of managerial influence, an erasure or closure of oppositions or recalcitrance will not adequately account for workers' identity-formation.

The thesis shows that while managerial control remains significant, workers inhabit domains that are 'unmanaged' and 'unmanageable' where 'resistance' and 'misbehaviour' reside. Without a conceptual and empirical interrogation, evidence of normative and mutual benefits of managerial practices or a submissive image of workers will produce images of workers that obscure their covert opposition and resistance. Workers 'collude' with the 'hubris' of management in order to invert and subvert managerial practices and intentions. Through theoretical reconceptualization, the thesis demonstrates the specific dimensions of these inversions and subversions. The thesis therefore seeks to re-insert "worker-agency" back into the

analysis of power-relations in the workplace; agency that is not overtly under the absolute grip of managerial control, but with a multiplicity of identities and multilevel manifestations.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

BLPG:	Brighton Labour Process Group
CDU:	Crude Distillation Unit
CRU:	Catalytic Refinery Unit
CTAC:	Corporate Training Advisory Committee
CR:	Control Room
CTQD:	Corporate Total Quality Department
CHQ:	Corporate Headquarters
COMD:	Chief Officers Management Development Program
COSD:	Crude Oil Sales Division
DPR:	Department of Petroleum Resources
ER:	Employment Relations
ED:	Executive Director
FCCU:	Fluid Catalytic Cracking Unit
FLDP:	Foundation Leadership Development Program
GM (GLD):	General Manger, Group Learning Department
GLD:	Group Learning Department
GGM:	Group General Manager
GMD:	Group Managing Director
GGMHR:	Group General Manager Human Resource

GHRDD:	Group Human Resource Development Department
HRDD:	Human Resource Development Department
HRM:	Human Resource Management
IJV:	Incorporated Joint Venture
IDS:	Integrated Data Services
JCC:	Joint Consultative Council
JOA:	Joint Operating Agreement
JNC:	Joint Negotiation Council
KHU:	Kero Hydrotreating Unit
LCW:	Lateral Community at Work
LMC:	Labour and Monopoly Capital
LPA:	Labour Process Analysis
LPT:	Labour Process Theory
LPG:	Liquefied Petroleum Gas
NAPIMS:	National Petroleum Investment Management Services
NGS:	Nigerian Gas Company
NOC:	National Oil Company
NNPC:	Nigerian National Petroleum Company
NNOC:	Nigerian National Oil Company
NUPENG:	National Union of Petroleum Employees of Nigeria
NJCC:	National Joint Consultative Council

NHU:	Naphta Hydrogen Unit
NPDC:	Nigerian Petroleum Development Company
OGIC:	Oil and Gas Reform Implementation Committee
OPEC:	Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
PENGASSAN:	Petroleum Employees and Natural Gas Senior Staff of Nigeria
POS:	Plant Operating Sheet
PHRC:	Port-Harcourt Refinery Company
PSC:	Production Sharing Contracts
PIB:	Petroleum Industry Bill
PPMC:	Petroleum Product Marketing Company
SBU:	Subsidiary Business Unit
SOTP:	Senior Officers Transition Program
TAM:	Turn Around Maintenance
TQC:	Total Quality Control
TQM:	Total Quality Maintenance
VCW:	Vertical Community in Work
VDU:	Vacuum Distillation Unit
VGO:	Vacuum Gas Oil

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This study is concerned with the implications of managerial practices and labour process on workers in the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), Nigeria, particularly, at the Shopfloor (Refinery) levels. The Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) was established in April 1977 by the Federal Government of Nigeria with the mandate to manage the operational aspects of the oil industry in Nigeria, while the regulatory functions reside with the Federal Government. The NNPC is a successor organisation to the Nigerian Oil Corporation which was established in 1971. In addition to its exploration activities, NNPC developed operational interests in refinery, petrochemicals and products transportation, as well as marketing. Between 1978 and 1988, NNPC constructed petroleum and petrochemical refineries in Warri, Kaduna and Port-Harcourt. The Port-Harcourt refinery was the research site for this study (NNPC2007).

However, in the last two decades, NNPC has emerged from one of the most ambitious and far reaching organisational changes in its thirty-year history. In 1988, the corporation was decentralised into twelve strategic subsidiaries and units covering the entire spectrum of the corporation's operations. Port-Harcourt Refinery Company (PHRC), Eleme, Port-Harcourt, is one of the twelve subsidiary companies of NNPC. In the last ten years, the operations and activities in NNPC have centred on coping with the challenges of both intense internal and external developments in the operating environment, in particular with regards to its products and processes of production. The concern has been to make its products compete favourably in the world market, both in terms of pricing and quality. As a result, the business units and subsidiaries of NNPC have been re-organised into companies with NNPC as holding company (NNPC, 2007). The implications of these developments on employment relations become the concern of this study. In particular, the study is concerned with the workers' own experiences and interpretations of these changes, given the peculiarity of the corporation as a State-Owned Enterprise. As a state owned enterprise, NNPC remains the main driver of Nigeria's economy. The study is thus specifically inspired by the realization that given the centrality of the NNPC to the

Nigerian economy and Fiscus, the interpretations that workers give of the new production process and their locations within the employment relations merit scholarly enquiry. Workers' perception and their sense-making of the changes deserve empirical analysis and theoretical understanding. In addition, the study explores, at the level of the refinery, how workers' representatives responded to these changes.

The thesis is in three parts. Part one comprises two sections made up of Chapters 2 and 3. Chapter 2 describes the background to the study, and the research methods adopted in carrying out the fieldwork. The Chapter ends with methodological issues in ethnographic method—the principal technique adopted in the study. Chapter 3 comprises the Conceptual Framework that underpins the Research Work. Labour Process Theory provides the theoretical framework for the study. Its deep and insightful contribution to understanding workplace labour process provides the “critical understanding of the world of work, and of the submerged issues of management's control” (Gamze, 2003:32). The conceptual inheritance from labour process debates both of the earlier Marxist works and the second wave analysts remain influential.

Chapters 4-9, form Part two of the thesis, covering the context of the research. Chapter 4 provides a historical over-view and a critical discussion of the regulatory framework of the Nigerian oil industry. In Chapters 5 and 6, we examine the dynamics in the labour process within the corporation. This is against the background of managerial practices and organizational reconfigurations of work processes that were undertaken in the context of the operating environment of the corporation. It is in this context that we examine the prevailing employment relations. Furthermore, we examine workers' sense-making of the managerial practices in the organisation. We argue that NNPC is in a period of significant changes and work re-organisation, which is impacting strongly on the method of production and thus redefining the managerial practices such as teamwork and Total Quality Management Programme (TQM). This, in turn, is having considerable influence on workplace relations and the work experiences of the workers. We place the emphasis on workers' perception and the interpretations that trade union officials offer, “as something different from its presentation by the management” (Gregor 2000 cited in Knights, D. and Willmott, H. 2000:136).

The problematic and contentious issue of workplace identity formation and responses to changes in work processes in NNPC are examined in Chapter 7. The discursive and context of the organisational practices through which employees perceive managerial practices are evaluated; both from conceptual and empirical analysis. The management at NNPC, as part of change process has introduced intervention programs such as training and development with its implicated dimensions in terms of normative expectations from workers, and their own perception. The relations between managerial practices; (Chapters 5 and 6), and the responses of workers are analysed. This analysis is located within, and guided by the thematic strands contained in later writing on labour process theorizing that tend to mediate the classic discourse of labour process theory. It is argued that the analysis of workplace relations goes beyond a “one-side abstraction” of labour-capital relation. It incorporates the mediating influences of workplace and extra workplace social processes in the articulation of workers’ consciousness and identity within the workplace power relations. It is also in this context that the institutional frameworks of interest mediations in NNPC are analysed. The institutional structures and processes of interest mediations and efforts bargaining such as the branches of trade unions in NNPC, Joint Consultative Councils(JCC), and other frameworks for ‘social partnerships’ are analysed in the light of emerging theories. This analysis is done in Chapter 8. Work process, and process of production, especially at the process plant level are characterised by shopfloor collectives and its infra-politics. Chapter 9 evaluates the dimensions and implications of collective knowledge sharing in the plant. The concept and processes of collective knowledge sharing is reconceptualised to examine its hegemonic power implications.

A general review of evaluation and implications of the themes surrounding managerial practices in the context of labour process in NNPC on workplace relations is done in Chapter 10. This review of the innovative strength of LPT further deepens our understanding of the thematic strands within labour process analysis, especially in the specific type of labour relations in NNPC.

Thus, while the core elements of labour process analysis, including its theoretical and analytical substances are adopted in explaining work process, and its managerial control imperatives in NNPC, the study examines workers’ own construction of their location in

the social relations of production. The mediating role of other social processes, such as identity-work “highlights the importance of contextualizing our understanding of “Shopfloor” responses to managerial practices” (Glover and Noon 2005:16).

The study therefore attempts to re-conceptualize production relations, especially in the context of a State-Owned Enterprises such as the NNPC where issues of work and employment relations go beyond the classic labour process analysis. Workers’ own sense-making and explanations, and indeed their rationalization also count. There is therefore a need for “a re-conceptualization and re-definition of production relations” (Adesina1988), that seek to extend the conceptual remit of LPT to incorporate identity-work and interest factors. While Braverman’s (1974) conceptualization of labour process, and Burawoy’s (1998) method of enquiry at the workplace remain foundational to our understanding, contextual relevance of social processes within the particular capitalist mode of production, through which workplace orientations and relations are enacted and interpreted also serve as mediating factors in the understanding of workplace relations at the Refinery. Analysis of workplace relations at NNPC goes beyond “ex-ante” structural labour determinacy.

The Refinery, where the fieldwork is carried out is located in Eleme, in the riverine area of Southern Nigeria. Port-Harcourt Refinery Company (PHRC) Eleme, is one of the twelve subsidiary companies of NNPC. It provides petroleum refinery service to the nation. It is also charged with the development and production of specialized petroleum products. The operations and activities of the company are carried out by two departments within the company: Production, Engineering and Total Quality Control Department and Administrative, Personnel and Manpower Development Department.

In the attempt to place the re-organization of work in its theoretical context, and in a manner that sufficiently captures the dynamics in labour process of work in NNPC Labour Process Theory (LPT) is adopted as a conceptual tool in this study. LPT is considered as an appropriate framework that situates labour process in the historical process of production relations. It remains a significant “theoretical framework for understanding workplace labour process issues, and changes” (Thompson and Newsome 2004, in

Kaufman 2004:133]. LPT as a theoretical approach provides the central focus in analysing the core elements surrounding changes in work process that had taken place in the organization in the last twenty years (NNPC 2007).

As a theory for analysing workplace relations and labour process in the organization, the strands within the theory will be employed thematically between Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9, in understanding labour process and workplace relations in the refinery. As noted by Thompson and Smith (1998:18), “the systematic qualities of capitalism are not experienced in the same way across societies because of diversity of nations and firms.” It is this diversity that makes the application of LPT context-specific and guided by the historical circumstances of organization under study.

Changes in work processes, and technology of production in the refinery have been varied and diverse. This has been influenced not only by the diverse challenges facing the operating environment of the organisation, but also by the interests of the Federal Government within Nigeria’s oil industry.

Therefore any analysis that seeks to capture these nuances must be context and historically based. As a conceptual tool, LPT allows its diverse strands to dovetail into context and specific circumstances that shaped workplace labour process. In other words, as analytical tool that allows it to be deployed into specifics, LPT continues to be at its most, in revealing the interplays between organisation of work and employment relations. It reaches downward “into micro-firm analysis from political economy of capitalism” (Thompson and Smith1998:20).

While the various normative discourses within mainstream managerial literature tend to privilege our understanding of how workers are ‘bought into’ the managerial normative practices (Hammer and Champy 1993, cited in Knights, D. and Willmott, H. 2000:136), such managerial discourse only ends up in providing a limited trend in the understanding. Thus, in the light of conceptual tools provided by LPT, such mainstream managerial understanding could only be interpreted as a ‘self-limiting’ alternative line for our understanding the dynamics of labour process in the workplace. Indeed, considering the implications of managerial initiatives and practices on employment relations, and impact on

workers' experiences, dynamics of labour process in NNPC deserve our scholarly attention.

NNPC has witnessed significant developments in its work process and managerial practices in response to its challenges and operating environment. This is especially so in regards to its product markets and process of production. Emerging managerial practices such as skill flexibility, teamwork, Total Quality Control (Hammer and Champy 1993) become workplace practices seeking the 'hearts and minds' of the workers. These are emerging managerial "practices that promise empowerment, autonomy, more discretion and consequently more rewards for the workers" (Knights, D. and Willmott, H. 2000:65). However, beyond the 'disciplined workers' thesis, Glover and Noon (2005), the new work processes are accompanied by more work intensification, more competition, increased workload, task-flexibility, and pressures on the trade unions. Indeed, while the dimensions of work processes and managerial practices in NNPC may have sought to integrate workers more with the accompanying normative values of empowerment, adequate rewards, and opportunity for career growth, the deeper implications for employment relations in the workplace remain that of "more intensified exploitative work experience for the workers" (Gregor 2000, cited in Knights and Willmott2000:137).

This introductory section of the thesis provides the general outline and overview of the entire body of the thesis. The various themes analysed and evaluated in each of the Chapters provide the understanding of the managerial practices and dynamic of labour process in the corporation. In what follows as Chapter 2, the background to the research context is provided, which is also underpinned by the research methods adopted for the study.

Chapter 2

Background to the Research

2.1. Introduction

The Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) was established in April 1977 by the Federal Government of Nigeria with the mandate to manage the operational aspects

of the oil industry in Nigeria, while the regulatory functions reside with the Federal Government. The NNPC is a successor organization to the Nigerian National Oil Company (NNOC), which was established in 1971. In addition to its exploration activities, NNPC developed operational interest in refinery, petrochemicals and product transportation as well as marketing. Thus, between 1978 and 1989, NNPC constructed petroleum and petrochemical refineries in Warri, Kaduna, and Port-Harcourt (NNPC 2007).

However, in the last two decades, the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), one of the largest federally owned corporations in Nigeria, has emerged from one of the far-reaching organizational changes in its thirty year history. In 1978, the corporation was decentralized into twelve strategic business subsidiaries and units covering the entire spectrum of the corporation's operation. This has entailed making the corporation responsible for the commercial aspects of oil and gas activity. Also, as part of efforts to put NNPC on a more commercial footing, the Federal government in March 1988 introduced a new structure for the corporation. The aim, as stated by the Federal government was to see the NNPC as a "financially autonomous" and "commercially integrated" company. Accordingly, three new areas of responsibility were initiated for the corporation: Corporate Services, Operations and Petroleum Investment (NNPC 2007). In 1989, two additional SBUs were established: the Integrated Data Services Company (IDS), and Eleme Petrochemicals Company which was established and commissioned "to provide the basis for the expansion of a petrochemicals and plastics industry" (International Directory of Company History, 2005:3 Vol. 172). Also, between 1978 and 1989, the NNPC constructed refineries in Warri, Kaduna and Port-Harcourt (NNPC 2007). The activities and operations of the refineries fall under what is referred to as Downstream Operations of the NNPC, which cover oil/gas conversion into refined and petrochemical products. As an autonomous Federal Government-owned corporation, NNPC is regulated by the Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR) - a Department within the Ministry of Petroleum Resources (NNPC 2007). Over the years, the operations and activities of NNPC have centred on coping with challenges of dealing with developments in the oil industry, particularly with regards to its products. The concern has been how to make its products compete favourably in the world market, both in terms of pricing and quality. As a result,

the business units and subsidiaries of the State Owned Oil firm have been reorganized “unbundled” into companies with NNPC as a holding company.

Port Harcourt Refinery Company PHRC, Eleme is one of the twelve subsidiaries of NNPC. It provides a petroleum refinery service to the country. It produces petroleum products. The operations and activities of the company are carried out by two Departments within the company: Production, Engineering, and Total Quality Control Department; and Administrative, Personnel and Manpower Development Department (NNPC2007).

Within the context and rhythms of work processes and managerial practices in the corporation, there have been considerable impacts and implications on employment relations, especially at the “shopfloor” levels, where the influences of labour processes are more immanent. Labour process implications of the managerial practices are the scholarly concerns of this study. In particular the study is concerned with lived experiences of workers and their explanations of the labour process regarding the accompanying managerial practices, given the peculiarities of the State Owned Enterprise within the Nigerian peripheral capitalist mode of production. As a State Owned Enterprise, the Corporation contributes significantly to the Nigerian socio-economic development. The study is thus specifically inspired by the realization that NNPC as a “state-capital” does sustain the collective socioeconomic interest of the citizens of Nigeria. This is illustrated in its motto “NNPC touches your lives in many other diverse ways”. The work experience of workers in this context, their interpretations, and indeed their orientation are therefore the focus of this study.

Literature has shown what organisation of work often means for workers, and workers’ interests at the workplace, as something different from its presentation by the Management (Gregor 2000). Thus, to Gregor, forms of managerial practices and the discourse surrounding them are designed to exploit the workers in the organization. In essence, from the perspective of labour process analysis, work processes at the workplace with its components of new technology of production, work re-organizations and employee involvement are strategies that “when stripped bare, aimed at tapping into the shopfloor

based knowledge for increase productivity, and work intensification” (Gregor 2000,cited in Knights and Willmott 2000:137).

At the point of production, managerial practice is to be conceived as a medium and outcome of distinctive and often unequal power relations between capital and labour. In this sense, managerial practices generate potentially problematic issues and tensions at the point of production. While on the one hand, workers’ locations in the production relations reflect the dimensions of labour process and managerial practices, their experience and perceptions also reflect these dynamics. Within the regulatory framework that established the NNPC, operational activities at the refineries level are expected to respond to the ‘un-bundling’ at the corporate level. The nature and patterns of work relations at the interfaces thus become important. This is because “itis at the factory level that the formation of workers’ consciousness and its manifestation are clearly shown in response to the production process” (Adesina1989:2-3). Activities at the shop floor “reflect workers’ perception and explanations of their locations in the production relations” (Adesina 1989:2). Questions therefore persist on the need to examine and analyse workers’ experiences within the context of the corporation’s labour process.

The aim of this study is to explore the dynamics of labour process and managerial practices on employment relations. I intend to do this by critically examining the managerial discourse of the emerging work process, managerial control imperatives, and implications on workplace employment relations, and workers’ own experiences and perception of this.

Fieldwork for this research took place at the NNPC, Nigeria, between the months of April and August 2008. The five month period of the fieldwork was split into two; I spent the first two months at the Abuja Corporate Office of NNPC, and the remaining three months at the PHRC, Eleme Port-Harcourt. The choice of NNPC, and indeed the focus on the PHRC as a research site is influenced by several factors: First, NNPC remains one of the most significant and largest sectors in the Nigeria economy, and there is a curious duality to this. Reorganization of work as influenced by regulatory framework reverberates in the managerial practices of the corporation. This has implications on employment relations

both at the corporate and refinery levels. Secondly, such changes in managerial practices affect the roles and activities of the trade unions.

2.2. Research Goals and Objectives

The goals and objectives of this study therefore are:

- a. To critically examine rhythms of labour process within NNPC, and the impact on organization of work, and shop floor relations at the Port-Harcourt Refinery Company (PHRC);
- b. To examine the influence and implications of managerial practices and techniques, on workplace representational roles of the Trade Unions at the Refinery; and
- c. To examine the forms of shop floor collective and subjective identity formation of workers, and how these mediate adaptation to work, resistance to work and other manifest forms of workers' orientation at the point of production.

Towards achieving the basic goals/objectives set for this study, the study offers explanations to the following questions;

- a. How does organization of work process in the NNPC impact on the shop floor relations and workers' experiences at the PHRC?
- b. How do managerial practices and techniques at the company influence shop floor collective representation, and roles of the Union Leaders?
- c. How do the social processes of identity formation on the shop floor mediate workers' perception and interpretations of managerial practices?

In offering explanations to the above questions, the study adopts both explanatory and critical approaches; while the former focuses on the descriptive dimensions of the managerial control practices in the context of the production process, labour process analysis provides the critical exploration of these dimensions. The study therefore offers empirical

analysis of managerial discourse and practices in the NNPC. More importantly, it offers new insights into the mediating roles of workplace and extra workplace social process in the reproduction of relations of production. The study offers an explanation to what happens at the point of production. From the basic conceptual understanding and analysis of managerial practices in the NNPC and in the context of social processes of production, it is believed that it is at the point of production that the impacts of managerial practices are mostly felt.

An empirical investigation of the influence of managerial practices and labour process on workplace relations at NNPC continues to raise some methodological concerns relating to the ‘problem of knowing’ “How the Researcher approaches the knowing of the context under investigation privileges the method to be adopted in the knowing” (Adesina, 1992:19). He notes further “the method of knowing makes one’s narratives as valid as any other”, and our method of enquiry in this study is “trenchantly ethno-methodological” (Adesina 1992:19). Thus, in what follows in the next section of this Chapter, I will discuss the research method and the techniques adopted for data gathering for the research. In line with the central objective of this research which is to examine the dynamics of labour process in the refinery, including workers and trade unions perceptions and orientations, the research method for data collection would be qualitative.

2.3. Research Method for Data Collection: an Epistemological Concern

This section of this Chapter is concerned with the Research Methodology and Techniques for data collection. In particular, the section deals with the epistemological issues surrounding the adoption of the particular method of doing research. This and the epistemic of the research method are discussed along the following three areas: ethnography, interview and participant observation, all of which fall under qualitative research methodology.

In this section, we attempt first, to clarify and elaborate on some of the issues relating to the use of qualitative research method generally, and in particular, how the method is relevant to this study. As noted by Denzin and Lincoln (2005:3) “qualitative research is

concerned with interpretative, naturalistic approach to the world we study.” While making sense of people’s own interpretation of their social relations, qualitative research locates the researcher in the world he is studying. Writing on the importance and relevance of qualitative research method, Babbie and Mouton (2001) note that it is an approach in which the researcher takes as its departure point, the “‘insider’s perspective’”, in social action. It seeks to explore the lived experiences of the research subjects based on their “symbolic materials”, that is meaning, values and norms enacted and attached to their “sociational” experiences. It is an “emic perspective” that privileges our understanding of the research subjects’ behaviour in their cultural milieu. As noted by Wolcott (1987 in Babbie and Mouton 2001:411) “culture should be understood as attributes of a group with patterns relating to their social world.” To Lincoln and Guba (1985:42) “qualitative research is more sensitive to, and adaptable to the many mutually shaping influences and values patterns” in the research setting. Writing on the need for the researcher to infuse the social setting into his description, Miles and Huberman (1984) stress how “thick description” allows meaning to come out, and which only the research subjects can best communicate.

To Brockington and Sullivan (2003 cited in Scheyvens and Storey 2003:57) qualitative methods allow the researcher “to explore the meanings of people’s worlds, the myriad personal impacts of impersonal social structures” on the individual. As they note, “qualitative methods work inductively, building theory from observation” (Brockington and Sullivan 2003 in Scheyvens and Storey 2003:57). In other words, the “symbolic interpretation” the research subjects give to their perspective and social dynamics are explained through the lens of qualitative inquiry. The researcher must be able to locate himself in the world of the research subjects. The world, in which the researcher immersed himself,, is then turned into “a series of representation, field notes, interviews and conversations” (Denzin and Lincoln 2005:3). Guided by the situational understanding of the research subjects, the researcher is therefore able to make sense of the natural setting through the ‘interpretive narratives’ of the research subject. The world view of the researched subject is reflected through the ‘reflexivity’ of the researcher (Burawoy, 1998).

As mentioned above, Miles and Huberman (1984) stress how thick description allows meaning to come out, and which only the research subject can best communicate. In other words, qualitative research unearths the various dimensions of the subject's lived-world, privileging an "insider's perspective" into the research. On the inclination of a researcher adopting a particular methodological approach, Morgan (1979) notes that this will be influenced by his or her underlying view of reality (ontology), and ways of knowing (epistemology). As demonstrated throughout this research, our ontological and epistemological concerns are guided by the inclinations we have towards examining the underlying dynamics of labour process and the implications on workplace relations, and from the perspective of the workers.

2.4. Ethnography

In what follows here, I describe Ethnography as research technique, in line with explanations given by Fetterman (1989), Hammersley and Atkinson (1995), on Ethnography. Brewer (2000:10) describes Ethnography as the "study of people in naturally occurring settings or fields by means of methods which capture their social meaning and ordinary activities, involving the researcher participating directly in the setting." Ethnography, therefore, stresses the need for the researcher to have access not only to the research objects' social setting, but also their social meaning and activities. However, ethnography, as noted by other writers involves 'triangulation' of methods stressing the need for the researcher to approach the research setting with full awareness and recognition of the strength and limitations inherent in any of the research methods adopted. In the context of workplace study therefore, ethnography has become an important method of enquiry. It has become a useful tool in analysing workers' identities and managerial control in the workplace. This is more so when the purpose is to capture the lived experience and perception of workers in the workplace. However, within its tradition, ethnography has also taken on a critical perspective; a neo-Marxist turn in post-structuralist analysis of workplace relations. These are located in (Hugh Willmott 1995) informal social organization in the workplace, and the dynamics of workplace resistance (Beynon 1975, and Thompson 1995). Espousing the inherent qualities in Ethnography as a research technique in his

Extended Case Method, Burawoy (1998), for instance, elaborates and qualifies it as an approach that highlights the importance of participant observation as an important tool for the researcher in placing the everyday lives of workers in its local work context. This implies that the researcher, while ‘rooting himself in the context of the world of the research object, will need to “thematize his participation, thus allowing himself to be guided by evolving dialogue with the participants” (Burawoy, 1998:5). Ethnography, as a research technique, according to Burawoy (1998: 5-6) embraces ‘reflexivity’, an approach that stresses not detachment, but “engagement as the road to knowledge, assuring multiple dialogue to reach explanation of the empirical phenomenon.” In other words, through reflexivity, the researcher is able to comprehend the interaction between the workers and their local processes in the social world he studies. And as Kuhn (1962 cited in Burawoy 1998:5) notes, “...reflexivity in ethnography builds on knowledge through reconstruction of theory” and is thereby able to accommodate the dimensions of the research setting. Thus, in a grounded empirical underpinning of such ethno-methodology, the researcher, in the context of workplace study needs to go beyond ‘pigeonholing’ of ‘capital’ and ‘labour’ as deterministic ‘categories’, especially in a peripheral capitalist workplace, to discuss the multiple processes, interests, and overlapping in the workplace. In other words, the “existential folk stories and indigenous narratives of the research subjects should guide the academic theory brought to the social world of those we study” (Burawoy 1998:7). The hallmark of reflexivity in ethnographic study, according to Burawoy (1998) is demonstrated when the knowledge of the research objects is not created ‘Tabula Rasa’ but through dialogue between the researcher and the participants.

More discussions on the importance of ethnographic study as research tool in a workplace environment are further located in Burawoy (2003). According to Burawoy(2003:652),there is a combination of factors that could warrant ethnographic study; “the internal processes within the field over time, and forces external to the field.” The underlying facts that therefore recommend ethnographic study is the reality that the world we study undergoes real historical changes, and the ‘dynamic properties’ that characterize these changes can only be fully understood and put into empirical analytical perspective through ethnographic study of the research site. Thus, questions and implications

of workplace changes within the historical and social context of the place of study, in the wider dimensions, are best addressed by ethnographic research method.

Ethnography opens up for the researcher the historical dimensions and social processes that characterize the social context being researched. In making a case for the relevance of ethnography, guided by this historical process, we argue that ‘in-situ’ observations allow the researcher to study others in their micro-social space and time, involving an “analysis of the canonical works of either himself or that of his forebears in a diachronic comparison” (Burawoy 2003:650). This way, and by “standing on the shoulders of the giants” (Burawoy 2003:658) the researcher brings to the research field ‘a frog-eye view’ (Adesina1995) that makes the study unfold along what Burawoy (2003:650) categorizes into central dimensions or themes that guide the researcher; “first as participant observer, and secondly for the reconstruction of a theory that answer both the internal and external forces.” Focused study of ethnographic type takes as its point of departure, an “adequate awareness and cognizance of changes in historical context, the interests and perspectives of the objects’ at research site,”(Burawoy 2003:650).

In the context of the workplace where this study was carried out, ethnography explains workers’ account of their experiences of managerial practices, and the social relations of production. Work processes in the corporation exemplified in managerial control practices and procedures (mediated by both micro and macro social processes), impact on labour relations in the workplace. Therefore our adoption of ethnography not only opens up for our understanding, workers’ own account, but also explains the unfolding dimensions of social relations of production. An analysis of dimensions of internal managerial practices with impact on employment relations is best accounted for through the ethnographic lineage. Ethnography allows the research to be done in a manner that is not a description or illustration, but done through foregrounding and conceptualization of a theoretical lens, and analysis of the dynamic trends of labour processes, in the light of emerging historically specific external forces. Attentiveness to how the external forces of workplace relations feed on the internal micro-social process remains the “hallmark of best structuralist ethnographic study” (Burawoy2003:661).It throws up “complimentary and contradictory multiple perspectives” (Burawoy 2003:661), implicated in our analysis of the research

site. This is more compelling if the concern is to situate and thematize the “interconnect-
edness” between the internal micro social processes of workplace relations with the ex-
ternal forces that reconfigured managerial practices and the labour process. Ethnographic
study ‘problematizes’ not only the ‘thematic assumptions’ and findings in the context of
these emerging dynamics, but also calls for reconceptualization in explaining the emerg-
ing assumptions. Theoretical lenses brought on to the field guide the researcher in reflect-
ing on the assumptions. However, while the conceptualization of the emerging assump-
tions may not necessarily ‘deconstruct’ or ‘reconstruct’ findings, merit in its adoption lies
in its abilities to problematize the emerging workplace configuration. Its values also lie in
paying distinct attentiveness to ‘fluxes’ and ‘processural dynamics’ of the labour process,
with adequate cognizance of ‘disruptions’ on the field from the ‘external’. With under-
standing and inspirations gleaned from the research site, ethnographic study analyses
concepts, explores themes, and based on these, new questions are posed, aimed at offer-
ing explanations and accounts of the “changing terrain” of the workplace (Bu-
rawoy2003). In justifying the use of ethnography on workplace study, Burawoy
(2003:675) argues that in “the context of changes that give character to the field of study
today, the re-composition of everyday life has become a product of transactional process;
of new trajectories in institutional processes; changes in individual identities at work and
reconstitution of workplace”. In other words, ethnography tracks down, and helps the
researcher to make sense of the evolving trajectories.

While raising concerns on pedagogical implications of ethnography, and its broader im-
plications on reliability of research outcome, Adesina (1991:30) however, notes that eth-
nography with its technique of “participant observation is essentially a simulation of so-
cial realities and experiences of those being researched.” According to him the process
courts the danger of just “rehearsing the power relations context of the workplace”
(Adesina 1991:30). Drawing on Brown’s (1984) distinction between ‘Work’ and ‘work-
ing on Work’ , the latter reflects the engagement of the researcher at the research site
which might just be a ‘pretentious undertone’ of the reality of work. Adesina (1991:30)
further highlights the problems associated with doing participant observation, especially
in a workplace context where “immanent locational and class differences between the
researcher and the research objects cannot be ruled out.” While urging researchers to be

conscious of their own “pedagogical orientation” on the field, he stresses the need to be attentive to the context of the research setting, especially of a workplace where “problems of management” often shape our research agenda and conversation. Such asymmetric relations between the researcher and the research objects often have implications for ethnographic writing and findings in which ‘shopfloor’ experience of workers may be substituted by experiences and orientation of the researcher (Adesina 1991).

2.4.1. Justification of Ethnography as Methodological Approach.

As suggested by (Daudi 1986, cited in Muhammed 2003:14) there are two major approaches that guide the researcher in his methodological analysis; “one entails an effort to provide a comprehensive epistemological discussion that allows for a review of major theories involved; and the second involves empirical analysis of the procedures to be incorporated in data collection and analysis”. This section of the Chapter would, therefore, incorporate these approaches in providing a detailed explanation of the ‘epistemological foundation’, thereby facilitating a fuller understanding of the issues involved in studying workplace relations in NNPC.

In keeping with sociological traditions that seek to provide explanations to dynamics rooted in local specific conditions, we adopted ethnographic approach in this study. While allowing a limit of the field of analysis to a particular context, it facilitates an in-depth exploration of the unique dimensions of labour process that influenced or shaped the experience and orientations of workers in the corporation. In other words, it seeks to explore how the interplay of work process and managerial practices in NNPC shape the lived experiences of workers. On how the researcher should decide on the techniques for gathering data, Silverman (1985, cited in Muhammed 2003:14) notes, “...given the wide range of possible research topics brought to the research field, there are no hard-and-fast rules for conducting research.” Corroborating this, Gaskell (2000) observes that the technique for gathering data must reflect the specific aims of the given study (Muhammed 2003:14). Since the broad objective of this study is to explore meanings workers give to their subjective conditions and how they interpret managerial issues, a decision was made by this researcher to combine the use of ethnography as research method with interviews

and participant observation, as techniques for gathering data. Noting the importance of interviews in ethnographic study, Collinson (1992) suggests that using interviews allows the researcher to gain access to many issues that questionnaires do not allow (Muhammed 2003:14). In other words, participant observation combined with interview aids the researcher to gain the social significance of 'shopfloor folklore'; "while positivist methods like questionnaires constrain research by imposing a particular structure or predefined categories on the research" (Muhammed 2003:14). On the other hand, a more open-ended research method such as interviewing allows and encourages respondents to narrate stories of their own reality. According to Silverman, (in Muhammed 2003:14) "interview data obtained through open-ended techniques reproduce and rearticulate cultural processes and practices grounded in a given pattern of social setting or organization." Cultural realities are displayed in manners that are "neither biased nor accurate but simply real, from the respondent's point of view" (cited in Mohammed 2003: 14). Thus, my use of participant observation provides me with the analytic tool to obtain knowledge about the social processes of the workplace, its routine and the specific daily practices. Daudi (1986) and Collinson (1992), separately noted in their work, that many acts of daily work experiences of workers draw on a thorough knowledge of the technical and social specificities embedded in the social organization (Muhammed 2003).

Opportunity to understand the context which "direct observation" provides, gives analytical insights into ongoing practices, consistencies, patterns and nuances in the workplace that are themselves context defined. As noted by Muhammed (2003:14) "fractures within and between patterns could not be easily analyzed and coded without taking context into consideration." Actors in workplace relations are engaging in "infinite and counter nuances"(Mohammed 2003:14) in the specific context. To Gaskell, therefore (cited in Muhammed 2003:15) "what goes in one setting must be understood in its own terms within the context, in which a researcher must be able to deploy 'an approach which allows him multiplicity of methods in the specific settings.'" This therefore provides the opportunity to bring together seemingly "inconsistent" and often "contradictory categories" that give a 'thick description' of the particular workplace. This therefore explains our adoption of ethnography, participant observation and interview as research tools. It is on this that Gill (2000, cited in Mohammed 2003:18) suggests that a "context-based analytical approach

must be adopted in such ethnographic study.””Such a perspective is characterized by certain features that should prevent the researcher from adopting an ‘a priori’, and taken for granted stance which could yield unproblematic ‘truth’ of the context. On this, Brockington and Sullivan (2003, cited in Scheyvens and Storey 2003:59) caution that “qualitative methods go beyond numbers, to consider meanings derived from findings, and to problematize, rather than accept uncritically the production of data.” With this orientation, the researcher would be able to appreciate that his analysis and understanding of the context are “historically” and “culturally specific” and also relative. Such an approach appreciates that knowledge is ‘socially constructed’; reality of the world we study are constructed by the on-going social processes, embedded with people, practices and phenomenon that are linked to action, practices and discourses”(Brockington and Sullivan 2003, in Scheyvens and Storey 2003:59). Thus in the context of the workplace for this study, the unfolding dynamics of labour process and managerial practices require a combination of theoretical concepts with empirical analysis in the interpretation of not only the dynamics, but indeed workers’ lived experiences in the context. In making sense of the workplace regimes in the NNPC therefore, Ethnography guides my research work in the corporation.

While the use of qualitative technique for gathering data and gaining insights from the field have been found to be well established in the social science discipline (Lincoln and Guba 1985), it has also been demonstrated to be complimented by quantitative technique. Quantitative research tends to adopt a more technical numbers and tables approach in analysis (Miles and Huberman 1984), while qualitative research utilizes words and ‘thick descriptions’ as method of analysis. For Lincoln and Guba (1985), researchers in the social science discipline should be ‘wary’ of ‘technicist’ approach of quantitative research.

However, as shown in literature, some researchers such as Lincoln and Guba (1985), Bart Kosko (1994), Steiner Kvale (1996), and Babbie and Mouton (2001), have demonstrated that there was indeed no need for separating the social research work into quantitative and qualitative. As I applied the combination of both in my analysis and evaluations in Chapters 5-9, it is also demonstrated that social research inquiry is simultaneous-

ly guided by both qualitative and quantitative considerations of research reports. Yet emphasis remains that, in the instances of ethnographic studies, reports are captured better through qualitative method. As indicated above in my discussions on ethnography, this is more so when the researcher will need to actually make sense of “enduring” social process from the perspectives of the research objects, in their own context. This is when ‘insider’s perspective’ becomes highly important to be privileged into researcher’s analysis. Thus, as noted by Babbie and Mouton (2001), qualitative research method is crucial to capture the underlying dynamics in the social context. However, in the context of social reality, what produces “balanced research” evidence is the ‘triangulation’ of techniques both within and across the qualitative and quantitative. As demonstrated in this research (Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8), it entails utilizing the strength of one to mitigate the weakness of the other. And in addressing the questions of objectivity and validity, as often raised by the ‘positivists’, Lincoln and Guba (1985) have rightly cautioned against rigidity of quantitative techniques. They argue that qualitative inquiry of ethnographic study should start with ‘multiple constructed realities’ of the social context (Lincoln and Guba 1985:301). To them, this allows for credibility, neutrality and consistency which in the final analysis fulfil the ground objectives of both qualitative and quantitative research.

Nevertheless, arguments on the appropriate research tool to be adopted for investigating the social world remains problematic. This is why Smalings (1989) earlier advocated for a non-rigid scientific protocol that does not privilege one technique over the other. The concern for a researcher, as noted by Smalings is to adopt a multi-method approach to his data collection. This will allow a consideration of the detailed evidence from the field. Importance of such detailed discussion has therefore informed the relevance of multi-method approach that underpinned my adoption of technique of interview, participant observation and my evaluations of responses in this research.

In this part of the section, I have been able to review literature on Qualitative Research Methodology with attention to its merits as a method of inquiry. Justifications for the adoption of ethnography and its limitations as method of inquiry are further discussed as I moved into sections that deal with my research site. While its merits and justification are particularly placed against the backdrop that the social realities of the world of work for

the workers is better captured through their own 'lens', and with attentiveness to 'narratives' of their own 'stories', its problematic remains, as shall be demonstrated shortly.

2.4.2. Doing Ethnography Study in NNPC: Inside the Corporation

Sociological methodology, that often accompanies doing workplace ethnographic study, especially that of large corporations such as the NNPC, would initially present the researcher with dilemmas and practical challenges. The initial challenges concern those of negotiating and gaining access into the Corporation. As noted by Gronning (1997:23), the challenges border on "how to gain acceptance to do research on what is perceived as 'sensitive topics' and therefore obtaining conditional access, and how to maintain a positive relationship with the "gatekeeper." In my own experience in this research, the management at the corporate level of the NNPC symbolizes the gatekeeper. And in the circumstance of this research work, my relational experience with the gatekeeper required of me, some acts of perseverance, consistency and patience in the corporation. The air of official secrecy and bureaucracy that is palpable in the NNPC and which also surrounds its activities could be interpreted as a measure of its importance to the country. Totsukka,(1995 cited in Gronning 1997:25)earlier identified some challenges associated with gaining access into large corporations while doing workplace study. Two major challenges identified by Totsukka (1995) parallel my encounter in the course of gaining access and doing my study at NNPC. This has to do with what I refer to as 'Main door' challenges; involving how to enlist the interest and approval of the Corporate Manager to conduct the research, and also an approval for the duration, as direct observer in the refinery.

Having enlisted the interest and approval of the Corporate Management through the gatekeeper for access, my duration at the Corporate Office of NNPC was typified by direct observation of employment relations matters and activities. The Office for employment relations matters at the Corporate Headquarters co-ordinates all activities relating to Unions and Management. The Office relates to and services the two branches of national industrial unions in NNPC; the National Union of Petroleum and Gas Workers, and the

Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association of Nigeria(NUPENG and PENGASSAN), representing the Junior and Senior workers of the corporation respectively. The Office renders assistance to the unions' officials relating to their roles to members. This involves conferences, workshops and meetings which the unions' officials need to attend in the discharge of their roles and functions as representatives of workers in the corporation.

At the unit, I participated in the processing of applications for the release of nominated union officials to attend conferences and meetings. Such meetings and conferences have to do with unions activities. The call for attendance and nomination of officials for Meetings and Conferences reaches the Secretariat of the Union where nominations are subsequently made, request for release and sponsorship obtained from the management through the Employment Relations Office. From the management's point of view, unions' leaders' attendance of such meetings is meant to further develop the organizing and leadership qualities of the Union leaders. Such meetings also include the quarterly Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) meetings between management and the unions' officials. Gleaned from the organization's records and files, and as stressed by the management representatives, JCC meetings ensure regular consultation on matters pertaining to mutual interests of both the management and the workers. This is essentially to maintain peace and mutual agreement on vexing matters relating to labour process and managerial practices.

Equally important, Corporate Employee Relations Office facilitates meetings for resolution of perceived grievances either of intra-union or between the management and unions, of any of the branches. By implication it is through the JCC that Management enlists the cooperation and compliance of workers, through unions' leaders on current and proposed managerial policies and practices. This is exemplified in one of the remarks made by the Convenor, at one of the meetings I attended; "consultations and discussions at this level have come to represent the hallmarks of harmonious relations between us (management)and the unions' leaders." Indeed, such a forum and opportunity to present Management-Labour issues is viewed with all seriousness by the management, going by the wide range of issues often deliberated upon at these meetings. Also, the hierarchies of JCC

between unions and management cascade from the corporate level down to the Zones and Branches of the SBUs and the Refineries; many of which I participated in at the refinery level.

My two (2) month stay at the Corporate Employment Relations Office gave me the valuable interactions with the leadership of the unions with whom I was able to share opinions on management policies and issues, and how they believed their members were affected. Discussions on these issues and evaluations are contained in Chapters 5-8. The discussions and evaluations give the understanding of their perceptions of the broader implications of managerial practices. My evaluations and analysis of union leaders' views, roles at JCC meetings, and how these had impacted on their representational roles to members are contained in Chapters 5-9.

2.4.3. Inside the Refinery (PHRC)

Port-Harcourt Refining Company (PHRC), Eleme is made up of two refineries; the old refinery commissioned in 1965 and the second, often referred to as the 'new plant', commissioned in 1989. PHRC has five (5) Process Areas; Areas 1-5. At the time of this research, the new refinery was made up of Areas 1-4; while the old refinery was Area 5. Areas 2 and 3 were the only ones in operation at the period of this research. Due to Turn Around Maintenance (TAM), Areas 1 and 4 were shut down. Area 2 has the Continuous Catalyst Regeneration Unit, which constantly reactivates catalyst from the reformer. Other units in Area 2 include, the Hydrogen Purification, Fuel Gas Vaporizer, Sour Water Treatment and Caustic Treatment unit. Area 3 is made up of a Fluid Catalytic Cracking Unit (FCCU), where Vacuum Gas Oil (VGO) and heavy diesel oil are cracked to obtain the more valuable products such as PIVIS and the Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG). Other units in Area 3 include the Gas Concentration, Gas Treating and Mercaptan Oxidation units (NNPC2008).

My ethnographic study of the refinery entailed close interactions and working with both the Plant Operators and their unions' leaders, to gain understanding of how they performed their daily activities within the plant, and how they interpreted the emerging managerial practices. It also gave me the opportunity to understand how the unions' leaders

engaged with the management on diverse managerial issues. However, in the context of work environment for this study, I constantly realised that I was in a sensitive work environment where concerns about information, particularly about how the conditions and operations of the refinery, are viewed with great sensitivity. I also realised that while I had to exercise some level of discretions in ways I related to the workers and unions' leaders, I needed to be attentive to both intended and unintended responses. In doing all this, I knew I had to be part of the everyday work routine in the refinery. I was therefore able to observe and gain understanding of covert responses to work processes in the plant. I was warmly accepted into the plant, after being introduced to the Plant Superintendent by the Employee Relations Officer from the Administrative Department. It was on the first week of my arrival in the Plant that I quickly got close to Emeka, who I later came to know as the team leader in the Plant. For the duration of my stay in the refinery, Emeka was very friendly and co-operative, which was not unconnected with his desire to explore opportunities to study in South Africa.

By 'working' with the Plant Operators on a daily basis, I was able to gain 'insiders account' of the Plant Operators' responses to daily routine of work processes in the Plant. Within two weeks of my stay in the Plant, I became a 'familiar member', and I was therefore able to interact freely with the Supervisors and the Plant Operators. With the introduction by Emeka to the team members some of whom I even maintained contacts with after my stay, I became a member of the team and we moved around the Plants installations for the daily routine of work. For the daily routine of work in the plant, I was provided with helmet and ear-muff, but not with the factory boot. During our daily 'tour' round the plant, I knew I had to pay due diligence, and attention to every relevant aspect of the team members' activities, and team leader's discussions regarding the plant operations. Occasionally, while I observed as the team members carried out their work activities, I asked questions, and took mental notes of their answers and the observations I made, as we moved round the plants. I listened, and took notes of their conversations as they engaged in the explanations; demonstrating technical skills in the process of repair or operations of the plant, and the use of technical language. This understanding and insights from the workers' perspectives are tied up in my evaluations and analysis of labour process in the refinery, as contained in Chapters 5-9 of this study. As far as my observa-

tion was concerned in the refinery, and in line with Fetterman's, remarks on ethnography, unrelenting questioning and interviewing lead an ethnographer into respondents' "deepest spheres" of meaning. This helped me to have good understanding and notes of their world of work, and thereby being able to make sense of some of their vocabulary, often couched in the plant operation's jargon

Through my interaction with the Plant Operators, I got to know and understand the rhythms of their daily work activities, and their perceptions of management's roles in scheduling their task performance. I was thus able to gain insights into what the realities of refinery work meant for the Plant Operators. Various insightful remarks, from labour process perspective, made by team members and leaders concerning the operations, state of the plants and how management is responding to their own suggestion, explained the daily operations of the Plant, and possible solutions to 'critical incidence', as the team leader often referred to un-envisaged problems in the plants. And it is in this context that tasks are performed, and also made sense of in the daily work process. Critical incidence or un-anticipated problems could happen anytime during the process of daily operations of the plant. This explained why the teams were multi-skilled in formation, for team members to be able to respond in time to the incidence. As I also stayed with the Operators in the Control Room, I further gained insights into the operations in the CR; that is, the operations of the cursor and control panels. It was the labour process implications of their activities and interactions, both inside the plant and in the CR that further deepened my analytical evaluations of labour process in the refinery. These are rendered in Chapters 5-9.

While I was in the Plant as a 'team member', the canteen and the rest-rooms also served as avenues for interaction with the workers. I utilized many of these opportunities to engage informally with the plant operators to learn from them. Specific observations made and information picked during various informal conversations was further explored during my in-depth interviews with some of the workers and union leaders. As the workers were more willing to express their feelings regarding 'new' work practices and what the daily operations entailed in the plant, I was able to gain their understanding and perceptions of the managerial discourse such as their working in teams, concern to ensure steady and

uninterrupted plant operations, and quality of products. Detailed analysis of the evaluations of the issues to which the workers responded is contained in Chapters 5-9.

As a participant observer in the refinery, I came in with the purpose to actively observe the plant operations activities, and make sense of the dynamics of the refinery labour process, and how the socio-physical aspects of the work environment also explained the dynamics. And this has entailed applying me, appropriately, to the social context of the work environment. In doing all this, the complexities of the social context required me to be consciously aware of details. As noted by Spradley (1980:55) being aware of details in the social setting enables the researcher to avoid what he calls “selective inattention”; a situation in which the researcher is not attuned into the context, “not seeing” and “not hearing”. In the context of my participation in the activities of the refinery, I had to pay attention to every relevant piece of information, even to the seemingly trivial ones; on the notice boards in the plants, in the offices, in the canteen and even along the hallways in the refinery. Here, I picked information relating to daily work schedules in the plants, shifts- rosters and latest ‘news’ from the management, concerning the state of the refinery, plant operators that were to be on secondment to other refineries. The shift- rosters always reflected skill-composition of team members from other units such as the Maintenance and Electrical. The team composition also cut across all skills needed for operations of the plant at every point in time. The labour process implication of this was to ensure flexibility in the deployment of the workforce. For the purpose of obtaining full understanding of the teams’ work process in the plant, I ensured that I joined the team being led by my friend, Emeka. With Emeka, as the team leader I got the full advantage of the ‘grand tour’, Spradley’s observation of the Process Plant(1980).

However, given the sensitive nature of the socio-physical environment of the Process Plant, the ‘question-observation’ of my ethnographic study must be done unobtrusively. Also, with a heightened sense of expediency of time and opportunity, I knew I had to prepare myself to take in as much of the broader spectrum of information as practically possible. Detailed discussions of some of the question-observation of the work process in the Process Plants are contained in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 of my evaluation of dimensions of labour process in the refinery.

As a ‘familiar stranger’ in the refinery, I went about doing my ethnographic study in the plants with the sense of “learning from the workers, rather than studying them” (Spradley, 1980:55), but with a focus on critical sociological inquiry and explanation of their daily work processes, in the plant. In doing this, I also had to deploy the use of open-ended interviews with the workers. As noted by Gillham (2000:13) “...open-ended interview should be used to obtain from interviewees, what they know in relation to the researcher’s aim of study.” But this must be done with a researcher’s concern to gain insights into interviewees’ ‘frame of meaning’ (Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 291). My use of open-ended interviews thus proceeded with the aim of understanding workers’ concern about the daily routines and perceptions formed in interpreting work processes and managerial practices in the plant. It was in the process of interviewing that the ‘hidden dimensions’ of their interpretations of work processes were understood. It gave me the opportunity to know how their perceptions acquired its character. In other words, unstructured interviews of this nature move beyond the content of daily conversation regarding the work process in the plant, to include the sense the workers made of the work process itself, and the team compositions. Thus, in the attempt to understand the ‘framing’ and ‘interpretations’ workers and unions leaders made of emerging themes of managerial practices and work process in the refinery, the Secretaries General of the two branches of industrial unions in the corporation were interviewed. Details of their responses and evaluations are contained in Chapters5-9. My interviews with the union leaders both at the Headquarters and refinery sought to obtain their views on the specific forms of managerial practices, and how this had been affecting their representational roles to their members. Also, the interviews gave me the opportunity to further understand their roles and perception of various institutional frameworks such as the JCC, and learning programs in the corporation, as established structure and process to enlist the co-operation of the workers. My trip with the unions to Mosinmi Office of NNPC, for instance, gave me the opportunity to interview both the management and unions sides, on the regular JCC meetings. Perceptions and evaluations from both the managements and unions sides of JCC meetings are rendered in Chapters5-8.

The Employee Relations Office at the refinery also performed Personnel and Employees relations activities for the workers at the refinery level. As an interface between the

workers in the Plants and the management, I interviewed the Officers in charge, Messers Epelle and Victor. Their views were considered important as my understanding of Personnel activities in the Office served as background information into knowing managerial and administrative practices in the Plants. Here, I also had the opportunity to go through some of the Personnel files in the Department. While most of the activities and correspondence carried out by this Office were meant to acquaint the workers with management's decisions on Personnel and Welfare matters, my participation at some of the meetings gave me the opportunity to know how workers reacted to some of these administrative decisions and welfare matters. For instance, an awareness workshop on Appraisal System was organised by PHRC Management between 14th and 16th July 2008 for both the Junior and Senior cadres. The unions and workers had earlier complained about their lack of understanding of procedures and objectives of Appraisal Exercise for the year 2007. Many of the junior workers expressed a complete lack of understanding of the 'motives'. This is the remark made by one of the junior workers at the Workshop, "we are suspicious of management's intentions." The union leaders also complained that the last exercise for the year 2007 did not favour them as "many of our officers scored less than 3%," as remarked by Secretary General for NUPENG. He said further, the "evaluations did not take into consideration additional roles we performed to our members as union officers." However, the Management explained that it was only the unions' Chairmen and Secretaries that were "on-call" on emergency basis that could have additional consideration in the exercise, apart from their primary assignments. While the unions' leaders expressed dissatisfaction with the rating procedures, the junior workers complained of "lack of effective communication between them and their appraisers." This was a case of different and opposing views to administrative matters in the refinery, also demonstrating workers' experience and perceptions of managerial discourse on the Appraisal System in the organization. While my discussions so far had centred on the rationale, and justifications for the use of participant observation in the refinery, these were not without their limitations, to which I now turn in the remaining part of this Chapter.

As noted by Spradley (1980:56), while "active participation" could be a valuable tool for data gathering, 'not all social situations' offer the same opportunity for active involvement for the researcher. In the socio-technical context of the refinery, my participant ob-

ervation was limited by the highly specialised and technical configuration of the plant installations. Thus, according to Spradley (1980:55-56), “active participation for maximum benefits, and limited use of the technique, for greater understanding depend on the social context of the research site.”

Further, on the use of participant observation, Paul Thompson and Stephen Akcroyd (1995) caution against the tendency of overlooking employee’s ‘misbehaviours’ (resistance), both from theoretical and empirical grounds, when doing workplace participant observation. As they note, researchers visit workplace, already “seduced by cultural corporatism, and therefore unable to identify misbehaviour and resistance” (cited in Gabriel 1999:192). In other words, the tendency is there for a researcher doing ethnographic study to be influenced by discourse of management, prevalent in the particular organization. This resonates with observations made earlier by Adesina (1989). Gabriel (1999:192) maintains, “...the researchers see control, and consent everywhere, because they have been conditioned to see control everywhere”. In Foucauldian interpretation, the researcher doing ethnographic study “wears his or her identity card, equipped with his interview schedules and notebook, he or she too easily becomes part of the panoptic machinery surveying and constructing the docile worker’ and his or her gaze becomes inseparable from the disciplinary gaze of the organization” (cited in Gabriel, 1999:192). On this, Willmott (1993, cited in Gabriel, 1999:192) notes, “the invisibility of resistance marks the absence of resistance.” Doing research of this type thus, requires the researcher to adopt the stance of “good listener, co-conspirator on forbidden plots, and fellow-travellers on fantasies” (Gabriel, 1999: 196). This is because, as he puts it, it is in these plots and story-telling that some of the oppositional, and ‘conspirational discourses’ reside, which may not be immediately manifested in their actions. Indeed, specific observations and information I picked up as a ‘team member’ in the plant and at the corporate headquarters gave me insights on how covert oppositions and inversion of managerial practices occur, for example on training programs, and managerial discourse surrounding learning programs at NNPC. This was also shown in my evaluations and analysis how controls and resistance still reside in the ‘margins’ of ‘managed terrain’. This is illustrated in Chapter 8. Also, my working in the Employee Relations Office in the refinery re-

vealed to me how workers contrived to re-appropriate time and resources (Thompson and Ackroyd, 1999), which were below managerial radar.

In inserting theory into empirical findings, some commentators on labour process analysis such as Paul Thompson and Stephen Ackroyd (1999), Hugh Willmott(1995), David Knights(1996), Deetz and Collinson(1994), have admonished researchers to reconceptualize how managerial control mechanisms and consent generate new forms of resistance and work-identity in the workplace. As remarked by Gabriel (1999:196), “resistance may go unnoticed if one goes about looking for it in the way plant Sociologists did.” Ethnographic study of post-industrial factory workers requires different observational and conceptual resources to be able to account for “invisible” on the shop floor. As demonstrated through Chapters 5-9 of this research, attempts have been made to re-insert emerging conceptual framework into my evaluations of workers’ and unions’ experiences of labour process in the refinery.

2.5. Conclusion.

The main aim of this Chapter on ethnography has been to provide an account of how the empirical data for this research were obtained. Evaluations of the responses both from the workers and unions are shown in Chapters 5-9. This Chapter has illustrated the specific ways, and how I deployed ethnography as a research method in the refinery. Participant observation and interviews were employed as my research tools in the research. Contained in this discussion are also the justifications and limitations of the research method for the research. My next Chapter deals with the review of literature concerning conceptual framework for this research.

Chapter 3

Review of the Literature

3.1. Introduction

This chapter is concerned with the review of literature on the conceptual framework that underpins the study: *the labour process analysis*. The generic character of capitalist mode of production has distinct features that have been elaborated in labour process analysis. In the context of structured relations between capital and labour, labour process analysis provides the foundational theoretical framework for examining and understanding the relations of production within the workplace. However, the debates over labour process continue to reflect a ‘broad church’ of perspectives comprising ‘eclectic orientations’ of diverse strands. The diverse contributions to the debates on the labour process provide the “critical understanding of the world of work, and of the submerged issues of management control” (Gamze, 2003:32). The conceptual lineages of labour process debates—both of the earlier Marxist contributors represented by Braverman (1974), and Burawoy (1979, 1985), P. Edwards (1979) Friedman (1977) and that of second wave analysts such as Paul Thompson and Stephen Ackroyd (1995) Hugh Willmott (1998) David Knights (1988) and David Collinson (1994), remain influential.

3:2 Braverman and Labour process Analysis: a resilient analytical tool.

Braverman’s (1974), *Labor and Monopoly Capital* draws on Marxian orientation for understanding the Capitalist mode of production. It provides the means for examining the workplace as a contested terrain between the owners of the means of production, and the workers, while locating the struggles within a wider political economy. This is further demonstrated in Burawoy’s (1985) *Politics of Production*. The “Labour Process debate” that followed Braverman’s publication continues to advance our understanding of the complex character of the transformations of work under capitalism. Indeed, the on-going tendencies in labour process analysis of reproducing the orthodox labour process, and the

inclusion of diverse perspectives under the same umbrella continue to make the debates dynamic and relevant for understanding workplace relations.

The strands within the genre make Labour Process Theory (LPT) the best means for critically analysing work under capitalism. However, as Thompson (1989, cited in Vaughan Ellis 2004:2) notes, it is necessary for “both orthodox analysts and “second wave” writers to consistently identify with the “core” elements of LPT for it to retain its vitality and usefulness in understanding work under Capitalism”. Marx (1990, cited in Vaughan Ellis 2004:3) defines “labour process as comprising three elements; one as a purposeful activity, that is work itself, second the object on which that work is performed, and third the instruments of the work”. It is therefore the interaction between the ‘human’ and ‘technical elements’ that shapes the particular labour process. It is this analysis that provides the framework for delineating the “core” elements of labour process, as argued by Paul Thompson (1990).

Thompson (1990, cited in Stephen Jaros 2005:5-7) outlines four elements that constitute a proper and “coherent core” for labour process theory; one, the function of labour in generating surplus in capitalism; second, the need for constant renewal and change in the forces of production and the skill of labour; third, the necessity for control imperatives in the labour process. And fourthly, ““due to the dynamics of exploitation and control, the social relations of production in the workplace are of structured antagonism.”” These theoretical categories of labour process offer explanations not only to specific capitalist mode of production, but also to historical change that characterised it. The general character that constitutes the ‘core elements’ of labour process thus provides the backdrop for understanding any particular capitalist social formation.

It is also within these general categories that interconnections between technology of production and human category form and shape the social organisation of labour process. These core characteristics of the labour process, explored by Paul Thompson (1983) give an explanation to the condition under which capital and labour co-habit in particular socio-economic formations. Thus, the relationship between labour-power--the human capacity to work--and the means of production transform the capitalist social formations to

value creation for the capitalists. In this formation, the sole goal of the capitalist goes beyond commodities production, but goes to that of exchanging the use-values. The labour process is thereby linked to the struggle for profitable production, in the interest of the capitalists.

The distinct character of the Capitalist mode of production is that production is for the purpose of extracting surplus value. Though created by the labour power, it becomes the 'legal purchase of the employer' (Stephen Jaros 2005:7).

From the Marxian perspective, capitalist production is “‘both a labour process; human action with a view to the production of use-values, and a process of the production of self-expanding value of valorisation’” (Marx, Capital 1, cited in Brighton Labour Process Group 1976 :4). It is also noted that “‘valorisation is a process specific to capitalism, a social system in which a given quantity of abstract socially necessary labour time, ‘value’, has the property of being able to activate and socialise more labour time, and thus create additional surplus value” (BLPG 1976:4). This understanding of the development of the capitalist mode of production has therefore provided widespread concern for the study of work organisations, and the labour process. From the Marxian perspective, the interest in the labour process involves a concern with the impact of the capitalist mode of production on workers’ lived-experiences of the workplace, and for worker collectivities on the “shopfloor”. The concern has been to challenge the managerialist rhetoric of organisation of work delivering prosperity to workers (Marx 1990; Braverman, 1990; Edwards 1979; Friedman 1977; cited in Ellis 2004:3).

Building on Marx’s conceptualisation of labour within the capitalist mode of production, Braverman’s contribution involves two theoretical concerns; given the Capitalist’s interest in appropriating surplus-value, Braverman conceptualizes degradation of work as fragmentation of circuit of labour, that is, the separation of the sphere of conception from the sphere of execution (Braverman 1974). This tendency in the workplace in which there is separation between those who perform the ‘global function’ of capital and those who perform the ‘global function’ of labour-power remains central in our understanding of capitalist labour process. The implication of this for labour process analysis is that “work

under capitalist mode of production is increasingly degraded and dehumanizing to the people who perform it in order to survive” (Vaughan Ellis, 2004:4). Braverman (1974), in the circumstance of advancement in technology, “where the instruments of labour are removed from the worker’s hand and placed in the grip of mechanism” (Braverman 1974:169), poses the question “how is labour process transformed by the scientific technical revolution? According to Braverman, though no straight-forward answer could be given, nevertheless, he notes “the scientific and managerial attack upon the labour process had embraced all its aspects; labour power, the instruments of labour, the material of labour and the products of labour” (Braverman 1974:169). Braverman maintains, “the labour had been re-organised and subdivided according to the rigorous principles of modern management” (Braverman 1974:169). This implies that as capitalist mode of production develops, “new methods and new machinery are incorporated within a management’s efforts to dissolve the labour process as a process conducted by the worker and reconstituted as a process conducted by the management” (Braverman 1974:170). Thus, in the capitalist attempt to degrade work, “the capitalist disassembles the craft and returns it to the worker piecemeal, so that the process as a whole no longer belongs to the province of any individual worker; the capitalist manages with an “eye” towards getting a grip on the individual operations” (Braverman 1974:171).

Consequently, as noted by Braverman, “the unity of thought and action, conception and execution, hand and mind have now been systematically attacked by capitalism” (Braverman 1974:171). As a result, “the materials and instrument of production have now been with the labour force, as a factor of production, henceforth carried on by management as the sole subjective element” (Braverman 1974:171). Braverman makes this argument for the purpose of guiding our understanding, showing how, historically, work has been effectively degraded as he notes, “the degradation experienced by men and women” at the workplace “arose because of the transformation of working humanity into a labour force” (Braverman 1974:139-141). Management has thus “in its activities as an organiser of labour continued to provide the formal structure for the production process” (Braverman 1974:155). This formal structure, as noted by Braverman “is not just the technical production process but also the content in which the technique of production, in form of skill and craft are carried out” (Braverman 1974:155).

As argued by Vaughan Ellis (2004:5), Braverman is concerned more with understanding how the “wider issues of the emergence of monopoly capitalism had succeeded in changing the composition of working class, shift between occupations and the evolution of the specific labour process.”. While much of Braverman’s degradation thesis has been supported by Friedman (1977) and Edwards (1998), they argue the need for “considerations of managerial control strategies in understanding labour process” (Vaughan Ellis 2004: 5). Context of technology of production, nature and extent of workers’ resistance continue to shape the trends in labour process analysis. However, it is to be noted that contemporary trend in labour process analysis is moving away from Braverman’s own conception and analysis of labour process. The emerging tendency, which seems to cut across the evolving spectrum, has tended to incorporate into the political economy of labour process debate “culture”; to move class analysis of labour process into studies of ‘discourse and identity’ (Peter Meiksins, 1994:1-2). More significantly study of labour process has refocused attention (beyond Braverman’s conceptualisation) to the ability of workers to resist managerial controls – by covert and overt means, and to a concern with the role of forces outside the workplace in shaping the labour process and conflict within it. Thus, in the context of contemporary managerial practices of workplace organisation, Meiksins argues that a “distinct critique on Braverman’s work is found in his (Braverman’s) analysis of techniques of scientific management” (Meiksins 1994: 5). The techniques of work rationalisation and control, developed by Taylor, and located in Braverman’s conception and analysis of labour process are particularly being eroded in modern workplace organisation. On the contrary, as noted by Meiksins (1994:6), capitalists have “developed a variety of strategies for controlling labour, of which Taylorism is only one, and not necessarily the most effective one as espoused in Braverman’s”.

Commenting on the emerging and diverse techniques of management, Andrew Friedman (1977), has argued that there are two major types of capitalists control strategy in contemporary workplaces; “direct control” involving the techniques of scientific management and “responsible autonomy’ in which workers are allowed leeways and discretion at work. Even as modern capitalism progresses, there is no feasible future for the ‘erasure’ or ‘closure’ of these two concepts in modern workplace. In a later work, Richard Edwards (1979), develops a historical review of the evolution of the labour process in which

the capitalists have developed a sequence of modes of control in response to new forms of worker resistance in the production system. To Edwards, the small workshops characterised by 'simple control' developed into 'technical control' of assembly line type, which as modern capitalism develops gave rise to 'bureaucratic control' that characterises "the internal labour markets of contemporary workplaces" (cited in Meiksins 1994:4). Consequently as observed by Edwards (cited in Meiksins 1994:4), transitional forms of control continue to emerge "as employers grope for ways to solve the problem of workplace labour control." As a result, contemporary workplace transformations and new ways of managerial practice seem to have superseded scientific Tayloristic management type.

Also, a consistent theme in the long line of critiques of Braverman's *Labour and Monopoly Capital* has been the absence of 'subjectivity' in shaping the labour process. On this, it has been pointed out that Braverman's "self-imposed emphasis on "class-in-itself" as opposed to "class-for-itself" excludes an understanding of the role of subjectivity in shaping labour process. To Zimbali, (cited in Meiksins 1994:5), this is interpreted as Braverman's neglect of working-class resistance to capitalist efforts to control the workforce. To Braverman's critics therefore, this represents an implicit claim in his work of "working class inability under monopoly capitalism to mount effective resistance to capital", and the role workers' resistance could play in conditioning, or blocking the capitalist efforts to control workers (Meiksins 1994:5). However, as pointed out by Meiksins (1994:7), much of Braverman's analysis can still accommodate the "idea of subjectivity and resistance since the central achievement of his work was to restore the dynamics of exploitation, class and class conflict in the central analysis of work under capitalism." Thus, as noted by Sheila Cohen (cited in Meiksins 1994:7), Braverman does not describe "a labour process to nowhere", but a labour process that exposes the fundamental logic of capitalist accumulation of surplus labour.

Much as Burawoy's (1979) work, *Manufacturing Consent* is located in Braverman's (1974) *Labour and Monopoly Capital*, his discussions fail in many ways to account for workplace resistance and opposition. In his "*Manufacturing Consent*", Burawoy had argued that a central element in shaping work relations is the manufacture of consent by

workers, which consequently aids the management's in gaining workers' consent to the conditions of production, even on the volition of the workers. However, the "negotiated outcome" through which workers continue to "manufacture" their consent inexorably ties them to the structures of capitalist mode of production.

Burawoy's "Manufacturing Consent" has also been criticised as offering "a version of elite theory in which all events at the point of production end up in strengthening the control of capital" (Clawson 1983:671). In his critique of Burawoy's *Manufacturing Consent*, Clawson (1983) argues that his approach is "fundamentally ahistorical and non-dialectical", as such does not account for the dynamics and the struggle between labour and capital. In Clawson's interpretation of Burawoy's analysis, he further argues, "all social processes on the shopfloor benefit the capitalist" (Clawson 1983:671).

As noted by Clawson (1983:672), the most important means through which shop floor workers produce consent in Burawoy's *Manufacturing Consent* is by playing various "games", especially the game of "making out". Therefore as part of "ensuring the subordination to the labour process" (Clawson 1983:673), games arise from the initiatives of the workers. Interpreted from the perspective of class relations, these "games did not create an autonomous cultural and production system that oppose the management" (Clawson 1983:673). In other words, the shop floor collectivities surrounding workers' games play on output and quota restrictions are "neither independent of, nor in opposition to management" (Clawson 1983:673). A careful reading of the shop floor "games" on the manufacturing of consent seems to persist because they are indirectly supported, and being "regulated by the management in serving its own ends"(Clawson 1983:673). The Supervisors, on the shop floor actively co-operate and participate in the game of making out by requesting the workers to reduce or increase the number of their pieces in line with the on-going piece rate. Thus, at Allied Corporation, where Burawoy did his fieldwork, for the game of making out to succeed, the active co-operation of the management was involved = "management accepted the rules of the game and co-operated in entering these rules, specifically those informal rules establishing an upper limit on output" (Clawson 1983:673). Paradoxically, the acts of the management helped to consolidate the process of securing consent and production output of workers on the shop floor. The implication

of this for our understanding of the labour process is that the workers themselves negotiated their own way into the process of “super-exploitation with no rebellion but consent, the very activity of playing a game generates consent with respect to its rules” (Clawson 1983:674). In this way, consent on the shop floor is inexorably tied and rests upon the workers’ activities. Ironically therefore, the game is responsible for, and generates the “harmony” of workers’ interest with the management. From labour process analysis therefore, though the workers are tied to the logic of capitalist mode of production, they still “make choices”, which also encourage the process that generates their consent. On the shop floor, the informal rules establishing the norms of making out, legitimates the relationship between the supervisors and the workers, and where each errs, the other points out the corrections.

Drawing on Antonio Gramsci’s work on hegemony, Clawson (1983:675) argues that Burawoy’s work illustrates how hegemony manifests at the workplace. In other words how the patterning of the lived work experiences “shape the game of making out, and how workers find rewards in self-acts that drive them harder, thus generating more profits for the capitalists”(Clawson1983:675). As pointed out by Clawson, the problematics of consent and control in contemporary workplace is aptly demonstrated by Burawoy; how capitalism structures “on a day-to-day basis, the labour process control without the use of force” (Clawson 1983:675). The game dimension of the labour process reinforces the interests of the capitalists in expropriating more profits from the workers. Critiquing Burawoy’s, Clawson noted the essentialist logic of “either/or” in his analysis, and this is “the fundamental weakness in his book” (Clawson 1983:676). The game of making out, in as much as it reinforces the system, can equally perform the opposite role of opposition and struggle – “a phenomenon can be both itself, and its opposite,”(Clawson1983:676). To Clawson therefore, “Burawoy’s Marxist argument on labour process lacks a dialectical analysis” (Clawson 1983:676).

A significant weakness in Burawoy’s *Manufacturing Consent*, is its “neglect of the inputs of conscious class struggle” (Gartman, 1983:659). According to Gartman, by evoking Althusserian Marxism of structural determinism, Burawoy’s work “underestimates the significant role of class struggle in shaping the development of the production process

under capitalist formation”(Gartman 1983 659). Through his “manufacturing consent,” “Burawoy gives us a class struggle that only reproduces and realizes the structure” (Gartman 1983:662). The apparent “complementarity” of interests between the workers and the management, in the game of making out privileges output maximization for the capitalists.

By evoking the tenets of Structuralist-Marxism, Burawoy’s work paid undue significance to “a static system of social relations at the workplace, essentially, governed by prevailing laws of reproduction to the neglect of process of historicity of such mode of production” (Gartman, 1983:660). In this deterministic view, the role of ‘human agency’ in shaping the consciousness and dimensions of class struggle is made passive. Underscoring Burawoy’s analysis of labour process are the “essential principles and requirements inscribed within the structure of the capitalist mode of production” (Gartman 1983:660), which ensure the “unmitigated fulfilment” of capitalist interests through consent at the point of production. As pointed out by Gartman, Burawoy’s analysis of labour process is a “coupling of governing principles of production with the governing principles of economic surplus appropriation which together secure an adequate production of surplus values but in obscure indirect and exploitative manner” (Gartman 1983:660). Accordingly, the dual situations of “obscuring” and “securing” surplus value generates a logic of “internal transformation”, carried out through the game of making out, that consequently reproduces and realizes the essential interests of capitalism. Further, Gartman’s critique of Burawoy is located in the latter’s characterisations of capitalist labour process as divided between a ‘despotic’ and a ‘hegemonic’ type, in which advance capitalism represents the hegemonic type where there is “unmitigated fulfilment” of obscuring, by replacing coercion with ‘consent-producing measures” at the point of production. With greater challenges facing monopoly capitalism in the realisation of its goals, and with “greater resources” at its disposal, “capitalists offer workers autonomy within the production system, by relaxing hitherto standards, and supervision, creating internal job ladder, and instituting collective-bargaining systems”(Gartman 1983:660) – all fulfilling the essential logics of the game of “making out”. These “measures generate workers’ consent” (Gartman 1983:660) into which they “voluntarily negotiate” themselves. However, in Gartman’s reconceptualization, Burawoy’s merger of “micro-rationalism of game theory with

“structural determinism of Althusserian Marxism provides the pivot through which hegemonic labour process fully realises the structural requirements of securing and obscuring surplus value, and thus assuring the capitalists a stable structure with no contradiction” (Gartman 1983:661).

For the purpose of our reconceptualization, the version of labour process analysis provided by Burawoy produces a ‘deterministic structure’ of capitalism production with an “inexorable logic” of surplus value production and appropriation, and in which the issue of social relations of production facilitate rather than “contradict the immanent development of the structure,”(Gartman 1983:661). The social relations of production identified by Burawoy merely deepen the process of obscuring and securing the structure of self-exploitation. Paraphrasing Burawoy’s argument rather than agreeing with him, Gartman notes that “the economic struggle between workers and managers on the shopfloor over piece rate quotas, bonuses and rules as identified by Burawoy does not (in Marxist’s standard account), contradict but actually facilitates capital accumulation” (Gartman, 1983:661). To Gartman, “the motor driving the development of labour process in Burawoy’s conceptualization is not struggle but structural conditions of competition” (Gartman 1983:662).

Under the hegemonic labour process characterised by consent-generating and game of making out, Burawoy sees “class struggle at the level of collective bargaining as facilitating the development of equally appropriate institutions i.e., internal labour market and internal state” (Gartman 1983:662), through which workers’ consent is obtained and consolidated. The motive here is not struggle but structural imperatives of competition and surplus-values. Put graphically, the enormous resources at the command of monopoly capitalism necessarily allow capitalists to usher in flexibility and re-organize production along hegemonic lines, as against the despotism of earlier factory regime. Under the new hegemonic regimes, and for capitalists to continue with surplus accumulation without making obvious, the “dimensions of job intensifications and cut in wages, ‘increased flexibility’ and ‘responsible autonomy’ must appear to be given to the workers through internal labour markets e.g. seniority and hierarchy demarcations, and institutional mediations of which unions play significant roles” (Gartman 1983:662). Within this context,

and in Burawoy's conceptual framework, workers "act and struggle", but such struggles are confined to, and only fulfil the structural logic of capitalism. They do not undermine it. Though the developments in labour process understanding through the successive stages of Taylorism, Fordism and Neo-Fordism of work organisations, in general, reflect the immanence and the inexorable character of the structural logic of capital accumulation (Gartman 1983:664), the concrete dimensions of workers' own struggle must also be located.

However, in his own contributions, Adesina (1991:2) argues for a reconceptualization of labour process theory that incorporates extra-institutional factors that mediate the 'sphere of interests' in capitalist production. While noting the conceptual remit in the work of Braverman and Burawoy, he argues for the concern of labour process analysis to go beyond the institutionalist models that reify the categories of politics of production. This is more so in peripheral capitalist mode of production where collective relations of labour processes are often embedded with extra-collective bargaining processes. As he notes, if LPT is to make sense of labour process within the context of the specific capitalist formation, "such engagement must embrace the processes of both collective and extra collective within the specific relations of production" (Adesina 1991:2). This would therefore require a procedure of analysis that moves beyond the structuralist-Marxian model. If the totality of the social relations of production must be accounted for, then "our analysis of labour process must take on board other forms interests mediation" (Adesina 1991:6), apart from institutions of wage bargaining encapsulated in institutional framework. A central point located in this mode of reconceptualisation as reiterated in Adesina's (1991) is for the researcher to show attentiveness to how the dynamics of relations of production are mediated by specifics cultural, historical and economic experiences, thus shaping the character of social struggles at the point of production. It is this "mediation that shapes workers' consciousness and subjectivities at work and gives rise to distinctive formations of diverse labour processes" (Adesina 1991:13).

Building on the lines of arguments earlier developed in Hyman (1978), Adesina (1991) outlines the directions in which such reconceptualization should take place, especially in the context of peripheral capitalism. This implies that labour process analysis should

“creatively engage with the peculiarities of social process of production that subsequently define the terrain of labour process in the contexts’ (Adesina 1991:13). By way of the reinterpretation of Adesina’s line of arguments, much of what existed in mainstream labour process analysis (e.g., Edwards 1979; Friedman 1977; and Burawoy 1979) fails to account for the duality of labour as comprising “both sides of the same coin of commodity production and as definitive creative processes at the point of production” (Adesina 1991:460). Even Burawoy’s work, as remarked by Adesina (1991:460) treats “consent as absolute” as if it is something different from what is “essentially an indeterminate and contradictory factor in the labour process”. In other words, their analysis treats the dynamics of consent and control in purely “structuralist-deterministic” ways without properly accounting for the contradictions in the duality, that is. conflict and consent as inherent in the capitalist labour process. This deficit therefore calls for the re-insertion of dialectics in our reconceptualization of labour process even within the mainstream of the debate (Gartman 1983).

3:3 Beyond Consent Manufacturing: bringing Dialectics back in

As clearly shown in this review, Burawoy’s conceptual approach to labour process and his theoretical construct, is demonstrated to be limited by his overt emphasis on the immanent logic of the structure of the capitalist mode of production in which “the interests of workers and those performing the global functions of capital are co-ordinated and sustained” (Adesina 1991:7). Concern for a dialectical analysis of forms of control and resistance is excluded from his analysis. Thus, in his work both the “internal moments” (game of making out) and the “internal state” (efforts bargaining) co-joined to “generate consent rather than challenge the relations of production and surplus appropriation” (Adesina 1991:7). Burawoy’s analysis therefore renders worker resistance irrelevant in the whole logic and process of consent manufacturing through which consent is constantly generated on the shop floor. As Adesina (1991:8) notes, “Burawoy’s work neglects the purposeful militant activities which undermine the hegemony of the dominant classes or the ruling bloc.” This resonates with Gartman’s claim that “the struggle by the working class often threatens the accumulation of capital” (Gartman 1983:664). In its quest for surplus value appropriation through production, capitalists need to constantly

“modernise” the means of production. In doing this, and its attempt to defeat workers’ struggles, capitalists need incremental “changes in the labour process” (Gartman 1983:664). According to Gartman, and in line with Adesina (1991), “these changes give rise to new forms of accumulation and class structure, which in turn reconstitute class struggle, leading once again to changes in the labour process to overcome it” (Gartman 1983:664). Therefore embedded in historical development of capitalist labour formation is the “dialectical” and “contradictory process” in which capitalists not only need to contain, but indeed continue to design “counter-measures” against labour in the process of accumulation of surplus labour. Thus, located in the capitalist structure, and the struggle it generates, is the “dialectical interplay” between labour and the capitalists.

An illustration of this dialectic of class struggle between capital represented by the state and labour is shown in Adesina’s (1991) account of “the developments that led to the restructuring of unions and the national grievance machinery in Nigeria, between 1971 and 1975” (Adesina, 1991:9). During this period, there was the struggle between the state and the national unions that “threatened the functions of the state” (Adesina 1991:9). On the one hand, there was the shop floor militancy reflecting the agitation of the workers within the National Unions, and the logic of state-capitalists’ “expansion” put the responsibility on the Federal Government to checkmate workers’ “agitation spirit.” In quick response to this, the state had to embark on changes in the labour process by way of restructuring the National labour policy “in response to struggles around production relations”(Adesina 1991: 10). The State, as a functioning capital was being challenged by the agitations and unions’ struggle, and as an attempt to protect the existing capitalist structure of production, the State had to mediate on behalf of Capital, Adesina (1991). Thus, as noted by Marx, “it is the barriers to accumulation often erected by class struggle, and not the inherent logic of capitalism, which cause capital to transform the labour process” (cited in Gartman 1983:665). Therefore, analysis and conceptual approach towards understanding labour process must be attentive to this dialectic. Indeed, workers’ struggles have often been “consequential” in shaping the labour process. In spite of the capitalists’ efforts in the design and redesign of organisation of production from Taylorism to neo-Fordist transformation of the labour process (Gartman 1983), “shopfloor resistance” by workers remains as struggle against increased exploitation. Therefore, for a dialectical

understanding of the labour process, theoretical and empirical work must pay attention to the contradictions inhered in the process.

As insightful as Marxian perspective, in the analysis of relations of production remain foundational, emerging dictates of contemporary dynamics of such systems of production “demand a revitalization of alternatives, and greater openness” (BLPS 1976:15) in the discourse of labour process. As such, post-Braverman’s labour process analysis has therefore made efforts to introduce the idea of “national variations” into analysing organisations of work. As argued by some of the second-wave labour process writers, for example Thompson and Smith (1998:563), “there are variations and diverse capitalist formations, and therefore the types of capitalist forms of labour process organisation.” In other words, there are competing forms of organising labour process reflecting the national distinctiveness of a particular form of capitalist formation. Cautioning against seeing the continental Europe and the USA variant of capitalist labour process analysis as universal reference points, Thompson and Smith (1998) drew attention to diverse and multi-variant forms of capitalist labour process shaped by the national “social effects”. According to Thompson, and Smith, “today, it is hard to speak of the capitalist labour process as a single experience, as though US-capitalist labour relations are equivalent” (Thompson and Smith 1998:563). National socio-political systems of diverse capitalist formations have therefore become important and critical in the post-Braverman labour process analysis. Also, a pattern in which a particular capitalist formation is “written into the global forces of capitalism and neo-liberal market place have some “hollowing out” effect on national economy and the labour process” (Thompson and Smith 1998:568). In the context of neo-liberalism, “global features of capitalism in the form of transnational character of firms, the universal patterns of commodities production continue to succeed in drawing people into waged labour” (Thompson and Smith 1998:564) and therefore integrate labour more into world commodity production. Nevertheless, researchers doing labour process analysis are to note that, regardless of “regionalisation of economic activity into distinct blocks, and the diverse patterns of employment relations, global economic dictates continue to erode the autonomy of national economic systems” (Thompson and Smith 1998:564). Thus, despite the distinctiveness of a national economy from neo-liberal analysis, it remains vulnerable to capitalism, and therefore may not be able to maintain “a

serious autonomous space” in terms of pursuing “a distinct form of labour process” (Thompson and Smith 1998:564).

Nevertheless, and for empirical grounding, contemporary labour process needs to be “de-centred” from the US-European process”, and put into consideration national institutions, the patterns of employment relations, local forces, and socio-political dynamics of the specific capitalist formation. As noted by Adesina (1991:14) “a conceptualisation of a labour process must commence from the specificity, and peculiarities of commodity relations,” if we are to make sense of the particular labour process. Researchers on labour process are therefore encouraged to embrace an attitude of “selectivity” in their analysis, dictated not only by the context of study but also by emerging global dynamics. Within the “universalistic” labour process, analytical framework on which first wave analysts, largely influenced by Marxian perspective premised their arguments, the concern for national diversity and difference in organisation of work has generated new themes for labour process analysts.

Theoretically, attempts are being made to ensure analysis of the workplace labour process that takes into account “societal effects” of diverse nation states. Such comparative perspective takes into consideration, as noted by Sorge (1991; cited in Thompson and Smith 1998:565) “situated variety of forms of organisational systems and practice...bound into institutional forms of HRM; education, training, work careers, social stratifications, and industrial relations”. Buttressing this point, Thompson and Smith (1989:566) notes “social institutions mould capitalist social relations of production in distinctly “national ways”, so much so, that “there is no generalised tendency for labour process to express the same antagonistic relationship between labour and capital, as seen in the UK or the USA”.

The implications of this for our understanding therefore is that within a specific capitalist formation, workers and managers may manifest “mutual expectations” and perceptions distinctively rooted in the “cultural”, informed by historical experiences and enduring social processes. However, this is not to dismiss the primacy of the “core” elements of the capitalist labour formation, and in fact, the “peripheral” which are embedded in the

'core'. And in the context of liberal workplaces such as in Nigeria, the "peripheral" cannot limit the "core." As noted by Thompson and Smith (1998:566) "no sufficient and adequate national ingredients can produce totally different national cake, if our analysis takes into consideration such structural, essentially contradictory categories such as wage-labour, unemployment, flexibility, wage-effort bargaining that characterize contemporary organisational practices." Also, taking into consideration the universalism of "technology of production" and peculiarities of production patterns in a local labour market such as the Refinery, for instance (dictated by global operating environment) "peripheries" are embedded in the "core". And as Thompson and Smith (1998:566) caution, "societal or institutional approaches in its undiluted form are close to Weberian Sociology, when workers and manager's activities, orientations and perceptions are bracketed within institutional dynamics of organisation of work." Clearly, therefore, while labour process analysis must incorporate societal or "institutional effects", and in the attempt to retain the autonomy of social processes, such conceptualisation must be synthesized with wider social structures and production politics.

The significance of this for conceptualizing the labour process is that the post-Braverman genre is to be re-theorized beyond the "binary classic" structural Marxism to embrace national thinking such as the family, community or clan as co-existing with "rational-legal" capitalism, and with its own distinct implications on specific labour process. Impliedly, the autonomy of the local workplace practices, and experiences of labour process at national or local levels "speak into", and are "also fed" by the "international typicality" of labour process. As noted by Thompson and Smith (1998:566) "there are common technological imperatives impacting on the life history of factories as influenced by local labour markets, folklores and social processes that are context determined at the workplace." Labour process understanding is made more "reflexive" and "nuanced" when the dynamic tensions between national specific varieties are "synthesized" with international capitalist dynamics.

Contemporary developments and patterns in labour process conceptualisation therefore indicate the importance of "broad theoretical" perspectives in thematizing and understanding the emerging dimensions in the capitalist labour process, and organisation of

work. The implications of these dimensions have now compelled labour process researchers to work beyond Braverman's Labour and Monopoly Capital, and contextualise the shifts in patterns of labour process, and the attendant managerial practices and control imperatives. Emerging patterns in the workplace show responses to trends that are both dynamic and contradictory, even as they are influenced by the dictate of global capitalism (Thompson and Smith 1998). New perspectives on labour process therefore "needs to combine sensitivity to the more emerging individualised and employer dominated forms of employment which seek to engage workers' subjectivity in realising capitalist agenda" (Thompson and Smith 1998:571). In other words, particular workplace understanding needs to be contextualised with structural relations and production politics that go beyond local or national context. As noted by Thompson and Smith (1998:571) both "micro and macro contexts need to speak to each other." Researchers within the labour process tradition, therefore, need to evolve analytical tools that are capable of integrating both.

In his exploration of how the "micro' and 'macro" contexts feed into each other in the explanation of specific labour process, Adesina (1989, 1990) explains "how workers' perception of their location in the relations of production feeds into shopfloor resistance and oppositional practices" (Adesina 1989:289), in their response to managerial practices. Beyond Burawoy's structural autonomy of labour process, workers' "lived experiences, shaped by symbolic construction of social communities underscore their autonomously constructed identity at work" (Adesina 1989:290). Shop floor workers'"identity formation" influences workplace relations. Through the articulation of "social processes" at work, the experiences of workers, therefore, go beyond the capitalist social relations of production, but serve as "basis for maintaining working class solidarity, and are mobilised in the process of defensive activities on the shop floor" (Adesina 1989:290). Through empirical analysis, Adesina's work shows how "lateral community in work" (LCW) constituted by shop floor workers, and combined with extra workplace social processes such as earth-folk talks serve as cultural repositories, are mobilised in their daily work experiences. These cultural resources mobilized by shop floor workers feed into, and may at times contrast sharply with the capitalist ethos of the relations of productions" (Adesina 1989:290).

The significance of this observation is to be able to reconceptualise labour process understanding within the 'locale specific' dynamics of on-going social processes that feed into everyday forms of worker experiences and activities at the workplace. This solidary bond amongst shop floor workers becomes the basis for "emphatic" (lateral) relations in support of or against the workplace managerial practices. It becomes the "context of collective reproduction of mutual support or opposition" (Adesina 1989:290) to supervisory practices on the shopfloor. It also forms the basis of workers' perception of their locations in the distributional relations of capitalist labour formation (Adesina 1989). As noted by Adesina (1989:294), the "complex interpenetration of work and non-workplace sources in shaping lived work experiences of workers exist in contradictory forms" in determining workers subjectively at work. Workers' perception and moral position that "their humanity should count for something *significance* in the direction of work" (Adesina 1989:294) drawn from their "cultural repository, co-exist in dynamic, even in mutually/contradictory process, within capitalist ethos of production relations"(Adesina 1989:294). Thus, the 'locational perceptions' of workers within the employment relations are shaped by what the workers themselves perceive as "matters" or "not matters" within the workplace itself. Adesina's (1989) observation illustrates further how the "micro" feeds into "macro" while doing labour process analysis.

The peculiar character of workplace labour process where Adesina's (1989, 1990, 1991) data were drawn is particularly instructive for the purpose of understanding the mediating role of "sociational" processes in shaping the "locational perceptions" of the workers. NNPC, as a "state-owned capital" (Adesina 1989), fosters a feeling of collective orientation, a sense of oneness of a 'collective farmland' amongst the workers. In this context, there is "alternative morality' which defines the relationship between the workers and the management which performs the global functions of capital" (Adesina 1989:295). To the workers, their "humanity" and sense of belonging are tied with the collectively owned asset, and this ethos negates being treated as a "labour" category in the employment relations(Adesina 1989).Workers' perception that "legitimises the framework of production i.e the refinery or corporation as state-owned capital reinforces perception of their location in the labour process" (Adesina 1990:135).

The other-side of this perception as noted by Adesina (1989) is also significant for our understanding of the labour process in the peripheral capitalist economy. The “expenditure of labour-power that generates products and surplus-values for instance, is firstly interpreted within the context of the social process of the organization, even though their location as wage-labour persists with the concern for the survival of the unit of capital” (Adesina 1990:130). Thus, as noted by Adesina (1990:131) “the feeling that the corporation belongs to us all is however complex in its implication” within the particular workplace of the study. While it fosters the ethos of a collectively owned asset, underscoring the LCW, “its valorisation process does not disappear from sight,” it equally expresses the “other-side” as a basic unit of capital for the reproduction of labour power and profit generation”(Adesina 1990:131).

In another analysis of how the solidary nature of shop floor’s lateral relations shape workers’ subjectivity, Oloyede (1992) deploys Burawoy’s analytical mode of “game-play” to explain workers’ own capacity, in the wake of recession in the organisation he(Oloyede) studied. His analysis was based on shop floor workers lived experiences and efforts to cope with the challenges of the recessions. In Oloyede’s (1992:52) account, shopfloor workers enactment of the strategies of “game-play” were designed to cope with “anxieties” and “uncertainties” in response to managerial disciplinary strategies of task intensification and job-cuts. As part of strategies for coping with the recession, the workers actively engage in shopfloor relations in their autonomous work experiences as basis for “making out” in the light of managerial “on-slaughts”.

According to Oloyede (1992:52) “in moments of organisational changes (recession), a consciousness of insecurity is generated which exerts a greater influence on strategy to be adopted by shopfloor workers.” The strategy adopted may, however “not be oppositional but survival oriented” (Oloyede 1992:52), and as such, consent is produced making workers remain “acquiescent” to managerial disciplinary measures. Enactment of “game play” by shop floor workers in this empirical study equally remains instructive in our understanding of shop floor culture as “resource strategy” for workers’ “subjective formation” in coping with regimes of uncertainty. More significantly, though, and in the context of labour process analysis, his account remains within the confine of Burawoy’s

“consent manufacturing” at the point of production, and not interpreted as overt struggle and oppositions to the processes of organisation of work. He notes “by engaging in the game, the individual worker concern for survival predominates” (Oloyede 1992:52), over the collective action that could confront or challenge the concrete issues of surplus-value valorisations. Concern for survival inhibits workers’ ability to harness the “lateral tension” into collective action in confronting the managerial practices. This further confirms Gartman’s (1983) observations of limitations of Burawoy’s “manufacturing consent” thesis in offering a dialectical understanding of labour process under assumed managerial hegemony.

While the Labour Process Analysis, as a conceptual approach for understanding the workplace labour process, offers a powerful theoretical insight into the capitalist mode of production, “in a context like Nigeria, it needs to take into consideration the specific cultural context and dimensions in which workers perceive their location in the world of work” (Adesina 1991:145). In a peripheral capitalist economy like Nigeria, the labour process framework remains a credible conceptual approach in understanding the character of workplace relations (Adesina 1988). However, as noted by Adesina (1991:145), attentiveness to “context specificity in sociological study of workplace guides researchers from mapping insights developed from one research setting to another.”

The importance of context-specificity—indeed the social process in which the objects of study are located, has been empirically demonstrated to be useful for the workplace researcher (Adesina 1988, 1989, 1992). In other words, from the standpoint of shop floor workers, that is, their perception of work and their world of work that is, sensitivity to context-specific social process and culture should guide workplace studies. Adesina (1991:145) notes “shopfloor workers orientation rooted in their cultural milieu influence how they relate to their supervisors and co-workers.” Based on his empirical findings, “the analysis of workplace relations, in particular shopfloor, need to go beyond the one-sided abstraction, on a continuum, to one mediated by the “workers’ (people’s) culture” if we are to lay bare the complex contradictory character of work relations in its totality (Adesina 1991:145).

Thus, for an understanding of a particular labour process, it has to take into account the dynamics of the workplace. It has to pay attention to the specificities of on-going social process at the research site. This is more so in a context of a workplace such as the NNPC. The corporation is generally viewed by the workers as a collectively owned national asset and central to the national development project. Although “a unit of capital, the sense of collectively owned asset has implications not only for the sense of legitimacy of the claims that workers make on its management, but also of the demands that the management can make on the workers” (Adesina 1991:146). Such concerted and reciprocal obligations have implications for the type of “qualifications” a researcher might need to attach to the specific labour process in the workplace (Adesina 1991). Qualifying, and analysing this distinct aspect of workers’ perception as a premise for, and how it shapes their subjectivity, is crucial as a mediating role even for understanding the complex dialectical interplay of shopfloor politics of production.

For instance, in the specific site where Adesina did his study (Adesina 1988), the shopfloor politics is structured by, and reflected in what Adesina (1991:1-2) refers to as Lateral Community in Work (LCW), and Vertical Community in Work (VCW). The LCW refers to the “community of shopfloor or office workers, while the VCW refers to reciprocal bonds of non-formal obligations between the management – represented by the supervisors on the shopfloor and workers – beyond the standard ideas of workplace relations between those performing the global functions of capital and workers under their control” (Adesina 1991:119).

In this conceptualization, a coherent understanding of labour process should involve a “deeper understanding of workers’ oppositional stance and resistance to particular managerial practices as grounded in (and mediated through) “collective ethos” or ‘alternative morality – alternative in the sense of confronting the logic of capitalist commodity relations and individualisation” (Adesina 1991:114). The interpretation that workers give their “significant others” – in this context, the supervisors and managers – on issues relating to work or outside the work, is equally important for the study of the labour process in the context of NNPC. This is more so in the context of state-owned enterprises (such as the NNPC) where the feelings and perception of pure labour exploitation in the process of

production are mediated by ethos of “collective ownership,” reinforced by and articulated through the idea of “national development”.

“Workers’ construction of social communities at work”, Adesina (1991:115) notes, represents two levels of mediation for understanding workers’ orientation in the process of production. The two levels involve the “Lateral Communities in Work (LCW), and the Vertical Communities in Work (VCW), mediated by a set of norms and values that produce the two levels, and are equally reproduced” (Adesina 1991:115). In other words, the sense of belonging and collective ethos that flow from the ‘community’ mediates the patterns of consent and resistance in the workplace. In this sense, even though workers subject themselves to a capitalist mode of production, they still find rationalization of their location in the “collective” which mediates the workplace resistance.

3.4. Analyzing Control and Resistance in the Labour Process Debate: post-structuralists’ perspective

The understanding of labour process in the workplace, represented strongly by Braverman’s (1974), which was in turn, inspired by Marx’s, labour process debate in recent times has started to take the turn for consideration of resistance in the workplace . And from Marxian perspective, ‘real resistance is manifested in diverse forms but significantly takes its source from revolutionary class consciousness’ (cited in Knights et al 1994:2). Here, resistance is conceptualised as a fundamental defining feature of capitalist mode of production, where surplus value is appropriated.

Inherent in this collective form of labour is lack of tendency for real consciousness on the part of labour of the “real resistance”. As noted by Marx, “because of the mystifications surrounding capitalist mode of production, there is illusion of freedom which blurs and obscures the fundamental source of the alienation” (Knights et al.1994: 3). Here again, we note how the mechanisms and “legitimizing ideologies” of capitalist mode of production tend to obscure a tendency on the part of collective labour to engage in class-based resistance. The legitimating ideologies constructed capitalism “as normal and rational progress of nature” (Knights et al 1994:4). As a result of this rationality and its inner logics, workers may therefore find it difficult to actively move beyond it as a ‘socially

constructed” reality, thereby obscuring and mystifying any consciousness for “real resistance”.

As demonstrated in the above review, it is precisely because of the “hidden” and obscure form of consent in the workplace that evokes the concern for understanding the relevance of “subjectivity” and “identity” as crucial imperatives for a critical understanding of labour process. As noted by Knights and Vurdubakis (1994, cited in Knights et al. 1994:168), post-’structuralists’ interest in “subjectivity and resistance is to address the gap in early writers’ contributions to labour process understanding.” Thus, elaborate theorisations in its various forms continue to engage the attention of “second-wave” labour process analysts. We find this in the works of David Knights and Hugh Willmott(2000); Stephen Ackroyd and Paul Thompson (1999); David Collinson(1994 and 2003); Mahmoud Ezzamel et al (2001); and Muhammad (2003). Their analyses within the labour process debate touch on the meaning of resistance from the subjective formation of workers’ identity even as this is influenced by the inner logics of the capitalist labour process.

While Braverman’s (1974) *LMC* remains inspirational and fundamental in the work of these analysts, attention is increasingly being paid to the issues of subjectivity and power/knowledge relations on identity formation and resistance in the workplaces. Their contributions paid close attention to what may appear as “cooperation or consensus at work”, which may conceal aspects of resistance that do not directly threaten capitalism, but form the “subjective orientation” of workers and subsequently “reproduce” itself in the workplace. According to Knights and Vurdubakis, labour process analysis should begin “to question the assumptions that render knowledge of resistance self-evident in the workplace” (Knights and Vurdubakis 1994, in Knights et al 1994:169). In other words, “theory and analysis of resistance should be located around three central questions; where is resistance to be located, who are its agents, and how can it be justified?”(Knights and Vurdubakis 1994). The answers to these questions as noted by Knights and Vudurbubakis are situated “in the analysis of resistance within the relations of power and knowledge” (Knights and Vurdubakis 1994, in Knights et al 1994:169) in the workplace. In this understanding, the “subjects though separated, are also determined by the structures of

power knowledge relations and discourses” they are embedded in (Knights and Vurdubakis 1994 in Knights et al 1994:170).

In this new turn, labour process debates have consequently been “far-reaching” in an attempt for a “re-dress” of the relative neglect of resistance in the workplace. There have been calls for consideration of detail theorisation of subjectivity and resistance in the analysis of labour process. In the contemporary workplace, Knights et al (1994) argue that “resistance is intertwined with subjectivity.” In other words, there is a “role” assigned to the subject in the manifestation of resistance in the workplace. Labour process understanding, therefore, needs to incorporate the new direction of resistance and the processes of subjectivity in the capitalist workplace. Amongst the critical labour process writers whose work depicts the growing concern for a theory of subjectivity are David Knights (1980), Paul Thompson (1990), Hugh Willmott (1990), David Collinson (1992), Study *et.al.* (1992).

It is, however to be noted, that there are differences in their theory of subjectivity and social identity formation at workplaces. While earlier writers such as Friedman (1977), Edwards (1979) situate their line of analysis within managerial control strategies and workers’ subjective resistance tendencies, other writers like Littler (1982), Edwards and Reich (1982), Burawoy (1985), and Knights et al (1994:6) draw a connection between managerial control and resistance in the workplace.

Though Burawoy’s (1979) writing on “game play” through which consent is generated among the shopfloor workers could also be interpreted as workers’ experience and identity formation on the shopfloor. Its limitations have been pointed out for not being able to draw out “the implication for understanding shopfloor resistance” (Knights and Vurdubakis 1994:6). Arguably, his analysis remains relevant to the extent that “playing game” becomes an arena for testing the self-esteem of shopfloor workers. Nevertheless, it is still locked up in the conditions of exploitation and subordination that reproduce their subordination. When workers get bounded up in the conditions that reproduce their subordinate positions, awareness regarding resistance is “blurred and obscured”. Critics of

Burawoy's "making out" thesis point to this, as one of its limitations for understanding modern workplace 'misbehaviour' and subjectivity (Ackroyd and Thompson 1999).

Also, the critical labour process analysis that draws on Foucault's works (1980, 1982) started with a refocus on the close relationship between "the subject and power/knowledge relations, as particularly influential in stimulating a deeper understanding of subjectivity, with a strong focus upon localized, context determined forms of resistance" (cited in Knights et al 1994:177). For the Foucauldian turn, the real implication of power is through the workers' subjectivity. Subjectivity is seen as "a complex composite of such category of persons (workers) upon who powers of others are exercised" (Knights and Vurdubakis 1994 in Knights et al 1994:177). According to Foucault, "it is the formation and reformation of self through the gaze of power/authority that is most important for understanding contemporary strategies of control and resistance" (cited in Knights et al 1994:184). "Self-identity formation" thus becomes a complex outcome of "subjugation" at workplace, and from which resistance to it also emanates. Through the "effects" of power, process of subjectivity and identity formation are in process. While power does not in itself "directly" form identity and subjectivity, it puts in motion process and conditions for its formation – which also generate tensions and resistance (Knights et al 1994). Modern workplace study has, therefore, renewed the attention on how to problematize workers' experiences through the concepts of control and resistance, understanding the relationship as dialectics between power/subjectivity, and consent/resistance in the analysis of labour process (Knights and Vurdubakis 1994 in Knights et al 1994).

In its most conventional way, resistance in the workplace is seen as a "reactive process when agents (workers), in the context of workplace/power relations actively oppose initiatives from the management" (Knights et al 1994:9). Resistance is, therefore, seen to be shaped and determined by the particular context, and the context of the workplace. Workers' responses to specific processes of managerial practices are manifested in the dimensions and character of workplace resistance and consent. And the particular form in which the resistance is manifested is also located and conditioned by the local and historically specific formations of the workplace managerial and employment relations' prac-

tices. To Knights et al (1994:10), therefore, central to “theoretical analysis of resistance and subjectivity in the workplace is the focus on power.” Thus, consistent with the underlying assumptions of post-structuralists’ labour process analysis, theory of subjectivity and resistance provides the conceptual framework “where self and agency are seen as constituted through the essence of power in the workplace ... and other practices” (Knights et al 1994:10). In the attempt to break away from the “dualistic-deterministic” orthodoxy of agency – structure within the Marxian tradition, in which resistance could be interpreted as manifestation of deep-rooted antagonism between capital and labour, the theoretical framework of subjectivity draws insight from both extremes of “structure-action”, and “determinist-voluntarism’s” range of thematic underlines, within the critical strand of labour process understanding. At one point on the continuum or level of our analysis, it is essential for the researcher doing workplace study to investigate the meaning the subjects themselves attribute to their action within the locale (Adesina 1989). In other words, the researcher should consider the words and interpretations of the participants in the analysis and confirm their meaning regarding the local resistance practices.

At another level, and arguing for contemporary literature on workplace resistance to move beyond the “dualism” of consent and resistance, Mumby (2005) urges researchers to incorporate a dialectical approach that account for consent-resistance as “mutually constitutive of social reproduction of everyday organisational life” (Mumby 2005:20). In this way, according to Mumby, a “thick description of the politics of everyday life and workplace would be provided” (Mumby 2005:20). A conceptual approach that adopts “a more dialectical analysis to consent/resistance seeks to understand how the two are “mutually implicated and co-productive” (Mumby 2005:21). Consent and resistance often intersect in the “complex mundane practices of everyday workplace situations where the “bow” and the “fart” i.e. both processes of workers’ obedience and covert act of resistance shape the process of workplace relations” (Mumby 2005:21).

Mumby’s (2005) work goes further to show, drawing on both neo-Marxist inspirations and Foucault’s perspective “the discursive conditions under which the dynamics of consent and resistance unfolds” (Mumby 2005:21) in the workplace. To Mumby, “all forms of workplace workers’ behaviour - “discursive or material” are best understood through

the prism of discourse in which all forms of behaviours are shaped and fixed by competing efforts in the workplace” (Mumby 2005:21) A dialectical understanding of the workplace relations of consent and resistance therefore explains how “the actors accommodate, resist, reproduce and transform the interpretive possibilities and meaning systems embedded in the organisational life” (Mumby 2005:22). If the workplace is conceptualised as frontiers for interplay of mutual tensions, and contradictions, a dialectical approach synthesises these tendencies in their “dramaturlogical” context. As such, workplace resistance is best understood as a local sociational process and production, involving “how actors attempt to shape workplace practices” (Mumby 2005:23). While it seeks to eschew reification of behaviours in the workplace, it analyses the “how” in a dialectical context.

In arguing for the revitalization of dialectical approach in the study of contemporary workplace, Mumby’s emphasis is on how daily manifestation of struggles by workers is best conceptualised. According to him, there is “indeterminacy” in this struggle, and this indeterminacy is best understood through the prism of dialectical analysis. In other words, in the workplace, there are diverse ‘underbelly’ interplay of mutually embedded efforts unfolding in the daily workplace practices that shape workers’ struggle and resistance. In an Edwardian sense, this workplace struggle and resistance are at the centre of analysis, and which, therefore, makes it a “contested terrain”. With greater attention on this, dialectics give attention to “rhythms” of everyday managerial practices and labour process, without privileging “limitless” understanding on the managerial texts and discourses, for instance on TQM, teamwork, and flexibility as objects of analysis. As such, dialectical perspectives “rediscover the recalcitrant worker – the missing subject that has become an “extinct” species in critical” workplace analysis” (Ackroyd and Thompson 1999, cited in Mumby 2005:24).

For the researcher to be able to locate and identify the recalcitrant worker, he is to adopt a dialectical approach and move beyond descriptive “typologies” or “differentiation” of types of resistance in workplaces (Mumby 2005), to a model that gives distinctive attention to the “interpretive struggles” with managerial practices. In other words, the specific, locally produced character of the workplace, and its attendant “ambiguities” and “recon-

stitution”, should engage the attention of the critical analyst within the labour process tradition. In the context of this “discursive turn,” and within the general framework of dialectical model, resistance is conceptualised “as a routine, yet complex embedded social process, the meaning of which is contingent on the contextual features of the workplace” (Mumby 2005:32).

According to Mumby (2005:32), this has been the approach and concern of post-structuralist labour process scholars such as Mumby (1998); Knights and McCabe (2000); Collinson (1992,1994); Ackroyd and Thompson(1999); Fleming and Spicer (2002), to thematize workers’ resistance in its “agentic formulation” and reconstitution in the workplace. Within this conceptual remit, workers in their recalcitrant tendencies are able to deploy inherent “discourse strategies” in their attempt to create “resistant spaces for themselves within the larger discourses of managerial practices” (Gabriel 1999, cited in Mumby 2005:32). Such discursive tactics are exemplified as including: “cynicism, dis-identification, humour, joking, gossiping, parody, mode of dress, hidden transcripts, office graffiti and discursive distancing” (Mumby 2005:32). Though these are routine daily workplace practices, “they are also forms of resistance, that are covert and non-confrontational, operating in the interstices and underbelly of organisational life” (Mumby 2005:33). Mumby’s analysis has, therefore, shown how the workers in the workplace, through the process of discourse, “engage in the systems of meanings constituted in their daily fabric of organising” (Mumby 2005:33). In other words,labour process analysis should focus on the “ambiguity” and “multiplicity” enacted by the workers towards the managerial practices. The broad space provided by this “ambiguity and indeterminacy therefore allow workers to freely deploy resources that make possibilities for reconstructing alternative resistance and counter the hegemony of managerial practices”(Mumby 2005:33).

Drawing on illustrations from Collinson’s (1992) workplace ethnographic study, Mumby (2005:33) shows how humour, for instance could firstly be seen as a discursive practice “producing conformity” and simultaneously used to resist managerial practices, and, therefore, use it to control shopfloor production output. In this context, as demonstrated through Collinson’ (1992), humour on the shopfloor, demonstrates a strong resistance

culture, rooted in shopfloor conception of autonomy, knowledgeability, and “critical narcissism.”

While classic Marxist labour process analysis situates mechanisms for resistance within the inherent contradiction of capitalist mode of production, “discourse-based” post-structuralist analysis conceptualises resistance as a form of “Identity-Work” (Mumby 2005) through which “organizational members, that is, the workers discursively manage their identities in the face of management’s efforts at control and surveillance”(Mumby 2005:33). Self-identity formation, therefore, becomes the outcome of “daily experiences” of work life practices. The implication of this for our understanding of labour process analysis is that in this context of ambivalent work life experiences, a worker may pursue “conformist subjectivity” behaviour to secure identity in the face of constant pressure, and at another level he/she may articulate such “self-formation” and subjectivity in a manner that challenges the very managerial discourse.

The conceptual challenge from a research point of view is, therefore, to critically analyse and examine how workers explore the “tropes of resistance” mechanism such as irony, cynicism, and parody and how they use these resources at their disposal to reconstitute their identity, and in the appropriation of managerial discourse. And as noted by A. Prasad and Prasad (1998 cited in Mumby 2005:36), such strategic discursive of resistance is manifested in “subtle subversions,” “ambiguous accommodation”, and various forms of workplace disengagement that may be difficult to be noticed directly, or identified as overt recalcitrance. Ezzamel et al (2001) also identify how workers have been able to “use such discursive mechanisms to resist managerial attempts to encroach on what they perceive as their autonomy and collective identity in the production process” (cited in Mumby 2005:36).

Thus, in the context of “multiplicity of meaning”, that characterised everyday workplace practices, resistance is the “medium and outcome” of how workers reproduce and deploy available “spaces” and managerial discourse to reformulate their own self-identity. From a dialectical perspective of consent-resistance dynamics, and given the “shifting” and “precariousness” of meanings/discourses in the workplace, resistance and self-identity of

workers are contingent upon the ability of workers to strategically engage with and adapt to available discourses. As noted by Mumby (2005:36), workplace resistance as a “discursive practice needs to be examined not as a specific, identifiable set of behaviours, but as a complex, contradictory and socially situated attempt to construct oppositional meanings and identities.”

The concern about forms and dimensions of workplace resistance and recalcitrant behaviours that are often covert, and that lie beneath the “observable surface” in the workplace continue to engage the attention of “second-wave” labour process commentators on how to conceptualize and analyse such forms of “organisational misbehaviours” (Ackroyd and Thompson 1999). In a context, where management remains the active agent in managerial practices, Ackroyd and Thompson (1999:3) argue for the rediscovery of the “recalcitrant worker” that is becoming an “extinct species” in the labour process analysis.

Within diverse strands, but within a single genre of labour process conceptualization, sociology of work continues to see the workplace as an arena of “contested” and multiple changes. In other words, work processes are restructured with new management practices, with attendant implications on employment relations. From the critical LPT perspective as against mainstream managerialists’ conception of workplace relations, there is a growing and palpable “removal of labour as an active agency of resistance” - painting a picture of “quietness in the workplace’ (Ackroyd and Thompson 1999:615). Therefore, as work organisations change and evolve in the light of global dynamics and in line with normative expectations, with the attendant managerial implications, theoretical reconsideration and re-conceptualization of “recalcitrant worker” have challenged researchers to see beneath the surface of “formal consensual” formation in the capitalist employment relationship. At the workplace, and beneath the managerial gaze, there exists “a considerable variety of forms of resistance and misbehaviour’ (Ackroyd and Thompson 1999:615) , thus making workplace practices an arena of contestations that often make the insidious process of “colonization” not easily observable, but inherent in the daily process of work organisation. Ackroyd and Thompson (1999) therefore, offer an insightful analysis of contemporary workplace practices, at ‘the underneath’, that constitute the covert forms of workplace resistance.

Conventional Marxist thinking within the labour process perspective has tended to over-emphasize the overt forms of resistance and opposition taking the form of “declared strikes” and union activism, and thus underplays the role of “agency” (Ackroyd and Thompson 1999). In response, recent analytical focus has attempted to remedy these shortcomings by identifying the incidence of all forms of resistance prevailing in the workplace. The focus on various and diverse forms of resistance has shifted from collective type, Vallas 2003; individual type, Wilson 2000; overt type, Ezzamel et al 2001; to covert type, Ackroyd and Thompson 1999, (cited in Penny Dick 2008:327). Indeed, following the criticisms of Braverman’s (1974) apparent neglect of workplace resistance, the conceptual significance of workplace resistance within the labour process debate continue to rise. As stated earlier, part of the concern is the challenge coming from dimensions of managerial practices and control imperative, and it is in this context that all forms of workers resistance are manifested.

While the concern of management and its control imperatives continue to focus on how to “eliminate” or minimize recalcitrance in the workplace, its persistence in several forms remains a “distinct analytical” focus within labour process commentary. Analysed through diverse conceptual orientations, resistance and recalcitrance have been thematized and outlined in such diverse forms. However, the distinct contributions from labour process writers have been significant in the attention they are able to draw to the “irreducible interrelationships” between managerial practices, control and workers’ resistance; pointing out the significant implications of unequal power relations in the workplace. Amongst early analysts in this realm are Friedman 1977; Nichols and Beynon 1977; R Edwards 1979; Storey 1985; Thompson and Bannon 1985; Ackroyd and Thompson 1999; and Collinson 1994, (cited in Knights et al 1994:26). Their concern has been to explore and analyse the way workplace resistance could be conceptualised as the inevitable outcome of managerial control strategies.

As such, their analyses tend to “reinsert” worker resistance and subjectivity which were thought to be lacking in Braverman (1974). Among the important analytical questions that these analysts engage with in this strand are: “What discourses and practices constitute resistance in the workplace? What resources and strategies are available to those who

resist? How do resistances emerge?” (Collinson 1994 in Knights et al 1994:26). According to Collinson (1994), these questions are important if researchers are to explain the “complexity and dimensions” of workplace resistance.

The significance of these analytical questions for our understanding of workplace resistance, therefore is that rather than paying attention to describing and explaining the disciplinary process of managerial control, and how consent is manufactured (Burawoy 1979), researchers are to refocus attention on analytical questions of dimensions of resistance and its enactment by workers. On this, Clegg (1989, cited in Collinson 1994:27), draws on Foucault’s (1977) arguments to explain why the “dominated so frequently consent to their subordination, pointing out the significant influence of power–knowledge relations in organisations.” In Clegg’s(1989) formulation, management possess the overriding strategic power in terms of agenda-setting, procedures, rules and resources mobilization so much so that management invariably “outflanks” the subordinate. However, for Collinson (1994), this argument cannot be taken as given, since to him, in modern workplaces “workers are not so lacking in knowledge and information or so powerless” (Collinson 1994, in Knights et al 1994:27), in the situation they found themselves. Collinson argued that while a researcher often explains the patterns in which consents are manufactured, or how compliance are gained and sustained, there should be a “renewed analytical” focus that primarily gives attention to “detailed examination of the conditions, processes, and consequences of workplace resistance” (Collinson 1994 in Knights et al 1994:28). As he puts it “knowledge in organisation is multiple, contested and shifting” in which, though workers may “lack certain detailed understanding of the underlying political processes, they do possess and monopolize other technical production-related knowledge that facilitate their oppositional practices,” (Collinson 1994 in Knights et al 1994:28). Therefore, according to Collinson, it would be misleading to assume that the prevalence of compliance or consent in the workplace has totally “outflanked” resistance. Thus, the “subjective strategies” deployed by workers through their own mobilization of the very organisational knowledge and processes account for the prevailing workplace resistance.

According to Collinson (1994:28), part of workers' subjective strategies may include attempts to escape or avoid demands of the management by "distancing themselves" exemplified in "daily routine resistance" at the shopfloor. Reading in tandem with Mumby's, Collinson's work shows that "oppositional practices are significantly shaped, not only by power, knowledge and specific organisational discourses, but also by the 'subjectivities of employees in its agentic formulation'" (Collinson 1994:29). Collinson argues, "these subjectivities are creative, knowledgeable, multiple, shifting, sometimes fragmentary, often inconsistent and frequently contradictory" (Collinson 1994:29). Running through their analysis, therefore, is the recognition that "resistance and consent are rarely polarized as extremes on a continuum but are interwoven and invariably play themselves out together within particular organisational cultures, discourses and practices" (Collinson 1994:29). The interfaces between the two "arenas of display" are characterised by elements and features of each other. Therefore, a "polyvalent understanding" of the role of compliance, consent and resistance within labour process analysis needs to incorporate the "interrelationship between power, knowledge, information and subjectivity" (Collinson 1994:29). It is, therefore, important for labour process analysis to first account for how the appropriation and monopoly of knowledge by management constitutes an important control strategy in the workplace. Secondly, to explain how this control strategy generates opposition and resistance arising from the subjectivity of the workers (Collinson 1994).

In an ethnographic study of workplace resistance in a UK organisation, Collinson (1992) demonstrated how shopfloor culture of an engineering factory had shown workers' response to corporate's discourse and practices relating to teamwork and quality improvement programs. Here, shopfloor workers were able to enact their own informal discursive practices where "resistance by distance" was articulated. The workers were more concerned to redefine their own identity in a more positive way, and in a manner different from that prescribed by the management concerning teamwork, and quality programmes introduced in the organisation (Collinson 1992). Workers' own redefinition of managerial practices reflected their oppositional discursive practices to the practices.

On the shopfloor, workers' own understanding and definitions of factory production process, based on their knowledge information (craft-knowledge) and as something different

from what the management wanted them to believe, played an important role in the dual process of identity formation and resistance in the organisation (Collinson 1992 and 1994). In other words, the workers had the capacity to mobilize the practical knowledge of the shop floor to their own advantage in their resistance to managerial practices. To them, the “craft knowledge” that characterised shopfloor production system was more important than the “white-collar scripts” (managerial practices), that was interpreted as less important realities to that obtained on the shopfloor (Collinson 1994). Through this orientation, the shopfloor workers “symbolically inverted the management scripts and discourses, and, therefore, able to demonstrate that shopfloor work and knowledge remain the site for real, authentic and experiential knowledge” (Collinson 1994:33); an inversion that facilitates their resistance and “self-differentiation.” Here, we are able to see how the technical and shopfloor knowledge of production process were mobilized as “counter-culture” to managerial practices –a sense of power and self-identity for shopfloor workers.

Shopfloor craft knowledge facilitated “series of oppositional practices and resistance through “distance” which often entail restriction of flow of technical and social information through deployment of their engineering and collective skills solidarity” (Collinson 1994:34). By having control over the job and self, they were not only able to manipulate their knowledge of the shopfloor, but also able to appropriate symbolic spaces and resources using their knowledge of the labour process (Collinson 1994). The resistance practices gave the workers “oppositional power” to equally counter the “managerial hegemonic” practices on the shopfloor. With their knowledge of the skill and the shop floor technology of production process, they were not only able to “control output”, but also the “plant process” in the factory. Their craft-skill and knowledge therefore represented a “collectivity” of engineering knowledge which superseded whatever “production scripts” the management may have enacted for production processes on the shopfloor (Collinson 1994).

However, as pointed out by Collinson (1994:37), it is to be noted that the act of resistance and oppositions put up by the workers also “reinforce the commodification of their labour, and therefore serve to reproduce their own material and symbolic insecurity.” This

is because by merely acting to secure a degree of their “self-identity”, without critically challenging the logic of the managerial practices and discourses, their resistance reproduces the very conditions in which they found themselves. Therefore, on the shop floor, resistance, compliance, and consent co-exist in the same discursive pattern. Here again, we read a Foucauldian interpretation of power/knowledge in the analysis of workplace consent-resistance.

Indeed, in moments of labour process changes and re-organisation of work that accompany workplace restructuring, or the introduction of new methods of production, in the refinery for instance, there could be “uncritical acceptance” of management’s technical and managerial prerogatives. Management often justifies the decision to be taken in this regard by presenting to workers “discursive rationale” in form of technical and managerial information to warrant such decisions. In this circumstance, workers might not be able to critically question such management wisdom. And this could therefore be interpreted from labour process perspective as “conferment of acceptance of their status as disposable commodified labour” (Collinson 1994:37). Also, in such moments when workers concede to managerial prerogatives and discourses (because they have lesser options), they may manifest a ‘hidden’ expression of opposition. This, referred to as “resistance through distance” (Collinson 1994:37), “working at resistance” (Ezzamel et al 2001:1065) often shows the two dimensions of consent to managerial initiatives, and its “counter-veiling” tendencies from the workers. Thus, the processes of consent and resistance embed moments of shifting contradictions, ambiguities, paradoxes and tensions in the workplace which play out in the discursive practices and symbolic mobilization of the resources involved.

The above reference to “resistance through distance” and “working at resistance” (Collinson 1994 in Ezzamel et al 2001:1061) has in part demonstrated the significance of social and technical knowledge and its mobilization as “a medium for the articulation of shopfloor workplace resistance” (Collinson 1994 in Ezzamel et al 2001). Through its manipulation, and the associated inversion of managerial discourse, shopfloor workers have been able to assert their own knowledge and technical skill through which they could “restrict output”, act oppositionally, appropriate time and space (Collinson 1994).

Paradoxically, it is also within this context that they consented to the control imperatives of the management. Thus, context and circumstances of the workplace determine the form of “cultural” and counter cultural practices workers may enact in response to managerial control. In the daily routine of workplace behaviours are acts that indicate dimensions of ambiguities, ambivalence and paradoxes invented, and mobilized in the manifestation of consent and resistance. In other words, workers in their concern with how to secure their identities in the workplace, mobilize “informal collectives” and “symbols” as resistance strategies, even in their confinement as “commodity status” in the labour process.

However, as pointed out by Collinson (1994:40), workers’ resistance through distance “paradoxically reinforces the legitimacy of managerial control, making workers submissive to the disciplinary practices.” This, therefore, implies that at the workplace, “workers have available to themselves variety of options, knowledge, cultural resources and strategic agencies through which they initiate oppositional practices” (Collinson 1994:49). Workplace resistance which seeks to challenge managerial control initiatives draws on multiple “material and symbolic” forms of the specific context of the workplace. Within the context, issues of consent and resistance are so “inextricably interwoven” that they “mutually” constitute each other. Also, while resistance could not be entirely interpreted as overtly subversive or intended for disruption, it might be naïve to conceive that it could invariably be “outflanked” by managerial control. The routine, daily manifestations of covert resistance underscore their shifting, indeterminate and overlapping dimension while still remain as strategic choices for the workers. In other words, they could be mobilized for resistance as they could be mobilized for consent.

Indeed, the specific deployment of knowledge and symbolic materials shaped by circumstances or shifting situations the workers find themselves in also define their “subjective orientation, power relations and motivation” (Collinson 1994:38). Resistance and consent are so interwoven that they mutually constitute each other in defining workers’ own identity and subjectivity. Thus, as shown in the case studies analysed in (Collinson 1992,1994), there are always overlapping and mutually embedded character of consent compliances and resistance at workplace.

Within the tradition of labour process analysis, there are diverse themes that explain how workers have become “self-discipline” productive type under managerial practices. Prominent in this tradition are writers such as Hugh Willmott, David Knights, McCabe, Ackroyd and Thompson. Demonstrated in the works of Willmott et al (1993), Thompson and Ackroyd (1999) and David Knights (1994), for instance, is how a worker “self-identify formation” and subjectivity explain the “indeterminacy” of consent and resistance. Their analysis illustrates the complex, simultaneous and even contradictory dynamics in which workplace consent, resistance and subjectivity are constituted. Such contributions therefore limit the extent to which a researcher should overstate or “romanticize” oppositional or ‘consent practices’. According to Collinson (1994:54), “overly-rationalist”, and essentialist assumptions regarding agency, subjectivity and human actions tend to project workplace oppositional and consent actions from employees as purely deterministic process.” In other words, the “process of negotiation” and formation of identity and subjectivity in the workplace are diverse and are manifested in “overlapping dimensions.”

In his critique of Burawoy’s (1979) analysis of role and influence of political and ideological realms on the creation of human agency on the shopfloor, Willmott (1997), argues that we can neither reduce “workers to passive carriers of political and ideological structures” (cited in Ezzamel et al 2001:1056), nor can we seek the explanation in the “spaces” created by them in dealing with their alienating conditions. The explanation, Willmott (1997), contends, can only be obtained in the “social processes that shape workers subjectively on the shopfloor” (cited in Ezzamel et al 2001:1057). As Thompson notes, Burawoy’s work stops short of developing a theory of human agency or “the subject” – a task that is identified as probably the “greatest theorising challenge facing contemporary labour process analysis” (Thompson 1990 in Ezzamel et al 2001:1057). Thus, in the later work of Knights and Willmott (1989); Willmott (1993; 1994; 1997), considerable attention has been given to the incorporation of a theory of “social and personal” identity into analysis of dynamics of capitalist labour process. Workplace labour process analysis needs to incorporate identity because “meanings imported by actions in labour – management relations are derived from their respective self-identity and agency” (Thompson 1999 in Ezzamel et al 2001:1057).

Self-identity project in workplace relations has therefore secured a relief affinity with Giddens' (1984) analysis in which "social actions are mediated by the "knowledgeability" and "capability" of human agents, that is, the inclination for the subjective to secure safe self-identity" (cited in Ezzamel 2001:1057). In Ezzamel et al's analysis, workers make "investments in measures and practices that construct and sustain their own sense of self-identity that gives an "understanding" of management's imposition, which in that circumstance makes little rational sense of categories/objectives ascribed to them by orthodox labour process theory" (Ezzamel et al 2001:1057). This also explains why values or expectations of management on the workers are not often "perfectly embraced or accepted when such demands threaten their self-identity" (Ezzamel 2001: 1058).

It is, therefore, the "sensed implications", to accept or not accept changes in organisation of work and managerial practices, conditioned by the desire to secure a sense of self-identity, that shape workers' lived experiences. As Giddens (1991 cited in Ezzamel et al 2001:1058) notes, "self-identity is normally commensurate to an experience of continuity across time and space, where this self is reflexively negotiated by the agent." This implies that the self-identity derives its meaning from "networks" or narratives through which the subjectivity is grounded and through which workers actively and artfully engage in (Giddens 1991).

The implications of self-identity and subjectivity in labour process analysis are located in the understanding of the 'exploitative dimensions' of employment relationship. In Ezzamel et al's (2001:1058) contention, "the structured antagonism between capital and labour continuously informs management to refine and strengthen the means of control, and equally, upon workers to enact forms of resistance." In this context, "there are processes of interpretation, assessing and responding" (Ezzamel et al. 2001:1058) by the workers. It is also in this context that the relations between the workers are mediated by "traditions and understandings" (Edwards 1990 cited in Ezzamel et al 2001). These customs and practices are "enacted and articulated" within the contradictory structures of production relations. Workers' self-identification within the context shapes their "self-involvement" and "self-management" of workplace challenges. It is through workers' "involvement in workplace/shopfloor activities that their real identity, as they perceived

it, is most directly and unequivocally expressed” (Ezzamel et al 2001:1058). The significance of this in the context of labour process understanding is made more analytical in the empirical illustrations shown in Collinson’s (1994), of shopfloor workers’ production and reproduction of consent and resistance, especially in moments of managerial practices.

3.5 Managerial Practices and the Workers

In the context of managerial regimes and labour process, workers are portrayed as being subject to a “more complete” and totalizing mode of managerial power and control exercised through a series and combination of workplace practices; team-based practices, total quality programs, flexibility – that accentuate “all forms of vertical and horizontal power relations, e.g team-based practices” (Sewell and Wilkinson 1992 cited in Collinson 2001:1059). As argued by Delbridge (1995 cited in Ezzamel et al 2001 : 1059), “by defining and controlling workplace relations through the TQM, team-based production methods, management have more completely combined its objective of the control of labour with economic objectives, and have therefore left workers to survive rather than resisting their exploitation.” Impliedly, it is assumed that resistance is either “eliminated or rendered futile” in the wake of “new” managerial initiatives. Even though workers could “distance” themselves from managerial control initiatives by withholding certain technical information (Collinson 1994:28), they are still subject to vertical managerial control mechanisms and, therefore, their actions will be less “subversive” of the managerial objectives.

From labour process analysis, therefore, managerial control imperatives of work processes are intended to intensify work activities, thereby securing surplus value from the labour. Here, it is also perceived, by extension, that through the new frontiers of control, managerial practices have succeeded in subsuming the workers to a “totalizing control” and exploitation. However, as argued in Ezzamel et al (2001: 1059), if it is acknowledged that “social relations of production is established upon a “structured antagonism” (Edwards 1990), the tendency to assume a free-flow of labour – commodity production as totalizing control and exploitation is flawed, but characterized with points of indetermi-

nacy.” The process of surplus-value appropriation from workers is ever “precarious and negotiated” (Ezzamel et al 2001:1059). For the purpose of our review and analysis, the implication is that in spite of prevailing managerial ideologies and practices, workplace relations are mediated by “traditions and understanding” developed by the managers and workers to interpret their relations to each other (Edwards 1990 cited in Ezzamel et al 2001:1059). In other words, the social process of work upon which managerial practices operate allows for an appreciation of how the “endemic contradictions” and resistance are mediated (Ezzamel et al 2001).

A valuable illustration of how this contradiction and resistance are mediated on the shopfloor was presented by Ezzamel et al (2001) based on empirical study. Based on evidence from the study, “misbehaviour and resistance” on the shopfloor provided a counterbalance of totalizing image of the managerial control strategies. It was shown through this study, that, in spite of scope and depth of new forms of managerial practices, there were still spaces opened up by the workers for manifestation of resistance on the shopfloor. Through a process of ‘negotiation’ and “understanding”, labour- management relations on the shopfloor were conducted in an informal, “idiosyncratic manner” that allowed workers to express themselves freely on managerial practices. In the case study presented by Ezzamel et al (2001), the organisation in line with global restructuring programmes launched a series of new managerial practices: multi-skilling, flexible team-based manufacturing, accompanied by various HRM initiatives in the efforts to ensure that the organisation conforms to “world-class manufacturing” standards. Nevertheless, “these initiatives encountered sustained, yet covertly accommodating resistance from the shopfloor” (Ezzamel et al 2001: 1062). To the shopfloor workers, various managerial initiatives that accompanied introduction of new work practices were designed to promote the latter’s objective. At every opportunity, therefore, the workers challenged or even “reject calls for more co-operative team-based work practices” (Ezzamel et al 2001:1065).

For the purpose of maintaining the central argument surrounding consent-resistance dialectics, it is particularly important to note as empirical analysis from Ezzamel et al (2001) continues to show, and as pointed out by Collinson (1994 cited in Ezzamel et al

2001:1062), “that those who engage in collective forms of resistance are likely to do so for a multiplicity of different, often interwoven reasons.” And these reasons are particularly located in the “defensiveness of workers’ subjectivity” (Collinson 1994 in Ezzamel et al 2001:1062), in the context of structured antagonisms. This subjectivity is multiple, shifting and fragmentary, providing workers with a “diverse network” of terms and resources to draw upon. In Collinson’s (1992), conceptualization, ‘identity projects’ within the workplace relations are played out amongst workers with the purpose of “checkmating” the impacts of managerial control practices. The identity project is shown in Collinson’s analysis of “resistance by distance”, through which the shopfloor workers by virtue of their technical knowledge can withhold technical information from the management. By extension, such a self-identity project could have “power-effect” upon the management when workers wish to confront the managers over their managerial practices. The power-effect of resistance is more apt when workers feel “threatened” by the demands of the managerial practices. They consequently “deploy more offensive strategies of resistance as they sought to undermine the authority and credibility of management” (Ezzamel et al 2001:1065).

In the pursuit of a self-identity project, workers mobilize their sense of collective as genuine and “mutually supportive” to fight what they may perceive unfair. According to Ezzamel et al, such workers’ sense of collective tends to appeal to the notion of “united we stand” to justify their avoidance of new methods which they perceive as threatening. At times, wrapped in humour, shopfloor banter conveys to the management, their dislike of new practices. Such “vertical tensions” often expose the contradictory consequences of management’s promoting certain practices. In the unifying character of shopfloor collective, workers are able to show that management practices “are often not integrating but divisive and destructive of their identity investments within the established workplace relations” (Ezzamel et al 2001:1066). On the shopfloor, workers’ disavowal of management’s practices has been encapsulated as “con” designed to increase work intensity and control. Through their self-identity they not only show awareness and pride in their capacity to endure the repetition and boredom of the shopfloor work, but also of being able to mobilize their resources in inverting the discourse behind the management’s initiatives

(Ezzamel et al 2001). Workers' self-identity project has therefore demonstrated workers' knowledgeability on the shopfloor.

Collinson's (1992, 1994) work has therefore adequately explored workers' manifestation of resistance, as shopfloor demonstration of working-class knowledgeability, through which shopfloor workers made an attempt to differentiate themselves from the middle-class world-view of managerial real intentions. Through "craft-skill identity" workers were able to show the discrepancies and contradictions inherent in the new managerial practices. And by "working at resistance" (Ezzamel et al 2001:1062), they jealously guided their knowledge and ability to assert control over production.

This implies, as Collinson (1994) notes "ability to defend an important physical and symbolic space, and through which they are able to deal with contradictions and insecurities of their work...without posing a meaningful challenge in terms of class struggle to the structure of power relations within the workplace" (cited in Ezzamel et al 2001:1070). Construed and interpreted through class struggle dialectics, therefore, the self-identity process fulfils the role of "reinforcing and reconfirming the legitimacy and hierarchal control of managerial prerogatives" (Ezzamel et al 2001:1070). Without actively challenging the structure of power relations, "self-identity formation and manifestation reinforces their entrapment in the managerial control" (Ezzamel et al 2001:1070).

Interpreted through the lens of critical conceptual analysis of "class struggle and dialectics" Gartman's (1983), 'resistance through distance' (Collinson 1994), and 'working at resistance' (Ezzamel et al 2001), workplace subjectivity is, therefore, analysed as a form of "self-subordinating" consent and "compliance negotiations", through which workers remain compliant or unaware of their conditions of entrapment. Its articulation and reproduction on the "shopfloor" covertly serve to reinforce their positions of subordination. Arguably, while forms of resistance "may reinforce workers' "subordination", it nevertheless points out the contradictory basis of managerial demands for new work practices, thereby providing the basis for contesting and re-appropriating such management efforts at introducing new practices (Collinson 1994).

A critical reappraisal of control-resistance and subjectivity on the shopfloor is also identified in the line of conceptualisation taken by Gabriel (1999) in his analysis of managerial control mechanisms, and the extent they can be said to “colonize employees’ subjectivity” in the workplace and “types of resistance in which they generate” (Gabriel 199:179). In Gabriel’s proposition, labour process analysis needs to be reconceptualised to be able to account for both the “unmanaged” and “unmanageable” terrains in the workplace. According to Gabriel (1999:179), it is at this “unnoticed terrain that human agency is locked, and to be rediscovered neither as a class-conscious ..., nor as a transcendental subject but as a struggling, feeling, thinking, suffering subject; one capable of obeying and disobeying, controlling and being controlled...defining and redefining control for itself and for others” (Gabriel 1999:179). While modern workplace could be said to be evolving from traditional “bureaucratic regimes” and “coercive domination” by management, workplace managerial practice has become a more subtle form of normative control “one that transforms employees into self-regulating and self-policing subjects – one that is unable to achieve or maintain any critical detachment from the employers’ power practices” (Gabriel 1999:180).

In the context of workplace labour process and organization of work, conceptual approaches within the labour process traditions remain insightful; for instance, following the influential work of Braverman (1974), Burawoy (1979, 1983, 1985), and Edwards (1979), concern within the labour process analysis has been the changing dimension of capitalist management control strategies, and the form of resistance and opposition which they engender. Within this tradition, labour process theorists continue to view management’s discourses and practices as imposition with “underlying asymmetrical power relations” (Gabriel 1999:181). It is argued within this tradition that work intensification that came with ‘managerial’ practices such as team-based productions process, or quality programs, is interpreted as managerial “ideological onslaught” on workers.

Some other theorists still in the tradition of post-structuralist analysis have drawn, largely, on Michel Foucault to argue that “subjectivity is actually constructed at the workplace” (Gabriel 1999:181). They “view normative controls as the primary, rather than the super-structural in the workplace” (Gabriel 1999:181). Thus, Management’s enactment of

practices such as team work and quality programs are means of shaping the subjectivity of the workers. Following Foucault, these analysts view knowledge/power relations within the workplace as embedded in the workers' subjectivity, "residing in a variety of discursive practices that shape their normative orientations" (Gabriel 1999:181). Represented in this tradition are Knights (1990; 1992); Hugh Willmott (1994; 1996). These authors view "resistance as part of the power/knowledge complex in the workplace" (Gabriel 1999:181).

Thus, central to both the orthodox labour process analysis, and the later strands, exposed through the work of "post-structuralists" are the problematic dimensions of consent, resistance and subjectivity in the workplace. It is problematic because, as pointed out by Gabriel (1999:182), modern workplace labour process is encapsulated with "certain core questions that therefore attract much theoretical and empirical attention; now warranting a sense among scholars for understanding and analysis." In the emerging dimensions of work process, are embedded forms of discourses of managerial control mechanisms. In modern workplace, "there is a co-habitation of old and new forms of controls, even an intensification of old controls with the assistance of new controls"(Gabriel 1999:184). As noted by Gabriel (1999:184), "emerging corporate managerial practices are accompanied by diverse forms of controls "flatter hierarchies, flexible working practice, changes in production processes such as introductions of team-based production and TQM". Consequently, Management must continue to enact new set of "symbolic meanings" and normative values that privilege the objectives of the organization.

While within classic Marxist analysis, Management normative practices are essentially interpreted as "super-structural mystification" of underlying forms of political control, for example, Hyman (1984), current understanding of labour process sees "normative control as primary, and when combined with cultural dimensions, it reinforces other controls and resides in the very process of organisational structure and production system" (Gabriel 1999:184). Control mechanisms in the modern workplace are "mutually reinforcing" making some forms of "control invisible" but acceptable, combining to lead to intensification of efforts and choking of dissent (Deetz 1992; Willmott 1993; Casey 1996; 1998 cited in Gabriel 1999:184). As noted by Purcell (1993), this, in turn, invariably

leads to an exclusion or “emasculatation” of trade unions, and a decline in formal collective resistance and opposition. In the context of modern managerial practices, workers now regard “their relationship with their employer in personal rather than collective terms, developing a new dependence which becomes constitutive of workers’ identity and selfhood”(Deetz 1992 cited in Gabriel 1999). Characterising the “compositions” of workers’ identity and “selfhood” in the context of the post- modern workplace managerial practices are insecurity; an insecurity different from a collective form of traditional working class type (Blackwell and Seabrook, 1985), but “an insecurity arising from individual employees’ self-doubt and emotional instability” (Gabriel 1999:185). In the modern workplace, the individual worker believes: it is within his own self-identity and selfhood to “stay in the family” through loyal, long service, and unquestioned obedience”(Gabriel 1999: 185).

Schwartz (1987) earlier described this type of control as “totalizing” to denote the suppression of overt deployment of resistance and opposition. In Schwartz’s (1987) assumption, totalizing control implies a “total control over the employees, their hearts and minds”; a pervasive one “colonizing the individual from within rather than from above” (cited in Gabriel 1999:185). Interpreted from Foucault’s understanding, therefore, “...control in post-modern organisation is more invasive and insidious than those of earlier eras” (Gabriel 1999:185). For instance, the “vast mechanism” of “surveillance” operating in modern workplace insidiously operates in a manner in which individual team members “police themselves”. Foucault’s line of understanding has had a considerable influence on modern workplace analysis coming from authors such as Hugh Willmott (1993); David Knights (1992); and Schwartz (1990). For instance, Schwartz’s (1990) portrait of “organisational totalitarianism,” implies that its leadership understanding of its own action is proclaimed to be the organisation’s ideal. And this seems as “ego ideal for all organisations’ participants” (Schwartz 1990 cited in Gabriel 1999:185).

Extending this conceptualisation of “organisational totalitarianism”, Willmott (1993), argued that totalitarianism has become “an intrinsic feature of contemporary cultural control, amounting to programs of corporate culturalism, HRM, and TQM with emphasis on corporate ethos that demands loyalty from employees” ((Willmott 1993 cited in

Gabriel 1999: 185). Modern corporate culturalism is established on the assumption of “you either buy into the norms or you get out” (Peters and Waterman 1982 cited in Gabriel 1999); a “phoney choice” designed to create “enterprise employees”. Thus, in an earlier critique of capitalism, Marcuse (1964 cited in Gabriel 1999:186), argues that “capitalism exercises totalitarian controls over the masses, through the same appearance of “phoney choice”, which in essence leads to ‘closure’ and collusion of critical consciousness and paralysis of resistance.”

However, the “transformative project” of modern workplace has equally ushered in “defining features” of control imperatives that tend to shape and reshape different strategies of control, to which individual workers are subject. Thus, modern workplace has become “transformational” with “an implicit acceptance that there are right and wrong attitudes, appropriate and inappropriate behaviours through which the individual continuously monitors himself against the totalitarian standards” (Gabriel 1999:187). In the modern workplace, where everything is “confessional” in terms of right/wrong attitudes and behaviours, the individual employee becomes “pliable, self-policing, self-disciplining, embedded in the invasive tyranny of power/knowledge” (Gabriel 1999:187).

The “multi-pronged” dimensions of control imperatives in the modern workplace have shown its far-reaching implications in “moulding” the sense of “self-hood” and identity of workers. Foucault’s uncompromising proposition, Gabriel (1999) notes, in spite of its criticisms and weakness pointed out by later writers, regarding “totalizing gaze” of workplace “power/knowledge relations”, remains insightful. To Foucault, the individual’s dependence or “embeddedness” is “not a cultural or a symbolic one, but an ontological one” (cited in Gabriel 1999:188). In other words, the individual worker is not just “dependent” on managerial power in the workplace, he is both “the effect and product” of such power. Thus, following Foucault’s proposition, the individual worker is not just, “an entity who collides with power, and resists it”, he is also a derivative of the power” (Gabriel 1999:188). Even though the worker’s entrapment in the totalizing gaze could be mediated by his struggle for identity and self-hood, he is still a “constitute” of the power.

As noted by Gabriel (1999:188), it is a “degree and measure of the dominance of managerial control mechanisms and devices that make resistance problematic in contemporary work organisation.” Resistance is problematic, because modern corporation is conceptualised and approached as a “universal family surrogate” (Gabriel 1999:188), infiltrating the individual’s identity and self-hood. An important point in this for the purpose of our understanding of the dimensions of workplace relations is the fact that “organisation is experienced as family, offer an appeasement for satisfying the workers’ need for identity” (Schwartz 1987, cited in Gabriel 1999:189). The workplace offers the worker the “golden handcuffs, through which he constructs the organisation as a formidable, powerful and alluring entity” (Gabriel 1999:189). Workers’ perception of the workplace is that of a “symbolic universe”, one that “fulfils or frustrates” desires and one that drives emotions (Gabriel 1999).

As argued by Hochschild (1997 cited in Gabriel 1999:190), “the corporation is providing the individuals with an alternative home, a surrogate family with the seduction of security, needed to offer freedom from insecurity, and a certain symbolic anchorage in a world where all is doubt and change” (Gabriel 1999:190). In the lived experiences of the worker, he continually perceives dangers, insecurity, doubts and changes, but the symbolic deals of “golden handcuffs” offered by the corporation remain irresistible, which further entrap him (Gabriel 1990).

In another illustration, Casey’s (1989), work further exemplifies many of the arguments that seem to suggest the “extinct” of worker resistance in the workplace. In her observation and account of workplaces, “few signs” of resistance and oppositions exist. Instead, according to her, workers deal with the issues of “workplace ambivalence” with an increase in identification with the management with a whole lot of “fantasies” of retreat and escape. The apparent “extinction” of employee’s resistance is, therefore, generally interpreted by other commentators as perhaps “farewells to the working class traditional forms of collective rebelliousness and opposition” (Gabriel 1999:191). However, Thompson et al (1995, 1999) have retraced the current trends to account for employee recalcitrance in the modern workplace, thus providing a “fresh” reconceptualisation of “missing subjects” both at theoretical and empirical grounds. In other words, the discursive and managerial

practices pervading the modern workplace may limit the ability of the workplace researcher to identify and report on workers' recalcitrance. In a Foucauldian twist, as noted by Gabriel (1999:192), the researcher on entering the corporate setting, easily becomes "part of the panoptic machinery surveying the docile worker – his gaze becomes inseparable from the disciplinary gaze" of the organization in constructing the research objects. With such a "cultural lens", shaped through, by "corporate enculturation" in which the researcher may find himself, "the invisibility of resistance marks the absence of resistance" (Gabriel 1999:192). From the empirical point of view, "resistance may go unnoticed if the researcher goes about looking for it in the way earlier sociologists did" (Gabriel 1999:192). For example, and as pointed out by Gabriel (1999) "looking for resistance among PhD's in electronic engineering, or even amongst manual workers in post-industrial factories requires "different observational" and "conceptual resources" from those displayed for the study of workers in the Fordist's era" (Gabriel 1999: 192).

Ackroyd and Thompson (1999) have, in their own analysis explored a range of subtle and covert oppositional strategies which they refer to as 'misbehaviours'. They have argued that, at the 'underbelly' of workplace relations are 'recursive actions' carried out by workers that show their covert oppositions to managerial initiatives. Through re-appropriation of time, space and organisational resources, workers act to "undermine production operations" of the organisation (Ackroyd and Thompson 1999). Collinson (1994, cited in Gabriel 1999:192), earlier explored two distinct modes of resistance; first, 'resistance through distance', here workers emotionally create their own spaces, physical, emotional and symbolic." According to Collinson, this is a defence mechanism enacted and played out to invert some of the managerial practices and initiatives but which can still be re-appropriated by the management. The second; 'resistance through persistence' (Collinson 1994), proves more potent when an aggrieved worker "presses on" the organisation's resources and symbols in proving a case. According to him, this involves the "radicalisation of the individual", while proving a case with the management, especially "when armed with knowledge of the management procedures and established practices" (Collinson 1994 cited in Gabriel 1994:194). Examples of this type of resistance may take the form of: "leaking information to the press, rumour mongering and whistle-blowing" (Gabriel 1999:192). Elaborating on the potency of this type of resistance in proving a

point, Collinson (1994) adds “resistance is likely to be more effective when those involved are less concerned with the construction and protection of identity but committed to the “issues on which their opposition is based” (cited in Gabriel 1999:193).

In other words, in the current dynamics of workplace relations in which “all is ‘apparently’ quiet at the workplace front” (Thompson and Ackroyd, 1995), and in which there is formidable presence of ‘panopticism’, “employee dissent and resistance must be sought at the margins - at the margins of workers’ experience” (Gabriel 1999:195). These are the subtle and unmanaged arena often beyond the gaze of management’s controls (Gabriel 1995). As de Certeau long ago observed, activities carried out in this “space” may include “unorthodox use of established codes, clever ruses and private codes,” (cited in Gabriel 1999:195). It is at the subtle arena, the “underlife” of the workplace that the “invisible” becomes visible. While this subtle arena may appear as “unmanaged terrain”, it remains important as underbelly where “identities are fashioned, tested and transformed” (Gabriel 1999:195). The subtlety of the unmanaged terrain characterised with the “mastery of skills” and “symbolic resources” acquired and shared by the workers allows for a continuous construction and re-construction of identity in their narrative forms (Gabriel 1999). It is in these narratives and “story-telling” by the workers that “some of the oppositional discourses reside” (Gabriel 199:196), which later become more potent and manifest. It is at this “hidden” abode that alternate forms of “acts of recalcitrance” are re-enacted and launched.

The “material” and “symbolic” context of the unmanaged terrains within the workplace, and which made them less accessible to the “controlling gaze” are places where “misbehaviours” are located (Belanger and Thuderoz 2009). Also, the “content” of this seemingly unimportant terrain in terms of nuances and social process generates a new type of subjectivity of the worker and identity or “human agency” still embedded in the “corporate values and culture, ceaselessly providing essence for re-appropriation of the symbolic resources, for resistance and dissent” (Belanger and Thuderoz 2009:9). To Belanger and Thuderoz (2009:9), such analysis and understanding of misbehaviour go beyond the essentialist notion that “points to intrinsic nature of behaviour with moral undertone, and to locate its meaning in the constraining character of employment relationship that gives

rise to misbehaviour.” For instance, workers’ “re-appropriation of time” through breaking the rules of time on the job when the strain of work is excessive (constraints) should not be seen as “good” or “bad” in itself, but “needs to be understood within the specific context of the constraints which the workers experience” (Belanger and Thuderoz 2009:10). Conceptualizing resistance (misbehaviour) in this way “has the merit of putting individual employees or collective behaviours into the context of the employment relationship” (Belanger and Thuderoz 2009:10). Workplace analysis, and the conceptual model adopted should, therefore, be sensitive to the shifts and ambivalence in the “repertoire of employees oppositions” (Belanger and Thuderoz 2009:10), which are context determined. Labour, conceptualized as a category in the employment relationships and modern management, noted by Dickens and Hess (2008), “is highly localised and socially embedded in its idiosyncratic and place bound tendencies” (cited in Belanger and Thuderoz 2009:12). Workplace forms of social actions and adaptations are therefore bounded in the “multiple and unfolding” dynamics of the context. While cautioning on the inherent danger in seeing the world of work and modern managerial practices as the “end of the problems of consent” and the “vanishing of workplace resistance”, Belanger and Thuderoz (2009:3), argue for a conceptual model that looks at “new” pattern of work with “new” lenses. Analytically also, a reconceptualization of consent and resistance in their “immanent forms”, within the modern workplace allow the researcher to reinsert the “missing subject” and is thereby enabled to bring back the “agency” into the understanding of labour process in work organisation. According to Gabriel (1999:199), a better way of conceptualising the “agency” in modern workplace is “not to see it as a coherent transcendental subject, but as a struggling, interacting, feeling and suffering subject; one capable of defining and redefining control for itself and for others.”

Beyond the theoretical injunction that conceptualises the individual in the workplace as an object of “economic relations”, other analysts, such as Hugh Willmott (1994 cited in John Hassard et al 1994:87), have equally called for “recognition and attentiveness to human agency in its enactment of social and organisational realities.” In the context of workplace analysis, “human agency” according to Heidegger (1972) refers to the ‘open reflexive and intentional quality of human beings’ (cited in Hassard et al 1994:91). However, as observed by Willmott (1994) the conceptualisation of agency must be developed

with an appreciation of how the character and meaning of human agency is “inter-subjectively constructed” within the workplace asymmetrical power relations. Thus, an attempt to make a corrective of the neglect of the “subjective” of the labour within the orthodox labour process analysis is reconceptualised as an attempt to “bringing agency back into” organisational analysis (Hassard et al 1994: 93). Drawing upon post-structuralism, Clegg (1989), developed a framework based upon the need to focus on both the relations of production, and the “meaning” workers enacted from this relation. While corroborating this framework on meaning actors attach to their membership of organisation, Silverman (1970), earlier argued for analysis of studies of organisational work as a product of how organisational members attach “meanings” to situations (cited in Hassard et al 1994:94). Though Silverman (1970) imposes action and meanings on the individual, it is, however, limited as analytical tool, for it lacks “historical perspective on the institutional practices” that informs the actions (Willmott 1994:95).

3.6 Labour Process, and Managerial Control Strategies

In another analytically grounded and carefully detailed examination, Hyman (1987) proposes the critical view of managerial practices, and impacts on workplace relations. His theoretical views also reject the normative precepts associated with work process that often characterise managerial practices. According to him, any credible treatment of managerial control strategy in a capitalist mode of production should begin with an emphasis on its “inherent contradictions” (Hyman 1987). To (Hyman 1987), fundamental to Marxian analysis of workplace, must be an emphasis on the structural contradiction between social relations of production on the one hand, and the “realisation” of surplus value. Even though, state’s intervention could occasionally “alter the form of such contradiction, the state’s intervention does not in any way transcend the contradiction” (Hyman 1987:30).

Hyman’s conceptualisation of our understanding of labour process within capitalist mode of production lies in the fundamentally embodied character of production relations that manifest in the outcome of managerial practices. Therefore, for a corporate entity to initiate the process of work process re-organisation it implies that such organisation is

responding to some form of “internal and “external” conditions(Hyman 1987). Management as a “collective labour process”, Hyman (1987) notes, must initiate pragmatic choices of action in tackling those conditions, and in doing this, “internal coherence cannot be assumed a priori” (Hyman 1987:30). And in this circumstance, Management is “relentless” in initiating practices and mechanisms to checkmate the recalcitrance of the workers. To Hyman (1987:32) “the problems of overall managerial control strategies” and practices particularly manifest in the “contested terrain” of workplace relations. Also, as argued by Hyman, managerial concerns for “optimal returns” on investment through changes in managerial practices continue to neglect the “political dimensions of social relations” (Hyman 1987: 32-33). Thus, as noted by Hyman, “the internal politics of management, the linkages between capital and state within the context, and the dimensions of “structured antagonism” inherent in the capitalist labour process” (Hyman 1987:33), themselves are problematic concerns in labour process analysis. Theorising an understanding of “control of labour” within this framework provides the conceptual underpinning to examine the interrelations between managerial practices and the labour process. Extant literature on managerial practices, remain inversely sensitive to immanent implications of social relations of production(Hyman 1987).

It is this limit in understanding within managerial literature that provokes certain key concerns apropos of labour process within the Marxist praxis; “management and managerial practices remain a “self-conscious process of capitalist, and its agents, to subordinate labour” (Hyman 1987:34). Labour process and issues of its control become problematic in the contextual practices of managerial control imperatives where the fundamental interest of the capitalist is profit maximisation. Within capitalist mode of production, “any worthwhile analysis of managerial functions and values must start by recognising the vital distinction between labour expenditure (for production of use-values), and labour as category; with its inescapable coupling to produce surplus value” (Hyman 1987:34). In other words, Management’s quest for profit maximization has also necessitated the need to design control strategies, thereby further creating tension in the structured antagonism.

And because capitalist labour process is both “cooperative and conflictual”, Management must perform both the role of “a co-ordinator of a complex process of production” (Hy-

man 1987: 35), and simultaneously the “role” of discipline of the workforce. Consequently, antagonism becomes inevitable between the management and the labour. However, in Hyman’s view, our analysis of this “inevitable contestations” between labour and management should be cautious of an “absolute” domineering role of control imperatives of management over labour; and therefore not to assume a ‘complete package’ of strategies of control over labour. According to him, there are wider sources of “differentiation” in managerial control strategies. This is somewhat reflected in Burawoy’s (1984, cited in Hyman 1987:35), where Burawoy cautions against overt emphasis on managerial control without putting into consideration “the political and ideological moments of production that account for the wider sources of differentiation” in managerial practices and control strategies.

While referring to Littler’s (1982) three levels of capitalist organisations of work as paralleling Burawoy’s (1984) “dimensions of production”, Hyman(1987:36) analyses how the labour process on the one side, and “the production apparatuses, on the other, generate the ideological interest for the capitalist.” According to Hyman, (1987:36), “the moments of struggle in the workplace shape and reshape the labour process, and its regulative apparatuses.” It is here that the “internal political” moments of management practices reflect the collective labour process characterized by forms of contradictions inherent in capitalist relation to production. This contradiction could be overtly or covertly manifest, which according to Hyman (1987:42), reflects “the shifting fashions in labour–management relations.” The management’s concern for “consent and discipline” aggravates workers’ covert and manifest struggle at the workplace.

In the context where the dimensions of labour control in terms of technology of production, the bureaucratic control of production, and the social organisation of production (Edwards 1979), are noted to be in the domain of specialised function of management, its disciplinary intent on the labour process “obscure the exploitative basis of capitalist labour relations”(Hyman 1987:42). And where a workplace is undergoing some form of transformation in terms of the material context of corporate activities, management styles swing between “despotic forms” of control to “hegemonic” type.

In contextualising the labour process analysis within the social relations of production, Lazonick(1983) argues that the “the accumulation of capital and the accompanying generation of surplus value depends upon the “management” of “work efforts” at all levels of corporate hierarchy”(cited in Hyman1987:45). Impliedly, the stability and extent “of capitalist labour control, depends on the nature and character of work practices, upon which the labour process develops culturally, and workers participate politically”(Hyman 1987:47).Also as argued by Thompson (1983), within the “overall control of the labour process by the management, there are therefore a variety of techniques and structures available” (Thompson 1983, cited in Hyman 1987:49), determined and influenced by local and extra local factors that shape production relations. The problematic needs for ‘cohesion and control’ as managerial imperatives also shape the variations of managerial control strategies.

Changes in the organisation of work are accompanied by management’s consultation efforts coached in “joint collaboration involving the hierarchy of the organisation, and the “micro-political struggles” (Hyman 1987:49), between the workers and the management. This consequently makes the whole process of labour relations “a negotiated order.” Characterising this ‘negotiated order’ are locked-in “ambiguities, uncertainties, complexities” (Batstone et al 1984 cited in Hyman 1987:49). The “control of labour process and its envioning conditions should, therefore, be understood as a process continuously evolving, as an outcome of established structure within the social relations of production” (Hyman1987:49).As “externally induced”, workplace managerial practices facilitate strategy that affects the labour process.

The “agentic role” of the management in introducing and facilitating the dimensions in work processes are therefore premised on certain managerial imperatives, for example,“the division of labour and technology, the formal structure of authority and surveillance, and the job positions in the labour market” (Littler 1982:42-3).This corresponds with Paul Edwards’s (1979) earlier schema of “forms of control.” On this, Burawoy (1985), called for the theorizations of “political and ideological moments” that gave rise to these forms of control in order to know how, for instance, the “simple control” is underpinned by the “relational dimension” of work, the “technological control’ is character-

ised by the “instruments of production, and how the “bureaucratic control” is equally underpinned by the concern for “social regulations”, in the modern workplace (Hyman 1987:35).

Bringing in together the technical control with the instruments of production, Hyman reformulates this as the “labour process”, while the social forms of regulation or bureaucratic control, “indexes the political apparatus of production” (Hyman 1987:36). Therefore, in understanding the changing forms of work process and its underlying managerial practices, the “material context” of its historical development and how this is produced by the apparatus or ideology of production in giving expressions to the prevailing patterns of labour process remain instructive for analytical purposes (Hyman 1987).

In the emerging dimensions of work process, and managerial practices, the context of work activities may entail the “introduction of cost-effective use of technologies, the reconstruction of organisation of work, the intensification of control mechanisms” (Hyman 1987:50). Consequently, workplace employment relations may take new patterns: “job losses, possible plant closure, transfer and deployment of workers to other locations” (Hyman 1987:50). Therefore, the implications are to be noted at the level of labour relations. The ensuing shifts in patterns of “established procedures are likely to engender ideological and political struggles” (Hyman 1987:50), in the workplace. Invariably, “social antagonisms” which have their origin within the “hidden abode of production” may now begin to also find its expression in covert forms of resistance and opposition.

The relevance of this argument for the purpose of our understanding of the labour process is that, while the general “modifications” in the organisation of work and management practices are rooted in the material context of the larger operating environment, the implicated labour relations dimensions are driven by the “company’s policies.” Noting this, Purcell and Sisson (1983 cited in Hyman 1987:50), argue “together, management approach to employment relations should be understood as the outcome of an interaction between labour and product market changes.” In other words, changes in the product market influencing company policies force changes on management practices.

In the circumstances of continuous managerial control strategies, therefore, there will be a great “redirection in the scope of collective bargaining and of management’s interpretation of unions’ mediations in dealing with employers” (Hyman 1987:51). A more “collaborative relationship” between the management and labour is thus invoked. Such collaborative relationship must of necessity take on the character of “attitudinal restructuring”, “identity shift” mobilized by parties not only as a way of modifying the “authority patterns between the union and management but that will subsequently lead to re-appraisal of labour relations in the wake of the changes” (Purcell 1981 cited in Hyman 1987:51) argues, in the moments of such collaborative relationship “all matters melt down to negotiable issues” (Hyman 1987:52). In such circumstances, important “management objectives” such as forms of workplace relations, plant closure, wage/benefits reductions, work redesign, deployment and internal transfers” (Hyman 1987:52), are brought under the Joint Consultative Committee. Impliedly, modifications in labour management relations in moments of workplace restructuring may have succeeded in “taking away the militancy” in the union (Hyman 1987). The prevailing patterns therefore echo Burawoy’s (1985) “hegemonic” managerial practices. In the context of new managerial practices, the fear of the consequences of workplace transformations may have made the workers to be vulnerable, thereby making collaborative work relations the “cornerstone” of modern workplace relations. It is equally within this new context that inherent contradictions, ambiguities and reconstitution of identity of workers occur at the point of production. It may at one point or manner prove to be a “new normalcy” or normative patterns, and at another level, provoke its “disruptive forms” of resistance and opposition.

Prominent among the charges against the earlier commentators on labour process is the lack of adequate and sufficient attention to ‘worker agency’. For instance, according to Thompson and Newsome (2004 cited in Kaufman 2004:154), emphasis on production of consent at the point of production “is not so much wrong as its incompleteness, in accounting for workers’ agentic formation to existential insecurity, identity and individuals’ sense of self” at the workplace.” Indeed, the shift in analytical focus from the ‘materialist-deterministic’ understanding of employment relations, “including the individualizing tendencies of managerial practices and corporate culture on individual employees” led to the argument that the reproduction of everyday work life, and the basis of domination is

best understood through individual workers' experiences (Thompson and Newsome 2004 cited in Kaufman 2004:154). Ackroyd and Smith (1996) also observed that by restoring emphasis on the workers' experiences, labour process analysis will be able to explore the implications of workplace transformation in its collective dimensions on the workers. In other words, while the management retains the "capacity" to continue to secure surplus value under the emerging managerial practices, this is nevertheless being mitigated by workers' own "ability" to deploy a wide array of "restive responses" to managerial control imperatives. Focus on this side of workplace dimensions and manifestations, provides the needed analytical framework for understanding the "situatedness" of workers' "subjectivities" within managerial practices. A refocus on workers' subjectivities has, therefore, questioned the accuracy of a 'deterministic understanding' of labour process, without adequate understanding of workers' own experiences and hence their resistance. Contemporary workplace research as exemplified in the work of Ackroyd and Thompson (1999), Hugh Willmott and David Knights (1995) has shown that workers remain "knowledgeable about managerial normative intentions and outcomes, and therefore could retain the resources to resist, misbehave or disengage" (Thompson and Newsome 2004 cited in Kaufman 2004:149). The workplace remains the "primary terrain where structured antagonisms and multiple layers of interests are reproduced and contested" (Thompson and Newsome in Kaufman 2004:149).

While much of these arguments are located and indeed flow from the core LPT, its "extended value" as contained in later works of labour process analysts not only assists our understanding to move beyond the 'hegemonic' conceptualisation of workplace relations, but also "provides the conceptual tool to map out workers' actions and agentic responses" (Thompson and Newsome 2004:149). In Elgers' (2001) reformulation of this conceptualisation in accounting for workers' own agentic roles, four distinct forms of struggles are identified: "appropriation of working time, working efforts, the product of work, and work identities" (cited in Thompson and Newsome 2004:149). These forms of workers' recalcitrance termed misbehaviour are analysed by Ackroyd and Thompson (1999) to encapsulate the latest dimensions of workplace workers' behaviour which are less accounted for from mainstream labour process analysis. These acts, though not easily ac-

counted for through orthodox gaze of LPT, still signify “counter-veiling” acts of workers in the workplace.

This new perspective within the LPT tradition constitutes a “conceptual shift” in two ways; it moves our analysis beyond control/resistance model. As noted by Fleming (2001 in Thompson and Newsome 2004:150), rather than resistance “being conceived solely as negative reactions to power relations, misbehaviour is an active set of behaviour that attempts to re-insert some degree of autonomy at work.” This measure of “relative autonomy”, therefore, gives workers space to manifest their agentic identities and interests. While it may be argued, therefore, that the traditional forms of “collective resistance and struggles in the workplace have not substantially receded, individuals’ and group-based informal action” (Thompson and Newsome 2004:150), is also “growing” in the hidden abode of production. Indeed, while managerial control imperatives are succeeding in enlisting workers’ commitment and interests through mobilization of “material” and “symbolic” resources in the workplace, it is equally embedded with growing forms of contestations and dimensions of workers’ restive responses.

In this analytical shift, the “core elements” of LPT, with its strong emphasis on the “structural contradictory” dynamics and imperatives of the modern workplace have also called for a “re-focus” on situational or “context-specific” analysis in which both managerial practices and employees’ actions are not only “historically determined”, but also mediated through enduring social processes of control, consent and resistance in multiple and interwoven forms within the workplace. With this conceptual tool, my workplace ethnographic study in NNPC is approached with qualitative analysis that allows exploration of both formal and informal dynamics of control, consent and resistance triad, while still situating the explanation within the broader remit of core LPT. Post-Braverman “accounts of conflicting interests and processes of consent manufacture at workplace” have helped to look beneath the formal institutional level (Thompson and Newsome 2004:156). Further, labour process analysis in its various strands, according to Thompson and Newsome (2004) has helped, not only in refuting the ‘end of collectivism’ in the workplace, but also helped to demonstrate the importance of paying attention to workers’ resilience.

Chapter 4

Overview of Oil Industry in Nigeria, and NNPC: The Regulatory Framework

4.1. Introduction

In this Chapter we examine the regulatory context of the Oil Industry in Nigeria. The Chapter provides a historical overview of the development of the regulatory frameworks that have been shaping the industry. The organisation of work in NNPC that, therefore, became outcome of this development over the years is drawn in, to examining the managerial practices in the organisation. Organisation of work in the NNPC and the regulatory context that informs it provide the background for analysing the emerging managerial practices and patterns of employment relations.

Managerial practices and employment relations within the corporation are often the response to the global market dynamics that influence the operating environment of the Industry, thereby shaping the emerging managerial practices, workplace relations, and the lived experiences of workers. To understand this historical development, and the content of the various legislations that shape the Industry, we also need to understand the various factors and influences that gave rise to the regulatory framework. In fact, the development of petroleum industry in Nigeria is explained in terms of the regulatory framework that guides the operations and activities of the oil companies, including the NNPC.

Oil was first discovered in Nigeria in 1908, while exploration proceeded in the 1930s in the form of the Shell-BP Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria Ltd (Shell-BP), under the control of Shell and British Petroleum (International Directory of Company Histories, 2005 Vol.72.). Commercial exploration and production of oil and gas, however, only started in Oloibiri, in the Delta area in 1958 (NNPC 2008). Following the first commercial exploration of oil in Nigeria, “Mineral Oils Amendment Ordinance 1958, No 5 was enacted to repeal the 1914 Mineral Oils Ordinance”(Akinrele 2005, cited in Encyclopaedia of Hydrocarbons, Vol.IV 2005:759).

This Amendment could be regarded as the first attempt by the Nigerian Government to develop interest in regulating procedures for royalties and taxations from oil production, and to ensure that adequate revenues accrued to the Government. The Ordinance also effectively “extended the grant of exploration and production to other non-British oil corporations” (Akinrele 2005:759). Akinrele (2005) observes further that as the Multinationals Oil Companies began to increase their exploration and production activities in the 1960s, it became a challenge for the Nigerian Government to equally increase its level of involvement in the oil and gas Industry.

More significantly, in response to the “1962 United Nations Resolution on Permanent Sovereignty over Natural Resources” the local Government sought steadily to increase its control over oil production in keeping with the United Nations Resolutions urging member states to develop strong interest in oil production activities in their respective countries (Olajumoke Akinjide-Balogun 2001:1). The Resolution upheld that the “people have their right to freely use and exploit their natural wealth and resources” (Olajumoke Akinjide-Balogun 2001:1).

The Government interest in the oil industry was limited to collection of taxes, royalties and leases in the 1960s. With the awareness of the steady activities of the oil multinationals, it was increasingly realized that the Mineral Oils Ordinance of 1914 and its 1958 amendment were no longer adequate in protecting the interest of Nigeria in the industry. The 1969 Petroleum Act was thus enacted in this spirit. The Act gave Nigeria Government stronger control over the oil exploration and production.

As stated in the Petroleum Act 1969, the ownership and control of all petroleum is vested in the State. Also, as contained in the Act, licences and leases to other oil companies and Nigerians are to be granted by the Federal Government. Thus, the Petroleum Act 1969, “for the first time in the history of the oil industry in Nigeria was able to establish a comprehensive statutory regime for the grants of right to search for and obtain oil in Nigeria” (Akinrele 2005, cited in *Encyclopaedia of Hydrocarbons* Vol. IV: 759). This piece of legislation formed the basis of subsequent regulatory regimes for the oil industry in Nigeria.

In 1960 the formation of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) was formed. The desire of the Federal Government of Nigeria to increase its control and ownership of the oil industry was also stimulated by The Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) Resolution of 1968 and 1971 urging member states “to participate fully in oil operations by acquiring ownership in the concessions held by foreign oil companies” (Olajumoke Akinjide-Balogun 2001:1). Nigeria became a member of OPEC in July 1971, after being an observer for four years. Accordingly, in 1971 the Military government established the Nigerian National Oil Company (NNOC) by Decree 1971 No 18. In terms of the Act, “NNOC was empowered to acquire any asset and liability in existing oil companies on behalf of the Federal government” (Olajumoke Akinjide-Balogun 2001:1).

One other factor that pushed the Nigerian government towards “taking the stakes in the oil production that eventually constituted the NNOC holdings was the Biafran War of secession, which began in 1967” (International Directory of Company Histories, 2005:2 Vol.72.). The territory in the South East of Nigeria, the seat of the Biafran War of secession constituted some “two-thirds of the country’s oil reserves” (International Directory of Company Histories, 2005:2.Vol.72.) Also, the support given by one of the French oil companies operating in the area of the secession attempt led the government to question the contribution of the foreign oil companies to the country’s development. Other factors had to do with the “unimpressive record of the foreign companies in assisting in transfer of technology, in the development of the communities, and in the employment of indigenous staff” (International Directory of Company Histories, 2005:3Vol.72.). This combination of factors and pressures led to the formation of NNOC in April 1971.

The NNOC was established under the terms of the Government Decree No 18 of 1971. Its brief was to “participate in all aspects of petroleum including exploration, production, refining, marketing, transportation and distribution” (International Directory of Company Histories, 2005:3Vol. 72). In carrying out this mandate, NNOC acquired a “33.33 percent stake in the Nigerian Agip Oil Company, and 35 percent in Safrap-the Nigerian arm of the French company, Elf” (International Directory of Company Histories, 2005:3 Vol. 72). Further, and as part of efforts to protect Nigeria interest within the context of this

regulatory framework, NNOC acquired “35 percent stakes in Shell-BP, Gulf and Mobil on April 1 1973” (International Directory of Company Histories,2005:3Vol.72). Also, in 1973, NNOC entered into production-sharing agreement with Ashland Oil. On April 1 1974, “stakes in Elf, Agip/Philips, Shell-BP, Gulf and Mobil were increased to 55 percent, and on May 1 1975, the NNOC acquired 55 percent of Texaco’s operations” (International Directory of Company Histories, 2005:3 Vol.72). From the above analysis, it became clear that the decision to increase the equity holding of the Federal Government consistently had to do with the intention, not just to reposition its own oil company within the regulatory framework and the oil industry, but also to deal with some of the observed lapses in the operations of the oil multinationals.

This was further expressed by the Federal Government in response to the 1977 Indigenization Decree. The States oil company holdings in the oil industry increased significantly in July 1979, when its stakes in the exploration and production activities in the multinational oil companies were raised by 60 per cent. By 1979, NNPC’s stake in the Shell ventures was also raised to 80 percent. This was when “BP lost its 20 percent stake, following disagreement with the Nigerian Government over South Africa” (International Directory of Company Histories, 2005:3 Vol.72).

Clearly, attempts by the Government of Nigeria to reform its own oil company rests largely on the desirability to put it on strong par with the multinationals. Consequently, on April 1 1977, the NNOC was reconstituted as the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC). Like the NNOC, the “NNPC operates and functions as a holding company for the Federal government. Decree No 33 that created it vested the assets and liabilities of the NNOC in the NNPC,” (International Directory of Company Histories, 2005:4 Vol.72).Thus, by 1979, the NNPC had acquired the majority interests in the operations of the corporations that engaged in oil business in Nigeria. A significant development that arose from this has been the creation and existence of what is referred to as Joint Operating Agreements (JOA), which regulates the partnership between the NNPC and the major oil companies (NNPC 2008).In addition, the multinationals have been operating under what is referred to as Concession System, with NNPC being the Concessionaire, while the companies are the Operators (NNPC 2008). The multinational companies also operate

in partnership with NNPC under what is referred to as Production Sharing Contracts (PSCs). The prevailing government “policy objectives in this regard are to permit the involvement of private and public interests in the exploration and development of petroleum resources”(Gas and Industry Regulation in Nigeria,2000). It also aimed at “expanding the scope of participation in Nigeria’s oil industry and diversify the sources of investment and the inflow of funds” (Gas and Industry Regulations in Nigeria, 2000).

As part of the reorganisation of the State oil sector, the NNPC had, in succeeding the NNOC subsumed the functions of the petroleum inspectorate of the Ministry of Petroleum Resources. However, by 1986, the petroleum inspectorate responsible for the regulation and policy formulation for the oil industry was detached from the NNPC, and reorganised as the Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR) (NNPC 2008). Consequently, the NNPC remains solely concerned with commercial aspects of oil and gas activity through the National Petroleum Investment Management Services (NAPIMS) (NNPC 2008). The NNPC, through the NAPIMS supervises and manages government investment in the oil industry. Thus, as noted by Akinrele (2005:763), “the prevailing policy of direct state participation has been exemplified by the regulatory instruments to ensure a measure of control over the operations” in the industry. The regulatory instrument also aimed at “ensuring physical control of vast quantities of oil, the acquisition and management of information and know-how about the industry” (Akinrele 2005, cited in Encyclopaedia of Hydrocarbons 2005:763), through the Integrated Data Services (IDS). To date, the emergence and operational growth of the NNPC has been to oversee and implement such policy instruments and mandate from the Federal Government.

As part of efforts to put the NNPC on a more viable commercial footing, the Federal Government introduced a new structure for the corporation in March 1988. The aim, as stated by the Federal Government was to see the NNPC as “a financially autonomous” and “commercially integrated” company. Accordingly, three new areas of responsibility were initiated for the corporation; Corporate Services, Operations and Petroleum Investment Management. In 1989, two additional SBUs were established; Eleme Petrochemicals Company was established and commissioned in 1989, “to provide the basis for the expansion of a petrochemicals and plastics industry” in the country (International Direc-

tory of Company Histories, 2005:3Vol.72). Integrated Data Services Company was also established. Since its inception, the NNPC and its subsidiaries have undergone “strategic restructuring”, which have kept it abreast of opportunities in local and international operating environments. Thus, between 1978 and 1989, the NNPC constructed refineries in Warri, Kaduna and Port-Harcourt (NNPC 2008). The activities and operations of the refineries fall under what is referred to as Downstream Operations of the NNPC, which cover crude oil/gas conversion into refined and petrochemical products. Under the Upstream Operations of NNPC, there is the crude oil production which is currently managed under the Exploration and Production Directorate.

As part of efforts to reform the oil industry in Nigeria, the Federal government set up a reform committee in 2000; Oil and Gas Reform Implementation Committee (OGIC). The Committee was mandated to carry out a comprehensive review and make recommendations for a reform of the oil industry. Based on the recommendations of the Committee, the Petroleum Industry Bill was proposed in 2008 (Minister of Petroleum Resources, July 2009). The Petroleum Industry Bill (PIB) is currently before the National Assembly. When passed it seeks to provide a “new legal framework for the organisation and operation of the entire oil industry in Nigeria” (Minister of Petroleum Resources, July 2009). In this regard, there will be “clear rules, procedures and institutions for the administration of the petroleum industry in Nigeria” (Minister of Petroleum Resources, July 2009).

In the new regime, there will be a redefined role and character for the NNPC. While it will still be owned solely by the government, it is expected to be more self-financing. Under the new framework, NNPC will be renamed National Oil Company (NOC). By this arrangement, the NOC will pay to the Federal government the same royalties and taxes, as any other company (Minister of Petroleum Resources, July 2009). The Bill also seeks to create a new joint venture structure called Incorporated Joint Venture (IJV). By this arrangement, the NOC and the foreign oil companies will join into a single company of which they will be shareholders for the development of the upstream sector. According to the Minister, this is to remove the bottlenecks currently being experienced by NNPC in securing funds for joint ventures operations. The new incorporated joint ventures will pay for new projects from their cash flow and through borrowing (Minister of Petroleum Re-

sources, July 2009). As noted in the Minister's speech, for sound petroleum industry to exist in Nigeria, the administration must be streamlined and strengthened. Under the new regulatory regime the oil companies, including the NOC that will be involved in the upstream petroleum industry, will be subject to the same system of rents, royalties and taxes, depending on whether they operate onshore, shallow or deep offshore or inland (Minister of Petroleum Resources, 2009). This also implies that all oil companies will be treated equally regarding the payment of the taxes and royalties. In this regard, the "PIB will represent the largest overhaul of the government petroleum revenue system in the last four decades" (Minister of Petroleum Resources, 2009).

The framework also seeks to make natural gas production an important resource for Nigeria. In this regard, the Bill will create what is referred to as "Gas Master Plan", whereby maximum support is hoped to be given to domestic gas production under the arrangement of what is to be referred to as "Midstream Agency" (Minister of Petroleum Resources, 2009). As noted in the Minister's Speech, "new gas processing plants and gas pipelines will be supported through favourable tax holidays under the Corporate Income Tax." The Minister noted further that "all the provisions in the Bill seek to create a coherent and attractive framework for new and additional investment in the oil Industry."

4.4. Organizational Structure of the NNPC

The headquarters of NNPC are located in Abuja, the Federal Capital territory, Nigeria. NNPC remains a monolithic corporate entity with Executive Board. The Management is headed by a Group Managing Director with eight directorates, namely: Exploration and Production, Refineries and Petrochemicals, Finance and Accounts, Corporate Services, Commercial and Investment, Engineering and Technology, Gas and Power, and Special Services. Its Divisions are headed by Group General Managers, while its eleven Subsidiary Companies are headed by Managing Directors. The Minister of Petroleum Resources heads the Board of Executive Directors of the corporation (NNPC 2008). The Ministry of Petroleum Resources is the government Ministry charged with the formulation and implementation of government policy, and general management of the operations of the petroleum industry. As stated above, the Directorate of Petroleum Resources is a sub-unit

under the Ministry. It also formulates and implements the industry policy on behalf of the Ministry (NNPC 2008).

The general character of the composition of the NNPCs organisational structure is also in line with the regulatory framework that guides the petroleum industry in Nigeria. For instance, Section 5 Sub-Section 2 of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation Act, No 3 of 1977 states, “It shall be the duty of the Corporation, from time to time.....to undertake a general review of the affairs of the corporation and any of the Subsidiary thereof for the purpose of determining how the management of the activities of the Corporation or any of the Subsidiary thereof can most efficiently be organised.” Section 6, Sub-Section 1 (d) states that the “Corporation shall have power to establish and maintain Subsidiaries for the discharge of such functions in the opinion of the Corporation” and continues in Sub-Section (e) “to train managerial, technical and such other staff for the purpose of the running of its operation, and for the petroleum industry in general”(NNPC Act No 33 of 1977).It is in the context of this piece of legislation, for instance, that we can begin to appreciate the implications of managerial policies on workplace relations in the organization, which is the focus of this study.

4.5. The Port-Harcourt Refinery Company (PHRC), Eleme

In consonance with the regulatory framework that established the NNPC, the Port-Harcourt Refinery Company (PHRC) was established in 1988 and it started operations in 1989. The refinery was established to provide petroleum refinery services primarily to the nation. It is also engaged in the development and production of specialized petroleum products (NNPC 2008).

PHRC is made up of two refineries: the old refinery commissioned in 1965, and the new refinery commissioned in 1989 with an installed capacity of 150,000 bpsd. The PHRC has five (5) Process Areas; Areas 1-5. The new refinery is made up of Areas 1-4, while the old refinery is Area 5. Area 1 is made up of the Crude Distillation Unit (CDU), and the Vacuum Distillation Unit (VDU); Area 2 is made up of Naphta Hydrotreating Unit (NHU);the Catalytic Reforming Unit(CRU),responsible for upgrading naphta to refor-

mate which has a higher octane value; the Kero Hydrotreating Unit(KHU) where kero is treated to make it acceptable for aviation use. Area 2 also has the Continuous Catalyst Regeneration Unit, which constantly reactivates deactivated catalyst from the reformer. Other Units in Area 2 include: the Hydrogen Purification, Fuel Gas Vaporizer, Sour Water Treatment and Caustic Treatment Unit_(NNPC 2008).

Area 3 is made up of a Fluid Catalytic Cracking Unit (FCCU), where Vacuum Gas Oil and heavy diesel oil are cracked to obtain more valuable products, like PIVIS and LPG. Other units in Area 3 include: Gas Concentration, Gas Treating and Mercaptan Oxidations Units. Area 4 has three process units namely: Dimersol, Butamer Isomerisation and Alkylaton units. The units are designed to produce high octane gasoline blend components.

Area 5, which is the old refinery, is made up of the Crude Distillation Unit(CDU);the Platform Unit (CRU); the LPG Unit as well as the utilities section (NNPC 2008).

The refinery also has a pool of maintenance personnel that are responsible for routine, programmed and emergency repairs of equipment. Personnel from the Maintenance unit criss-cross to other units for repairs and emergency services. To meet the Quality Policy of the refinery, Management “implements and maintains policy programs that empower and satisfy the workforce” (NNPC 2008). Thus, contained in the Quality Policy for the refinery is a commitment to “train and retrain the workforce” and to continuously improve production process. The provisions of this Quality Policy are mandatory on all employees (NNPC 2008).

For effective operations of the refinery, there are two Directorates: the Operations and Service Directorate, and the Management, Finance, and Accounts Directorate. The Operations and Services Directorate has the following departments: Production, Maintenance, Production Programming and Quality Control, Engineering and Technical Services, Power Plant and Utilities Department, and Fire, Safety and Environment Materials. The Management, Finance, and Accounts Directorate are made up of: the Management, Finance and Accounts, Planning and Budget Monitoring and Administration and Personnel, Manpower Development and Total Quality Management Departments. The Managing

Director, who is the Chief Executive, co-ordinates the entire management and department activities of the Company (NNPC2008).

Chapter 5

Continuous Process Technology, Skill and Labour Process in PHRC

5.1. Introduction

The general overview of the oil Industry and the regulatory framework that underpin its operation as illustrated in Chapter 4 gives the background in which the NNPC operates. The discussion on the overview also provides the background for the research site, which is the Port-Harcourt Refinery Company (PHRC). Within the regulatory framework that established the NNPC, operational activities at the refineries are expected to respond to the corporate level managerial policies. The dynamics of labour process at this level shape the work experiences of the workers. While on the one hand, workers' location in the relations of production reflects these dynamics, their experiences of the work process are also significant in the context.

We chose the Port-Harcourt Refinery Company of the NNPC as the site for this study, to analyse and conceptualize the interplays. In this Chapter we will, therefore, be treating the conceptual approaches that shape the process of work in the context of the refinery. The era of new technology, and indeed the continuous process technology in the workplace have "brought in certain patterns in the world of work" (William Cavestro 1989 cited in Stephen Wood 1989: 220); there is the re-organisation of tasks – "a leap in the use of automation of production" - resulting from the work process of production which accompanies the technology of production (William Cavestro 1989). Implicated in the context of new technology of production in the refineries, therefore, are emerging issues of work activities and the labour process. The issues of skill, job content and technology have become essential dimensions in understanding workplace labour process. At the job level, work process has entailed reviewing the existing tasks at the point of production, through the adoption of a variety of new initiatives; job enrichment, and organising work around semi-autonomous or flexible work groups or teams.

Accompanying the continuous process technology of production in the refinery and chemical industry generally, is the increased use of automotive and computer control process that enhances integration and overall co-ordination and control of production process (Cavestro 1989). These in turn enhance efficiency at the plant level. However, as noted by Cavestro(1989 cited in Stephen Wood 1989:221), “the reality of management’s monopolising the managerial drives and initiatives” in the context of reorganisation of work remains important to the work process in the refinery. While continuous process technology and automation may have offered increased precision, flexibility, and integration, the embedded managerial practices and standards remain central and dominant in shaping workplace relations.

5.2. Continuous Process Technology

The past twenty-five years of NNPC have witnessed rapid developments in continuous process technology together with substantial improvements in the automation of production within the oil industry. Consequently, the issues of skill and its potential implications in the refinery have assumed a new dimension. As plant operators were trained in the new technology of production, workers have experienced a further significant degree of ‘up-skilling’ in the process of production (Hirschorn and Gilmore, 1992). Also, Adler (2005), in analysing the issue of skill in the context of labour process has argued that skill has become a critical factor in contemporary work place understanding. Developments in skill-based requirements in the continuous process technology have made the dimension of skill, and its use critical to the analysis of workplace labour process. Consequently, and regardless of the type of tasks performed in the refinery, there are shifts at the level of personnel control, autonomy and discretion in the production process with implications on the workers themselves.

The issue of skill and its underlying dimensions in the workplace are fundamental to a comprehensive understanding of the workplace labour process. Thus, in an earlier contribution on the issue of skill acquisition under process technology, Manwaring and Wood (1985:175) contended that skill should be understood in its three core dimensions, “learning of routine tasks, the acquisition of awareness necessary to perform the tasks, and the

acquisition of co-operative skills.”. These three dimensions combine to allow greater flexibility in the performance of tasks at the plant level.

With the introduction of continuous process technology and the automatic regulation systems in the operations procedures and task, work process in the refinery has witnessed a combination of the various dimensions of skill in the performance of work in the process plant. Unlike the manual control system in which the operators have to observe the temperature or pressure by moving round, and by moving or closing the valves, the automatic system has centralized the information system in the Control Room where the state of the operating systems is presented by means of a video display panel (William Cavestro, 1989). Thus, in the process plant, the control and supervision of the plant operation is “indirect”; contact with the production plants is maintained through video displays with information relayed through walkie-talkies to Supervisors and Plant operators. The “tacit-skill” dimensions of the labour process in the control-room of the plant are characterised by the main process of the detection of any “abnormalities in the operation process of the plants, stabilization of the chemical reactors and determining the optimal performance of the operating plants”(Cavestro 1989:220). In other words, in the daily routines of labour process in the Control Room (CR) of the plant, there are two major moments of activities “the quiet moment” and “the abnormal moment”. During the “quiet moment” the operator is “routinely occupied with observing and monitoring the variations in the parameters of the control system for example, the pressure, the temperature, gas and liquid flow patterns, on the display screens”(Cavestro 1989:220). The various set-points indicating values for these variables are monitored to know the quiet moment and to know when they move to the “abnormal moment”.

At the Port-Harcourt Refinery, the operation and activities of the Plant Operators are led by the Area Operator, the Supervisors and the team leaders, and their daily operational activities cover the heating, pumping and compressors of the process plants. In the Control Room, the Chief Operator monitors the operations system, and communicates data to the plant operators. There are other “men” on the “board” that are in charge of monitoring the sensors on the panels in the CR. In the plant itself, the most experienced plant operator leads the team of 5-10 in the “routine” plant process work. It is within their team that

1 or 2 trainee operators are also being coached by the Plant Operators' team leader. In the CR, an abnormal moment is identified as the difference between the "set-point" and the "true value" on the video display, and this is normally indicated by warning lights. The information is then communicated to the Operators in the Plants who know the next "diagnostic" steps to take in remedying the faulty operations. Thus, in the event of any problem in the process plant, the Area Operator in the plant, with his team members analyses the problems, based on the information conveyed to them by the Control Room Operators.

The labour process in the Control Room, therefore, involves not just the knowledge and skill of "indicators" of the computer monitoring devices of the operating temperature, pressure and the flow processes. It also involves knowledge of the integrative working of the system, the state of the system as "normal" and "abnormal", and, therefore, what information to convey to the operating plant, concerning the progress of the flow processes and the gauging values. At the Port-Harcourt Refinery, the Control Room Operators had access to the "flow charts" of the operation flows of the three process plants that were operational at the time of this study. With this "diagnosis", they were able to engage in appropriate information exchanges between their colleagues and team members in the plants. In the ensuing labour process the task thus became a collective one, not only among the team members, but also between the Superintendent and the Control Room, on the state of the process operations and appropriate decisions and actions to be taken. Indeed, the dimension of work process, with the centralization of information, which the Control Room monitored, was observed to have enhanced "integrative" work process between the Plant Operators and the Control Room.

The work process in the plants rests on the relay of accurate and reliable information on the "state" of the plant operations system which becomes the critical part of the Control Room operator's skill and know-how. Thus, the skill to carry out necessary observation and relay the information has become an important segment of plant operations, not only in co-ordinating the work of the "external" plant operators, but also in "stabilizing" the production flow processes. Such work process co-ordination leads to more accurate and prompt actions to be taken by the Plant Operators. Co-ordination of work and roles be-

tween the Control Room and the plant operators which involves anticipation of “incidents” based on observation and selection of solutions has become central part of integrated skill and labour process in the plant. Therefore, as noted by Cavestro (1998:227), “the evolution of work organisation and work content in continuous process technology has involved the transformation of tasks and skills around automation.” In the context of work process in the plant, the Plants Operators and Control Room Operators’ “skills depend on their intellectual competence, capacity to adapt, training and work experience” (Cavestro, 1998:228). In other words, while manual dexterity still remains part of work process and activities in the process plant, this dimension has to be integrated with their “tacit skills” in understanding the very dimensions and challenges of continuous process technology and automation.

Continuous process technology and automation have introduced a process of “decomposition” and “re-composition” of tasks between the Control Room and the Process Operations. In the light of debates surrounding skill and technology (Braverman, 1974), the labour process of the continuous process technology has become critical to tasks performance in the refinery. Plant operations work such as temperature and pressure reading and understanding has become computerised and formalized, thereby determining work relations and activities. The “formalization” of labour process in this regard has become important, thereby compelling the CR and plant operations to “synchronize” and ensure co-ordination of the diverse operations systems. To the Plant Operators, work process and tasks performance have given rise to new types of task and competence. The new dimensions revolve round the use and understanding of computer languages of the plant operations, as they must constantly interpret data in the form of coded computer languages. These are complex intellectual activities involving a “balance interface” between knowledge of computer language and practical plant process operations. In other words, and in practical terms, plant operators must be able to align their computer knowledge with sequences and procedures involved in process operations.

5.3. Tacit Skill and Labour Process in the Refinery: conceptual approach

Accompanying continuous process technology in the refinery are the “control systems” of the flow processes in the plant which indicate the kind of “incidents” and activities plant operators have to cope with. In coping with the challenges and problems in terms of daily operational activities of the operating plants, it was observed that there must be constant task collaboration with the Maintenance Section. With its specialisations into mechanical, electrical and welding, the Maintenance Section performs the respective roles and tasks. Because of the challenges facing the refinery in terms of optimal plant operations, my observation showed a shift in labour process “decomposition” and “re-composition” with a renewed emphasis on continuous process flow, quality control and maintenance of plant operations.

Indeed, the emphasis on the above dimensions in the plant has come to represent the incorporation of workers’ tacit skill, not only in the quality improvement drives, but also in the regular maintenance of the plants. Through quality programmes, “the hidden but effective know-how which the workers have accumulated through work experiences” Troussier(1987 cited in Cavestro 1989:232), is now being deployed as tacit skill to ensure efficient plant operations. Therefore, given the challenges of the technology of production in the refinery, managerial initiatives continue to focus on forms of workers’ tacit skill involvement that are in line with the technical and production challenges. Thus, intuitively Process Operators use their practical knowledge to carry out the information conveyed by the Control Room operators. The “polyvalence character” of their tacit skill and know-how is integrated with the challenges of automation. The tacit knowledge of the plant operations mobilized by the plant operators in their daily work process makes it possible for them to attend to many incidents and practical needs of the plant operations. In the continuous process technology of the plant, challenges in the work content and job-skills, concomitantly influence the character of the labour process. The complexities and varieties of tasks performed daily equally call for more nuanced demonstration of this skill in the process plants. A symbiosis is created between the “formal” computer coded information and the “informal” task skills rooted in their daily practical experiences. The

implication of “up-skill” or tacit -skill utilization, from the labour process analysis is that continuous process technology and the automated programming have become part of Management’s apparatus for intensifying control over production arrangements. The inclination of labour process analysis to focus on implications of continuous process technology on labour relations is, therefore, to go beyond the managerialist argument of technical and production challenges. As argued by Kelly (1989 cited in Cavestro et al 1989:235) continuous process technology remains a tool for “wrestling greater control over the production process.”

However, in what has become the concern of some other writers on skill and new technology, the relation between technological development and implication on labour process is said to have moved beyond conventional positions regarding the deskilling thesis. In a context where Plant Operators still need to use their traditional detailed day-to-day occupational experiences and understanding to interpret the computer coding in the process plant, “enskilling thesis” is affirmed; tacit understanding of skilled Process Operators is still relevant. Braverman (1974), noted decades before that “for the worker, the concept of skill is traditionally bound up with craft mastery” (Braverman 1974: 443), and in which there is the “combination of knowledge of material and processes with the practised manual dexterity required to carry on a specific mode of production”(Braverman 1974:443).What has happened, however, as Braverman(1974) notes is that “with the development of capitalist mode of production, the very concept of skill becomes degraded along with the degradation of labour, and in which the reconstruction of production as a collective or social process has destroyed the traditional concept of skill”(Braverman 1974:443-444). _

Thus, in advancing “enskilling thesis” for understanding the implications of technological change on labour process, Penn et al (1985:612) used various sociological models to argue that enskilling is still embedded in modern work places. For Braverman, as noted by Penn et al (1985:612) the “logic of capitalist mode of production constantly requires transformation of the techniques of production” (Penn et 1985:612). As technology of production advances, there is a corollary displacement of skills; the workforce becomes ever more degraded” (Penn et al 1985:612). Capitalist’s technology of production has

thus given the Management the initiatives to “flexibilize labour”; thereby making sure that there is an enhanced control over the production process. However, as noted by Jones (1982 cited in Penn 1985:613) “no process of a general reduction of skills can be said to be attributed to technological changes.” The same point was emphasised by Finchman (1983 in Penn, et al.1985) in his analysis of the impact of new technologies on the balance of manual skills in the production process. Indeed, as noted by Penn et al (1985) systematic enquiry and empirical investigations are yet to corroborate deskilling thesis in the context of technological changes.

Accordingly, a sociological model is proposed by Penn, et al (1985) termed “Social determinism” which, through systematic and empirical investigation seeks to account for dimensions of skilled work in new technology of production. According to Penn et al (1985: 614), an “analytical understanding of the relation between skill and technologies of production, should commence with teasing out the interconnections, through empirical and historical and contextual understanding, if positive theoretical developments are to be generated.” Also, in seeking out the positive co-relation between technologies of production and skill, Turner (1962); Penn (1983a; 1983b; 1984); Jones and Rose (1983); earlier argued for the elements of social determinism in empirically based analysis. In this understanding of social determinism, it is argued that “occupations are organised around the identity skill” (Penn et al 1985:614) which is “equally organised by a whole range of context based norms and practices that focus on the preservation of such skill at the point of production.” Such rules and regulations surrounding skill formation at the point of production are “horizontally” and “vertically” related involving “demarcation, dilution, manning, agreements, and norms about skills differentials that are a graphic representation of a set of complex social process that sustain manual skill in the workplace” (Penn et al 1985:614). And as such, skills and occupations are “actively structured” around “skill identities” in both formal and informal dimensions in the workplace.

However, in an attempt to extricate Braverman’s arguments from the “determinative technology deductive analysis” (Penn, et al 1985:615), another model is constructed termed “compensatory theory”. It is here argued that, though technological change generates both “skilling” and “deskilling”, in which the understanding has to be located in their

more dynamic and context forms, through which “increased premiums are placed on a range of ancillary skilled tasks associated with plant operations, its maintenance and automated programming” (Penn, et al 1985:615). Within this construct, Sabel, et al (1984 cited in Kuhn 1986:12) extend further the understanding of workplace implication of “programmable technology”, by arguing that work processes involving “the introduction of technology of production increase the importance of shop-floor skill in production.” While highlighting why competitive operating environments often compel firms to combine new technology with a broadly skilled workforce, Sabel et al stress how the imperatives of skilled workers’ knowledge of technology of production facilitate both process and production innovation. In this sense, workers require “broad skills” in order to function in the context of new challenges of production technologies. Therefore, it is argued, work process must evolve in a manner that allows skilled workers to “function flexibly” in specialized production process. In other words as an alternative analysis, Sabel et al (1985) have taken issue with the implications of production technology on “skilled workforce” by presenting a counter argument that work process in the shopfloor, involving introduction of new technology does not absolutely intensify work or reduce autonomy on the job.

5.4. Teamwork in the Refinery

In what follows here, we shall begin to discuss the dimensions and process of employees’ involvement and other illustrations that show the prevalence of teamwork in the refinery. As gleaned from the official documents of the NNPC, the arrangements show that team-working and other related innovative arrangements from the management have been part of work activity and labour process in the NNPC. As part of Total Quality programmes at NNPC, the practice of team-working, semi-autonomous work groups, task forces and other ad hoc committees have become institutionalised as process of involving workers within the frameworks of Joint Consultation in NNPC. Both at the Corporate and Refinery levels, the management at NNPC established the structure and process of Joint Consultative Council (JCC). The JCC has become a process of involving the workers and the unions in decision making process of the corporation. Other processes of “co-opting” the workers are through quality circles, project task force, employees’ representation on ad

hoc committees, total quality committees, and the creation of semi-autonomous work groups. In the context of all these arrangements, it was envisaged by the management that productivity and product market quality and process production would improve. While the work process of the teams and team-working in the process plants provide insight into their working, they reveal little about the impact and implications on employees.

Indeed, while these arrangements can be interpreted from managerial point of view as heralding performance improvements, designed to enhance employee involvement through enhanced representations, they also have strong implications in terms of workers' experience and expectations. The other face of team-working as something of different experience from normative managerial orientations is what is contained in the diverse workers' responses and survey measurement. The survey measurement and workers' responses illustrate the "performance expectations" that underline the processes and practices of team-working generally. Also, while these performance expectations report the practice of teams and team-working as benchmarks of productivity and process efficiency in the plant, they reveal little about power relations dynamics that shape plant workers' own experiences and orientations.

In other words, within the power relations dynamics of the managerial initiatives surrounding team-working in the plant, the concern from the labour process analysis and understanding is; to what extent are teams, work groups or even JCC conferring considerable autonomy and decision making power on workers? Also, to what extent does the team system and team working embody managerial control imperatives, even though in its subtle form, where managerial objectives are generally "imposed" on the multi-skill systems and the teams are also held accountable for their performances? These are emerging implications of team-work system of labour process that have engaged the concerns of "second-wave" labour process analysts.

It is also within this level of concern that evaluations are made of the implications of the introduction of team-working systems on relations between unions and management over the nature of collaborative relations that may ensue (Kelly1998, 2005).Indeed, the existence of strong unions and the institutionalisation of processes and procedures within the

system of JCC at the NNPC have even made the character and workers' perceptions of concomitant collaborative relations a curious one. This dimension of labour process analysis is analysed in Chapter 8 of this work.

The team-work segment of this collaborative relation and workers' sense-making of it is interrogated in this Chapter. As will be shown subsequently, a more detailed and critical side of workers' and union leaders' assessment of this dimension indicates a less autonomous self-managed status for the teams. As shown below, there exist work-teams in the process plants in the Refinery through which plant operators form the assessment of the teams' status in the context of the "governance" of the corporation. Management directs semi-autonomous work teams, project work-teams that are skill-functional and criss-crossing, meant for problem-solving and quality control program in the plant. In the workers' own assessment, the general tendency is for the teams to function and operate under the direction of the management through the Supervisors. Expectedly therefore, responsibilities became "variegated" along the hierarchy of authority up to the team systems in the refinery on a range of specific activities concerning process operations in the plant. Responsibilities for such ranges of activities lay primarily either within the control of the Superintendents representing the Management, or jointly shared by the Superintendents and the Supervisors. And where such "ownership" of responsibility was not within the domain of these two layers, it remains exclusive managerial responsibility. In the process plant of the Refinery, team systems have tended to be restricted largely to operational, day-to-day decision making concerning operations and maintenance works. For instance, the decisions to rotate workers through both the operational and maintenance tasks, and communication of decisions to team members were carried out by the Supervisors, while decisions on temporary stop of production process lay with the Superintendent. Also, in conjunction with the Supervisors, the Superintendent set daily work tasks and dealt with the issue of work absences or swapping within the shift systems. In a most significant way, crucial and strategic decisions and responsibility lie with the Management. Therefore, the level and dimensions of autonomy that might be exercised seemed to have been high-jacked and constrained by overriding presence of managerial responsibilities and influence on teaming systems. As will be shown in what follows, power and

responsibilities were variegated in the plant between Team leaders, the Supervisors, Superintendent and what constitute managerial prerogatives.

5.4.1. Management Responsibilities and Control-Power

The following dimensions of labour process in the refinery fall within the purview of managerial directives, carried out by the Area Supervisor in “team” with the Plant Supervisors. These are; managing the continuous flow processes; managing improvement of products, training programmes, setting and controlling team budget, selecting parts and resources for plants. Other responsibilities for the Superintendent in this regard include; setting daily tasks and goals, selecting team members, managing for unplanned absence and co-ordinating preventative maintenance and deciding temporary process production stoppage, and job rotation.

These illustrations show a more detailed understanding of the character and dimension of variegated power and responsibilities in the refinery. The illustration indicates clearly that teaming system was less than self-managing. A number of several elements that related to the introduction and use of teams and team-working accompanied Management’s efforts to re-organise work and labour process in the refinery. These key elements emerged as components of Management’s prerogative at ensuring quality products, efficient operations of the refinery. Contained in the corporate documents relating to teams and team-working and quality production were the following excerpts: that the Management was committed to continuous pursuit of product quality improvements through the concerted efforts to incorporate the ideas of workers at all levels of the organisation. Gleaned from the document on team-work and quality programme in the refinery was the Management’s argument of being committed to introducing more team-based approaches to problem-solving and quality production that utilize multiple skills. Thus, being committed in introducing team-based work process entailed multi-skilling in the plants.

Therefore as a distinctive feature of the Management’s conception and practices concerning quality product programme, and work process was the strong emphasis on Union’s involvement and employee participation in the development of team-work system in the plant. Quality improvement tied with re-organisation of labour process to achieve im-

proved productivity increasingly became part of collaborative arrangements under the institutionalised structure and processes of team-work under the JCC arrangement in the refinery. In the normative orientation of the Management, the JCC was conceived as the best platform to promote employee participation and Union involvement in the work process that guaranteed quality improvement. However, these arrangements under the JCC were not without implications for Union's roles and activities. While Union leaders agreed on the Management's prerogatives, they still maintained a strong critical line of disagreement, arguing that the very existence of JCC tended to compromise the traditional negotiation process and substantiveness of collective bargaining.

Thus, in what follows here I explore the impact and effect of emerging work process under the team-work and the labour process implications on workers, experience of work in the plant, and implications on trade Unions' roles. In particular, such analysis will provide a critical assessment of work experience under team-work as something different from Management's official pronouncements and work process dimensions in the refinery. In the context of organisation of work and the emerging labour process patterns in the refinery, team-working became widely diffused in the plant operations, and also became associated with normative orientations for employee involvement and participation. However, there were workplace labour relations implications, and these implications were embedded in on-going lived experience of the workers.

As a mark of observation of factors that underpinned the emerging work process regime, NNPC has been confronted with significant challenges occasioned by increased exposure to product market competition, advanced technology of production. Expectedly, NNPC, like any other corporate entity in the oil industry, typically had to evolve "best practice", as a way of continuous assurance of product quality and optimal performance of the refinery. The practice was also introduced to be able to consolidate their product market position, and thus be able to respond proactively to challenges of the oil industry. Concomitantly a high degree of Union-Management alliance and co-operation became imperative for the "negotiation" of these workplace relations needed by the Management. Consequently, team-work arrangement under JCC had to be instituted and used as collaborative arrangement. It is in the context of such collaborative relations that benchmarking in

terms of quality circle programmes, team-working and degree of Unions' involvement was to be enhanced for improved performance.

5.4.2. Team working and Quality Programme in the Refinery: Plant Operators' Responses

While the larger part of the study in the refinery rests mostly on ethnographic study in the refinery, during my in-situ observation, some pertinent questions were raised with the plant operators concerning their experiences and responses to managerial initiatives. Here, I touched on three major aspects of the organisation of work in the refinery; Team-working, Quality Control programme, and Plant Operator Trainees at work. I raised these issues in the Production and Maintenance departments of the refinery. Though both the Supervisory and non-Supervisory operation workers were involved in the two separate surveys, the latter is reported on because they form a larger representative of the sampling survey.

The survey with self-administered questionnaires produced a valid sample size of 120 from 200 sample frame. While the survey was essentially a multi-stage sampling process with selection of units from which respondents were administered with questionnaire, it was pointed out during the process that because of the shut-down of some parts of the processing plants due to operation/maintenance problems a large number of the operations workers were on secondment to Kaduna refinery. As a result, the process plants for Area 3 and 4 were in operation. The survey was, therefore, conducted with the plant operators in the plant Area 3 and 4.

5.5. Labour process in the Refinery

At the Port-Harcourt Refinery Company of NNPC, the process production and maintenance departments were each split into operational units headed by Area superintendents and Supervisors. In the production department, there are 5 units broadly referred to as process plants with their operational specialization. For instance, the process plant A where I did my participant observation covered Area 3 and 4, while Areas 1, 2 and 5 were at the time of research shut down due to operational problems. Area 3 dealt with the

refinery processes and was headed by a Superintendent and two Supervisors. Under the Supervisors were Chief Operators and elected team leaders. Each shift in the process plant A was headed by the Chief Operator who was also in charge of Control Room and external operations with the assistance of the team leaders. In the Control Room were Control Operators who monitored the video panels of the processing plants. Operators in the plant were the team-work, or work-group. The Superintendent, who served as the Area Operator was usually the most experienced Plant Operator. During the time the study was in progress he supervised the Area 3 process operations. He was in charge of the orientation and induction of the trainee operators in the plant.

At the time of this research, 6 trainee operators were deployed to the Area from the pool of newly recruited graduate operators in 2008. The Superintendent helped the Operators on all operational problems requiring immediate solutions. Corresponding with the activities they perform in the process plants, operators bear titles such as pump man, compressor man and heater man. As stated earlier, the Plant Operators were organised into 8-10 work groups or teams and each team was led by team leaders. It is within each of these teams that the specific character of labour process and work performance are manifested.

Working with each of these teams were maintenance workmen to carry out the maintenance operations as problems arose in the plants. Essentially, those working with each team dealt with mechanical or maintenance jobs in the refinery, from routine checking of pumps, compressors and welding to more complex mechanical repairs at times. Fleets of the maintenance workers arrived at the plant operations and were grouped into the team and also rotated with the shift schedules. During morning briefing, the plant superintendent and Supervisors with the team members discussed activities and schedules for the day, based on the “work sheet” from the Superintendent having reviewed the previous day’s activities. A more detailed daily schedule and performance monitoring was produced by the Superintendent. While the plant operators wore blue boiler suits, fellow maintenance workers in the work units wore green boiler suits with their protective boots and helmets. To reduce the impact of noise, the helmets were fitted with ear muffs. The Superintendent and Supervisors were in the brown khaki shirt and trousers with walkie-talkies.

The nature of work process in the refinery is characterised by the bureaucratic labour control process; each plant operator must put in his 8 hours' working period. A working day starts at 7:30am and ends at 4pm. In the plant operations, there are no closing hours, plant operators work in shifts. The dimension of daily labour process commences from the Control Room. The Control Room operators on the video panel monitor and regulate the refining processes in the plant. From the control panel, they relay information to the Superintendents and Supervisors in the plant. Here, and also in the process plant, "tacit skills" are manifested greatly, not only in reading the parameters from the panel, but also in involving "intuitive experiences" of the plant operators in responding to the necessary operational challenges. Based on "tacit skill" and instinct, plant operators in particular are able to sense and act. In the words of one of the plant operators, "when I hear the noise or see the type of steam coming out from the pipes, I know what is going on and I know what actions to take." In other words, tacit skill is demonstrated when intuitively, plant operators are able to detect early where there is imminent crisis. And when there is indeed any "operational problem" all hands must be on deck; from Area Superintendent to the control room operators, the plant consultant, plant operators and the maintenance crew, even the trainee operators. In such unusual situations, expenditure of labour thus becomes heightened, exerting not only physical pressures on the workforce, but also intensifying the work process for them. Though less physically exerting than the work in the traditional manual machines industry, most of the tasks in the continuous process technology essentially entail monitoring the plant installation. However, the "rhythm" in the continuous process technology of the refinery has its own dimension of labour intensification. While the video panel in the Control Room reads drop in temperature or pressure, the task is on the plant operators to actually detect the lines or nozzles or valves that give the problem. This is why tasks in the plant operations are more intensifying and demanding, the plant operators need to regularly and routinely move round the plant to monitor the process flow of the plant. Taking readings of the gauges regularly and feeding the Control Room with the information intensify the jobs – an obviously "intellectualized" labour.

Indeed while the intellectualized labour in the plant operator is largely of "tacit" skill dimension, it is nonetheless equally physically exerting. There is physical exertion in

moving round the plant, peeping into and trying to read the gauges in the equipment, moving up and down to open and close relevant valves, shouting on top of voices to pass information to a fellow team at the other end. All this physical and body movements are within the greasy, wet grounds in the process operating plants. Here, also the Fire and Safety crew must be on hand to give the necessary help and assistance in case of any accident.

In most cases, it would require the team of the Plant Operators and Maintenance men to climb up and down tall stairs where necessary repair or maintenance is to be carried out. The tasks need getting used to physically, and right body movements without falling down in climbing up and down the stairs – more so, if on edge of a perceived major problem.

Thus in evaluating the labour process in the process plant, the combination of tacit skill and physical exertion, force the workers to “acclimatize the job to themselves” (Adesina, 1989, 1990, 1991). The labour process in the refinery has become a combination of several conditions in the plant; pollution of the environment from the chemicals and gas, the high pitched noise level from the compressors, and the fear of slipping or falling while moving round on slippery ground in between heats and heavy instruments. It could indeed be fearsome to be crammed in between instruments that exude heavy gases and high temperatures.

A significant dimension to the whole process of work in the refinery carried out by both the Control Room operators and plant operators has to do with the use of combination of several aspects of labour process in carrying out the daily task; the “tacit skill” (Manwaring and Wood, 1985:171) “job acclimatization” (Adesina, 1989) where the operators not only get used to the noise, but amidst the multiple noise must be able to know which noise belongs to a particular instrument. To the plant operators and the Supervisors, the multiple noises are not just noise, when listened to, “the normal are separated from the misnomer in terms of plants’ operation performances”, remarked one of the plant operators. Thus, noise, smoke and vibrations when analysed carry their meaning to the plant operator. The tacit skill needed to disentangle and respond appropriately is intuitively

developed by the plant operators on the shopfloor. They are indeed shop-floor skilled craft, mobilized to survive the “fragmented” labour process. The other dimension to this “tacit skill”, mobilized by plant operators is what is referred to as “human/machine relationship” through which the plant operators see the instruments as “animate objects, and relate to them in precise manner” (Adesina 1991:453). One often hears the Supervisors urging the Plant Operators to read “their gauges” and temperatures properly, “make sure you read the gauges in your compressor properly before you open or close your valves.” Thus, as noted by Adesina (1991: 454) “there is intimate knowledge of instruments that feeds into distinct level of confidence” among the plant operators. In other words, the “contradictions immanent in commodity production relations notwithstanding, the plant operators exude pride in their concrete labour activities and their knowledge of the use of complex technology of production” (Adesina 1991:454). It is this “shopfloor” collective and skill identification noted in concrete labour activities that serve as “cultural ensemble” mobilized in resisting or supporting the vagaries of production system. This distinct perception of both individual and collective labour process mediates the notion of classic subordination to commodity production.

Within the Refinery, the labour process, both in the plants and other sections such as the Quality Controls, and Maintenance, reflects skills, knowledge and experience that are brought to bear in the concrete expenditure of labour in both the maintenance workshop and on the plant lines - reflecting both craft- skills, and knowledge of the crew.

As a critical segment of the plant production processes, the work process in the Maintenance section is to repair and maintain all mechanical and instrument jobs in the refinery. Repair or maintenance jobs are not done in isolation of the plant operators’ job. This is why the maintenance crew works alongside the plant operators as a team during a particular shift schedule. There are fluidity and criss-cross of tasks and job schedules between the plant operators and the maintenance crew. Work process of the Maintenance section is threefold; while there is the maintenance crew attached on shift bases with the Plant Operation Areas, there are those in the workshop who carry out their jobs in the workshop. While in the workshop, the job schedule is essentially manual, consisting mainly of fabrication, welding, scaffolding and tool making; there are also occasions

where broken-down equipment is brought down from the operating plants to the workshop for repair. Jobs here are essentially manual, though within work-teams led by the team leader or the Supervisors as well. Maintenance jobs within the operating plants seem to be most favoured by these crew members, as observed from a particular bloke who showed resentment when he was called back to the maintenance workshop from the operating plant. There was also a particular young graduate who vehemently opposed his being transferred to Fire and Safety section from Maintenance, "I am a trained Engineer, I don't know what they want me to be doing there" (Fire and Safety Section). This frustration demonstrates the dimension of labour process being experienced by the plant operators. Unlike process plant's work, where team-work is of occupational boundary of work groups comprising same skill and expertise, the fluidity is more where most repair jobs in the workshop often cut across several people. Here, we have welders, mechanics, and other technicians who must work in team for a particular repair job. The Supervisor allocates jobs with man-hours set by the workshop Superintendent. Instruments requiring major repair are wheeled to the workshop for repair. Also, unlike the more intellectualized labour of the plant operators, work in the workshop is more manual. Both the "organisation of work and patterns of monitoring between the plant operations and maintenance sections are different, generating an intense undercurrent of resentment among the latter workgroup" (Adesina, 1991:445).

Discussions about skills and organisation of work in the context of continuous process technology are increasingly being located within the second-wave labour process analysis in the attempt to move the conceptualisation of skill beyond Braverman's arguments. As noted by Wood (1987:3), post-Braverman's discussion of skill has moved into a broader conceptualisation of skill as a "social construction", embracing tacit knowledge under new technologies of production. Therefore at odds with Braverman's conclusion on skill is the emerging argument that tacit skill may indeed be vital for the success of continuous process technology. Labour process commentators, such as Kelly and Wood (1984); Litterer and Salaman (1982); MacKenzie (1977), within the labour process strands though, stressed the contradictory character of labour not only in terms of its antagonistic dimensions, but significantly on the perception of work as being an outcome of concrete creation by the workers. As a purposeful creation of labour-power, work is intrinsically em-

bodied with the tacit knowledge of the workers. According to Wood (1984:4), Braverman's zero-sum conceptualization of skill, and its unidirectional association with craftsmen and artisans, and therefore an erosion of skill-control, ultimately serves the interest of Management on control and power to "the exclusion of workers' own discretion such as resistance and subjectivity." Skill under "new" technologies of production and labour process is "characterized by both conflict and co-operation; with a strong active element in the workers' participation in the labour process" (Wood 1984:4).

In the context of continuous process technology, the material basis for co-operation is underpinned by mutual economic interest between capital and labour, and in particular the need for workers to exercise their skills. It is these dimensions of organisation of work and labour process that rekindled the emphasis on skill and its being associated with workers' tacit knowledge. In corroborating this understanding Burcham (2000, 2004:1) proposes two theoretical constructs: "collective competence" and "work process knowledge" as major theoretical strands that explain labour process under new technology of production. Characterising the labour process and work activity in the new production systems, according to Burcham (2004:1) is emphasis on "teams with responsibility for continuous improvement of working practices." Collective competence "is constituted in patterns of interaction within the team which enable it to make collective sense of understanding of the work processes" (Burcham 2004:1). This, therefore, depends on the capacity of the workforce or team members to make use of the collective knowledge base (tacit skill) in the work processes. Work process knowledge in the context of continuous process technology is defined as "active" (tacit) knowledge which is "directly useful for performance at work" (Burcham 2004:1). Typically enacted and demonstrated in the workplace, it is designed to "solve problems and in doing so, it involves synthesizing codified knowledge with experiential knowledge acquired on the job" (Burcham 2004:1). Implicitly, tacit knowledge constitutes a significant part of the daily organisation of work and labour process in the continuous process technology environment.

In the attempt to corroborate my discussion on the labour process and workers' experiences of the nature of work under the continuous process technology, a number of questions were asked to account for workers' responses. The questions were asked on the var-

ious aspects of work that demonstrate workers' responses to different aspects of work process and the ensuing labour process.

Issues relating to workers' opinion regarding the work process that was evaluated included: how do they see the dimensions in connection with their own work; and in the process, how much of the following did they obtain or derive - opportunity for initiative and discretion, opportunity and freedom to determine method of work; and what amount of challenges does the work process offer them? These aspects of the labour process were touched in what follows as workers' responses during my ethnographic study.

The research, which involved periods of interviewing and participant observation both at the NNPC headquarters and the refinery over a period of 5 months from April to September 2008, included a variety of methods; formal and informal interviewing techniques, documentary analysis of Corporate Briefs and Bulletin, Training documents and Union-Management relations documents. In my survey of the "shopfloor" workers, I raised the pertinent questions on the diverse aspects of the implication of current patterns of work and labour process on workers' own perception and experiences on the shopfloor. The survey contained a number of common themes running through the strands of work arrangement, and workers' expectations; impact of team-working on employees' attitudes and behaviours.

In terms of survey administration and level of responses, 120 valid replies were received from a total of 200 administered (60% rate), and in terms of biographical and structured characteristics (age, sex, level of education, length of service, occupational group and department), the respondent group was satisfactorily representative of the process plant of Area 3 workforce.

The survey instruments explored various aspects of team-working and its implication on workers' attitude and expectation. This covered a wide range of work-related features, relating to the introduction of team-working, that is; measure of experiences of work activities; and attitude to the team-work practice. The survey also sought workers' attitude to managerial practices on aspects of labour relations; perceptions of workers to Union-Management relations in the wake of these managerial decisions surrounding team-work

and its other dimensions; the extent to which such Union-Management relations were characterised by cooperation and conflict; and what level of trust was perceived to exist between Union leaders and members. Preliminary interviews were, however, conducted with Superintendents, Supervisors and Plant Operators' team leaders before administering the survey instruments. In addition, four trade Union representatives of the Branch Unions of NUPENG and PENGASSAN were interviewed to elicit their opinions on team-work system in the refinery.

As a strong component of organisation of work within the NNPC, and as part of management decisions to improve production process in the refinery, team-working was introduced to usher in the desired improvement in the work process. Team-working was introduced into the process plant, and aimed at integration of tasks division in the production system. However, as expected, such introduction is bound to have implications for skill levels, hierarchy structure, status and occupational boundary, and trade Union recognition. In the process plant Area 3, team-working incorporated 8-10 workers comprising both the production and maintenance crew, working in the shift system. Such teams were responsible for all aspects of process operation; inspection and monitoring of instruments and equipment; day-to-day maintenance; and resolving operational and maintenance problems. Skill levels with increased responsibilities and complexities of operational activities have become associated with job content enlargement and heavier workload in the process plants. Apparently, team-working became a significant and critical component of organisation of work in the attempt by the Management to ensure productivity and efficiency in the refinery. And in terms of its implications on Union-Management relations, a Union leader expressed the view that, "Management have always tried to bring issues surrounding team-working in terms of skill-mix, training and leadership representation to JCC meetings, and we also lend our support." In principle, Unions seemed to agree with introduction of team-working, but the practicality of it was left for plant workers and Supervisors to implement, and in this process of implementation, implications emerged.

5.6. Survey findings And Evaluations

With the introduction of team-working, the main indication of positive attitude or satisfaction of team-working is the measurement of acceptance of main aspects of the programme. From Table 1, while just fifty percent of the respondents acknowledged the skill-mix nature of teamwork system; the majority of them agreed to the aspect that it also reduced opportunity for initiatives (thirty-three percent accepted it as means towards encouraging initiatives). Also, more than average of the respondents, fifty-eight percent saw team-work as a means for job intensification, while just fifty percent perceived it as heralding opportunity for training. Generally, therefore, the plant operators of Area 3 appeared to be more critical of certain aspects of the team-working, in particular the bonus-system aspect, job-rotation system and their implementation. Table One (1) shows level of acceptance of certain aspects of implementation of team-working by plant operators:

Table 1: Levels and Main Aspects of acceptance of Team-Working=120

	Acceptance		Non-acceptance	
	N0	%	N0	%
Opportunity for initiatives	40	33	80	67
Increase in workload	70	58	68	57
Opportunity to choose team leaders	60	50	60	50
Job rotations in team-work	65	54	55	46
Recognition for seniority	70	58	50	42
Skill composition of teams	60 50		60	50
Bonus scheme for team-working	45	38	76	63
Changes in task performance	45	38	76	63

Table 2: Perception of job satisfaction from present schedule=120

I derive satisfaction from my schedules	Frequency	
	N0	%
Strongly agree	60	50
Agree	30	25

Disagree	30	25
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Responding on a 3 point scale (Strongly agree, Agree, and Disagree) many of the workers recorded job satisfaction from their job schedules, but obviously at the cost of increased workloads going by the response recorded in Table 1.

While a majority, fifty percent (50%) felt that the skill level of their job increased and commensurate with their seniority (58%) on the job, and they also enjoyed job rotation (54%), (33%) of the respondents still felt it gave less opportunity for initiative. Also (58%) confirmed that a significant aspect of team-working had been its contribution to workload and job intensification. Thus, the attitude the plant operators had of the aspects of team-working generally was that, though it was associated with high skill utilization, greater training and recognition for seniority, it also contributed to greater workload and intensive work regime. There was, therefore, an overall increase in level of satisfaction with the extent of seniority and a considered amount of skill and opportunities for training. There was also considerable satisfaction with their opportunity to choose their team leaders, and make decisions regarding job rotation. This, therefore, confirmed the existence of regular team meeting and briefing between the Supervisors and team members.

Table 3: Types of satisfaction derived from teamwork=120

	Satisfied		Not-satisfied	
	N0	%	N0	%
Freedom to make decision	45	37	71	63
Freedom to influence schedule of work	45	37	71	63
Recognition of opinion and suggestions	60	50	60	50

Experience of promotion and adequate compensation	65	54	55	46
Relations with Supervisors	60	50	60	50
Skill utilization on the job	60	50	60	50

As shown on Table 3, workers in the Operations Plant further expressed their opinions on the specific aspects of satisfaction they derived from team-working:

Given the nature of jobs that plant process operations entail, and the type of symbiotic relations that must exist between the control operations room and the external (plant) operations, one should expect less discretion and autonomy as expressed by the Plant Operators within the team-working systems. However, in the current regimes of tasks multiplicity and reduction in hierarchical structures in the plant, for example, the team of Plant Operators and Maintenance crew working together, the Plant Operators observed to be deriving satisfaction from the variety of tasks performed, enjoyed good relations with Supervisors and, therefore, felt their opinions and suggestions on schedules were recognised.

More than average (60%) of the Plant Operators felt their job was more skill-oriented than before, occasioned by challenges of continuous process technology. They expressed satisfaction with newly-learned skills underpinned by regular training, and reinforced by job experience (tacit skill). On the issue of job rotation as a central component of flexibility, management seemed to encourage a shift system to occur within the team-working systems. For many of the Plant Operators job rotation ensured skill deployment within work groups and allows newly-learned skills to cut across team members. As noted by one of the team members in plant process Area 3, “it is when one is moved around in the plant that you learn vital aspects of the operation...I think it is good for learning.” The Plant Area 3 Superintendent also said “we try to ensure that team-working embraces learning diverse key aspects of operational skills needed in the plant.” Thus, while the

majority of the Plant Operators saw team-working as providing opportunity for skill learning and multiplicity of tasks, they were dissatisfied with the job intensive aspect of it.

As evident in the survey reports, the introduction of team-working as part of managerial initiatives to ensure productivity and efficiency was associated with moderate orientation and experiences of workers. These were noted in such aspects of the labour process as more skill-related learning, underpinned by training and briefing, positive relations with team leaders and Supervisors, flexibility within team-working and feeling of getting one's suggestion listened to. Nevertheless, a key issue that also shaped workers' experience had to do with their perception of management's attitude to the whole process of labour relations. While they could be satisfied with other aspects of team-working, and its prospects for promotion, there were sharp comments regarding the overall management's attitude in the labour relations process. Apparently, therefore, workers' poor perception of management attitudes to Union-Management relations on issues relating to re-organisation of work could have gradually crept in as low estimations of management on issues relating to Unions-Management relations.

An important point to note about the dimensions of labour relations in the ensuing work process patterns was the continuous attempt by the Management to re-orientate workers towards accepting the dynamics of improved performance as inevitable, and this was evaluated in the workers' acceptance and general identification with the management's normative values regarding the overall work process in the process plant. As a state owned enterprise, workers still shared a common concern with management's interest on the future survival and growth of the corporation. In the context of internal and external competitive operating environment of the oil industry, and for the corporation to continue to survive the diverse shocks and threats, the workers generally perceived that they had indeed, "bent too much" in their own efforts to ensure the continued survival of the corporation. These observations were evident in the remarks and perception of the workers, and their Union leaders.

In this sense, scepticism and a lack of trust still existed among the Union leaders, and rank and file members on the real intention, and procedures for achieving the over-all goals of the corporation in the context of the fluid operating environment. As my ethnographic observation and survey findings reflect regarding labour relations issues, a sense of lack of absolute understanding still reflected in the evaluation of management by the Union leaders and their members. In the analysis of survey report, a reduced employee's and Union's trust of the collaborative relations was evident. It is this aspect of Union's perception of management that is evaluated in the next Table (4).

Table 4: Does Management consult with workers and unions on decisions concerning work process=120

	N0	%
Regularly	45	37
Sometimes	65	54
Not at all	10	9

The survey reports indicated in Table 4 show that the majority of plant operators maintained a feeling there was some level of unwillingness on the part of Management to share decisions on managerial issues with the employees. Indicative of this feeling was the belief on the part of workers that though both management and workers might be pursuing the same interests regarding the overall objectives of the corporation, the management still “holds back” on certain managerial issues. More than half of the respondents held that management was less prepared to share its prerogatives with the workers. The responses in Table 4 therefore indicated a modest level of perceived “shared-work” orientation with management as earlier noted by Scott et al (1956).

Responses to questions whether Unions are more involved in managerial decisions on work related practices reinforce the general view of limited involvement of Union leaders. This indicates a perceived low ebb labour relations climate when it comes to deciding on issues relating to work process and some important Managerial practices. Both the Union leaders and members showed that there existed “low trust” industrial relations with respect to levels of co-operation, mutual understanding, good faith and sense of fairness. As shown in Table 5 below, these were other measures that evaluated the perceptions of plant workers of labour-management relations concerning the managerial initiatives. Thirty three percent (33%) of respondents indicated that there was “low trust” between

the management and the Unions, while (41%) felt that there was a “moderate” level of understanding, and (41%) also admitted a road leading to mutual relationship.

Perception of management’s “high- handedness” and “hard-lines” approach on issues pertaining to work processes generally, as these affect their members and management control initiatives, were indeed reinforced by several comments from Union leaders at JCC meetings.

Table 5: Workers’ perception of union-management relations=120

	Regularly		Sometimes	
	N0	%	N0	%
Does management take unions views into considerations on issues?	49	41	71	59
Do you see partnership between the unions and management?	44	37	76	63
Do you see management consulting with unions on issues?	44	37	76	63
Do you see a pattern of mutual trust between the management and unions?	49	41	71	59
Do you see such relationship as existing in good faith?	40	33	80	67
Do you see management willing to involve unions on	40	33	80	67

issues?				
How often do you see management responding to union's suggestion?	44	37	76	63

As against the old traditional beliefs and understanding that characterised managerial practices that issues must be jointly negotiated, there were emerging trends on the part of the management that it now had the prerogative to introduce changes in line with operational challenges. Accordingly, these changes were increasingly less negotiated between the Union and Management.

At a general level of the Plant Operators' responses, there were indications that the long-established co-operative and joint relations that were to be built on the basis of "shared identity" and consensus were gradually being completely taken over by managerial prerogatives. The existence of mandatory processes such as JCC notwithstanding, a majority of the workers held the opinion that the legitimacy and sacrosanct nature of such established procedures for joint discussion were being undermined and hijacked by the prerogative power of the management.

The gradual receding of "consensual style" in negotiations and agreements deserved to be understood against the logic of the competitive operating environment of the corporation, with increasing pressure for product quality, and efficient operation of the refinery. As noted by Turnbull and Blyton (1992), in moments of organisation change, managements are increasingly pressured to exert extra managerial practices on the workforce. It is at these moments that managements espouse "a mix" of managerial practices, such as team-working with other "hard" policies, in order to survive the competitive environment.

At NNPC, while workers may have previously shared the same "family ideological" commitment to the overall survival of the corporation as an "integrated social concern, comprising a formal social process and informal types, together with a "tradition" that lay emphasis on shared values and attitudes between the management and workers"(Scott et

al 1956 cited in Paul Blyton et al 2001:255), such sentiments are being eroded by the realities of the organisation where new labour regimes have to be initiated.

According to Blyton et al (2001: 255), “enduring values embodied in traditions, sustained the shared commitment between management and Union to have mutual understanding for the sustainability of the organisation.” The “family ideology” Scott et al (1965) that underpinned the existence of such “shared commitment” (Blyton et al 2001) maintained the “traditional values at work through which Management and Unions maintained clearly defined and agreed upon prerogatives” (Brown 1965 cited in Blyton et al 2001:256). Such traditional values at work grew out of and were reinforced by the fact that Management tended to “share a common” occupational background to that of the manual workforce, together with the same common origin in the same industrial community” (Blyton et al 2001:256). Therefore, “the sense” held by the plant operators in perceiving the corporation as an “integrated social concern” resulted in both Management and workers maintaining a shared understanding which tended “to predominate over any manifestation of conflicting interest” (Brown 1965 cited in Blyton et al 2001:256). Within this context of “integrated social process and collective identity” (Adesina, 1989), labour management relations would be expected to be facilitated not only by a shared ideology and commitment to a common purpose, which was based on how to sustain the corporation, but also to an understanding that the workforce was indeed part of the “larger family” whose welfare needed to be taken care of by the Management.

However, historical developments that tend to define context of operational activities of the NNPC, necessitating broader and wider issues regarding how work is to be performed, and imperatives of managerial practices have brought in “new” patterns to labour processes with wider implications on broader workplace relations. Consequently, the long-established co-operative relations and a positive “ideological” disposition at workplace, built on the basis of shared identity and commitment seemed to be giving way to emerging imperatives of managerial practices under the “new” production systems. It is to be noted, however, that with the introduction of new managerial practices, the process of change was still mediated by the old traditional social process of the workplace, rein-

forced through collective tradition and values shared by both Management and the workers.

In his characterisation of diverse motives behind the introduction of teams system and team-working, Mueller (1994 cited in Buchanan et al 2002:399), identified certain dimensions that often inform the introduction of a team system; these could be grouped into “both economic, social and cultural reasons in which management’s concern for labour utilization and productivity is combined with the need to harness the work experience and tacit skill of the workforce.” In an improved elaboration of these dimensions, Mueller (2000, cited in Buchanan 2002:399), identified additional framework, the “socio-technical dimension”, emphasising the degree of task inter-dependence among team members through which production is organised.” According to Buchanan (2002:399), this socio-technical dimension is reinforced and underpinned by the “organisational governance” of the corporation. In other words, the “decision-making patterns” and “power relations” not only have implications for the nature and character of the team system but are also “important for an analysis of labour relations patterns of the organisation” (Buchanan 2002:399). It is also in this pattern that the “role of Unions in the development, implementation and operations of teams are implicated”(Buchanan 2002:399). Thus, according to Buchanan (2002:399), Mueller’s (2000) framework provides the significant “indicator for an evaluation of what teamwork and team system hold for the workers and the labour process.” It is also within this “organisational governance” that, what underlines the importance of skill and autonomy as significant dimensions within the labour process, can best be conceptualised. Mueller’s (2000) framework has, therefore, provided a way for the evaluation of team-working and its implication both for the workers and the Union roles in the process plant.

Indeed, as noted by Kate Mulholland (2009) even though team-working may produce a feeling of collectives among workers in terms of interdependence and co-operation, the realities are often at odds with the expectations. Noting the failings of the Fordist production system, advocates of a team-work system, Womack, Roos and Ones (2007) argue that team-work “facilitates worker autonomy, and decision-making through the utilization of their skills and knowledge in problem solving” (cited in Mulholland 2009:1). To them,

team-work expediency is located in its “economical” and “cultural” relevance, in assuring for the management, workers’ innovative performance, it eliminates waste; assures greater efficiency and productivity and worker commitment,”(Mulholland 2009:1).Essentially conceptualised in unitary perspective, the traditional Union involvement is collaborative within the broader managerial strategic goals that underpin team-working. Thus, central to team-working and practices from the managerial normative orientation are how to redesign work process and discourse of “unity” that underpins it. However, as noted by Danford et al (1999) and Rinehart (1997cited in Mulholland 2009:1), the “discourse and practice of team-working eliminates workers’ voice”, and the assumptions of worker empowerment that it conjures runs against the very contradictions of “work intensification, increased surveillance and control.” It is, therefore, seen more as an outcome of “social engineering” in the context of challenges facing production process, rather than a fundamental refinement of the labour process where the “new” production system is superimposed on a traditional process production system” (Danford et al 1999, cited in Mulholland 2009:2).

Thus, whether as a process or practice, conceptualised for workplace culture transformation, work-team practice is rooted in managerial logic symbolized in “team spirit”, and driven by “collaborative partnership” with Union leaders. Characterising the imperatives of team system, therefore, are its assumptions to promote continuous improvement, flexible work arrangements into team with a team leader. Also, in an extension of features that underpin team-working, Danford (1999), identifies the management techniques underlining the process as including, “maximum use of labour, and minimisation of idle work time, the erosion of traditional skill demarcations, task fragmentation and job enlargement driven by controlled flexibility”(cited in Mulholland 2009:2).However, as noted by Mulholland (2009:2) “most of these characteristics are to the detriment of the workers’ interest and a departure from the socio-technical model.”

Picking issues with the cultural and ideological dimension of team-working, Mueller (1994) sees it as “the realignment of individual motivation and organisational rationality”(in Mulholland 2009:2), arguing that the major distinguishing feature of emerging wave of team-working in contemporary workplaces is the Management’s strong empha-

sis on “organisational strategic interest and focus on performance, which tend to determine ways in which labour processes are structured and managed.” In the attempt to locate workers’ voice in the team-working system, Smith et al (2008 in Mulholland 2009:2), in their empirical study of team-working in the public sector argue that, in addition, “team-working serves management’s administrative functions”, while at the same time sustaining the “ideological imperatives” it seeks to promote.

Based on her own study of a major supermarket, Mulholland (2009:3) explores the dynamics of workplace experience and employment relations for the supermarket workers under the team-working system. In her analysis, the gradual phasing-in of team-working system reconfigured the labour process from “a worker oriented informal group to a managerial composition at a company-wide level.” According to Mulholland (2009:2), the managerial logic of work organisation, and the particular reconfiguration of team-work revealed clearly the distinct features of the organisational labour process as being “monotonous, tedious, boring and physically hard for frontline workers.”

At odds with Mueller et al’s (2000), conceptualisation that team systems provide several normative values based on economic, cultural, social aspects, are Smiths et al’s (2008), estimation of team-work as inherently characterised by “low trust”, arguing that team-working operates at a level that underpins the managerial ideological position, “without necessarily, of any benefit for the workers”(cited in Mulholland 2009:3). Drawing on this model, Mulholland (2009) argues that team-working symbolises “ideological unity” between labour and Management in which it serves an economic function to the Management by reducing labour costs through re-organisation of the labour process; for example, the introduction of functional flexibility, team members’ control over the pace and distribution of work tasks.

Based on the above empirical and conceptual analysis, it implies that, when confronted with increasing competitive challenges regarding productivity and efficiency, Management is compelled to introduce series of management techniques, such as team systems aimed at improving quality performance and productivity. Indeed, as Lund et al’s (2006) and Mulholland’s (2009) research demonstrate, in a context of operating challenges,

Managements are compelled to introduce new process technology, “with a subsequent synchronisation of the labour process, exemplary in quality management and teamwork systems”(Mulholland 2009:4). The inevitability of major changes in the process of work is, therefore, “pressures on the workforce for increased productivity, intensive surveillance through concerted team systems, and a “managed autonomy” (Mulholland 2009:4) for the workers. According to Mulholland (2009:4), new technologies which seek to synchronise labour process “may not fundamentally initiate a change in the structure and dimensions of control over work, rather provides an opportunity for the Management to phase in “new” ways of working that assume profitability, quality control and performance improvement.”

Thus, in a context of “efficient rationality” that influences managerial strategies and techniques in the introduction of team-working, in the refinery, significant implications are its dimensions in the character of the labour process. This has involved the technical details of the work process itself, self-management, and job enlargement with multi-skills dimensions cutting across sections and workforce in the process plant. Thus, in the emerging dimensions of work in the process plant, the next “managerial layer” the Plant Superintendent and the Supervisors closer to the shopfloor “are freed” from shopfloor, and are mainly concerned with attention to issues of implementing the dimensions of the work process. “At the heart of the new self-control regime is the whole emphasis on labour flexibility and the continuous allocation of labour as features of team-working” (Mulholland 2009: 5). Work teams in the process plants are given the responsibility and self-control; paradoxically, such employee responsibility is equally characterised by imposed commitment for improved productivity and quality product. Accordingly, and in line with Mulholland’s (2009:5) evaluation, “team system amounts to simplification of a planned process of work control regime in which the standardisation of plant operative works are carried out for the economic rationality of the organisation rather than real autonomy for the workforce.” In her evaluation the “departmental manager spells out how the culture of the team system, is filtered down the shop-floor hierarchy” (Mulholland 2009:6). Therefore, as part of managerial practices, team systems ensure the simplification of labour process within the traditional tenets of “unitary” managerial system.

Nevertheless, as noted by Mulholland (2009) in the attempt to “homogenise” labour process through team-working, management faces the challenge of issues of “job ownership” and traditional “job identities” associated with skills-craftsmanship of specific work technique on the shopfloor. Skill-identity and job demarcation had been the traditional means through which shopfloor workers protected their skills, and this tends to pose challenges to new initiatives under team-working. In Mueller’s (1994) formulation, “inhered in the logic of team system is the management’s attempt to realign workers’ interest with managerial strategy” (cited in Mulholland 2009:6), and this is also corroborated by Womack et al (2007), that in the new management’s discourse of the team system is the “re- invigoration of employees’ motivation”(cited in Mulholland 2009:6). And this necessarily involves concerted efforts to transform the “workplace consciousness”, when workers are expected to embrace a “unitary perspective”, and accept “new realities” toward quality product, improved performance and efficiency in the process plant, characterised by increased workloads, overtime, shift-system and flexible working across jobs, in the process of production. Therefore, if functional and task flexibility are the underpinning logic of Management’s team-work system in the process plant, it implies that in such a ‘flexibilised’ workplace, team members must work in a monitored environment to meet targets under close supervision. Paradoxically, and as pointed out by Mulholland (2009), workers are also required to work flexibly across the different task lines.

Consistent with the team-working system is the recognition of role and position of team leaders. A team leader’s job involves a routine “management” of the operations of the work team in the process plant. On the basis of their work experience and “corporate commitment”, team leaders are generally selected by management, and this is in consonance with Smith et al(2008 cited in Mulholland 2009:2),who observe that team leaders’ roles in the team system include, “monitoring colleagues performance, enforcing individual team target output, in terms of quality coaching of colleagues, cascading the corporate message down into “shop-floor operations and disciplines.” While making an elaborate illustration of this, Rinehart et al (1997) argue that the new concept of work organisations has never made pretence about the existence of workplace authoritarian practice.

The above evaluations and conceptual analysis have strong resonance with my findings and, therefore, lend credence to the understanding that, in spite of the changing nature of work practices and management initiatives at NNPC, the traditional managerial practices coexist with the new work team systems. Indeed, as evidenced in my research findings on issues of team system, and task flexibility in the refinery, whenever productivity and quality performance are paramount in the joint consultative council meetings, management deploys terse tough language couched in the discourse of “family ideology” on which the work processes are to be performed. Embedded in the discourse of productivity, efficient operations of the process plants, quality product and “family ideology” are underlying manifestation of job intensifications, work load, and additional responsibilities for the team members.

In the work process arrangements and the labour process, a central function for the line Supervisors and the plant team leaders had been an extensive and intensive work monitoring, deployment of labour through the shift system, within and across teams in the most efficient manner. Work monitoring in the process plant operated at different levels; morning briefing, pre-shift job rotation discussions, team self-monitoring, and regular debriefing from the management, through the Superintendent. The obvious but salient outcome of such labour process and practices was work intensification and tense social relations. As noted by Mulholland (2009:12), “while the subliminal intent of such morning team meeting could be suggestible of something cosy, close, and convivial relations, embedded are authoritarian management tendencies where managers appraise the workers of the progress of targets and productivity.” Also, discipline is tacitly embedded in such team meetings where issues relating to workers’ absence, performance and conduct are routinely dealt with on a daily basis; suggesting a quasi-coercive managerial regime (Mulholland 2009).

Such workplace culture as guiding principle of the labour process becomes contextualised in the corporate normative patterns and managerial techniques, illustrating the character of workplace relations in the process plant. This tendency in the process plant, therefore, mirrors Mueller’s (1994) arguments that managerial strategy regarding labour

process and the ensuing job re-organisation are mutually linked in serving the economic rationale of the management.

However, as contextually found in the process plant, while theoretically, team-working conveys an image of “synchronization” of labour deployment and schedule allocations for team members, its practicality as a “seamless” means towards efficiency is even problematic, from the perspective of labour process. It might prove difficult to be finely intoned with product quality and expected improved performances. This is because from the realities of plant operations generally, un-envisaged operational problems might put additional pressure on the whole arrangement and schedule of team systems, thereby making the whole discourse of team-working overwhelming problems, both to the Plant Operators and the Management.

In the context of the debate about the normative benefits of team-working, these empirical evaluations and conceptual analysis have explored Management’s rationale for “phasing” in the new form of work arrangements, with the implication on workplace labour relations. From the perspective of the various models reviewed and analysed, it is shown that in the emerging labour process practices, Management exhortation and “talk” of team-working as heralding “empowerment” for workers fall short of realities and expectations of workers. Therefore, consonant with the commentary of various authors, the logic of processes and practices of team-working system is rooted in “economic rationality” for product quality, efficient performance with little evidence of worker “empowerment” as contained in Womack et al’s (2007) arguments. And as pointed out by Mueller (1994), and elaborated upon through Smith et al’s (2008) empirical findings, “...the logic of team-working is to re-align the employees with business of the organisation” (in Mulholland 2009:15), which is essentially “ideological” and “normative”, in the interest of the management.

While the introduction of and emphasis on team-working arrangements continues to be of central concern in the context of managerial practices, opinions continue to divide on the importance and benefits to both management and employees. Central to this concern is indeed the question of whether organisational goals concerning the new work arrange-

ments could lead to consensus-building between Management and the workers. Authors such as Appelbaum et al (2000), have suggested that such work redesign through team-working is not only beneficial to employers, but indeed has led to workers' empowerment and, therefore, greater commitment to the goals of the organisation. However, other authors have equally taken critical stand on the supposed benefits, arguing that redesigning of work and responsibilities largely succeeded in intensifying work for workers, and will therefore ultimately "re-insert resistance" to the very logic of the processes (Vallas 2000, David Knights and McCabe 2003).

Thus, in keeping with tradition of critical understanding that seeks to re-conceptualise workers' own perception of team-working through their lived work experiences, the focus of this Chapter has been to demonstrate whether work teams introduced in the refinery in the context of continuous process production for quality product and improved performance, increased the support and commitment of employees to work re-organisation. The Chapter evaluates the impact of labour process dimensions through team-working introduced in the refinery on employees' lived experiences. Through interpretative, but critical analysis of textual narratives and remarks of Process Operators in response to open-ended interviews, collaborated with survey measures analysed, the Chapter evaluates the impact of team-working and other labour process on their lived work experiences. The potency of interpretative analysis couched in reflexivity (Burawoy, 2003) and combined with the survey measures, demonstrate clearly the salient dimensions of the processes of workers' own interpretation of work process and team systems.

In line with Vallas (2000, 2003) the Chapter demonstrates that the success or otherwise of management's control imperatives concerning labour process need to be located and empirically analysed within the workers' own perception of the processes. The Chapter has demonstrated how the workers could mobilize their creative ability, both in their collective and as individuals, to utilize the symbolic resources – material and cultural, and make sense of their location and experience in the context of the emerging processes. In finding relevance in Kelly and Kelly's (1991) arguments, that workers' attitudes and opinion on organisational changes are largely expressions of the dimension of on-going

labour management relations and its interpretation, the study demonstrates that while workers' perception of team-working may not totally undermine the normative expectations of management, it indeed establishes the basis for "fragmented", "individualistic" and covert resistance from the workers. Indeed, as noted by Coupland et al (2005:1056), "the extents to which workers recognise their interests as fundamentally similar to, or distinct from, those of management" is to that extent that "implicit or explicit" attitudes are manifested by the workers. The legitimacy or otherwise of such managerial initiatives is thus manifested in the responses of the workers. Works of Appelbaum et al (2000), Bailey et al (2001), Lerine (1995), and Wall et al (1986), have generally shown that, to the extent that work teams promote employee involvement and greater inner satisfaction, to that extent such work arrangements equally engender organisational commitment and cohesion in the workplace. Behind such Management initiatives are explicit or implicit "cultural" and "normative" prescriptions with which workers are expected to be identified, thereby leading to greater consensus.

On the other hand, critical commentary on team-work system from authors such as Knights and McCabe (2000); Barker (1993), emphasises its "control dimensions" in which "concertive control", "self-management" are its hallmarks. For example, Knights and McCabe (2003) suggest that teamwork system is "inherently normative and that through the discourse of team-working, workers' own subjectivity is re-constituted in the process of shaping how workers think and understand their employment relationship"(cited in Coupland et al 2005:1058).

From the perspective of labour process analysis, such practices are seen as part of the larger and broader design in managerial rhetoric from "rational" or bureaucratic to "normative" and cultural managerial control strategies (Barley and Kunda 1992) to subsume the "soul" and "body" of the workers. In the context of workplace Labour-Management relations, team-work conceptualisation seeks to "overcome conflict and therefore extend managerial hegemony by encouraging workers to identify with a common cause of the organisation" (Vallas 2003:204). Interpreted through the normative lens, "empowerment" and "self-control" ingredients of team-working predict that "dichotomous relations" between managers and workers will be reduced because it "re-writes" labour relations by

investing some levels of responsibilities and involvement in the team that traditionally divided the workers and Management (Vallas 2003).

Embedded in such pro-management relations practices, therefore, are “diffusions” of management’s functions where teams, for example, take on the responsibilities not only of work process related tasks and associated maintenance, and quality control in the plant, but perform self-managing roles such as self-monitoring for improved performance in the team. However, much as the “empowerment” and “autonomous rhetoric” associated with team-work system continue to envisage “organisation-wide” unity and consensus, a variant perspective within the critical labour process analysis has indicated the inevitability of employee resistance as outcome of the change initiatives. Reviewed generally as “new industrial relations” initiatives with its numerous hallmarks, Kelly and Kelly (1991) concluded that the potential of the new initiatives under teamwork system to bring desired changes are often undermined by its failing to build up trust between the parties. Thus, in the failing of the new management’s initiatives to “provide an overarching and sustainable framework”(Vallas 2003:220) for workers’ lived experiences and perception to align with its normative values, workers continue to create space with which to show and manifest resistance, that of conflicting interest with that of Management.

In accounting for the prevalence of “dichotomous relations” even in the “modernised” industrial relations environment where the normative and management’s hegemony is expected to hold sway, Martins (1992:2003) constructed a “tripartite cultural framework” in which “organisational cultures” or “organisational governance” (Mueller 1994) could be “integrative” “differentiation” or “fragmentation”, that “separately account for the responses of workers to team-working system”. While the “integrative culture” framework resonates with normative work environment, the “differential culture” recognises the existence of competing but coherent sub-cultures characterised by cases of workers resistance. Under a “fragmented culture” framework “teamwork may have more ambiguous effects with fragmented – multiple views among employees” (Coupland et al 2005:1059).

At NNPC, in spite of the challenges of the operating environment on the product market and technology of operations, the social dimensions of the labour process comprising the occupational structures of the workplace and workers' identity within the corporation, traditional Union-Management relations still underpinned NNPC workers' positive orientation to the corporation. In other words, there still exists in NNPC, a stable, traditional old employment relation of segmented hierarchical structure between the Management and working-class grades (Brown, 1992). Due to shared ideological commitment under a collective ethos of "same family", labour-management relations were largely governed through conventional processes of negotiation, with each party demonstrating fairness and commitment, embodied in the social systems orientation of work. As Brown (1965) notes "management and union prerogatives were "clearly defined and agreed upon" (Coupland et al 2005: 1060) on diverse issues of workplace relations.

With other work process arrangements and managerial practices, team-working system was systematically phased into the Refinery as part of broader measures to ensure improved performance in the refinery process production system. It remains the basic "change programme" to fundamentally introduce shifts in the continuous process technology of the refinery. Thus, as part of what is often referred to as "Quality way" in the refinery, NNPC was to invest considerably in the training and re-training for "attitudinal integration" of all categories of employees into the change initiatives. Hierarchies in the refinery were gradually replaced with team system integration comprising workers of different skills cutting across occupational boundaries forming plant process production teams in the refinery. Team-working, therefore, came to involve all refinery plant operators of both the production and maintenance departments, with team-working cells typically comprising 8-10 workers often on shift bases. Such teams in the refinery were, therefore, responsible for all aspects of the process plant operations, day-to-day maintenance and resolving technical problems of process plant operations. As should be expected, additional skill level composition and increased responsibilities for the team entailed higher workloads and job intensification. Plant Operators in the refinery of all occupational boundaries, therefore had to accept the team-working system, and its associated task flexibility, shared-task responsibility, and increased commitment to product quality and improved performance.

In a context where workers deploy and use diverse symbolic resources both material and discourse to narrate their lived work experiences in response to change initiatives, an “interpretative analysis” Mumby and Clair (1997) is combined with other research methods to give a thick and nuanced description of “co-existing, multiple layers or organisational realities” Coupland et al (2005:1061) which reconstruct workplace relationships as “dialogue” Grant et al (1997). And as pointed out by Turner (1982) workers possess the “infinite resources to continuously draw on, in classifying and contesting similarities and differences in the workplace” (cited in Coupland et al 2005:1061). Workers have the capacity to initiate and re-appropriate diverse resources including the managerial initiatives itself to sponsor and promote their interest. In their utilization of space and symbolic resources for resistance, workers’ construction of attitudes and identities are context specific and not “necessarily absolute or central and enduring” (Potter and Wetherell 1987 cited in Coupland et al 2005:1062). Thus, such “cultural ensembles” drawn on, in the enactment of “attitude” and identity become plausible, legitimate and acceptable in team interaction (Coupland et al 2005). Analytical focus on context relevance of issues and situations as narrated by the workers themselves are what Oswick et al (2000), refer to as “turn to text” analysis of workers’ narratives in the workplace.

In what follows, therefore, empirical focus of this study is on the analysis of the corporate documents regarding total quality programme as this is tied up with teamwork systems and training programmes for the employees. Gleaned from the relevant corporate documents such as Total Quality Manual, Training Programme Manual and other publications, justifications for the introduction of new managerial initiatives were premised on the need to “continuously ensure quality products and improved performances for the corporation”(PHRC News 2ndQuarter 2008).Management’s commitment to quality programme over the years had been combined with the concern to re-organise the work processes culminating into the introduction of team-working. As contained in the various publications of the corporation on issues of quality control, quality programme, and improved performance, the management intentions remained on how to align employees’ focus with the normative expectations of the corporation in this regard.

Management's view on how to ensure success of quality programme through team-working was made to involve training and "culture programmes" designed to "overcome old functional task barriers between occupational boundaries, create a climate of trust and openness, and assure a culture of shared problems and solutions" (GM, Group Learning Department). According to him, "incorporated in the training programme are; leadership training, designed to bring a new perspective to team-working and leadership when the workers, trade Unions and management could be involved in joint collaboration to bring the desired quality improvement." From the management's perspective, therefore, training and development were considered important in bringing the employee commitment. In another comment by one of the plant Superintendents, "team-working and its skill composition are designed to support plant workers in the refinery, to be able to focus on operational and production issues critical for quality products." According to him, this requires a culture of learning, and experience sharing among the team members.

From the Management perspective, therefore, team-working was aimed at providing team members with opportunities to develop themselves fully, and thereby be able to maximize their contribution to the growth of NNPC (PHRC News, 2nd Quarter 2008). Interviews and informal discussions with Superintendents in the refinery underscored these normative assumptions regarding the objectives of team-working. However, several themes emerged from the refinery workers' responses, concerning what their perceptions are of these managerial precepts. The themes that are included in this evaluation reflect largely workers' own narrative and what sense they made of these normative expectations from the management. Generally, these themes were expressed in the frustration of expectations from the new initiatives; "fragmented individuation" arising from workers' criticisms and re-appropriation of rhetoric surrounding team-working and quality program. In the evaluation of workers' feelings and responses, there were elements of accounts of the failure of team-working to meet their expectations in terms of intrinsic job fulfilment.

As a result of unfulfilled expectations in terms of symbolic and material rewards, a feeling of distancing may have been engendered when realities are at odds with expectations. As noted in Knights and McCabe (2000), unmet expectations in team-working may stimulate employee resistance when management's rhetoric of working together does not

match workers' expectations. In a context of normative expectations from the Management, workers are faced with a dilemma of balancing their own expectations with realities. The concept of team-working as being canvassed promised autonomy, self-responsibility and empowerment – which are themselves, appealing. However, in practical terms there are far in-betweens in terms of realisation (Ezzamel and Willmott 1998) due to all types of pressure that accompany it. According to Knights and McCabe (2000), therefore, there is a “veiled laudatory aura” surrounding team-working, in which events and realities are inconsistent with assumptions. In other words, “a feeling of disjunction between the discursive configuration of expectations and impacts on members may also evoke feelings of resistance even in discursive form” (Coupland et al 2005:1067). These feelings and expressions occurred regularly in the comments of the plant workers. In their various but similar comments, there was distinctive incongruity between patterns of what team-working expected of them, and their own realistic experience in the situations.

One of the comments of one of the Union leaders that seemed to offer explanation to this disjunction was, “the problem could be attributed to the management not doing enough in terms of style of going about team-working, and in particular the communication side of it.”. He commented further, “we have seen situations where Management would talk one thing concerning the benefits to workers, and doing another thing when it comes to implementation” (Union Leader at PHRC). Analysis of such comments and responses both from workers and Union leaders further highlighted how the plant workers actively reconstructed their identity and attitudes within the work team rhetoric.

A curious dimension to understanding why workers opt for maintaining normative orientation even in the event of the unfulfilled expectations from the team-working concept is to locate this within “careerist behavioural compliance attitude” (Coupland et al 2005:1069) as a concern for job security and promotion even in the face of harsh realities of job dissatisfaction. D’Art and Turner (1999) argued that the uncomfortable balance and co-existence of co-operative behaviour and tacit resistance were due to a “requirement for mutual survival”. In essence, the insecurity in both the labour market and the competitive product market of the oil industry may invariably lead to a “muted” but persistent resistance among the workers. Therefore, the mutual, but tense co-existence of

workers' self-discipline and the realities of the employment relations is an outcome of insecurity in the competitive labour market within the logic of co-participation in the team-working system.

Identity construction in the context of team-working, as shown in the detailed analysis of workers' responses also led to "fragmented individualisation" (Coupland et al 2005). Exploration of this theme indicates a construction of individual identity which reflects fissures of differences between Management and workers, and even among the workers themselves. The opening up of "fissures" mirrors Vallas' (2003a) view, that the introduction of team systems may exacerbate both "lateral" and "vertical" tensions in the workplace. This may eventually lead to fragmentation of individual positions, and "multiple views" concerning diverse issues in the workplace, deepening tensions and contradictions among the workers themselves, and between the team members and the Supervisors (Vallas 2003a).

Evaluation of team members and team leaders' account that demonstrates feeling and ambiguity in the context of team-working aligned with some authors' notion, for example, Martin (1992 cited in Coupland 2005:1072), that "changed workplace practices often result in fragmentation of collective shop-floor traditional solidarity." The scepticism that results from "low trust" relations could lead to "a privatized and individualized construction of workplace relations" (Coupland et al 2005:1072) which may however remain slippery, fluid and shifting as circumstance of the workplace relations dictate.

Existence of this individuation and "instrumental self-identity" construction led one of the plant operators to remark, "we have seen colleagues who in their self-seeking attitudes lobbied themselves to become employment relations officers in the ER Department from the refinery." This is Emeka, a team leader referring to one of his colleagues who through his career-seeking devices left the plant to become "one of them" (management team) in the ER Office.

What is particularly obvious from the various themes emerging from team-working in the plant as understood and interpreted by the workers is that; team-working as a concept or managerial initiated normative value has been re-appropriated and negotiated and de-

ployed not only in criticising its very logic, but also in a discursive re-appropriation to construct multiple views and shifting identities in the context. In other words, and as noted by Knights and McCabe (2000:1482), “employees are not so convinced by the discourse of team-working as its advocates presume, and as its critics fear,” for employees interpret and redeploy the rhetoric as their expectations demand. Thus, the ethos of team-working operates in an environment of “management dogma” and rhetoric, leaving space for workers’ re-appropriation of the framework to their own ends.

By way of empirical evaluation of workers’ responses in the plant to the work arrangements, the rhetoric of team-working had typically embodied normative expectations of work performance improvement and quality control in the process production, through an arrangement of shared responsibility between the Management and the workers. However in the evaluation, clear manifestation of conflicting interest exists between the Management and the workers on the remit of the initiatives. And the realities of workers’ experiences seemed to be at odds with the “unitary” prescriptions of team-working systems. The “integrative” and “empowerment expectations” from the Management’s initiatives were still confronted with subtle forms of resistance and re-negotiation. Ezzamel and Willmott (1998), David Knights and McCabe (2000) and Vallas (2003) have pointed out the outcome of team-working in terms of the lived experiences of workers. To them, there exist uneasy and ambiguous perceptions of the arrangements providing the space through which workers demonstrate their resentments.

In the Refinery where this study was carried out, the implementation of team work arrangements were associated and interpreted both by the workers and Unions as “talk of experiences” without commensurate realities on the ground. Here, when the workers perceived an unmet expectation, the talk and rhetoric surrounding team-working and managerial practices became drawn up as framework not only to legitimately criticise the initiatives, but also use it to reconstitute their own self-identity and agentic responses to the normative control systems. Clearly, Management’s attempt to establish and integrate the normative and “culture-turn” in the refinery in terms of work arrangements and the desired outcomes, while raising a lot of expectations, also indirectly ingrained in their orientation the capacity to re-appropriate the very framework in the light of Management’s

failure to meet workers' expectations. For instance, the ambivalence and shifting manifolds on which mobilization of resources for consent and resistance rest were demonstrated by the workers and the Union leaders of the NNPC, at one of the JCC meetings between the union leaders and the management. The entire body of challenges and implications for efficiency or productivity of the corporate restructuring, in the context of operating challenges was perceived by workers and Unions leaders entirely as responsibilities of the Management. The workers inverted the Management rhetoric of commitment and productivity in the light of emerging demands for quality control by tasking the Management to bear the burden and responsibilities. Here, we were able to see how within the discourse and practices of the Management, compliance and consent are mediated by resistance by the workers, and in producing self-identity to counter the Management. Also, in this case, it was observed that while certain managerial policies and practices may generally be viewed in oppositional forms by the workers, Union leaders may still buy the ideas and concede to the management initiatives. Thus, while control at one point may generate opposition, such opposition may be outflanked at another point, and therefore further reinforce managerial concern for control. Through these interfaces within the workplace, the subjective experience of the workers is formed, reproduced and reconstituted, sometimes in contradictory forms and at other times in conformity with managerial initiatives.

Indeed, absence of outright collective opposition in terms of formal adversarial action on the part of Unions was noticed. The embedded and covert forms of resistance and cynicism suggest abilities of the plant workers to draw on "textual resources" introduced by the Management itself to meet their own individual and collective instrumental interest such as need for job security, promotion and career protection. While the perceived low expectations from the Management may serve as discursive resources to criticize the arrangement, it ironically also provides the framework through which the workers renegotiate their individual self-interest and manage their own subjectivities. Thus, as noted in Vallas (2003a:220), "employees are not just passive receivers of discourses in the organisation." This alludes to fragmented and individualistic themes identified earlier as emerging tendencies among some categories of plant operators in the refinery. Workers' capacity to pick certain fallouts of the new work practices provides them with "subtle and

strategic resources with which to renegotiate their “other” work orientation (Vallas 2003:204). Workplace practices, therefore, usher in for workers the “unintended consequences for providing a new source of ensembles to counter workplace managerial initiatives” (Vallas 2003:204).

In line with other studies, this Chapter has demonstrated that traditional workplace loyalties associated with old management arrangements remained in the NNPC, a renewed emphasis on work practices that reinforced the need for commitment and quality products nevertheless provided the potential recourse for workers to continuously challenge the hegemonic expectations of team-working systems. While traditional occupational boundaries and skill classifications continue to exist with conventional seniority system with a promise of tenures in employment relations patterns in the corporation, workers in the emerging work practices and in adapting to new roles and responsibilities create both lateral and vertical tensions, as spaces are provided for them to “re-draw the traditional hierarchical work relationships” (Coupland et al 2005:1076). Workers in the plant re-created the concepts and resources behind the initiatives to serve their instrumental orientation to work such as career and job protection interests.

In the context of perceived job insecurity and volatility, workers both as team members and team leaders re-appropriated the discourses to think and act instrumentally as individuals and in subjective isolation. They may individually or at times, collectively identify the “pecking orders” within the process, and act their way round this to meet their expectations (Coupland et al 2005). While the discourse of team-working may provide space for individual resentment, they still possess the potential to “re-direct” this resentment to achieve their subjective expectations.

Thus, as indicated by Martin (1992 cited in Coupland, et al 2005:1077) “heightened individualisation and emergence of multiple fragmented views may now appear as key workers’ responses and orientation to work.” In other words, multiple and fragmented orientations emerged as material resources, not only in place of collective opposition but also strategic choices in the face of difficult economic conditions prevalent in the workplace. Hyman (1987) succinctly put it that in a climate of job insecurity it was necessary for

employees as individuals to “co-operate” with change and secure a place in the “pecking order”. Increasingly, in the context of job insecurity, employees equally indeed mobilized the capacity to talk one thing and act their way, thereby re-appropriating management’s own discourse. As put by Ezzamel and Willmott, 1998; Kelly and Kelly 1991; Vallas 2003a, acts of resistance become individual and salience demonstrating employees’ behavioural compliance to fulfil individual interests.

Therefore, in evaluating workplace orientation of workers to team-work systems, responses obtained have provided the additional insights into understanding that the introduction of team-working had neither brought in workers adapting a “unitary” view as envisaged by management expectations, Appelbarm et al (2000), Barker (1993), nor had it absolutely reinforced collective resistance (Vallas 2003a). However, team-working had demonstrated fragmented and multiple spaces for acting out their “subjective identity” and “self-projects” in the workplace. Observed in workers’ orientation in the evolving arrangements is mobilization of shifting “contextual resources” to achieve their instrumental expectation at work.

Job insecurity and uncertainty in the new work arrangements and dispensation ‘encouraged “reflexive and instrumental compliance” Coupland et al (2005:1077), rather than totally embracing a common course as managerial discourse expected. Thus, the findings here illustrate Vallas’ (2003:9) argument that “job insecurity encourages fragmented and individualistic resistance to team-working and new work arrangements, rather than establish the basis for collective worker resistance” (Vallas 2003:9).

The significant implications of this in the context of this study, is the offer of a different perspective for understanding impact of team-working and other managerial initiatives on increased individuation, multiple, and fragmented views in shaping workers’ orientation and experiences at work. While situations of job insecurity could make “collective resistance unlikely”, workers exhibit “behavioural compliance manifesting individualisation and reflex cognism” (Coupland 2005:1078). Findings in this study further explain Edwards et al (1998:12) in their “disciplined worker thesis” in which workers may prefer “an ordered and disciplined work environment” as basis for demonstrating behavioural

compliance to managerial initiatives. However, Linda et al (2005:727), while subscribing to this thesis further explores the utility of the thesis – through empirical studies that maintain, though the discipline of worker thesis may be “substantive”, it is not “comprehensive enough” to account for “non-work factors” that shape workers’ experience of managerial initiatives.

It is on this conceptual remit and its relevance, that the next evaluations of workers’ responses to new work practices, or what at this stage could be referred to as “Quality way” in the refinery seek to explore in my analysis. In empirical studies in Edwards (1998), Collinson (1994) and Rees (1998), it was shown that “quality management practices including team-working can bring a simultaneous mix of gains, losses and tensions to employees” (cited in Linda et al 2005:728). And that indeed, where the new practices may require additional mental and physical investments through work intensification, workers still retain behavioural attitudes in compliance with these managerial demands, (Linda et al 2005). Thus “comprehensive arguments” located in empirical findings and analyses that account for employees’ lived experiences explore “orientation of employees” in the context of these work process arrangements. Such a contextual and empirical understanding provides “full means” of explaining workers’ attitudes and lived experiences. Looking beyond the “discipline worker thesis” (Edwards 1998) to incorporate “orientations to work” (Linda, et al 2005), provides a balanced understanding of non-work factors in influencing lived experiences of workers. Workers’ responses to managerial initiatives positively or negatively reflect the “fraction” and “tedium” inherent in the work situations.

Analysis in this study shows that Plant Operators’ responses, while largely located in the disciplined worker thesis, were also moderated by how “individuals define their relationship in the employment relationships” (Linda et al 2005:730). The extra-workplace factors that mediate workplace factors are: “strong association between the employing organisation and the community” in which it is based, which also include, “strong family commitment” (Linda, et al 2005:730). Re-inserting this understanding provides grounded explanations to workers’ lived experiences.

Goldthorpe et al (1961), in their “orientation to work” thesis, essentially a structural functionalist model though, embeds in its argument the mediating impact of the social agency of the subject – that is, their own definitions of the work situations on the socio-technical dimensions of process production. Goldthorpe (1961) further argues the “ideal-type” elements that influence non-work orientation of workers may be drawn to explain an “instrumental orientation” in which work is regarded as a “means to an end” with the financial gain at work. This is combined with what might be interpreted as normative orientation, where in return for working for the corporation, there is an expectation of job satisfaction. In addition, though work could entail an economic interest, workers manifest a “solidarity orientation” in which workers in solidary unity manifest a distinct meaning of occupational culture and occupational community.

Indeed, in the context of workplace such as the NNPC, the identification of non-work factors in mediating responses to teamwork labour process and other managerial practices have become a significant focus for understanding experiences of workers. For instance, workers in their concern to satisfy personal and family commitments outside work and in the face of economic hardship may decide to sacrifice other “intrinsic values” or expectations from the work for economic gain. In circumstances of harsh economic conditions, concern for “job dissatisfaction” may be of less priority to the economic interests. In the refinery, workers behaviours were largely shaped by this, as they aligned their expectations with the management, and this included their concern for work and non-work factors.

This explorative dimension in the findings therefore align with the perspective of using workers’ own account and perception as central theme, emerging from our observation in the refinery in understanding their behaviours. Workers’ narrative contextualised in their perception of non-work factors, nuanced with workplace managerial practices, give a grounded understanding of their responses to the management’s decisions. Empirical observations and evidence from this study have illustrated the explanatory value in the conceptual fusion of “workplace” and “non-workplace” factors.

At a particular level, evidence has indeed shown that the plant operators were supportive of the tenets behind team-working labour process in their beliefs that efficient performance of the refinery, and indeed the corporation, and quality products partly would guarantee the sustenance of the corporation in a climate of intense competition. For these normative expectations, the workers endured the numerous “irritations” of the managerial practices and became “disciplined workers.” In the evaluation of the disciplined worker thesis among the plant workers, it was evident that while the workers were concerned about the disciplinary dimension of new workplace regime in spite of the negative implications on their working experiences, this had been mediated by non-workplace factors through which they derived their “instrumental” satisfaction.

Through their comments and narratives they expressed negative feelings on certain key aspects of the managerial decisions on diverse dimensions of work process. They still perceived top-down managerial style, job intensification and workload through shift system. They still perceived lack of open and sincere explanation about the state of the refinery – with immanent threat of shut-down and privatization. Indeed, a palpable feeling about the unpredictability of operating environment, and continuous changes in regulatory framework of the corporation continued to invoke a suspicious perception of the managerial regimes. The palpable feeling noticed in their narratives was what implications the “unbundling” exercises would have for their jobs and career in NNPC. Thus with a perception of job insecurity in an “unstable” environment, the workers were ready to tinker with the disciplinary tenets of new initiatives.

Therefore, in evaluating the “disciplined worker” thesis in the refinery my analysis further examined certain assumptions to determine the responses of the workers. These are the extent to which the promise of involvement, and empowerment were achieved, and the contextual factors within the management practices that assured job security, and positive union-management relations. Even though to a large extent, NNPC operates within the old traditional management-labour relations, workers were attracted by the imperatives that underpinned quality production system and team-working which they assumed could offer scope for fulfilment. However, realities fell short of expectations as these

hopes were not translated into concrete achievements. The workers perceived failings in the implementation of the new managerial practices.

With an awareness that the corporation needs to remain sustainable and efficient, against the vagaries of operating environment, this contributed significantly to propel them to continue to embrace the philosophies of “quality programme” and “improved productivity”, even though these philosophies fell short of their overall expectations as workers in the corporation. This therefore suggests that “extra-workplace” orientation brought in by workers helped to account for this, “the major concern here now is to ensure quality production and make the plant run...we have our families to take care of and you know there is no job out there” (Plant Operator).

Such remarks and comments indicate how concern for life-sustenance, outside the “factory-gate” tended to shape workers’ orientation at work. The need to continue to secure incomes for themselves and immediate families may at times be individualistic, and at other time takes the form of collective concern. The collective concern of the workers on their fate in the Corporation, was occasionally shown in the plant where workers discussed quietly the likely impact of any plant closure or immanent privatisation of the corporation on their career and jobs. Thus, in the waves of concern for the status of the corporation in the context of a perceived “instability” surrounding the regulatory frameworks of the NNPC, the refinery workers tended to manifest “instrumental orientation to work” with the concern for securing individual economic gain.

Therefore, for the refinery workers, the concern to tarry with the management’s normative expectations of quality products and efficient running of the refinery was increasingly born out of the concern for more income security and the instrumental need for the refinery to continue to survive. The refinery workers’ account thus showed an emotional attachment that depicts a kind of reverse direction of the logic behind team-working and new initiative. The instrumental need to maintain work-life-balance in the light of limited alternatives gives credence to Goldthorpe *et al* (1968) in their orientation to work perspective. In essence, with the emerging realities, working for the corporation was increasingly being regarded as “a means to an end” rather than a “collective ethos” for the

survival of “national farmland”. Workers’ attachment to the corporation, in the light of prevailing realities in which the corporation would have to operate, hardly ran deeper than what to get out of the corporation.

Also, a notable dimension of workers’ orientation to work in the refinery was the pragmatic tendencies of solidarity orientations to work, underpinned by the presence of distinct skill and occupational categories of workers. There was a strong occupational culture and a well-developed sense of collectivism that was still running in the corporation. This had been born out of the “family ideology” upon which the NNPC was perceived over the years, and sustained through a concern for its survival in spite of all odds.

Thus an additional factor that helped to merge the conceptual relevance of work and non-work orientations in producing the “disciplined worker” in the NNPC had been the sense of pride still carried on by the workers, the sense of pride of being part of the “team” that produced the “wealth of the nation”. And significantly the workers realised that NNPC remains one of the leading organisations in the country with best remuneration for its workforce. As a result, identification with the management’s decisions concerning quality products and improved performance remained attractive so long as they perceived it as providing the route to ensuring the sustainability of the organisation in the light of intense product market competition and operating environment. As remarked by one of the team leaders, “NNPC remains the farmland of this nation, and we have to continue to do our best to support the Management.” Here, one might begin to read a “fragmented” view of the workers’ perception; where in one breath the concern is the survival of the “collective asset”; and at another level, the symbolic status of the corporation was being re-appropriated for “individualisation” and for survival of “me” and “my family”.

Embedded in the sense of collectivism which NNPC represents are manifestations of diverse and numerous socio-economic needs which the corporation fulfils. Apart from offering well-paid employment opportunities, the Refinery plays an important economic and social role in the community. Through its multiplicities of impacts, the Refinery helps to sustain local businesses and local informal activities in Eleme, the host community. Activities that are directly by-products of Eleme PHRC are carried out by indigenes

and non-indigenes of the community. The status of the Refinery has been significant in terms of underpinning the maintenance of a network of established community relationships; local housing landlords and agents, local politics, local social organisations that depict a symbiotic relation with the refinery itself. The impact is such that local employment opportunities are provided for family and community members living in the area. It is not uncommon to see some of the workers in the refinery owning and operating shops in the local community. Therefore the survival of the plant is linked to the survival of the community. This was aptly shown on NNPC's signboard on the road leading to the Refinery from Eleme community: "NNPC Touches Your Lives in Many Diverse Ways", reflecting a kind of symbiotic relation with the community and the people.

From the workers' narratives, and the researcher interactions within the Eleme community itself, we could see how the enduring experience of the workers, a fissure of "disciplined worker" thesis and "non-work orientations" continued to intertwine in shaping the work experiences of the workers, which continued to sustain the desire for the refinery's survival even in the face of occasional uncertainties perceived by the workers in the wake of changes in the regulatory frameworks. Workers have no choice, therefore, but to retain a "pragmatic co-operation" with management's initiatives, Belangers et al (2003), Wright and Edwards (1998). Indeed, as noted by Black et al (1999), "an orientation to work perspective in exploring workers' own sense making and identity-formation captures the significance the employees place on their distinct occupational community and culture to which they belong, and how this helps us to understand how aspects of non-work life mediate responses to management initiatives" (cited in Linda, et al 2005:741). To PHRC workers, and the local residents of Eleme community, NNPC's logo remains valid in explaining the "communal orientation" and the "disciplined worker thesis"; "NNPC touches your life in many other diverse ways." Here, workers' perception is that income is protected, while they are still in employment, and a way of life through informal occupation in the community outside the factory gate is secured.

In evaluating workers' sense-making of the workplace labour process in which they found themselves, the study further finds recourse in Stephenson and Stewart's (2001) observation that, "we need to go beyond the factory gate and begin the process of linking

the internal world of new production regimes to the wider social domain of which they are a part” (cited in Linda, et al 2005:742). Evaluation of workers’ responses to the espoused managerial strategies in the refinery has been seen to be mediated by this multiple shift in orientation to workplace and non-workplace factors. .

5.7. Trade Unions Leaders’ Perception

Our evaluation in the preceding discussions focused mainly on workers’ own account of the new managerial initiatives on their own work experiences. In what follows here, evaluation of what the trade unions made of emerging work process will be discussed. For, as noted by Smith (2006) the employment relation is ever indeterminate as dimensions of conflict and co-operation are always worked out within the labour process. It is in the coupling, and co-existence of conflict and compromise that the role of trade unions will be evaluated in the context of labour process in the refinery. Wright (2004 cited in Edwards et al 2007:1), argues that “labour and capital always find conditions under which they conjoin in their interests for the sustenance of the work organisation.” According to him, the traditional concern for both labour and the management has always been a unified objective for efficiency and improved performance which both share as a goal “even though they may differ as to the best way to achieving this” (Edwards2007:1). In other words, while Management may want to stress the importance of profit and economic gain, the concern of Unions remains quality of work life for members.

It is in this context of intractable differing views between labour and management that trade unions’ roles are analysed and evaluated in the light of emerging managerial practices that define work process in the refinery. Edwards et al (2007), offer a formal framework within which to identify sets of factors that shape workplace relations between labour and management in an era of changing labour process regimes. As they note, these factors are “the product market, the technology of production and the institutional arrangements” (Edwards et al 2007: 2), drawing on explanatory accounts of Batstone (1988), Dunlop (1958), Edwards et al (2007), who comment on how workplace regimes function to combine these conditioning factors in shaping the ensuing social compromise in the workplace between labour and management. In working out the social compro-

mise, the authors give due consideration to “agency choices” and “strategies” by actors. Thus, it is in this framework that the implications of emerging labour process on Trade Unions’ activities are evaluated.

Indeed, the conceptual relevance of “social compromise” as a framework of analysis and evaluation of workplace dynamics on Trade Unions was eloquently pointed out by Flanders (1975 cited in Edwards et al 2007:3). In the understanding of workplace relations, it was argued by Flanders (1975) that, firstly, management can only regain control by sharing it; two, normative relations between labour and management cannot be fostered by mere discourse; requiring that “progressive fusing” of two unilateral objectives can only be worked out through “a common system of joint control based on agreed objectives,”(Edwards 2007:3). Such a “pluralist” conceptualization remains substantially significant in evaluating the role of Trade Unions in the specific context of workplace relations such as NNPC where managerial practices are contingent on diverse factors. Also, as pointed out by MacInnes (1980), it is in this analytical framework of pluralist model that the specific sources of both conflict and co-operation can be better located within the employment relationship. For instance, since the only way through which the labour can have a say in the production process - by selling its labour power – it also has a “shared interest in ensuring the viability of the unit of capital which employs it” (Edwards 2007:3).

Elaborating on this, Edwards et al (2007:3) note, “in analysing the structuring conditions which foster or impede workplace co-operation and subjective orientations of actors of what is advantageous and not, it is necessary to do this in context.” It is by analysing the contradictory character of labour process in context that the “competing rationales of Management and Labour that sometimes run in parallel, converge, and shifting, are understood”(Edwards et al 2007:3). It is in this “fluid” and “shifting context” of workplace relations that the “developmental” and “control” imperatives of both Management and Labour on labour process are best conceptualised” (Edwards et al 2007:4).

NNPC has had to maintain itself to survive in a highly competitive operating environment dictated by innovative and technically complex business challenges thereby con-

straining the space for free-flow of workers' "developmental" concerns in the employment relationship. In a context of tight product market conditions induced by the complex process of technology of production, workers through their Trade Unions increasingly embrace a social compromise attitude.

Thus, in understanding the patterns in which the embedded "social compromise" between Labour and Management shaped not only the character of the specific labour process, but also the dimensions of Trade Union responses, we need to combine this understanding with the specific challenges of the refinery as influenced by technology of production, and institutional arrangements of established joint partnership. It is these "structuring conditions" which in combination also throw up a combination of alternative choices of actions and strategies for both the Management and the Unions. For, in a context of intense product market competition, coupled with complexity of technology of production in which the NNPC is currently operating, it continues to require a great deal of sacrifice and compromise for the parties to continually function in "co-operative relations." Drawing on this conceptual backdrop, the following section empirically illustrates and evaluates Trade Unions' side of these dimensions.

5.7.1. Union Leaders' Responses to Teamwork and Total Quality Programme

While the introduction of team-work labour process remains part of NNPC's managerial initiatives, aimed at assuring improved productivity and quality products, in the context of the identified "structural conditions" such as challenges of the competitive environments, unions' leaders' views and perceptions of the initiatives also count. Accordingly, the core of this evaluation relies on my informal discussion and interviews with the unions leaders in the refinery.

Six officers within the hierarchies of the two Branch unions of – NNUPENG and PENGASSAN comprising the Chairman, Secretary and Assistant Secretary were interviewed on their perception of the managerial initiatives in the refinery, and implications on their members' experiences. Their responses were corroborated by the team leaders and plant operators' responses. In addition, documents relating to Total Quality Programmes and meetings between Union leaders and Management on production processes

as influenced by managerial practices were obtained and analysed, Also, union documents relating to their own deliberations on these change initiatives and consultations were gone through. At the PHRC, I attended a number of the Branch level meetings on team work arrangements. In the last two decades, NNPC had adopted, at corporate level a code of conduct and initiatives to ensure productivity and quality performance, and this cascaded to its refineries and other strategic business units (SBUS). In line with these initiatives, production process at the refinery level was organised into team-working labour process. Characterising the team-working system are job rotation, multi-skilling, shift system and flexible work arrangements through which team members in the process plants are to perform work requirements and thereby acquire a wide range of experiences on their tasks. Team members in the process plant units are also expected to perform other incidental and indirect tasks of maintaining, cleaning, self-repair, self-inspection and monitoring.

Team leaders elected by team members, whose nominations are invariably supported by plant Superintendents, encourage joint identification of operations or maintenance problems in their respective work areas, and accordingly organise continuous improvement meetings with members. Brought to such Quality Improvement meetings are plant “operating sheets” showing tasks to be performed, timings and procedures. Also deliberated at such continuous improvement meetings are issues such as quality control, plant operations, training for members and processes of task evaluation.

5.7.2. Unions Own Assessment of Teamwork.

In evaluating the role of the union in the context of new managerial practices, Kelly (1996) suggested that unions’ militancy in their orientation tend to mediate “opportunistic behaviour” of management to gain the body and soul of employees. It is in this context that motivation of the unions’ refusal to completely co-operate with management on introduction of new work arrangements is found. To Kelly (1996), unions’ militancy reflects unions’ ideology, goals and methods, mobilization of union membership and use of institutional resources in neutralising the unilateral tendencies of the management. At NNPC, and indeed at the refinery level, the two Branch Unions had been able to mobilize

their membership and resources to mediate management's top-down approach, and prerogative power on many of the managerial initiatives. In their collective responses, unions had been reacting to specific processes of managerial practices regarding team-working, training and quality programmes.

Kelly's (1996) model has been seen to demonstrate in both specific and general tendencies in the unions' responses strategies to counter-balance power relations with the management on issues of work processes at the refinery. Unions' mobilization of collective interests and concerns of members in fighting specific aspects of management decisions have been providing the needed leverage for them to counter the managerial practices. Corroborating Kelly's conceptualization of union militancy as a strong mediating factor for power balancing, Frost (2001) argues that it is not enough for a Union to display such adversarial tendencies, but it must also be pro-active and reactive to management's "on-slaughts". These conceptual tools, therefore, provide a basis for understanding unions' responses, and provide a framework to evaluate unions' collaborative support, or otherwise, to "change initiatives" in NNPC.

However, as Beale (2003), and Darlington (2002) noted, the inevitability of "conjoining of choices" and "mutual interest" between Unions and Management make team working in a context of a change programme a strategic interactive one, and as such, a great deal of the tendencies of both parties needed to be understood in that context. Over the years, as part of managerial approaches to improve quality products and efficient performance in the refinery, the management had been introducing series of change initiatives. In the area of technology of production, there had been great concerns to leverage and improve the skill and knowledge of the plant operators in the refinery. An important component of this had been to improve communication between the workers and the management through the unions' mediation. Established as part of the institutional process to ensure this, there were team members' morning briefings aimed to integrate members' positions on decisions concerning daily operations and production planning and implementation at the refinery level. At the PHRC, and the SBUS, the local arrangement involved setting up in-plant committees to discover how to continuously improve performance through the involvement of team leaders and members. The remit of these committees at the Branch

level was to broaden and incorporate decisions and opinions of Unions with the Management. Under this partnership the Unions had largely hoped that this would lead to greater “discretion” and “opportunities” for members in the utilization of acquired skills and expertise.

With the introduction of flexible skill-mix, the accompanying team-working system and quality programme, Unions had hoped for a reduction in workload and intensification. However, when these expectations were apparently unmet in the context of operating challenges, pessimism, and disappointment were expressed by Union leaders on behalf of their members. As one of the Union leaders remarked, “our colleagues in the plant process had hoped for a better deal in terms of a more flexible arrangement, such as in the shift work and the allowances, but Management seemed to continue to show reluctance to concerns of our members.”

Another area of concern for both the unions and management that is often brought to table at the “Quality Committee” of the local JCC had been the discussions to mitigate the outcome of “change initiatives” such as possible skill redundancy. The most developed aspect of this joint collaboration on redundancies were often articulated under training and competency development programmes. Union leaders were actively involved at the NJCC on the need for members to develop their skill for continuous employability in the corporation. Issues of possible skill redundancy continued to generate concerns even at the refinery level. Apart from giving new openings for concerned workers in other areas, programmes of skill/career conversions were often discussed at the local Quality Committee meetings. Discussions and joint consultations here generally centred on how to develop flexible skills, and how to move them round within the plant.

A central feature of restructuring programme at the NNPC in 1990’s was the decentralization of operational activities from a unified structure into a set of discrete business subsidiaries, and the refinery as independent entity, with operational interdependence though with unified employment grading structure. Company’s strategy at the refinery operational level, therefore, involved developing in-plant strategy that incorporated in-house training and leadership programmes. Among other training and leadership development

programmes, this involved training of workers' required operational skills in the diverse occupational community in the plant operations in the refinery. Thus, concern about obsolete skill and competence, and how to revamp it for "new" technology of production constantly featured at Quality Committee meetings at the plant level. The concerns remain show to ensure acceptable intra-plant mobility of members with up-graded skills, and therefore integration into the team-working system. As remarked by one of the Training Officers who was also a member of the refinery committee on Manpower Development, "as you can see, with the modern refinery technology, re-tooling and re-skilling of old hands remain on the agenda of our training programme, and the unions have been very supportive of the challenges involved." In other words, as the corporation had to operate within a challenging and competitive environment and new technology of production, it became increasingly imperative for the Unions to lend their support to Management, especially in the training and man-power development programme of their members. Nomination and selection of plant Operators and other categories of workers for "next in-house training" programmes were done in partnership with the unions through the workplace Training Joint Committee under Manpower Development Unit in the Refinery.

Generally, it was observed that the strength of the Unions at the Refinery had a significant impact in shaping the ensuing labour process in terms of the implications of quality production, skill formation and processes of work organisation on members. Regarding the Unions, one of the main sources of conflict remained Management's attempt to use work-process of team-working and shift system as a means to intensify the labour process. Management's normative calls for re-orientation and attitudes towards quality production and processes in the context of intense operating environment often implied labour process intensification. For these reasons, Unions often displayed what they referred to as "pragmatic cautiousness" towards management's proposed changes in the work processes. And only when the Unions perceived a "win-win" outcome would they willingly support management's initiatives. In one of the Unions' leaders' words, "we need to be cautiously pragmatic so as not to put our members into their (Management) booby traps...we also have our in-house committee to study and scrutinize their agenda before we meet for meetings." Unions' leaders' attitude has always been to put into contest and

critical appraisal any ambitious managerial initiatives perceived to likely compromise the interests of members. Such issues centred on training, career paths, and conversion after training, job/skill swapping, and the personnel implications for members. Other employment relations matters under the watchful eyes of unions were; job title and regarding the new context, status and seniority matter “and a whole range of personnel matters that we may see as outcome of the practices” (Assistant Secretary, NUPENG).

Unions’ responses to managerial initiatives generally need to be evaluated against the backdrop of reforms conceived by the Management and that is on-going within the NNPC at the corporate level. These reforms were designed to reposition the corporation in the context of emerging dynamics and realities in the oil industry. It is in this context of the “structuring conditions” of the “Quality Programs” that unions’ responses and “activeness” are best understood. Apparently, therefore, because a diverse implication of the “family ideology” surrounding workers’ perception of the corporation exists, any “offensive” or “militancy” postures of the unions must be moderated. Issues of sustainability of the corporation within the dynamics of socio-economic development of the country inform the orientation; and hence need for such caution on a wide range of issues even when members expected their leaders to take an oppositional stand, might be understandable.

However, even in the context of this “social partnership” project, certain significant dimensions and implications stand out clearly. While management had always been willing to share workplace managerial decisions and issues with unions, for example, to “jointly” discover and integrate potentially progressive ideas, inherently embedded are Union suspicions and scepticisms of such intentions. Union suspicions and scepticisms are located in a perceived “immanent disappearance of jobs, career growth and work pressure and intensifications” (Ferner and Terry 1997 cited in Kamirez et al 2007:12). Consequently, unions still pick holes in management’s decisions. Of noticeable issue was a Union-Management contestation over a re-grading exercise and transfer of Plant Operators to different tasks, thus “allowing greater flexibility for individuals to make career changes across a broader spectrum of jobs (NNPC Training Programme Document). As contained in the Management Training Document, the challenges of technology of production, and

indeed the product market imperatives continue to compel Management to be proactive in terms of skill formation, up-grading and jobs transfers. While this has been accepted in principle by the unions, the concern is the personnel implications of it to their members. And the Unions' leaders frequently made reference to this at JCC meetings.

In this circumstance, and in return for job security for members, Unions' militancy and adversarial tendencies needed to be moderated. And as part of strategic compromise, unions leveraged their positions by mobilizing their resources and methods to shape the direction of implementations of management's programmes. At the refinery level, through the Committees, Unions were able to steer the training and retraining programme, decisions on who to be trained and retrained, plant multi-skilling programmes, and the accompanying performance appraisal system. As remarked by the NUPENG Assistant Secretary "We maintain a three-way approach; new technology, skills, and growth of our members."

The relative strength and leverage the unions brought to bear on these issues seemed to have its root in the long historically established tradition of collective bargaining and institutionalised IR patterns in NNPC. Immersed in the product market challenges, unions were more willing and encouraged to help the company in "moments of distress" and on reformation agenda. Management was more willing to reciprocate in the same manner. Remarks and concerns about "social partners" at every Committee meeting seemed to underscore the long established tradition of "harmonious" labour relations. At NNPC, in spite of seemingly harsh implications of certain aspects of managerial practices, Union leaders accommodated a range of the practices to make the concern of both parties a reality in light of the challenges. Such integrative bargaining and joint collaborative arrangements characterised a push towards social partnership though, could limit the customary roles of union activities, nevertheless they seemed to have paid off in terms of job security and mitigating redundancies. Even though the threat and real fear of "marginalisation" remained immanent in the workplace relations, the extent of unions' positive engagements explained the vibrancy of the unions in the emerging tendencies of "business unionism".

Teamwork labour process at NNPC had the prime objective of enlisting workers' commitment in a period of intense organisational challenges. Greater demand was, therefore, placed on the Union leaders in moderating the tendencies of unilateral power of the Management. In evaluating how the two Branch Unions in the Refinery perceived and indeed how they redefined their traditional/representational roles within the emerging employment relationship, two significant theoretical models guided my evaluation; one, in the context of workplace relations, local unions revamped their co-operative strategies, thereby becoming what is identified as "productive coalitions," (Windolf, 1989, cited in Pulignano, 2002:30). They, therefore, became a collaborative partner with the management in order to enhance the performance of the corporation.

This new arrangement that was encapsulated in the notion of "social partnership" seems to contrast with classic tradition of class social mobilization for struggle. In the new social partnership, more emphasis was placed on teamwork as a form of work process, with the intended outcome of improved performance and quality product. There was, therefore, avowed "subjective commitment of the workforce through identification with the goals of the organisation" (Pulignano, 2002:30).

Conceivably, it is in this normative commitment or relation between labour and management that the traditional expression of union collectivism could be "eroded and undermined". Also, the dimension and form of "social partnership" and the problematic consequences and implication on union's roles were "strongly shaped by the institutional and organisational arrangements of established labour relations patterns" (Pulignano 2002:30). Labour relations in the NNPC presented a long historical tradition of trade unionism; highly unionised, with the presence of two strong Branch Unions, against which the dimensions of managerial practices allowed us to evaluate the emerging workplace implications of teamwork rationale on the labour process. In evaluating the current workplace implications of the evolving initiatives centring on teamwork and quality programme, significant issues for evaluations were trade unions' responses to the decisions and implementation of the initiatives; plant-level issues and challenges for unions in terms of relationship with co-workers and team leaders; the plant workers' perception of unions and their perceptions of unions' relationship with management.

In the refinery, teamwork and other aspects of the work process became part of the larger process of managerial practices for the organisation of work process for production process and quality product, thereby becoming a significant dimension of the labour process. Characterizing teamwork rationale in the refinery was multi-skill formation, in-house training, job rotation and shift system, and work attitude improvement between the team members and the management. In the plant, teamwork implied a collective work process and orientation involving all members of the team with communications to members through Unions, by the Management as an attempt to continuously gain their commitment. Thus, this “cultural dimension” of work process, (Mueller, 1994:13), had become a kind of joint commitment to improve workforce identification with the managerial objectives.

In the context of this logic, it is argued that “unions’ roles and activities might be undermined and gradually eroded through eventual accommodation because plant workers have been conditioned to buy into it” (Stewart and Wass, 1996 cited in Pulignano, 2002:32). Thus, the logic of “commitment” with a strong focus on employees’ participation for improved performance and quality product in the plant ran against the long tradition of employee unionism. In line with teamwork rationale, the collective attitudes and worker subjectivity were to be “structured” in line with the productivity ethos. Through the normative precepts, plant workers were increasingly encouraged to identify with their teams, with obvious consequences on Unions representational roles.

Thus, as noted by Bacon and Storey, (1996 cited in Pulignano 2002:33), the “new individualism” of team-working can be reconceptualised as opposition to “traditional collectivism” and solidarity practices of trade unionism”. However, while the “collective orientation” of the workforce is consistently tilted towards managerial ethos of improved productivity, “the consequences of intra-politics and the established trade unions’ roles in the collective work process remain problematic in the equation” (Martinez Lucio and Stewart 1997a cited in Pulignano 2001:33). By concentrating and expanding its relations with teams and teamwork rationale, “management has deliberately weakened the union roles by substituting unions’ mediating roles with team solidarity” (Wells 1993 in Pulignano2001:33). In essence, management’s normative commitment to foster work-

force integration through team-working remains a challenge to trade unions' roles. It remains problematic because in seeking compliance from the workforce, "the call has less to do with empowering the workforce, but more to do with reducing the union's influence over conditions of work, and in general marginalizing the struggles between capital and labour over production standard" (Stewart, Lewchuk and Yates, 1998 cited in Pulignano 2002:33). Noting this, Garrahan and Stewart (1992) and Parker and Slaughter (1988) argue that the emergence of teamwork "provides the scope for both increased management control on the shop-floor, and the erosion of shop-floor unionism on the other hand"(cited in Pulignano2002:33). As noted by Pulignano (2002:33) "the latter objective is achieved through the role of team leaders as supervisors of a team." In other words, the apparent autonomy and independence conferred on team-work and its rationale may consequently undermine unions' workplace representation. The "direct communication" between the team leaders who now serve as "mini-managers" of the team may undermine the unions' roles and representational functions. Consequently, as emphasised by Bacon and Storey (1993) the collective relations between unions and members may be severed. Thus, the main problematic implication of introduction of team-working in the plant remains a "parallel reduction" in the role of union leaders to members.

The contradictory dimension of teamwork in terms of implication for the traditional roles of unions in the refinery, and how it succeeded in achieving management's objectives have been identified in this evaluation. In the refinery, teamwork had a long history of existence as part of managerial strategies for improved productivity. Management consistently encouraged the unions to embrace the initiatives, and this was not openly opposed by the unions. Consequently, in line with corporate objectives, the principle was integrated with the local JCC. Embedded in the new work arrangement were principles of flexible work arrangement in terms of skill formation and utilization on the plants and labour relation practices – teamwork, shift system, continuous improvement of the product, job security, joint bargaining and committees. Quality production method remains central to the introduction of team-work arrangement in the refinery.

Team members in the process area of the plant performed such tasks as cleaning, tidying of plant area, in addition to being committed to work efficiency, and quality product ac-

ording to the objective of continuous quality improvements. However, these new work arrangements and the expected workers commitment have clear implications for union roles and leaders' relations at the point of production. Findings and observations show that Management was increasingly willing to rely on team working for the success of collective work process. The concern of the Management was more on the team leaders for the direction of skills needed for the implementation of technology of production. The Management seemed to be more willing to rely on the team leaders for streamlining all technical aspects of production process; solving individual work related activities, thinking for the team generally. And this is interpreted by one of the team leaders in this way "I see myself solving my colleagues' problems, and guiding the graduate trainees on technical aspects of the process plant...my concern is to let them know, and guide them through the daily aspects of their work."

The potential implication of teamwork of the labour process is an immanent reduction in union's roles and "shopfloor" collective opposition. The new managerial practices have virtually reduced "shopfloor" collectives of team work to problem-solving, rather than traditional unions' roles in grievance channelling. It is through this "collective turn" of work process that workers perceive their work related expectations and needs to be met. Mutual respect and confidence was gained through daily direct communication between individual team members and the team leaders. Workers within the team in the plant did not see unions' roles beyond the traditional role of negotiations of terms and conditions of employment at its larger corporate level. Local unions' responses to team systems have been shifting and ambiguous reflecting both "combative" and "consensual" attitudes. While Unions leaders concern, on the one hand, reflects need to collaborate with the management, they still retain scepticism of management's undermining of their roles, In one of the unions' internal memos, the union said they were constantly watchful of management's objectives so as not to erode the collective interest of their members in the refinery. This was interpreted as making sure that union's traditional roles are not completely marginalised.

Going by their constant and regular engagement with the Management, at the refinery either through the local branch of JCC or quality product committee, or in-house training

sessions, my observations showed that Union leaders are ever concerned with the implication of teamwork, and used such meetings and committees to retain strong union presence in the plant. Such unions' "critical engagement" sounded out their independent and collective culture in the refinery, indicating that though they did not oppose management's policy directions, they deserved to be adequately consulted before such decisions were taken.

In the Refinery, the plant team leader's role is interpreted as that of a sort of "mini-manager" whose role was critical in mobilizing competence of team members, building commitment among members through training, communication, leadership direction in quality, maintenance and repair, control and information dissemination in quality circles, allocation of jobs within the team for shift system. These roles were performed in conjunction with the approval and understanding of the Supervisor. Also, when there were oil process problems, they involved the process/oil movement technologists as team members whose task is that of ensuring continuous movement of oil. Team leader's role also involved ensuring flexibility of team skills composition and rotation, increased team-workers "polyvalence", and reduction in time waste. Workers on the team are encouraged to be committed to continuous improvement through problem solving activities.

Having highlighted the roles and activities of team leaders within the team rationale, it becomes obvious that the team rationale provides the context for the resolution of "personal" or work difficulties of the team members. The team leader is the first contact person for a worker to find a solution to his problems within the team. The team leader therefore appears like a personality who finds solution to work-related difficulties of team members. As remarked by the Supervisor of Area 3 plant "the main team leader's tasks are to manage team members' skills and jobs in relation to the challenges of the plant in terms of oil processes and quality." And because of his closeness with the team members, he is seen as advisor for career related issues.

One of the team members remarked "the team leader was the first contact person in the Plant, he gives advice generally, always ready to listen to us, mobilize all of us for tasks ahead." An important implication emerged from these remarks; the team rationale in the

refinery fosters a kind of co-operative and participative atmosphere generally; accepted and recognised by team members. Though not seen in a paternalistic or hierarchical image, the team leader remains an important skill profile who facilitates inter-personal communication in terms of career and job related activities. He manages informally, and at “micro” level job related activities of members. In the words of the Superintendent of Area 3 plant, “he is the point of connection between the members and the Supervisor .By being with the team in the plant everyday, he knows the feel for his members, their needs and he lets me know all this promptly.” In one of my observations in the plant, the team leader would collect the monthly “bonuses” such as milk, sugar, and other confectionaries for distribution to his team members.

In the Refinery, the work arrangement, though recognising disagreement as part of the work process, such apparent disagreement is perceived to emanate from operational problems of the production process which need to be solved technically at the plant level. In other words, in the team labour process rationale, problems are examined technically and solved rather than being seen as “expressions of collective workers’ resistance at the workplace” (Pulignano, 2002:41). Thus, within the team collectives, rifts and disagreement are reduced to minimum, through a “continuous process of inter-personal communications among team members” (Pulignano 2002:41).

Through the team rationale, therefore, the space for conflict has been reduced, thereby minimizing unions’ role at the point of production. According to Pulignano (2002:47) “the work re-organisation and insertion of teamwork system has led to ‘cellularisation’ of the workforce at the point of production” reducing the traditional shopfloor collectivity that might challenge the Management. The point of production at the plant level has become “micro-level” for the resolution of work-related rifts and problems, instead of being transferred to the personnel office. “The intention of the Management is to facilitate the resolution of these problems through team-work inter-personal communication, thereby reducing the potential to refer grievances to a union representative at the workplace” (Pulignano 2002:47). By this design, Management has reduced the level of relationship between the workers and the union leaders, but has also diverted the attention of team-workers to the team leaders in terms of finding solutions to their problems. Indeed, Man-

agement's tendency to reduce the "potency of traditional negotiations and disputes/grievance resolution process in which Unions are the mediators is cast against the backdrop of co-operative and "joint-partnership" logic of new work arrangement" (Pulignano2002:48). And as argued by Pulignano (2002:48), in the "rationality of team-work, which underlines the company's wish to recapture control and manage conflict on the shop-floor, trade union's roles become that of "facilitator."

My observation and evaluations of comments from Supervisors and team leaders in the plant indicated primacy of concern with the success of managerial decisions, in which team-work rationale remains an important and enduring component, and, therefore, around which issues relating to skill and work process problems must be resolved. Unions' concessions to the rationale of managerial practices such as the team-work arrangement serve as a starting point to understanding the "growing spirit" behind "joint partnership" and collaborative understanding" that have become the driving force in the NNPC. For instance, the existence of joint consultative committees of various types on quality control, production process reliability and maintenance, have come to represent means through which social partnerships are cultivated for the workforce. The social partnership arrangements in the refinery have become enduring arenas "to tackle not only job-related problems but also micro-conflicts", (Pulignano 2002:49), without reference to the Unions. In other words, it has provided the platform for joint understanding of issues and challenges, and therefore recognition by both partners of their reciprocal relations in the new work arrangements.

In the refinery, the co-operation between the management and the unions implies a joint partnership involving a process of joint consultation where barriers to harmonious work relations are to be "broken", and the hitherto "over-arching" managerial prerogatives are to be reduced. Thus, joint-consultation at the plant level has become the route through which the "domain" of Management is entered into by the Unions. Through, their platform at plant level, the Unions are to play a mediating role in terms of balancing the concerns and interests of members. The Unions are to become social partners in managing "micro-conflicts" in the process plant. However, while Union leaders may have differed in their perception of positive impact of team-working rationale, they tacitly conceded to

the need for and relevance of such partnership in smoothing out “grey areas” of disagreement. Also, given the historic traditional and “political” role of trade unions, some form of “pragmatic cautiousness” being demonstrated by some of the union leaders may not be seen out of place. In the new dimension of management’s control imperatives, and social partnership, trade unions never lost their role of “combativeness” to checkmate the management.

In the refinery, the “consensual attitude” and approach being demonstrated by the Unions is perceived to be expedient, in the understanding that joint consultation remains a sounding board to tease out areas of disagreement that could potentially lead to conflict and trade dispute, particularly as these relate to personnel matters of the entire workforce. Joint consultations are not just a platform for the ratification of management decisions on managerial issues, but indeed, the Unions perceived it also to be an avenue to tease out labour relations implications of the new managerial practices. In the remarks of the Unions’ Secretary “we do not see the consultations as rubber-stamping forum, but we see it as avenues to lash out at the Management where we feel they are encroaching on our interest.” Thus, given the perceived “consensual ethos” the arrangement is supposed to fulfil for the Management, Unions still re-appropriate and re-negotiate the framework to protect members’ interests when it comes to assessing their roles in the context of emerging labour process.

5.8 Conclusion

In an overall evaluation, though it could be argued that in the context of work process in the refinery, traditional role of trade unions may have been “corroded” and seemingly “over flanked” by team-working rationale, they are still concerned with how the managerial decisions are put into practice with an “eye” on labour relations implications. Union leaders in the refinery are never deceived by team-work rationale and the emerging normative calls surrounding it, rather they use the very platform as a form of collective proactive re-engagement with the management. Thus, my findings and evaluation of union leaders’ responses and perception of managerial initiatives align with the arguments of Blyton and Martinez Lucio (1995) and Ortiz (1998) “that industrial relations institutional

factors mainly shape different trade union responses to introduction of team-work”(cited in Pulignano 2002:54). In the refinery, the Unions are not only strong as collective voice of the workforce, but are also legally protected, which encourage them to feel at par in engaging with the management in a pro-active “articulation of union and member interests in the processes of work re-organisation” (Terry 1993 in Pulignano 2002:54). As noted by Terry (1994 cited in Pulignano2002:54), the “kind of union responses to work re-organisation are facilitated or undermined by the organisational and institutional arrangements in a system.” In the Refinery, unions’ activities are located within, and indeed shaped by the institutional structures of political and cultural histories of Trade Unions’ organisation with underlying emphasis on collaborative industrial relations with the management for the overall interest of the organisation. However, in Hyman’s (1987) interpretation of such collaborative industrial relations, workplace unionism and strategies are increasingly being “tangentially collaborative”, in contrast to the classic combative and adversarial tendencies in tackling workplace issues. To Bacon and Storey (1993), “social partnership” in the collaborative industrial relations has become the “winning way” in which workplace unionism of joint partnership has gradually shaped capital-labour relations in a climate of workplace re-organisation.

However, in the emerging context of workplace relations, where the union’s role is to be perceived and interpreted as “a willing contributor” or a facilitator of change with the management” (Overell 1997 in Pulignano 2002:57) the concept of “social partnership” remains a problematic one. Empirical evidence has shown that in the new context of social partnership, management agenda remains on how to use it as “enduring apparatus” and tools not only to win the “body and minds” of the workers, but to also significantly “convert traditional collective antagonism to a managerial tool for retaining control and increasing surplus-values within the production process” (Pulignano 2002:57).

Chapter 6

Institutional Framework for Learning and Development in NNPC

6.1. Introduction

Much of the discussion in Chapter 5 dealt with workers' responses to managerial practices in particular as these relate to teamwork system and quality control programme, and this had centred on the plant workers' experiences and perceptions of the work processes. While much of the discussion is concerned with the sense that workers made of these managerial expectations, Unions' roles and Union leader's experiences of these managerial practices were also evaluated.

In what follows in this Chapter, I shall further evaluate the implications of training provisions in the context of labour process in the organisation. In NNPC, training has come to be regarded as central to the attainment of the diverse managerial practices, designed to improve performance. Training is also seen as crucial for the involvement of workers and their co-operation in the production process. From the management's point of view, training is the cornerstone for the achievement of organisational objectives. This Chapter is, therefore, concerned with the evaluation of such claims made by the Management on the relevance, and importance attached to training as strategic tool for the attainment of these goals. It is within this claim that the Chapter assesses employees' attitudes and experiences towards training provisions in the organisation. The link between training provisions and employees' attitudes in the organisation is examined.

6.2. Management's normative assumptions of Training in NNPC

While decisions on training programs in NNPC are often viewed generally in terms of need for the corporation to positively respond to the challenges of the operating environment, the dimensions of the consequences on employees' attitudes also need to be understood. To be evaluated against the backdrop of institutional framework and discourse, surrounding training provision in NNPC is how the process and procedures underpinning

training decisions are formulated. Even though training provisions and the assumptions behind them are governed by the challenges of production process requirement and the wider context of the operating environment, workers' assessment illustrates their perceptions and experiences of these decisions.

The context in which training is provided in NNPC forms the analytical backdrop for the examination of the dimensions, and workers' attitudes surrounding training programmes. Indeed, the implementation of new work practices such as team-working and quality programmes conceivably provide the micro-social context for skill formations programmes at NNPC. Nevertheless, these are not without workplace labour relations issues and problems. Here, it is noted that the institutional framework that emphasises the "consensual character" of skill formation in the corporation no doubt tends to over-stress the commitment and willingness of the workforce to training programs (Stuart 1996:253). Empirical analysis put to test the institutional assumptions on which training programmes are underpinned.

In one dimension of the evaluation are the management normative assumptions surrounding training programs in the corporation, and on the other, are the attitude and orientations of the workers towards training. The importance attached to training for employees within NNPC has taken normative assumption of "a direct impact on learning, behavioural and attitudinal changes required for new work processes, and therefore an individual performance improvement" (Stuart et al 2003:27). It is also in this connection that an overall corporate improvement and effective workplace performance of the workers is assumed. However, these normative assumptions and the institutional framework put in place to elicit this greater training benefits are not without implications on workers' lived work experiences. At another dimension of this evaluation is the analysis of the relations between training decisions and provisions, and the workplace labour relations implications. Specifically, it is concerned with the evaluation of Branch unions; their priorities and evaluation of training programmes in the corporation. Here, particular attention is paid to analysing trade unions' effort at emphasising training issues in the institutional framework of labour relations, and other workplace training committees in the NNPC.

The reactions and responses of trade unions to training programmes and the procedures for determining training needs are analysed.

In recent years, and with a renewed managerial concern on “social re-engineering” orientation in the context of managements search for “best practices” towards enhancing productivity, some strands of theoretical assumptions have emerged with which to evaluate unions’ own representational roles and activities in the context of the corporation’s skill formation strategies, as one of the managerial designed means through which the desired improved performance and quality assurance could be guaranteed. Within this conceptual remit, there are also concerns for “constant assessment of the likely impact, and what unions’ roles should be over training provisions” (Claydon et al 1994 cited in Stuart 1996:253). To Stuart (1996), the concern to adequately evaluate trade unions’ side of the coin stems from underpinning assumptions of the consensual nature of skill formation, from which the discourse is presented by the management as “panacea” for filling the skill deficit gap, occasioned by the new managerial imperatives. It is also seen by the Management as an important element in the development of more co-operative work relations.

Also, as noted by Leisink (1993 cited in Stuart 1996:253), in an environment of organisational transformation, “skill formation and occupational interests are promoted as central issues, and therefore seen as essential, if unions are to continue in their pragmatic relations with management in response to organisational changes in the workplace.” Unions are, therefore, to see training as a “positive-sum” in an era of “productivist ethos” where all parties are to be involved in the productivity improvement drive of the organisation. Increasingly, trade unions in the NNPC are being called upon to identify with Management in seeing training as central factor for skill formation needed for productivity improvement of their members. Consequently, attention is being shifted towards incorporating training and issues surrounding it as part of “bargaining agenda” in the context of the Joint Consultative Council’s meetings. Embodied in JCC agenda, both at the Corporate and Branch levels are discussions on training programmes for the workforce. At JCC meetings it is often stressed “the main qualities of the training programmes are to be of positive outcomes, and intended to be of mutual benefit to all” (General Manager, Group

Learning Dept). However, as argued by Heyes (1993:297), our understanding of “conceptual assumptions and institutional framework that provide justification and support for training programmes must be sensitive to the “conflicts and tensions”, bounded in the discourse in the organisation. This is because workplace institutions such as those for training and development, and the assumptions of the management within the institutions have a tendency to shape the direction of choices and decisions for the training and types of training to be provided (Heyes 1993). Representational roles of trade Unions’ leaders are also shaped by the “past experiences and expectations regarding the training programme” (Heyes 1993:298). Such directions of the choices and decisions are “particularly shaped by the ‘employers’ attempt to introduce measures aimed at promoting workplace flexibility” (Heyes 1993:298).

Flexibility in an era of managerial practices in NNPC for instance, includes multi-skilling, team-working and commitment to total quality of the corporation which in the logic of trade unions traditional orientation and roles may equally generate tensions and hostile receptions within the leadership of the trade unions. A “fragmented attitude” from Union leaders may emerge where there exists a perception of “occupational interests” and “occupational boundaries” within the workforce, and, therefore, sees such management’s intention on training and skill formation as “additional responsibility on the employees without an appropriate framework for up-grading or reward after the training” (Heyes 1993:298). On the other hand, some other segments within the unions may see skill formation and training programme as constituting a threat to skill demarcation within the organisation (Heyes 1993). In other words, occupational interests, skill demarcations and boundaries may constitute fundamental variables for consideration by union leaders and, therefore, attempt to insert its significance in the wider content of the “social partnership” agenda of the training programs. Unions responses to skill formation and training programme have been analysed along two basic strategies; Unions may adopt a “price oriented strategy” whereby they are ready to trade off the wage claims for the potential positive outcome of training, and alternatively as “skill oriented” path, “where unions go along with the management in adopting measures based on functional flexibility” (Mahnkopf 1992 cited in Heyes 1993:298). In adopting either of these strategic choices within organisational transformation arrangement, unions tacitly endorse the introduction

of skill up-grading programme that accompanies new work practices (Mahnkopf 1992). In Heyes' (1993:298) account, central to this partnership and evolving bargaining style has been a pre-occupation with "re-integration of the processes of conception and execution in the organisation of work and a stabilization of wage levels linked to on-going training." Consequently, unions could indirectly be placed under pressures to rather accept a "competitive strategy of acquiescence than a proactive independent involvement" (Heyes 1993:298). Thus, a contextual approach to understanding the unions' representational roles and attitudes to issues of training decisions and programmes are determined and influenced by wider contextual variables such as "stabilization of wages", and "career-growth" assurance, putting to test the strengths of unions within a particular managerial regime of training programme. These variables as identified by Heyes (1993:298) carry certain implications for training outcomes, from the workers' perspective. Other contextual factors such as the existence of "multi-union work environment, unions density, and skill compositions of the workforce, unions training bargaining skills, and the institutional framework of recognition in the organisation" (Heyes 1993:298), shape the position of trade unions within the institutional arrangement of skill formation for members.

In the emerging circumstances of work process in the workplaces, it is advocated that trade unions and management should take a more "productivist approach" to workplace relations, and, therefore, be more open to the challenges of competitiveness of the organisation. Among other engagements, unions are advised to enter into more "alliances with the management at the level of qualification politics" (Mahnkopf 1991:61). In this way it is envisaged that Unions will be able to "incorporate" more issues into collective bargaining agenda, and more mutually beneficial training decisions and programmes for their members. In the emerging dictates unions' concern is expected to be on potentially beneficial training decisions for their members in the context of contemporary changes in the work processes of production. For the unions, the emerging challenge is the concern how to re-invent the organisational and collective bargaining processes in a manner that will re-structure the social composition of skill profiles of their members (Mahnkopf 1991). Increasingly, within the new arrangements, and in response to the challenges in work and production processes, unions have come to realise that "skill up-grading strategies

through training programmes promote interests of members rather mere adjustments through productivity and bargaining concessions” (Mahnkopf 1991:62). It is in this context of “realistic engagement” on issues of training that unions’ workplace activities must include how to “enhance skill formations and occupational interest of members”(Mahnkopf 1991:63). In addition to “working in ‘alliance’ with management at the level of production strategies” (Mahnkopf 1991:63), increasing challenges of skill acquisition and “qualification politics” within the workplace have now compelled them to re-channel their orientations towards organisational training programmes.

Therefore, in adjusting to the challenges of technology of production that increasingly redefine managerial practices, union leaders are compelled to respond with “active modernization policy” Mahnkopf (1991:63), a re-integration of attitudes towards training programmes. Such integrative attitude, according to Mahnkopf would, therefore, involve “skill-orientated” strategy which among others implies unions accepting the “supply-oriented labour market policy” (Mahnkopf 1991:63). In other words, while unions’ roles involve traditional “watchful eyes” on the gains won in the past, regarding employment relations issues, their roles “need to incorporate how to deal with functional flexibility and how to adapt within the internal labour market”(Mahnkopf 1991:63) occasioned by the challenges of production requirements. The greater pressure on the unions to maintain job security for members is conjoined with the concern to ensure functional flexibility of members’ skill through the adoption of “skill-oriented” strategy, in “making rational decisions to agree with the retraining of workers”(Mahnkopf 1991:66) within the managerial framework of training programmes.

In NNPC, the adoption and chances of success of such “skill-oriented” strategy in the “modernisation” of Labour-Management relations would appear to be mutually reasonable and acceptable to both partners in the context of emerging drive for quality product and improved performance. The complex competitive operative environment in which NNPC has to operate coupled with complex dimensions of technology of production, the survival of the corporation would appear to depend on how to maintain high-level skills of the workforce, and in addition to take measures to improve the skill formation of the workforce. The concern for skill enhancement, encapsulated in the management’s frame-

work on training programmes tending to be supported by the Unions has a long tradition of existence and operation in the corporation. This has long been linked with joint union-management orientation towards “stabilising” the internal labour market, and from the trade unions’ perspective, aims at maintaining and enhancing workers’ skill requirement for the over-all improved performance of the corporation.

6.3. Skill and Learning Development: an Institutional Arrangement

As opposed to some many other issues between the trade unions and management in NNPC, skill and learning development have remained issues of mutual interest, and with considerable measure of “success” and “satisfaction” to both parties. Trade Unions in the partnership relations have not relented in exploring the opportunity offered by the arrangement to advance the interest of members on issues of skill acquisition. Apparently therefore, issues of skill and learning development have remained out of contestation in the corporation. In the NNPC, as work processes implied changes in production technology, and, therefore, a certain level of “acquired” skills needed to be added to current skill formation for effective performance. The opportunity offered to trade unions for inputs in the institutional process of skill acquisition through the joint partnership also implies “opportunities for trade unions to exert influence on the structuring of the context of work, on working systems, and on the management’s planning with respect to personnel and training matters” (Mahnkopf 1991:71). In NNPC, in the unions’ attempt to elicit the loyalty of members, particularly the skilled workers, they encouraged their members to continue to explore the workplace institutional framework in advancing the occupational interests of this cohort. To the unions, all institutional processes needed to be explored for the purpose of “social and normative integration” (Mahnkopf 1991:71).

In the NNPC, and in line with the “pacts” concerning training and development, agreements existed, which saw voluntary skill development for all categories of the workforce as part of the strategic drive for improved performances in moments of transformation in corporation. It helped the unions and their members in a claim for higher position and seniority. Thus, the strategy for workforce utilisation, as noted by the (GM, Group Learning Department) “has been towards merging of expansion in training opportunity with the

skills need of the corporation.” Indeed, against the backdrop of complex social-technical skill requirement of continuous process production of the oil industry, the concept of continuous training has enabled NNPC to reconcile the occupational interests of all categories of the workforce with task and functional flexibility in skills formation of the workforce.

On the one hand, the arguments persist that, in the context of need for organisational competitive survival, unions should adopt “realistic forms” of strategy, and should, therefore, be prepared to enter into “productivity coalitions” with management in shaping the “supply side” of the internal labour market. Thus, as noted by Mahnkopf (1991:75) “if the future and survival of such productivity coalitions depends largely on the unions supply-side contribution to the labour market, then a strategy or institutional arrangement that promises optimal “efficiency” for the organisation deserved being supported by the unions.” On the other hand, it is also argued (Mahnkopf 1991), that, if unions continue to adapt the management’s arguments as outlined in the institutional arrangements concerning skill development, it might eventually bring about disparity in “social status, increase social privileges and social recognition” (Mahnkopf 1991:77). This is because for those within the workforce who could not secure their “individual competitive” position through “life-long learning, may not want to reckon with the new qualified worker elite with polyvalent qualifications”(Mahnkopf 1991:77), within the union. Furthermore, as noted by Mahnkopf(1991:77), such “efficiency-oriented productivity coalitions” at the plant-level may lead to ideological split within the unions- of a “hard-working” and successful occupational group against the “indolent” and incapable group. It could also lead to “pressure towards flexibilization and deregulation of wages and employment relations” (Mahnkopf 1991:77) between the “core” and “peripheral” occupational groups within the same workforce. Consequently, an “internal differentiation of structure of wages and salaries”(Mahnkopf 1991:77) arising from differentiation in skill formation may become problematic at the personnel and career management front of the organisation. It is, therefore, canvassed that unions’ “good position” in the productivity coalition should be evaluated against the possible consequences on other “categories of workers within the workforce where the management might find it difficult to harmonize the equal distribution of skill formation with reward system” (Mahnkopf 1991:78). Also, as pointed out by Hirsch

(1976 cited in Mahnkopf 1991:78) “employer’s demands for skilled labour may be heating up competition between the various occupation interests.” This is more so when further training endeavours might mean different things for those involved. Issues of job security, higher pay, intrinsic rewards such as prestige and social recognition are fundamental concerns of workers on matters of training programmes (Mahnkopf 1991). Therefore, unions’ “good position” in advocating for “longer life-learning” for various occupational groups runs the risk of being misinterpreted, or “misrepresenting” the diverse individual interests of their members.

6.4. Institutional Framework for Learning: NNPC’s Group Learning Department

In line with the institutional framework for learning in NNPC, a move towards functional flexibility and building skill profile was being undertaken as part of management’s drive towards improved performance and efficiency. As extracted from the organisation’s document on training, functional flexibility is conceived as employees’ ability to undertake tasks both horizontally and vertically. Within this arrangement, acting as catalyst and platform for skill development and learning had been the institutional framework through which learning needs were identified, and competencies development programmes targeted at each occupational group’s needs. The framework combines an emphasis on core skills with “modularisation approach” to facilitate multi-skilling. The strong focus of the learning development programme as remarked by the GM, (Group Learning and Development), “is an emphasis not only on core skills development but also on mobility of the workers within the internal labour market as outcome of the learning programmes.” According to him, “skill and learning development in the corporation is about developing for the corporation expertise on processes, techniques and operations both at the Corporate and Subsidiary levels (GM, Group Learning Department). In other words, the objective was to enhance capacity building of the targeted occupational groups.

The goals of the Group Learning Department in connection with the above were tied with the objectives of being “committed to accelerating professional excellence.” As remarked by the Group Manager, “our organisation and staff should have a good knowledge of entire world of oil industry; in other words, a knowledge-management visionary for

NNPC” (GM, Group Learning Department). He noted further that workers in NNPC “are ready through learning to identify, acquire, share and use knowledge to achieve our goals through standardized processes and by creating enabling environment which rewards knowledge sharing” (GM, Group Learning Department). In this regard, and as contained in the framework for learning and development, “NNPC will be a continuous learning organisation that will acquire, share and transfer knowledge of its operations and business strategies to enhance performance.” According to the GM, this would be achieved by “surveying skill needs of groups of employees, and rolling our programs that target the competencies and knowledge in which each group needs the most performance improvement intervention”.

Through competence development programmes at NNPC, the corporation identified areas where it needed to improve the capabilities of its workforce. According to the GM (Group Learning Department), “the first step is to pinpoint these learning needs, and we do this by survey and evaluation of current skill levels horizontally and vertically, and estimate skill level needs for identified groups for them to be successful.” This process of identifying and evaluating skills needs “has become an inclusive and integrative approach in enhancing employee’s awareness of their leaning needs, and this “helps break down any resistance to learning new skills” (GM Learning Department). In NNPC, framework for implementing learning and skill development were categorised as “Chief Officers Development Program(COMDP), this is an eight-week mandatory programme for Chief Officers transiting to Managers Cadre”(Group Learning Department) .

In 1991, the Management saw an urgent need to develop a programme that would groom Senior Officers, transiting to the Management Cadre - the programme was referred to as Chief Officers’ Management Development Programme (COMDP). This platform for learning and development became a major and regular tradition in NNPC as a “key factor for capacity building for emerging managers to live up to the corporation’s vision, mission statement, and expectations of the corporation for improved performance” (GM, Group Learning Department). As remarked by the GM, “the objective of the COMPD is to train leader/managers for the future - those that will eventually manage NNPC.” According to him, “the programme is like a talent management programme, to tap into the

potentiality of would-be managers that NNPC has.” With the initiatives and programme like these, NNPC was able to “harness those talents and develop the staff into world class leaders/managers” (GM, Group Learning Department). Through this transition in skill development programme, NNPC as noted by the GM had been able to have “the best crop of managers and the best talent that you can find in the industry and that is why we insist that our greatest asset is the human capital – the staff of NNPC”. In the context of its operational challenges, and as attempts to make it more responsive to these operational challenges, the GM noted “we are working towards a situation that the managers that are being trained will work in any of the subsidiaries, and therefore be able to move the organisation forward as a commercialized company that it is supposed to be.”

In addition to the COMDP, NNPC also “unfolded a new leadership development model”(GM, Group Learning Department). In the new leadership development model referred to as “7DL” designed for leaders in NNPC to exhibit “the seven dimensions of leadership; to champion enterprise view, to demonstrate interpersonal effectiveness, envision future and acts, coach and develop others, demonstrate leadership qualities, and demonstrate professional excellence in maximizing alignment”(NNPC Training Document). In the estimation, and normative assumption behind this arrangement “these qualities are expected to eliminate divergent views on leadership by providing a common ground for all leaders in NNPC, and for the development of high performing individuals responsible for professional functions and projects”(NNPC Training Document). According to the GM, (Group Learning Department)“through the new initiatives of leadership development in NNPC, we are developing leaders who can work effectively in 3 domains; “NNPC vision, and its communication, people behavioural and interpersonal skills, and business task skill,”

The COMDP was designed seventeen years ago as the “vehicle to sharpen the leadership, managerial and communication skills of Chief Officers (senior) transiting to Managerial Cadre. In the current efforts at reviewing the programmes, and in harmony with the new leadership challenges in NNPC, the ‘7DL’ model has been incorporated.” According to the (GM, Group Learning Department), the ‘7DL’ became the basis for revision of the existing (COMDP), and through which trained leaders would have “multiple ways to

work in cross functional assignments.” Incorporated in the 7DL were: “new and future leaders, mid-level leaders and experienced leaders programs, each focusing on leaders’ behaviour, direction-setting strategic in decision making.”

Other skill and learning development programmes under the Training Programs of NNPC were: Senior Officers Transition programme (SOTP), this was designed for staff on supervisory grade level, and the objective was to “acquaint the group to the core business challenges of the corporation, and also to provide them with basic computer and supervisory skills required by the supervisors” (Group Learning Department, NNPC). Another one was the Foundation Leadership Development Program (FLDP) This programme helps “new joiners” to make a quick and seamless transition into working career in the corporation. It was aimed at “developing interpersonal and team building skills, and in fostering and sustaining value adding relationships, to stimulate creativity and entrepreneurial skills among the “new entrants” (Group Learning Department, NNPC). Further learning programmes were induction programmes for experienced hires, to create awareness and understanding of the NNPC core values, ethics and business processes, and to acquaint the experienced hires with the refinery plant operations. Also, fresh graduates recruited into the corporation were inducted for a period of one month, and this was to make them develop personal effectiveness in the workplace (Group Learning Department, NNPC). Under the Foundation Skills Training Programme, young graduate engineers and technicians were equipped with skills and capabilities required to operate in the oil and gas industry. According to the GM, (Group Learning Department), “the objective is to provide the young technicians and graduates with a common platform upon which they can build a career in the oil and gas industry.” Through the programme, the basic skills and operational understanding needed for the first four years of their career in the oil industry were provided.

As part of institutional arrangement to enhance the performance of the workforce and quality products, Corporate Total Quality Department was also established in 1998 as “Strategic Commercialisation, Reorganisation and Capitalization Unit. The Total Quality Department had, the “objective of improving NNPC work processes to achieve the vision” of the total quality department. The operational objectives of the Department

were linked with plant processes operation and quality requirements at the refinery level. As remarked by the GM, Corporate Total Quality Department (CTQD), “Total Quality Management remained one of the most laudable initiatives of NNPC that has culminated in the establishment of TQM departments at the SBUS and CSUS.” For instance, as he noted the “CTQD designed the modules, and initially handled the programme for the Chief Officers courses before this was later handed over to the Human Resources Division.”

In the context of challenges of continuous process technology of oil production and distribution, CTQD developed and carried out series of “service level agreements” and programmes with the several departments and units of the corporation. In pursuance of its objectives, CTQD mission was to develop an in-house consultancy, collaborating and co-ordination of initiatives for performance improvements in the corporation (Corporate Total Quality Department, NNPC). Accordingly, CTQD was more pro-active in engaging the SBUS to improve their business processes, to align and re-position the corporation for high performance as well as creating appropriate process and systems for improved performance (GM, CTQD). As noted by the GM (CTQD), for “NNPC to achieve its process of transformation there remained a need to develop and implement standard operating mechanisms for all units and sections of the corporation.” Towards this end the CTQD co-ordinated the service-level agreements with all sections of the corporation in “order to improve their delivery capabilities” (GM, CTQD). The “Service-Level Agreements” provided the platforms for all stakeholders in quality improvement to participate and share ideas and procedures for enhancing improved performance (CTQD, NNPC 2008).

6.5. Learning and Training in NNPC: Trade Unions and Members Concern

A managerialist understanding of the importance of existing institutional framework and arrangement concerning learning and training in NNPC, as described above, continues to take a significant impression of “linear relationship” between processes of skill formation and performance of the corporation. In the normative understanding of the corporation, there is a linear relationship between training and effective performance. The

assumption in managerialist literature has also been that there is “causal positive contribution between training and individual employees’ adaptability to his organisation” (Elena P, 2001:327). It is also normatively perceived, linearly of the significance of knowledge acquired for organisational improved performance.

This section of the Chapter makes an evaluation of this assumption by providing analytical insights into workers’ own perception of training in the corporation. By evaluating workers’ own assumptions and experiences of learning and training in NNPC, the section examines the “flip-side” and the basic differences between learning provided and impact on the workers, using the refinery workers of the corporation as the unit of analysis. Arguably, training and learning may appear to be on the way of fulfilling the normative expectation of the corporation’s drive for improved performance. However, in essence, it may fall short of fulfilling the intrinsic expectations of the workers themselves. This is because as observed by Elena (2001), the simplified assumptions about the positive outcome of training and learning have come to represent kinds of “obvious” benefits both for the individuals and the organisation. Thus, as raised by Mathieu et al (1992); Noe(1986 cited in Elena 2001:327), there are “multiplicity of factors influencing training effectiveness” and outcomes. There is also the “difficulty of transferring learning from training events back to the process of work itself,” Baldwin and Ford, (1988); Casey(1980 cited in Elena 2001:327). In other words, there are always the “contradictory purposes” located in the different perceptions of both the management, and the workers themselves.

Indeed, while the relationship between training expectations (outcome) and organisational improved performance remains a potent one, there are a whole lot of “social, cultural and political dimensions” (Elena 2001:328), that tend to mediate these ““uni-linear assumptions”. Therefore, in a more critical account of this relationship, Elena (1999a) provides a contextual analysis from the perspective of individual learners; individuals’ concerns and expectations. According to Elena, “if we are to appreciate more fully the complexity of social processes of organisational life, we need to move beyond the linear representation, to capture the complex web of reciprocal, non-linear interactions between the individual and the organisation” (Elena 2001:328).

Utilized in this way, the theoretical construct, therefore, provides a critical evaluation of what training implied, from the workers' perspective within the refinery. It seeks to evaluate the perceived impact of learning activities from the workers' own perspective. As noted above, there are certain socio-cultural and infra-politics and processes within the corporation which shape and mediate the normative assumptions between training and its outcome. While it is indeed acknowledged that learning, as described by Elena (2001:328) implies the "liberation of knowledge through self-reflection and questioning," (the developmental aspect of it is seen as "double-loop process"), echoing Argyris' (1978), earlier formulation that training should be conceptualised as both structural, "off-the-job" careers, and instrumental "on-the-job", day-to-day "problem solving initiatives that seek to instil a greater awareness and understanding of work practices while providing the scope for development and growth" (Elena 2001:329). However, in reality, and against the backdrop of other multiple factors mediating workplace labour relations and workers' orientation, the assumptions behind these definitions are not "determinate" a priori, particularly "when organisational and individual priorities compete" (Elena 2001:329).

This empirical evaluation is undertaken against the existing competing goals in terms of improved performance, drive for quality product and sustenance of the corporation which NNPC seeks to achieve, and the embedded implications being experienced by workers themselves when seeing learning and training as opportunities for the fulfilment of diverse expectations. Within the context of the organisation's work process, even though the workers expect a positive outcome from the training and learning programmes, the realities of it not meeting their individual expectations" on- the-job" and "off-the-job" remain.

Both implicit and explicit in the importance attached to training by the individuals is the "assumption of fulfilment of both personal and career goals on the job" (Cagne 1983 cited in Elena 2001:330). And this in turn influences the "level of motivation" that drives individuals', willingness to learn. Authors have argued that individual workers' responses to training have always been a function of the relationship between "training motivation and learning" (Elena 2001:330). To Noe(1986cited in Elena2001:330), "trainees will be

more motivated to participate more in training services” if there is a symmetry between such training and high performance. Mediating factors between such motivation and high performance are found to be “personal factors and individual career planning” (Elena 2001:331). In other words, a balance between individuals’ identification with their job, facilitated by workplace positive influences, enhances high performance at the job. By way of extending Elena’s (2001) arguments the micro-political processes in the workplace that are perceived to be favourable to individual learners stimulate a willingness to approach training with “positive intention” to learn. Therefore, the contextual factors and conditions of the workplace influence and underpin workers’ attitudes and responses to training. These conditions as noted by Elena (2001:332) provide the “in depth analysis of interactive between the individual and the organisation “which then shape individuals’ attitudes to training. This is because, “individuals construct their realities of the significance and association between such rhetoric and practice of training in the organisation” (Elena 2001: 332).

To Holton and Baldwin (2003), transfer of learning to workplace performance remains a critical issue in analysing the relationship between the learner and the organisation” (cited in Dan S. Chiaburu 2005:605). For the organisation to enhance performance, such skills and behaviour learned and practice during training must be “transferred to the workplace, maintained over time, and generalised over contexts” (Dan S. Chiaburu:604). Indeed, for training effectiveness to take place in the organisation there must be an integrative balance between the contextual components of the organisation and individual expectations. To Mathieu and Martineau(1997 cited in Chiaburu 2005:605), the contextual components incorporate an existence of “continuous learning culture and supervisor support that influence not only individual’s attitude in terms of goals and expectations”, but also the various training outcomes, for example, “learning, training transfer, maintenance and generalisations” (Tracey et al 2001 in Chiaburu 2005:605). As maintained by Colquitt et al (2000) situational characteristics shaped by organisational culture and micro-social process of the context “have the most positive relationship with training motivation and outcomes”(cited in Chiaburu 2005:605).

My evaluation in this Chapter responds to these theoretical assumptions and constructs, as put forward by the various authors, by discussing my observation in NNPC, the relationship between contextual factors in the workplace; continuous-learning culture, supervisor supports, training motivation and training outcomes – learning, transfer of learning to workplace practices. For the purpose of this evaluation, the analysis draws on Baldwin and Ford's (1988) definition of "transfer of learning" as the "degree to which trainees effectively apply the knowledge, skills and attitudes gained in a training context to the job"(cited in Chiaburu 2005:606). When the learner is subsequently able to "reproduce the skills in a new setting, it is referred to as "training maintenance", and when such skill is applied to more complex task situations' – training generalisations" (Ford et al 1998 cited in Chiaburu 2005:606). Thus, in determining training outcomes, and what learning holds for individual learners are "a number of contextual/work environment factors conceptualised in terms of organisational normative values, belief and expectations that knowledge acquisition and utilization are crucial for the organisation's competitive advantage"(London and Mone, 1999 cited in Chiaburu 2005:607). In other words, when there is congruence between workers' perception of these normative values, motivation for learning is high and willingness to transfer such learning to workplace activities is demonstrated.

In exploring skill developments and its deployment trajectory especially as part of attempts to empirically explain the theoretical construct of workplace contexts and relationship with workers perception of learning and outcome in NNPC, qualitative method has been adopted. For an in-depth understanding of the nature of the relationship between training and outcomes, direct observations and unstructured interviews methods were adopted. These were adopted in order to understand the specific type of skill development relevant for the oil industry in meeting the challenges of the competitive environment. In the evaluation, emphasis was placed on individuals' perceptions of the current training provisions in the corporation. In relation to individual experience of learning programmes, the approach allowed an in-depth analysis of individuals' perception, and attitudes to learning, their evaluation of contextual factors that facilitated or restricted learning. The "critical incident" technique was particularly useful in allowing the particular learners to "talk about their particular journey across this map; the skills acquired, how, when and

why they acquired them” (Elena 2001:332). In the attempt to enhance the depth and breadth of the research sample and in exploring deeply, the interaction between the individual and the organisation, data were collected pertaining to the organisation’s training programme through my discussion with the GM (Group Learning Department), and from the organisation records and material pertaining to training.

NNPC provides a good example of oil industry which has undergone a process of restructuring, and that of its work processes in response to the challenges of its operating environment and the product market, and which consequently required appropriate responsiveness to these expectations. This has entailed a great need for training and learning for the workforce. A significant challenge to the corporation in the context of these imperatives of production process remained central to the issues of training and skill development. Behind the introduction of various multi-level skill development programmes at NNPC had been the normative assumption that by transferring learning and self-development to the individuals, they would be better placed to positively respond to challenges facing the oil industry (GLD, Training Policies and Practices).

6.6. Workplace Learning and Development in NNPC: re-inserting the Context

A considerable body of research work has been provided on contextual factors which influenced work organisations to embark upon training programme for their workforce. For instance, Hayton et al (1996) argues that certain circumstances induced firms to provide training. According to him, these included; firms’ acquisition of new process technology, competitiveness within the industry itself and the level of workforce skill formation. In a more refined approach, Billett (2001) puts workplace learning environment as significant in determining employees’ and employers’ learning relations. According to Billett (2001) workers need to be given the opportunity to learn (which normatively, NNPC gives), and much depends on the workers’ willingness to learn and put it into effective practices. Positive contextual factors are referred to as ‘affordances,’ while workers’ willingness to take up the opportunities is described as “engagement” (Billett 2001). In other words, when a workplace has developed a motivating learning culture,

there tends to be symmetry between the two relationships. And where there is such a balance, the aspirations to learn and put learning into effective use seem unproblematic to both management and the workers. Central to this empirical evaluation, therefore, was to examine the interplay between the two relationships; of what drove the decisions both for the management and the workers. A significant characteristic and dimension to learning in the oil industry as noted by Sternberg et al (2000) is the experiential nature of the learning process and its transfer. In the workplace of the oil industry, the complex socio-technical dimensions of process of production make the learning and utilization of skills an “experiential” one. Elaborating on the experiential dimensions of learning, Dewey in Schon (1987) notes that the learner has to see for himself, and that right kind of guiding on the “shopfloor” will help him to “see” what he needs to “see”.

Utilizing this insight and construct in my evaluation, and given the nature of work process in the refinery, the structure of learning and training programme of the corporation, learning and skill transfer remained essentially an experiential type characterised by coaching, mentoring and “do it yourself” in the process plants. This empirical analysis is therefore concerned with examining how these dimensions were played out during the long career path of the workers in the corporation. Indeed, various learning and training programmes of the corporation namely; the Graduate Trainees’ Induction, Induction programme for Experienced Hires, Foundation Leadership Development Programme (FLDP), Senior Officers’ Transition programme (SOTP) and the Chief Officers’ Management Development Programme (COMDP) were all designed to enhance skill development for “seamless transition” from one stage to another in the career progressions of all categories of workers in the NNPC. The central idea behind the programme had been to identify and emphasize the “critical dimensions” of skill transition needs, across levels in the trajectory of workers career advancement while on the job. The refinery’s oil process and production unit referred to as Process Plants, remains the point of and evaluation of skill and experiential learning development for this study. It was here that the practical skills acquired had to match the emerging challenges of work process required for effective performance.

From the level of entrance as fresh graduate trainee into the corporation and subsequent deployment to the refinery (after the one month Graduate Trainee Induction; designed to enhance the trainee's "personal effectiveness" and overview of the corporation, generally), he was expected to begin a gradual, almost smooth transition from trainee to competent plant operator. Through experiential learning, the trainee operator internalised the complex systems of skills, knowledge and practical understanding needed to function as plant operations officer. It was at the plant process level that these details were gradually impacted in the trainee.

With different educational background but typically in the technical and engineering, the fresh "entrants" started their career journey into "person in charge" through experiential learning. While safety was a primary concern in the process plants, the dimensions of coaching were expected to reflect on improved performance as he "progressed" in the process plant. The process plant trainee obtained specific instructions and guides on the processes of the plant operations.

As stated earlier, the intent of this section of the study is to evaluate workers' own orientation and responses to skill development and experiential learning processes at the plant process production level of the refinery. The methodology was largely in-depth unstructured interview and direct observation with Plant Operators and Trainee Process Operators in the process plants. Specifically, ten (10) of the fresh graduates transiting into the skill learning "experiential" stage of the process operation were in the plant. As Plant Operators-in-training, they gradually acquired "on-the-ground" skill and understanding required to be expertise. They were interviewed in detail to know about their personal skill development trajectories that had come to impact on their perceptions of the experiential learning process and work performance.

This was, however, done against the background of information provided by the Plant Supervisors and Superintendent on what were referred to as "key-skill" transition points needed by the plant process operators. The nature of my empirical observation gradually moved into unstructured, but in-depth interviews with the Plant Operators-the mentors for the trainees. My interview of the sampling frame that comprised Plant Operators who had

made the successful transition from graduate trainees to competent plant operators relied on sourcing a diverse range of information on their experiential knowledge as they moved along the skill transition processes of the plant operations. Workers' narratives and story lines relating to their experiential knowledge appeared consistent and uniform; reflecting a clear expectation of the corporation's patterns of skill formation in the fulfilment of their career goals on the one hand, and improved performance in the corporation, on the other. The consensus, therefore, seemed to be a smooth skill progression from graduate trainees to process Plant Operators. Concern about how to make a successful learning process and fulfil expectations were therefore consistent across the views expressed by the Plant Operators. The workplace learning interactions between the learners and the trainers in the operating plant rests largely on the need for "safety", and keeping "process flow" going. In the refinery, the skills for process flow involved responding to problems, maintenance, and fixing of equipment. In order to keep process flow going, both the learner and trainer must remain vigilant.

As noted in the preceding discussion, plant process operation was carried out in teamwork; a team typically comprised 3-4 trainee plant operators in addition to the "old hands" - led by a team leader. In this way, the trainee plant operators learn from both the team leader who served as coach, and "old hands" within the team. Through the informal "coaching" of the multi-skilled team leaders, the trainee plant operators routinely learned maintenance and repair works while process flow was going on.

Thus, the learning paths along which process plant skills were acquired were characterised by both points of "formality" and "informality" through which the technical competencies were achieved. Combined with technical competence development in the learning process in the plant was the trainee's attitude and aptitude. Indeed, as noted by one of the team leaders who also acted as trainer to the newly deployed graduate trainee, "attitude to process operations system is fundamental in the refinery." In addition to mastering the technical side, the work environment also required them to be safety conscious. In other words attitude to basic safety operations requirement underpinned technical skills. According to the trainer, they must have what is referred to as "consequence imaginations" – a kind of aptitude, alertness with their ears, eyes and voices while in the process

operating plant.” Combined with this, they must be able to ask questions, have common sense, and problem-solving attitudes.

Also, as noted by the Plant Superintendent, “here, people must equally develop, in line with the technology of production, hence we give them the opportunity through coaching to contribute in the process operations, and have a say on how things go on in the plant.” Attitudes and vigilance are genuinely required for plant operators to be able to work in such hazardous environment. The learning process in the plant required trainees to carry on with the daily routine of the plant operations with the technical side of it, as well as the ability to have “a questioning frame of mind.” They were given opportunity to confidently experiment with little problem-solving challenges. While they are expected to be team-players, and learn with the team, they were equally expected to be “capable loners”, who were ready to learn alone even after mastering the routine operations.

Both the Plant Superintendent and the coaching team leader were frank in emphasising the importance of safety attitudes and vigilance. This implies that, technical skills become a straightforward thing if it is adequately combined with right personal attributes such as pro-active thinking and observations. When asked about his experience as a learner in the process plant, one of the trainees remarked “daily, there are challenges here, and one keeps learning everyday.” Indeed, it was often stressed to the trainees, the importance of “zero-tolerance” to unsafe personal dispositions in the plant operations, and, therefore, they must always give their best in terms of attitude and attributes to safety and precautions. Transition from graduate trainee into Plant Process Operator was characterised by mentoring, with skill and knowledge acquired through the “eyes” and “movement” from the team leaders and the Supervisors in the process plant. The process therefore constituted gradual but steady identifiable “skills points”, required to effectively function as Plant Process Operator. Even though the graduate trainee that had successfully transitioned to Process Operator remained in the plants and could be shifted from one plant process area to another, he was expected to carry with him the well-defined set of right attitudes and attributes, combined with the technical skills. However, parts of the significant components of learning process in the plant were also the skills dimensions expected to be ac-

quired from the Control Room. Indeed, as remarked by the Supervisor, a skilled Process Operator must have a detailed technical understanding of the Control Room operation.

The implication of this remark is that for a Plant Process Operator to function effectively, he still needs to go through the training as regards workings in the Control Room. This is because as Plant Operator, he needs to maintain “effective co-ordination” and balanced understanding of the information and responses from the Control Room regarding the “functioning system” and state of the plants. Learning the vital points of control room labour process could therefore be regarded as the next, but equally important transition point for the learning Plant Operator. Essentially, Control Room transition is understood as a move from physically working with the equipment outside, with working inside on the monitoring panels of the computers. As remarked by the Control Room Operator (whose status is also that of team leader), “the control panel is a big complex machine which represents the entire picture and “inner workings” of process operations.” Here, the trainee plant operator came to know the complex relations between the process plants and the Control Room.

In the Control Room, the trainee Process Operator was expected to know from the control board “when something doesn’t go right – this they can tell by seeing the malfunctioning on the panel.” The control room is referred to as the “living, breathing organism of the plant equipment.” It therefore represents an essential stage in the long process of on-the-job learning for the trainee operator. Though, as noted by the Supervisor “it might take an average of 3-4 years for a trainee Process Operator to become sufficiently knowledgeable to step into the practical simulation of the control room.” This is because, as a Process Operator, plant operation technical experience is brought in, to be able to read signals on the computer screen. The “visual simulation” of the control and monitoring panels reveal the real happening and functioning of the operating equipment. It provides a sense of what is happening as fluids flow through the pipe and valves.

In the words of the Control Room Operator who also served as trainer for the graduate trainee Operators, “anybody could be trained on how to respond to flashing lights and warning alarms, but the Process Operators need to bring into the control room a “feel”,

the “smell”, and an awareness of not just what is happening in the plant, but also why it is happening.” They bring in, this practical “operations knowledge” from the plant operation. Thus, the important transition points for the trainee Plant Process Operators became a meaningful and gradual integration into the “insights” and competence of both plant operations and control room.

In view of the above description of dimension of on-the-job training in the refinery, it needs to be pointed out that the many challenges facing NNPC as oil industry continue to compel the corporation to reassess its skill development programmes. In line with the Corporation’s Learning and Skills Assessment Programme (Group Learning Department), there is a corporate wide training package as a valuable source of competency standards for all the subsidiaries and refineries. This is to serve as industry’s wide standards when it comes to competency and skill developments for the Process Operators. In other words, with this training package for all the units, a trained Plant Operator can be transferred and expected to function effectively in any of the process plants or refineries of the corporation. As such, the skill profile of the trainee is to be multi-skilled. The trainees were, therefore, not just being trained as “process operators” but as “process technicians” with a combination of electrical and instrument skills, in addition to process knowledge. With the complex dimension of process technology, multi-skilled production workforce is increasingly required in the refinery.

In this complex context of continuous process technology that characterises the oil industry, the trainee Operators enthused an experience of being relevant in a challenging work environment of the plant processes and the control room, “I think the challenges and opportunity are very good, to work in such company”, remarked one of the Trainees. While the training environment requires a workforce that is enthusiastic and curious about knowing the diverse and complex dimensions, this was buttressed by the culture of training and supervision, earlier referred to as “enabling environment”, in which training operators are ready to utilize and transfer knowledge acquired. One of the trainee operators enthused further, “with my 6th month in the Plant, I think am able to work anywhere in the refinery”.

In what could be interpreted as comment on learning or training culture of the NNPC the Superintendent remarked “we want people who ask questions, people who want to learn.” The trainees themselves expressed willingness to know, and be engaged with the challenges of the process operation. Trainee Operators were ready to take up the opportunity and challenges of the learning programme for their transition into skilled operator in the refinery. It became obvious, therefore, that, there existed an “alignment” between the normative training programme “affordness” and fulfilment of workers’ personal and career goals “engagement” in the refinery.

Arguably within the oil industry in Nigeria, NNPC remains exemplary in terms of scope of learning programme and platforms for delivering learning program to its workforce. As indicated above, learning “ingredients” are delivered across all categories of the workforce in the corporation. Indeed, evaluation of plant process workers’ experiences for being able to progress from graduate trainee to process operator demonstrates clearly how well articulated training programme was encapsulated in the institutional structure and processes and co-ordinated by the Group Learning Department. Learning and development programmes are both of informal and formal processes, channelled at meeting the clear goals of the corporation. It is a process that has remained experiential, embodied and carried out through the various informal mechanisms; Graduate Trainee Induction, Workplace Coaching and Supervision, on-the-job training, mentoring and regular reinforcement.

Trainees’ own stories behind the diverse experiential dimensions of learning process illustrate their experiences as they progressed from one “learning point” to another in the context of workplace learning in the refinery. One trainee in the process plant remarked as follows “for the first four months in the refinery after the official trainee induction, we did a lot of learning from instrumentation to boiler making, then we moved to floating, production, and valve fixing, we were also put through a lot of fire training and teamwork activities.”

Another trainee remarked, “Most of the learning we obtain here is through observing and following our team leaders around, and then we get small opportunities to fix things our-

selves, through this we get used to the routines of the process plant by looking at the gauges ourselves.” This essentially illustrated the fact that learning processes in the process plant operation for the Operators was characterised by both informal and effective interactions between the learner and the coaching Supervisors and team leaders. In line with the peculiarity of the refinery’s work environment, the trainee operators needed to observe first, and then utilize opportunities to do it themselves. As one of them remarked, “Here we are given opportunities to move around and learn through the daily routines of the process flows.”

In the Process Plant, for learning to take place, there was an informal mentoring system characterised largely by “look-listen-hear-feel skills,” where the learners were expected to acquire and demonstrate the learning points naturally. The team leaders and Supervisor would also come in to assist in building the strength of the learning operators. By building on the strength and potential of the learner, the mentoring system emphasised the important dimensions of skill development processes for Operators. Very important to the competence-based skill development of mentoring system of learning in the plants was the “Safety-based behaviour” expected of the Operators. These safety attitudes and behaviour were built in as part of training elements surrounding work processes, such as ability to identify leaks, carrying out cleaning and turning the valves.

In observing workers’ experience in the context of learning situations generally, there appeared to be a balance between the driving agenda of training expectations and the personal career interests of the Process Operator. The nature of the experiential learning improved the skills needs of the trainees. As indicative of the evidence of trainee experiences, the training programmes, were found to be stimulating and challenging by the trainees. And since they found the training situations “positive”, improvement in their competence and skill seemed to be reflected in their ability to meet the challenges of the process plant. The trainee plant operators were curious to find out about new activities, and demonstrated confidence to face daily operating activities and safety issues. It was, therefore, demonstrated by the Plant Operators that the workplace learning activities in the plant operations gave the right “experiential learning”; an integration that underpinned knowledge and active practice in the process plant.

In these illustrations, the trajectories of learning experiences of the trainees have been those of eager learners; a willingness to acquire additional skills not only for personal fulfilment, but also for building a robust skill composition needed in the oil industry. Thus, being eager to learn in such a stimulating and experiential learning environment re-validates corporate normative expectations from the “new” entrants. In this instance, Management’s expectations and roles, in providing learning environment combined with the eagerness and personal goals of the new entrants. This is quite understandable, and in place, given the fact that the trainees were fresh graduates from the Universities, who certainly found it a rare opportunity to work in such an organisation.

It is perhaps instructive to note, therefore, that the trainee plant operators were motivated not just by the desire to pass through the skill points, but we observed their excitement to be competent, skilled and be more knowledgeable about all aspects of the process operation. While the perceptions and experiences of the Plant Operators and the Trainees might not totally unpack their experiences in the course of my interviews with them, the immense range of potentialities of skills and competencies learned were experientially demonstrated in the plant. This observation also showed how “affordances” of the learning environment became a learning situation for opportunity to probe and be inquisitive about the general operations in the refinery. In the plant, such learning situations were observed to be characterised by the following; opportunities for exposure to dimensions of the process flow as defined by the type of technology of production in the refinery; need for skill and competence flexibility for team work; exposure to challenges that accompanied these changes; opportunity to develop skills and competency as professionals and individual Plant Process Operators; and experience of support and encouragement by the trainers. As peculiarly the case in the oil industry, individual employees’ qualification on entry needs to be reinforced by workplace experiential learning that he obtained in the plant process learning environment. It is expected that such a hands-on competence development programme makes the plant process operator to be fit and flexible on the job.

The descriptions of workers’ own experience as contained in this section of empirical observations and comments of Plant Process Operators has shown how the trainee operators were encouraged to develop competency-based knowledge across the technical skill

points of their skill formation trajectory in the refinery. The “grades” or “skill points” gone through by the Plant Operators in their learning processes demonstrated the important implications of “on-the-ground” learning for them, to fit into the industry. As a practice, NNPC relies on two main sources to maintain its skill formation for plant operators; graduates from tertiary institutions, specifically those with engineering background as graduate trainees for the plant process operations, and the specialised training courses in a wide variety of professional and operational areas for its “old hands”. Many of these professional, operational and supervising skills development courses are through in-house and consultancy training arrangements such as COMDP.

As noted by the GM,(Group Learning Department), “in recent years, there have been limited recruitment, and thus emphasis is now placed on Crafts and Trades Apprenticeship programme in the organisation.” From its in-house consultancy services, such as those organised by the Group Learning Department and the Total Quality Control Department, the corporation has been providing comprehensive in-house training and learning programmes. In addition, NNPC continuously sends senior officers overseas for training, and to attend courses by the GM further remarked(Group Learning Department), “an important dimension of skill formation programme in NNPC is its emphasis on learners acquiring expertise and in-depth knowledge through experience.” According to him, “this is particularly reinforced by the tertiary educational background of the qualified new entrants.” In other words, once a person is recruited, training becomes cumulative and progressive experiential process in the corporation. Just like any other oil company, the experiential learning depends very much on attitude and behavioural attributes of the trainee that is, his readiness to learn for himself through problem-solving disposition in the process plant. In other words, willingness to face challenges through the deployment of experience and learning remains the hallmark of the corporation learning programmes.

6.7. Workplace Learning in NNPC: a Conceptual Re-Evaluation

Workplace learning has long remained the process and mechanisms through which knowledge and skill needed for workers’ effective performance was achieved in work organisations. It has long been identified through which mechanisms knowledge is ob-

tained, created and transferred in the workplace (Lave and Wenger 1991). Indeed, Wenger et al (1998) whose contribution to the understanding of workplace learning as effective means for knowledge transfer remains influential as contained in the “communities of practice” model for analysing workplace learning. Thus, in much of management literature and practices, communities of practice models continue to gain attention for understanding modern workplace learning process. The diverse patterns and institutional process of workplace learning as “situated learning” are underpinned and explained through the conceptual lens of (COP). Indeed, in a more implicit way, the on-going learning and training processes encapsulated in the Group Learning’s programme of NNPC are based on (COP) model. In other words, the wider tradition and patterns of workplace learning in NNPC as contained in the preceding discussion are consistent with Lave and Wenger’s (1991, 1998) account of “situated learning” as conceptualised in the “Community of Practice” model. Within the “COP” model, learning process is conceptualised as “social learning in which the individual members learn by participating in shared activity” (Stephen Fox 2000:853). Learning, conceptualised in its “social” and “situated” context is expected to develop employee learners in the multiple dimensions of shared objectives and goals of the workplace. Emphasis of COP model as an approach to understanding “situated learning” has typically been on group or team interactive learning process in a work setting” (Hutchins 1993 cited in Fox 2000:854).

As observed by Lave and Wenger (1991), “situated learning” draws our attention to “learning that takes place in everyday life, including the workplace in which such learning is tied to on-going activities and practices, and these are done by communities of people through social interaction” (Stephen Fox 2000:854). In their empirical illustrations from workplaces they studied, Wenger et al (1991) explained that a central feature of situated learning was the involvement of a group of people-learners and mentors in shared practices of the workplace. Essentially, according to Wenger and Lave (1991), “situated learning” needs to be characterised by “triadic” group relations; between “masters” or old-timer (Supervisor), the newcomer (Trainee) and the Management. In this context of learning, the newcomer must “learn from the old-timers, but must also feel challenged by making a contribution to the work of the group, typically by doing simple, routine aspects of the work practices” (Stephen Fox 2000:855). The “new comer” must par-

ticipate in a practice or set of practices of the workplace his immediate contribution, therefore, makes him a “legitimate member of the community” (Stephen Fox 2000:855). This type of participation of the young learners, Lave and Wenger (1991 cited in Stephen Fox 2000:855) refer to as “legitimate peripheral participation.” However, as the learner gains more understanding of the work practices through effective participation, his “legitimacy increases within the group: socially and experientially, and he moves toward the centre of the group” (Stephen Fox 2000:855). Consequently he identifies more in terms of “personality” and “competencies” within the community of practice of the workplace. While much of Lave and Wengers accounts and empirical illustrations, is drawn from their case studies, the type of situated learning’, contextual features and characteristics of the organisation of my study may strain Wenger et al’s model a little bit. However, the central features of “situated learning” at NNPC draw in largely the numerous illustrations typified in their analysis and conceptualisation of COP.

In a later elaboration on the concept of communities of practices, Wenger (1998) explains that ‘within COP, meaning is negotiated through the process of participation of the learner’ (cited in Roberts 2006:624). In other words, for the Plant Operator (learner), COP represents places of negotiation where learning, meaning and identity (Wenger 1998) are enacted. Wenger in this elaboration, identifies three dimensions of relation through which practices reinforce “coherence of a community”; “mutual engagements – here both learners and masters as members interact with one another, establishing norms and relationships; through this relationship members are bound together by an understanding of joint enterprise; and thirdly over some period of time, a shared repertoire of communal resources for corporate cultures, normative values continue to cement their relationships”(cited in Roberts 2006:624). Furthermore to Wenger (2000), learners’ engagement is achieved through doing things together in the “community”.

While Wenger’s (2000) characterisation may not adequately depict the on-going situated learning process at NNPC, if one takes into cognizance the structured- “fragmented” practices of different layers of training and development, as indicated above that take care of occupational groups for skills formation in the corporation. Nevertheless, some of the central features of “communities of practices” model resonate in our evaluations. For

instance, Management as a dominant player within the structure of learning and development in NNPC has a role to support the “legitimate practices” and learning needs of the various “fragmented units,” and also has to encourage alignment of interests and practices between or among the “communities” represented by occupational groups in the corporation. This, Management does by providing the conducive learning environment and motivation. Management at NNPC develops and leverages the various conceptual elements of COP to enhance the strategic advantage of the corporation through its support and alignment of situated learning in the Refinery. Through the existing institutional framework and practices of learning programmes, Management at NNPC increasingly engages in the development of its knowledge building capacities, through the “communities of practices” within which the diverse forms of “situated learning” programmes are embodied.

However, a growing number of studies within the labour process strands have emerged to criticise and expose the limitations of COP model in the evaluation and conceptualisation of learning in the workplace. Thus, in discussing the limitation of COP model, as enunciated in Wenger (2000), Brown and Duguid (1991) argue that we should view organisations as “community of communities of practice”, in which “each of the sub-communities recruits their “newcomers” who learn from “old-timers” within the sub-communities, and thereby socially reproduce the units”(cited in Stephen Fox 2000:856) with their distinct orientations and shared values. The import of this argument for the purpose of our understanding, therefore, is that, in NNPC, the existence of different occupational groups with different levels of skills formation and shared social relations that go with it makes a deterministic understanding of “COP” model a problematic one. Making a forceful argument on this, Fox (2000:856) argues that “one of the dilemmas of contemporary sub-communities within the larger COP is the issue of power conflict.” In other words, as learning and training practices evolved, partly through the agency of the members of a group, “such practices and shared values behind it may not easily cut across into the other sub-communities”(Fox 2000:856). This implies that, what is “sacrosanct” in terms of learning needs for one occupational group may not hold any meaning to the other group within the same community. According to Fox, (2000:856), “different masters may compete with each other in leading the way to the future” of the organisation. The presence of

“contradictions, continuity and displacements, alignment and re-alignments may be in essence embedded features of contemporary sub-communities within the larger COP” (Fox 2000:856). Thus, COP, as originally argued by Wenger (1991, 1998) becomes a less homogeneous concept in understanding workplace organisational learning.

A more vigorous critique of Wenger (COP) model is found in the work of Willmott and Contu (2003). Also, a more detailed evaluation of purchase of COP model in the context of “methodological and theoretical remit of Foucault’s analysis” has been offered by Richard Edwards and Nicholl (2004:159) for the understanding of implications of workplace learning to individual employees. According to Edward and Nicholl (2004) the “totalizing discourse” surrounding COP and normative assumptions behind workplace learning did not give space for the actors involved to manifest their “performativity,” and the “deterministic” trajectory of situated learning did not account for “actor-networks” evidence. According to Edwards and Nicholl (2004:160), our analysis needs to situate the discussion of workplace learning within the wider trajectory of “changing practices of workplace governing, and the embedded different forms of workers’ subjectivity in form of actor-networks outcome”.

Thus, a reconceptualisation of discourses surrounding learning programme and the institutional norms that promote it in the context of Willmott and Contu (2003), and Edwards and Nicholl (2004) provide alternative lines of conceptual understanding of the embeddings of power relations within “situated learning” practices. Each of these authors’ contribution is therefore evaluated in turn, in this part of the Chapter.

Situated in Willmott and Contu (2003) analysis is an understanding of power relations in the dynamics of communities of practices as critical to a full conceptualisation of dimensions of knowledge creation as embedded character of situated learning. In a similar vein, Roberts (2006:627) argues that though Wenger et al (1991) do give recognition to the importance of power in shaping the “legitimacy of peripheral and participation of employees, their analysis fails to explore and account for the implications of power relations and practices in COP”. To Marshall and Rollinson (2004 cited in Roberts 2006:627), Wenger’s (1991) account of negotiation of meaning and shared relations is essentially

“quiescent and consensual, while in reality such shared activities are plagued by misunderstanding and disagreements” (Roberts 2006: 627). Also, Yanow (2004 cited Roberts 2006:627) reconnects the relations between power and knowledge, particularly expert knowledge in the COP dynamics. According to Yanow (2004), though acquired knowledge of workers in a situated learning situation may be recognised in a context of strategy formation and practices, “expert knowledge in the form of consultancy” may take precedence over the local knowledge of the trained employees. Drawing on Foucault’s conceptualisation, Blackler and McDonald (2000 in Roberts 2006:627) note that “mastery, collective learning and the dynamics of power therein are inseparable.” Making reference to Foucault (1979) they note “there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose at the same time power relations”(in Roberts 2006:627).

Utilizing the enhanced theoretical perspective as contained in Foucault’s Actor Network Theory (ANT), Fox (2000 cited in Roberts 2006:627) “provides a useful critique of power relations within COP”. Also, Edwards and Nicholl (2004:161) utilize the work of Foucault and (ANT) in the understanding of “discipline and governmentality” as central character of workplace learning. From ANT, according to Fox (2000) “learning is seen as an outcome of a process of local struggle and the particular struggle is multi-faceted involving the self as (subject) acting upon itself, as well upon others and upon the material world”(in Roberts 2006:627).

In the attempt to reconceptualise what situated learning implied to workers Willmott and Contu (2003:1) show how managements have “utilized media of learning as power to harness communities of practice to the fulfilment of corporate objectives.” According to Willmott and Contu (2003) workplace learning process must be understood and analysed in its embeddedness with institutionalised power relations. Taking issue with the orthodox understanding of situated learning as “vehicle for revitalizing the understanding of, and prescriptions for how knowledge is developed and organised within workplaces” Willmott and Contu (2003:3) argue for alternative re-conceptualisation of embeddedness of power relations in organisational learning process. In the workplace learning practices, “exercise of power and its control are integral part and not external to it,” (Willmott and

Contu 2003: 3). Challenging the understanding of COP as “locales of learning and knowledge management, and as a medium and technology for consensus and stability building” Willmott and Contu (2003:3) argue that the asymmetrical power relations embedded in it, reveal it as practices that consolidate the legitimate peripheral participation. However, as observed by them, the practical and empirical demonstrations of situated learning may appear benefiting the workers, it is this very “subjective dimension” that obscures its power dimensions. Essentially, the “selectivity of interests” as benefiting, inherent in situated learning (Lave and Wengers 1991) “underdeveloped a radical conception of the power-invested tendencies in situated learning” (Willmott and Contu 2003:4). Therefore, a sustained attentiveness and re-conceptualisation of the theory of “situated learning” and COP in workplace learning open up for critical understanding, the “broader social process implications of workplace learning” (Willmott and Contu 2003:4). To be able to understand how this social process of work relations reflect the power dimensions, therefore, our empirical and theoretical tool must refocus on the “lived in” – its embeddedness with its historical and cultural dimensions i.e. how it serves as “self-generative qualities” in the social relations of work,”(Willmott and Contu 2003:5).

In other words, if the understanding of workplace learning as contained in situated learning thesis is to be re-conceptualised, as embodied activity “involving acquisition, maintenance and transformation of knowledge, for the purpose of transforming the self and the organisation” (Willmott and Contu 2003:5) then our evaluation of organisational learning at NNPC necessarily needs to re-insert this strand from labour process perspective where “practices” within the complex web of social relations must account for the unequal power relations. In Willmott and Contu’s evaluation, “hegemony over resources (including learning) of legitimacy and participation are inherent in the shaping of legitimacy and the peripherally of participation” (Willmott et al 2003:8). Resources in this context are interpreted to mean “shared activities” and “opportunities” that are embodied in the “practices” of shared learning, and which consequently shape the power-relations. And it is this dynamics of power relations that “mediate the acquisition, maintenance and transformation of meanings, including what is legitimate” (Willmott et al 2003:8). In the context of power relations and its interplay, between the learners and the mentor, in terms of

shared activities and practices, power “enables or constrains access to resources”(Willmott and Contu 2003:8)that consequently shape the “peripherality” or “centrality” of positions.

In essence, the “conflictual character” of relations of production of the advanced capitalist mode of production and its ensuing “hegemonic” managerial practices are reproduced in the “practices” that characterised situated learning of workplaces. And it is this conflictual dimensions of the structural characteristics of social processes of communities of practices in which power and control are embedded that portend implications for workers’ experiences and positions in the workplace learning and the relations of work generally (Willmott and Contu 2003). To Willmott and Contu (2003), therefore, an analysis of learning that incorporated an appreciation of the hegemony over resources of learning, and within which “unequal relations of power” are embodied provide a deep analytical understanding of inherent conflictual characteristics of sub-communities within the communities of practice.

“Community” as conceptualised in the perspective of situated learning in the modern workplaces implies “coherence and consensus” in harmonizing relationships of the shared benefits of all (Willmott and Contu 2003). However, as argued by Willmott and Contu (2003:12) such tendencies in assumption tend to “gloss over the inevitable dynamics of processes of formation and reproduction of unequal relations of production.” In other words, instead of focusing on centrality of communities and its derivatives of consensus and coherence that are assumed a priori, analytic focus should be on “practices located in different space-time contexts, coloured by diverse perceptions and thoughts of actors in the social relations of production” (Willmott and Contu 2003:12). It is in this multiplicity of practices located within the sub-communities (occupational groups) and layers that conflict and power dynamics are “generated and sustained”. In other words, “the historicity of learning in its embeddedness” (Willmott and Contu 2003:12) and other workplace practices may not “universally” generate shared understanding and value consensus for all actors, but inhered with tensions and contradictions.

A distinct analytical focus, according to Willmott and Contu (2003:13) should invite a “consideration of how learning processes in work organisation are embedded with relations of subordinate, and how this may potentially generate antagonism” between the learners and mentors. It is this potential tension, covertly glossed over by “practices”, and constructed as a “sense of meaning” and “identity” for the Plant Operators. Our findings and evaluations of learning programme at NNPC, particularly for the Process Plant Operators in the refinery can, therefore, be interpreted and cast against the backdrop of this conceptual remit of “power embeddedness” in the social process and practices of “situated learning” in the organisation. Plant workers’ own sense making, experiences and agentic relations within the communities of practices of situated learning in the refinery are bounded and mediated by discourse and normative practice of “joint enterprise”, competent development and skill formation for the growth and improved performance of the corporation. Sensitivity to power relations of workplace learning provides an alternative analytical reading of situated learning and practices in the NNPC workplace learning programs.

Utilizing the empirical evidence and analytical illustrations contained in Orr’s (1996) *Talking About Machines*, Willmott and Contu (2003) illustrate how collective learning process, as a type of situated learning is a terrain where the basic problems of power relations are evident. Thus, in our reconceptualisation of the assumptions of structural-functionalist interpretation of “hegemonic” “consensual alignment” of worker (learners’) interests with Management’s objectives, we maintain that a critical understanding should invite “disentangling” managerial expectations from the covert tensions that are inhered. Such considerations point to the need of treating workplace learning as equally “politically problematic” just like any other workplace labour process issues. Thus, an alternative approach towards understanding and evaluating workplace learning should involve a re-appraisal of situated learning practices within the spaces provided by embedded power relations for the formation of identity and agentic articulation of workers, mediated through the logic of “communities of practice”. Indeed, it is in the demonstrated practices of workplace learning that the institutional context and framework, underpinned by “family ideologies”, as shaped by the subjective orientation of the workers are manifested. It is in this conservative understanding of situated learning which emerges in the communities

of practice that “become self-referential for all relevant knowledge and learning” (Willmott and Contu 2003:24), in the workplace. However, a re-conceptualisation that goes beyond the functional-structuralist interpretation “radicalises” learning process as embeddedness of “tensions and consensus” in their delicate balance within the workplace. In this re-cast of conceptual approach, it is argued that, while the “consensual” may have been “seductively imbibed through normative value orientation of the “learning organisation” of the NNPC, the “conflictual” explains the inevitable asymmetry power relations. Such a radical conceptualisation gives consideration to how “homogeneous” assumptions behind learning programs are “hegemonically” conditioned (Willmott and Contu 2003:24) through managerial practices. Management’s concern for enhanced performance in the face of technological changes and product market challenges in the NNPC calls for effective monitoring of workplace learning of employees that are in tune with the mainstream situated learning model. Tied to the normative workplace learning and skill formations in the NNPC are the expectations that such situated learning will further secure workers’ participation and compliance through the evolving managerial practices such as teamworking and quality improvement programmes. By collapsing and conflating managerial agenda with individual employees’ subjective identity, through subtle hegemonic “practices”, workplace learning programmes become a “unified and consensual” (Willmott and Contu 2003:25) with minimal concern for dialectics it inevitably generates. In Willmott and Contu’s summation (2003:27), the concept of situated learning demonstrated through institutional patterns of organisational learning programmes “is a complex notion, implicated in social structures” of the community of practices, and through which it reproduces itself.

6.8 Trade Unions in the Context

While much of the empirical evaluation and theoretical construct through which workplace learning in NNPC was examined in the preceding section focused largely on workers’ sense making, and indeed their “situatedness” in the power relations of organisational learning, in what follows here, we shall be dwelling on Unions’ roles and situations in the institutional framework of workplace learning. The implications of workplace learning to trade unions and representational roles in the context of work process and changes

in the technology of production are evaluated. As observed by Dean Stroud and Fairbrother (2008:1) “while workplace is increasingly becoming an important site for workers to acquire skills and qualifications, thereby enhancing their employability”, unions seem to view workplace learning as additional “organisational objective, rather than a concern for core members interest and interests” (Harris 2000 in Dean Stroud and Fairbrother 2008:1). In essence, in a context where workplace learning is promoted at institutional level that seeks to enlist the joint collaboration between the management and unions, “trade Unions operate on the periphery of workplace learning decisions” (Dean Stroud and Fairbrother 2008:1) with the implications that workplace learning remains the prerogative of the Management. In such circumstances, the bargaining position of Unions remains weak leaving the decisions of workplace learning to the “fulfilment” of workplace needs of the corporation.

In Stroud and Fairbrother’s (2006) earlier arguments on while this remains prevalent in an environment of work re-organisation, they note “the organisational and structural features of a sector do indeed have a profound influence on the way workplace learning is organised” (in Dean and Fairbrother 2008:2). “It may count less, the strong general presence of the unions in the sector, where the entrenched concerns focus primarily on skill enhancement”(cited in Dean and Fairbrother 2008:2) for the survival of the organisations. Also, in a context where unions operate broadly as “service organisation” to members which in itself may be “historically determined”, workplace learning agenda therefore occupies “a narrowly defined” and secondary, in the unions’ representational activities (Dean and Fairbrother 2008). “Often the focus is on terms of pay and conditions including job security, and not more on comprehensive issues of job development and alternatives” (Bronfenbrenner et al 1998 cited in Dean Stroud and Fairbrother 2008:2). Whereas the concerns of Unions and Management “consensually” centre on improved productivity and quality products, under “situated learning” arrangements, Unions’ roles will narrowly focus on concrete involvement in defining the learning needs of the members (Dean and Fairbrother 2008). Consequently, tensions do arise on how to reconcile the Management’s normative expectations, within this “social partnership” and, the ensuring asymmetrical power relations that define the social process of learning and the representational roles of Unions in particular, as noted by Forrester and Payne (2000 in Dean Stroud and

Fairbrother 2008:2). Unions do find it difficult to “reconcile “life-long” learning aspirations of members with circumstance of needing to survive the employability conditions of the workplace”.

Thus, trade unions’ representational roles of trying to engage with workplace learning programme in the context of “bargaining processes, social partnership and social dialogue are bound to be circumscribed by the situated unequal power relationship” (Forrester and Payne 2000 in Dean Stroud and Fairbrother 2008:2). And because their representational activities cannot go beyond bargaining related issues of terms and conditions of employment, they often adopt “limited servicing approaches to question workplace learning issues” (Dean Stroud and Fairbrother 2008:2). Traditionally, in NNPC unions’ roles and emphasis have been on negotiating and securing tangible results for members, while active engagements on issues of workplace learning are left within the prerogative of the management. While analysts such as Mahnkopf (1991) have identified how unions’ adoption of “skill-oriented” strategy in addition to “price-oriented” type may make additional efforts in combating skill-deficiency of members, thereby enhancing their skill profile for employability, the very context of situated learning that defines the practices and power relations portend implications and limit greater remits for unions. In other words, the contextual relationship defined by unequal power relations, makes workplace learning a terrain defined by Management” (Dean Stroud and Fairbrother 2008:3).

6.9. Conclusion

This Chapter of the study has shown how developments and dimensions in the work process and managerial practices in NNPC have resulted in specific responses from the Management in respect of skill formation and training needs. With changes in technology of production accompanied by normative concern for improved performance, there has been a renewed focus on recruitment and retention of a “credentialised” set of workers across the hierarchical and occupational groups, which also necessitated a more “advanced” training and learning programme for the graduate trainees, for instance, and for those in supervisory positions. The emerging types of different layers of occupational groups with different qualification and training backgrounds are associated with varying

degrees of “practices” of sub-communities in communities for practices in the NNPC. Consequently, the prevailing “sector-based” training and practices in the corporation that take into consideration, orientation and expectations of the occupational groups also have implications for training and learning needs which the unions have to contest. In the prevailing circumstance of the NNPC where training and development are conceived with renewed emphasis, there will be limited but also “restricted” ways in which the unions will have to engage with workplace learning agenda. Operating challenges in NNPC continue to call for the need to up-grade skills of some members of the Plant Operators, while “new” graduate employees, with tertiary educational background readily and often benefit from learning programmes. The different levels and hierarchical layers of which occupational groups are formed, with different educational background were a contentious issue for unions’ involvement in learning agenda in the corporation. In other words, the different skills-profiles and occupational identities of workers shaped by different educational and skill backgrounds established occupational boundaries thereby creating challenges for the two Branch unions in engaging with management on issues of training and workplace learning. This was recurrently made reference to by NUPENG Chairman, who never minced words on how the above have become areas of concern amongst his members in all the Branches. In NNPC, where Management’s prerogative predominates, even under the “social partnership” arrangement, Unions still find it difficult to “break in” in shaping training agenda in favour of these different occupational groups and identities. Also, where essentially, traditional methods and concern of Unions’ representation still focus on terms and conditions of employment for the different groups, serious engagements with management on training issues might continue to occupy a secondary position.

Chapter 7

Identity-Work and Interests Articulation in the Refinery

7.1. Introduction

As shown in Chapter 6, much attention was given to the experiences of the workers and their responses to the workplace managerial practices in the NNPC which have been conceptualised through the diverse strands of labour process analysis. An attempt was made to concretely locate the diverse patterns of managerial discourse and practices within these conceptual approaches. More specifically, critical interest within the labour process strand has been able to make insightful connections between labour process, workers' experiences and management's learning programmes. Also, understanding has been linked between management's learning programme and "identity work" in the workplaces (Alvesson and Willmott 2002). In particular, the concept of identity work and its regulation through managerial discourses and practices has offered a somewhat different understanding of management development programmes, and through which workers construct and enact their workplace identity; thereby giving interpretations to the managerial and symbolic importance of management initiated training programmes (Gagnon, 2008). Utilized as an analytical tool, Collinson (2003:14), earlier developed the conceptual model of how employees enact their repertoire of selves, that is, "conformist, dramaturgical and resistance selves", in securing their identities in the workplace. According to Gagnon (2008:376), workplace or "management's discourse mechanisms produce identity work as responses to dynamics of power relations in the organisations, in shaping workers' sense of self and in relation to management's development programmes." Drawing on Collinson's (2003) analytical tools, Gagnon (2008:376) proposes a Webberian type of identity regulation through management's development programme. According to him workers' self-identity in the context of training environment grows from "constant testing and competition within conditions of relative insecurity in the organisation, where survival depends on the outcome of the identity testing." There is also the "benevolent" context of training environment in shaping workers' self-identity, "wherein monitoring and

surveillance could remain important” (Gagnon 2008:376), but in which prevailing workplace conditions assure identity security for the workers.

7.2 Identity-Work Construction: models for evaluation

In the context of identity regulation and shaping, such as the learning situations and management development programmes, the micro-social processes are provided through which participants enact “identity-form co-created through the discursive practices and expectations of the training programmes”(Gagnon 2008:376). Grounded in Collinson’s model of “selves”, Gagnon’s (2008) theoretical and empirical analysis is based on categories of conforming practices that emerge in the shaping of workers’ identity in the context of managerial discursive programmes and practices of training. According to Gagnon, workers “work on self” through “confessional and introspective” identity shaping, and also through engaging in enacting “required self”, as a way of coping and conforming to the discursive expectations(Gagnon 2008).

The concern of post-structuralists labour process theorists, such as Collinson (2003), Fleming and Sewell (2002), Hogson (2005), Gagnon (2008), Alvesson and Willmott (2002) has been the process of identity formation and its regulation within the discursive framework of management’s training programme. Identified in their respective analyses they are concerned with the issues of how identities, subjectivities, or “selves” are constructed, monitored, regulated and resisted in the workplace, in the context of discursive practices such as culture change programmes, training and professionalism in “management projects” (Gagnon 2008:376).

As something different from mainstream managerial understanding of these practices and programmes, labour process analysts have developed critical and alternative themes for the interpretations of what workers’ identity and selves are under the training and change discourses. In their analysis they emphasized ambivalence and contradictions located in the self-constructions and experiences of the participant-employees involved in the learning programme were indeed emphasised in their analysis. As workers are simultaneously

being “pulled” and “pushed” by management’s rhetoric and discourse on offer, their “selves at work” are formed within the ambivalences and contradictions thrown at them by management’s change programmes. In Alvesson and Dertez (2000 cited in Gagnon 2008:377) “selves at work or employee subjectivities are defined as feelings, values, self-perception and cognition” shaped by the social process in the workplace. In the situation, self-identity is constructed by the micro-social process of management’s discursive practices in which the workers are situated.

Conceptualised as both objects and subjects in the workplace, workers’ self-identity formation is not, therefore, something determined passively through “external forces or structures, nor fully a self-controlling type, shaping the world around him” (Collinson 2003, cited in Gagnon 2008:377). It is something shaped by the “interface” in which the worker finds himself. Self-identity formations, therefore, like other issues within labour process understanding form part of “contested terrain” in contemporary workplaces. As a terrain for contest between the management and the worker himself, identity at workplace remains the “habitus” through which the management has been able to induce the processes (rhetoric) for the construction of “acceptable selves” as a form of regulation. Such identity regulation and subjectivity is worked on by the management through “discourse mechanisms aimed at enjoining employees to construct certain self-images, aligned with management-defined objectives” (Gagnon 2008:377). Also, as noted by Alvesson and Willmott (2002), management’s regulation of identity is achieved through the “self-positioning of employees within the managerially inspired discourse about work and, to which they are expected to be more committed” (cited in Gagnon 2008:377). Explaining this further, Deetz adds “modern work organisation is increasingly being pre-occupied with managing the insides – the hopes, fears and aspirations of workers, rather than their behaviours directly” (cited in Gagnon 2008:377). Other contributors, following Foucault’s work also within the post-structuralists’ tradition stressed the power dimension of identity construction in the workplace. Prasad (2005), Kondo (1990), Lorbiecki (2007), and Gabriel (1999), have all put emphasis on the impact of power in shaping the multiple forms of workers’ identity in the workplace, (cited by Gagnon 2008:377). For instance, Lorbiecki (2007) in his own rejection of Foucault’s “deterministic” reading of resistance as “being co-produced and therefore contiguous with, and immanent within power”

aligns his arguments with Gabriel(1999), that in “the ambiguity and ambivalence inherent in the process of identity construction, there are still unmanaged spaces, in which subjects counteract and shape the managerial image of self” (cited in Gagnon 2008:377). Central to identity work and its dimension in the workplace, therefore, are its “multiple” and “shifting character” engaged by the workers and influenced by the management’s regulations in “forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that produce a sense of coherence and contradictions along line of continuous in the work organisation”(Alvesson and Willmott 2002 in Gagnon 2008:377). Thus, the process of identity work, its regulation and manifestation are “mutually reinforcing” and shaped by managerial discourses. Indeed as pointed out by Alvesson and Willmott (2002), through “self-positioning” of employees within managerially inspired discourses about work and organisation, managerial regulatory mechanisms are achieved. Such managerial regulatory devices as noted by Alvesson and Willmott are “less obtrusive” yet more potent and “effective” in constructing and reconstructing workers’ identities in the workplace. And they manifest in diverse “cultural media” put in place by the management.

However, while sounding a note of caution in assuming that such corporate cultural media designed to shape the orientation and identity of workers are all consuming and totally dominating, Ezzamel and Willmott (1998 cited in Alvesson and Willmott 2002), urge analysts to be attentive to the consideration of expression of employee “resistance” and “subversive tendencies”. In other words, workers through their own agentic and active “identity–work” make the process of managerial regulation “precarious”, unpredictable and contested.. Workers, therefore “are not passive consumers of managerially designed and designated identities” (Alvesson and Willmott 2002:621). While this is so regarding employees’ agentic role, analysts still maintain that management’s identity regulation is significant. Indeed it remains one of the most important “modalities of organisational control” (Alvesson and Willmott 2002:621). Conceptualised as a new cultural mechanism, the intent is to produce employees who find meaning in corporate values. While they are expected to demonstrate and maintain their “autonomy”, they are equally expected to be “committed” to the process of continuous improvement in the organisation. For instance, in the NNPC the professionals and “competent managers” trained and inducted in the

management development programmes are expected to be “competent”, to take “responsibility” towards achieving the objectives of the corporation.

Within the mainstream managerial understanding, the concern for training and objective aspects of normative control with strong emphasis on competence development for categories of workers reflects managerial regulatory mechanism as a legitimated form of management. It is therefore, assumed that “resistance” and agentic opposition is a demonstration of poorly designed training structure and processes that can be modified through refinement of the structure and processes. While rejecting this positivist line of understanding, and the essentialist interpretations of these managerial practices, those analysts within interpretive and critical tradition of labour process analysis urge researchers to pay attention to the agentic dimensions that explain the “negotiated and often problematic status of the assumed shared meanings, values, beliefs, ideas and symbolic discourses” associated with management’s training programmes (Barley and Kunda 1992; Mumby 1988; Ray 1986; and Kunda 1992 cited in Alvesson and Willmott 2002:621). Their theoretical and empirical analysis demonstrate how management through discourses and practices of leadership development and training have succeeded in promoting, by design and values “organisational experience for consumption by employees” (Alvesson and Willmott 2002:621).

Researchers are, therefore, urged to focus more on the “discursive and reflexive process of identity construction” (Alvesson and Willmott 2002:621) and reconstruction through managerial training interventions, and on which the identity work of individual employees rests. This is because, as noted by Alvesson and Willmott (2002:622), the “mechanisms of control, and outcomes such as rewards, leadership, task specialization and competency do not work “outside” the individual’s quest for self-definition, coherence, and meaning as corporate citizen.” The mechanisms, “reflexively” and “processurally” interact in the interface to produce the identity work of the worker (Alvesson and Willmott 2002). As they note, identity-work is the medium through which workers’ self-construction and management’s regulatory training programmes works through” (Alvesson and Willmott 2002:622).

Strongly connected with the process of identity-work through processural and reflexive interpretative process is how “subjectivity is manufactured” (Deetz 1992; 1994; and Knights and Willmott 1989). However, as Alvesson and Willmott (2002) caution, researchers should avoid the “heavy-hand” interpretations of influence of managerial discourse in shaping identity work project. “Identity construction should be understood as a process in which the role of discourse in moulding the human subject is “balanced” with other elements of life-history, forged by a capacity, reflexively, to accomplish life projects out of various sources of influence and inspiration(Alvesson and Willmott 2002:622). In other words, while identity formation or regulation has an outcome of “intentional modality” of managerial control, its total influence is not to be seen or interpreted as unproblematic since there are other mediating factors or elements that influence employees’ commitment or loyalty to the organisation (Alvesson and Willmott 2002). While there could be “instrumental valence” to compliance to managerial discourse, its “buy-in” is equally “conditional upon” other intervening variables in the organization. Thus, Alvesson and Willmott’s (2002) work conceptualizes and analyses identity project in the context of modern workplace as a distinct influence of managerial regulation, transmitted in the discourse of training and development. It also provides illustrative empirical evidence to understanding how “greater flexibility” and “self-reflexivity are” brought into the interplay, in producing subjectivity and identity work.

Alvesson and Willmott’s (2002) analysis provides the theoretical and analytical value on how the diverse forms of managerial discourses in the NNPC, concerning training, leadership management, team-working and quality improvement are promoted in working on employees’ “insides” – their self-image, feelings and identifications” (Alvesson and Willmott 2002: 622). Their contributions further provide the conceptual understanding of how the “employee as identity worker” is enjoined to “incorporate the new managerial discourses, introduced through the process of induction, training, and corporate education into his narratives of self-identity” (Alvesson and Willmott 2002:622). Indeed, in the context of job and employment insecurity, and career protection, in the wake of changes in work process and managerial practices, “management of identity work becomes salient and critical”(Alvesson and Willmott 2002:623) to the sustainability of employment relationship. Thus, in NNPC, in which the corporation is compelled to sustain itself in the

context of the goals of the regulatory framework, and need of the workers to protect what “remains of employment,” self-identification with the organisation –manifest in “employee loyalty cannot be interpreted as given, it is actively engendered, cultivated and manufactured” (Alvesson and Willmott 2008:623).

Thus, contemporary workplaces remain arenas of intense contestation of diverse issues and interests including issues of self-identities within the complex social processes of ambiguities around which contradictory dimensions of workplace struggles are manifested (Alvesson and Willmott 2008). It is equally in this complex manifold dimension of workplace struggle that “struggle for securing a self remains a continuous and more problematic for self-conscious identity construction for employees”(Casey 1995; Knights and Murray 1994 cited in Alvesson and Willmott 2002:623). Identity “construction” as achieved through managerial discourses has become locus of understanding and reference points for employees to be more “creative”, “innovative” and decisive in the context of organisational repositioning. However, additional “flexibility” and “fluidity” are presented as forms of opportunities and “empowerment” in this social process, in which “employees can re-arrange their work schedules and work practices” (Alvesson and Willmott 2002:624) in form of team-work, for instance. Indeed as Axford (1995 cited in Alvesson and Willmott 2003:624) observes, “identity is capable of being relevant in several ways, because it is grounded in nothing more compelling than the legitimation of differences, rather than in institutional scripts”, which, therefore, produces shifts in meaning, interpretation and constructions for the workers. For instance, in the context of work process in NNPC, the discourse of flexibility, self-autonomy, and skill-mix in team-work practices, identified as “legitimation of plurality” of purpose are “promoted as seductive means of engineering consent and commitment to corporate goals, such that the sense of participation and empowerment disguises the insidious dimensions of producing subjective employees”(Alvesson and Willmott 2002:624). In the emerging context of workplace managerial practices in NNPC, “flexible construction” and re-construction of identity as supposedly given to the workers remain on the agenda of managerial control strategies. Such identity re-construction may, therefore, involve a “processing and re-processing of subjectivity”(Alvesson and Willmott 2003:624) aimed at developing a corporate employee that is not only more “malleable” but also more flexible for activities and work process

with fluid “subjective orientations” within self-managing, multi-functional work groups or teams of the corporation.

Though occasionally, the assumed discourse of “increased flexibility” and “multi-skilling” and other forms of managerial practices may pre-dispose workers to want to challenge certain “established hierarchies and practices”, thereby fostering some elements of “micro-emancipation”, however the very project of identity formation anchored in the managerial practice “may render employees more vulnerable to the appeal of corporate identifications and less inclined to engage in resistance” (Alvesson and Willmott 2002:624). While indeed the managerial control strategies for shaping and constructing identities for workers are far-reaching, analysts have made instructive observations that explain limit of universal applications of self-identity construction through managerial regulations (Gray 1999, Warhurst and Thompson 1998). In other words, just like a need for contextualising the analysis of labour process issues, “self-identity of workers”, “vulnerability” to managerial regulatory mechanisms are also to be context-based, influenced by the prevailing discourse of the organisation. This observation is noted by Alvesson and Willmott (2002:624) that “contemporary developments within the workplace make processes of constructing and securing identity an increasingly relevant focus for conceptual and empirical analysis.” Identity construction and its regulation are “shaped” and embedded within particular institutional and micro-social process of the workplace relations. And in the context of work activities for improved performance, “training and induction programmes tied with promotion procedures are designed and regulated in such a manner that they have implications for constructing and reconstructing identity”(Alvesson and Willmott 2002:625). In particular, in workplaces with overwhelming orientation of “family ideology” like the NNPC, they become “significant sources of identification for individuals” (Alvesson and Willmott 2002:625) with workers imbibing and demonstrating the core values and normative characteristics of the corporation.

7 3.Identity-Work in Context: Learning and Workers Subjectivity in the NNPC

As noted earlier, managerial discourses and practices surrounding managerial innovative in work process and managerial practices, promote in workers the expected passion, soul and charismas (Alvesson and Willmott 2002) needed by the corporation to achieve these objectives. The “ferment” on the part of the management to continue to enlist the commitment and interest of the workers are often exemplified through the process of training and corporate educational programmes to shape the identity orientation of the workers.

In this section of the Chapter, the study takes a critical empirical evaluation of NNPCs Leadership and Management development programme. Drawing on the conceptual approaches described above, the Chapter examines the connection between the management’s development programmes and “identity construction” of “high-potential” employees in the corporation. It takes a critical evaluation of what the managerial regulatory discourses and practices surrounding the training programme have made of the “participants” would-be-managers, in terms of identity formation, and experiences.

As part of its corporate development and re-positioning processes, NNPC introduced the Chief Officers’ and Management Development Programme (COMDP) in 1991, designed for the Senior Officers of the corporation. It was designed and introduced to serve as catalyst for capacities building to enable the corporation to actualize its corporate objectives of improved performance in the oil industry. As contained in the corporate training and development document; the objectives of the (COMDP) were to “develop leaders towards becoming excellent and professional versatile leaders; to adequately prepare trainees (participants) for management positions and responsibilities, and therefore provide a pool of virile leaders and managers sound in the knowledge of the oil and gas business from which the corporation can draw in pursuit of its business goals”(NNPC, Group Learning Dept.2008).For NNPC to become competitive in the oil industry, it was implied, based on the content of this objectives, that it would have to keep renewing its strategy as well as its workforce learning and training in form of (COMDP).This is, therefore, seen and conceptualised as mechanisms and strategy for the deployment of skills and competence for improved organisational performance.

Since its introduction in 1991, “the corporation has trained a total of 2,292 Chief Officers (Snr Officers) in 47 batches of the programme” (Group Learning Department). At NNPC, staff promoted to the Snr Officers Cadre, are enlisted to attend the Chief Officers’ and Management Development Course (COMDP), within two to three years of promotion. In the statement of the Group General Manager, (HR) of the corporation, he declared “this programme has become a key success factor in our quest for human capital development in NNPC” (Group Learning Department).

The leadership development framework which had also been designed as significant component of Chief Officers’ training was also conceptualized and defined as “systematic process of building leadership and management capabilities, required of a successful leader within the corporation, at all levels” (GM, Group Learning Department). The GM remarked further on the importance of the training programmes “as we transit as a corporation into a true world class oil and gas company, we reflect on the strategic aspirations of the corporation, and we are committed to growing competent leaders at all levels who are able to harness the energies and talents available within the corporation for breakthrough performance, COMDP therefore will continue to play a major role in the achievement of our aspirations and mandate in the oil and gas industry.” COMDP has become an in-house training programme that develops and trains Chief Officers transiting to the management Cadre.

NNPCs corporate values and normative expectations encapsulated in COMD were therefore contained in the various statements of the GGM (HR) and the GM (GLD), which included developing appropriate leadership and managerial orientation/identity needed to transform the corporation. Consequently, the programme had been broadened to achieve the goal of building cross-functional knowledge for the participants. At NNPC, programme participants cut across the five functional areas of the corporation; Operations, Maintenance, Quality Control, Administration and Safety and Security. COMDP was among the training programmes run by NNPC, and was designed to “sharpen the leadership, managerial and communicative skills of Chief Officers transiting to managerial cadre (Group Learning Department). As noted by the GM (Group Learning Department), “this is very timely now, that the corporation is transforming and re-strategizing towards

becoming a profit-making company.” Already, over 2,292 officers, some of whom were among the present top managers of the corporation had undergone the training programme. Thus, in the GM’s assessment of the programme so far “these officers who have benefited from the programme have become well-equipped to handle managerial responsibilities in the new NNPC”.

Chief Officers’ Management Development (COMPMD) at NNPC is run in batches (classes), and up to date, 35 classes comprising a total of 2,292 participants. In 2008, for instance, 424 officers attended the programme in seven batches (classes). For each of the classes, the programme was run for eight weeks, through which “participants are exposed to different leadership and management behaviours and concepts” (GM, Group Learning Department). Apart from writing a standard dissertation on a self-identified problem that relates to their job schedule, the participants are also expected to make flexible recommendations on management policies to management for subsequent implementation. Also, as part of the training exercise, a six-day field trip is incorporated; designed for the course participants to visit various NNPC installations and subsidiaries, “this is to expose them to NNPC operational facilities and activities, especially for those who have not had the opportunity of visiting other NNPC facilities and operations”(GM, Group Learning Department). At the end of the training programme, the participants are then appraised generally on the programme and on “effective presentation”.

As contained in the company documents and training manuals, the broad objectives of the programme also included adequate consultation with all strata involved in the corporation. that is, the management, the staff and the unions including other stakeholders, with a view to discussing, agreeing and accepting the broad imperatives of transformation through training and development (Group Learning Department). Through consultation, “every stakeholder will have a fair knowledge of why the transformation is necessary after wide re-examination and identification of challenges and threats that require serious and urgent attention” (GM, Group Learning Department). The imperative of transformation tied with the training programmes was to be demonstrated through the retention, motivation and development of high-performing leaders that would facilitate “succession planning” and challenge current management’s business and production processes. The

Senior Officers (participants) were therefore expected to imbibe leadership potential – defined as ideals, values and normative roles that are in congruence with the vision statement of the corporation. Through this, they demonstrated the right identity for promotion to senior management positions. Through professional challenges, visibility, opportunities and right identity construct, participants were to contribute to improved performance of the corporation.

Incorporated in NNPCs (COMDP) is what is referred to as the Seven Dimensions of Leadership (7DL). The leadership training, seeks in each management leader the attitude of preparedness to take on greater responsibility and professionalism in their organisational positions. As contained in the training document, the Seven Dimensions of Leadership become the basis for the high potential leaders; with multiple ways of demonstrating their leadership, including cross-functional assignments. The new leadership development therefore contained as part of its components; New and Future Leaders, Mid-level Leaders, and Experienced Leaders Programmes, each focused on leaders' behaviour, identified by the Seven Dimensions of Leadership (Group Learning Department). In addition, the Experienced Leaders' programme included direction- setting-strategic training to support the senior's leadership group's decision making abilities. The two-part programme for Senior Leadership training has a content that "incorporates world class strategy analysis and decision making with examination of the national context that makes NNPC unique" (Leadership Programme, Group Learning Department). The Seven Dimensions of Leadership (7DL) has been introduced comprehensively into the NNPCs current and future leaders. It was also incorporated into the graduate employee's' orientation materials, "as new employees gain technical experience, there is consideration that they are also entering leadership role" (GM, Group Learning Department). For the young professional to "move on", on the leadership role and careers, they were also evaluated in the context of Seven Dimensions of Leadership.

7.4. NNPCs Workplace Learning; a learning agreement between Unions and Management?

As part of NNPCs attempt to involve “stakeholders” including the unions into the objectives and principles of training and leadership programme, joint partnership was continuously sought with the Branch Trade Unions. As contained in the Corporate Training Objectives which also formed part of Corporate Training Advisory Committee (CTAC), and as remarked by the (GM, GLD), the “idea is to give union leaders a fair knowledge of why change is necessary, and the directives leaders through the change must take.”

The composition of the Corporate Training Advisory Committee (CTAC) in the NNPC is made up of the management’s representatives and also of the trade unions (Group Learning Department). Among other aims, the goals of the “learning partnership” which is also referred to as “knowledge management” is to build a partnership in the workplace, to encourage workers of the NNPC to participate in learning and skills development, to provide access to learning and skills development (Group Learning Department) With the hope that the joint partnership on personal and professional development will bring positive benefits for both the unions and management, the parties agree to; improve the quality of education and training provided by the corporation through positive promotion and encouragement of professional development of workers; improve the skills and employability of members, thereby making them more flexible and adaptable to change, improve the recruitment, retention and job satisfaction of all workers; and ensure equality of opportunity in the workplace and equal access to training and development regardless of employment status” (Group Learning Department). Also stated is the “commitment to make NNPC a continuous learning organization that will acquire, share, and transfer knowledge of its operations and business strategies to employees to enhance performance” (Group Learning Department).

Accordingly, with the establishment of such joint union and managements CTAC for Human Resource Development both at the Headquarters and at the Refinery levels of NNPC, the Committees have been responsible for introducing, implementing and monitoring learning initiatives at the workplace level. As contained in the Committee’s Agreement, the main responsibilities of the Committee will include; “identifying learning

and skills needs of workers, based on corporate goals and objectives, prioritising learning needs at the workplace, identifying groups and individuals who will benefit from better access to learning and skills; ensuring that learning plan is effectively implemented; setting appropriate quality standards for learning opportunities, monitoring of provision to ensure consistent quality in provision, monitoring of any contract with outside consultants and training providers, and evaluating progress against agreed objectives”(NNPC Corporate Policy and Procedure Guides).

Accordingly, both the representatives of the unions and management were expected to regularly consult in determining the learning needs and to consider proposals for learning of the workers.

7.5 Chief Officers’ Management Development Programme (COMDP), and Identity/Agentic Construction of Middle-Level Managers

Within the institutional framework and implementation of the objectives behind Learning and Management programme at NNPC, potential managers’ identity regulation and formation are very strong. The desired expectations and normative orientations for the participants are well defined and strong. The Chief Officers’ Management Programme (COMDP), with the Seven Dimensions of Leadership Development, (7DL) as its components had the distinct “identity-formation discourse.” Themes and objectives emphasised the need for participants to develop the desired attributes, energy, and managerial decisiveness and leadership skills. In the context of organisation of work process and expectations in NNPC, these behavioural attributes are deemed to be very critical for the future success of the corporation. In measuring these attributes, a number of mechanisms are used to tie “achievement-identity” to participants’ performance in the course of leadership development programme. For instance, they are expected to write a standard dissertation on a self-identified problem that related to their job-schedules from their project. They are also expected to make feasible recommendations to the management. Also, the exposure to NNPC operational facilities and activities are designed to increase participants’ sense of exposure and appreciation of diverse potentials and challenges of the corporation’s facilities and assets.

Various forms of the programme's content and presentations reinforce the processes of the programme in identity-construction for the participants. Participants who have climbed up their work career to the senior positions cadre have the potential of being selected for the programme. Once selected to participate, they are grouped into classes with "tags" that depict the normative expectations of the Management from the participants. For instance, Class 045 of the 2007 participants was tagged "the Dynamics", Class 046 was known as "the Restorers" and Class 047, was known as "the Hope" (Group Learning Department). From these "class identifications" and "tags", identity constructs emerged on which the normative expectations and effective performance also rested. The identity regulation and formation that emerged from this thus became the central tendency in shaping the participants' desired behaviours and experiences in the context of the work process, and leadership roles expected of them in the corporation.

At NNPC, programme participants' account of their experiences and orientation, taken all together, depict an identity of a dedicated and committed crop of would-be managers with promising careers in the corporation, with level of loyalty, and with an orientation to progress in their career within the corporation. Through their narratives, a sense of deep identification emerges with a considerable evidence of commitment to the goals of the corporation, conceptualised, as a "paternalistic benevolent" provider of opportunities for growth and development. Emerging from the management's learning and development programmes are two types of identity construction, one; "identity-work" constructed through anxiety and competition, but in which excellent performance is recognised and honoured. The outcome of such competition and excellent performance are managerial competences that promote alignment with goals of the corporation.

It is to be noted that the Management Learning and Development programme entails excellent performance as outcomes of the series of tests and examinations the participants have to go through. The structured content of the programme involving thesis writing (projects), leadership tests, and evaluation entails that the participants must excel with good grades. In addition, awards and prizes that are attached with excellent performance of participants' indicate the seriousness and commitment attached to the programme and its outcome on them. Types of Prizes and Awards include; the Group Managing Direc-

tor's prize for "best overall performance". And for each of the batches or classes, there are prizes and awards for whoever tops the class (Group Learning Department). Thus, like a training programme with its own stress and pressures, the participants go through all in order to produce the appropriate attributes needed for appropriate performance on the job.

As narrated by Ezieani (Group Learning Dept, CHQ, Abuja, Class 045) one of the participants for 2007 graduating Class 045, "I feel very happy, I feel highly elated because I've been repackaged and am poised for better future performance in this organisation...and I thank the Management of NNPC for giving us the opportunity to attend this programme." Another participant for Class 046, Susan (Finance and Accounts, CHQ Abuja) narrates her story in being grateful to the organisation thus; "I have to thank NNPC for giving us the opportunity to be part of this, and for a successful completion of the programme...It is a very interesting but challenging programme, and I believe all of us have been well equipped for the challenges ahead." A member of batch (class) 047, Uche (Group Public Relations Dept, CHQ, Abuja) also has this as his narrative and experiences of the training programme, "this is one of the greatest benefits a Chief Officer gets from NNPC";

It was a kind of 'Webberian interpretation' of an organisation that provides security, based on paternalistic attachment between the organisation and the employees. "The training is enough to build and prepare one within and outside the corporation" that is, providing life-long learning that could still be useful for life after retirement, "so we are grateful to the management of NNPC...it is one of the best things that every staff should be looking forward to," (batch (class) 047, 2007 of NNPC's Leadership and COMDP. This participant said further, "I will start by thanking God for the opportunity, and the management of NNPC, especially our GM who has encouraged me in all ramifications, I am also proud to say that I'm dedicating the prize to my division, because the division made me what I am today."

In their narratives of their experiences of the programme, it is evident and shown that the learning and development programmes of COMDP at NNPC aim to shape identity, and

influence the participants not only normatively towards the corporation, but also in what the corporation expects of them with such degree of purposefulness and commitment.

This evaluation has focused on the meanings which the participants give of their learning experiences as shown in their own narratives and “stories”, using Collinson’s (2003) two types of selves; “conformist” and “dramaturgical”. The narratives of the participants revealed the “micro-social process” encapsulated in normative expectation that shaped their identity and experiences. The micro-social processes involved in the discourse of the learning context, that is, the expectations and the desires of the participants; constructed the desired identity in terms of themselves and the management. They therefore enacted and reproduced this identity in fulfilment of their own normative expectations and that of the corporation. With their own agentic responses embedded and shaped by the training discourse practices, their identity enactment was “interactively related” and “co-constructed” in the management discursive practices of the training programme.

Thus, clearly demonstrated in the agentic attitudes and identity work of the “would-be managers” and “leaders of tomorrow” at NNPC”. Revealing attitudes of conformity were found in their own accounts and narratives. The identity formations of the learning participants were clearly consistent with the managerial assumptions of them as “would-be managers” of the corporation. Therefore, it became clear that their career progress as managers in the corporation became “closer to be loyal and committed corporate citizen” (Gagnon 2008:384). This type of identity-construction conforms to what Gagnon (2008:384) referred to as “work-on-self”, consisting of practices implying a transformation in “self” to one that complies with the required identity” by the corporation. However, in this very process of identity enactment, the transformed personality still enacted “required self” – which is an “outward expression of conformity” (Gagnon 2008:384) to that required by the corporation for its members.

As shown in the narratives of the participants, they actually demonstrated a “conforming self”; remarks and narratives of the participants demonstrating their experiences of the training programmes, and acceptance of the discourses and the practices in order to become accepted member of the Senior Officers and Management team of the corporation.

It is a demonstration of identity constructs both in terms of orientation, demeanour and daily practices at the workplace in order to “prove” self as committed member of the management team. In such identity enactment and self-construct, use of “program discourse” reflecting the very culture of the corporation was daily used to describe themselves in the eyes of other colleagues, one’s own behaviour and carriage, in satisfying the preferences of the Management. Shown in the narratives and accounts of the participants had been the keen desire to improve self not only for the purpose of career progress in the corporation, but indeed one’s life after the working careers. Such “paternal orientation” of the participants further reinforced the hold of the corporation’s identity management discourses on the workforce, especially those of the managerial cadre.

In NNPC, evidence of “conformity” has shown the outcome of the training programme in constructing the identity of the participant. Evidence of praises and exhortation of personal and career growth came out of their narratives. The identity construct is that of “self” as corporate citizen which is largely shaped by their perception of the training programme as benefiting and “careerism fitting” into the needs of the ‘would be’ managers to function effectively as “new” leaders of the corporation. Behavioural traits of “managers of tomorrow” for the corporation showed clear evidence of “dramaturgy” in identity, demonstration of managerial traits and sound corporate attitudes and actions.

Building on Collinson’s (2003) framework of conformist as analytical tool, the evaluation of participants experience and narrative of NNPC’s Management Development Programme influenced by the discourse practices and contexts of the training resulted in high level of conforming attitude and orientations in the Senior Officers who had been participating in the programme. Identification with the corporation of this cohort of employees was constructed on those bases. The micro-social process of conforming attitude induced by management “intellectual technology” of the training package led to the construction and reconstruction of “corporate citizen’s” orientation.

As noted by Gagnon (2008:388), in the attempt of management’s learning programmes to “homogenize” identity, its regulations are operated at two levels; its “discursive, and inter-subjective dimensions”. The two operate in interpenetration with the “discursive”

dimension being more “subtle and covert” in shaping the identity of the participants. Also, the workings of the two dimensions show the valence of “symbolic and material context and processes of workplace identity production,” (Gagnon 2008:389). Indeed, the manifestation of managerial identity construction mechanisms could be overt and covert with degree of “intensity” determined by the potency of the discursive practices behind the management learning programmes. For instance, conforming identity could be “confessional and introspective desire” (Gagnon 2008:389) on the part of the participants to demonstrate attitudes that are, in line with the management’s normative expectation. It also involves expressing opinions that “justify aims and principles behind management’s training programme”(Gagnon 2008:389). However, as argued by Gagnon (2008), discursive practices of management’s training programme and intents on the subjects should not be construed as “strait-jacket trajectory” in the process of identity construction. Like any other issue within the understanding of labour process analysis, and managerial control strategies, resistance is imminent. Thus, in a context of relative presence of material insecurity within the corporation, a more covert ability to “resist the symbolic and intersubjective pressures of discursive practices and expectation of the training programme may be observed” (Gagnon 2008:389).

In evaluating the “micro-social process” of management learning (regulating) programme through which identity is constructed by the Senior Staff at NNPC who had participated in the programme, evidence and findings gave strong weight to Alvesson and Willmott’s (2002) model, and Collinson’s (2003) “conformity selves.” Participant’s responses and experiences of training programme demonstrated clearly how conforming identity was enacted in justifying the objectives and goals of the training programmes. However, and in contrast to other studies on identity construction for example, Ibara’s (1999) “socialization thesis” of career transition “that tend to limit consideration of insecurity”(cited in Gagnon 2008:389)identity work is indeed constrained by “structural and material insecurity as well as symbolic insecurity embedded in the particular context of the workplace”(Gagnon 2008:390).There is, therefore, evidence of not only a broader asymmetrical power relation in the corporation, but also the covert resistance to the “totalising assumptions” of management’s training programmes on the participants. In other words, construction of identity and possibility of resistance which material or symbolic insecurity

ty may engender are “fused in different and multiple ways” (Gagnon 2008:390) thereby bringing different forms of conforming practices and resistance, located in the particular context of the workplace. Workers’ identity construction shaped by the “subjectivity” and “insecurity” in the context of a workplace will reveal multiple forms and dimensions of workers’ experiences and orientation to management identity construction devices,

Elaborating on the conceptual model of “actor-network” (ANT) and “Intellectual technology” of the self, Edwards (2003) maintains that the discourse of learning in the workplace be conceptualised as management’s intellectual project through which the “ordering of socialites are built into the workplace” (Edwards 2003:2), In other words, management learning agenda is essentially a process of “mobilization” through which “designed conducts” of the learners are produced. The intention is to ensure identity alignments with the “efficient rationality” assumption of the corporation. Mobilization of processes and “content value” of training into learning objective are underpinned with “socio-rhetorical” work that shapes the identity of the participants. Thus, in the context of management’s learning programme, there exists interplay of “power being exercised at a distance in shaping the subjective orientation of the participants” (Edwards 2000:1)

From the management’s perspective, training provision tied with employability of the learner is conceptualised as a process of “socialization”, “ordering” the subjective orientation of the participants to develop the “self” that is congruent with the employment situations of the organisation (Edwards 2003). Indeed, as noted by Rose (1998 in Edwards 2003:2) “the learning subject is positioned in a particular way, to be autonomous, flexible, enterprising and empowered” within the employment relations. And the learning contents are designed in such a way for the participants to develop a “self” that makes them develop a sense of autonomy, self-direction and alignment in skills for their own career progression and as “disciplined workers” in the corporation. Demonstrating this type of disciplined worker orientation, a participant in Class 047 of Chief Officers’ Management Development programme at NNPC remarked, “we can only show appreciation to management for the huge resources sunk into the programme by ensuring that we maintain a common line of alignment with the strategic business objectives of the corporation” (Participant, Class 047 COMDP).

In the enactment of self within the “intellectual technology” of self development, the “socialisation process” is expected to align the individual participant in an “action-network” process with the goals and objectives of the corporation. In this way, participants and the corporation in the specific locale social-process of the NNPC are “brought together in approximate symbiotic relations” (Edwards, 2003:2) However, such actor-network relations are not unmediated. They are invested with multiple and shifting meanings, tensions and ambiguities. Within the disciplinary-identity construction process of the learning programme, expected attributes such as flexibility, autonomy and self-direction “become ontological conditions for successful participation”(Edwards 2003:5)as corporate citizen of the corporation. There is, therefore, a “re-ordering” of agentic role through which participants work on themselves in “conducting their conduct” in the corporation. In this regard, participants are expected to cultivate and mobilize “ethos” of the corporation in shaping their worth and values to the corporation. These expectant values and orientations are aptly demonstrated by the participants of the Chief Officer Training programme at NNPC. Their experiences and responses to the learning programme were shown in that direction. In their “conduct of conduct” shaped through the gaze of intellectual technology of management’s learning programme, the middle-level managers and senior officers were exposed to ethos, and norms in which taking responsibility and challenges for the success of the corporation became part of the individual “biographical formation” in the corporation. Here, as observed by du Gay (1996; Rose 1998 in Edwards 2003:6) “the entire discourse on jobs and careers are shaped and conducted round, not only of economy man; an enterprising individual but also work process self-identity with subjective attachment.”

Learning therefore has become, from the management point of view “a central technology”, fulfilling what would-be Managers strive to become; self-directing, flexibly and enterprising in becoming Managers of the corporation. Embedded in this “transformational intention” of the intellectual technology of learning is the need of the middle-level managers to view their on-going employability as being tied to the improved performance of the corporation. This, they do through “work on self”, and enacting identity in tune with management’s cultural attributes and expectations. Thus, in its prescriptive constructs, the discourse of management learning programme in NNPC is deepening and multi-

dimensional, serving as reference point for the would-be-manager to build himself up as a “new” corporate man who has to “be ceaseless” in his instrumental calculations in being relevant to the corporation, and also investing in himself through “training, retraining, skilling and re-skilling, enhancement of credentials and preparation for a life of continuous socio-economic capitalisation of the self”(Rose, 1999 in Edwards 2003:7). Through this identity construct, central values and norms of the success of the corporation are imbibed and rehashed, and around which “coalitions” for the sustenance of the corporation are mobilized (Edwards 2003). Participants and would-be managers’ identity are mobilized around these central themes, “intertwined” in producing the corporate identity of the learners.

In teasing Edward (2003) line of argument further, and drawing on Foucault’s (1985), and Rose’s (1996) conceptual approach to learning and action-network (ANT), a qualifying note is made for researchers not to assume a “generalising and totalising” tendency of this model. Sounding this note of warning, Edwards, (2003:7) notes “participants desire to mobilize self, and in acting on management’s scripts does not necessarily manifest its straightforward in social practices, which tend to be messier than what the discourse may prescribe.” Our evaluation of participants’ narratives and responses to discourse attached to management training programme at NNPC have shown multi-dimensional levels; indicating at one level the need on the part of the participant to adopt to managerial learning expectations and requirements in order to “fit” into the corporation, and at another level have shown insecurity and anxiety embedded in the material existence of the corporation. This is more immanent in the context of uncertainties and competitive environment in which the corporation has had to operate in recent years. The uncertainty and expectations which this has indicated for the issues of employability and job security at one level also show their identity-construct and their agentic response to managerial learning programme. This, therefore, indicates that identity enactment of training programme is not a “taken for granted” outcome. It is shifting and multi-dimensional and ambiguous in response to the “micro-social health” of the corporation. How the fluidity of the patterns, in certain circumstances, act in coherence or contradiction, of managerial discourse and practices are context-determined.

Also, the fluidity and multi-dimensional implications of managerial learning could be analysed at two levels; one, while the expectations could act as mobilization of the participants to be able to position themselves as active participant in the corporation, it could also fulfil all other expectations even outside the corporation, and needs of the participants that are not workplace related, Thus, as remarked by Edwards (2003:9), “there are diverse and denser set of networks through which the participants’ interests are fulfilled; actor-networks are fluid and are shaped by the practices of the translation brought in by the participants to explain and account for the several points within the networks.” From this Webberian sociological interpretation, therefore, workplace learning and management learning programme are conceptualised as collaborative arrangement in which, while the participant’s identity is shaped by the managerial prescripts, he equally takes rational, calculative and instrumental attitude to the learning programmes and the outcomes. In this way, participant’s responses and experiences become nuanced within the social process and dense networks that patterned his needs and expectations both inside the workplace and outside. In other words, in the realities of social process of workplace relations, there is a “double-position” in which the participant is positioned; both a “subjectivized individual” and on the other hand in his own agentic power and ability. Participation of the would-be-managers in work related activities after learning programme is influenced by his agentic power to “constitute and reconstitute” his identity reflexively, thereby transforming the patterns of his network relations in the performance of his work roles. These network-relations in the performance of jobs, based on “newly” acquired skill and knowledge are not “for given”. They are “negotiated” and “contested” network social relations between workplace expectations and the individual “subjective orientation”. This “inter-subjectivity” with the workplace roles and performance, and non-workplace roles are mutually embedded by overlapping and of continuous process.

Indeed, as observed by Billett et al (2005), it is in this overlapping and continuous process that the learner’s participants are caught up in the contradictory concern of what value is in their newly acquired competency and to what extent can it support them for the rest of their working life. In other words as “maturation processes” of working life catch up with them, they are concerned with how relevant they could still be in the corporation. And in order to maintain a balance of their “sense and worth” in the corporation, they

need to “engage agentially with their working life”(Billet et al 2005:1) and the challenges it brings to them. Part of the challenges the participants may face is how to maintain a healthy balance between a perceived and likely “redundancy of their existing expertise”(Billet 2005:1), as this may have become obsolete in their performance of work. The concern may also be on; how to bring in new “competency and capabilities” as emerging challenges of work processes demand. Thus, their “agentic balance” and subjectivity have to maintain in congruence with their “mobilization, engagement and intentionality” (Billet et al 2005:1) otherwise there could be a threat to their perception of self worth and identity in the workplace. As noted further by Billet et al (2005), what drives the motivation and intention to learn within the organisation are also mediated by the social processes of the organisation itself. Located within this mediation processes in shaping the self and self-identity are the measures of personal agency brought in by participants. Thus, the agentic involvement of the participant helps to evaluate not only his competence, but also his continuous relevance and worth within the corporation.

Participants’ evaluation of their competence and its relevance is at one end the “product”, and at the other end “contributes” to continuous development of sense of worth and identity in the corporation (Billet et al 2005). The enactment of agency around this self-conceptualisation “contributes to personal epistemology or biography based on critical reflection”(Van Woerkom 2003 cited in Billett et al 2005:2). As noted by Billett et al (2003:2), central to the mobilization of this agentic resource are the availability of “cultural and social resources that serve as reference points” for the participants. In other words, the “affordances” provided by the social-cultural milieu of the workplace become important resources in shaping their subjectivity and identification with the corporation. In this process of mobilizing their agentic resource to make sense of the overlapping and shifting expectations within the workplace, both in terms of jobs and non-job demands, they continuously engage in self-reflection of their past experiences(carrier wise), and future relevance in the corporation. Indeed, while the emerging challenges of demands in the work process may involve making decisions on need to “up-grade competence” on the part of the participants in the face of “erosions of existing knowledge and need to re-establish their competences”(Billet 2005:3) such decisions are reflectively made in the circumstances of their career position in the corporation.

From evaluation of my findings, selection and participation in NNPCs Chief Officers' Management Development Programme and the Leadership Development are primarily meant for the Officers promoted to the Seniors Officers Cadre. Many of the nominated Officers that participated in the 2007 edition of the programme, and who were grouped into Classes 045, 046 and 047 of 2007 programme have, on average, come close to age 45-55. For many of the Officers who are in the last decade of their career in the corporation, the implications are multi-dimensional requiring "critical" and "reflexive thinking" on their future relevance and career growth in the NNPC. Indeed, some of these reflections would have to do with concern on their "career plateauing" in the corporation. Promotion prospects, competency relevance and, even greater concern would have to do with the implications or relevance of their "skills" in retirement. Thus, apart from being able to reflect on their worth to the corporation in terms of competence and contribution, as they are reaching their "career plateaus", the Senior Officers who constitute the cohort of the learning group were also concerned with what became of them after retirement. Also the agentic exercise and application in their reflective thinking and perception, was equally influenced by the corporation being "invitational", or being seen as "contested environment" where they see support or lack of it, in their maturation process in the corporation (Billet 2005).

Thus the institutional dimension of the workplace social processes, expected to be seen as full of opportunities and positive interactions of the social practices tend to reinforce a "positive agentic" disposition in this maturation process within the organisation (Billett2005). Also, the level and degree of acceptance, and perceiving the "social collective" of their colleagues as "positive" or favourable influence agentic disposition in their maturation process in the corporation. Further, in moment of immanent unemployment such as situations of job insecurity and redundancy, it is their ability to mobilize personal agency, (Festener et al 2004), and personal epistemology Smith (2004 cited in Billet 2005:6), that "provide the ability to maintain positive self-identification with self and the organisation." As noted by Billett (2005:6) when workers are faced with "complex and contradictory" mix that facilitate or inhibit their self-identity in the workplace, it is their ability to positively engage agentic resources in positioning themselves against all odds.

For participants of the COMDP, therefore, as maturation processes both in terms of career and age catch up with them in the corporation, it is their agentic resource both in terms of social processes of relations and practices they need to mobilize in order to maintain the delicate balance which otherwise might threaten their “self” and “self-perception” of the corporation. It is their “critical reflection in biography and self-epistemic” that determine how they situate themselves in the corporation as they get more matured,” (Van Woerkom, 2003, cited in Billett 2005:6). Thus in the prevailing circumstances of the corporation, and in which they found themselves they could be more concerned with the relevance of the corporation in shaping their identity through learning and skill\knowledge building, or on the other hand could be more concerned with their “selves-worth” to themselves after retirement.

While engaging with the shifting and ambivalence circumstances of themselves and the corporation, the would-be-managers will ,therefore, from their agentic point of view have to be “purposeful and critical” for them to maintain the needed balance and self-identity. As remarked by Patrickson and Ranzjin (2004 in Billett 2005:6), it is the “individual’s gaze and subjectivities”, shaped by the social processes of work and non-workplace elements that construct and remake them in their maturation process.” “Managers of tomorrow” construction of self-worth and “effortful contributions” in the corporation is embodied in their agency which does remake their identity after working life. To Billett (2005:7), therefore, “older workers’ agency and intentionality stands as key elements” in moderating positively or negatively the ageing and career maturation process in the “contested” and “differentiated levels” of the corporation. Also, it is this agentic response that sustains, in particular their “competency through processes of negotiating self, purposes and self-worth in their working life” (Billett et al 2005:7). However, and no matter how this self-worth and purposes are shaped by agentic responses, they are still “vulnerable” to the multiple and shifting circumstances of workplace and non-workplace social processes. In other words, the “messiness of everyday” work life of the workers, and indeed the emerging dimensions of modern workplaces have made the “rationalistic” conceptualisation of agentic responses of workers in their epistemic calculations unrealistic, (Billett: 2005). Apprehensions do indeed exist among the older workers who were participants of the “Workplace Learning” at NNPC. If it is appreciated that the very process of

agentic responses are “embedded in the frame of reference of individual’s internalisation”(Billett 2005:7) or being “socialised” in the social process and relations of workplace, such agentic formation and socialisation are still shaped by the power dynamics of the labour process. The agentic responses and subjectivity are “both socially and contextually embedded, and the process is ever political and ideologically shaped” (Kemmis 1985 in Billett 2005:7).

In the NNPC, the Senior Staff in the middle-age cohort that were enlisted and participated in the Chief Officers’ Management Development programme appeared to have been caught up in the “ambiguous web” of what the corporation is meant for them as their “maturation processes” and work career is drawn up. They are also concerned with the worth of their competence and skill requirement by the corporation as there is growing body of young graduates being recruited and trained by the corporation. The “fear of unknown”, of what the situation is like “outside there” has also been identified as a strong factor shaping their self-worth and agentic composition. In spite of the management’s rhetoric surrounding learning and the normative orientations of going to be leaders of tomorrow in the corporation, the realities of multiple form of uncertainty both inside and outside the work still confront them. In their daily life within the corporation, and within their remaining years in the corporation, their concern seem to be on how to “re-orient” their self-identity and worth towards challenges and opportunities that might likely confront them after retirement. While it could be a hopeful expectation for this category of senior workers to rely on managements rhetoric’s concerning their self-worth to the corporation, the brute realities of being the “ageing cohort” of the workforce confront them with diverse and multiple implications, not only on their work career but also life after work-life.

In McGovern, et al (1998:457),in their analysis of case studies of British based corporate organisations, that underwent some organisational restructuring, incidences of transformational changes found them to be associated with “erosion and decline in the traditional patterns of employment characterised by job insecurity, fewer opportunities for upward mobility and greater emphasis on lateral career moves, particularly for those older than fifty years. Evidence also showed in their findings of decline of the internal promotion of

middle managers. McGovern et al's (1998), characterisations and analysis resonates with the evaluation contained in this study where in a context of the NNPCs long drawn transformation agenda of regulatory framework described in Chapter 4, with implications on labour process, palpable perception exists among this cohort. Indeed the old belief in secured job with career progressions and traditional assumptions surrounding work-life career pattern within the corporation, is increasingly being threatened by the on-going transformation and organisation of production process. Indeed, much of the outcome of workplace transformation in the NNPC has led to the emergence of "delaying" or "flattening of structure" with greater implications on the employees of Senior Cadre especially the middle-level manager perception of career patterns in the corporation. The transformation has given new and distinct dimensions to the internal labour markets and middle-level management career patterns, and therefore implications for the orientation and experiences for them.

The concern of this section of the Chapter has therefore been on the evaluation of "middle-level managers" perception and experiences of what remain of internal labour market within the corporation, shaped largely by what we may now refer to as NNPCs "career management system". This evaluation is done against the backdrop of managerial discourses and practices that surround the institutional framework and deployment of learning and training programmes in the NNPC. In the face of ongoing transformation (regulatory framework) in NNPC in terms of managerial practices and employment relations, the implicit assumptions underlying "loyalty-career relations" or a kind of "social contract" between management and the workers seem to be receding. In other words, the conventional assumptions and understanding that employment contract are implicit with job security, career progression and incremental employment benefits even after retirement, with career opportunities are gradually being eroded. In the traditional employment relations, "job security was assured, and career paths well laid out and defined" (Rosenbam 1984 in McGovern et al 1998:458). This has been the prevailing practice and assumptions behind employment contract in NNPC. While the core values of such "implicit loyalty-career" relations between management and workers have been commented upon by some authors such as Blauner 1964; and Dore (1973 cited in McGovern et al 1998:458), as accepted ways through which social integration can be generated and sustained in the

workplace, emerging dynamics and challenges seem to be eroding this assumption. The implicit old employment contract on career structure and assurance as mechanics for sustaining the motivational interests of the employees is declining in the face of emerging challenges facing work organisations (McGovern et al 1998).

Consequently, the processes of workplace transformation as responses to the emerging challenges have meant a lot of implications on these old implicit assumptions and implied terms in employment relations such as “job security” and “career progression”. As observed by Savage et al (1992 cited in McGovern et al 1998:459), these changes and what it implies in terms of employment situations for workers have involved a “decline of internally secured process of career progression for the middle-level managers.” In other words, the realities and implications for the middle-level managers have been a decline in “managerial job security and the prospects for upward mobility along established hierarchical structure of the organisations” (McGovern et al 1998:459). Research and studies carried out by Brown and Sease (1994); Rajan (1997); Wheatley (1992); and Lockwood et al (1992), indicate that as a result of workplace re-organisation and restructuring, adaptive mechanisms are continuously being put in place which tends to alter career structure, and assumption behind job security and workplace employability. Contained in their analysis, has been how the middle-level managers managed their career path, especially in the context of flatter organisational structure(Lockwood et al 1992 cited in McGovern et al 1998:459).Also as noted by Lockwood et al (1992), a similar concern for the middle-level managers was on, how to manage their career path, “especially in relation to future training and promotion opportunities” (in McGovern et al 1998:459).In a similar way for understanding how model of managerial employment adapt to workplace restructuring, Kanter (1989), argues on the basis of his analysis of case studies that “bureaucratic-corporate assumptions about a steady, long-term rise up a hierarchy of ever more lucrative jobs would give way to new realities and new expectations” (in McGovern et al 1998:459). Impliedly, and in response to these new realities, “middle-level managers will now be pre-occupied with “hopping” between organisations rather than on climbing up through the ladder of a specific organisation” (McGovern, et al 1989:460).

In surviving the emerging realities, middle-level managers will need to mobilize more of their agentic responses and capabilities to “give shape” to their identity in relation to the challenges in their career, promotions and employability in the workplace. In accounting for what workplace re-structuring has implied for work and non-work experiences of managerial employees, middle-level managers and professionals, Heckscher’s (1995), argues that, it has implied a steady decline of positive orientation for this category of the workforce in the organisation he studied. With an awareness of the harsh realities of re-structuring on their employment, the middle-level managers concluded that “things would not settle down, and return to normal”, (Heckschers 1995 in McGovern et al 1999:460). In this circumstance, “expectation of life-time security and unquestioning loyalty had been mostly abandoned” (McGovern et al 1998:460). In the emerging realities, middle-level managers’ orientation is characterised by task-focus, policy directed, and work to rules. A sense of “professional orientation seems to replace a long term commitment to the organisation” (McGovern et al 1998:460.) A delicate balance, therefore, exists between professional orientation and loyalty to the organisation. The agentic concern of the middle-level managers and their sense of work identity are, therefore, expected to be dominated more by “professional challenge and career progression than a strong commitment to the organisation” (McGovern et al 1998:460). The overall implication as described by Heckscher (1995), of this subjective orientation is a “delicate balance in a general community of purpose,” (cited in McGovern 1999:460).

These two models utilized for understanding the general orientation and perspectives of middle-level managers in a context of workplace re-organisation including management learning programmes, that is, “decline of loyalty” to the internal managerial employment relations, and “professional orientation” model (McGovern 1999), account for the empirical observation and evaluation of managers and participants’ experience of NNPC’s learning programme as their agentic identity after the learning sessions. Beyond their apparent appreciation and applause of the management’s initiated learning programmes as contained in their remarks, as described earlier in the Chapter, concerns still remain of the realities of the corporation’s managerial practices as relate to issues such as job security, career structures and prospects, and how to maintain a good balance between all this and after-work life expectations. Inevitable changes in the internal labour market as occa-

sioned by managerial practices and employment relations issues as outcome of “unbundling exercise” are bound to raise significant concerns and implications to the middle-level managers’ self-identity at work as they are reaching the maturation age in the corporation. At NNPC, the new patterns of employment relations and practices, driven by managerial strategies as influenced by challenges of production and work processes are underpinned by policies relating to training and development, on the one hand, and the need for the corporation to reposition itself. This is bound to have a “ripple effect” on the career management of the middle-level managers’ experience, as it will also shape their workplace identity. Perceptions of changes in old career paths and line of advancement, and job security, therefore, have significant implications on how they now view their self-worth and self identity in the corporation.

Adoption of qualitative and interpretive approach in this evaluation of perception and responses allow for the reflexive examination of expressions of middle-level managers concerning their attitude and orientation towards learning programmes in the corporation. It gives a critical evaluation of the view of this category or cohort of workers; their experiences of the implementation of career structures and normative expectations behind it. No doubt, NNPC remains one of the leading corporations in Nigeria with exemplary practices in the management of career programmes for their workers. This leading position also counts in the workers’ perception and experiences of the corporation as “best place” to work. Nevertheless, emerging managerial practices and challenges in terms of the operating environment and evolving patterns in work processes are beginning to have implications on the workers’ assessment of the corporation. In particular as these ‘innovative’ practices are bound to affect their career and expectations in the corporation. While the implicit assumptions behind managerial introduced training and learning programmes aim at ensuring the employability of the participants, in terms of enhancing their skills combined with competency in the corporation, the concerns of the middle-level managers remain how to retain their employment, career growth and job security even in the face of these assumptions. Concerns about job security and fear of what might become of them in the context of on-going transformation still remain with this category as they reach their career plateau in the corporation. An implied theme of their responses

has been the concern about their future, and indeed their employability even after their tenure in the corporation.

It is obvious therefore that in the context of the current restructuring in the NNPC, there is implicit orientation held by the middle level managers of their fate in the corporation, particularly in relation to their tenure and career prospects. More significantly, since many of those who fall into this category are in their mid-fifties, and have spent more than half of their statutory tenure in the corporation, their concern is well founded. There remains a shared feeling of limited prospect of further promotion after a few years on their present position in the corporation. The palpable feeling of job insecurity and limited prospect of further promotion, in spite of their training and capacity building is now manifesting in contrast against the background of old traditions of NNPC being a provider of life-long employment. While to a certain extent, NNPC in the view of many of the workers still remains the “paternal” provider of “job-for-life”, emerging pessimisms and changes in this perspective are evident in view of the inevitable transformation the corporation had to undergo in recent times.

As remarked by one of the class 047 participants of the management training programme on issues of career prospect and job security in the organisation “before now, we used to have confidence in NNPC as permanent job provider, that expectation is going away.” He remarked further, “we have witnessed cases of retrenchment in the past, and we don’t know what is going to happen after this so called “unbundling” exercise.” Impliedly, the concern is there, even among the middle-level managers. For this age cohort who had put in 15-25 years in the service of the corporation, and who had just been promoted into middle-level management position, the feeling of gradually reaching career plateau is well founded.

Indeed, a combination of evolving managerial practices, such as recruitment and training of younger graduates into the corporation in recent years may have contributed to the feeling of insecurity among the middle-level managers, with a perceptive orientation of early retirement in the new dispensation. The feeling of insecurity and what the future holds for them within corporation is palpable from “unwritten rules” concerning early

retirement. These perceptive feelings and orientation were more implicit, deduced as unwritten rules rather than explicitly stated in the corporation's managerial practices even in the area of learning and development programme. Perceptions of implications on job security, career paths and prospects were well founded. Constant themes found in the illustrative evidence of the respondents' narratives are concerns for job security and prospect for promotions in the corporation. In particular, there seemed to be larger implications of these concerns for middle-level managers. Indeed, these concerns are well founded against the background of the traditional views of the NNPC as provider of life-long employment, in the context of paternalistic assumptions workers hold of the corporation in Nigeria. Even in the context of the ever evolving regulatory framework the NNPC has to operate as part of transformation and unbundling strategies, the assumption will still exist concerning the corporation providing jobs-for-life for Nigerian citizens.

However, with many of these middle-level managers having worked for more than one and half decades in the corporation, combination of factors embedded in the restructuring programmes have started to make them develop anxiety over early retirements as they arrive at the career plateau. Indeed, a major implication and outcome of transformation at NNPC had been the "flattening" of the structure of the corporation. With the creation of various subsidiaries and business units of the corporation, there have been a shift and adjustment in the career structures and prospects for the middle-level managers with less enthusiasm over its consequences and implications. Evidence has indicated a "delayed" managerial ladder with lateral moves rather than upward mobility. As a result of this, and the corporate-wide restructuring, a middle-level manager could be transferred or re-deployed to another lateral position in any of the subsidiaries or refineries of the corporation. In other words, the processes of restructuring brought with it layering of managerial positions with less emphasis on upward mobility even after having been "qualified" upon successful completion of the Senior Officers' and Management Development Programme. Even though management's emphasis on training and leadership development as essential route towards attaining the objectives of the corporation, middle-level managers perceived a limited prospect for upwards mobility, with "flattened", lateral promotion and deployment as part of emerging managerial practices. Consequently, management at NNPC implicitly seems to be promoting the idea of horizontal steps and move-

ment in which people of managerial cadre are moved horizontally to other refineries and subsidiaries. “Career management”, in NNPC, arising from re-organisation and transformation reflects a move away from traditional hierarchical career progression towards a “flexible type” that offers flexibility in terms of career growth and movement.

Clearly, there were traits and tendencies of pessimism and uncertainty regarding the “lateral movement” in the corporation. In many of their remarks, some of the middle-level managers painted the picture of their career being characterised by lateral movement rather than vertical promotion “management expectation seem to be reflecting in the transfer and promotion exercises” (Participant in Class 047 of COMDP), “ with new rules concerning the appraisal system we are no more enjoying the automatic promotion, and also you need to acquire new skills and training before moving to another career point” (Class 046 member).

The implication of these responses is such that the middle-level managers and indeed all other employees have to acquire a “new identity” in adapting to emerging culture of lateral movement rather than upward growth as a consequence of workplace transformation. To the middle-level managers, observations show that a move that is not upward is not perceived as positive one. Impliedly, concern for career growth along traditional career path will remain a contested issue shaping the identity and agentic orientation of the concerned workers. Indeed, in the present circumstance of on-going transformation and restructuring at NNPC, emerging tendency amongst the middle-level managers that had undergone the training and leadership development programme had been an orientation reflecting a cautious and instrumental attachment to the corporation.

This evaluation is in line with Seases and Goffees 1989; and Kanter 1989; where both argued that “middle and junior managers have a tendency of declining levels of organisational commitment when they perceive a declining career progression” (cited in McGovern et al 1998:471). In the wake of restructuring and transformation at NNPC, and as against old traditional assumptions of “job-for-life” and its hierarchical movement, this is gradually being replaced by “training for employability” and not promotion in the corpo-

ration. At NNPC, the traditional career management has been replaced by training and skill formation for employability.

My evaluations of middle-level manager's experience and orientation also resonate with Newell and Dopson's (1996) analysis that in a context of workplace restructuring, middle-level managers often perceive lack of career growth as a "breach of social contract with the organisation" (Newell and Dopson 1996:4). In other words, in a context of transformation, in response to competitive challenges, and in which the corporation might not be able to assure employment for life, this might present a "pessimistic future and loyalty for the middle-level managers" (Newell and Dopson 1996:4). In Newell and Dopson's (1996) analysis, two major strands of approaches explain the understanding of middle-level manager orientation and perception of career management in a context of workplace transformation; one, "the problem of promotion opportunities confront this category of employees in a context of flatter organisational hierarchies" (Newell and Dopson 1996:6). A shift of managerial career management system from "model of narrow upwards mobility where employees automatically made their way up through routine promotion exercise" (Newell and Dopson 1996:6) to one of horizontal movements with few or no promotion points, is bound to create anxiety for this category of workers.

Writing on how adult workers perceived their own, and that of organisation's "investment on their own work-life", Bartolome and Evans (1979 cited in Newell and Dopson 1996:9) had argued that "middle level managers were dissatisfied with the way they were investing their time and resources on professional growth, rather than their private lives." In the prevailing circumstance in the NNPC, it is expected that competing loyalties will come from both workplace and outside the workplace commitments, thereby having implications on how they perceive the management of their career. In these circumstances, ambivalence, shifting loyalty and commitment are bound to shape their agentic orientation and attitudes. And as noted in Herriot (1992) the reality of organisational practices shape identity formation of middle managers towards career management "as organisations are in the midst of profound business changes of the present decades, with their headlong rush into business future...has shattered whatever remains of social contract the employees may have" (cited in Newell and Dopson 1996:9).

7.6. Conclusion

This Chapter of the study has shown that in a context of organisational transformation, there will exist a process of “negotiation” and “renegotiation” of individual workers’ orientation as a way of coping with the challenges, and “balancing organisational and individual needs” (Newell and Dopson 1996:9). The analytical model presented here explains the on-going perception and concerns of middle-level managers of NNPC to changes and experiences in relation to their job security, career management arising from implications of on-going transformation process in the corporation. Of particular relevance here, therefore, are the experiences and orientation of middle-level managers to career management, skills development strategies and how they are able to construct their identity and agentic response around all these managerial initiatives. Constituting part of this feeling and in response to their situation is an experience of dissonance, and being “muddled” in the “middle” of their career in the corporation. Even though they still acknowledge the perception that NNPC remains one of the best paying organisations in the industry in Nigeria, the prevailing feeling of job insecurity is perceptible. In a sense, what now exists amongst the middle-level manager is a feeling of “instrumental commitment”.

At NNPC, an important dimension that in turn constitutes part of career management is the adoption and use of Experienced Hires to complement skill formation and managerial cohort within the corporation. In the current career management programme at NNPC Experienced Hires are Senior Professionals with long years of expertise experience recruited and trained to assist in the mentoring and providing managerial leadership to young and middle-level managers “who would successfully drive the future of the corporation” (GM, Group Learning Department). While this remains part of discursive practice within NNPC managerial initiatives, middle-level managers’ interpretations and responses also form part of their orientations towards career managements in the corporation.

At NNPC, examples of a recent cross-functional re-deployment of Officers of Management’s cadre included the following; GM, Pension and Gratuity re-deployed to SBU Pensions Fund Ltd; Manager; Treasury PPMC to Corporate Hgts/Audit; GM, Minister’s Office to Corporate Hgt; Manager Plant Performance Monitoring Corp Hgts to R & D Corp

Hgts. Major retirement exercises have also affected those in the following positions; GGM(GHR), GGM(Greenfield), Refineries, Project, GGM(Retail), GGGM(Marketing) GM(Retail) GM(JVNAPIMS) MG(GAS) NAPIMS) GM(Downstream(NNPC2008) 2009). As noted in the directives concerning this retirement, “the on-going changes are in response to the enormous challenges of survival and growth of the NNPC” (NNPC 2008). The implication of this for the workers, generally, and for those in the middle and at the top of their career in the NNPC are the palpable feeling of early retirement in the context of NNPC transformation programme. .

Since 1998, NNPC had been embarking on series of continuous process of transformation and restructuring in the attempt to make the corporation operate effectively as a commercial oriented enterprise within the oil industry. Underlying these changes have also been major changes in managerial policies and practices affecting the employment relations in the corporation. Towards the end of the decade 2000’s, there have been adjustments in the overall structure of managerial practices and employment relations characterised by “cost-cutting” exercising impacting on the workforce. Apart from the extensive restructuring of the entity into several Subsidiary Business Units(SBU), and “flattening” of managerial structures, there have been accompanying adjustments in the workforce composition. An important element of transformation at NNPC had been the “unbundling” exercise involving delayering of management structure; the aim being to make the corporation more responsive to the challenges of the operating environment.

In outlining the broad rationale behind the transformation exercise at NNPC, the Group Managing Director of NNPC(GMD, NNPC) in an address to the participants of Class 046, 047 and 048 of COMDP, had remarked, “the evolving transformation exercise we are embarking on requires the right people that can align with the business processes.” It needs the “transformation of our organisation culture...changing our past and current practices into a new one that is compactable to product market challenges requires this.” He continued, “We have no choice in the matter, we cannot continue in the old ways and expect a different outcome from one, we are currently on”, (NNPC 2008). Noted in the management’s position, “the challenge of change has become inevitable” no one could have predicted the fate of the government agency a few years ago...a national champion

(like NNPC) could very easily become irrelevant to the economic life of a nation” (GMD, NNPC, 2008). Underlying the GMD’s statement therefore remain the normative expectations from managers in the corporation in which a great deal of effort is required of them in leading the change process. In the context of the transformation process, “NNPC is expected to operate as a commercial organisation so as to reach the full potential, and also to meet the expectations of the Nigerian government.” In this respect therefore, “a new organisational culture is vital to do the reform agenda, since it fosters employee development, and encourages them to maximally impact on the organisation” (GMD, NNPC, 2008). Thus, in trying to reshape its corporate culture into a commercial orientated type, competency development programmes have been identified as change agent.

Accordingly, and as part of competency development programmes, career paths have been developed along structured and functional basis related to, not only the needs and challenges of the corporation, but also as important development in aligning the skill formation of the employees to challenges in the oil industry, with which the corporation have to contend. Defining the managerial drive and practices, therefore, has been the introduction of institutional structure and practices of training and learning programmes of which the COMP remains an important component.

Chapter 8

Institutional Framework for Interest Mediation in NNPC

8.1. Introduction

In the preceding Chapters, the tensions between the diverse forms of managerial hegemonic practices, and the responses of the workers even in their representational forms by trade unions were examined and evaluated. The analysis and evaluation had been located, and guided by the thematic themes and strands within the “third-wave” labour process conceptualization. These strands and perspectives tend to mediate the mainstream discourse of managerialist labour process understanding. It was argued that both the workers’ experiences, and indeed the labour process dimensions and implications of emergent managerial initiatives in the contemporary workplaces go beyond “one-sided” managerial understanding, and in what extant literature put forward as normative benefits to both management and the workers. Workplace Labour-Management relations are mediated by “ambivalent” social processes through which workers and unions are able to articulate their consciousness and agentic subjectivity in response to workplace power relations. Workplace relations and workers’ experience that came out as outcome of managerial practices on work and production processes incorporate the mediating influences of workplace and extra-workplace social processes in the manifestation of workers’ agentic responses.

In what follows here, the articulation of workers’ orientation and indeed the trade unions’ positions and activities within the context of institutional framework and processes of interest mediation in NNPC are analysed and evaluated. Institutional structures and processes for interest mediations, and efforts bargaining in NNPC; such as the hierarchy of Industrial Relations structure, comprising the Branch trade unions and the management, the National Joint Consultative Councils (NJCC) and other frameworks for social partnership are empirically analysed in terms of functions and processes, and their outcomes or benefits examined in light of emerging conceptual approaches. Work process, and the process of production especially at the process plant levels are increasingly characterised

and shaped by the institutional processes of production negotiations and its outcomes between the labour and management, with diverse implications on the workers and institutional roles and activities of the trade unions.

8.2 Process of Joint Consultation in NNPC: models for evaluation

In response to heightened competitive processes, labour and management relation in the workplace have acquired a new dimension and prominence in terms of industrial relations practices and institutional processes for coping with the emerging challenges. Much of these challenges have focused on how to evolve a “working together” that takes care of the processes and outcomes of work processes and the need to realign the interest of the workers. Consequently, formal processes of co-operation became institutionalised within the established framework of work relations among workers, unions and employers and this have assumed a prominence in the workplace relations in the NNPC. Indeed, evidence of different forms of partnership on lean production, Kochan, Lansbury and MacDuffie (1997), high-performance work systems Appelbaum, et al (2000), and social partnership agreement Guest and Peccei (2001), point to a new dimension of institutional processes and framework of collective bargaining and industrial relations in the context of workplace re-organisation (cited in John Kelly 2004:267). Impact and implications of new forms of co-operative working relations on the employees’ working lives have also been examined by Babson (1995), the implications for trade unions and activities, (Kelly 1996, 1998 and 2004). These diverse analyses provide a review of evidence that provides understanding of processes and outcomes of partnership relations and agreements, and their implications on workers’ and trade union activities. In the context of workplace relations, both workers and union leaders in their experiences, and responses, appeared to have been committed to the values and benefits of “social partnership’ as “pacts” towards assuring continued interests of the workers in the corporation, and as a major way through which the unions can continuously “revitalise” their legitimacy to the union members. Indeed, Kelly’s (1996, 1998, 2004), have drawn out the “main elements of strengths and weakness”(Kelly 2004:268) in the processes and outcomes of social partnership between the labour and management, In turn, Kelly’s work (1996, 1998, 2004) have provided the conceptual approach towards understanding the emerging trends and

dimensions of social partnership “its impact on employment relations, wages and conditions of employment”(Kelly 2004:268).The implication for unions’ leadership roles to members on issues of production processes and decisions between labour and management that often underpin how production processes are to be organised have also been analysed. His analysis has also examined the implications of social partnership on “union revitalization” in the context of work processes. It is in this context that “labour-management co-operation for mutual gains”(Kelly 2004: 268)has to be examined at NNPC. Drawing on Kelly’s (2004), conceptualization of labour management co-operation, this evaluation of institutional structure and process of consultative and collective bargaining, assesses the “core components” of themes that influence the perceived outcomes of “social partnership” at NNPC. In the context of re-arrangement of production process and workplace relations at NNPC, this analysis evaluates the following themes; dimensions of “union concession” to management, on emergent managerial practices and work processes such as, productivity, concessions on task and teamworking, unions “rights to information and consultations over strategic business decisions”(Kelly 2004:268)and issues of job and employment security in the NNPC.

In what follows, therefore in this Chapter, is an account of both the way in which the – “corporatist-concertive” dimension of management and union accommodation influences the workplace at NNPC, and how this has further provided an understanding of the new forms of work and patterns of institutional structures and processes of collective bargaining in the corporation. Literature on labour-management partnership, especially in the context of work process has shown diverse opinions of commentators on the values and outcomes of partnership arrangements for workers, the unions and the management (Kelly 2004). While the mainstream managerialist account of values and normative outcomes of such “productivity coalitions” pointed out that in the context of weak positions of unions, the traditional methods of collective bargaining processes may be inadequate in providing or guaranteeing the much needed interest of workers and unions, and as such “partnership provides alternative means to leverage their positions, in particular as these concern training, job security, career progression and other terms of conditions of employment” (Kelly 2004:268). Social partnership in the workplace, it is argued fosters unions’ capability to promote a broader interest of members on such employment relations

issues. It is also argued within the mainstream understanding that increasingly, workers in contemporary workplaces have become “less impatient” of the traditional approaches of unions’ negotiation, and hence the need for union officials to consolidate their legitimacy by engaging with the management on regular basis through the ambit of joint consultation. Expectedly therefore, union leaders are compelled to shed their adversarial and militant posture if they are to pursue a partnership approach to industrial relations matter (Guest and Peccei 1998; 2001; Haynes and Allen 2001; cited in Kelly 2004:269). Indeed, as noted by Turner (2006:2), “because employers are increasingly tempted by strategies that seek to weaken or marginalize unions, sustained participation for unions” arguably remain alternative approach. In NPPC, need to align operations activities with internal and external challenges in the industry continuously compels unions and management to “innovate” on wide range of issues such as concession bargaining and productivity bargaining, thereby strengthening “coalition building” and partnership. This is why it is claimed in the managerialist literatures that parties would therefore be able to pursue and achieve their respective objectives under co-operative relations.

However, critics of social partnership such as Kelly (1998), Claydon (1998), Heery (2002), Tailby and Winchester (2000), have variously cautioned that beyond the management rhetoric and discourse surrounding the normative outcomes for both parties, partnership arrangement only succeeds in “reinforcing the ideology of the employer” (cited in Kelly 2004:269), in the context of overall corporate objectives. It is argued that joint partnership not only weakens the independence of the trade unions, but also ends up in “co-opting the unions officials” into managerial agenda, and therefore “rarely delivers on the commitment to employment security” (Heery 2002,cited in Kelly 2004:269).

As noted by Kelly (2004), the emergence of joint labour-management partnership in the 1990’s on the backdrop of compelling managerial responses to competitive operating environment of corporate organisations has to do with responses on how to cope with these challenges. Thus, the evolving patterns of co-operative relations came through a number of forms, and in all instances of its growth and dimensions in work organisation it operates on the “core components of managerial objectives, flexibility, rights to information, consultation, job security and improved productivity”(Kelly 2004:270). While

these partnership relations emerged in situations that help to deal with immanent “industrial conflict”, thereby changing the contour of industrial relations in era of unpredictable operating environment, “the agreements served primarily to secure a minimal degree of union impact on collective bargaining, and day-to-day workplace issues, thereby facilitating high levels of both labour intensity and managerial surveillance” (Danford 1999, cited in Kelly 2004:269). In this understanding therefore there is limit to the claim of “mutual benefits.

Through case studies and empirical analysis, Colling and Ferner (1995), Gall (2001), and Storey et al (2000), have come up with findings that partnership agreements are often conducted in “heavily unionized firms and industries undergoing substantial organisational restructuring or work processes”(in Kelly’s 2004:270). Kelly’s work (2004), has, therefore, provided a theoretical base for understanding the processes and mechanisms by which diverse forms of partnerships have produced outcomes revealing on such joint partnership relations. Theoretical and conceptual considerations that shaped the understanding of different forms of agreements are equally determined by the prevailing situations of labour-management relations. In Kelly’s (2004) evaluation, the “balance of power” within particular industrial relations institutions shapes the patterns of employment relations. In similar vein dimensions and dynamics of labour-management are contingent on such power relations dynamics that characterised the industrial relations system. In Kelly’s characterisation of such labour-management partnership is a power-relation balance continuum where at one end exists “employer-dominant agreement” (Kelly 2004:271). According to Kelly, “this is marked by employer dominated agenda, primarily reflecting employer’s interests and labour compliance relations rather than co-operation” (Kelly 2004:271). Moving along the continuum, as observed by Kelly, is “labour-parity agreements” where there is “more even balance of power”(Kelly 2004:271) here, issues for discussion and consultations are expected to reflect their interests respectively.

As contextual factors and variables influencing the power balance and relations, Kelly identifies such factors as the dimensions of the labour market; whether loose or tight, the “degree of product market competition, the degree to which employer would have to rely on the employees for productive purposes and attributes of unions in terms of member-

ship density and mobilization capability” (Kelly 2004:271). From the perspective of this model of “power- relationsbalance, we would, therefore, expect different set of outcomes, e.g. one that might reflect mutual gains for both parties – a labour-parity scheme, and the alternative or opposing type that might reflect more benefits to the employer, that is, employer-dominant scheme.

In evaluating and accounting for the “outcomes” of these theoretical schemes in the workplace, Kelly’s (2004), analysis also came up with certain variables that should guide researchers in doing empirical investigations and evaluations. According to him, three key variables shape the outcome of labour-management partnership under the above theoretical schemes. First, where business imperatives have to compel management to share information with the workers on relevant issues, there is “information sharing and joint decision making process” (Freeman and Lazear 1995 cited in Kelly 2004:271). When this prevails, unions’ representations often agree to “job losses” might be proposed by the management. Secondly, when parties realised that a “route to partnership outcomes must be shaped by changes in feelings and attitudes; “trust variable” guides the union-management relations” (Kelly 2004:271). Here, the relations must be reciprocal for such “feelings of trust to be perceived as guiding consultative moves” (Kelly 2004: 271). The third key factor or variable that shapes power balance and relations, and one that deviates from the first two occurs or comes into play in “moments of economic crisis”, referred to as “power-resource variable”(Kelly 2004:272). When there is a shift in power resource or base of either party arising from economic circumstances of the organisation, outcomes could come out in favour of either of the parties. According to Cooke (1990), “both parties would then have to seek out and construct alternative ways of relating, and construct new agreements around issues confronting the organisation” (cited in Kelly, 2004:272). Invariably, in such circumstances, unions are more weakened in terms of power base and resource, which then makes the employer to secure more benefits at the expense of the unions. Thus, as noted by Kelly (2004:272), “changes in power resources could therefore lead either to genuine co-operation (labour-parity agreements) or to employer coercion and therefore union compliance.”

Deployed as analytical tool in my evaluation of joint partnership at NNPC, it is hypothesised that; in moments of workplace restructuring, and in response to emerging operating environment, NNPC makes use of the circumstances and imperatives of the operating environment to seek and secure “more compliance” on various labour process issues. While the concern of this evaluation of joint partnership involves primarily a recasting of institutional framework of collective bargaining in the corporation, it is done in the context of new forms of interplay between formal and informal platforms of joint consultations in the corporation. The evaluation is located within the broader process involving not only the existing formal structures of “collective relations” generally but also the prevailing workplace culture and social process in the refinery that constitutes the “micro-social” space through which the understanding must of necessity evolve. In this respect, and as noted by Oxenbridge and Brown (2002), while paying attention to the dynamics and processes of “formal understanding,” we need to locate the understanding within the “determinate sociological relationships which define the pattern of any context-bound partnership agreement” (cited in Martinez Lucio and Mark Stuart 2005:212). In other words, the dynamics of workers and union leader’s engagement with management on issues of workplace partnership are regulated and mediated by micro-social processes located both at the corporate and refinery levels. The configuration of institutional outcomes of partnership is shaped and mediated by informal dynamics of interests in the corporation. For instance, occupational interests of the workers both at the corporate and refinery levels mediate patterns and processes of consultation with the management. It is the “interpretations” the workers give to the process and outcomes that shape their opinion of the consultations.

Indeed, as pointed out by Peter Haynes et al (2000:5), the “regulatory ideas” of give and take that constitute collective relations at the shopfloor which is informal and “ad hoc and covert” do influence partnership processes and outcome. Such informal relations at the shopfloor level have been known to be used in “resolution of conflicts, information sharing and off-the record discussions that reinforce mutual commitments of shopfloor members towards themselves, and the organisation” (Batstone et al 1977, cited in Peter Haynes et al 2000:5). While such an arrangement may remain within the informal collective of the shopfloor workers, they represent a foundation of trust and mutual benefit to

members (Peter Haynes et al 2000:5). The emerging tradition of overt and formalised union-management co-operation has been identified to have been built upon this micro-social process of mutual understanding that characterised the informal work groups at the shopfloor level. The “common interest” ideology of the collective at the shopfloor provides the foundation for the “formalised joint production arrangement of the contemporary workplaces” (Marchington, 1994 cited in Peter Haynes et al 2000:5). The current notion of modern workplace partnership as observed by Peter Haynes et al (2000) should therefore be seen as a modern version of the former tradition of mutual trust and respect that characterised the informal arrangements of workplace relations. However, in spite of this continuity in the evolving patterns, the modern workplace dimension emerged and rested upon different historical context and specificity of modern capitalist mode of production. This essentially therefore gives the specific forms of implication and significance to both workers’ experience and interpretations and union representational roles in the context. Indeed, evidence of diversity in the form of processes and outcomes of partnership in the workplace from informal level to a more formalised process between unions and management points to a “continuum of union involvement in the workplace” (Oxenbridge and Brown 2005 cited in Martinez Lucio et al 2005:85). As noted by Oxenbridge and Brown; at one end of the continuum are informal partnership relationships on the shopfloor concerning daily production arrangement, and at the other end of the continuum is the existence of “highly formalised and regulated unions active involvement and engagement with the cognisance of workplace implications of such arrangement to both workers and the unions” (cited in Martinez Lucio et al 2005:5). The mode and levels of such arrangements have implications on the outcomes and perceptions of the partners

In the context of highly competitive labour and product markets to which the managements have to respond through “prioritisation” of work processes, with attendant labour intensification, unions are increasingly compelled to moderate their stance towards management and embrace social partnership. With such shift in balance of power, “unions may face the risk of marginalisation, and limited roles within the system of workplace industrial relations”(Kelly 1996 cited in Ackers et al 1996:83). Therefore, in assessing the outcome of this partnership arrangement in terms of implications on traditional patterns of joint negotiations in NNPC, we analyse the scope of union involvement, levels and

degree of acceptance from the Plant Operators' perspective, and the diverse management control strategies.

As noted by Jenkins (2007:635), "the dynamics of workplace union-management partnership has been a contestation of perceptions in terms of outcomes between the unions and management." The context of the partnership itself shapes the patterns of this contestation, the "interests and motivations of the actors, the nature and the shared distribution of reciprocal risks influence the mutuality of the substantive outcomes" (Jenkins 2007:635).

While the "potentials for more gains and benefits remain central to the objectives of management in the partnership, much of the deficits remain the concern for unions and members" (Martinez Lucio and Stuart 2005 in Jenkins 2007:636). Also, while on the one hand, management manifests low tolerance and outlook to acknowledge union's legitimacy, unions in the same way risk their legitimacy from the members. The importance of outcomes and mutuality of interest, as noted by Guest and Peccei, (2001), Kelly (2004), Oxenbridge and Brown (2002, 2005), is critical to positions of partners, that is, labour and management have made the evaluation of partnership arrangement to pay significant attention to "politics of workplace" relations, that define the dynamics of partnership relations. The relative "robustness" or "weakness" of partnership is defined by the "ideology" and interests of the partners that are involved. Thus, as observed by Martinez Lucio and Stuart (2004 cited in Jenkins 2007:636) the "politics of partnership are both complex and context determined", shaped by the dynamics of interest articulations of both labour and management. More specifically, for the purpose of critical evaluation; "an apparently robust partnership may serve to disguise current marginalisation"(Jenkins 2007:636), and relative weakness of the unions. This is more so given the capitalist mode of production on which the politics workplace relations and labour processes are located. In the context of an inherent imbalance in power relations on which labour process dynamics are located and manifested, "mutuality of interest", and "causal link between partnership and substantive outcomes"(Kelly 2005Martinez Lucio and Stuart 2004; in Jenkins 2007:636), demonstrate the risks and uncertainties that unions bear in the context.

This Chapter therefore draws on Kelly's (1996), conceptualisation of "union's militancy moderation" in evaluating the reciprocal link between partnership and substantive outcomes to partners. This evaluation will be done along these analytical themes and dimensions of goals, union membership interest protection, and prevailing unions' orientation within the workplace,(Kelly 1996 cited in Ackers et al 1996). Adoption of this framework for evaluating unions' responses and experiences allows for an empirically location of unions' position, and envisages different forms of "militancy and moderation" that shape the substantive outcomes, either negatively or positively. It answers the questions of what drives "causal associations, the issues of unequal outcomes that asymmetrical power relations engendered; and implications in terms of risks of legitimacy and trust relations between union leaders and members," (Jenkins 2007:636).

While making a case for research work to look beyond the managerialist interpretations of "robust", "nurturing" and "stable" partnership, Kelly (1996), argues that mutuality of interest "inclined" workers toward management. Indeed, as noted by Danford et al (2004, 2005), there are clear empirical examples of how organisational changes and labour-management partnerships "being deleterious to workers' interest"(in Jenkins 2007:637).Also, empirical illustrations have highlighted how the causal link between partnership and outcomes is not frequently "coterminous and tension-free" (Martinez Lucio and Stuart 2004 cited in Jenkins 2007:637). The contexts in which workplace changes and partnership take place are shaped by the dynamics of operating and product market environment thereby determining both the political and economic motivated dimension of decision making process. Such decision making process within the partnership arrangement must therefore have implications for degree of influence available for workers and the unions in the workplace (Tailby et al 2004 Danford et al 2004; 2005 cited in Jenkins 2007:637). Also evidence from Kelly's (2005), evaluations of outcomes of partnership agreements for workers and management found no tangible benefits for the workers in the organisation. His analysis showed "little support for the new-pluralist institutionalist account of mutual gains" for partners in partnership arrangement (Kelly 2005 and Martinez Lucio and Stuart 2005 in Jenkins 2007:637). These analyses, therefore, suggest that a "duality" of relations between partnership and outcomes is contestable and may not be "unidirectional". Expectations of substantive outcomes and mutuality of in-

terests may ultimately be deceptive, and may not adequately explain labour's interests in the relationship.

Our evaluation of partnership arrangement in NNPC, in particular in the context of workplace labour relations and labour process benefit from the conceptual analysis deployed by these authors. For instance, as noted in Martinez Lucio and Stuart (2005), if by trying to identify a beneficial outcome of partnership arrangements has become problematic in the context of competitive environment., Researcher's analysis and evaluation must place the concept of "risk" in the centre of analysis. Risks in this context, according to Martinez Lucio and Stuart (2005) refer to both the micro-process of political dynamics upon which the distribution or "substantive risks are egotiated and shared between the partners" (cited in Jenkins 2007:638). Distributive risk is associated with the "material conditions" of employment relations, and the social relations of production that are politically determined. Thus, location and evaluation of attitudes and responses of parties to the meso-social process and risks provide a more nuanced sociological account of motivations of both unions and management, in particular within the context of "internalised" operating challenges.

As work organisations are faced with "external" competitive pressures on work process thereby requiring shifts in expectations and aspirations of both management and unions, security of jobs remains the prime concern for workers. Concession bargaining, therefore, characterises workplace relations through which expectations are "narrowed down", "and management uses that leverage to justify adjustment on terms and conditions of work" (Jenkins 2007:638). While unions may desire to maintain and legitimize their representative capability, the challenges of the "bargaining environment remain a considerable political risk for them" (Danford 2004 in Jenkins 2007:638).

NNPC has assumed a position where "innovative" work practices and arrangements based on teamwork, total quality programme and flexible deployment of skills are found, and these are characterised with management assumptions of workers' empowerment and autonomy. It is in these normative expectations that partnership relations are expected to engender a more positive climate. Piore and Sabel (1984); Kuchan and Osterman (1994);

Rogers and Streeck (1995 cited in Roche et al 2002), have all earlier written on these themes as characterising managerial initiatives of organisation, operating on the basis of competitive and diversified, flexible and quality-focused product orientations. However, as qualified by Jenkins (2007:638), labour-management partnership in any context is never apolitical, “even integrative bargaining that seem to move relations beyond distributive concerns, simply end up in integrating the workers more into the political manipulation of the management”. For instance, “better communication does not make the workplace partnerships less vulnerable to the shareholders’ dictates; it does not insulate the workers against the vagaries of the product market” (Jenkins 2007:638). According to Jenkins (2007:638), developing a research agenda that incorporates the analysis of partnership will have to be attentive to “the internal micro-social process of politics” involved in decision-making that shapes the “strategic choices” of the actors. This therefore must be sensitive to the distinctive meanings and interpretations the workplace actors give to the concept and its outcomes. Context therefore matters, in terms of the dynamics of the economic involvement and regulatory framework of the organisation (Jenkins 2007). The various dimensions for understanding and analysis of workplace partnership are located both within the organisation and outside it. To Boyer (2006), the relationship between Joint Consultative Committee and collective bargaining in the workplace is neither one of “mutual exclusion” nor “complimentary”; they tend to co-exist. In other words, the valence of each; either to the Union or Management is determined by the prevailing circumstance of the organisation.

8. 3. In Pursuit of Common Interest- Social Partnership project in the NNPC

As shown in the above analysis of various authors, the context of the workplace provides the background for understanding the concept and dimensions of partnership arrangements. For the evaluation of social partnership in NNPC, qualitative research in form of semi-structured interviews with workers and Unions representatives was carried out. Observation of production process and evaluation of documentary evidence such as procedural agreements relating to joint consultation with Unions was also carried out. The Chairman and Secretary of the two in Branch Unions of NUPENG and PENGASSAN

were interviewed. Semi-structured interviews were held with two Senior/Management Cadres of the Employee Relations Office who served as convenors of the corporate level National Joint Consultative Committee (NJCC) meetings. The interviews were enhanced by the researcher's attendance and observations at the JCC meetings. This provided the basis to understand the deliberations and normative assumptions behind the social partnership arrangements both at the corporate and refinery levels of the NNPC.

The challenges of oil industry operation in NNPC that allowed for the introduction of social partnership became significant at a time when the corporation had to respond "pro-actively" to the highly competitive product markets and operating environment. Management's initiatives behind JCC demonstrated the normative understanding that the sustainability and improved performance of the corporation rested on the basis of joint work arrangement between the workers and the management on the challenges facing the corporation. Thus, rhetoric of "working together" was constantly harped on, as the need to jointly work together in the interest of the corporation in the face of operating challenges, and, therefore, used as a lever for a "reintegration" of attitudes of unions and workers. Even though union and management at NNPC had been operating on the traditional collective bargaining arrangement, even on a wide range of issues, the challenges of the competitive operating environment of the oil industry, in particular, as this related to the products market, made the elaborate arrangement and justifications for joint consultation more compelling.

In the last two decades, the NNPC had therefore witnessed different forms and patterns to its work process, defined and driven by Management's initiated partnership relations with the unions. The distinctive opportunity and access gained to conduct interviews and attend the JCC meetings both at the corporate and refinery levels offered insightful understanding into both "incentives" and "tensions" surrounding partnership at NNPC. Analysis from these interviews offered an evaluation of both unions' and workers' view of partnership; its promises and limitations. This can only be assessed from the perspective of both the unions and the workers, as something different from the perspective of the management. Evaluations of the workers' and union leaders' responses gave significant picture as showed how workplace relations concerning JCC at NNPC had been synony-

mous and interpreted by them as partnership defined by the challenges for quality products and efficient operations of the refinery; and in which the “consultative agenda” was tailored along the management’s imperatives. At NNPC, efficiency of the plant operations and improved performance had become non-negotiable, only the manner and processes of achieving this became a subject of contestation between the management and the unions.

Much of the literature and assessments of workplace partnership identified it to be a process that conceded little workplace rights to workers, Rather, it remained as extension of the managerial rhetoric tool for neutralising workers’ resistance to specific management objectives. This was in line with Danfords et al (2005), observation. Joint consultation became imperative in NNPC as a result of compelling reasons for management to embark upon workplace attitude reintegration between the management and the workers. As noted earlier in the preceding chapters, the compelling competitive environment in which NNPC has had to operate in the previous two decades, and the challenges to maintain product markets production had forced the corporation to embark upon phases of restructuring, which had involved “unbundling” into commercially focused subsidiaries and business units. And this consequently entailed introduction of diverse work process regimes based on “business rationality”, and efficient utilization of both material resources and labour. Through these processes and practices, management sought to improve work process and quality products. However, and as indicated in the preceding evaluations of the other managerial “initiatives” concerning work process regimes, workers had suffered labour intensifications in the face of job insecurity. They showed their own narratives and perceptions of the emergent managerial practices.

Indeed, from the management’s perspective, social partnership emerged as part of an ongoing process for improved performance of the corporation. In NNPC, it was developed as part of a compelling attempt to construct cooperative social relations in order to secure unions’ and workers’ acceptance of the process of transformation. Consequently, the institutional structure and process upon which social partnership operated had developed over a number of years, and comprised a mixture of both formal procedures of consultations over certain conditions and parameters of work process. It has become an elaborate

system of consultations that cascaded from the corporate levels to the refineries. While social partnership in the context of work process in the NNPC might be interpreted as providing a basis for “industrial democracy”, it has essentially become a way of “legitimizing” managerial initiatives on workplace relations in line with prevailing dynamics of operating challenges of the corporation. Perceptions and responses of both workers and unions’ leaders provided a leading confirmation of this. However, from the management’s interpretation, it was perceived as a qualitative process to refine interactions between workers and management on work processes and mutual problems arising thereof. However, my discussion and informal interviews with the refinery workers still showed some level of ambivalence and doubt about the “substance” of its democratic assumptions. To the workers, “democratic qualities” of partnership agendas were reinterpreted into “productionist terms” that fulfilled the expectation of the management. Indeed, as observed in Jenkins(2007:639), unions and their members may gain more influence at “consultation levels, but only in a form that serves as a complement rather than constraint” to management’s prerogative. Management’s position was re-echoed in one of the remarks of the convenors of JCC at the corporate level of NNPC “integrating the attitude of the workers in light of new dispensation in the NNPC is what the meetings seek to achieve”. Management constructively sought trade unions’ leadership commitment to the project.

Consequently, in NNPC, emergent dynamics of workplace relations had become manifested at two scales of understanding; first, there was a situation where management sought unions’ and members’ approval, and thus their commitment to the strategic goals and objectives of improved performance, and secondly that required a qualitative shift in relations and attitudes that must eschew adversarial tendencies. However, from our research point of view, those were not without implications to the union roles and indeed the kind of “legitimacy” they eventually obtained from their members, and what sense the workers themselves made out of this management’s driven “constructive attitudinal” integration.

8.4. Joint Consultative Councils and Unions Involvement in NNPC

To evaluate the outcome of JCC and partnership arrangements in NNPC, in terms of implications on unions' leadership roles and members' orientation, and in terms of implication on traditional collective bargaining, we focused on the form and scope of union involvements, the type of legitimacy accorded unions from the workers, degree and extent of unions' involvement in terms of consultation, communication and strength of decision making abilities. The evaluations were done in the context of employers' managerial strategies of the control of work process in the corporation.

In NNPC, the two Branch Unions: PENGASSAN and NUPENG were involved in the consultation process. In the (Procedural Agreements, 2007), of both unions with the management it was stated clearly that Joint Consultative Council was the formal framework and process of the mechanism. Part III, Clause 1 of the document read, "There shall be a body established by the Corporation and the Union to consult with each other." It stated further that "the terms and coverage of the Council's decisions shall apply to Senior Staff of the Corporation in permanent employment who are members of the Union, employed and holding jobs within the Corporation salary grade levels SS7 to SS2" (Procedural Agreements, 2007). This was in respect of National Joint Consultative Council (NJCC) pertaining to members of both the PENGASSAN and NUPENG. At the corporate level, membership of the NJCC was made up of representatives of the Corporate Headquarters, comprising; the Managers of the Admin and Personnel of all the subsidiaries, Zonal Managers, and members of the Unions' Group Executive Council, and National Officers –non-elected officers of the unions. The General Manager, Personnel or his representative, a member of the Managerial Cadre was the Chairman of the NJCC, while the Unions' Chairman or his representative was the Spokesman for the Union (Procedural Agreements 2007).

All members of the union present at the JCC meetings "shall get clearance from the Chief Spokesman before contributing to any discussion" (Procedural Agreements 2007).

Contained in the Procedural Agreements was the Clause that "-Deputy Manager Employee Relations shall be the Secretary at the meetings of the NJCC".

Meetings of the NJCC are to be convened quarterly at any location of the Corporation that has been agreed upon by the two parties.

Notice convening the meeting of the NJCC would include the proposed agenda for the meeting.

Any item slated in the agenda submitted by either party would have to be discussed with the Secretary at least fourteen (14) days prior to the meeting. Issues not contained in the agenda would not be discussed during the meeting (Procedural Agreements, 2007). Obviously, this Clause as shall be expounded upon in the cause of this evaluations, once again brings to our understanding the embedded power dynamics in the whole arrangement

The Agreement contained further that, no more than four (4) issues would be allowed under the (AOB). At every meeting, the Council would agree on the agenda for the meeting. Also, contained in the Procedural Agreements was the Proviso that the Quorum could only be formed by not less than half of the accredited representatives of both the management and the union. Any decision taken by the NJCC shall be binding on all the branches of the Union in NNPC and all the SBUs Management (Procedural Agreements 2007 NNPC). Just as obtained at the corporate headquarters of the NNPC, all the refineries and other Branches of NNPC where local Branch Unions exist are also to replicate their local JCC. The activities of the local Joint Consultative Council are also, as applied to NJCC, but limited to local issues within the competence of the Management at Branch level.

In addition to the accredited representatives of both the management and unions at the SBUs level, membership also include one (1) representative each from Operations, Finance, Training and Medical. Immediate past Chairman of the Branch Executive is also a member to give guides at deliberations. JCC Meetings at the SBU levels take place once every three (3) months. Any decision taken by the SBUs JCC shall be binding on both parties, provided it is in line with the corporate policies and decisions reached at NJCC meetings (Procedural Agreements 2007).

In the context of the highly competitive product market operating environments, to which the corporation has to respond through prioritising of production processes, unions are

increasingly compelled to embrace social partnership arrangements. As a result, the main aims of NJCC at NNPC are as follows; to ensure consultation on matters affecting the well being of members of the unions on the one hand, and such matters include but not limited to the following terms and conditions of service, efficiency, productivity, safety, education, medical and training (Procedural Agreements 2007). As remarked by the convenor of the NJCC, who is also the Manager Employee Relations, “in achieving all this for the union members, management therefore expects greatest measure of cooperation from the unions and members on how best to attain higher productivity arising from efficient operations of the corporation’s business.” NJCC also has the mandate to attend to all matters that are referred to it from time to time by the management or the unions. Such matters may include; methods and procedures of improving communication and operations of managerial initiatives such as team-working, labour flexibility (Procedural Agreements 2007).

8.5. Evaluation of Union Involvement in the Institutional Structure

While much of the discussions above had to do with the institutional structure and procedure of JCC in NNPC, it served as backdrop for our evaluation of social partnership in NNPC. It also served as basis for our evaluation of dynamics of power play in the consultation process in the corporation. However, for all the “mutual benefits” and promises supposedly contained therein, there are from the perspective of this research work conceptual concerns, which also explain the experiences and responses of both union leaders and workers in the arrangement.

In what follows here, an attempt is made to re-conceptualize this salience, by focusing on how the Management, through its agenda-setting and the institutional framework of NJCC implemented the “discourse” and “practices” it wanted the union and members to follow. From the workers and union leaders’ perspective and account, the agenda-setting was limited and driven by issues that favoured the distinct unitary prerogative of the management. However tempting it is, to assume that the presence of micro-level institutional process of partnership gives the workers opportunity to air their views and concerns, the practical manifestations of the mechanisms tell little of the robustness of the

“mutual benefits” even from the workers’ perspective. Much of the managerial discourse and functioning of NJCC had succeeded only in subsuming the unions in its “integrative processes.”

It therefore becomes instructive to note that while the focus is essentially on its normative dimensions it provides the workers with minimal say and contributions on matters that affect them on terms and conditions, and welfare matters, this is even mediated by the “need to accept market imperatives while also emphasising the centrality of their voice and job security” (Danford et al 2005:598). In the context of logics of the imperatives of JCC, the institutional process of NJCC may be “shallow” or “deep” – defined not only by the operational challenges but also largely by the embedded power-relations character (Wilkinson et al 2004 cited in Donaghey and Dundon (2009). Thus, as noted by Charlowood (2003), institutional process of partnership may exist, but its relevance may not be more than “information dissemination”. In this circumstance, the presence and relevance of the unions may substantially be that of convening decisions reached at the JCC meetings to members. Putting this in a different way, Ackers et al (2005) had observed that the representational role of the union may be weak or strong, depending on the managerial driven agenda. The “nuanced” institutional structure and process through which “partnership is carried out define the relevant expectations and focus of social partners” Donaghey and Dundonl (2009:7). Taken cue from this analytical lens, what is important in the consideration and observation in this evaluation, and that is still under-represented in the institutional architecture of social partnership at NNPC is how the “efficient rationality” of the management weakened the institutional capacity of the unions in relation to equal level with the management. Central to our understanding is also an appreciation of the management’s perception of what roles the unions should play in the “efficiency logics”, in the corporation, regarding the dimensions and nature of their contribution in the consultative council meetings. Institutional structure and processes of partnership are only as “effective” as the willingness of management not only to accommodate, but also to act “positively when workers articulate their concerns” (Harlos 2001in Donaghey and Dundon 2009:8). Indeed, the robustness and scale of acceptability of mutuality of interest is largely shaped by the willingness of the management to accommodate and integrate the divergent views of the unions.

To Donaghey and Dundon (2009:8), therefore, “management’s behaviour presumed or actual, has very much at the heart of the debate on” social partnership, therefore making it analytically important in accounting for workers’ own attitude and experience in the arrangement. Drawing on analytical path provided by Kelly (2005), Taras and Kaufman (2006), define the function of representational role of unions in partnership mechanism; “it is a situation whereby unions act in agency function for their members in dealing with management over issues of mutual concern including terms and conditions of employment” (cited in Donaghey and Dundon 2009:8). According to Kaufman (2006), in taking on such representational function, workers expect unions, to among others provide “a meaningful form of employee voice, a capacity to influence management decisions, and mutual recognition from the management” (in Donaghey and Dundon 2009:8).

However, and following the lines of our arguments on social partnership in NNPC, evidence has shown not only management’s inclination to shape the mechanisms and agenda of such representation, but also to “circumvent what they perceive to be potentially more intrusive of their prerogatives” (Donaghey and Dundon 2009:8). Partnership, in any form that it is institutionalised have the tendency to “stave off” encroachment into “substantive areas of managerial prerogatives, and to perpetuate a climate of subordinate relation between management and the unions” (Donaghey and Dundon 2009:8). Even in the context of non-union representation, Tara (2006), Terry (1999) and Wills (2000), noted that employees’ success in expressing their interests are confined to what the management defined. Likewise, as noted by Broads (1994) structures and channel of communication and processes of voicing out concerns tend to limit “a robust and militant forms of engagement from unions”(cited in Donaghey and Dundon 2009:8). The agency of the unions may therefore seem to have been overshadowed by the management’s dominant position. Similarly, Dundon and Rollinshon (2004) had noted that partnership schemes were often “designed and controlled from above” (cited in Donaghey and Dundon 2009:9). From this researcher’s observation in NNPCs JCC meetings, when workers through the unions were allowed to contribute, these were on “matters”, and in “manners” perceived to be appropriate from the management’s point of view. Consequently, what unions can influence and “sway-over” were limited in “scope and substance” in terms of issues and context.

There existed less inclination on the part of management to accommodate more on certain other crucial issues that are equally important to the interest of the workers.

While much of the above model for evaluation has to do with what partnership implied for the unions and workers in the corporation, it is also imperative to locate this understanding within appropriate interpretations. Working on this, Donaghey and Dundon (2009), observe that one of the useful ways of doing this is to locate the relational dimension within the context of “social power”. From sociological point of view, this implies paying attention to who gains more in decision-making process and power relations. At a more theoretical level, it also implies the “voice process” of the unions. In this instance, Schattschinder (1963, cited in Donaghey and Dundon 2009:9), proposed what is referred to as “mobilisation of bias” which indicates that management through the process of “agenda setting” not only confines “voice process” to pre-determined issues, but generally would want to rough-shoulder employees on several other issues. Demonstrating this in his study also, Kirkbiride (1986) showed “how mobilization of bias could be utilized by management to prevent latent issue from coming up for matters of discussion or decision-making process” (in Donaghey and Dundon 2009:9). In doing this, management may engage in deployment of rhetoric and discourse to justify decisions already taken on issues. Such “legitimising principles” or processes are found to be based on “prerogative rights to manage in the face of competitive pressures, and need for efficiency”, (Donaghey and Dundon 2009:9).

As should be expected, the outcome of such management-driven-terrain is “manufacture of compliance” both by the workers and the unions, as defined by the realities of managerial practices and decisions. Indeed, reinforcing the culture of “compliance” in NNPC has been the “managerialist interpretation of partnership as essentially that of information and communication sharing, rather than negotiation or bargaining”(Donaghey and Dundon 2009:10). Relevant to our evaluation of partnership arrangement and process in NNPC, is the perceptible reality that such institutional process is part of management designs to solicit employees’ commitment to productivity and efficiency, rather than as an effective form of representation for diverging interests to be aired and tackled. Indeed, as noted above, what is observed in NNPC has been covert tendency on the part of the manage-

ment to interpret partnership as essentially a process for conveying information to employees on how to improve their performance, on quality improvement, or on ways to go about the continuous process technology in view of competing challenges facing the corporation. Workforce is seen as “vessel” for “knowledge-ideas” on how to improve the performance of the corporation. Conceivably, management has therefore been able to “draw the lines”, and separate issues that could be interpreted as “grievances”, and these are confined to the statutory grievances/dispute settlement procedures, Issues bordering on grievances and disagreements from the workers were seen to be procedurally separated from the agenda of the quarterly JCC meetings. Impliedly, tensions and contestations surrounding issues of grievances and disputes were interpreted and treated as separate from JCC agenda, and disincentive for effective decision making at the meetings, even when such matters practically bordered on interests of the workers. Thus, the processes and workings of consultations in NNPC were fashioned in ways that not only deferred and transferred inevitable tensions to the statutory body of joint negotiation, but also worked in a manner that avoided hindrance to decision-making on information to be passed down to the workers.

Indeed, while efforts at partnering with unions and workers in NNPC may not have been designed to totally remove unions inputs from the remit of strategic decisions making, unions contribution are rather preferred at the minimal level. While it may also be incorrect to say workers were not participating, the significant dimension of such relational dynamics as “power-centeredness” stands out clearly in our evaluations. Our evaluations have sought to demonstrate how management in NNPC through institutionalisation of joint consultative process, reinforced a climate of co-option, manufacturing of compliance, and tailoring of information and communication arrangements. The conceptual lens adopted in re-interpreting such managerial thesis consequently broadened our understanding of the “structuration” of partnership arrangement in NNPC. Indeed, as noted by Donaghey and Dundon (2000:12), the contemporary workplace partnerships were attempts by management to “re-compose pre-existing agreements in manners to stave off” potential areas of tensions and conflict in the run-up to real negotiations. The issues and contents of NJCC were, therefore, expected to serve as a “comfortable precursor” for real negotiations.

8.6. Workers' perception of Joint Consultative Council and its outcomes in NNPC

Evaluation of workers' experiences and outcomes of Joint Consultations in the corporation, both at the Headquarters and Refinery levels was based on data and information generated through interviews and observations. The implications of the partnership arrangement from the workers' views were examined. From the wisdom of institutional structure and process upon which the Joint Consultation was based, it would appear that the arrangement brought in "equal" and perhaps "mutual benefits" to both partners. However, an evaluation of workers' experiences and perceptions displayed in key themes showed "asymmetry" in "mutuality of benefits" and as something variant to what management would want to portray. The key themes used for the assessment and evaluations were workers' involvement in the process; perception of how the process assured them job security, perception of their unions' roles, and level of trust and participation in decision-making at NJCC. Moving beyond the essentialist analysis as noted by (Guest and Pecci, 2001) which tends to privilege understanding of positive impacts on workers' working lives, these evaluations incorporated workers' perception in the understanding. While much of this extant literature from management's perspective seemed to "lay emphasis on the rationality of partnership regimes to generate enhanced outcomes for the corporations" (Kochan and Osterman 1994, Towers 1997 cited in Suff and Williams 2004:32), less emphasis was placed on the "quality of involvement" from the workers' perspective. Also, it is in this understanding of mutuality of interest that the attractiveness of partnership had to be evaluated (Martinez Lucio and Stuart 2002; Oxenbridge and Brown 2002; cited in Suff et al 2004:32). From a broader traditional perspective for understanding unions' representational roles, Kelly (1998) and Marks et al (1998) have written on the "institutional security" of which it assured trade unions, where moderate responsible unionism seemed to be stressed. Given that such context was managerially driven, and the outcomes, predictably in favour of the management, workers' own sense making of the regime was equally important for our evaluation. In what follows, we aim to report major outcomes of the research investigations concerning workers' perception and orientation towards Joint Consultative regimes.

8.7. Context: Evaluating Joint Consultation in NNPC

As indicated above, the research seeks to evaluate workers' experience and perception of joint consultation in NNPC, which focused on the following; their involvement, perception of job security, unions' representational roles and level of trust they obtained in the arrangement. Inferred from several remarks made by the convenor of NJCC at the corporate level, the outcome of consultations over the years had been identified as "hallmark of high-trust" in employment relations with improved benefits for the corporation, institutional presence and security for unions and employability for the workers.

Responses relating to workers' experiences and attitudes to this discourse were collated at two levels; at corporate level and at the Refinery. Responses obtained from series of interviews were contextualised with group discussions with team leaders and supervisors at the Refinery level. Two members of the Management Cadre who served as convenors of NJCC were interviewed (Deputy Manager ER, and Assistant Manager HR). The interviews were also corroborated with the views and opinions of two elected officers, each of the two trade Unions.

In evaluating the attitudes and opinions of the workers with regard to consultations, they were asked about the level and degree of their awareness, and about their perceptions of the "joint consultation" in the refinery. In the interviews, specific questions were asked about the key themes that drove the consultation process in the corporation, as these were central to their interests in employability, job security, need for efficiency, productivity, involvement in decision-making and how the outcome of JCC reinforced their confidence in the corporation. These themes seemed to dominate concerns from the workers' perspectives.

As a point of note, outcomes of deliberations at joint consultations, expectedly, were transmitted to the management and the unions, and decisions reached were taken in, as "Action Notes" and incorporated in work processes and managerial practices as defined by the corporation strategic objectives of "efficiency rationality." As contained in the documents guiding NJCC were the items emphasising such issues as the need for the consultation itself, and other deliberations that emphasised welfare matters such as com-

munication, team-working, employee development, and on terms and conditions, with implied understanding towards maintaining the current employment situation in the corporation. Indeed, the institutionalisation of NJCC, represented a significant shift in the ways management mediated on management-union relations issues. For instance, as observed during one of the quarterly meetings, the GM, (ER) remarked on, and commended the way in which the unions had been handling the challenges of “unbundling”, and implored them to carry on in that “team spirit” with the management. Unions were, therefore, expected to approach issues with dedicated maturity, co-operation and understanding like a “family affair.”

In such management driven rhythms, evidence from NJCC quarterly meetings showed unions pledging their “unalloyed loyalty” to the corporation, with often repeated promises that the unions would continue to work for the success of the corporation. Reflecting on how joint consultation had been perceived and functioned over the years, the convenor remarked “the unions are now more considerate of the corporation’s position within the operating environment, and have therefore shown understanding, while promoting the interests of their members.”

From observation and note taking of deliberations and outcomes of series of quarterly meetings of NJCCs in 2008, positive pictures of formal agreements were documented as “Action Notes” which invariably formed part of managerial practices on work processes in the corporation. Contained in the “Action Notes” were emphases on the strength of collaborative relationship which must be sustained by both parties. Even though an awareness of joint consultation and outcomes existed among the workers, the focus of this evaluation was their concern, on how much they benefited from these outcomes. A critical line for evaluating their concern was to ascertain whether this awareness was interpreted as a sense of strong involvement – in terms of appreciable inputs into the decision-making process. Responses of Plant Operators to key areas of consultation from the workers’ perspective are analysed below. In spite of the fact that NNPC had instituted JCC for long as a way of smoothing relations, a perception of low level acceptance still existed among the workforce. While the workers did not entirely reject the consultative arrangement, their pessimism was on the motives of management behind the whole idea,

which to them took on a strong business orientation. The experiences of the workers, therefore, demonstrated an awareness of the inherent conflicts of interest in the capitalist employment relationship, with their agentic responses that manifested covert resistance and “manufactured compliance.”

Based on qualitative interviews held with the refinery workers (N=120), of the process plant, analysis of the Plant Operators’ experience was done in the context of management’s initiatives of JCC. While this was being done, it was acknowledged that even though Joint Consultation processes in NNPC operated on indirect participation of workers through their unions management’s perception was that the “voice” of the workforce was being adequately represented. However, many of the Plant Operators interviewed believed their unions’ leaders were not actually doing enough. For many of them that I had discussion with, the perception was that it was always a “talk-show”, and no concrete attempts to address the issues put forward.

Thirty-six percent of the 120 respondents said that even though they were aware of JCC, and what was expected of their union leaders, they still believed their opinions regarding the plant level were not often adequately represented. The workers acknowledged that they only had knowledge of JCC outcomes via “News” on the Notice Boards of the corporation’s activity, particularly on managerial decisions on plant operations and other issues at the management level. Thirty-six percent of my respondents indicated knowledge of this. In the interview, many of them expressed the greatest reservations: “we always have Committee Meetings and we are always encouraged to make our contributions, but we hardly notice impacts of such contributions” we only see the outcomes of JCC meetings on Notice Boards and Bulletins telling us what they want us to do.” As build-up to Joint Consultative Council meetings, there were processes and procedures at the Refinery levels. There were regular morning team briefings, Quality Control briefings, monthly reviews and other processes of information and communication sharing. However, the majority of the workers still expressed pessimism and doubt about the “openness” of the system, with the perception that such openness referred to what management would want them to know. Thus, the degree and extent of employees’ involve-

ment were restricted to receiving information, and limited influence on work process and decisions on managerial issues.

Table 6: Plant Operators' assessment of JCCN=120

	No	%
Improved information and communication	30	36
Improved trust between management and workers	30	36
Involvement in decisions on plant operations	36	43
Active involvement of unions	25	30
Confidence of job security	48	58
Satisfaction with JCC	50	60

As indicated earlier, majority of the workers interpreted JCC as mechanisms for passing on necessary information and communication regarding managerial decisions. In reality, and as far as they were concerned, there was separation between “being involved” and just receiving information regarding the corporation’s activities. A total of forty-three percent of those interviewed considered themselves as being actually involved in the process of decision making. Impliedly, this category of workers considered their contributions and opinions as being considered on issues, when it came to work process activities. As noted by one interviewee, “our regular morning and weekly team-work briefings, and quality control briefings are no more than passing down information on what to do, rather than real assessment of our views.” Another plant operator added, “now that we have seen the whole process as such, we don’t bother to disturb ourselves, but to listen, or read the information on the notice board. Evaluation of the workers’ responses as con-

tained in Table 6 also showed the degree to which the consultation promoted feelings of job security at NNPC. Fifty eight percent of the respondents in this category expressed confidence that the regular JCC meetings and issues deliberated upon, with the outcome assured them a feeling of security of their job. Though not expressively mentioned as issues, they felt that though the efficient performance of the corporation so far remained important on the one hand, the intensified dimensions in work process also existed as a concern. Impliedly, the intertwined relations of competitive product market, the operating environment and the accompanying managerial practices could be promoting a climate of job insecurity for the majority of the refinery workers. There was, therefore, a perceptible awareness on this category that job security and their employability were tied to the good performance of the corporation, even in the context of the diverse challenges. Indeed, feelings existed among some of them that their job might not be more secured than before. The workers often made reference to waves of past restructuring in the corporation and reflected on how such exercises affected the workforce in the past. Overall, the evaluation showed a reserved and “cautious” orientation towards JCC. The evaluation also showed that though the institutional arrangement fulfilled the “communication needs” of the management, the plant workers maintained a low opinion of it, in satisfying their important expectation such as job security and needed to reduce workload that accompanied the shift system, for instance. It also demonstrated that the machinery had little impact on what centred on their interest at the workplace.

In addition, the team leaders I interviewed expressed a similar opinion of the machinery just as their team members did. This, therefore, suggests a prevailing “managerial hegemony” on matters they would have preferred to be thrashed out on “equal par” at JCC. Team leaders, even in their estimation were less inclined to tinker with the idea of consultation, which to them implied Unions conceding too much to the Management.

However, for the purpose of our understanding of workers’ perception and work-life experiences, there are two implications that could be inferred, one; while the workers acknowledged the existence of the machinery as main means for canvassing for their interest they demonstrated their agentic identity by “distancing themselves” from the overall objectives of the arrangements. Therefore, the remit of “mutuality of interest, and its

being interpreted as workplace democratisation, became less realistic. For instance, we noted earlier that in the build-up and preparation for the quarterly JCC meetings, unions had to submit and incorporate their own issues with management and this had to be submitted two weeks before the meeting. The implication of this requirement was, as might be interpreted from the workers' perspective, that there was less willingness on the part of management to allow unions to engage with the management independently on their own terms. This, obviously further withered down the confidence union members could have had in the partnership relationship. While showing less interest towards JCC at the plant level, one of the team leaders commented, "I am aware of the existence of JCC, and I also know our union leaders are there, but I think the whole thing is always directed by the management." This constant re-interpretation of management overtures on the idea of "working together" on the one hand, and the persistence of work intensification occasioned by managerial practices and discourse also contributed to "low-trust relations" under the regime of JCC. Indeed, the dominant concern that emerged from the workers' experiences and responses remained that of "little faith" in joint consultation process to relieve them of pressures arising from demands of new managerial practices and initiatives.

For instance, in my interactions and interviews with the plant workers in the refinery, they had expected the machinery of consultations to offer good opportunity for their leaders to pragmatically engage with management on the diverse implications and "fall-out" of managerial strategies and practices, and thereby influence the processes of decision-making to address so many of their problems. When asked to respond to some of the issues agitating the mind of members, the Secretary of NUPENG who was also a member of the delegates at the JCC meetings remarked, "we and the management are partners in the whole process, but it is difficult to convince members of the challenges we are facing." Nevertheless, the identified pessimism on the part of plant workers that their unions were not doing enough persisted, and on the relative powerlessness of unions to "do more" in protecting their interests within the ambit of JCC.

My observation and interviews with the plant workers also demonstrated how perceived immanent job insecurity in the context of restructuring might have engendered low-trust

and indeed, underlying doubts and pessimism about unions’ real involvement in mitigating untoward implications of managerial practices on their employability. This typical comment exemplified the perception of the workers in this regard, “yes indeed, we are always willing to co-operate on decisions as they come out from the meetings, but we also live in perceptual fear of being laid off as the noise about ‘unbundling’ continues.”

Still on workers’ perceptions, my evaluations moved further to incorporate additional analysis of the “quality” of representational roles of unions’ leaders within the JCC framework in the corporation. Similarly, just as on how workers perceived the Management, the emerging themes from my evaluations demonstrated a low-rating of unions’ representational roles. Such rating of unions by members centred on the following key areas; unions influence over terms and conditions of work in the light of the managerial practices, or whether unions were indeed taken seriously by management in issues pertaining to work processes, and whether the loyalty of the unions “shifted more” to members or to the management. Though, there was indeed a general low-rating of unions by members on each of these areas, such deficit in unions’ influence was not entirely attributed to overwhelming managerial overtures on unions, minimal resistance and critical engagement from unions still manifested on certain issues. This had more to do with cautious and “instrumental orientation” union leaders needed to demonstrate in view of the prevailing circumstances.

Table 7: Members’ assessment of unions’ representational roles in JCCN=120

	No	%
Unions maintain strong influence over terms and conditions of work	60	72
Unions have strong influence on decisions over work activities	25	30

The loyalty of unions is with members	60	72
Unions are more loyal to management	40	48
Unions' roles at JCC make a difference generally	35	42
Loyalty of members to Unions	48	58

As shown in Table 7 above, members' assessment of union roles within the NJCC was not uniform across the various themes. To many of the interviewees, union roles in maintaining greater influence on management was in obtaining tangible benefit in working conditions. However, they equally agreed that this did not necessarily translate to unions being well accepted or integrated when it came to making a "critical decision" on other issues on managerial practices. The relatively strong rating of the unions on the theme might as well be attributed to workers' concern for terms and conditions of employment. This was more convincing if it is appreciated that these crucial areas of union performance were themselves strong issues laden with emotional concern under the ambit of traditional collective bargaining process. This evaluation of workers' assessment, therefore, suggests that the ability of unions to prevail on management in terms of pay and conditions was still considered "primary" area of influence.

However, the analysis further examined the effectiveness of the unions in terms of serious contributions into decision-making process of the managerial practices, and whether indeed unions' roles had made any meaning to them in terms of the work process. A limited spread of positive opinion regarding these items existed amongst the interviewees. Only thirty percent of the interviewees agreed that their union leaders were effective in their representational roles as regards critical issues that took care of their interests. And

just forty two percent of them felt that participation of their unions' leaders made "meaning" to their expectation of the work process.

8.8. Conclusion

As generally indicated in the above analysis, one of the driving forces behind the introduction of joint consultation was to ensure the efficiency and improved performance of the corporation even in the face of competitive challenges. Consequently, components of new managerial practices included; team-working, quality performance and other adjustments in work processes. However, these were not without down-the-path implications for the workers in terms of job intensification and other work overloads and pressure. Therefore, the concern of the workers had been how effective were their leaders in protecting their interests regarding the impact of work process. And this had been aptly demonstrated in their responses. The preponderance of low rating of union leaders in this regard, in spite of tangible benefits in areas of pay and conditions of service, pointed to the fact that the plant workers still experienced work intensification arising from the ensuing work process.

Where loyalty and commitments lay in the emergent context was another parameter used to measure the workers' assessment of unions' roles in the partnership. In order to assess the level of union leaders' loyalty and commitment to members, responses to item 3 on the table were analysed. While the evidence showed a tilt of workers' perception of their union leaders being loyal to them, this must have been influenced by their perceived benefits in the area of pay and allowances. Dimensions of outcomes of the evaluation tended to suggest ambivalence of attitudes and responses of workers to unions' roles. Potential damages to legitimacy of unions, in their own assessments, were mitigated by unions' formidable disposition on issues of terms and conditions of work. And this could have somewhat strengthened the acceptance and legitimacy of unions in the eyes of the members. Members still acknowledged the role of their unions leaders in their active engagement with management on a range of strategic and management issues. However, the degree at which this was not interpreted as "co-option" remained contested.

Even though workers' participation and involvement in joint consultation remained the defining hallmark of "modernisation" of workplace (Stuart et al 2004), in the context of compelling challenges, evidence had indeed shown that outcomes and benefits were not mutually shared by the parties involved. The whole process had not absolutely moved towards "mutuality of interest." Workers' real workplace experience in the context of social partnership was still short of benefits of workplace "democratization" as protagonists tended to push. Through a re-conceptualisation of the modernisation model, and by adopting unions' and members' assessment approach in the evaluation of "exemplary demonstration" of joint consultation in the NNPC, the notion of "mutuality of gains" was shown to be ambivalent and "interpreted differently" by the parties involved. The evaluation did show how the management's strategic objective of joint consultation rarely aligned with what the workers expected from the "alliance".

The compelling imperatives of efficient performance identified in the key areas of managerial practices and work process, that is team-working and total quality programmes in NNPC required a re-integration of attitudes. And in making a case for this through JCC, "structured antagonism" was intensified. In its deployment of strong managerial rhetoric for support for consultation, management had hoped for a mutual interest of participation in the process of managerial decision making process. However, spots of resistance and covert opposition were still noticed. Secondly, even though management continued to make an attempt to elicit the commitment of unions' leaders through a "qualitative" shift in relations, and thereby assisting in legitimising "institutional securities" of unions to members, members' re-interpretations of such relations had also become critical in terms of our understanding of the "modernisation model" Stuart et al (2004), of partnership in the corporation.

Indeed, this evaluation has shown that though the "value" and process of consultation in NNPC remained well-integrated and cut across all facets, designed and promoted to address issues concerning both parties, workers' assessment was found to be something different. More specifically to the plant workers, the normative discourse that the principle and process of JCC designed to qualitatively contribute to improvement in work process did not entirely satisfy them in the key areas used to assess their crucial area of con-

cern, that is, assurance of job security, on whether their opinions and views counted when it came to decision-making and level of work satisfaction in the corporation. On the one hand, the workers came to re-interpret the process and activities of JCC as routine requirements in maintaining labour-management relations, but on the other, also acknowledged its deficit as means for articulating their collective interest in the workplace. My interviews and observation also showed that unions' representational roles within JCC tended to reinforce these multiple dimensions. Members' perceptions and interpretations of management's overtures on the unions continued to cast doubt on the legitimacy of JCC's workplace partnership in NNPC.

Chapter 9: Work and the Articulation of Occupational Interest in the Process Plant.

9.1 Introduction

This Chapter of the research work seeks to evaluate the processes of work in the NNPC, and its implications for occupational identity and collective competence of work activity among the plant's process operators. A "contextualised" social process analysis, (Bernstein, 1996), of collective competence is deployed, which is cast within the ongoing evaluation of implications of work process and skill formation of occupational identity, as existing among the plant operators. Evaluation done here helps to highlight the significance, and what drives the "collegiality" of occupational hegemonic norms in the refinery, which also serves to explain the collective orientation and articulation of "collectives", (occupational interests) along lines of work process within the refinery's plant operation groups. In the context of work process in the NNPC, the embedded "ways of doing things", articulated through collective occupational knowledge, and its manifestation, offers explanation for collective actions in the form of work orientation, with distinctive work process knowledge.

This evaluation forms part of my ethnographic study that analysed the dimensions and implications of collective occupational knowledge of plant operators in the refinery. Utilizing Abaya's (1997). model of "psychological home", occupational knowledge and identity is conceptualized as "a familiar environment, a place where we know our way around, and above all, where we feel secure"(cited in Brown 2004:245). It is the sense of ease and control that defines the hegemonic orientation and collective identity the plant operators attached to their skill and occupation. Dewey, (1916), saw an occupation as "giving direction to life activities, and as a concrete representation of continuity" a long time ago, (Cited in Brown 2004:245). Thus, the social and psychological anchorage provided by such occupational norms and orientation gives meaning to work in its collec-

tives, which also shapes occupational interests and its articulation by plant operators, in the refinery.

At one level, theorising occupational identity this way provides the conceptual approach for understanding identity and the meaning the plant operators placed on their skills and occupation, and which also provides lines of demarcation and differences exhibited by them. Coffey and Atkinson (1994); Evans and Heinz's(1994), model of "occupational socialization"(in Brown 2004:245), have also shown how occupational identity and demarcation have been utilized by workers as processes for defining "inclusion" and "exclusion" and the type of occupational commitment (collective), exhibited by the workers within the solidarity, and also towards the organisation. Lave (1993); Wenger (1998); and Billet (2004 in Brown 2004:246), have also utilized the concept of "processes of skill acquisition" within a work group to explain how individuals have increasingly become "active participants" in the creation of a new "community of practice" which underscores their occupational identity and practices.

Brown's (1997), model of "occupational identity formation" (in Brown 2004:246), upon which themes such as work processes, and in which work activities are embedded is utilized here. The model also talked about the issues of social relations at work, and issues of continuous learning and developments for skill formation, all served as theoretical cornerstone for exploring and explaining dimensions and manifestations of occupational identity in the refinery. This theoretical construct was also utilized in the context of work process in which individual employees attached importance and concern to implications such as "job sustainability, skills utilization and the implications of shifting dimensions of career development" in the organisation (Heinz 2002 cited in Brown 2004:246). Heinz (2002), also looks at how the processes of occupational identity formation shaped "biography" of individual workers in terms of "career importance". Our analysis here is thus concerned with occupational identity as agentic concerns of workers in their collective, within the plant's operating environment. As noted by Brown 1997; Ibarra 2003, "sources of occupational identity formation are diverse and multi-faceted shaped by issues such as the specific character of the work group itself in terms of levels of skills, the particular work environment" (cited in Brown 2004:246). This may be referred to as the embedded

“ways of doing things”, the work processes and the engendered social relations at work. Levels and degree of importance attached to these processes shape workplace occupational identity.

As shown in the preceding evaluations, one of the significant dimensions for understanding how NNPC has been responding to operating challenges, and the need for improved performance has been through the processes of knowledge and competence building. NNPC puts strong emphasis on the use of institutional framework for learning and development as a means for achieving the competence-base for the corporation. Boreham’s (2004), models of “collective competence” and “work process knowledge” provide bases for understanding how the corporation has been able to build on its competence-base, and skill formation of the workforces. Boreham’s (2004), conceptualisation also resonates with our earlier analysis of the importance NNPC attached to teamwork and practices in the corporation. Workers’ enactment of collective role and occupational identity within a team is understood to go beyond individual employees within the team, and which also allows an appreciation and understanding of the “collective sense” in responding to the challenging situations. To Boreham (2004:1) the capacity of a work team to construct collective understanding and competence to meet organisational challenges “depends on building and making use of the “collective knowledge” and the engendered “lateral interdependency” within the work group that is equally deployed by the workers to make sense and respond to a wide range of production and work processes.

Tracing this understanding back to my earlier analysis of normative ethos and practices that drive workplace institutional learning systems in NNPC, it has here been demonstrated that workers in the plants have been able to utilize their “collective competence” to underpin workplace collaboration and “cross-boundary” roles-activity in their performance of plant operations. In the context of plant operation processes in the refinery, knowledge of plant process is essential to collective competence, and this is referred to as “operations knowledge” directly deployed for work performance. Such operations knowledge is enacted and demonstrated at the “point of production”, typically utilized in solving plant process operation problems. Thus, going by Boreham’s (2004:1), it also involves not only tacit knowledge but also “experiential knowledge acquired on the job”.

Contained in literature on “shopfloor-collectives” of work process are conceptualisations concerning the generation of group cohesions and solidarity in meeting challenges facing the group. For instance, Collinson (1992), Willis (1979), Darlington (1998), Hall et al. (2007) and Salaman (1986) have all shown how team-work processes have become bases around which occupational solidarity remains a platform for carrying out plant operations. Implicit in the shop-floor collective is the ability of members to channel their individual and collective competence regarding work activity. Shopfloor collective, therefore, provides the pivot for meeting operational challenges in the refinery, and for confirming individual competence in terms of socio-technical ability. Occupational sub-cultures in the process plants create work solidarity that cuts across skills formation, engendering a “group unity” and “collegial mutuality” in solving operational problems. Shopfloor occupational sub-culture is here understood to mean complex, but “shared assumptions” which underpin processes of collective activity of the process operations. And it is in this social process that occupational identities are formed. As argued by Brown (1997), the processes of forming “occupational identities are socially situated”, and contextually embedded with work process in the operation plants. These processes also take on the “agentic characteristics” of the individuals in the social process of work activity.

Re-interpreted as “community of practice”, occupational identity formation is seen as “relational social process” through which skills formation takes place “within a broader process of identity formation” (Brown 1997:4). In this process of occupational identity formation, there is “interdependence of structure and agency” through “which individual employees assume the roles and identities that are pre-existent”(Brown 1997:4). Nevertheless, scopes exist for these individuals to bring to bear their “biography” and “agency” in acting upon “the structures and processes” (Brown 1997:5) in shaping both their skills and workplace identity.

9.2. Agentic Engagement of Individuals in the Construction of Occupational Identity

In the context of dynamic work practices and processes, particularly as this concerns process operations, individual employees demonstrate active involvement in the construction

of their own occupational identity. Building on Brown's (1996, 1997), dynamic model of occupational identity formation, it is here argued that individual workers in the process plant are themselves active in enacting their work identity, and this shapes how they perceive development in the work process in the process plant. Identity at work is not just being a worker doing his own bits, "but is all bound up with other factors that are also active in constructing the identity" (Brown 1997:3). The great expectations concerning job security, career growth, are all mediated by non-workplace factors, in fulfilling the other roles the worker assumed as a breadwinner and community member. Also, the changing work processes and practices may elicit both "direct" and "indirect" agentic responses from the individual worker. The individual would have to tackle the challenges of both "old" and "new" ways of doing things in the organisation. It is also in this context that his agentic construction and identity would have to be helpful in constructing relations with "significant others"; such as the team mates, supervisors and other workers who "can also be influential in the formation of his occupational identity at work as an individual" (Brown 1997:5). The social relations between these significant others have also been identified "as salient in the process of any workplace identity formation" (Brown 1997:5). Also, the distinctive work communities remain a cluster around which the processes of occupational identities are formed. The skilled worker in the process plant relies on the explicit "support, encouragement and advice" (Brown 1997:5), from mentors and teammates to attain the orientations and behavioural standards expected of him as plant process operator. The distinct community of practices upon which "mixed occupational traits" are embedded shape the manner in which the individual worker constructs his work identity, and in relations to others (Brown 1996).

Brown's (1996, 1997) "dynamic model" in the individual's construction of occupational identity and his agentic engagement fits into Lave's (1991) theoretical framework of "situated learning in Community of Practice (CoP) in explaining the mediating role of socio-cultural analysis of collective competence and knowledge base dynamics in the workplace (Morgan and Boreham 2004). Lave (1991), argues that workers' "knowledgeable skill" and occupational identity are subsumed in CoP. And the ensuing "social practice" needed for "work activity" is underpinned by agentic interdependence of actors – the workers. More importantly as pointed out by Lave (1991) in Morgan and Boreham

2004:309), the process of developing such occupational learning skills and practices is also underpinned by a “process of social and cultural mediators” which gives meaning to the individual in the on-going workplace activity. As explanatory models, workplace collective competence and knowledge-base, surrounding work process of plant operations and practices in NNPC rest on Brown’s (1996,1997), Lave’s (1991) and Morgan and Boreham’s(2004), analyses. And this is deployed in evaluating the social processes and relational dynamics of “work activity” among the plant process operators. Morgan and Boreham’s (2004), model is brought in as theoretical construct to explain the relational dynamics of “work activity” in the process plant. However, their models of analysis are located within mainstream sociological praxis, which does not account for other dimensions that will be explicated upon later, that is the embedded power- relations.

Still within mainstream sociological analysis, collective competence as analytical concept has been viewed as an incorporating means of “co-constructing, in explicit and relatively structured ways” (Fuller and Unwin 2002), among team members or a work group. This distinctive feature of collective competence has, therefore, made collective plant process roles a “co-activity” among the plant process workers. Therefore, from social-relational perspective of learning “how things are done” in the process plant, collective competence may be re-interpreted as context embedded, allowing skill formation for individual’s workers, but also redefining relational patterns in ways that fulfil work processes. In other words, for the plant operators, the socio-relational dimensions of work process are “mutually constitutive”. The mutual constitutiveness of collective competence and operations process allows “collectivistic interpretations”, and consequently, how they go about their work roles in the process plants. Pivotal to the relevance of the socio-relational model as gleaned from Morgan and Boreham (2004) (Doorewaard and Brouns 2003:109). is the repertoire of “tools” i.e. language, in coded form, and “cultural artefacts” that are mobilised, and guide the social process of “work activity”. Drawn into our argument in this understanding, it includes those artefacts enacted collectively for problem-solving activity in the process plants. The cultural artefacts are the “socially-constructed” nuances of the process operations in their “community of practice.” Performance of task and the competence dimension of it, have therefore become an “integral part of generative social practices” Morgan and Boreham (2004:309) and not a mere de-

ployment of labour-power on the task to be performed. To the workers, according to Boreham, (2000); and Boreham et al (2002), knowledge or skill deployed in “work activity” has become a collective resource; a dynamic manifestation of interactions between themselves, artefacts, that is, language and codes specific to the “work activity, and the work itself” (cited in Morgan and Boreham 2004:209).

Re-conceptualised from Engestrom’s (1987, 2001), and Leontev’s (1978), model of “higher functions” of skills and practice, collective competence in the process plant is re-interpreted here as “work activity system” whose groups’ or participants’ orientations are tilted towards collective roles, for example, plant process operations, mediated by task differentiation of team members from many operating procedures codified in “cultural artefacts” for instance, charts, blue-prints, meetings, briefings and computers. Collective roles in the performance of tasks are located and indeed guided by the “repertoire of artefacts, which also remains a significant constituent” Morgan and Boreham (2004:310), of the group for carrying out work activity. Also, the “expansive learning” Engestom’s (2001), dimension of the collective culture and competence enables the team member to learn and co-relate in a manner that moves beyond “occupational boundaries,” that might be imposed by skills or task demarcation. Expansive learning as described by Morgan and Boreham (2004:310), “occurs when the group constructs new working practices by reflecting collectively on the whole work activity system” in solving the operation’s problems.

9.3. Work Activity and its Collective Competence Dimensions in the Process Plant: labour process evaluation

Evaluation of the plant’s operation work process, in its collective dimension is done in this Chapter, based on the conceptual approach highlighted above. This has involved the dimensions of collective knowledge building and horizontal communication, and providing “cultural repertoire” to mediate process plant work activity. Work process in the plant is carried out around three major task areas; plant operations, plant maintenance and monitoring of quality of production. Tasks to be performed by the team of plant operators in this form, typically comprising ten to twelve members cut across the relevant task are-

as. There is expected to be technical co-ordination and coherence across these skill/technical lines. For a stable operation system, the tasks of this team include controlling, regulating, optimising and starting and shutting down valves.

The position of the Control Room Operations as indicated elsewhere in this study is also very important in this process. Depending on the conditions of the process operation, control room operations provide back-up information for the plant operators that are inside the plant. Monitoring the performance of the plant operation, and reporting the faults have to be balanced with information relay between the plant operators and the control room. For instance, an apparent faulty functioning of a particular instrument or installations may at times give wrong signals or information to control-room; this has to be counter-checked by the plant operators. As noted by one of the plant operators, “in order to prevent any error, we normally re-read and counter-check the pumps by going inside to record and compare with what the console gives.” This implies, on the one hand, that work process is interdependent, and on the other, it also emphasises that Plant Operators must be acquainted with the order and routines, and must not be reluctant about the routine checks of the pumps’ parameter.

The routine checks and reading of valves of the temperatures may appear as just routine, but it also significantly brings home the value of tacit knowledge and competence of the operators. As remarked by the Superintendent, “when the value of a parameter is noticed to go outside the normal, the operator is expected to begin to anticipate problems”, in such circumstance, there are some of the “rules of thumb” he can use, but most importantly, he brings his experience to bear, depending on the complexity and dimensions of the problems.” Thus, knowledge and experience of daily performance of the process plant re-emphasises the competence-base of the task team in the plant.

Coping with problems of the process operations involves not just being familiar with the entire plant “inside and outside”, but also being experienced in its complex dimensions, and how they are connected in terms of process flow. This, according to the Superintendent, involves developing in the plant operators, multi-level skills in order to be able to work in all sections of the plant’s installation. Thus, knowledge-understanding of process

operations, with inside the plant experience, goes hand in hand with the refinery task of the process operator. As will be discussed subsequently, acquisition of the plant process collective knowledge in its complex dimensions is facilitated by the Plant Operating Sheet, (POS); a codified manual, meant to guide the plant operators' tasks.

As a highly automated, continuous process flow environment, operating and controlling “work activity”-labour process, is carried out by both “manual” and “automatic” controls. The automatic control being an advanced one, designed to “prompt up” awareness of any fault, and how to act in rectifying the problem. A typical disturbance in the process operation occurs when, for instance “parameters go beyond the boundaries.” This disturbance is not just a disturbance to plant operations, but also a disturbance to the often “quiet moments” the plant operators may be enjoying in their “rest-room” as a result of the self-operating, automated system of the continuous process flow. Thus, as remarked by one of the plant operators, “it is always a clarion call for all of us in moments of this disturbance.” This remark underscores how important the task of the operators is, in responding promptly and effectively in moments of disturbance. A good understanding of the entire process in its complexity and operations, and in teasing out the procedures for tackling the difficult situations are provided by the Plant Operating Sheet (POS). The procedures and processes to follow in “starting and stopping” the operations in moments of “critical incidents” are provided as guides in the Plant Operating Sheet (POS).

Work process within the operating environment of the plant, therefore, required a degree of preparedness on the part of the operators; in one moment it could be “quiet”, and indeed for a long stretch of days, the operators could be having their “fun” in the rest rooms and spaces they carved out for exchanging all kinds of “shopfloor banter and jokes”, and abruptly, disturbance and critical incidents could necessitate temporary “shut-down” requiring full interventions. A typical daily work routine for the team leaders and his members would start with what is referred to as a “controlling or monitoring tour” of the process plant. They would take predetermined routes as contained in the Sheet round the plant with the leader holding a “handheld computer”. He used this to verify the reading of the valves parameters, en route, as they moved round the plant. This helps to provide needed information which is later fed into the control room for cross checking and feed-

back. As I observed during one of our “tours” of the plant, the processes of detecting any fault in flow process involved not just writing down the information, the team “feels”, “smells” and “hears” the sound of the operation of the installation. As we moved along round the plant, they double checked everything was working well. As the team leader remarked, “though you have to record the numbers and figures, you also need to feel it this way, you double-check everything is perfectly working well. For instance, as he remarked, the temperature gauge could be in the right place, but again, there could be a leaking pipe, valves and holes that needed greasing. Thus, though the work process activity might revolve round the performance of automatic process flow system, the experience that came through sensory perception mediated a purely technical understanding of work routine in the process operations, and this equally remained crucial in terms of collective work competence.

Though, the “inspection tour” being described here could be technical and predetermined, the mediating roles of sensory perceptions of smells, sound, feeling of the entire complex installation make the work process an “integrated-whole” for a complete understanding of the flow process. “In this way, I always tell my boys to see, feel, smell and hear for themselves, how a pipe is operating, and hear the sound of a valve, for them to make sense of the entire process,” remarked the team leader during one of our tours.

The significance of this for our evaluation and understanding here, is looking at the “social-process or cultural” dimensions of work process in the plant, which requires competent knowledge, and which also goes beyond the technical side of the work process. There are differences in the processes of functioning of the plant operations, and this equally requires differences in way of sensing and interpreting the functioning. Understanding the operating systems of the plant from this collective point of view requires bringing in the “specificity” of the knowledge, in terms of the “repertoire of artefacts” required to interpret the functioning. And this often entails integrative work knowledge and understanding of the entire process. These are noted in the remarks of the Superintendent, on one of our inspection tours in the plant; “when you open a valve gently, you cannot determine whether the pipe is flowing through, you need to bring in other variables that challenge your sensory perceptions.”

Thus, though it may be assumed that the daily work routine of the inspection is highly technical as information gathering, “the operators need to bring in their knowledge in verifying and reporting what they have observed,” remarked the Superintendent. Also, as he remarked further, “our routine check is never an “open-ended” one; you need to pay attention to some other factors before making your report.” “On-the-spot” observation and immediate responses of the plant operators “on tour” also counted in shaping their collective competence. For instance, a water or steam leak might not necessitate making a report on, but looking round the entire spot, and putting on an instant remedy by turning another valve in another direction might even fix up a pipe or valve that was already making a noise somewhere else in the entire installation. This dimension of work process and understanding was built upon by Control Room’s “inter-mediation”. As “over viewer” of the entire plant process operation, the Control Room could give certain specific instructions to what the plant operators must do. For instance, the control room could advise to make manual adjustments to temperature and reading of valves and pipes temperature in attempt to counter-balance some other “incidents” within the entire process.

From the perspective of Engestrom’s “expansive learning”, therefore, work process in the process plant for the plant operators could be said to revolve round having a “broad competence” profile that put into consideration not only technical competence but also a “socio-cultural symbiosis” of attitude towards Quality Production, Safety of Environment, in an integrated/interconnected manner. Teams’, and members’ collective sense and interpretation of the specific dimensions of the process operation, broadened into building up the “professional” and collective competence needed for the work process. These specific and detailed competence profiles needed to operate effectively as plant operators were also broadened into understanding the utility of the Plant Operating Sheet as guides that underscored the refinery drive for improved performance, quality of products, safe operating environment and safety of the plant operators.

9.4. The use of the Plant Operating Sheet (POS) in the Plant: a Culture Mediated Process

In what follows here, the discussion will focus on the utility of the Plant Operating Sheet (POS), and how it was mediated by what had been referred to as repertoire of “languages” and “codes”. The relevance and the use of plant operation sheets and guides remain in the domain of how it facilitated collective knowledge and work process in the plant. The dimensions with which the plant operators made sense of the sheet underscore its usefulness as guides for process operations. In demonstrating the conceptual relevance of “expanded learning” model among the plant operators, the utility of POS as operating guides is here elaborated upon. This is done not only as basis for technical competence build-up process for plant operators, but how its use is mediated in its socio-cultural dimensions.

In the context of plant process operations of the refinery, (POS) could be described as “guides-framework” for monitoring and measuring plant’s processing and flow of petroleum oil and other products. This entails that certain procedures must be followed for the plant operations to perform at efficient and optimal level. In the process of monitoring and controlling the process flow, the “Sheets” serve as “benchmarks” or procedures for certain tasks routine, as “intervention procedures” in keeping the plant working. Such interventions are not only meant for operational efficiency, but also underscore the procedures to follow for safety and protection of the plant. As noted by the plant Superintendent “the daily tasks within the plant are important, routine checks must be accurate and procedures to be followed must be understood by all.”

However, and as noted above, from socio-cultural dimension of work process in the plant, the “codified Sheet” is not just a technical artefact; rather it is interpreted in the manner which fitted into the whole social-cultural dimension of the work process itself, in the plant. The plant process operating procedures as contained in the Sheet did not only incorporate procedures in terms of knowledge and competence expected for operational efficiency, they also embodied “living experiences” of senior experienced workers. Such experiences were typified in “incident reports” which were subsequently codified to guide future operational behaviours. Incident happenings such as “disturbances” called to

task the living experience and knowledge of the plant operators and supervisors in tackling the problems. The description and solutions to the problems were put in writing afterwards for guidance when similar incidents happen. Solutions to incident happenings reflected not only “transcribed knowledge” for work activity, but also indicated the experience of senior operators in the context. Thus, constant and regular reference to the “process procedures” in the Sheet consolidated the “experiential learning” of young operators in the process plant. Generally, operations knowledge related to issues of not only technical operational procedures but also behavioural expectations concerning environment, safety and quality.

Plant operators’ experiential learning is gained more in moments of critical incidents. Procedures for fixing the problems are collectively learned in such circumstances. Descriptions of the nature of the problems are not only written down for future references, or as “operations memory,” procedures followed in solving a particular problem are also documented. Thus collective learning from critical incidents in the plant did not come from the experiences of the operators alone; it was a “group-dynamic” thing, a kind of “group thought” that cohered to the entire social process of collective understanding for plant operations efficiency. This implies that suggestions and ideas for solutions and practical activities got through the group. Based on individuals’ and members’ understanding, and how to ensure improvements, these ideas and suggestions were discussed and eventually became incorporated in the guide. Given the nature and character of work process in the plant, it implies that ideas from such a group when pooled could provide needed ways of ensuring operational efficiency. Work process in the plant with strong emphasis on teamworking, it was believed, would stimulate and incorporate creative ideas from the different skill-mix that formed the team. And in one of the remarks from the Superintendent, “occasional problems from the plant operations tend to task the creative thinking of the operators, and we tend to make use of this in constructive and demonstrable ways for all to see.” And for the purpose of making contributions to suggestions on how to solve problems arising from incident happenings, individual plant operators were expected to have, and keep a recording book as they moved around during the “monitoring tour”. “Such note-taking makes it easier to “decode” and “interpret” operating procedures as contained in the guide,” remarked one of the plant operators. A gradu-

ate trainee (3 months in the plant) whom I met in the plant was assigned a mentor, Emeka – an experienced plant operator whom he followed, as we moved around on “monitoring tour”. And he was always handy with his recording book. “Here in this recording book, I put down every important information and observation I noticed as we pass by each of the installations,” he said. Thus, the social process of interaction in the context of the work process in the plant stimulated a transfer of knowledge from the experienced mentor to the graduate trainee. The dynamics of social process of such relations at the plant level allowed for the growth of collective work knowledge needed for the plant operation.

Central to the working and objective of the plant process operating sheet in the plant was to identify and repeat “best practice” in operating procedures, for example, the procedures to follow in bringing a repaired pump into operation. The significance of utilizing the guidelines as contained in the Sheet was, among others to promote a sharing of collective experience and knowledge needed in doing this. In the context of the refinery, the Sheet guided operation procedures through the various steps to be taken emphasising “critical points” regarding safety matters and operational efficiency. And with the help of external consultants occasionally brought into the plant, the Sheet became the basis for knowledge sharing that had to do with project or tasks to be carried out in the plant. As a way to show the dimension of this collective knowledge and experience pool, the Sheet was produced by both the experienced operators who could be the Superintendents, and the plant operators with “experts guide” from the consultants invited into the plant.

A good example in the use and modification of the Sheet was done during my stay at the plant. There was a “task-team” set up comprising the plant Superintendent, the Supervisors, and the Process Operators to respond to an “incident happening” which was a valve linkage problem in the flow process. With the help of the consultant, the group came together to establish the procedures for rectifying the situation in what they referred to as a “cost-effective” way. Using the codified guidelines as contained in the Sheet, the task team identified what they referred to as “Incident Assessment” priorities, and procedures to follow in remedying the situation. Though the task’s team exercise and activity was expected to be structured in line with Sheets’ guidelines and codes, it was observed that the process of “fixing” the problem was more of an informal social relations type; tapping

on the collective experience of those present as “groupthink” with suggestions and contributions not particularly rigid and regimented to the Consultant or the Superintendents.

In essence, apart from the detailed operating procedures expected to be followed, collective knowledge and experience of team members became more relevant in situations of “incident happenings”. Practical working and utilization of the Sheet in the plant essentially involved sharing experiences and knowledge among the operators that constituted the task team. Knowledge building and work process was collective, allowing discussion and consensual approach in fixing the problem. The collective, which is important for plant work process, and which the guides seemed to promote, became important as a learning platform for the young graduate trainee who was a member of the team. As remarked by the Superintendent, “by involving all, we all share experience no matter how small, from every member.” Everybody talked, based on previous experience and similar occurrence in the past. By promoting such collective knowledge sharing, there was a feeling of collective ownership in the knowledge of plant operation.

In a sense, therefore, it could be argued that because of the culture of collective sharing of experience within the plant, work process was facilitated by “horizontal communication” and participation in the plant. Apart from “pooling of knowledge” that “incident happenings” provoked, the use of the Plant Operating Sheet was strengthened by the existing knowledge and understanding of all. Through this horizontal communication and discussion, collective learning was extended more widely. Knowledge generated through the culture of “shared experience” permeated the task team, guiding members during the process of what the Superintendent referred to as “critical process points” that demanded greater attention to quality products and safety measures in the plant. The operating sheet as a “codified assemble” seemed to have, therefore, characterised work process culture in the plant, thereby reinforcing continuous collective learning in the process plant. Also, by making operation procedures and interventions explicit, informal training specification and learning was provided for the work process group.

Indeed, apart from being an essential guideline for the “renewal” of work processes, for instance, during and after attentions to critical incidents and procedures, the culture of

collective that characterised the operating procedure allowed co-opting and mainstreaming the views and opinions of all plant operators. The collective culture observed in the use of the operating sheet facilitated the integration of views and opinions of task team. The level of competence and technical skill expected to generate practical solutions was also facilitated by “joint meetings” of the entire work process team. Layers of meeting of plant process operators facilitated modifications that were deemed necessary for subsequent guides in its use, and contributions of all matter. In the context of the plant process operations, task teams or work groups are a composition of skilled operators whose opinions and comments remain valuable in shaping operational procedures. In the plant, the following layers of meetings were put in place to facilitate collective knowledge pooling for operational efficiency; Plant Operation Meetings for the purpose of “tracking” and solving incidental technical and operational problems of the plant. Participants at the meeting cut across technical skills and included all members of the taskteam. Discussions and deliberations at this meeting which came up once a week intersects with the Technical Meetings of the Supervisors and Team Leaders in the plant. Problems of major technical and operational problems in the specific process plant which might have been identified during the series of monitoring tours were brought up for discussion. The meetings of Team Members on shifts were for the purpose of exchanging relevant information concerning shift schedules for shift members. In the words of the plant Superintendent, “These meetings at their various stages are very important for operational efficiency of the plant operations.” Such meetings updated procedures for work process in the plant and steps for solving operation’s problems. Its collective character explains its important role in integrating skill formation of various plant operators. Updates on procedures to be incorporated in the Sheet, as well as identified problems with necessary interventions were firstly discussed at these layers and task-team levels.

As indicated elsewhere in this discussion, a Plant Operating Sheet was conceived as part of plant-specific operations and intervention procedures. It became the “artefact” for knowledge dissemination needed for smooth running of the plant. Steps for compliance with safety and environmental measures and for trouble-shooting were included. The collective dimension of its use stressed the recognition given to various occupational groups and skill formation within the plant work process. Contributions for the modifica-

tion and improvement of its use seemed to be a bottom-up type allowing for suggestions from the plant operators. And this started with the coalition of relevant information and suggestions about the state of plant operations from the various layers of meetings identified above. The concern of each of the layers was to obtain information and clarify issues by discussing relevant information with colleagues. Therefore, a collective learning impact was observed to arise from joint discussion within the teams presided over by the experienced team leader, the Supervisor and the Superintendent, and possibly the in-plant Consultant. The very process of integrating all these levels of work process and experience, in the use or modification of the operating sheet provided the plant operators with clarity and precise identification of processes of trouble-shooting and the interventions to follow. Thus, because of the “activity-oriented” use of the Sheet, it guided and provided the specific processes in problem identification and its solution. Procedures for the use of the guide, with specific reference to the following were provided in the Sheet; overview of all parts of the plant installation, with specific attention to the functional interdependence, and steps for process operation, procedures for early recognition of faults in the plant’s operation process, and approaches to effect solutions. Plant Operators of the relevant skill-mix get acquainted with the Sheet in order to get an overview of the functioning of all the parts of the installation. The integrative nature of the task process in the use of the Sheet reinforces learning on the job and skilling-up of plant operators.

9.5. Culture of Collective Knowledge-Sharing and Skilling-Up in the Plant Process Operations

From the preceding discussion, the processes or steps for the modification and up-dating of the Plant Operating Sheet as guides could be interpreted as integrative. It involved consolidating the experiential learning of the plant operators in their collective. It also demonstrated a skilling system, as it was linked to the whole process of showing how knowledge and experience could be built up in the operating plant; leading to knowledge-creation and sharing. In its collective, knowledge about process operation moved above mere “documentation”, it became “generative” and remains relevant in its cultural-social process form.

The operating procedures as signifier of a collective knowledge-base were not just on direct routine operations, but something to collectively reflect upon in moments of “emergencies and disturbances”. Procedures of interventions in moments of disturbance were diligently carried out by all members of the team. It was through the collective culture of knowledge-sharing that the procedures for monitoring and controlling the operations of the plant, ensuring that the smooth functioning and connectivity of parts were carried out. The gradual transformation of the informal plant learning process into a form of collective knowledge-base, firms up the skill profile of the process operators. Contents of the “sheet” were oriented towards skill building of the plant operators. The complexity of operating process in the plant confronted the entire work team from the Operators, Supervisors, Superintendent, Plant Consultants, even to the Trainee Operators. For this reason, the informal settings through which learning procedures were carried out facilitated collective knowledge-building. Experiences were exchanged both in “structured” and informal processes between the Operators, Consultants and the Supervisors. The informal setting of collective culture of the plant through which knowledge was fostered was equally facilitated by various non-work activities, for example, sporting activities and tournaments involving the various work teams.

Our discussions in this Chapter so far have thus shown that plant process operations in the refinery in the context of the use of the Plant Operating Sheet could be described as “organic”, “knowledge-creating” and an information disseminating environment in which process operators were grouped around information and process flow, “reinforcing team working and capacity” (Boreham, 2004:2). The discussion also aligns with Boreham’s (2004) normative principles, guiding the process operation that is, making collective sense of events-“incident happenings” in the plant. The typical response of process operators to critical situations further stimulated group discussion in order to make sense of the event. The discussion was not just on how to “fix” the problem but “narratives” and “stories” that made the event more comprehensible to the group. And in making sense through narratives, the task team would need to deploy “repertoire of languages” that was equally meaningful within the domain of the event and the group. “Artefacts” relevant to the work process were shared and maintained over time, reinforcing collective knowledge of the group. Collective knowledge is noted by Boreham (2004:4), as refer-

ring to “the epistemic preconditions relevant to the language use.” Knowledge as contained in the technical language and their artefacts such as the operating sheet was shared by the process operators. Culture of collective knowledge within the plant was “maintained” and “renewed” through their interactions with these artefacts. Such collective sense of identification with work knowledge reinforced the “sense of interdependency” (Boreham 2004:4), which also underpinned collective purpose in responding to the challenging situations.

In Boreham, et al (1992 cited in Boreham 2004:6), work process is conceptualized as “co-configurative in which knowledge guides the work, and the work constructs the knowledge.” As evidenced in the above discussion, plant operators’ construction of work process knowledge had been in response to problem or critical happening which required “stepping out of fragmented work rule” (Boreham 2004:6), into infusing collective knowledge in finding solutions to the problem. Deployed for the performance of work, “work process knowledge is constructed by employees while they are engaged in work, especially when they are solving problems” (Boreham 2004:6). As opposed to just knowing technical details of operating procedures, work process knowledge in the context analysed above is typified by “synthesis of codified and experiential knowledge in a dialectical process of solving contradictions in the workplace” (Boreham 2004:6). The synthesis of experiential learning in a context of work process enabled the process operators to construct the understanding innovatively and in an integrative manner.

In exploring the link between work process knowledge and collective competence, Boreham and Morgan (2004 cited in Boreham 2004:8) explain how workers are able to “enact work process knowledge as essential component of collective competence” Boreham’s (2004:8), characterisation of workplace work process is a re-composition of work routines into “self-managing teams; multi-skill formation of teams and use of extensive lateral and horizontal communication by means of “all-to-table” discussions”. Reinforcing workers’ knowledge, as noted by Boreham is a “collective view of competence and development of work process knowledge” (Boreham 2004: 8).

Boreham's(2004) analysis and description fitted in well with our analysis of collective competence at PHRC, in particular showing how plant operators' "co-enactment" of work process knowledge underpinned work process at the plant level. At the PHRC's plant process level, and following the need to ensure efficient and uninterrupted process operations, "critical incident" points that might critically affect flow process, were jointly identified by the team members. Embarking on such "joint identification" often entailed making a "collective sense of the problem"(Boreham2004:9), through a "repertoire" of collective knowledge modes and high degree of interdependence of roles and skills. It entailed "synthesising" diverse skill profile formations of Plant Operators, Supervisors and the Superintendent and the Consultants. Characterising work process knowledge within the plant and solving "critical incidents" problems was a "system-level" understanding of the critical flow process of the plant. The needed collective knowledge required for carrying this out could only be achieved and disseminated among team members through discussions, embracing the perspectives of all categories of the plant operators.

Thus, our discussion of work routines and processes at the plant level of the refinery entered into the levels of theorization and conceptualisation provided by authors such as Boreham et al (2004). An explanatory framework had been found in socio-cultural theories with regard to situated learning and work-based knowledge formation and distribution. As long noted by Leont'ev (1978, cited in Boreham 2004:10), "central to understanding of the role of socio-cultural models is the significance of "artefacts" such as language in mediating learning and communication". Artefacts here implied the technical languages of the work process in the plant, deployed in "mediating" work knowledge distribution and acquisition. In this context, "artefact" i was further understood as a "social object", and means through which agentic work activities of the plant operators were enacted and expressed round the social object. In the process operating plant, operating procedures were enacted, codified in the repertoire of languages and placed at the disposal of every individual as "operations memory" or Sheet and served as references for process operations.

From a socio-cultural perspective, these “artefacts are symbolic tools embodying the work process knowledge, and are also embedded within the teamwork activity” (Boreham 2004:10). The mediating role of these artefacts was observed when the plant operators utilized the “symbolic tools to regulate their work activity” (Boreham 2004:10). Mediating roles of these socio-cultural artefacts in forms of languages and codes are also constructed in the building of “operation memory”. Also, in Vygotsky’s explanation (cited in Boreham 2004:10) “people think, act and accommodate themselves within the functions and limits of these symbolic tools.” There is a “socially constructed” work process knowledge that flows from this narrative and enactment of this repertoire.

In this discussion, plant operators not only aligned their work process with the “operation memory” of the Sheet, but also allowed the Sheet to guide their work process surrounding critical incidents in the plant’s operations. From the standpoint of “social process” of work in the plant, therefore, “operation memory” in the form of tools was not just “physical artefacts”; they incorporated “a social utilization tool[s]” (Leont’ev 1978, cited in Boreham 2004:11), with its embedded social process of plant operators’ perceptions of the artefacts within the plant process operations. Within the process plant, the concept of “social utilization” of the repertoire became central in explaining how work process was understood within the collective. Indeed, it was the “culture of its use” (Boreham 2004:11), which reinforced the collective competence of the work team within the plant. Even though the operating procedures within the plant might be perceived as physical, for instance turning the valve, gauging the flow and measuring the temperatures, there were underpinning “socio-cultural” processes that reinforced continuous process flow and cross-boundary work team.

Conceptualised as something existing in the “socio-cultural” perception of the plant operators, the prevailing work process and the underpinning artefacts, in their “social utilization” context, therefore, explained the collective competence and knowledge-base of the operators. The “social-technical” use of the operating procedures went beyond just turning the valves; they were all embedded in an interwoven complex social process of work process rhythm within the plant. Enactment of such “community of practice” creates the social process of work that maintained and sustained the lived work experiences of the

Plant Operators. Apart from its device to “mediate and negotiate” skills and competent utilization, it redefined social relation practices in the plant, thereby opening space for creation and distribution of shared knowledge in the plant.

Evaluation and discussion done so far in this Chapter of the work tallies with the empirical evidence and description that the Plant Operating Sheet as “operations memory” generates a socio-cultural dimension of workplace knowledge and collective competence that cuts across occupational boundaries. Thematic outcomes of the descriptions have been located in the three dimensions of Boreham’s (2004), analysis in which the plant process work environment opened up space for the creation of “shared knowledge”, and concomitantly provided cultural tools in the form of “codified language” to mediate plant operation’s learning and knowledge-sharing. This consequently recomposed the work process that cut across skills formation within the plant.

9.6. Beyond Collective Competence and Work Process: reinserting Labour Process Perspective

Analysis and description so far, in this Chapter, have remained in the genre and tradition of mainstream sociology of work approach to understanding work process in the plant process operations of the refinery. As demonstrated above, obtained empirical evidence thus privileged the utility of mainstream sociological theoretical constructs adopted for the analysis of work process, and issues surrounding it, within the remit of collective competence and work process concepts.

In what follows, however, attempts will be made to re-conceptualise the analysis within critical theorization, in particular to situate the analysis within the field of critical sociology of work. In providing an alternative lens to understanding work process, labour process analysis offers additional clarity to our comprehension of “politics” of workplace collective competence of work process. As an attempt has been made not to engage with “skilling/deskilling” debates of industrialisation and post-industrialisation (Braverman 1974), the politics of collective competence of work process is further located and explained in terms of critical, Marxian labour process perspective.

Contained in “up-skilling” argument, Spencer (1979); Nonaka and Takarchi (1995); Tam (1999in Sawchuk 2008:3), and as illustrated in our discussion so far, regarding collective competence of work process, it has been claimed that “work has progressively become more skilled with its enduring characteristics.” Much of this observation has been contained in my analysis of plant process operation in the refinery. And in order to avoid the risk of internalising the essentialist principles described earlier on, as dominant and ever-prevalent perspective, critical labour process perspective is introduced here to reconceptualise workplace collective competence and work process. From labour process analysis, collective competence is conceptualised to move away from the “lofty” managerialist rhetoric that seemed to characterise the “new realities” of workplace employment relations where “participatory productivity” becomes the normative orientation for both workers and the management. Analysed from critical traditions of sociology of work, “participatory productivity has become a signifier of inherent power/relations dynamics in the workplace and “stands as proxy for power/control struggles” (Sawchuk 2008:1).As it is interpreted as a new political system of workplace “power-relations” dynamics, collective competence and skill formation is, therefore to be “decentred” from the participatory managerialist perceptive. As noted in Sawchuk (2008), the discourse of collective skill and its utilization in the contemporary workplace has come to reflect particular essentialist managerial interest in its prevalent understanding, which inevitably raises some “deep political questions” (Sawchuk 2008:1). It follows, therefore, that there is the need to “question” the underlying assumptions explored and described above, as drawn from mainstream observation and analysis of workplace sociology of the plant. Indeed, if the structured contradictions inherent in capitalist employment relations continue to serve as a “default” for analysis, it stands to logic that the essentialist assumptions of “absolute” and “total” agentic commitment of employees is “deficit” in accounting for the dialectics and ambivalence of labour-management relations.

This section of the Chapter, therefore, proceeds with a critique of the key assumptions underlying the narrative of “participatory productivity” under the current modes of collective competence in the process plant. It is an alternative conceptualisation of collective skill and work process in the plant. It seeks to draw upon most recent contributions that highlight the enduring forms and themes surrounding the critiques. Critique of collective

competence and dimensions of work processes in the plant is a recast of conceptual tools in order to capture not only the salient dimensions of politics of collective competence, but also the employment relations implications of it. Analysis pursued here leads to reconstruction of conceptual tools for understanding the repertoire of other workplace implications of collective competence. Thus, rather than doing a “mapping” or describing the normative merits of collective competence, as shown above, a critique further sheds light on multiple implications from labour process perspective.

Located within labour process strands, “hegemonic power process” (Doorewaard and Brouns 2003), has been conceptualised, and used to analyse how self-managing work groups such as workplace collective-competent types have been constructed by the work group members to enact processes of meaning and identity formation in the context of work activity. Utilized as a conceptual tool, hegemonic power process is conceptualised as the way in which power relations implicit in collective work group govern, and direct self-managing teams in dealing with plant process operations. It explains how plant operators unobtrusively consent to dominant normative assumptions inherent in collective-based work practices. As noted by Doorewaard and Brouns (2003:106), hegemonic power, within work collective, “serves to conceal process meaning and practices within the work group”.

In our discussion of collective competence and work process in the plant operation, we observed that for the purpose of efficient plant operations system, certain practices and work attitudes were “organised in” thereby shaping the expected identity formation and collective orientation in the plant. And on the other hand, those non-work processes related attitudes were “organised out”. We also observed in our discussion that normative expectations surrounding high performance work system such as efficiency, productivity, job autonomy, job enrichment and responsibility were expected to be the remit of the plant operators. However, the “hegemonic power process” model tends to question such assumptions, arguing that such assumption conceals the “suppressive form of control inherent in collective-based work process” (Ezzamel and Willmott, 1998 in Doorewaard and Brouns 2003:107). The significance of re-appraising our conceptual approach in this section is, therefore, to re-evaluate the “sheltered functioning” of collective-based work

process through the lens of hegemonic power process perspective. We noticed that, in their stride within the collective, the plant process operators' essentially demonstrated "entrepreneurial" attitude, in meeting the challenges of plant operations and indeed the corporation. While dealing with those challenges of the plant operations, they enacted participatory productivity attitude, thereby integrating their own self-identity with that of the corporation into the work process. Hegemonic power processes re-define such entrepreneurial attitude that drives participatory productivity "in such a way that the work collective are induced to consent to organisation practices" (Doorewaard and Brouns 2003:107). Reconceptualised through the hegemonic power processes lens, our elaboration in the preceding sections may have suggested that the plant operators, though operating in a seemingly "unrestrictive" environment, given the normative promises of collective-base work process, nevertheless were caught in a process of "implicit domination" with "invisible bars". The implicit dimension of "participatory productivity" which collective work process stressed, illustrates more of normative functioning of power, but conceals more of the latent dimensions of the bureaucratic rules behind the power dominations (Doorewaard and Brouns 2003). In similar manner, Hamilton (1986); Mumby and Stohl (1991); and Barker (1993), illustrate how workers within the rubric of hegemonic power processes "casually" subjected themselves, or were subject to power domination "without fully being aware of this form of influence" (cited in Doorewaard and Brouns 2003:107). Having been seduced into its normative promises, workers accepted, and collectively legitimized the "ways we get things done here" an orientation not based "on the use of violence or force but on the normal and easy ways things are done" (Doorewaard and Brouns 2003:108).

Even though work process is conceptualised as "(sub) routines," through which daily work process in the plant is effectively regulated, hegemonic power process recognises the inherent implications of such managerial practices such as the work intensification side of it. Understood in this manner, work process within the context of collective competence and work knowledge has become something of a "paradox" in which the embedded power hegemony drives social process of work practices, (identified with essentialist analysis), and at the same time "conceals disagreement, but promotes consensus" (Robbins 1996 in Doorewaard and Brouns 2003:108). With particular reference to modern

workplace relations, hegemonic power processes draw inspiration from Foucault's theoretical construct of "knowledge-power" analysis in which meaning, practices and relations occur in "discursive forms" through which workers re-insert themselves in the ongoing management norms and values. From hegemonic power process perspective, social processes of "meaning formation in the context of work activity is a "non-neutral process," (Doorewaard and Brouns 2003:108). The process of "meaning-formation" of work process, and the repertoire of social practices and symbols that underpin the work activity are reinforced by both verbal and "non-verbal work expressions such as collective sense of the work and its consensual social relations" (Doorewaard and Brouns 2003:108).

It is also in the context of hegemonic power processes' understanding that employees' workplace social identity is reformulated and re-enacted, using Bourdieu's (1991), conceptualisation of "habitus"; "a habitus is a set of dispositions which inclines agents (workers) to act and react in certain ways" (cited in Doorewaard and Brouns 2003:109). Extending this analysis, (Doorewaard and Brouns 2003:109), maintain, "dispositions generate regular practices, perceptions and attitudes of a particular discourse." In this case, the collective competence and work knowledge of plant operators in the process plant, "a group habitus" was enacted which sustained the "discourse" and "norms" surrounding work process activity. Work process in the plant was bound up with the "social world" in which the workers found themselves. And this aligns with Clegg's (1998), characterisation that "identity is always a process, subject to reproduction through discursive practices, which secures or refuses particular posited identities" (cited in Doorewaard and Brouns 2003:109). Connecting this analysis with our evaluation of collective competence and knowledge activity in the process plant, plant operators, in their search for solution to "critical incidents", developed a shared group understanding, defined by their "habitus". They reformulated their group norms along lines of common knowledge in the process plant. From hegemonic power process perspective, this reformulation of identity along consensual social process "re-routed" their collectives in an "implicit" and concealed way.

Indeed, the implicit but concealed dimensions of power hegemony from labour process perspective, Burawoy (1979); Study, Knights and Willmott (1992), provide the distinct

way to understand how consent is produced and reproduced in an on-going manner through consensual social relations at the point of production. Hegemonic power processes produce workers' consent to both "implicit" and "explicit" codes, procedures and repertoire of production process. In their collectives, and in their re-enactment of meaning, identity and practices, around collective work knowledge, the normative process validates consent and legitimizes managerial practices surrounding their work process.

From the stand point of my research in the process plant, therefore, there were some empirical and methodological implications that attest to this conceptual approach. As indicated above, the precise functioning of hegemonic power was concealed, unobtrusive but seductive in its process. A re-conceptualisation of collective competence and knowledge became conceptually instructive based on hegemonic power process in the operating plant, in the context of the three main principles elaborated upon earlier, that is, collective sense of work process in the process plant, utilization or deployment of collective knowledge base, and how these were consolidated or reinforced by shared sense of interdependency among members of the workgroup (Boreham, 2003). In addition to these, the role of cultural tools in forms of language and codes was found to mediate the shared work experiences and knowledge. However, from the implicit significance of hegemonic power approach, there is a relationship between the socially constructed account of these realities that is, the principles highlighted above and "the intersubjective meaning and experiences of these realities" (Oswick and Grant 1997, in Doorewaard and Brouns 2003:110). As elaborated upon earlier, my observation in the process plant could show how the mediating roles of cultural artefacts in forms of language and codes shaped and reconstructed identity and meaning, and how this was able to reinforce the implicit dimensions of power relations. And this also explained how team-work processes were able to respond to operational challenges in the plant.

As a theoretical framework for empirical re-evaluation, we deploy the concept of hegemonic power process to assess "meaning formation" and reformation that guides collective sense making regarding the collective knowledge, and which reinforces production of consent and acceptance of managerial practices. Here, we observed clearly that meaning-formation and sense making of the ethos behind collective knowledge led to refor-

mulation of “common-scripts” in the form of collective work process. “Problem spots” and “critical incidents” were collectively diagnosed and identified, “shared interpretations” were enacted and alternative solutions provided. In finding solutions to the “critical incidents” in the process plant, re-construction of work process dominated the collective attitudes of members.

Indeed, within the plant’s operation process, collective search for solution helped in meeting the challenges of plant operations, and this involved leaning strongly on shared meaning and collective identity formation. The process of maintaining common meaning and collective understanding of the challenges also gave the plant operators a shared set of interpretations of the operational problems. In the process operating plant, we observed that the processes of formulation of shared meaning were a “constitute” of hegemonic power process for tackling the numerous challenges facing process operations. And it was this shared meaning in its collective, that served to “legitimize rationalities” of managerial practices of teamwork and collective work process in the plant. Thus, collective sense making of work process within the plant functioned as mechanisms for re-inserting “dominant organisational norms and values as notion of truth,” (Hall 1985 cited in Doorewaard and Brouns 2003:113). It is also within this collective sense making of work process that opinions and views were expressed that were in tandem with the management norms, and which also guided daily operational practices. As noted by Mumby (1994 cited in Doorewaard and Brouns 2003:113) “groupthink” in form of plant collective work dynamics appeared to be very important for reaching social consensus in daily work activities.”

In the process plant, we found the plant operators to have, not only imbibed the managerial normative expectations, but were also driven by collective ethos of the “groupthink” and “habitus” in performing their daily operations activities. We also found how the three themes identified earlier, that is ,collective sense making of work process, use of collective knowledge base, and shared sense of group interdependency operated at a level that reinforced the implicit assumptions behind hegemonic power. The existence of an autonomous self-regulating work team in the plant, alignment of teamwork activities with the management policies of quality production, safety environment and operational efficien-

cy – all combined to act as “affirmative action” for the collective. The plant operators, therefore, seemed to have aligned their interest with that of the corporation.

9.6. Conclusion

The argument above has shown forms of critique of the collective competence model in the process plant. Another portal of critique of collective competence and skill formation, still within the hegemonic power framework was found in Fenwick et al (2005). To them, skill formation and its normative valence, as claimed by mainstream analysis is an illusion that “floats according to the prevailing knowledge politics of the organisation” (cited in Sawchuk 2008:3). In their analysis, collective skill competence reproduces identity formation, and at the same time valorises the type of unequal power relations inherent between management and the work group. From labour process perspective, therefore, collective workplace competence and work process knowledge is conceptualised as an illusion, a deceptive way to solve “workers’ deficit” and an inherent contradiction in workplace power relations. Accordingly, what characterises hegemony power relation is “locus of control” between the management and labour. Inevitably, as noted by Sawchuk, (2008:3), there “exists a tension between management’s rhetoric of meaningful, flexible, and productive forms of work on the one hand, and work intensification, instability and exploitation on the other hand.” The embeddedness of power relations in work process raises the questions and concerns about motive behind quality production, and operation’s efficiency in the process plant.

Concerns for these inherent contradictions remain an important consideration for meaning and implications of work process within the field of sociology of work and labour process. It is, therefore, argued that critical understanding from hegemonic power process perspective has come as an alternative theoretical reference point for conceptualising the “collaborative dimensions” of workplace collective competence, and its “invincible inequities” in terms of “exchange-value” generation between labour and management. The essentialist tendency to conflate “actual” collective work process and competence, with

separate “interests” of management and workers has been re-opened for re-conceptualisation and evaluation using the hegemonic power processes framework.

Contributing to a critique, and for re-theorization of work process and managerial practices, Grant and Hardy (2004:5), have brought in “discursive analysis” of managerial practices as something different from mainstream sociological and theoretical approaches. Organisational discourse analysis has also “taken on a critical theoretical perspective infused with Foucauldian re-conceptualization of power, agency and resistance, and Gramscian’s concerns with hegemonic manifestation of specific forms of power relations in organisation” (Iedema and Wodak 1999:9). Also, contained in this re-conceptualisation is the perception of management practices as “embeddedness of power, reproduction and rationality of decision making” (Iedema and Wodak 1999:10). This perspective also criticises the traditional sociological perspective of how managerial practices shape “structural relations of people that make up the organisation, and how such formal relations help in achieving the organisational goals” (Giddens (1989 cited in Iedema et al 1999:11). Giddens’s “structuration” model and characterisation explain the latter within mainstream understanding of how structures of formal relations help in achieving organisational goals. To Giddens, organisation is typified as “impersonal institution” in terms of power relations goals’ attainment.

On the other hand, while mainstream Marxian analysis of managerial practices tends to confine itself to a dualist/dialectics of power relations between labour and management, Clegg’s (1993), critical discourse analysis tends to privilege workplace analysis with “micro-details of intentions” within context of “talk, text and social process of work activity” (Iedema and Wodak 1999:12) in the process plant. It situates the understanding of managerial practices within the context of its enactment of power process that legitimizes it within that particular context. Therefore, “meaning” and “materialities” are perceived as having strong influence in underpinning work process.

Moving beyond Gramsci’s (1971) conceptualisation of hegemony as ideological domination of one group over the other in the workplace, Mumby (1997); and Grossberg (1986); have made attempts to reconstruct the concept as not simply “consent to”, or “active sup-

port” of a dominant system of meanings, rather it is “embedded with complex dimensions of interests and meanings, articulations in particular ways”(Mumby 2003 in Grant2003:237).Managerial practices are conceived to be underpinned by “conjunctures” characterised by “durable and identifiable assemblies of people” (Thomas 2003:782). And this social process of relations is also underpinned by “moments, power, materiality, social practices, institutions, values and discourse that undergrind social relations” (Harvey 1996 cited in Thomas 2003:782).

Chapter 10

Conclusion

10. Unpacking the themes and link to Labour Process Theory

This study has sought to demonstrate how the control imperatives of managerial practices and the dynamics of labour process in NNPC, led to diverse implications for employment relations in the corporation. In particular, the concern has been what “sense” workers were able to make of these managerial practices. It has been demonstrated that changes in the operating and regulatory environment in which NNPC had to operate in the last twenty five years brought about major implications for workplace labour relations. We have also shown that given the dynamics of these control imperatives, capitalist labour process and indeed the social relations of production between capital and labour in the workplace are of “structured antagonism” (P.Edwards 1990). The attempt by the management to constantly re-organise work process placed challenges on it to seek co-operation and consent from the workers. The implication “is a continuum of possible situationally driven and overlapping worker responses-from resistance to accommodation, compliance and consent” (Thompson and Vincent 2010 in Thompson and Smith 2010:1).

The concern of this research has, therefore, been to evaluate how the dynamics of labour process impacted on work experiences of the workers, and how the trade unions responded to these managerial practices. It is the link between managerial practices and workers responses that afforded concern to undertake *in situ* study of the corporation. Work process and managerial practices at NNPC were found to have been intensified by two sets of parallel forces; those instigated by competitive operating environment, and secondly the government’s induced regulatory reforms (this is tracked through Chapter 4 of body of the work). These two led to internal reforms which resulted in adjustment to work processes in the corporation.

The period between 1988 and 2007 witnessed substantial changes in managerial practices and labour process within NNPC and its subsidiaries. In the 1990’s and 2000’s, NNPC, in

response to diverse challenges and regulatory reforms, significantly decentralised its operating activities into subsidiary business units, which consequently had the effect of altering its managerial practices and work processes. Consequently, labour process in the organisation had to be “re-drawn” to reflect the ethos and imperatives of ensuing challenges of production. The emerging dimensions of labour process in the corporation, therefore, came on the backdrop of regulatory reforms which generally re-defined the operational activities of oil industry in Nigeria. While the regulatory reforms continued to set the tone in “moving” the oil industry “forward” in terms of conforming to Federal Government’s objectives, the implications reverberated in the workplace labour relations practices.

As indicated in Chapter 4, the regulatory reforms that shaped and continued to shape NNPCs operations reflected the dynamic processes of national and cultural peculiarities which demonstrated clearly the significance of the corporation within Nigeria’s socio-economic context. And in spite of the peripheral character of mode of production in Nigeria, in which NNPC is embedded, it is still a particular illustration of core issues and themes of LPT. While the regulatory reforms might be very ambitious to meet national interests in terms of “best-practices” in the oil industry, the labour process component remained significant from the workers’ and unions’ point of view and the interests of their members.

This research project has not only tracked these dynamics in the labour process over the years, but also gave conceptual explanation to workers’ locations within the relations of production in the organisations. While a review of the findings pertaining to workers’ experiences of the labour process is provided here, the utility of the core themes and elements of LPT are linked in providing a comprehensive understanding of dynamics of labour process in the corporation. In this way, the centrality of LPT in providing conceptual understanding of empirical illustrations of work process is reviewed. The review illustrated how the corporation, particularly exemplified the diverse strands of LPT.

In doing this review, I started with Chapter 4 which detailed the regulatory context of oil industry, with particular reference to pieces of government interventions and policy re-

gimes that successively aided the background for workplace transformation in the NNPC. Successive regulatory regimes were identified as the critical context upon which operational activities at NNPC rested. Through these reformative policies of the Federal Government, the corporation moved from hitherto regulated format to one of partial deregulation and “commercial autonomy”, (www.nnpcgroup.com). While NNPC remained part of the public sector in Nigeria, the decision of the Federal Government to attempt to introduce “quasi-market” transformations into its managerial and operational activities had significant implications for labour relations.

In addition, the complexity of the production technology of the oil industry also largely accounted for the Federal Government’s interest, and this also contributed to an emphasis on “highly determined” work process of the corporation, in terms of “best practices”. Consequently, issues of labour relations had to be dealt with through well established institutional procedures of collective bargaining and joint consultations involving the management and the trade unions. The commercial imperatives that undergrind the regulatory reforms were also accounted for by the imperatives of managerial practices of work process, and the ensuing implications could not be dissociated.

An outline of theoretical framework adopted for this work was undertaken in Chapter 3. The theoretical context for understanding the research project provided an appropriate resource to evaluate empirical material concerning workers’ orientation towards managerial practices and workplace labour relations. LPT and its emerging strands were employed in this study because of its significance as theoretical approach (Thompson and Smith 2009), and because of the relevance of participant observation as a fundamental method of doing workplace study (Adesina 1989). Each of the strands of LPT adopted and paralleled “core dimensions” of managerial practices and labour processes at NNPC, both at the corporate level and in the refinery. Theoretical relevance of the various strands of LPT was deployed in turn between Chapters 5-9 of this study.

Thompson, et al (1989), pointed out earlier that the historical dimensions of capitalism are not experienced in the same manner across capitalist economies; because of varieties and diversity of forms of institutions in the nation-states. It is, therefore, expected that the

historical specificity of NNPC within Nigeria's peripheral capitalist mode of production should reverberate on the dimensions of work process, production processes, managerial practices and implications for employment relations. And because of the assumptions behind "varieties of capitalism (Kelly et al 2008), there is the problematic and challenges of crafting "varieties of employment relations" into "core elements" of LPT. The challenge is that of "connectivity" of the strands and waves from pure/classic Marxian perspective of LPT to post-structuralist and neo-Marxist analysis, (Hugh Willmott (1998) David Knights (2001), Thompson and Ackroyd (1999), Thompson and Smith (2009). However, as empirical illustrations from this study have shown, linkages among these strands as evidenced in this study continue to render LPT as "innovative" conceptual navigation.

The "material changes" in an increasingly globalised capitalism, and changes in the capitalist mode of production correspond with changes in workplace relations, thereby making the world of work a vital area for labour process analysis. On this, Thompson and Smith (2009:913) remark "core propositions of LPT provide it with resources for "resilience" and "innovation" thereby expanding the scope of its explanatory power within the tradition of sociology of work." The concern of LPT in its theoretical and analytical drive is to "open-up" the limited normative benefits of managerial practices such as team-work, skill development, partnership, empowerment, Total Quality Management (TQM), by pointing out the practical and interest implications for labour-power and trade unions in the workplace. LPT, therefore, continues to "strengthen those tendencies in workplace research that seek to reach beneath formal institutional patterns, to re-discover and explore the hidden and informal realms" (Thompson and Smith 2009:916), of workplace relations. In a situation where the factory/office regime has become the "uncritical recipient" of managerial orientation in terms of normative expectations, LPT has become innovative in revealing the sources of conflict and resistance, inherent therein. It is innovative because it has the capacity to "connect different dimensions of employment relations" (Thompson and Smith 2009:916), and, therefore, counter the tendency of workplace normative orientation.

Theoretical remits from LPT remain instructive, taking on a critical analysis of work under the impact of new forms of capitalist mode of production and managerial practices, and still attuned with radical Marxist account of capital and labour relations, even within advanced stage capitalism, and peripheral capitalism alike. As capitalism and world of work change, LPT offers to sociology of work, the analytical and empirical tools to “narrow down” and account for the “hidden side” of workplace relations that might evade the gaze of classic Marxist analysis. If “selectivity is inherently the hallmark of a credible conceptual framework”(Thompson and Smith 2009:917), then the currency of LPT is in order by drawing out the “hidden matters” of workplace relations. Its focus on objective materialist conditions of work, contrasts sharply with mainstream essentialist understanding of workers’ subjective orientation to work. As a theory-led workplace analysis, it illustrates not only “how matters at the point of production are indicative of battles over frontier of control, but also how workers are persuaded to release their labour power” (Edwards and Scullion 1982 cited in Thompson and Smith 2009:918). Analytical strength of LPT has also been demonstrated in revealing how labour-power is reproduced both inside and outside the factory gate. Even in the context of “varieties of capitalism” (VoC), (Kelly 2008), social reproductions of labour-power continue both inside and outside the workplace, thereby making labour-power to retain its “indeterminacy” as an embodied, mobile human/active investment (Thompson and Smith 2009).

In dealing with labour power indeterminacy, there is a corresponding shift in labour process analysis on the problematic dimension of workplace labour power; first it accounts for the materialist and contradictory relations between capital and labour, and secondly, to a more nuanced account of covert dimensions of workers’ activities on the “shopfloor”. Also with the rise and pre-eminence of “knowledge economies” [and] its flagship, even in the context of globalized capitalism, LPT retains its “unshakeable optimism” in accounting for new dimensions of workplace relations. Major characteristics and emerging dimensions of “knowledge economy” such as expert labour, knowledge worker, service worker, up-skilled labour, aesthetic labour, emotional labour and tacit labour present new ways of understanding the embedded labour processes. The embedded “constraints” and “continuities” of labour process still fall under the gaze of LPT.

Thus, in spite of the managerialist emphasis on the positive and normative outcomes of employment relations of “knowledge economy” and continuous process technology the “dark side” of managerial practices are within analytical lens of LPT. LPT, therefore, retains its hallmark in maintaining a space for critical research on sociology of work. Far from providing a normative orientation for workers, workplace restructuring and its attendant managerial practices not only “systematically intensify work, but also normalise it, yet in a new way that removes obstacles to the extraction of effort” (Thompson and Smith 2009:920). With a focus on workers’ experience of these dynamics in NNPC, LPT demonstrates how workers would have to adapt to the workplace challenges, and how they have mobilized an array of resistive responses to the managerial control strategies. For instance, as shown in Chapters 7 and 8 of this study, in seeking for more “knowledgeability” of workers, management at NNPC initiated workplace learning programmes in which institutional structures and practices are put in place to facilitate learning, innovation, and continuous improvement on the part of workers. Skills outcomes both in generic and operational forms are expected to be more social than technical. In its social forms, the expanded manifestations of skills benefit the employers more than the employees. It is in this social form of labour-power that the “whole person is mobilized on a qualitative intensification scale (Thompson and Smith 2006:920) to serve the interest of the management. And, in the “expanded” utility of labour power by capital, work intensification, insecurity and pressures are bounded, resulting in consent and resistance. Heightened labour market pressures and requirement for competency and employability resulted in workers being subjected to greater demands from capital, resulting in physical and emotional exhaustion in the workplace. These emerging trends in the workplace situations further represent theoretical conceptualisation and analysis from LPTs point of view, (Lash and Uray 1994; Prove and Sabel 1984). Here, the optimistic message for workers’ orientation, for improved performance, collaborative high trust and high commitment is concomitantly met with covert collective “shopfloor” resistive responses from the workers. Even, the proclamation of up-skilling as hallmark of knowledge economy has been questioned and demystified by labour process research, drawing on case studies analysis, (Thompson 2000). Many of the signifiers and markers of up-skilling in the “knowledge economy” such as qualifications and continuous education for improved

performance and continuous process production have been found to have “little relationship to actual skill and knowledge work(ed) on the job” (Warhurst and Thompson 2006:919). They have been interpreted as proxies for further extraction of more labour power from workers. As against essentialist assumptions behind the positive impact of skills and knowledge on workers, in the context of workplace transformation, qualitative research has emerged from labour process analysis to show the “dark side” of such managerial practices (Delbridge 1998; Elgar and Smith 1994; Parker and Slaughter 1998; cited in Thompson and Smith 2009:919). Theoretical resources from LPT, account for control/resistance of the “dark side” of managerial activities.

Apart from concerns about what skills have become under the “knowledge economy”, new understanding of the nature of skills in the service and aesthetic sectors also fall within the purview of LPT. Analysis in this area has benefited from the work of Hochschild (1983) and Warhurst et al (2000). For instance, Bolton (2005), building on Hochschild has developed a “detailed realist account of workplace emotions that gives consideration to the contested nature of the emotional effort bargain in the workplace” (cited in Thompson and Smith 2009:920). Also, Warhurst et al (2000) have developed the concept of “aesthetic labour” which gives a “materialist account of managerial interventions with respect to workers’ corporeality, and considerations of how the body becomes a focus of diverse labour process” (cited in Thompson and Smith 2009:920). Broad dimensions of skills such as character traits, attitudes, social predispositions, adaptability, and cooperativeness have been given theoretical evaluations by LPT. The contested nature of “emotional” and “aesthetic” labour even within the service sector has received theoretical consideration.

In the context of workplace transformation and the dimension and in the process of work, management in the NNPC renewed its emphasis on knowledgeability of workers with a focus on institutional structure and process for knowledge and skill development. As discussed in detail in Chapter 7, at NNPC, and in pursuance of corporate objectives, for improved continuous process production at the refinery level, and “high performance’ at the corporate level, the management initiated what was referred to as 7 Dimensions of Leadership (7DL) of “Learning Development Programs”; aimed at facilitating “initiatives,”

“innovation” and “creativity” for continuous quality improvement of products and performance. The social process and hegemonic dimensions of situated learning at NNPC as described and reconceptualised in Chapter 7-9 re-validated the strength of LPT as theoretical resource for understanding what learning implies both for the workers and the union leaders. In the evaluation, the processes and outcomes of the learning programmes were more social than technical, the “whole body of the worker is mobilized resulting into more qualitative intensification of labour” (Thompson and Smith 2009:920). Increased responsibility and work activities intensification remained the outcome of learning programmes, in response to pressures both from labour market and new imperatives. Management’s devices of using labour power in the NNPC remained that of building “common interest” and “consent” in the discourse of improved performance. However, evidence in this study has shown that while more “discretionary efforts” were being sought, workers continued to feel more insecure in their job. Thus, the concept “collectivization of efforts” and “decollectivization of risks” (Burchell 2002 cited in Thompson and Smith 2009:921) applied more to workers’ experience in the NNPC in their attempts to align with Management normative expectations.

Another implication of emerging managerial practices on workplace relations in the NNPC that also drew its theoretical resource from LPT has been the “existential character” of labour power in modern workplaces. This is more pronounced within the professional context of work process, (Thompson 2009 and Smith 2009:921). The “cultural turn” in workplace analysis that characterises post-structuralist perspective as pointed by Thompson is essentially located in the work of Hugh Willmott and David Knights (2008), “the reproduction of everyday life of work, and the basis of domination has shifted from the material to the symbolic” (cited in Thompson and Smith 2009:921). Drawing on Foucauldian thesis of power/knowledge relations, Hugh Willmott and David Knights argue that individual workers’ identity-formations are constituted and reconstituted under managerial discourse of self-discipline and empowerment. This explanation resonates with Gramsci’s conceptualisation of “power embeddedness” and hegemony, and how this reinforced seductive processes of workplace self-discipline.

As noted by Thompson and Smith (2009:921), in this version of LPT “identity rather than labour becomes the site of indeterminacy”. In other words, emphasis is on the role and importance of subjectivity and its agentic dimensions in the workplace. While post-modern perspectives in the labour process analysis draw largely from Foucault’s framework, “worker resistance and self-organization are seen as diminished or defunct” (Thompson and Smith 2009:921). In contrast, and located within the strand of LPT, labour power and identity-formation have not only become a site of indeterminacy but have also been characterised by shifting processes and ambivalence. “Knowledgeability” Thompson and Smith (2009) submit, characterises this indeterminacy, where “workers are aware of management’s intentions and outcomes, but still retain the symbolic capacity to resist, misbehave and disengage” (Thompson and Smith 2009:922). This line of analysis remains significant in much of the work of labour process commentators.

As a distinct dimension of workplace behaviour, recalcitrance and covert forms of workplace re-appropriation are manifested both at the “formal” and “informal” sides of managerial practices. Workplace deviancy had long been identified in the work of Baldamus (1961) Ditton and Mars (1982) Edwards and Scullion (1982). Also in introducing the concept of “agency”, Hodson (1995; 2001), has explored how “resistance serves to retain employees’ dignity at work” (Thompson and Smith 2009:922). While noting that much of this analysis has remained with tradition of sociological analysis of workers’ behaviour at the workplace, Thompson and Smith (2009) argue that LPT analysis of modern workplace has involved a “systematic and distinctive mapping of worker action and agency” (Thompson and Smith 2009:922). The dimensions of the workers’ action and agency have taken on the forms of “re- appropriation” that drive the agency of the workers in a variety of interests and identities” (Thompson and Smith 2009:922). Evaluations of workers’ behaviour at NNPC, both at corporate and refinery levels, as outcomes of managerial practices, embraced this analytical framework. The workplace interests of both the workers and unions, and identities often revolved round forms of “re- appropriations”, and struggle at the workplace.

The innovativeness of this conceptual framework for understanding the dynamics of labour process in the workplace has provided a fresh perspective of control and resistance.

As noted by Flemming (2001) “rather than resistance being conceived as a negative reaction to power, it has become an active set of practices that attempts to regain a degree of autonomy at work” (cited in Thompson and Smith 2009:922). Workers, therefore, have the capacity to retain some level of “relative autonomy” with which to re-appropriate managerial practices and normative expectations. Workers’ subjectivity manifested in their agentic form of identities and interests. Hugh Willmott and David Knights (1998), show that the two are not opposite “but reciprocally and discursively constitute one another” (Ackroyd and Thompson 1999; in Thompson and Smith 2009:922). As workers’ experiences are shaped by this “relative autonomy”, that is a space to re-appropriate, there is the expanded conception of agency, which also speaks to the concept of “labour indeterminacy”.

Tracing these conceptual remits back to my research study, “enhanced” managerial practices such as teamwork, JCC, workplace learning programmes did not totally mobilize “the whole person of the worker”; there were also “contested terrains”, providing “space” for LPT analytical focus. We noted in our evaluations, the imperatives of managerial control strategies, linking this with skill formation strategies and how these dynamics rested on consent and resistance in the workplace. Also, we have argued that though “much value” in terms of valorisation had been generated, more for the Management, the “relative autonomy” of the workplace was indeed embedded with “structured antagonism”. From a broadly based perspective, LPT continues with a sociological account of workplace changes to give explanation and analysis of managerial control, skill formations strategies, and how consent and conflict are embedded.

A significant shift in labour process theorising that has also benefited from “identity debate” has been located in the work of others belonging to the post-structuralist perspective. Central to the post-structuralist analysis is the concept of discourse. As noted by Mark and Thompson (2010:2) “if a concern with subjectivity became focused on identity, identity became even strongly linked to discourse.” They note further that identity to be conceptualised as a “social construct” is “non-contentious”, but the question is, on what is it socially constructed? The answer, as they point out “is in the discourse” (Mark and Thompson 2010:3). Calas and Smirch (1987) earlier observed that “we are nothing but

the discourse through and which we live” (cited in Mark and Thompson 2010:3). Utilizing this sociological premise, Gergen (1991) and Collison (2003) see the “relationship between the individual and organisation as being fluid, multiple and unstable social construction” (in Mark and Thompson 2010:3). Thus, individuals and organisations are conceived as “sites” or “fields” through which identities are shaped and regulated” (Marks and Thompson 2010:3). Elaborating on this, Philips and Maguire (2000), argue “if there is no “true” self, identity is the outcome of the narration through discourse” (in Mark and Thompson 2010:3). And this is exemplified through “corporate and business text” (Chrein 2005 in Mark and Thompson 2010:3).

As shown in the body of this research study, we have demonstrated how the processes of the workplace and individual workers’ identity formation have become “mutually constitutive” rather than separate. From the greater part of our evaluations, we have been able to demonstrate how NNPC has shown keen interest in ensuring “congruence” between the Management normative values and the interests of the workers over the years. As a result, some evidence tends to suggest from the narratives of the workers themselves how they identified or were “motivated to engage with the management objectives and ethos” (Davies 2006 in Mark and Thompson 2010:3). However, as equally shown in our evaluations, generalisations of this type are also problematic. As warned by Mark and Thompson (2010:3), organisations are “sites for contending interest and identities” for both Management and the workers. Therefore, evaluations and conclusions must give priority and consideration to “empirical objects as having their own property right” (Mark and Thompson 2010:4). In other words, there is an inherent danger in constructing an “absolute” or “total” explanation of identities in and organisation from such “texts” and “discourse”. The agent cannot be treated as “either absent” or “passive receptor” of the dominant narratives” (Mark and Thompson 2010:4).

The escape hatch from this problematic of “discourse” and “identity” in the workplace is to bring in “identity-work”. Identity-work as observed by Alvesson and Willmott (2002), has a “variety of formulation, but all seek to develop a notion of reflexive action that highlights the active aspect of engagement with the process of identity construction” (cited in Mark and Thompson 2010:4). This conceptualisation can also be reconnected with

“existential perspective” in which the “search for a secure and stable sense of self” (Mark and Thompson 2010: 4) drives workplace identity in the context of job insecurity and anxiety. At one level, this line of argument within the understanding of identity and discourse and to “identity-work”, indicates to us that there is a “limitation in theorising about identity that emphasises the vulnerability of subjects to discourse and texts” (Mark and Thompson 2010:4). Identity-work is a “precarious” and “contested terrain”. Workers’ identification with Management’s normative values is “conditioned by other elements of life history; for instance identity to material conditions, cultural traditions and relations of power” (Mark and Thompson 2010:4). Thus, our “materialist” or “existentialist reading” of this” line of analysis is located in the argument that by “mobilizing and engaging with discourses, we embellish or repair our sense of identity as a coherent narrative” (Alvesson and Willmott 2002, in Mark and Thompson 2010:4).

In their attempt to step back a bit from their early utilization of Foucauldian explanatory analysis, concerning “disciplined selves”, post-structuralists “now seek to examine how individuals actively engage with managerial discourses and through such engagement construct identities,” (Mark and Thompson 2010:4), concerning the employment relationship. And as noted by Thomas (2009 in Mark and Thompson 2010:4), “such alternative identities are of potentially resistance to forms of domination.” To reformulate this understanding from Foucauldian interpretations, resistance emerged from levels of “contradictions, weakness and gaps between alternative subjective positions,” (Mark and Thompson 2010:4), of workers in the employment relationship. In response to this “categorisation”, and “classification” of limitations in their subjective positions, workers struggle to “re-appropriate” and “invert” the discourse of the organisation. These theoretical trajectories within the strand of labour process analysis align with the conceptual perspective adopted to re-evaluate workers’ experience of labour process in the NNPC. In this sense, analysis of self, and identity of workers to the discourse in the corporation was attentive to the other dimensions of identity-work ,that is, “what motivates and drives interests, other than discourse of the organisation,” (Mark and Thompson 2010:5).

As pointed out by Mark and Thompson (2010:5), “self” is not a “blank-slate” on which anything can be written; “all entities in the workplace, individuals, groups and organisa-

tion itself are potentially involved in identity-work.” Therefore, for a “plausible explanation” of workplace behaviour, our analysis has re-inserted the concept of “interests”. This is because the “multiple dimensions” of self, identity and identity-work (interests) underpin workplace relations and manifest in such fluid, multiple and ambiguous dimensions. In deploying this perspective within the remit of labour process analysis, it has also been noted that “a population of perfectly rational utility maximisers is scarce” in the workplace, but what we have is that “a people can purposefully pursue their perceived interests” (Mark and Thompson 2010:6) even when such interests clash with the discourse of the organisation. It is also from this premise that our deployment of labour process analysis has benefited from “critical realist” perspective, (Thompson and Vincent 2010). The utility of this perspective is more on its conception of “human agency” (Mark and Thompson 2010). Drawing on this perspective, Sarah Jenkins (2007) writes on the notion of “reflective performance” to elaborate on how “agents identify structure and resources that constrain their action, but also construct strategies and use them to pursue their personal goals” (in Mark and Thompson 2010:10).

While inserting agency in her own analysis, Archer (2000), focuses on how “human purposes and powers are developed through an active process of reflections on practices, was deployed in engaging with social reality” (cited in Mark and Thompson 2010:11). She argued further that people make sense of their “identity through a process of internal and materially grounded conversation, rather than discourse”(in Mark and Thompson 2010:11). In this interpretation,(Marks and Thompson 2010:11), note, there is “a dialectical relationship between personal and social identity.” Workers deploy calculative attitudes and behaviours in dealing with the “constraints” and “desirables” of the workplace. Often, our evaluations may not be able to “read-off” this interest clearly, for as noted by Mark and Thompson (2010:12), “interests are hidden scripts in identity explanations”. Nevertheless, analysis and interpretations should continue to endeavour to uncover, and seek explanation to the interactions between interests and identity that explain “appropriation and defence of material and symbolic resources”(Mark and Thompson 2010:12).As observed by Mark and Thompson (2010:12),while mainstream labour process analysis may have endeavoured to articulate a notion of “purposeful” and “knowledgeable economic agent” (worker) in “negotiating the contours and constraints of capitalist relations

of production, a refined framework within the analysis provides a more balanced account of this agency.” In this sense, labour process analysis has been able to “explain more” of the dimensions of workplace relations.

While LPT has opened up this distinct workplace dynamics for vigorous analysis that goes beyond managerial precepts, “a great strength of it, that is, LPT, is in its capacity to connect the relative autonomy to broader political economy,” (Thompson 2009:923). In other words, the capacity of labour process analysis to “capture and reconnect workplace dynamics in their multiple forms of embeddedness into the broader political economy” (Thompson and Smith 2009:923) “explains more” of its innovativeness in analysing the contradictions in managerial practices.

Though a great value and strength of LPT has been located in the empirical site of employment – the workplace (Thompson and Smith 2009), it has the capacity and resilience to go beyond the “relative autonomy” of the workplace to link it with the “bigger picture” in the macro political economy. As pointed out elsewhere in the body of this work, both the micro-process and the macro speak to each other. The “dynamics of financialised and disconnected capitalism” (Thompson and Smith 2009:923), continue to restore the links with the study of labour process at the workplace. Such “innovativeness” of LPT has allowed for a nuanced and “contextualised understanding” of dimensions of employment relations both in the “financialised capitalism” and “knowledge economy” (Thompson and Smith 2009).

Labour process and its dimensions have historically and fundamentally been hinged on two “indeterminacies” – “effort power” and “mobility power” (Smith 2006). Tracing this conceptualization back, Marx earlier made a distinction between labour and labour power, where hiring the labour power by management “does not a priori translate into seamless flow of values or profit for the capital, capacity to work remains within the person of the worker” (Thompson and Smith 2009:924). This consequently brought additional imperative or challenge to capital to equally be innovative in designing managerial practices on how to extract this capacity. As choices and freedom over the disposal of his labour power flow from his “knowledgeability” of the “knowledge economy” worker has the

mind and choices of “where, and to which employer he can sell his labour power”(Thompson and Smith 2009:924).In the same manner, this “mobility power” is also indeterminate “in the sense that it remains a source of uncertainty for the employing firm in calculating whether or not the workers will remain with them, the decision on which employer to park his labour is left with the worker” (Thompson and Smith 2009:924).

In this review, I have tried to show that the conceptual strength of LPT retains its ‘resilience’ and “innovation” on the study of work. Indeed, it retains its strength and valence in the traditions of sociology of work. As an approach rooted in the classical exposition of Marx and Weber (Thompson and Smith 2009), it retains its capacity for a re-invigorated study of modern capitalist mode of production. From the old Weberian orientation to “plant-based’ study of work, in its informal and formal dimensions, “it advances to show sensitivity to broader macro process that shapes the world of work” (Thompson and Smith2009:924). The valence of LPT in “capturing and connecting the multiple and fluid dimension of workplace managerial practices and forms of embeddedness with broader political economy makes it relevant for our time” (Thompson and Smith 2009:924). Also the multiple dimensions and contradictions in which managerial practices are played out remain analytical focus of LPT. Capital, represented by its agent – Management, in the “knowledge economy”, more and more relies on the intensive use of a “broad range” of workers’ capacity; tacit, emotional and physical through diverse innovative practices such as total quality processes, team-working, team production, flexible specialisation, autonomy, empowerment and learning systems. It is also in this value of LPT that Trade Unions and institutional structure and process of interest mediations such as JCC has been treated.

Broadly, in expanding its analysis of labour power and its valorisation, LPT distinctly brought out for our use its innovativeness and immense capacity and resources within the genre of sociology of work. Conceptually, LPT, as noted by (Thompson and Smith 2009:925) within the tradition of sociology of work has no “rigid preference in terms of methodology”, thereby assuring a link and connectivity between theory and empirical work in the workplace study. For this reason, the study of NNPC in its historic specific-

ties within the context of Nigeria's peripheral capitalist mode of production fits in well with the various strands and concepts of LPT.

Evaluations of the various themes in the Chapters have shown how the NNPC has provided a good understanding of labour process analysis. The dimension of work processes and process of production, promoted through transformation regimes in the period after 1988 provided the contextual background to study the impact and implications of managerial practices in line with the objectives and logic of the institutional framework within which the corporation must operate. While it is tempting to easily subscribe to the discussions on managerial discourse regarding the normative orientation of managerial practices on employees, such approach offers "limited clues" as to the actual impact and outcome of such imperatives and practices on workplace relations, and workers' experience. The dominant discourse such as empowerment, autonomy, discretion, flexibility and skill development associated with the work process are rhetorically presented to workers, with the "dark side" hidden. Attempt has been made in this research to provide a reconceptualization of what managerial practices entailed for the workers.

The style adopted in the study and as shown in each of the Chapters has been to, first evaluate the themes of the particular Chapter within the specific strand of the labour process analysis, and then proceed to reconceptualise the findings within the conceptual framework of critical sociological understanding. For instance in Chapter 7, the study took as its theoretical point of departure in its re-evaluation, the model of identity regulation of Alvesson and Willmott (2001), and used this to explore subjectivities and identity work of the workers towards managerial practices in the corporation.

Chapter 8 linked the post-Braverman up-skilling thesis (Stephen Jaros 2005) to the ambitions of NNPC's management to provide learning and development programmes. While extensive literature exists on what skill formation implies for both workers and the employer (Adler (2004); Littler and Innes (2004); and Stephen Jaros (2005), NNPC learning programmes provided some interesting observations and evidence about the "normative" dimensions and reality of up-skilling for the categories of workers in the corporation. Learning and skill development's programmes have become a major and strong institu-

tional project for both the Management and the workers. However, empirical material and responses evaluated provided what sense workers were able to make of the programme. While both material and managerial evidence have demonstrated Management's position, reinforcing the view that emerging technology of production challenged the Management to introduce skills formation programmes, the reality, and what came out as workers' responses, partially affirmed the importance attached by Management.

As detailed in Chapters 7-9, NNPC's Management invested significantly in training and development of all categories of its workforce. While this might have had a largely significant impact on level of skill formation and career growth for the workers, a sense of job insecurity and uncertainty still pervades. At one level, loyalty and identification with the Management were observed alongside of which occupational community of trained-workers in the senior and management emerged, showing increasing labour control and work intensification existed. Evaluation of learning programmes, and indeed other managerial practices at NNPC found evidence to suggest that beneath the veneer of positive outcomes associated with the programme contestation over loyalty, commitment, consent and resistance persisted.

Attempts have also been made in this study to demonstrate how the theoretical substance of LPT has been linked with ethnography as a methodological tool. As a theoretical framework, LPT lies in the recognition and importance given to workers' narratives of their own lived work experiences. While ethnography has long been identified as an important research methodology within the tradition of sociology of work (Adesina, 1989), its incorporation within labour process analysis endeavours to uncover the hidden dimensions of workplace relations. At NNPC, narratives from the "shopfloor" have been situated within the appropriate context and dimensions of the themes in the Chapters, in which the workplace work process had affected them, and which also explained their experiences and orientation towards the evolving managerial practices. The narratives have been able to situate the sociological insights into the realities of work and employment relations in the corporation. Here, attempts have been made to justify the methodological relevance of ethnography that combines "testimonies" of workers with participant observation.

From the work of Huw Beynon (1973), *Working for Ford*, Nichols and Beynon (1977), to Roy (1958) and Burawoy (1979), methodological relevance of ethnography was adopted to gain conceptual understanding of workplace relations, but more to critically engage with the realities behind the “text” and “discourse” of managerial practices. In this study, this has been done with a strong focus on the work experiences of workers as influenced by the dynamics of the labour process. Use of ethnography as a “method of investigation” gives contextual and nuanced understanding of “social relations within and of production” (Warhurst et al 2009: 8), with distinct attentions to workers’ “storyline”. Such “shopfloor” narratives have given instructive “insights into social process at the workplace” (Warhurst et al 2009:8), pertaining to both the subordinating and alienating experiences of workers, articulation of workers’ normative orientation, the role of unions, and absence or presence of resistance, that are manifested behind managerial gaze. Similarly, ethnographic accounts have been rich in penetrating the “new” world of service and “knowledge work” (Taylor and Bain 2003 in Warhurst et al 2009:8), with particular reference to skill-workers’ experience and work performance within the “knowledge economies”. Narrative accounts from the workers open up the subtlety, nuances, multiple dynamics of workplace relations, from the workers’ point of view. By empirically studying the workers’ “sense making” of the labour process, we found that the multiple dimensions of this sense making reflected both the structural and subjectivist elements of the labour process.

It has thus been argued in this study, from both conceptual and empirical points of view, that the issue of labour process has not become irrelevant in the study of contemporary liberal workplaces. Indeed, post-Braverman conceptualisations of the labour process have further equipped it to be more innovative. In addition to locating control, consent and resistance as mutually constitutive of social relations of production, it has also restored the Marxist understanding of valorisation and exploitation of the use-value aspects of labour-power as central to the operations of the capitalist labour process, and to the politics of workers resistance. As shown in this study, issues of “control and consent” have remained a major theme and remained supreme, even from both Management and workers’ experiences. From both theoretical and empirical analysis in the study, control, con-

sent and resistance “mutual embeddedness remained pivotal in the understanding of labour process.

While Bravermans (1974) *LMC*, may have been alleged of portrayal of a single trend of degradation of work in the workplace (Cohen 1987), post-Braverman pushed the imperatives of control/consent of the labour process forward, and the centrality of dynamics of workers’ resistance. The theoretical context of *LMC* is a classical Marxist analysis of the specifically capitalist labour process. The specificity of this capitalist labour process is also understood to mean the “unity of the process of production and the process of valorisation” (Cohen, 1987:3). The objective of valorisation, according to Marx, “is what fundamentally structured the whole nature and organization of the capitalist labour process” (cited in Cohen, 1987:3). Braverman’s concern in the capitalist labour process is not primarily with ‘control’ or ‘deskilling’, as some commentators may have construed, but with the specificity of “capitalist logic” which constructs these tendencies.

Therefore, as shown in this study, all forms of managerial control strategies in the workplace are not simply a strategic of control or consent for its own sake, but are inextricably bound up with the very logic of profitability inherent in the capitalist mode of production. Both the qualitative and content of structuring of work process in form of teamwork and quality control are “governed by how ‘much’ and how ‘quickly’ of production process, and in which the whole process is ordained by the dominance of value in the relations of production” (Cohen 1987:4)

From the perspective of labour process analysis, there is a consideration of ‘efficiency’ in the workplace which has been understood to mean both the “qualitative maximization of output and reduction in socially necessary labour effort” (Cohen, 1987:4), which also remains central to managerial strategies. This consideration is translated to mean Marxist notion of ‘real subordination’ which also denotes modern workplace “liberal techniques” for the organisation of production. Managerial practices, even in its ultimate modern forms and tendencies expressed what Braverman referred to as “the explicit verbalization of the capitalist mode of production” (cited in Cohen, 1987:10). All these manifestations within capitalist labour process are central inclinations toward the intensification of work

and maximization of profits, which in turn are crucial in constructing workers' experience of the labour process. The everyday interactions of control and consent at the point of production constitute the primary terrain of workers' response and resistance.

Drawing on older sociological traditions, it has been demonstrated that both the Management and workers drew on 'symbolic resources' in the mediation of their relations of "cooperation and contestation" in the corporation. While this process of contestation and cooperation exists within power relations in the workplace, workers "re-appropriated" and inverted these symbolic resources to assert their respective identities, and shape management decisions, to "legitimize" their actions and "delegitimize" Management's, and as a "means of surviving and mastering prevailing conditions of the work and employment" (Paul Thompson and Chris Smith 1998:563). Labour process theory has, therefore, remained concerned with how to explain the contradictory dimensions of antagonism and accommodation in the workplace.

Managerial practices and work process at NNPC built on the old patterns of practices, rather than replace them, "much of the restructuring of work activity takes place in jobs that have been designed to integrate tasks back together", (Greenbaum, 1994, cited in Paul Thompson and Chris Smith, 1998:554). This emphasis on 'continuity' is also identified in the work of Wickens (1992), that "restructured work still retains Taylorist's elements in which work or tasks of line operators is still 95% prescription and 5% discretion" (cited in Thompson and Smith 1998:554). Also, Adler (1993) describes operations in "advanced manufacturing plants as a "learning bureaucracy", but that learning is based on standardized work procedures, though with a more sophisticated application of Taylorist techniques"(cited in Paul Thompson and Chris Smith 1998:555). Thus, whether we are talking of development in techniques of production in the refinery, or "search for standardized procedures or autonomous practices with total quality programme and team work, the shadow of scientific management continues to fall over contemporary work organization"(Paul Thompson and Chris Smith,1998:555). However, the concern in this study has been the adherence and focus on a critical account of the 'constraints' in the 'continuity' of labour process at NNPC, which has led to a substantial disclosure of workers' "sense making" of the rhythms of labour process in the corporation.

As shown in the study, post-Braverman labour process analysis has given considerable analysis of Management's subjective responses to the transformation of work. In Friedman's (1977), Burawoys (1979) Edwards (1989) and those of later labour process commentators such as Hugh Willmott (2001), David Knights (2000) and Paul Thompson and Chris Smith (1998), the 'missing subject' has been re-inserted in three main ways; "first, as a source of embodiment of labour power for surplus value for the capital, second, as a source of consent, notably through labours participation in workplace 'games' and routines; and third, as a source of opposition to capital, hence the creation of control-resistant model in labour process analysis"(Paul Thompson and Chris Smith 1998: 560).

This study in its deployment of labour process conceptual tools took cognisance of Thompson and Smith's (1998) observation that pure capitalism cannot exist, and that historical accounts of labour process organization are always 'particular stories' of the context of the workplace. In other words, as observed by Lane (1989 in Thompson 1998:565), "social institutions which take account of education, training and work careers, and cultures mould capitalist social relations of production in distinctly national ways so that a generalised tendency" for labour process to express itself in the same way is precluded. Though, there could be a temptation for analysts to discount the idea of the classical capitalist labour process with an argument that; "all that exist in the workplace are national variants of ways of working" (Paul Thompson and Chris Smith 1998:566), the fact still remains that "nations cannot circumscribe capital, and nation states are still constrained by dynamics of capitalist mode of production" (Paul Thompson and Chris Smith 1998:566). The idea that "different national ingredients produce totally different national cakes of labour process" (cited in Thompson 1998:566), underestimates the salience and dynamics of capitalist mode of production.

While 'national systemic' variation matters in my deployment of labour process analysis at NNPC, it has its root in the capitalist mode of production. Labour process analysis has demonstrated the capacity to "disentangle" the distinct institutional patterning of work, and indeed, how it is embedded in the forces of capitalist mode of production that shapes it. The 'structural essentials' such as the waged labour, wage-efforts bargaining and the

associated tensions that characterise capitalist mode of production still shape the national systemic labour process.

This study has, therefore, provided evidence for neither an intense, nor “benign” managerial practices of team work and quality programme, or a “malign” deterministic orthodox Marxist account of the labour process, but the specificities of the refinery’s labour process, demonstrating the dimensions and perceptions of both workers and the management to the dynamics of the labour process.

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Appendix 1



NIGERIAN NATIONAL PETROLEUM CORPORATION

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT, HERBERT MACAULAY WAY, P.M.B. 190, GARKI, ABUJA.

Cablegram NAPETCOR

Telephone: 09 - 2348200-17

Ref:.....**GM/GLD/001**.....

Date:....**April 18, 2007**.....

me

**Mr. Olusegun Oladeinde,
Department of Sociology,
Rhodes University, Grahamstown,
South Africa.**

Dear **Olusegun**

RE: PLACEMENT FOR FIELD WORK

We are pleased to inform you that you have been offered a place in this Corporation to carry out your Field Work for a period of 5 (five) **months** starting from April 21, and ending September 20, 2008.

You are to report to the **GM,HR** NNPC Towers, Abuja who will assign you an assistant for your work.

During the period of this programme, you will not be entitled to any stipend. However, you will enjoy some of our welfare benefits, e.g. medical and transportation services (where available).

Please note that at anytime it is discovered that your documentation with the University is faulty or incomplete., you will be withdrawn from the scheme and a report sent to your institution accordingly.

Yours Faithfully,

For: **NIGERIAN NATIONAL PETROLEUM CORPORATION**

Chris Aderogba

For: General Manager, Group Learning Department.

EXECUTIVE BOARD:

ENGR. ABUBAKAR L. YAR'ADUA (AG. GMD), IBRAHIM D. WAZIRI (GED, CS), STANLEY .I. LAWSON (GED F&A),
ENGR. C. OSA OGIEWONYI (GED E&P), ONOCHIE A. ANYAOKU (GED, R&P), DR. W. O. AYANGBILE (GED, ENGINEERING).

Appendix 2



NNPC

INTERNAL MEMORANDUM

TO: MD, PHRC

REF: HR-ER-037

FROM: GGM, HR

DATE: 11th June, 2008

PLACEMENT FOR FIELD WORK: OLUSEGUN OLADEIDE


We wish to inform you that, Mr. Olusegun Oladeinde is a PhD student from the Department of Sociology, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa. He is on a five (5) month field work attachment to the Corporation, three (3) of which will be spent in PHRC. His field of specialization is Industrial Relations.

He has just completed two (2) months attachment with Group HR in Abuja. He is being deployed to PHRC for the next three (3) months to enable him complete his fieldwork.

Accordingly, you are kindly requested to give him every assistance to enable him have a successful outing.

He is not entitled to any stipend during the period. However, he will enjoy some of the welfare benefits such as medical and transportation services.

Thank you for your usual co-operation.


P.O. ODJOJI
FOR: GGM, HR

Appendix 3

QUESTIONNAIRE

**MANAGEMENT AND THE DYNAMICS OF LABOUR PROCESS: STUDY OF
WORKPLACE RELATIONS IN AN OIL REFINERY, NIGERIA.**

NON-SUPERVISORY WORKERS

Dear Sir/Madam,

As part of Research Work to know the impact of Managerial Practices on Employment Relations in the PHRC of NNPC, we would greatly appreciate your efforts in completing this questionnaire. It is hoped that your expressions in this study will further contribute to understanding issues of Managerial Practices and Workplace relations in the Company. Confidentiality of your views and expressions are guaranteed, and the study is not in anyway connected with the Management or the Union. The Study is to further contribute to body of knowledge.

PART A: SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF RESPONDENTS.

Please fill in the space provided in answering the questions.

1. Please indicate your Sex
2. Please indicate your age
3. Please indicate your Marital Status: Single Married
Divorced Widowed Separated
4. If Married, how many wives do you have (For male respondents).
5. How many children do you have
6. Educational attainment: Primary Secondary Techn
 O.N.D. H.N.D. Sc/BA
6. Nationality
7. State of Origin, if Nigerian
8. How many dependants (Adults, Children and Relatives) do you support financially?

EMPLOYMENT BACKGROUND OF RESPONDENTS

- 9. In what section of the Refinery do you work
- 10. Please indicate your job title
- 11. For how long have you been in the Refinery
- 12. When were you transferred to the present section
- 13. Where were you working before joining NNPC

PART B WORKER'S VIEW ON ON-GOING RESTRUCTURING.

Please mark X in the appropriate box, your answer which best sum up your own opinion to the question or statement.

- 1. What is your opinion regarding the on-going changes in work practices introduced by the Management. Very Good Good Not Good Undecided
- 2. How do you see the changes in connection with your own work:
Opportunity for promotion More Job Satisfaction
More demanding Demanding Unsure of its future
- 3. In the process of on-going changes, how much of the following are present in your job/works Shift Job rotation Job transfer
- 4. Please indicate how much of the following you perceived present in your job/work?
 - a. Opportunity for initiative/judgement on the job: Very High
High Low Very Low None
 - b. Freedom/Opportunity to determine or choose method of working.
Very High High Low Very Low None
 - c. What amount of challenge does the changes in work offer you:
Very High High Low Very Low None
 - d. How much recognition do you get from your supervisor for taking independent action/decision on the job?
Very High High Low Very Low None

Please indicate how you are affected by the following on your job.

6. My job interferes with my family life: Often Sometimes
Never
7. My Workload affects time for my family at home: Always
Sometimes Very rare
8. How tired are you because of Workload, overtime and shift:
Regularly Sometimes
9. Do you receive adequate supports materials/resources from your supervisor for additional workload?
Often Occasionally Not at all

Indicate your levels of agreements with the following.

10. I derive job satisfaction from my schedules now than before:
Strongly agree I agree strongly disagree
Disagree
11. My schedule before gave me more time to enjoy than now.
Strongly agree I agree strongly disagree
Disagree
12. I derived more interest on my schedule before than now.
Strongly agree I agree strongly disagree
Disagree
13. I experienced more promotion and compensation before than now:
Strongly agree I agree Strongly disagree
Disagree

Involvement of Employees & Workers representatives in Decision Making.

Please indicate how you agree with the following.

14. Management consults with Workers and Unions on decisions concerning changes in work schedules. Regularly
Sometimes
Very rare Not at all
15. Unions are ready to be involved: Regularly Sometimes
Very rare Not at all

16. Supervisors and Team leaders brief Team members on outcome of decisions on changes. Regularly Sometimes Very rare
Not at all
17. Supervisors/Team leaders convey feelings of team members to management: Regularly Sometimes Very rare
Not at all
18. What is your opinion on Supervisors acceptance of suggestions from workers: Regularly Sometimes Very rare
Not at all
19. How does management take actions on suggestions given by workers?
Regularly Sometimes Very rare Not at all
20. Which of these can you say best describes the Union's participation in Management decision?
Regularly Sometimes Very rare Not at all
21. How often do you feel management respond to Unions suggestion on Work changes: Regu Somet Very
Not at all
22. How do you rate Union's activities when it comes to reacting to Management's decisions on Work changes: Very High High
Just fair Low
23. Do you think the Unions are actually doing enough in satisfying worker's interest on issues of Work Changes? Yes No
24. How do you rate members' participation in Union activities on issues of Work Changes: Very High High Just fair
Low
25. Which of the house Unions do you belong to: NUPENG
PENGASSAN
26. How do you see Unions officers representing the members' interests?
Very strongly Strongly Just enough Not enough
27. Do you see your performance improving since the implementation of team Work practices?
28. How do the teamwork practices affect your relations with colleagues at work: Very strongly Strongly Just enough
Not enough

29. With the introduction of new work practices and teamwork, to what extent do you have control over your schedules: Very strongly
Strongly
Just enough Not enough
30. How often do you feel you have to resist some or all the aspects of new work practice: All the time sometimes?
Not at all No Very rare
31. How often do you feel the teamwork practices enhance your personal/career interest?
Very strongly Strongly Just enough Not enough
32. Do you see the managerial initiatives and decisions on work practices and teamwork as another burden on you? Yes No
33. Do you see the Teamwork System as imposition of organizational authority? Yes No
34. How do you experience feeling of safety and good health in the work practices: Very strongly Strongly Just enough
Not enough
35. What is your opinion about job rotation and shifting in the teamwork and work practices: Strongly agree Agree Not e
36. Do you feel the new work practices make your work faster and quicker? Yes No
37. How much do you see of management's control over the operations of your work: Very h Ave
38. How much of co-operative relations do new work practices introduce to you as a team member Very High High Average Low
39. How much of free and open communications you noticed as a result of new Work practices: Very much Much Much
40. Do you think the Unions are doing their best in promoting your interests? Ave
41. Can Workers resist unacceptable management policies without the Unions: Yes No
42. Do you see any other collective actions apart from Unions, influencing management policies: Yes No

43. Apart from wages and other conditions of employment/work, do you think Unions should negotiate with the management decisions on new work practices: s p

NEW EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES AND SAFETY & HEALTH

44. For the Work you do: volume of work, hours of work and the shift system, how would you rate the effect on your health:
Much stressful Stressful Normal Negative
45. Does your work/job involve any hazard: Yes No
46. If yes, what type (e.g. Chemical, Mechanical, Electrical).
47. How often do you face this type of hazard(s) in your work:
Every time Occasionally Sometimes Rarely
48. What would you attribute the hazard(s) to: Inadequate Safety precaution Lack of safety warning/education, ers lapses general slack work environment
49. Given the nature of work hazard in the job, do you think the management is doing enough: Yes No Trying g
51. What do you like most about the new work practices?
Opportunity to participate to use initiative to control one's pace of work the incentives
52. What do you dislike most about new work practices: Too much monitor by the manent too much responsi? Control to meet target the job rotation
53. How much opportunity do you think the Management has given to skills acquisition and training.
54. How much of your expertise and training do you think the new work practices is demanding from you.
- 55.

**QUESTIONNAIRE ON
RESTRUCTURING, AND WORKPLACE RELATIONS AT PORT-HARCOURT
REFINERY COMPANY OF NNPC.**

SUPERVISORY STAFF

Dear Sir/Ma,

As part of on-going study of impact of organizational restructuring at NNPC on Employment Relations, this questionnaire survey is targeted at the people at Supervisory level whose official duties include supervision of human resources, and work activities in their unit or departments. These are Supervisors, Foremen, Plant Managers and Chief Operators. This study is an aspect of Doctoral Research program being undertaken from Rhodes University, South Africa. Every bit of information would be treated by this Researcher as confidential. Thanks for your time, efforts and understanding.

PART A: Please fill in the space, or mark X in response to appropriate questions.

1. Please indicate the Unit/Section of the Refinery you work.....
2. Please indicate your designation or your functional title
3. Please indicate the career post you occupy
4. Please indicate your gender: Male Female
5. Please indicate your Marital Status: Married Single
Divorced Separated
6. Kindly indicate your highest educational/professional qualification
7. Indicate your Nationality please
8. If Nigerian, please indicate your state of origin
9. Please specify when you joined the NNPC

10. When did you start to work in the Refinery
.....
11. When were you promoted/transferred to the present position
.....
12. Did you go for any in-house training/workshop before being
transferred/promoted to present post
.....
13. Please indicate no. & types training ever attended
.....
.....
14. Given the challenges of on-going restructuring at NNPC, do you feel
apprehensive/concerned? Yes No Not Sure
15. Do you feel the management is doing enough to carry the workers along
on issues of changes in work practices?
Yes No Trying
16. Since the introduction of restructuring exercise, how many types of
Team Works or Quality Control Programs you have
participated/attended
17. Please indicate, is the Team or Quality Control exercise contributing to
improved performance? Yes No..... Average
.....
18. Please indicate when you feel the management started to introduce
work changes
19. With the changes in work schedules, do workers working under your
supervision ever expressed opinions on these changes Yes.....
No.....
20. If yes, how do they do so?
(a) To immediate supervisor (b) To Union reps To Senior
Supervisor
21. How often do they make use of the channel indicated above?
All the time Sometimes Occasionally
22. In general how would you access the effectiveness of the channel of
communication between the management and the workers on changes
in work practices?

Very effective Effective Less Effective

23. How would you assess the role of supervisors in determining work changes? Very High High Average Do you think supervisors are adequately involved in decision making on issues relating to work changes? All the time involved Sometimes involved not involved
25. From your experience, do you think workers enthusiastically accept new work practices? Very enthusiastic Accepted because no choice Reluctant about it Accept
26. Please indicate the Union you belong; NUPENG PENGASSAN
27. From your experience, do you think Unions are involved in the decision making on issues of work practices: Yes Sometimes No
28. Do you think the remunerations attached with the new work practices are adequate? Yes can be improved

N.B.: With the changes/introduction of new work practices in the Refinery, please indicate your opinion on the following.

29.

	Very High	High	Average	Low
Degree of authority you have over your assigned responsibility				
Degree of control over your subordinates				
Degree of attention to complaints and grievances from subordinates				
Level of autonomy and initiatives on job assignments				
Level of incorporation by the management				
Level of representation at Union levels on issues of management practices				

30. Please assess level of management commitment to issues of safety and hazards at work: Very High High Average
31. On new management practices, what form of resistance do you often notice from workers: Individual resistance Collective
Resistance?
Union resistance
32. In your own opinion, do you think the management practice is “buying in” on workers and Unions? Average
33. How much of impact of new work responsibilities have on your social/community obligations/social engagements? Very much
Much Average Low
34. Do the new work practices affect your family obligations?
Generally Yes Average Low No
35. Please indicate your occupational or professional identity in the Refinery.....
36. For how long have you been in this occupational group.....
37. With the introduction of new work practices how much do you think the amount of work is increasing Very much Slightly Not much
Not at all
38. For how much does the scope of work expand Very much Slightly
Not much Not at all
39. How are assignments require Joint Projects or Teamwork Always
Sometimes Rarely Not at all
40. How much of managerial monitoring and control do you observe in the new work practices Very much Much Normal Not much
41. Over all, how do you rate the new work practices Challenging
Stressful Normal

Appendix 4

**RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE ON:
ANALYSING TOTAL QUALITY PROGRAMME IN
CONTEXT: SUPERVISORS AWARENESS AND
UNDERSTANDING; STUDY OF PHRC, NIGERIA.**

Dear Sir/Ma,

As part of on-going study of Organizational Changes and employment Relations in the PHRC, this questionnaire Survey is designed and targeted at the people of supervisory cadre. The supervisors occupy a critical position of products, processes and services quality assurance within the refinery. And as part of Corporate's efforts at improving products quality, services and processes delivery, the survey intends to elicit supervisors awareness and understanding of total quality programme.

The study is an aspect of Doctoral Research programme being undertaken from Rhodes University South Africa. The information provided would be treated as confidential, and for academic purpose.

Thanks for your co-operation.

Part A: Please fill in the space, or mark X in response to appropriate questions

1. Please indicate the Unit/Section of the refinery you work
2. Please indicate your designation or your functional title
3. Please indicate the career path you occupy.....
4. Please indicate your gender: Male Female
5. Please indicate your marital status: Married Single
6. Please indicate your age
7. Kindly indicate your highest educational/professional qualification

Part B: Supervisor and Total Quality Programme

8. Kindly indicate the year you joined the PHRC
9. When were you promoted/transferred to the present position?.....
10. Did you go for any in-house training/course before being transferred/promote to the present post?.....
11. Please indicate the no, and types of training ever attended
12. Are you aware of Organizational Changes generally in the PHRC?
.....
13. Are you aware of the concept Total Quality programme in the refinery?
.....

14. Has the concept and practice been introduced to your Dept/Unit?
.....
15. Do you see any importance of Total Quality Programme in your Dept/Unit?
.....
16. In line with Total Quality Programme, how much of functional –delegation from Top-management, you experience? Very High High Normal
Not at all Low
17. How much of your skill/experience you perceive being incorporated in your day-to-day work tasks? Very High High Normal
Not at all Low
18. With the introduction of Total Quality Programme, how much of control and monitoring do you feel accompany it from Top Management? Very High High
Normal Not at all Low
19. From your own experiences, could you please rate (%) the presence of each of these Quality Driven Cultures in Total Quality Programmes at PHRC Employee involvement %
Continuous Training % Team work %
Continuous improvement % Empowerment/autonomy %
20. Do you see the training as meeting the strategic objectives of TQP in your Department?
.....
21. In implementing the Total Quality Programme, do you see the management doing enough in soliciting your in-puts and contributions? Enough Not enough
Can be improved
22. To what extent has the introduction of Total Quality Programme contributed to workload in your Dept/Unit? Very High High Normal
Not at all Low
23. Give your skill/special training, how much of initiatives and discretion does Total Quality Programme allows in your over all job? Very High High
Normal Not at all Low
24. Do you see Total Quality Programme encouraging bottom-up issues identification and problems solving in your Dept/Unit? Very High High
Normal Not at all Low
25. Generally how much do you rate organizational culture in PHRC, in support of Total Quality Programme % % % % %

Many thanks.