Indigenous Employee Voice and Inclusion: Perspectives from Vietnam Public Sector Organisations

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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DECLARATION

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

Tho Alang

21 July, 2019
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AD</td>
<td>Anno Domini</td>
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<tr>
<td>ADB</td>
<td>Asian Development Bank</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEMA</td>
<td>Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPV</td>
<td>Communist Party of Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CYLH</td>
<td>Communist Youth League of Ho-chi-minh</td>
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<tr>
<td>EV</td>
<td>Employee voice</td>
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<tr>
<td>HR</td>
<td>Human Resource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRM</td>
<td>Human Resource Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IR</td>
<td>Industrial Relation</td>
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<tr>
<td>IWGIA</td>
<td>International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LP</td>
<td>Labour Process</td>
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<tr>
<td>OB</td>
<td>Organisational Behaviour</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAA</td>
<td>Public Administrative Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOEs</td>
<td>State-owned Enterprises</td>
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<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Program</td>
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<td>UNFPA</td>
<td>United Nations Population Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>VGCL</td>
<td>Vietnam General Confederation of Labour</td>
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ABSTRACT

The aims of this thesis were to understand: the impact of government policy and legislation on Indigenous employee voice in Vietnam’s public sector organisations; the organisations’ implementation of government policy and legislation on Indigenous voice practice; and the experience of Indigenous employees of such voice practices impacting on their inclusion in regard to organisational decision making.

In order to address the research questions, this research utilised a qualitative approach based on three case studies. Since the research subjects of the thesis were Indigenous employees in public sector organisations, Indigenous research methods were also employed to guide the research process, such as access to fieldwork, interviews with Indigenous people and data interpretation. This Indigenous approach addressed Indigenous research challenges that have been recognised by previous scholars. Twenty-seven in-depth face-to-face interviews were conducted with 10 managers and union representatives (including Indigenous and non-Indigenous managers) and 17 Indigenous employees. This study also utilised documentation and fieldnotes as sources of data to triangulate the results. Thematic analysis was applied to interpret the findings.

The findings show that government policy and legislation (i.e. EEO) had a positive impact on Indigenous workforce participation which is considered as a key precursor of Indigenous voice. Every organisation had multiple voice mechanisms consisting of formal, informal, direct, and indirect forms. The study found differences in voice practices that were applied to Indigenous employees and reflected their uniqueness. However, Indigenous employees had negative experiences of many of these organisational voice practices, as they felt that, in practice, their voices were not taken into consideration in organisational decision making. In particular, the study found that Indigenous voice was impeded by underlying racism, lack of support from trade unions, lack of senior leadership responsibility in the departments, Indigenous low self-
esteem, non-Indigenous managers’ lack of awareness of Indigenous differences and poor managerial skills, and government policy’s infantilisation of Indigenous people. In addition, the study found that Indigenous employees’ perception of inclusion in regard to organisational decision making rested on inclusive leadership practices. Implications are drawn for the theoretical contribution of the thesis and managerial practice.
LIST OF PUBLICATIONS


CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Research

Public sector organisations often emphasize the implementation of diversity policies to increase the workforce participation of minority groups, since public sector organisations act as bureaucratic representation of every segment of the population. As a result of diversity policies, the needs of a diverse range of citizens might be better reflected in government action (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015). In addition, the workplaces of public sector organisations become more diverse, which is desirable to create practices that involve distinct voices, so as to make certain that all employees have a say over their work. Such practices also enhance employee participation and consultation for minority groups since, within workplace diversity, each group has unique knowledge, skills and capacity to contribute to the organisation’s competitiveness (Farndale et al., 2015; Fujimoto & Härtel, 2017). These practices include applying equal employment opportunity for minorities and fostering their inclusion (Robinson, 2000). According to Budd, Gollan, and Wilkinson (2010), this new approach to voice can,

“not only greatly enhance our understanding of employee voice and participation, but hopefully will also help policy-makers, employers, and employee advocates design more effective voice and participation mechanisms that serve the multiplicity of interests inherent in the modern employment relationship” (p. 308).

Despite the advantages of employee voice having been recognised, the majority of employee voice studies to date have considered voice as a universal concept which is applied in the same way to all workers (Bell et al., 2011; Budd, 2014; Sablok et al., 2013; Wilkinson et al., 2018). This means that voices from marginalised employee groups are neglected by academic researchers, though they are part of the workforce. For instance, despite there being about 300
million Indigenous people living across 90 countries worldwide (United Nations, 2019), to date there is a dearth of research on their voice experiences. Studies worldwide on Indigenous employees also indicate that they often experience a sense of isolation in the workplace, because of the prevalence of discrimination and lack of support from trade unions and policy makers for their voices (Biddle et al., 2013; Daldy et al., 2013; Hunter & Hawke, 2001; Kensington-Miller & Ratima, 2015; Kunkel et al., 2010). Organisational voice mechanisms have not taken into account the unique aspects of Indigenous cultures, since they often do not understand Indigenous uniqueness (Haar & Brougham, 2011; Haar & Brougham, 2013; Hunter & Hawke, 2002). It has been argued that Indigenous employees are in a state of double jeopardy, with both their voice being repressed by organisations and a lack of attention from researchers (Biddle et al., 2013; Haar & Brougham, 2013; Hunter & Hawke, 2001).

Vietnam is a transitional economy which has changed its government structures from those of a centrally planned economy to those of a market-oriented economy (Riedel & Comer, 1997). Indigenous Vietnamese people (ie. the Montagnards, and Cham people) are treated as vulnerable groups, since they live under conditions of poverty and are marginalized from socioeconomic development (Badiani et al., 2012; Baulch et al., 2007). While Indigenous workforce participation in public sector organisations has increased in recent decades (Dang, 2010), several problems are identified in the workplace faced by Indigenous employees. Firstly, differences in language and culture impede Indigenous employees in regard to communication and interaction with their colleagues at work. Evidence shows that Indigenous people are less likely to speak the dominant language of the country, which leads them to tend to be more marginalized in relation to their non-Indigenous colleagues (Baulch et al., 2007; World Bank, 2009).
Secondly, racial prejudice exists in the workplace and is a threat to Indigenous participation at work (Molini & Wan, 2008; Dang, 2010; Wells-Dang, 2012; Badiani et al., 2012). For instance, Indigenous employees are labelled or perceived as ‘different’ by mainstream employees in the workplace (World Bank, 2009). In addition, they are stereotyped as having a ‘lack of knowledge’ by management even where they have higher education qualifications (Badiani et al., 2012). In such prejudiced environments, Indigenous voices at work are still overlooked. However, more importantly, Indigenous people have raised their voices politically by putting pressure on the government to request their political autonomy (Gupta, 2005). Although all Indigenous demands are not accepted, their voice can attract government attention, and many subsequent policies are reshaped and implemented in the Indigenous communities. For example, Government regulations on workplace democracy for public organisations have been formulated and implemented as a result of Indigenous workforce advocacy.

Research on Indigenous employees in Vietnamese workplaces is still limited and focuses mainly on the macro level (Nguyen, 2016). Little attention has been paid to Indigenous employees within the workplace; in particular, there is a relative lack of research on public sector organisations where the percentage of Indigenous employees is increasing, comprising 11.68 per cent of the total of governmental officials in 2013 (Vietnam Border Defence Force, 2015). Given the lack of organisational-based research, Indigenous voice experience and inclusion thus remain relatively unexplored. As an Indigenous researcher of Vietnam, this motivated me to search for knowledge of how Indigenous employee voice and inclusion are understood and facilitated in the context of Vietnam. In this thesis, findings not only provide a picture of Indigenous voice in Vietnam but also contribute to the existing literature an understanding of Indigenous employees’ voices worldwide from the perspective of Indigenous people.
1.2 Rationale for the Research

There are six reasons for conducting this research, explained as follows. First and foremost, this research will provide an understanding of Indigenous employee voice and inclusion within the move toward workplace diversity. In doing so, this research will contribute to the elimination of a gap in the existing literature on voice in the workplace (see Bell et al., 2011; Syed, 2014; Wilkinson et al., 2018). Employee voice has been investigated widely with several employee groups such as LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender), immigrant workers and ethnic minorities, but there is little research on Indigenous employee voice (Bell et al., 2011; Wilkinson et al., 2018). Wilkinson et al. (2018) claim that, in order to address the increase in diversity within the workplace, it is necessary to consider the perspectives, insights and concerns of a diverse range of employees so that they can be involved in workplace decision making. While the uniqueness of Indigenous people has been recognised and has shaped management practices and leadership behaviours in many studies (Doyle & Hungerford, 2015; Eyong, 2017; Haar & Brougham, 2011; Haar & Brougham, 2013; Henry & Wolfgramm, 2018; Hunter & Hawke, 2002; Mika & O'Sullivan, 2014; Ruwhiu & Elkin, 2016), the application of the study of voice to these peoples remains unexplored.

The second reason for the present research is that it will extend the understanding of public policy and legislation affecting Indigenous employee voice within diverse workplaces. This second reason is framed on the basis that the roles of public policy and legislation are considered as preconditions for employee voice and participation (O'Donoghue et al., 2011). Public policy and legislation are considered centrally important to Indigenous people, since current Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) policy focuses mainly on increasing diversity, rather than on creating an inclusiveness workplace where Indigenous voice will be taken into consideration (Sabharwal, 2014). According to Budd and Zagelmeyer (2010), “if the objectives
are more broadly defined to include things like equity and voice for employees […] then there is the potential for public policies to improve the employment relationship” (p. 497). The present research utilizes employee voice theories to explain the role of public policy and legislation (i.e. EEO) as a crucial precursor of Indigenous voice behaviours.

Thirdly, previous studies showed that employee participation is often tokenistic in nature, as individual employees have very little power to make change or a real contribution to decision making (Brinsfield, 2014; Strauss, 2006). This situation is because managers lack important skills in implementing and using voice mechanisms as designed and intended, which undermines voice effectiveness and relevance (Townsend, 2014). Addressing this problem is particularly important in managing minorities because, without relevant skills and training in cultural competency skills, voice mechanisms can become meaningless (Fujimoto & EJ Härtel, 2017; Townsend, 2014). Furthermore, Vietnam’s cultural values in management are identified as in-group collectivism and high power distance, which have impacted differently on Vietnamese peoples’ voice architecture, particularly for Indigenous Vietnamese employees (Kwon & Farndale, 2018; Nguyen et al., 2017; Ralston et al., 1999). As such, voice practices for Indigenous employees rely on inclusive leaders, since such leaders are the ones who have “the capabilities including mindsets, knowledge, skills, and behaviours […] which make their organisations inclusive” (Diversity Council Australia 2015, p. 8; Randel et al., 2018). The present research extends the leadership literature by addressing the call by Shore, Cleveland, and Sanchez (2018) for more research to explore these inclusive leadership behaviours which have impacts on employee perceptions of inclusion at work, and in particular on the experiences of employees from traditionally marginalised groups.

Fourthly, most studies on employee voice and inclusion are conducted in Western countries: as diversity exists in all parts of the world, perspectives on such issues from non-Western
countries are needed (Budd, 2014; Oswick & Noon, 2014; Wilkinson et al., 2018). For example, Vietnam, with a transitional economy, has shaped employee voice practices through unions and other informal representatives such as team leaders and senior staff (Do, 2013), which may be different from Western countries. As Budd (2014) suggests, “voice research should continue to confront and analyse issues that result from changing and emerging institutions of voice” (p. 483); thus, the present research extends understanding of employee voice by adding perspectives from the context of Vietnam, as a non-Western country.

Fifthly, this research contributes to extending the knowledge on traditional qualitative research by applying this research methods in the context of Indigenous communities. Scholars have recognised the existence of challenges in conducting Indigenous research, such as access to Indigenous communities, and in collecting, analysing and interpreting data from such communities (Burnette et al., 2014; Chilisa, 2012; Louis, 2007; Tsui, 2004). In addition, Indigenous research changes across countries and cultures in adaptation to each specific context. In Vietnam, doing research on or with Indigenous people is still perceived as a sensitive issue, due to political and historical factors. The present research provides insights into the qualitative research in the contexts of Indigenous Vietnamese people.

The sixth reason for the present research is that scholars have found that non-Indigenous managers often lack understanding of Indigenous people and HR policy has not included Indigenous difference (Haar & Brougham, 2013). The present research aims to improve policy-makers’ and organisational managers’ understandings of frameworks for Indigenous employee voice and inclusion which are preferable in the context of public sector organisations. The framework from this research will include public policy and legislation needed to be applied for Indigenous people within workplaces. Furthermore, such a framework shows how inclusive leadership behaviours can encourage Indigenous voices and their perception of inclusion.
Having awareness of Indigenous differences will support policy-makers and managers to effectively address Indigenous peoples’ demands for valuing of their uniqueness, as well as facilitating the latter’s perception of belongingness (Randel et al., 2018). This will help to eliminate racial conflict, encourage every employee to speak up, and foster organisations’ creativity and innovation (Farndale et al., 2015).

1.3 The Context of the Research

Vietnam is an ethnically diverse country with 53 designated ethnic minorities, of which many groups are indigenous to their lands, particularly ethnic groups (ie. the Montagnards, and Cham people) in the Central Highlands region (Gupta, 2005). The uniqueness of Indigenous people in Vietnam is that they are not acknowledged officially by the government because of political and historical reasons (IWGIA, 2018). However, the efforts of the Vietnamese government to advance the economic and social development of Indigenous communities have been recognised (Badiani et al., 2012). The Vietnamese government also has endorsed and ratified the United Nations Millennium Declaration for freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature, and shared responsibility, which relates directly to Indigenous workforce participation (Gerard, 2001; United Nations, 2010). With a population of almost twelve million, the Indigenous people of Vietnam not only has been recognised to be a potential source of skills and talent for the future but could also make a considerable contribution to the growth of the Vietnamese economy through the development of cultural tourism, arts and crafts (Gerard, 2001).

As mentioned earlier, Vietnam is known as a ‘transitional economy’, in which the role of employee voice has been widely recognised and applied in the workplace through a variety of mechanisms (Collins et al., 2011; Grosse, 2015; Riedel & Comer, 1997; Thang & Quang, 2005). For example, in the public sector, the ‘Regulations on Workplace Democracy’ include:
sharing information with employees; encouraging employee participation; and recognising employees’ responsibility to monitor the progress of democratic practices. According to these regulations, employees are able to contribute to work-related issues such as the development of organizational strategies, human resource policies, improving organisational performance, development of workplace rules and regulations, and other organisational policies. Information is shared with employees through meetings, documents, line managers, newsletters and emails. Government policy states that employees can have influence over their work by either direct or indirect voice mechanisms. On the one hand, individuals can express their views directly about work in a formal meeting or discussion with management; and, on the other hand, they can be represented by labour unions.

Vietnam is also known as a Confucianism-/collectivism-influenced country, and there is the existence of a high power distance culture (Nguyen et al., 2013; Ralston et al., 1999). Previous studies indicate that employee voices are limited in collectivist cultures due to norms of not being appropriate in speaking up (Ralston et al., 1999). Also, employees in the context of high power distance are less likely to speak up as they often feel psychologically unsafe in presenting their voice to management (Kwon & Farndale, 2018; Li et al., 2010; Tang et al., 2017). In such contexts, although voice mechanisms are provided within the workplace, Indigenous employee voice may be even more vulnerable, since their differences and distinct needs may be overlooked by managers (Badiani et al., 2012; The Economist, 2015).

1.4 Definitions

1.4.1 Indigenous people in Vietnam

According to the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (2017), the term ‘Indigenous people’ in Vietnam sometimes is used interchangeably with ‘ethnic minority
people’ to refer generally to the ethnic minority people living in the mountainous areas such as the Montagnards, and Cham people. In addition, international organisations such as the ILO, World Bank and UN use either Indigenous and/or minority people to refer to Vietnam’s ethnic minorities in their annual reports. This thesis utilises the term Indigenous people in an apolitical stance, aimed to differentiate between the ethnic minority groups who historically have been living in the Central Highlands region and other ethnic groups who have arrived from other places. As such, the term Indigenous people in this study only includes the local ethnic minority people who are recognised as the first people settling in this Highlands region (refer to each of the case histories in the present research; also, Gupta, 2005). Moreover, this thesis employs the term ‘Indigenous people’ to be consistent with existing literature on the thesis research topic and with usage in the English-speaking literature in this area.

1.4.2 Employee voice (EV)

A variety of definitions of employee voice (hereafter, EV) are recognised across disciplines (Wilkinson et al., 2014). In general, EV refers to providing employees with a say, and is understood as employee involvement and participation in workplace decision making (Freeman et al., 2007; Marchington, 2005; McCabe & Lewin, 1992). According to Strauss (2006), participation and involvement imply that employees have active and passive influence, respectively, over their work and employment conditions. EV has also been defined as “the ways and means through which employees attempt to have a say and potentially influence organisational affairs relating to issues that affect their work and the interests of managers and owners” (Wilkinson et al., 2014, p. 5). EV can be determined through union and non-union structures such as work councils or consultative committees (McCabe & Lewin, 1992; Sablok et al., 2013; Wilkinson et al., 2004). Furthermore, voice actors are identified as including
unions, managers, employers, employees, and other civil society organizations (Dundon et al., 2004; Wilkinson et al., 2014).

1.4.3 Diversity

Diversity is considered to be “the presence of differences among members of a social unit” (Jackson et al., 1995, p. 217), and described as “the composition of groups or workforces” (Roberson, 2006, p. 214). Two aspects of diversity are visible (e.g. gender, race, ethnicity and age) and invisible groupings (e.g. culture, cognition and technical ability) (Milliken & Martin, 1996). Milliken and Martins (1996) argue that visible groupings of race and ethnicity receive more attention than others, due to their observable attributes and in compliance with biases, prejudices or stereotypes. According to the social identity theory, race and ethnic minorities are at high risk of classification into ‘out-groups’, and deal with challenges in cooperating with others, given that people often prefer to work with those who are in their ‘in-group’ (Bae et al., 2016). However, other scholars argue that people who are members of ‘out-groups’ are: less psychologically committed to their organisations; more likely to be absent (Tsui et al., 1992); less inclined to stay with organisations; more likely to perceive themselves to be less accepted by their organisations; and more likely to feel that they have less discretion in their roles (Greenhaus et al., 1990).

1.4.4 Inclusion

Inclusion is defined as “a person’s ability to contribute fully and effectively to an organization” (Roberson 2006, p. 215). In addition, it is considered as “the degree to which individuals feel a part of the critical organisational processes, such as access to information, connectedness to co-workers, and ability to participate in and influence the decision-making” (Mor-Barak, 2011; p. 7). According to O'hara, Beehr, and Colarelli (1994), inclusion is perceived when a person
feels “accepted and treated as an insider by others in a work system” (p. 200). This means that different voices from minority groups are respected and heard (Bell et al., 2011). In other words, an individual employee considers herself/himself as “an esteemed member of the work group” since their needs for belongingness and uniqueness are satisfied (Shore et al., 2011, p. 1265).

1.4.5 Vietnam’s Public Sector Organisations

The public sector organisations in Vietnam include its public administration agencies at the central level and at local levels, the latter consisting of provinces, districts and communes or towns (Vietnam Laws and Legal Forum, 2017). Each level of local administration agencies includes a Peoples’ Committee and a Peoples’ Council. There are several departments within each local level of public administration agencies, which provide communities with a variety of services in relation to healthcare, education, security, taxes, finance, land registration, business registration, social support etc.

1.5 Research Objectives and Questions

The primary aim of this thesis is to explore Indigenous EV and inclusion in public sector organisations operating in Vietnam. More specifically, this thesis aims to understand: the impact of government policy and legislation on Indigenous EV in Vietnam’s public sector organisations; the organisations’ implementation of government policy and legislation in Indigenous voice practice; and the experiences of Indigenous employees of such voice practices impacting on their inclusion into organisational decision making. This thesis addresses three research questions as follows:

1) How do government policy and legislation affect Indigenous employee voice in Vietnam’s public sector organisations?
2) How do public sector organisations implement government policy and legislation in Indigenous employee voice practice?

3) How and why does the experience of Indigenous employees of voice practice impact on their inclusion in regard to organisational decision making?

1.6 Approach to the Inquiry

This thesis employs qualitative research with a multiple-case study, to address the dearth of organisationally based research on Indigenous voice in Vietnamese contexts, and the challenge of quantitatively measuring aspects of Indigenous voice and inclusion. The three case studies involved in this thesis were purposively selected on the basis of their ethnically diverse workplace, large size and union presence. The present research also took account of Indigenous uniqueness during the research process (Alang et al., 2017; Chilisa, 2012; Eyong, 2017; Li et al., 2012; Louis, 2007; Mika & O'Sullivan, 2014; Ruwhiu & Cone, 2010). For instance, Indigenous people’s voice was included in the research process, as the researcher of this thesis has an Indigenous Vietnamese background (Louis, 2007), which allowed for richness and of data collection and interpretation (Creswell, 1998).

A combination of snowball and opportunistic sampling strategies was implemented to obtain names and contact details of participants. In-depth interviews were conducted across the three organisations, and the participants included senior managers, line managers, union representatives and Indigenous employees. The primary field data were collected by using semi-structured questions and face-to-face interviews. The study reported here also explored various documentary second data in terms of HR policies, annual reports, monthly briefing summary, workplace regulations, research papers, local news, and the central and provincial governments’ decisions and directives. The research utilised thematic analysis as the data analysis procedure. The data were analysed in two stages: firstly, each case was analysed
separately; secondly, a comparison through cross-case analysis was employed. The data analysis procedure comprised data familiarisation, data coding, theme development and revision, and theme comparison. Furthermore, in order to gain reliability and validity, data analysis triangulation was emphasized in this study.

1.7 Thesis Structure

Chapter 1 presented an overview of the thesis. The remainder of the thesis is structured as follows. Chapter 2 describes the Vietnamese contexts under study (Part 1) by focussing on Indigenous people and government policy and legislation. Chapter 3 describes the Vietnamese context (Part 2) by focussing on public sector organisations, unions, management and leadership. Chapter 4 presents a review of the relevant literature. Chapter 5 outlines the research methodologies. Chapter 6 presents the findings from Case 1; Chapter 7 presents the findings from Case 2; and Chapter 8 presents the findings from Case 3. Chapter 9 presents the cross-case analysis. Chapter 10 presents the thesis conclusions and implications from the thesis.
CHAPTER 2: THE VIETNAMESE CONTEXT (PART 1) – INDIGENOUS PEOPLE, GOVERNMENT POLICY AND LEGISLATION

2.1 Introduction

Chapter 1 presented an overview of the thesis. Chapter 2 focuses on analysing the context of Indigenous people in Vietnam. More specifically, this chapter provides an in-depth understanding of Indigenous people, and of the government policy and legislation on Indigenous workforce participation and voice practice at work. This chapter addresses the questions: Who are Indigenous people in Vietnam? What are their problems? What is government policy and legislation in relation to Indigenous employees? In doing so, this chapter utilises documentary analysis methods. The documents comprise government reports published on the central and local governments’ websites, domestic and international media reports, and reports from the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, International Labour Organisation (ILO), United Nations (UN), Human Rights Watch, and the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA). To have multiple perspectives on Indigenous issues, this study also explores informal reports and comments from Vietnamese Indigenous people worldwide posted on their individual and groups social media sites. These multiple sources of data are used to cross-check the information.

The chapter is structured as follows. Section 2.2 presents the overall background of Indigenous people in Vietnam. Section 2.3 highlights Indigenous workforce participation in public sector organisations. Section 2.4 points out government policy and legislation relating to Indigenous workforce participation and voice practices in the workplace. Section 2.5 provides a summary of the chapter.
2.2 Overall information on Indigenous people in Vietnam

This section clarifies the definitions of Indigenous people worldwide, Indigenous people in Vietnam, and the Vietnamese Government’s fifty-three designated ethnic minorities. More importantly, it explains the term ‘Indigenous people’ utilised in this thesis.

2.2.1 Definition of Indigenous people worldwide

There is no global consensus on a definition of the terms, ‘Indigenous people’ and ‘ethnic minority people’, around the world (United Nations, 2018). The definition of the terms ‘Indigenous people’ and ‘tribal people’ are drawn from the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention issued by the International Labour Organisation (ILO, 1989). These terms are used widely in international organisational documents. The term ‘Indigenous’ in this Convention is clarified as follows:

“Peoples in independent countries who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, or a geographical region to which the country belongs, at the time of conquest or colonisation or the establishment of present state boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions” (Article 1).

The term ‘Indigenous people’ is also used interchangeably with ‘ethnic minority people’ in some countries and regions (IWGIA, 2018). In a United Nations’ report on ‘promoting inclusion through social protection’ (2018), the term ‘ethnic minority people’ is identified as follows:
“It is numerically smaller than the rest of the population; it is not in a dominant position; it has a culture, language, religion or race that is distinct from that of the majority; and its members have a will to preserve those characteristics” (p. 97).

Although there is lack of international agreement on understanding and using the term Indigenous people, many governments acknowledge and treat their ethnic minority people as Indigenous ethnic minorities, Aboriginals, hill tribes, minority nationalities, schedules tribes, or tribal groups (World Bank, 2011). For example: Indigenous Australian peoples include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups; Indigenous peoples in New Zealand are Maori people; and Indigenous peoples in United States consist of American Natives. Indigenous people are also recognised in Asian countries such as Japan (Ainu people), Taiwan (Indigenous Taiwanese peoples including Ami, Atayal, Bunun etc.) and Malaysia (Orang Asli). Some Asian countries, including China, Laos and Vietnam, do not recognised officially their Indigenous people; instead, in these countries, the governments use the official term ‘ethnic minority’ to refer to all ethnic minority groups. Globally, there are about 300 million Indigenous and minority ethnic people accounting for 4.5 percent of the world’s population (IWGIA, 2018), and one third are living in poor conditions (World Bank, 2011).

2.2.2 Understanding Indigenous people in Vietnam

As mentioned earlier, the term ‘Indigenous people’ is not commonly used among Vietnamese policymakers, as the government does not acknowledge some ethnic minorities as Indigenous people. However, according to the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (2017), the term ‘Indigenous people’ in Vietnam is sometimes used interchangeably with ‘ethnic minority people’ to refer generally to the ethnic minority people living in the mountainous areas. In addition, international organisations such as the ILO, World Bank and UN use either Indigenous and/or minority people to refer to Vietnam’s ethnic minorities in their annual
reports. The Vietnamese Government has also endorsed and ratified the United Nation Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (IWGIA, 2017; World Bank, 2009). This means that the Government is in line with UN in supporting, maintaining and protecting Indigenous people and their values.

Some ethnic minority groups such as the Montagnards, Khmer Krom and Cham people defend their claim to be acknowledged as Indigenous ethnic minorities on their land (Gupta, 2005). The Cham people are the descendants of the Champa Empire which was in existence from the 2nd century AD to 1832 in south Vietnam. The Montagnards, also known as Highlanders (nguoi Thuong), are a group of more than thirty ethnic minorities with a population of approximately one to two million people and traditionally inhabiting the highlands (UK Home Office, 2018). The Khmer Krom people traditionally inhabit the region of the Mekong delta in south-western Vietnam, and their population is approximately 1.3 million (UK Home Office, 2018).

There is still political controversy over the use of the term ‘Indigenous people’ in Vietnam among the Vietnamese Government and Indigenous people. The UN’s annual reports on ‘Indigenous people rights’ has fuelled this political tension. For instance, the Government states that the UN reports have given advantages to Indigenous people to make their claim over land rights and political autonomy (Nhandan, 2013), but that, under the Vietnamese political system, the land right belongs to the state, and the people have right to use it but no right to own it. The Indigenous people, particular the Montagnards, Cham and Khmer Krom, call for recognition of their ethnic identity as Indigenous in relation to their land and land rights (UK Home Office, 2018). Consequently, the term ‘Indigenous’ is considered to be politically sensitive, and the Government does not encourage its use in public media and documents. The Economist (2015) describes this situation as very serious, since the Vietnamese Government considers Indigenous-related issues to be as important as terrorism. It can be argued that this
political tension impacts on the cooperation between government staff and Indigenous communities, and between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, and has led to racial conflicts in the past (Gupta, 2005).

This thesis utilises the term ‘Indigenous people’ in an apolitical stance. The term ‘Indigenous people’ in this thesis aims to differentiate between ethnic minority groups who are from the Central Highlands region and other ethnic groups who have arrived from other places. As such, the term ‘Indigenous people’ in this study only includes the local ethnic minority people who are recognised as the first people settling in this region (Gupta, 2005). In addition, non-Indigenous people in this thesis refers not only to the Kinh ethnic group (the mainstream ethnic group) but also to other ethnic minority groups arriving from other regions of Vietnam, for instance, the Hmong, Tay, Thai, and Chinese from the Northern region. Moreover, this thesis employs the term ‘Indigenous people’ to be consistent with existing literature on the research topic of the thesis, and to be familiar with usage in the English-speaking literature in this area.

2.2.3 The Government’s designated fifty-three ethnic minority groups

Vietnam is an ethnically diverse country, with fifty-four designated ethnic groups in total (Badiani et al., 2012), of which the Kinh people account for eighty-six per cent of the population. Some of these groups have similarities in terms of living area, culture, language and history; for example, the Kinh and Muong ethnic groups are very similar in their cultures and languages. Due to such similarities, the Government places each ethnic group within each of eight general groups, which are Viet-Muong, Tay-Thai, Mon-Khme, Mong-Dao, Kadai, South Islands, Chinese, and Tang (ADB, 2012). This classification aims to implement different public policies for these groups to address their differences in social and economic development (DeJaeghere et al., 2013).
Aside from the majority Kinh group, the remaining fifty-three ethnic groups, which have a population of over twelve million, are defined as ethnic minorities because of their smaller population size (UNDP, 2010). However, the term ethnic minority sometimes does not include the Chinese group (the population of which is over 800 thousand people in Vietnam), as they are considered ethnically to be part of the wider group of Chinese people who have been migrating into Vietnam over a long period. Also, Chinese families dominate business as much as the Kinh people do (Dang, 2010). In government documents, the Chinese people are often identified separately from other ethnic minority groups and are determined by the name, người Hoa (Chinese people). In addition, the term ethnic minority is sometime used to label people who are living in deep poverty and those from minority communities; thus, ethnic minority people often perceive this term as having a sense of being racist or derogatory.

Five ethnic minority groups have populations of over one million: the Tay, Thai, Muong, Khmer, and Hmong. The smallest is the Odu group with a population of approximately 300 people. While the Kinh, Chinese, Khmer and Cham live in the lowlands, seventy-five per cent of the ethnic minority population live in mountainous areas (Badiani et al., 2012). The ethnic minorities spread over fifty-one provinces and the highest density is in the Northern Mountainous provinces (48.6 per cent) and the Central Highlands (29.3 per cent) (UNDP, 2010). The next section presents Indigenous peoples’ histories, cultures and languages in the Central Highlands region.

2.3 A snapshot of Indigenous peoples’ histories, cultures and languages

This section aims to provide a further understanding of Indigenous peoples in the Central Highlands in terms of their history, social systems, cultures and languages.
2.3.1 History

The histories of Indigenous peoples in Vietnam in general, and in particular in the Central Highlands (Figure 2.1), are not recorded faithfully in Vietnamese documents (Facts and Details, 2014). It is thus challenging to find Indigenous history from public media and documents. In this section, a snapshot of Indigenous history in the Central Highlands is presented based on work through the lens of foreigner authors. More specifically, the main points are drawn from a study by Salemink (2003) in *The ethnography of Vietnam’s Central Highlands: A historical contextualization, 1850-1990*, and another study by Christie (1998) in *A modern history of Southeast Asia: Decolonization, nationalism and separatism*. In addition, the present study considers information from individual stories posted on individual and group websites’ overseas Indigenous Vietnamese people and overseas non-Indigenous Vietnamese people, to ensure that the information has been cross-checked. The main points of the history of Indigenous people are presented as follows.

Before the 10th century, South Vietnam was inhabited by Indigenous people under two independent countries: the Kingdom of Champa (Central Coast region and Highlands), and Kingdom of Khme (South Western region). In 1832, the Champa Empire ended, and was partly absorbed by Dai Viet (an independent country in North Vietnam with the Kinh ethnic group); but the Central Highlands was still independent and self-governed by the Indigenous people. In 1842, the first French priests entered the Central Highlands, and after 10 years they established a Catholic church in Kontum. At those times, the French were the first non-Indigenous people in Vietnam. They began to grow rubber tree plants across the region. In 1895, the Central Highlands region was absorbed and became a part of Indochina, as a French colony in Southeast Asia.
In 1946, the French colonial government established ‘Pays Montagnard du Sud Indochinois’—self-government for Indigenous people in the region— and the term ‘Montagnard’ became the name used by Indigenous ethnic minorities in the region (however, the current Vietnamese Government does not accept this term). In 1951, Indigenous self-government changed to ‘Domaine de la Couronne’—special administrative division—which was under the control of the Vietnamese people (the Kinh ethnic group) but not incorporated within the Nguyen Dynasty—the Kingdom of the Kinh ethnic people (Christie, 1998). At that time, the special rights of Indigenous people such as land rights, Indigenous law codes in the local courts, Indigenous representation in the administration and local traditions, were still maintained. In addition, there was still a limitation of migrants to the Central Highlands. In 1953, 35,000 people, as the first large number of non-Indigenous background (mainly the Kinh mainstream ethnic group), migrated into the region.

Figure 2.1 Location of Indigenous peoples in the Central Highlands (source: UK Home Office (2018))
Following the Geneva Conference in 1954, the Indigenous self-government came to end, and the Central Highlands region came under the control of the South Vietnam Government. In addition, the Harmand policy on maintaining Indigenous special rights over lands, cultures and languages issued by the French colonial government finished at this time. Under the Diem Government (South Vietnam) from 1955 to 1963, more than 700,000 non-Indigenous people migrated into the Central Highlands. In 1976, following the end of the US-led war, the Communist Government took more than three million non-Indigenous people to the Central Highlands, which made a significant increase in the region’s population, and Indigenous peoples became an ethnic minority group in their own homeland. This fuelled racial conflicts among Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. In 2000 and 2004, a thousand Indigenous people protested against local governments over land grabs and religious discrimination (The Economist, 2015).

2.3.2 Indigenous cultures, languages and religion.

Indigenous cultures, languages, religion and social systems are very diverse, and different from the mainstream ethnic culture. Most Indigenous people in the region have matrilineal and matrilocal marriage patterns (Facts and Details, 2014). Some Indigenous groups still hold animistic beliefs; meanwhile, a large number of Indigenous peoples are Catholics or Protestants, Buddhists (Khmer group), Muslims, Hindus (Cham group). Different from the mainstream ethnic people, some Indigenous groups do not have family names. Instead, they use a simple letter to differentiate gender, such as labelling ‘Y’ in front of a name of woman and ‘A’ for a name of man. In addition, Indigenous languages are considered to be a branch of the Mon-Khmer (Austroasiatic languages) family and Austronesian languages group (Sidwell, 2005). Some groups of Indigenous peoples have their own writing systems, such as Cham, Khmer, Kohor, Ede, Bahnar, and Jarai (Facts and Details, 2014). Most Indigenous languages
are still used daily in Indigenous families and villages. However, there is a concern that the younger generation in cities are gradually giving up their native languages. The Government has attempted to protect and maintain these Indigenous languages through teaching these language subjects in schools and encouraging government staff to learn them. In addition, the Government provides some groups their own radio and television channels in Indigenous languages.

2.4 Indigenous workforce participation

Evidence from Vietnamese reports shows that there is an upward trend in Indigenous workforce participation (Dang, 2010). According to Dang (2010), the percentage of Indigenous workforce participation grew at 6.6 per cent from 1998 to 2006. This percentage growth is higher than that of the mainstream ethnic group which only grew by 1.6 per cent in the same period (Dang, 2010).

Public sector organisations provide the most job opportunities for Indigenous people. Cling, Razafindarakoto and Roubaud (2014) show that the percentage of Indigenous workforce participation in the public sector in 2007 was 8.9 per cent, compared to 5.1 per cent in foreign enterprises and 5.8 per cent in domestic enterprises. In 2013, the Vietnamese Government’s Border Defence Force (2015) reported that the percentage of Indigenous workforce participation constituted 11.68 per cent of the total of governmental officials in the public sector. These statistics demonstrate that Indigenous workforce participation has possibly increased as a result of both the Government’s policies and the growth of the economy (Vietnam Border Defence Force, 2015).

Well-Dang (2012) asserts that the number of Indigenous people involved in work varies across the regions. According to Well-Dang (2012), the Indigenous workforce in the Mekong river
delta mostly work in enterprises; for example, there were more than six thousand Indigenous minority workers (mostly Khmer and Cham ethnic groups) in Taiwanese-invested shoe factories in Tra Vinh province. In the Central Highlands and Northern Mountainous regions, the Indigenous workforce mostly works in the public sector instead of working in enterprises (World Bank, 2009, Well-Dang, 2012).

A report from the Central Highlands Regional Steering Committee (a branch of the Vietnam Communist Party) shows that there were about seven thousand Indigenous employees in 2009 working in public sector organisations of the five provinces in the Central Highlands region. Interestingly, Indigenous people also participate in executive positions in public sector organisations (UNDP, 2010). UNDP (2010) reports that there was approximately 0.76 per cent of Indigenous employees holding managerial positions in the public sector in the Central Highlands in 2010 (UNDP, 2010). In addition, most indigenous people work in the Local People Councils and Local People Committees (UNDP, 2010). The World Bank predicts that the numbers will be increased more in the future, as many Indigenous parents expect their children to work in the public sector after graduating, and as the effect of the government’s prioritised policies which give Indigenous people some advantages in recruitment processes (Badiani et al., 2012).

2.5 Indigenous barriers to participation at work

Despite an increase in Indigenous workforce participation, Indigenous people are still marginalised in employment (Badiani et al., 2012). The World Bank (2009) reports that the Indigenous workforce participation still relies heavily on the agricultural sector, while the non-Indigenous workforce is involved mostly in the non-agricultural sector due to taking advantage of economic growth. For example, Vietnam Household Living Standards Survey in 2012 reported that the proportion of Indigenous workforce participation in the non-agricultural
sector was only 19 per cent, while the proportion of non-Indigenous participation was 61 per cent. Furthermore, Indigenous workforce participation is mostly in lower-paid jobs (Badiani et al., 2012). The reasons for this Indigenous workforce marginalisation are presented as follows.

Firstly, the Indigenous people’s living location is isolated from the Vietnamese mainstream communities, which impedes them from education opportunities. It is evident that there are 75 per cent of the indigenous population living in mountainous areas where living conditions are extremely difficult (Badiani et al., 2012). Consequently, the percentages of Indigenous peoples graduating from high schools and at vocational and tertiary education levels are low (Dang, 2010; UNFPA, 2011; Wells-Dang, 2012). For example, in 2010, the percentage of Indigenous people who had graduated from high school was lower than that of the non-Indigenous people, at 9.0 and 22.7 per cent, respectively (UNFPA, 2011). In addition, at vocational and tertiary levels, Indigenous people still lagged far behind non-Indigenous people: there were only 2.81 per cent of the indigenous workforce in 2010 who had gained vocational degrees, compared to 5.01 per cent of the non-Indigenous workforce (UNFPA, 2011). This may lead to marginalisation of Indigenous people in employment because they do not meet the organisations’ eligibility criteria for specific job vacancies within the workplace (UNDP, 2010).

Secondly, the language and culture barriers impede Indigenous employees from participation and involvement in the workplace. Evidence shows that minority people are less likely to speak Vietnamese – the official language of the country – which leads them to tend to be more marginalized from organisational and group activities (Baulch et al., 2007; World Bank, 2009). Thirdly, racial prejudice and discrimination are also considered as threats to Indigenous workforce participation in the workplace (Molini & Wan, 2008; World Bank, 2009; Dang, 2010; Wells-Dang, 2012; Badiani et al., 2012). According to the World Bank (2009), given the
lack of research on the Indigenous workforce, a majority of non-Indigenous employers have misunderstood who Indigenous ethnic minorities are, who were thus normally tagged as ‘backward’ and a ‘different’ group by non-Indigenous employees. For example, as mentioned in Chapter 1, in the provinces of Daklak and Lao Cai, there were not many Indigenous people working in enterprises because they were tagged as having ‘lack of knowledge’ by management even if they had higher education qualifications (Badiani et al., 2012). In research on the poverty gap in Vietnam, Dang (2010) claims that the earning deferential between Indigenous and the non-Indigenous workforces was due to labour market discrimination toward the Indigenous workforce. Moreover, this discrimination is widely recognised by Indigenous employees and students in their organisations and schools and social relations (Badiani et al., 2012). This may lead to management not being confident in responding to Government policy for Indigenous people within the workplace.

2.6 The Government policy and legislation for Indigenous people

2.6.1 Legislation

The Vietnamese Government does not have law codes specialising in Indigenous peoples or ethnic minority groups, but they have demonstrated their willingness to fostering ethnic equal opportunities to promote non-discrimination and inclusion of Indigenous peoples in the workplace (United Nations, 2010). For instance, the latest Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam states, “all the ethnic groups are equal, united and mutually respected, and assisting each other for common development; all acts of discrimination and division are strictly forbidden” (Article 5). This means that the Indigenous peoples are legally protected from racial discrimination, able to present their culture and language differences in the workplace, and able to participate fully and enjoy all the benefits and opportunities society allows. The Government also expresses their commitment to build and protect social inclusion.
As stated in the Constitution, the state formulates and implements socio-economic policies for Indigenous communities to foster their development and inclusion in the wider society (Nguyen, 2016).

For the Government’s organisational structure, the Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs (CEMA) is a ministerial-level agency specialising in managing Indigenous affairs. CEMA has 52 provincial branches across the country. As stated on its official website, it takes responsibilities for formulating and implementing the Government’s policy and legislation on Indigenous people. In addition, the Communist Party has its branches in Indigenous areas; such as the Central Highlands Regional Steering Committee, which was founded in 2002 to support local governments in coping with the aftermath of racial conflicts which happened in 2000 and 2001, but which completed its commission in 2018 (Gupta, 2005).


The latest Labour Code (2012) also states that financial support will apply to organisations that recruit Indigenous people, women, and disability labourers.

2.6.2 Policies relating to Indigenous workforce participation

The Government has a number of policies for Indigenous workforce participation, namely Decision No. 402/QD-TTg; Decree No. 04/2015ND-CP; Decree No.05/2011/ND-CP; Decree No.29/2012/ND-CP; the Joint Circular No. 02/2014/TTLT-BNV-UBDT; Decree No.
These policies can be categorised into three themes: recruitment, training and development, and promotion. In relation to recruitment, the policy (i.e. Decree No.05/2011/ND-CP) consider Indigenous people as preferential candidates for the public sector organisations, particularly organisations based in the areas of Indigenous communities. Within these organisations, according to this policy (i.e. the Joint Circular No. 02/2014/TTLT-BNV-UBDT) it is compulsory to employ Indigenous people in the workplace, since each department has regulations on quotas of Indigenous employees. As stated by this policy (i.e. Decision No. 402/QD-TTg), these quotas aim to increase Indigenous participation and leadership in public sector organisations, and to contribute reducing the poverty in their communities through having influence over policy making and implementation.

With respect to training and development, Indigenous students from remote areas are encouraged to attend higher education by the governmental prioritizing policy on university enrolment, and are employed by public sector organisations without taking an examination for entry after graduation. In the workplace, Indigenous employees are able to develop their careers by participating in ongoing training programs on political ideologies, management skills and Indigenous cultural knowledge. In addition, some Indigenous employees who satisfy the government requirements on political and managerial qualifications are considered for promotion to executive positions in the public sectors.

### 2.6.3 Workplace democracy regulations

In addition to the policy and legislation on Indigenous workforce participation, the Government also has regulations on workplace democracy applied within public sector organisations, which are noted in the 2012 Labour Code. These regulations are clarified further in the government Decree No. 402/QD-TTg of March 14th 2016. As this legislation states, EV practices in public sector organisations include: sharing information with employees; encouraging employee
participation; and recognizing employees’ responsibility to monitor the progress of democratic practices within the workplace. More specifically, according to these regulations (i.e. Decree No. 402/QD-TTg of March 14th 2016), employees are able to contribute to work-related issues in terms of organisational strategies for development, human resource policies, and improving organisational performance, workplace rules and regulations, and other organisational policies. In addition, information is shared with employees through meetings, documents, line managers, newsletters and emails.

This regulation (i.e. Decree No. 04/2015ND-CP) also indicate forms and channels of voice mechanisms implemented within the workplaces. Employees can have influence over their work by either direct or indirect communication. On the one hand, individuals can express their perspectives indirectly through representatives such as unions in discussions with management. On the other hand, individuals are able to have influence directly over their work in formal meetings or discussions with management. However, as stated in this regulation (i.e. Decree No. 04/2015ND-CP) the final decision is made by management. Although EV practices have been formulated in the workplace, the role of the unions as the official representatives of workers in organisations is not explained clearly in this policy. Furthermore, the Decree provides employees with platforms to monitor the progress of democratic practices within organisations through their representatives and face-to-face meetings with managers.

2.7 Summary

This chapter provided a general understanding of Indigenous people as the research subject of this thesis. The term ‘Indigenous people’ is often used interchangeably with ‘ethnic minority people’ in the context of Vietnam. This thesis utilises the term ‘Indigenous people’ to differentiate between the local ethnic minority people who are native Indigenous tribes in the region of Central Highlands, and other ethnic groups such as non-Indigenous people who have
come from another place within or from outside of the country. This chapter also showed that Indigenous people have their own social systems, religions, cultures and languages that shape them differently from non-Indigenous people. The Government has introduced legislation and policy to deal with Indigenous barriers and to foster their workforce participation. Voice mechanisms, also, are established within workplaces to encourage Indigenous employees to have influence over their work. Chapter 3 will discuss further the Vietnamese context by focussing on the structure of local public sector organisation in Vietnam, the role of trade union in EV, and Vietnamese cultural values in management and leadership. In addition, the limitations of work-based research on Indigenous Vietnamese people will be elaborated in Chapter 3.
CHAPTER 3: THE VIETNAMESE CONTEXT (PART 2) – PUBLIC SECTOR, UNIONS, MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 provided a general understanding of Indigenous peoples and Government policy and legislation in Vietnam. This chapter outlines a background to Vietnam’s public sector organisations, unions, and cultural values in management and leadership. Vietnam has changed its government structures from being a centrally planned economy to a market-oriented economy, such that Western theories on human resource management and employment relations have been valued and gradually applied within Vietnamese workplaces (Collins et al., 2013; Do, 2013; Thang & Quang, 2005). However, concepts of EV, participation and inclusion in Vietnam’s public sector organisations are not new and have been rooted for a long time in government slogans such as, ‘People know, people discuss, people do and people monitor’, and ‘the Government of the people, by the people and for the people’. In order to provide a whole picture of the context of Indigenous EV in Vietnam’s public sector organisations, this chapter analyses the Vietnamese context by focussing on the characteristics of public sector organisations, the role of trade unions, and cultural values in management and leadership that may shape these organisations’ EV practice in general, and in particular for Indigenous employees. In doing so, this chapter reviews previous Vietnamese work-based studies, in particular research in the fields of management and industrial relations.

The chapter is structured as follows. Section 3.2 presents a general understanding of Vietnam’s local public sector organisations. Section 3.3 describes the organisational structure of trade unions and their role in supporting workers’ interests. Section 3.4 highlights Vietnamese cultural values in management and leadership. Section 3.5 points out the limitations of
Indigenous EV research on Vietnamese workplaces. Section 3.6 provides a summary of the chapter.

3.2 A snapshot of local public sector organisations

Vietnam is a single-party state, and its local public administration system is divided geographically into three levels, of provincial, district and commune levels (Vietnam Laws and Legal Forum, 2017). In urban areas, these levels consist of city, district or town, and ward. The commune or ward level of administration system is the lowest and smallest one, with staff numbers of around 20 to 24 employees. Each level of local administration includes Peoples’ Committees and Peoples’ Councils. The Communist Party also has its four levels of organisational structure in parallel with the administrative agencies (Figure 3.1). Similarly, the trade unions have their representatives within every level of administrative agencies. At the time of this investigation, in 2015, there were 63 provincial/city public administrative agencies, 713 district level agencies, and 11,162 commune-/ward-level agencies (Vietnam Laws and Legal Forum, 2017).

Provincial and district levels of public administrative agency consist of several departments which provide communities with a variety of services in relation to healthcare, education, security, taxes, finance, land registration, business registration and social support. Executive positions such as Chairperson and Vice Chairperson are considered as the highest-ranking officials in the local administrative agencies and are normally approved by the Peoples’ Councils. The Party’s head (with the formal name of Secretary) at each level has the most powerful position, though he or she does not hold any managerial position in the agencies. This is because the Party’s head is also the leader of the Party’s Committee, of which the Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, heads of departments and union representatives are members.
As the nature of a socialist state is promoting collectivism, a committee is set up at every managerial level within each agency; for instance, at the senior level of management it has the Peoples’ Committees. Similarly, the Party and the trade unions within agencies also have committees at every level of management (Đảng ủy, Chi uỷ, Ban chấp hành) (Truong & Hallinger, 2017). Decision-making processes at each level within public administrative agencies are based on multiple agreements among committee members (Truong & Hallinger, 2017). For instance, at the senior management level, a decision is made through agreement of all members of the Peoples’ Committees. At the departmental level, a board of management
(Ban Giám đốc) or a board of leaders (Ban lãnh đạo phòng) are responsible for work on a day-to-day basis. In addition, they are members themselves of the Party’s committee in their department. In some cases, the Party’s head at the departmental level is also the head or deputy head of the departments. This is similar to the trade union structure, as the Union representative (Union President) at the departmental level is sometimes the deputy head of a department (Van Gramberg et al., 2013; Vo & Rowley, 2010).

3.3 Trade Unions

As mentioned earlier, Vietnam has moved from a centrally planned economy to a socialist market economy (Bartram et al., 2009). In this new stage of its economy, an emphasis is placed on reforming trade unions to adopt employment issues and employment relationships between an organisation and its staff (Cox, 2015; Nguyen et al., 2018). As stated by Government policy, the role of trade unions is described as being employees’ indirect and collective voice or employees’ representatives to management and employers. The trade unions have their branches and representatives in both private and public sector organisations (Collins et al., 2011). In such a context, it is important to examine the role of the trade unions when conducting an investigation of EV within public sector organisations, since in their roles they must comply with Indigenous employee voice, and inclusion practices.

The difference between trade unions in Western countries and in Vietnam is their peak bodies. In Vietnam, the central Government is responsible for establishing and developing industrial relations in the workplaces (Grosse, 2015). As the 2012 Labour Code states, the Vietnam General Confederation of Labour (VGCL) is the official centre of unions in the country, which represents and protects the legal rights and interests of workers (Clarke & Lee, 2008; Van Gramberg et al., 2013). The VGCL is also a member of the Vietnam Fatherland Front (a member of the Communist Party organisation) and under supervision of the Party. According
to its website, the Party has responsibility for recommending individuals to be appointed into
the unions’ Committee as well as to the position of President.

The VGCL’s organisational structure is divided into two groups: VGCL’s local branches
(formal name, Province/City Federations of Labour); and trade unions for the central level of
public administration agencies and government-owned corporations. The VGCL’s provincial
branches have their representatives within every local public administration agency, industrial
zone and company. Until 2015, the VGCL had almost nine million in membership, of which
more than a half were from privately owned and foreign-owned enterprises. The VGCL holds
an annual workers’ congress at its local branches, and every five years a worker congress to
elect members at the state level of the trade unions’ Committee as well as the President (Do,
2013).

Previous studies on the trade unions in Vietnam are critical of their roles, as they have had little
ability to stand up to employers for their members’ interests (Clarke et al., 2007; Do, 2013; Do
& Broek, 2013). Cox (2015) identifies that this situation led to an increase in wildcat workers’
strikes in the garment and textile industry, for better pay and improved working conditions
throughout the early 2000s. According to Do (2013), the trade unions do not fulfil their roles
as workers’ representatives to management and employers since they focus too much on
hosting leisure activities for employees rather than on listening to and representing their voice
to managers. She claims:

“[…] apart from organising annual sport events for workers, they would rarely be
involved in addressing workers’ grievances or voicing workers’ opinions to the
management” (p. 199).
Other studies also claim that, despite protecting their members’ labour rights and interests from management, the unions have become a management supporter, since they often act as a voice channel for management to negotiate with the workers, and treat their relationship with management as a ‘partnership’ (Chan, 2011). Cox (2015) explains that this is because the union representatives in the workplace are also full-time staff of a company and receive their salary from this company. Hence, they are unwilling to raise workers’ concerns with management, fearing that this would be at the risk of their career (Cox, 2015).

Besides this, the lack of legislation is also a problem for employee collective voice through the union representatives. For example, Cox (2015) argues that the Government does not have laws that enforce every company or organisation to negotiate with employees for signing collective labour agreements between employees and employers or management, or to apply penalties to the companies or organisations neglecting to sign such agreements. It may be claimed, therefore, that the failure of unions as employees’ collective voice in private sector organisations has been explored, but the role of unions in public sector organisations is still unknown.

### 3.4 Cultural values in management and leadership

This section reviews the literature on management and leadership in Vietnamese organisations. As previous studies suggested, Vietnamese cultural values in management and leadership shapes the manner of interaction between leaders/managers and followers/employees, which may contribute an explanation for Indigenous voice and inclusion practices in Vietnam’s public sector organisations (Nguyen et al., 2018; Sagie & Aycan, 2003; Tang et al., 2017; Zhu, 2003). Historically, Vietnamese cultural values in management and leadership have been influenced by Confucianism (from China), grassroots democracy and delegation (from Western societies), egalitarianism, and collective decision making and responsibility (from
Socialist) (Nguyen et al., 2018; Zhu, 2003). Due to this mix of cultural values, some prominent characteristics of Vietnamese management and leadership styles can be found including individualism, high power distance, in-group collectivism, high context, and moderate uncertainty avoidance (Nguyen et al., 2017; Quang & Vuong, 2002; Ralston et al., 1999; Stanton & Pham, 2014; Swierczek, 1994; Truong & Hallinger, 2017). According to Sagie and Aycan (2003), high power distance and collectivism are both linked to employee participation in decision making.

3.4.1 High power distance

High power distance is defined as “the extent to which the members of a society accept that power in institutions and organisations is distributed unequally” (Hofstede, 1985, p. 348). In other words, power is concentrated at the higher level of an organisation (Kwon & Farndale, 2018). Employee voice in the context of high power distance is limited, ineffective and unsafe, since the high power distance creates barriers of communication between managers and their subordinates (Landau, 2009; Liu et al., 2017; Wei et al., 2015). For instance, management in the context of high power distance is less likely to provide formal voice mechanisms to employees since they consider voice as usurping managerial decision-making power (Kwon & Farndale, 2018). Also, employees are less likely to speak up if they perceive the risks outweigh the benefits and feel psychologically unsafe to present their voice over that of management (Kwon & Farndale, 2018; Li et al., 2010; Tang et al., 2017; Wei et al., 2015).

In Vietnam’s public sector organisations, a previous study finds that power was unequally distributed and bureaucratic, and that employees in such a context were more likely to respect and defer to their leaders in decision making (Nguyen et al., 2018). However, this respectful and deferential environment also encourages a climate of silence, since employees perceive it to be unsafe to speak out and contradict the views of management (Nguyen et al., 2018).
According to Nguyen et al. (2018), employee voice behaviours in Vietnam’s public sector organisations stem only from individual leaders who put an emphasis on building up a dyadic relationship between them and subordinates, in that both leaders and followers have “mutual trust, liking, loyalty, professional respect, and reciprocal behaviours” (Rosen et al., 2011, p. 822).

3.4.2 In-group collectivism

Vietnamese cultural values in management and leadership reflect its high collectivism, particular in South Vietnam (Quang & Vuong, 2002; Ralston et al., 1999; Rowley et al., 2007). According to Hofstede (1985), collectivism “stands for a preference for a tightly knit social framework in which individuals can expect their relatives, clan, or other in-group to look after them, in exchange for unquestioning loyalty” (P. 347). Collectivist cultures often emphasize a sense of communality which generates a feeling of belonging arising from common interests and goals (Buengeler et al., 2018). Furthermore, collectivism stresses employee loyalty to management and organisation (Sullivan et al., 2003).

In such societies, individual voice that is not aligned with the group’s interest is often considered as threat to the management and organisation, since it is “disruptive to the status quo and harmful to interpersonal relationships, threatening group cohesiveness” (Kwon & Farndale, 2018, p. 7). Collectivist cultures value group harmony and discourage diverse voices, since they believe that diversity increases relationship conflicts (Tenhiälä et al., 2016). Kwon and Farndale (2018) claim:

“even if a formal voice system were to be established in the organisation, managers in an in-group collectivistic culture are more likely to be indifferent to the system, or even
deliberately avoid responding due to their tendency to dislike behaviours that threaten group harmony” (p. 7).

This may raise a classification among majority and minority employees into ‘in-groups’ and ‘out-groups’, since different voices from minority employee groups may not be taken into consideration as their voices are weak and often hindered by stereotyping (Brinsfield, 2014; D’Netto & Sohal, 1999; Kwon & Farndale, 2018; Randel et al., 2018; Strauss, 2006).

3.5 Limitation of workplace-based research on indigenous people in Vietnam

Despite an increasing amount of research on industrial relations, management and leadership in Vietnam’s public sector organisations, there is a death of work-based research on Indigenous Vietnamese employees’ voice and workplace experience. With a population of more than twelve million people, Indigenous people can be considered as an important workforce for fostering Vietnam’s economy. Most research on Indigenous people in Vietnam, funded by the World Bank, United Nations Development Program, United Nations Population Fund, and the International Labour Organization (ILO), is often limited to public policies, poverty and inequality at the macro level. Although some of these studies refer to the Indigenous workforce as a component of the research subjects, there does not appear to be any empirical studies undertaken investigating Indigenous employees at the workplace level. It can be noted that most of the findings at the macro level focus on Indigenous peoples’ work skills (ILO, 2004), wage disparity (Gallup, 2004; Dang, 2010), Indigenous employment (Anh et al., 2005; Well-Dang, 2012), Indigenous socio-economic disadvantage (World Bank, 2009; Badiani et al., 2012), Indigenous human resource quality (UNDP, 2010), Indigenous education and employment rates (UNPFA, 2011), and the Indigenous workforce market (Cling et al., 2014).
Moreover, the research methods utilised in these studies take mostly a quantitative approach, while some studies employed mixed methods; for example, drawing data from Government reports such as the Vietnam Living Standard Survey, the Vietnam Household Living Standards Survey, and the Labour Force Survey (Gallup 2004; Dang 2010; UNPFA 2011; Cling et al., 2014). Some studies have utilised large scale survey. For example, a study by World Bank (2009) surveyed over two thousand Indigenous people to investigate the Indigenous socio-economic situation. Similarly, fifty-one provinces were included in UNDP’s survey (2010) on Indigenous human resource quality. A small number of studies use case study method to conduct research, such as studies by ILO (2004) on Indigenous workforce skills and Well-Dang (2012) on Indigenous employment.

In short, these studies do not focus specifically on Indigenous employees within organisations and workplaces. Therefore, they overlook issues related to practices of organisations in regard to public policies and Indigenous voice and participation at work. However, knowledge of such issues may contribute to Indigenous inclusion and reform of Government policy and legislation.

3.6 Summary

This chapter elaborated further on the Vietnamese context by focussing on public sector organisations, trade unions, management and leadership, and limitation of work-based Indigenous research. Public sector organisations in Vietnam provide communities with public administration services and have branches throughout the country. The trade unions have representatives at each level of these administrative agencies; and most government employees in these organisations are their members. This chapter also discussed the role of the trade unions, as they are under the supervision of the central Government and the Party, and have failed to protect and advance their members’ interests. Furthermore, Vietnamese cultural
values in management and leadership are recognised as being collectivism and high-power distance, which shape the way of voice practices. This chapter also identified that, given the dearth of work-based research on Vietnamese Indigenous people, organisational practices in regard to public policy on Indigenous employee voice and inclusion in the public sector remain unexplored. Chapter 4 will review literature on employee voice and inclusion to build up a theoretical foundation relating to the research questions.
CHAPTER 4 LITERATURE REVIEW

4.1 Introduction

Chapters 2 and chapter 3 of this thesis provided the context of this study, with a specific focus on Indigenous Vietnamese people, public sector organisations, trade unions, and Vietnamese cultural values in management and leadership. The purpose of Chapter 4 is to establish a theoretical foundation for the present study. To do so, this chapter will employ interdisciplinary literature reviews to examine how voice is shaped by government, organisations, trade unions and employees. It will focus on an analysis of employee voice, diversity management, and inclusion in public sector organisations.

The chapter is structured as follows. Section 4.2 presents an overview of employee voice, including definitions, practices, employee participation and involvement, influencing factors, and conceptual models of voice. Section 4.3 describes minority employee voice and workplace experience. Section 4.4 explores voice practices in public sector organisations. Section 4.5 presents management and leadership approaches to voice practices. Section 4.6 discusses trade unions’ approaches to employee voice. Section 4.7 presents a synthesis of the literature, and the thesis research questions. Finally, Section 4.8 summarises the chapter.

4.2 Understanding employee voice (EV)

This section presents a definition of EV in general, followed by a description of voice practices. It then clarifies the different perspectives on EV across disciplines and explains the concept of EV utilised in this thesis. In addition, this section highlights key terms in EV including employee participation and involvement, factors impacting on EV and participation, and conceptual models of EV.
4.2.1 Definition of EV

The term ‘voice’ first appeared in Hirschman’s (1970) Exit-Voice-Loyalty theory which focussed on dissatisfied customers of firms rather than on employees within organisations. The theory was first applied in the Industrial Relation (IR) discipline by Freeman and Medoff (1984), and in Organizational Behaviour (OB) by Van Dyne et al. (1995). EV has also been included in the Human Resource Management and Labour Process disciplines (Budd, 2014; Budd et al., 2010; Nechanska, Hughes, Dundon, in press). In general, EV can be defined as “opportunities for employees to have a say and potentially influence organisational affairs relating to issues that affect their work and the interests of managers and owners” (Wilkinson et al., 2014, p. 5).

4.2.2 EV practices

EV practices consist of direct and indirect communications conducted through formal and informal channels (Dachler & Wilpert, 1978; Morrison, 2011; Wilkinson et al., 2013). Direct voice is described as the immediate communication between managers and employees without the involvement of representatives (Dundon et al., 2004). This practice occurs through one-to-one meetings, attitude surveys, staff meetings, team briefings, emails and intranet (Boxall & Purcell, 2010; Cox et al., 2009; Dundon et al., 2004; Marchington & Suter, 2013; McCabe & Lewin, 1992; Wilkinson et al., 2013). By contrast, indirect communication, or collective voice, refers to employee representatives acting on behalf of workers and meeting with management on work-related issues. Indirect voice practices include trade unions’ involvement or workers’ councils or consultative committees in workplaces (Marchington & Kynighou, 2012; Richardson et al., 2010).
Some voice practices are expressed officially through formal organisational processes (Marchington & Suter, 2013). Harlos (2001) argues that applying formal practice can “foster consistent implementation and that reduce the discretionary powers of voice managers (i.e. individuals to whom employees complain” (p. 329). For instance, these formal voice practices are enacted in grievance processes, speaking-up programs, empowerment by supervisors, self-management teams, problem-solving groups, quality circles, suggestion schemes, joint consultative committees, work councils, continuous improvement teams, ombudsmen, mediation, and arbitration and internal tribunals (Boxall & Purcell, 2010; Cox et al., 2009; Dundon et al., 2004; Marchington & Suter, 2013; McCabe & Lewin, 1992). In addition, EV practices can be carried out informally and directly “outside a structured process” (Klaas et al., 2012, p. 324). This form includes informal discussions, one-to-one meetings, word-of-mouth, emails, and open-door policies (Boxall & Purcell, 2010; Dundon et al., 2004; Marchington & Suter, 2013; McCabe & Lewin, 1992; Wilkinson et al., 2013). Mor-Barak (2011) argues that informal structures such as lunchtime meetings are often where information sharing and decision making take place.

4.2.3 Different perspectives on EV across disciplines

Understanding and implementing EV practices often differs across disciplines, particularly within the disciplines of HRM, OB, IR, and LP (Budd et al., 2010; Liu at al., 2010; Mowbray et al., 2015). Perspectives from HRM consider voice as a means to improve organisational benefits through strengthening employee engagement and commitment within organisations. Voice practices within the HRM discipline tend to focus on direct channels of formal and informal voice. These voice practices can be criticised for providing an “employee perception of voice” while ignoring the extent to which employees can influence their work (Nechanska, Hughes, Dundon, in press, p. 2).
Similar to HRM, OB scholars assume that employees present their voices mainly through informal structures, and define voice as “discretionary communication of ideas, suggestions, concerns, or opinions about work-related issues with the intent to improve organisational or unit functioning” (Morrison, 2011, p. 375). In other words, the ‘mainstream’ OB position on voice is not to consider complaints or grievance raising as they do not contribute directly to organisational benefits (Nechanska et al., in press). OB scholars believe that employees are likely to speak up if they perceive high efficacy (the extent of their voice would be accepted by managers), and a psychological climate of safety for voice (Detert & Burris, 2007). Also, voice procedures are considered as fairness judgments since employees are given opportunities to provide input to decision makers (Bies & Shapiro, 1988).

By contrast, the concept of voice from an IR perspective extends beyond the organisational context to include contextual factors such as social, economic and political characteristics that influence various employment policies and legislation (Nechanska et al., in press; Wilkinson et al., 2014). IR scholars assume that voices are shaped by trade unions, management and the state, and that they occur at multiple societal and organisational levels as well as departmental and individual levels (Klaas et al., 2012; Nechanska et al., in press; Wilkinson et al., 2018). Furthermore, voice practices from an IR perspective capture both direct and indirect channels, extending the depth and scope of voice. Similarly, from the IR perspective, voice within the LP discipline is not seen only as supporting organisational goals but to challenging managers and HR practices (Nechanska et al., in press). For instance, workers may use their voice as a potential form of individual and/or collective resistance to contest HR practices if they perceive that such practices undermine their own interests (Artus, 2013; Donovan et al., 2016).
4.2.4 **EV concept utilised in this thesis**

This thesis utilises an integrated voice perspective from these four disciplines. Firstly, voice in the OB and HRM disciplines not only provides employees opportunities with a say and influence over their work but is also considered as an employee’s discretionary, extra-role behaviour which contributes directly to organisational improvement (Morrison, 2011; Wilkinson et al., 2014). Secondly, from an IR perspective, EV practices include direct and indirect communications, and through either formal and/or informal structures, so that the whole voice structure and its practices within organisations will be taken into consideration (Mowbray et al., 2015). Thirdly, again in line with an IR perspective, this thesis examines voice at the organisational level and includes consideration of the impacts of government policies and legislation, management, leadership, trade unions and employees themselves (Wilkinson et al., 2018). Furthermore, by investigating Indigenous employee voice, the present study provides rich information and reflects different perspectives, in particular, how Indigenous voice is shaped within public sector organisations.

4.2.5 **EV, employee participation and involvement**

The term employee voice has been used interchangeably with employee participation and involvement, although there are slight differences of meaning and practice among these terms (Sablok et al., 2013). Employee participation and involvement are often understood as a component of, or alongside, employee voice (Wilkinson et al., 2010; Mowbray et al., 2015). However, the notion of voice is weaker than other terms, in that voice by itself does not lead to participation (Strauss, 2006). Some authors argue that direct participation and involvement is often token in nature, as voices from individual employees have very little power to make change and real contributions to decision making (Brinsfield, 2014; Strauss, 2006). 

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Employee participation practices focus mainly on participatory influence and consultative participation practices (Marchington & Kynighou, 2012; O'Donoghue et al., 2011). Participatory influence is defined as “the range and importance of issues addressed and the degree of involvement in organisational decision making covering, as with consultation, operational issues and company strategy” (Richardson et al., 2010, p. 23). Similar to EV, these participatory practices include direct and indirect influences, which may be implemented through either formal or informal communications (Dachler & Wilpert, 1987; Richardson et al., 2010). Direct influence is where employees are involved in a formal practice and without the involvement of representatives (Richardson et al., 2010). This form can include team briefings, suggestion schemes, meetings between management and employees, attitude and opinion surveys, newsletters or emails, and open-door policies (Cabrera et al., 2003; Marchington & Kynighou, 2012). Indirect influence is where workers are represented by one of their co-workers or trade union officials on a formal committee (Cabrera et al., 2003; Richardson et al., 2010; Marchington & Kynighou, 2012). It can even be a form of collective bargaining “in which employee representatives collectively negotiate wages and working conditions with employer representatives” (Block & Berg, 2010, p. 187).

Consultative participation is defined as the communication between managers and employees outside the frame of collective bargaining, in which managers encourage employees to share their opinions regarding work-related concerns, yet retain the right to make all final decisions (Cabrera et al., 2003). Moreover, these practices include information sharing to enable reasoned discussion (Richardson et al., 2010). In this context, there are two forms of consultation, namely, direct and indirect. Indirect consultation happens through statutory representative arrangements, including trade unions and non-union bargaining structures, joint consultative committees, and worker councils (Sablok et al., 2013). Direct consultation includes a direct two-way communication and involvement between managers and employees
in the absence of a third party (Marginson et al., 2010). In addition, direct consultation can occur through team briefings, quality control circles, and meetings between managers and all the employees (Marginson et al., 2010; Sablok et al., 2013).

4.2.6 Influencing factors on EV

The practices of EV, participation and involvement are shaped by several factors from outside and inside organisations and individual employees (Dachler & Wilpert, 1978; O'Donoghue et al., 2007). Firstly, government legislation and policies (e.g. socio-political supports, directions and state intervention) play a critical role in determining the nature of employment relations systems, as they form the economic, political, social, and legal contexts (Budd & Zagelmeyer, 2010; Markey & Townsend, 2013; O'Donoghue et al., 2007; Spreitzer, 1996). Some authors argue that these policies contribute to the development and support of employee voice and participation by providing legal directions on building forms of organisational practices (Spreitzer, 2006; O'Donoghue et al., 2007; Markey & Townsend, 2013).

Secondly, organisational factors include technology levels of the organisation, size, span of control, climate of trust and cooperation, organisational culture and environment, competition, economic sector, organisational strategies, management support, perceived benefits, support of trade unions, and job security (Cabrera et al., 2003; Marchington et al., 1994; Nurse & Devonish, 2008; O'Donoghue et al., 2007). These factors partly form the properties of participatory systems, create some participation outcomes, and set up forms of participation (Heller et al., 1998). Management commitment is also considered crucial for the success of employee voice and participation (O'Donoghue et al., 2007). Lack of management support, even if other contextual influences are clear, means that employee participation will not be successful. On the other hand, if managers perceive there to be benefit from employee
participation, they may support appropriate forms of participation and determine the extent to which employee can be involved in their decision making (O’Donoghue et al., 2007).

Thirdly, EV and participation are also affected by differences such as gender and race, which hinder individual employees from cooperating with others whom they perceive as different (Schneider & Northcraft, 1999). Evidence demonstrates that women and minorities are often not included in the informal networks of the majority workforce (Sabharwal, 2014). Furthermore, employees’ working knowledge and skills impact on participation practices and their ability to contribute to organisational decision making in workplaces (Sablok et al., 2013).

4.2.7 Conceptual models of EV

As already stated, conceptual models of EV have been developed within and across disciplines (see Morrison, 2011; Mowbray et al., 2015; Nechanska et al., in press). This chapter reviews some exemplars of EV models relating directly to this thesis. In a model of employee voice behaviour (Figure 4.1), Morrison (2011) explains that voice motive is a prosocial behaviour that leads to voice occurrences, as employees express their voice with the intent to help their organisations or work units. Voice will occur after individuals recognise their motives; and voice will be expressed through sophisticated ways as they select appropriate type of messages conveying their voice (e.g. suggestion-focused voice, problem-focused voice, and opinion-focused voice) (Morrison, 2011). Furthermore, individuals select channels to present their voice through either indirect and/or direct communications, and whom (target of voice) they choose to speak to (e.g. line managers, supervisors, etc.) (Morrison, 2011).

This process from voice motives to actual voice behaviours is shaped by contextual factors (e.g. organisational structures, organisational cultures, workgroup sizes and structures, collective-level belief, supervisor openness, relationship with supervisors, leadership styles,
and seniority of leaders) and individual factors (e.g. job attitude, personalities, demographics, experience and tenure, full-time versus part-time, position and status, performance, and role definitions) (Morrison, 2011). These factors may strengthen or attenuate the process from voice motives to actual voice behaviour. For instance, individual employees are more likely to speak up if they perceive that their voice is effective and safe; whereas they are more likely to keep silent if they feel that expression is futile and are fearful of negative performance evaluation, undesirable job assignments, or even termination (Morrison, 2011, p. 383). This model indicates that EV is associated with the outcomes for organisations or groups (e.g. decision making, error correction, learning and improvement, impact on co-workers, and group harmony) and individuals (e.g. felt control, job attitude, stress, public image, performance evaluation, rewards/sanctions and performance) (Morrison, 2011).

![Figure 4.1. Model of employee voice (Source: Morrison, 2011)](image-url)
Another model of voice is the choice to remain silent (Figure 4.2). Milliken et al. (2003) assume that opportunities for speaking up or keeping silent depend on how much fear that individuals perceive within organisations. They identify five ‘fears’ or ‘anticipated negative outcomes’ that impact on an individual’s decision to keep silent. These are “being labelled or viewed negatively”, “damaged relationships”, “retaliation or punishment”, “negative impact on others”, and “speaking up will not make a difference” (Milliken et al., 2003, p. 17). In addition, individual perception of negative outcomes is influenced by three other sets of factors: individual characteristics (e.g. lack of experience, low position), organisational characteristics (e.g. hierarchical structures, unsupportive cultures) and relationship with supervisors (e.g. unsupportive style, lack of closeness).

Figure 4.2. A model of the choice to remain silent (source: Milliken et al., 2003)

Morrison’s EV model provides a whole picture of the voice process from its motives to the outcomes, whereas the Milliken’s model adds insight into an explanation of employee silence. However, it can be argued that Morrison’s model only considers voice motives that relate to prosocial behaviour, since this model describes EV through the lens of OB. According to Dundon et al. (2004), voice motives also stem from individual dissatisfaction with the organisations, and can relate directly to individual issues rather than to the organisations. An
integrated model of EV proposed by Mowbray et al. (2015) suggests that voice occurs as a result of dissatisfaction, justice or pro-social tendencies; each of which factors has content relating directly to either personal or organisational work-related issues.

Another integrated model from Nechanska et al. (in press) includes perspectives from HRM, OB, IR and LP disciplines. Nechanska’s model suggests that ‘interest formation’ and ‘structured antagonism’ (employment relationship) are the fundamental principles that form an organisation’s HR practices, and can create a silent working environment. Nechanska’s model explains that factors influencing voice (e.g. legislation, unions, voice mechanism, management, leadership, and individual identity and traits) and inter-organisational HR practices shape manager and employee interest formations, employee voice and silence (Nechanska et al., in press). To illustrate, interactions between these influencing factors and organisational HR responses lead to expressions of voice such as meaningful voices, and intentional and/or unintentional silence. Such voice expression causes workers to be ‘getting-back’ at their employers, and ‘getting-on’ with and ‘getting-by’ in their jobs (Nechanska et al., in press). For instance, intentional and/or unintentional silence causes workers to ‘get-back’ at their employer, such as by withholding information in different ways, which minimises productivity and co-operation. Intentional and/or unintentional silence also leads workers to ‘get-on’ with their job, while workers avoid presenting their suggestions, expressing grievances, and complaining to managers, as they lack commitment to organisational goals. Workers also use silence as a ‘coping mechanism’ to ‘get-by’ in their jobs.

These three worker actions suggest that workers are not satisfied with organisational responses to their diverse interests. Thus, it is important to seek appropriate ways to meet worker interests through providing them with more voice opportunities and less degrading and insecure jobs. Nechanska’s model may be particularly important to diverse workplaces since minority
employee groups have unique demands for their voice and inclusion practices. In the next section, this chapter will show how minority employees have different workplace experiences of voice.

4.3 Minority employee voice and workplace experience

Minority employee voice is not considered to be a crucial part of organisational EV practices, since voice is often treated as ‘universal concept’ and applied in the same ways to all workers (Bell et al., 2011; Wilkinson et al., 2018). As such, voice from minority groups has often gone unheard and minority employees are not involved in decision-making processes even though they are part of the labour force (Shore et al., 2018). The lack of minority EV can be exacerbated by discrimination and forms of harassment in the workplace (Colgan et al., 2009). For example, studies show that lesbians and gay men live in fear of sexual prejudice, as they often distance themselves from other lesbians and gay men due to fear of potential outcomes from such relationships (Trau & Härtel, 2004; Trau, 2015).

Many studies call for different but equal treatment for the employee voice from minority groups to adapt to their unique aspects of identity, cultures, languages, and capacity (Bell et al., 2011; 2013; Day & Schenrade, 2000; Hunter & Gray, 2002; Kensington-Miller & Ratima, 2015; Trau & Härtel, 2007; Trau et al., 2013; Wilkinson et al., 2018). Researching strategies for inclusion of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender employees, Bell et al. (2011) argue that voices from this group not only need to be treated the same as others in terms of “rights, benefits, and privileges” (p. 136), but in addition, their contributions to organisations should be accepted and valued equally (Bell et al., 2011; Trau & Härtel, 2007; Trau et al., 2013). Moreover, government policies and legislation are considered as key elements that guide organisations, employers and management to apply appropriate approaches to inclusion of minority employee voices into the workplace (Hunter & Hawke, 2002; Shore et al., 2018; Wilkinson et al., 2018).
With respect to Indigenous people, previous studies claim that Indigenous employees are twice as more likely to suffer from racial discrimination and sexual harassment than others in the workplace (Hunter & Hawke, 2002; Kensington-Miller & Ratima, 2015). Such discrimination and harassment may lead the Indigenous employee voice to be very vulnerable and overlooked by managers, since there is a lack of understanding of Indigenous voice from managers, trade unions, and policy makers (Hunter & Hawke, 2001). Evidence suggests that organisational voice practices do not take into account specific Indigenous employees’ cultural needs, often because managers do not understand what these needs are (Haar & Brougham, 2011; 2013). Furthermore, Indigenous employees have less opportunity to gain a range of technical skills and abilities which may contribute to their voice inclusion in regard to organisational decision making, due to a lack of support from managers, trade unions, and policy makers (Hunter & Hawke, 2001; Biddle et al., 2013; Kensington-Miller, 2015).

In order to encourage the Indigenous voice in the workplace, Hunter and Hawke (2002) suggest the implementation of particular policy for Indigenous employees, since there are a number of differences in industrial relations arrangements and practices between workplaces with and without Indigenous employees. For example, workplaces with Indigenous employees are required to have a written policy on racial harassment and an official grievance procedure to cope with issues arising from racial discrimination and sexual harassment (Hunter & Hawke, 2002). In addition, it is recommended that managers in workplaces with Indigenous employees should be trained in EEO, affirmative action, and anti-sexual harassment procedures, since such policies have increased Indigenous workforce participation and provided Indigenous employees with a pathway for voice (Hunter & Hawke, 2002). More importantly, other researchers suggest applying particular leadership styles in workplaces with Indigenous employees, since appropriate leadership style may adapt to Indigenous uniqueness and encourage their voice and inclusion (Randel et al., 2018; Ruwhiu & Elkin, 2016).
The next section will explain how public sector organisations implement government policies and legislation relating to diversity management, management practices and inclusive leadership to adopt the minority employee voice.

4.4 EV practices in public sector organisations

The nature of workplaces in public sector organisations is diverse, as they often strive to be representative agencies for diverse groups in their local population (Groeneveld & Van de Walle, 2010; Peters et al., 2015). This section first explains employee diversity in public sector organisations. After that, it presents related theories on equal employment opportunity (EEO), diversity management and inclusion practice.

4.4.1 Employee diversity in public sector organisations

Diversity can be defined as “the presence of differences among members of a social unit” (Jackson et al., 1995, p. 217), and is described as “the composition of groups or workforces” (Roberson, 2006, p. 214). Two aspects of diversity are visible (e.g. gender, race, ethnicity and age) and invisible groups (e.g. culture, cognition and technical ability) (Milliken & Martin, 1996). Milliken and Martins (1996) argue that the visible groups based on race and ethnicity receive more attention than others. This is due in part to their observable attributes, and people from visible groups are in compliance with biases, prejudices or stereotypes (Milliken & Martins, 1996).

According to social identity theory, racial and ethnic minorities have a high risk of classification into ‘out-groups’, and deal with challenges in cooperating with others given that people often prefer to work with those who are in their ‘in-group’ (Bae et al., 2017). Some authors argue that people who are members of ‘out-groups’ are less psychologically committed to their organisations and are more likely to be absent (Tsui et al., 1992). In addition, it has
been claimed that they are less inclined to stay with organisations, are more likely to perceive themselves to be less accepted by their organisations, and feel that they have less discretion in their roles (Greenhause et al., 1990).

Public organisations that provide services to local populations often attempt to recruit their staff to reflect the diversity of their population in terms of race, ethnicity and/or gender (Pitts, 2005). This makes the composition of public employees more demographically diverse, and creates demand for implementing equality and fairness practices for minority employees (Farazmand, 2010). These practices not only include recruitment and selection processes but also career development and promotion of minority employees into managerial positions (Kennedy, 2014). From the position of management, minority employees will have more opportunity to have a voice over organisational decision making (Bradbury, 2011; Groeneveld & Van de Walle, 2010; Meier & Hawes, 2009; Meier & Nicholson-Crotty, 2006; Sabharwal, 2013).

Studies on diversity in public management suggest three progressive stages of diversity management, from the traditional framework of equal employment opportunity (EEO) to diversity management and, finally, inclusion practices (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015; Ely & Thomas, 2001; Groeneveld & Van de Walle, 2010; Janssens & Zanoni, 2014; Shen et al., 2009). The next section outlines these theories of EEO, diversity management and inclusion practices in relation to EV practices for minority employees.

4.4.2 Equal employment opportunity (EEO)

According to Groeneveld and Van de Walle (2010), EEO attempts to gain a sense of equity and fairness for underrepresented groups within workplaces, and to counter the extent to which “women and minorities are assimilated to the dominant organisational (mono)culture” (p. 369).
EEO also aims to prevent racial discrimination, and to increase and advance women and minority employment in public organisations (Groeneveld & Van de Walle, 2010; Ng, 2008; Selden & Selden, 2001; Shen et al., 2009). EEO practices focus centrally on ‘recruitment and selection processes’, sometimes by giving minority people a quota on working vacancies at various levels of an organisation (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015; Shen et al., 2009). Furthermore, EEO practice is mostly driven by legislation to enforce organisations to implement it (Groeneveld & Van de Walle, 2010).

The positive impact of EEO practices has created significant outcomes in terms of public policies for minority communities (Bradbury & Kellough, 2011; Sabharwal, 2013). Bradbury and Kellough (2011) argue that minority people themselves also have changed their behaviours when working with their representativeness in public organisations; for instance, minority students’ performance and retention are improved under the teaching of minority teachers in high schools. However, EEO policy does not focus on employee voice, as there is no clarity on how their active voice actually occurs (Peters et al., 2015).

4.4.3 Diversity management practice

While EEO practices prevent discrimination and attempt to treat everyone equally, diversity management practices create and maintain an environment that allows all individuals to reach their full potential in pursuit of organisational objectives (Thomas, 1994). Ivancevich and Gilbert (2000) define diversity management as “the systematic and planned commitment by organisations to recruit, retain, reward, and promote a heterogeneous mix of employees” (p. 75). Diversity management practices consist not only of recruitment activities but also of increasing cultural awareness and implementing “pragmatic management policies” (Pitts, 2006, p. 253). Some authors argue that current diversity management has moved beyond a passive approach (valuing diversity such as EEO legislation) to an active approach (managing
diversity) which includes mentoring programs, succession planning, family-friendly programs, alternative work arrangements, training and accountability (Pitts, 2006; Pitts & Recascino Wise, 2010; Roberson, 2006).

Shen et al. (2009) suggest a framework of HR diversity management in which every HR function focuses on promoting a diversity climate, such as recruitment and selection, training, development and reward. For instance, recruitment processes focus on bringing diverse people into organisations and promoting their participation in decision making. In addition, job descriptions and selection processes comply with anti-discrimination, and job advertisements are conducted in the ethnic minority language press. With respect to training and development, diversity management practices raise diversity awareness, develop multicultural skills, strengthen social cohesion, and link to strategic objectives (Shen et al., 2009). Diversity management also proactively promotes and facilitates equal opportunities for minority groups through career development and including minority employees on panels of evaluation, selection, managerial assignment, and mentoring (D’Netto & Sohal, 1999; Shen et al., 2009). Moreover, the performance appraisal system under diversity management practices should be objective and relevant to job and organisation, and fair to all employees, and payment systems should be based on performance and equality (Shen et al., 2009).

In this way, diversity management can improve equality of employment, inclusiveness, creativity, and representation of women and ethnic minorities in managerial positions. However, diversity management practices contain some limitations (Janssens & Zanoni, 2014; Sabharwal, 2013). Sabharwal (2013) claims that mentoring and alternative work arrangements are not always successful if employees are not perceived as part of an organisation. In addition, in some cases, diversity management produces conflicts of interest, as these practices can reinforce stereotyping and prejudice by majority individuals towards minority employees.
(Janssens & Zanoni, 2014). For example, ‘work-life policy’ as part of diversity management practices causes a ‘backlash and negative career outcomes’ to minority employees, since such policy does not satisfy specific demands of minority employees in terms of their cultures and religions (Ryan & Kossek, 2008). Sabharwal (2014) suggests that promoting greater inclusion of employees is required because, in inclusive workplaces, different voices from minority groups are respected and heard, thus also promoting minority employees’ self-esteem.

4.4.4 Inclusion

Inclusion can be defined “as the degree to which an employee is accepted and treated as an insider by others” (Pelled et al., 1999, p. 1014), and relates to employees’ perceived involvement and sense of workplace fairness (Roberson, 2006). Shore et al. (2011) argue that an individual employee perceives a sense of inclusion when he or she considers himself or herself to be an ‘esteemed’ member of an organisation, by “experiencing treatment that satisfies his or her needs for belongingness and uniqueness” (p. 1265). Mor-Barak (2011) conceptualises inclusion as “the degree to which individuals feel a part of critical organisational processes, such as access to information, connectedness to co-workers and ability to participate in and influence the decision-making” (p. 7). This feeling occurs in both formal processes, such as access to information and decision-making channels, and informal processes, such as lunch and social meetings where information and decisions informally take place (Mor-Barak, 2011).

The conceptualisation of inclusion and EV are different but are interrelated. While EV is considered through the lens of management in relation to the process that enables individual employees to have influence over their work and the conditions in workplaces (Markey & Hodgkinson, 2003), inclusion emphasizes the psychological experience of feeling accepted and treated as an insider by other employees (Pelled et al., 1999). Indeed, the definitions of inclusion not only compound the conceptualisations of EV and participation but also embrace
the individual employees’ sense of belongingness and uniqueness. Inclusiveness practices are in compliance with legislation in EEO practice, anti-discrimination actions, and minority workforce participation (Oswick & Noon, 2014). However, inclusiveness practices go further by encouraging innovation and creativity to improve an organisation’s competitive advantage (Cox & Blake, 1991). In this way, inclusion removes obstacles and encourages employee voice, participation and contribution to organisations (Roberson, 2006). In addition, within an inclusive workplace, different voices can be respected and heard (Pless & Maak, 2004), since managers use continuous and multiple channels to gain an understanding of their employees’ concerns and expectations. For example, managers can lead to a climate of openness through employee meetings and open communication (Mor-Barak, 2014).

Organisational inclusive practices consist of inclusive communication, inclusive teamwork, inclusive decision-making, fair treatment, inclusive leadership and inclusive adaptation (Pelled et al., 1999; Janssens & Zanoni, 2007; Shore et al., 2011; Tang et al., 2014). As shown in Figure 4.3, an individual perceives full inclusion if he or she is treated as an insider (high belongingness) and is also encouraged to retain his or her uniqueness (high value in uniqueness) within the work group (Shore et al., 2011). By contrast, individuals tend to perceive exclusion if they are not treated as an organisational insider with unique value in the work group and there are other employees or groups who are insiders. If individuals feel high belongingness and low value in uniqueness, they will have fallen into the cell of ‘assimilation’. In the case where individuals perceive low belongingness and high value in uniqueness, they will have fallen into the cell of ‘differentiation’.
In brief, the workforce participation and voice practices of minority employees within public sector organisations can be shaped by government legislation and policies. However, there is still a lack of evidence on how minority EV actually occurs and what factors impact upon it (Ng, 2008; Peters et al., 2015). For example, Peters et al. (2015) ask, how does minority employee voice happen? Ng (2008) asks questions of how leadership roles impact on organisations’ prioritised policy for diversity practice and voice inclusion. The next section will explore role of management and leadership in promoting the voice of minority employees.

4.5 Management and inclusive leadership approach to minority EV

4.5.1 Management

Managers at every level of an organisation play an important role in EV practices. Senior managers adapt and interpret government legislation, corporate strategies, solutions and schemes for the workplace (Dundon et al., 2004; Mowbray et al., 2015; Wilkinson et al., 2014). Senior managers also can directly impact the effectiveness of such policies, particularly those
intended to enhance minority voice via equitable climate and treatment practices (Pichler et al., 2017; Trau, 2015).

Middle and line managers act as the agents of employers or senior managers to respond to requests from workers, and create either supportive climates for voice or climates of silence (Mowbray et al., 2015; Wilkinson et al., 2014; Townsend, 2014). They provide daily direct communication and upward problem solving, and play a key role in implementing a raft of human resource policies in the workplace (Townsend, 2014). Similarly, supervisors “play a link pin role, acting as the intermediary for voice and communicating up and down through hierarchy” (Mowbray et al., 2015, p. 393). The roles of line managers and supervisors also contribute to creating a sense of fairness and equity for minority employees, as they can include all employees into their groups (Pichler et al., 2017).

However, management practices at the levels of middle and line management, middle management and senior management are not often congruent. Mowbray et al. (2015) claim that, while senior managers can encourage and promote EV by designing voice architecture embedded within their organisational processes, line management often misunderstand this, and voices at this level may as a result not actually occur. For instance, line managers often ignore employees’ complaints and grievances, since these managers may believe that these complaints interrupt their work (Mowbray et al., 2015).

Some authors suggest that line managers often lack important skills in implementing and using voice mechanisms as designed and intended, and thus undermine voice effectiveness and relevance (Gollan et al., 2005; Marchington et al., 2001; Townsend, 2014; Wilkinson et al., 2004). This is particularly important in managing minorities, as without relevant skills and training on cultural competency skills, voice mechanisms can become meaningless (Townsend, 2014; Fujimoto & Härtel, 2017).
Besides this, the “power struggle” between management or employers and employees is also considered important, as it determines the level of influence over the decision making that the employees may have (Mowbray et al., 2015, p. 391). This power is central to the voice construct, as it can lead employee voice to be heard or to be ignored by management and/or employers (Allen & Tüselmann, 2009). For example, the voice of employees will become more powerful over decision making than their managers and/or employers if these employees play critical roles in supporting organisations to gain competitive advantages (Allen & Tüselmann, 2009). By contrast, the voice of employees may be missing from the workplace if managers and/or employers perceive that these employees are not important to their organisation’s success (Allen & Tüselmann, 2009). This may be particularly important to the voice of minority employees because their influence over work is often overlooked by managers due to racial stereotyping and prejudices (Janssens & Zanoni, 2014).

4.5.2 Inclusive Leadership

Leadership style is acknowledged as an essential factor in determining the effectiveness of voice practices (Boxall & Purcell, 2011; Mowbray et al., 2015). Van Wart (2013) defines leadership as “the ability to influence others, the ability to change organisations, the ability to provide a vision, the ability to create consensus to move forward, the use of emotional intelligence, or even the use of common sense” (p. 554). Several leadership styles make significant contributions to EV practice, such as transformational, transactional, ethical, servant leadership and leader-member exchange relationships (Mowbray et al., 2015; Shore et al., 2011; Van Wart, 2013). Researchers suggest that leadership styles change contextually and there is no specific form of leadership that can apply in any situation around the world (Doyle & Hungerford, 2015; van Dick et al., 2018).
Indigenous research conducted on Western societies where Indigenous people have experienced colonisation acknowledges the existence of several different leadership models across regions and countries (Henry & Wolfgramma, 2018; Ruwhiu & Elkin, 2016; Doyle & Hungerford, 2015; Eyong, 2017). For example, Henry and Wolfgramm (2018) suggest a relational leadership for Maori-New Zealand Indigenous people, as such a leadership style shapes Maori people’s culture and worldviews. Ruwhiu and Elkin (2016) find a common concern amongst Maori Indigenous leadership and servant leadership, as both of these leadership styles are “based on universal human values of respect, integrity and care for others” (p. 318). Unique leadership styles are also found in Indigenous Australian peoples’ cultures (Doyle & Hungerford, 2015). According to Doyle and Hungerford (2015), a situational leadership approach addresses a need of diverse Indigenous populations in Australia.

Researchers also suggest inclusive leadership practices to cope with challenges of workplace diversity (Bell et al., 2011; Pelled et al., 1999; Randel et al., 2018; MacPhee et al., 2017; Shore et al., 2011; Trau & Härtel, 2004). Randel et al. (2018) argue that inclusive leadership plays a crucial role in creating and maintaining inclusive environments, and is defined “as a set of positive leader behaviours that facilitate group members perceiving belongingness in the work group while maintaining their uniqueness within the group as they fully contribute to group processes and outcomes” (p. 191). In addition, an inclusive leader is the one who has “the capabilities including mindsets, knowledge, skills, and behaviours that leaders possess which make their organisations inclusive” (Diversity Council Australia, 2015, p. 8).

Because the concept of inclusion emerged from diversity issues (Roberson, 2006), Farndale et al. (2015) argue that leaders who wish to focus on inclusion first need to make the workplace more diverse through human resource management practices; for example, through the implementation of equal employment opportunity legislation to promote workforce
participation of women, people of colour and ethnic minorities (Shore et al., 2018). These practices ensure justice and fairness treatment for underrepresented groups, since a sense of fairness happens when employees feel that they are treated equally through human resource management procedures and by their colleagues and managers (Farndale et al., 2015). However, an organisation’s human resources practices by themselves do not lead to inclusion; instead, leaders who align their attitudes and mindset with inclusiveness make the difference (Buengeler et al., 2018; Shao et al., 2017). Tang et al. (2015) argue that inclusive leaders who wish to emphasise these fair treatment practices apply “open and equal recruitment”, “equal benefit” and “equal development opportunity” to all employees (p. 866).

However, such practices only provide a pathway for minority workforce participation and not for a voice over their work. Mor-Barak (2011) asserts that an individual employee perceives inclusion when he or she feel that he or she is able to “access to information, connectedness to co-workers and ability to participate in and influence the decision-making” (p. 7). As stated in previous sections, this feeling occurs in both formal forms and informal forms (Mor-Barak, 2011). Inclusive leaders also support their followers to feel more belongingness in the workplace by empowering them to advance their career prospects, creating a potential for new ways of relating, sense-making and creativity, and enhancing the beneficial and mitigating the detrimental consequences of a diverse workforce (Gotsis & Grimani, 2016).

Inclusive leadership behaviours also help maintain and value employee uniqueness. As mentioned earlier, individual employees have differences to others in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, age, culture, cognition and technical ability (Milliken & Martin, 1996; Kochan et al., 2003). Such differences give them a uniqueness that leaders need to recognise, respect and listen to if they are to be really inclusive (Bell et al., 2011; McPhee et al., 2017; Randel et al., 2018; Shore et al., 2011; Trau & Härtel, 2004). It should be noted that individual employees
are more likely to speak up if they feel comfortable and safe; for instance, if their voices are accepted and treated equally by their leaders and others (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006). Inclusive leaders also employ various practices to encourage diverse contributions from all employees; for example, inclusive leaders can encourage informal interaction at lunch-time meetings or social meetings outside the workplace (Mor-Barak, 1999).

Inclusive leaders also can invite minority employees to participate “in discussions and decisions in which their voices and perspectives might otherwise be absent” (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006, p. 947). Moreover, inclusive leaders are able to help group members to contribute by conducting discussion among staff, and at this discussion attempt to encourage new members of work groups to share successful experiences and perspectives on their current work (Randel et al., 2018). Evidence has shown that the communication style of leaders impacts on followers’ voice (Hofhuis et al., 2016; Ng & Barker, 2014; Ozyilmaz & Taner, 2018; Tang et al., 2015; Weiss et al., 2018). Weiss et al. (2018) claim that speaking styles of inclusive leadership, such as using first-person plural pronouns ‘we’, ‘us’ and ‘our’, are considered as a crucial element in forming the style of inclusive leadership which impacts positively on the voice behaviour of subordinates (p. 391). Tang et al. (2015) identify that inclusive communication consists of democratic communication (e.g. leaders provide channels for voice at each level) and communication and acceptance (e.g. leaders communicate and share experience within the workgroup) (p. 865). Overall, inclusive leadership behaviours foster employee needs for belongingness and value their uniqueness. As such, a person has “ability to contribute fully and effectively to an organisation” (Roberson, 2006, p. 15).

4.6 Trade Unions approach to EV

As mentioned in previous sections, EV occurs in two ways including direct and indirect forms. Indirect voice includes union representation, and non-union structures such as workers’
councils or consultative committees (Marchington, 2007; Richardson et al., 2010; Marchington & Kynighou, 2012). Freeman and Medoff (1984) argue that trade unions are ‘the vehicle’ for collective voice, as they gather workers together in a group to communicate with management. Trade unions have a long history of development as a social organisation of workers, and have five fundamental functions: “provision of services and benefits to members”, “workplace representation”, “involvement in a rule-making process” (i.e. collective bargaining), “governmental function” (i.e. political representation of working people), and “public administration function” (i.e. implementation and delivery of government policy) (Ewing, 2005; Howard, 1977).

In Western societies, trade unions are independent from government and employers, and their basic role is to support workers by maintaining and enhancing workers’ lives and working conditions (Gospel, 2008). Union representation can appear at various levels, from individual to supra-national levels, of which individual levels of union representation are considered as a fundamental feature of union representation (Kaine, 2014). According to Kaine (2014), at such levels unions not only provide employees a voice for their individual grievances (e.g. resolution and potential adaptation to company policies) but also engage in collective bargaining with employers or management for collective contracts or agreements. The presence of a union provides employees with a stronger bargaining position to negotiate over their work-related issues, given that trade unions are an independent channel and concerned with employee pay and conditions (Sablok et al., 2013). Previous studies also show that the support of a union is a key element of employee voice as it opens up opportunities for employees to have influence and participation over organisational decision making (Cabrera et al., 2003; O’Donoghue et al., 2007).
However, the challenge of trade unions in Western societies is that union representatives at different organisations do not always have the same capacity to represent their members to have voice over work-related issues (Benson & Brown, 2010). For instance, a survey on Australian organisations reported that only 41 per cent of these organisations had the occurrence of union activities such as “senior delegate present, membership meetings held or management-union negotiations”, and only 30 per cent had collective bargaining (Callus et al., 1991, as cited in Benson & Brown, 2010, p. 82). Another challenge of trade unions is that they are no longer the only avenue for collective voice, since membership levels of unions have declined because of their less prominent voice channel for workers (Dundon et al., 2004; Taras & Kaufman, 2006). Benson and Brown (2010) examined union voice in Australia by surveying 2,949 employees of a public sector organisation, and found that workers had low perceptions of organisational voice practices since their expectation of collective voice through union representatives were not met. Peccei et al. (2010) investigated information disclosure in UK using Workplace Employment Relations Survey panels for 1990-1998 and 1998-2004, and found that union voice did not have any role in information disclosure, which meant that “they were less able to provide a benefit to employees, and, in turn, […] they are less able to gain members and win credibility with employees and employers” (p. 435). This decrease in union membership has resulted in the growth of alternative voice mechanisms, which promote “renewed debates over the need for union voice and supportive public policies” in Western societies (Budd et al., 2010, p. 305).

Although trade unions are crucially defined as an organisation of workers independent from employers, in practice they still depend on political contexts, particularly in developing countries (Gospel, 2008; Zhu & Benson, 2008). Phelan (2007) argues that political parties and governments in such countries are responsible for establishing trade unions and shaping their practices. For example, trade unions in socialist transitional economies including China,
Vietnam and Laos are under the influence of the Communist party, and their roles are to not only represent workers’ interests but also support management (Zhu & Benson, 2008). On the one hand, trade unions provide workers welfare and other benefits, but on the other hand they are subordinate to management (Fry & Mees, 2016). Zhu and Benson (2008) argue that trade unions in these countries focus mostly on four functions: supporting both the interests of the party and state, and management and employees; participating in administration roles; facilitating workers’ performance and organisations’ productivity; and educating workers to be a ‘better’ employee (p. 262). It can be argued that trade unions in such countries lack a role in collective bargaining and solving conflicts of interest amongst workers and employers or management (Littler & Palmer, 1986). In addition, given that trade unions in these countries are not independent from government and employers, unofficial wildcat strikes often take place, as workers perceive that trade unions do not stand up for their rights and interests (Zhu & Fahey, 2000). While the Government of Vietnam allows some wildcat strikes to happen in the private sector, the Government of China attempts to stop such actions due to a fear that uncontrolled workers’ unrest could threaten the stability of the regime (Pringle & Clarke, 2011). This suggests that voice practices through trade unions are different among the post-communist economies. Furthermore, although there is an increase in research on trade unions in transitional economies, such research focuses mainly on the private sector (Collins et al., 2013; Cox, 2015). Voice practices through union representation in public sector organisations, which have the greatest union density, are still largely unexplored. Furthermore, there is little research exploring the trade union role in relation to minority groups such as Indigenous employees.
4.7 A synthesis of the literature and research questions

As discussed in the previous chapters, the Government of Vietnam has attempted to increase Indigenous workforce participation in public sector organisations by providing advantages in recruitment, training and promotion (Badiani et al., 2012). However, evidence suggests that these government policies are ‘well begun but not yet done’, as Indigenous employees are still marginalised from mainstream employment (Badiani et al., 2012). This is not unusual, as the literature has found that minority voices in diverse workplaces are missing in policy making and implementation (Groeneveld & Van de Walle, 2010; Shen et al., 2009; Peters, 2015). Employee voice studies have often considered voice as a ‘universal concept’, in that voice mechanisms are applied in the same way to all workers (Bell et al., 2011; Wilkinson et al., 2018). The uniqueness of minority employees is often overlooked by voice actors such as managers and union representatives, since they do not recognise it. The literature suggests that inclusive leadership practices are essential to employee voice from minority groups and their inclusion in regard to organisational decision-making processes, since inclusive leaders not only create a sense of belonging for minority employee groups but also value and maintain individual uniqueness (Boxall & Purcell, 2010; Randel et al., 2018; Shore et al., 2011). In addition, government policy and regulation has impacted on minority workforce participation in public sector organisations, which are considered as pathways for voices (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015; Shen et al., 2009).

Moreover, it appears that there is a lack of research on Indigenous voice practice in general (see Wilkinson et al., 2018), and in Vietnam in particular; hence, the experience of Indigenous employees is unexplored. Scholars suggest that Indigenous employees are in double jeopardy, meaning that their voice experience is ignored by organisations and by researchers (Biddle et al., 2013; Haar & Brougham, 2013; Hunter & Hawke, 2001). In the case of Vietnam, it is
argued that, until Indigenous voices are captured successfully in the workplace, efficiency of government policy making and implementation cannot be achieved. To take up these challenges, this thesis addresses three research questions, presented as follows:

1) How do government policy and legislation affect Indigenous employee voice in Vietnam’s public sector organisations?

2) How do public sector organisations implement government policy and legislation in Indigenous employee voice practice?

3) How and why does the experience of Indigenous employees of voice practice impact on their inclusion in regard to organisational decision making?

4.8 Summary

This chapter presented an in-depth discussion on the EV literature and other related theories. Definitions, practices, influencing factors and conceptual models of EV were outlined and discussed. This chapter also highlighted the characteristics of minority EV and Indigenous employee workplace experience worldwide. Since this thesis investigates EV in public sector organisations, the literature on public management relating to EEO, diversity management practices and inclusion was also included. This literature explains how and why public organisations have implemented EEO policy and legislation to increase diversity, fairness and equity. In addition, this chapter explained diversity management and inclusion practices, to clarify the ways in which minority EV and inclusion are shaped in workplace diversity. The roles of management and inclusive leadership in applying EV for Indigenous employees in the workplace were discussed. Furthermore, this chapter presented the unions’ approach to Indigenous EV as indirect/collective voice in workplaces. On the basis of the literature and contextual background, research questions were also framed in this chapter. Chapter 5 will present the research methodology utilised in this thesis.
CHAPTER 5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapters introduced the aim, objectives and research questions of this thesis and provided the theoretical foundation underpinning Indigenous employee voice and inclusion. The purpose of this chapter is to present the research methodology adopted in this thesis and to explain how and why these particular methods will answer the research questions. This chapter is structured as follows. Section 5.2 restates the study purposes. Section 5.3 presents the research paradigm employed in this study. Section 5.4 presents the research methodology and provides justification for the qualitative research methodology applied in this thesis. Section 5.5 introduces the research design which explains the details of case selection, participant selection methods and data collection. Section 5.6 presents the data analysis procedure. Section 5.7 explains the strategies used in this study to obtain data validity and reliability. Section 5.8 presents the ethical considerations to this study. Finally, Section 5.9 summarises the chapter.

5.2 Purpose of the study

The primary aim of this thesis is to explore Indigenous employee voice and inclusion in Vietnam’s public sector organisations. More specifically, this thesis attempts to understand: the impact of government policy and legislation on Indigenous employee voice in Vietnam’s public sector organisations; the organisations’ implementation of government policy and legislation on Indigenous voice practice; and the experience of Indigenous employees of the impact of these policies and practices on their perception of inclusion in organisational decision making. This thesis addresses three research questions, presented as follows:
1) How do government policy and legislation affect Indigenous employee voice in Vietnam’s public sector organisations?

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3) How and why does the experience of Indigenous employees of voice practice impact on their inclusion in regard to organisational decision making?

5.3 Research paradigms

Research is considered as a formal activity of investigation influenced by the beliefs and assumptions of the researcher. A set of beliefs, understood as ‘research paradigms’, guide the researcher’s actions (Creswell, 2007). These beliefs include the interrelated concepts of epistemologies, ontologies and methodologies (Creswell, 2007). While ontological assumption refers to the researcher’s views as to the nature of reality, epistemology means what reality is and how it can be understood (Bailey, 2007). Research methodology is defined as “an approach to the process of the research” and includes ‘a body of methods’ which is described as “a technique for collecting and/or analysing data” (Collis & Hussey, 2009, p. 73). Another concept incorporated into the research paradigm is axiology, which reflects the researcher’s own values, including the ethics and morals that guide the conduct of the research (Wilson, 2008).

Collis and Hussey (2009) argue that determining the research paradigm is essential at the beginning of a research design, since it “guides how research should be conducted, based on people’s philosophies and their assumptions about the world and the nature of knowledge” (p. 55). There are several research paradigms, but this thesis focusses on two basic approaches used widely in organisation studies, positivism and interpretivism. As shown in Table 5.1, these two research paradigms are different in terms of ontological, epistemological and
methodological assumptions (Bailey, 2007; Collis & Hussey, 2009). Each paradigm also has its own methodologies which enable researchers to address the research questions (Quinlan, 2011).

The underlying ontological assumption of positivism is the existence of an objective and singular reality (Bailey, 2007). Furthermore, its epistemological position implies that the researcher is independent from what constitutes valid knowledge. Methodology in this paradigm uses a deductive process that provides explanatory theories so that the social phenomena are understood without reference to a particular context (Collis & Hussey, 2009). Quantitative methods of analysis are normally used in this paradigm. In addition, these methods are needed to handle and ensure validity and reliability of data collected so that research outcomes are acquired accurately and reliably (Bailey, 2007).

By contrast, an interpretivism paradigm sees the world through the subjective experiences of individuals (Greener, 2008). This paradigm does not emphasize objectivity. For interpretivists, there is no objective social reality but instead subjective and multiple realities, and what is learnt from the research does not exist independently of the researcher’s conception and interpretation. Methodology used in this paradigm is an inductive process providing interpretive understanding of social phenomena embedded within a particular context (Collis & Hussey, 2009). This paradigm uses qualitative methods of analysis, which ask for verification of data so that research outcomes are acquired accurately and reliably (Collis & Hussey, 2009).
Table 5.1: A comparison of two different research paradigms (adapted from Collis & Hussey (2009) and Bailey (2007))

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Positivist paradigm</th>
<th>Interpretive paradigm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ontology</strong></td>
<td>Objective and singular realities</td>
<td>Subjective and multiple realities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Epistemology</strong></td>
<td>Researcher is independent from social world</td>
<td>Researcher interacts with that being researched</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Methodology</strong></td>
<td>A deductive process which provides explanatory theories to understand social phenomena without a particular context; results are accurate and reliable by testing validity and reliability.</td>
<td>An inductive process which provides interpretive understanding of social phenomena within a particular context; the findings under interpretivism are accurate and reliable by verifying data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Methods of analysis</strong></td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This thesis utilises an interpretivist paradigm as the most suitable approach to address the dearth of work-based Indigenous research in Vietnam where ontological assumptions on Indigenous voice and inclusion remain unknown. In addition, the present research takes account of epistemology from the Indigenous standpoint, which take into consideration three fundamental and interrelated principles in Indigenous research: “resistance as the emancipatory imperative”, “political integrity”, and “privileging Indigenous voices” (Foley, 2003, p. 47). This interpretive paradigm allows for in-depth examination within a natural location and social
context (Collis & Hussey, 2009). Furthermore, interpretivism promotes rich, subjective and qualitative data (Collis & Hussey, 2009).

5.4 Research methodology

As stated in the previous section, each paradigm underpins an appropriate research methodology. Within the interpretivist paradigm, a qualitative approach is the main method of inquiry. The next sections will clarify definition of qualitative research and provide justification for selection of this methodology in the present study.

5.4.1 Qualitative methodology

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), qualitative methodology is defined as

“situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that makes the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self” (p. 3).

Qualitative methodology is not built on the basis of a unified set of theoretical and methodological concepts; instead, it allows the use of various theoretical approaches and starts from subjective viewpoints rather than hypotheses (Flick, 1998). To underpin this argument, Creswell (2007) argues that “these are all good reasons to explore a problem rather than to use predetermined information from the literature or rely on results from other research studies” (p. 40). In addition, this methodology is used to understand the complexity and detail of an issue, since “most phenomena in reality indeed cannot be explained in isolation” (Flick, 1998, p. 5). In the present research, the complexity of reality and phenomena can be understood by talking directly with people at their home or workplaces, allowing them to tell their stories
freely about what the researcher wants to discover or what is addressed by the literature (Creswell, 2007). Creswell (2007) suggests that this approach allows the researcher to understand the context of the problem or issue. Moreover, qualitative research captures viewpoints and practices in particular contexts which might vary due to differences in subjective perspectives and social backgrounds (Flick, 1998).

5.4.2 Justification for selection of qualitative research methodology

Firstly, the selection of the research methodology in this thesis arises from the reality of the dearth of work-based research on Indigenous employee voice and inclusion in Vietnam’s public sector organisations. Studies suggest that qualitative inquiry is valuable for exploring research on a new phenomenon in an appropriate context (Falconer & Mackey, 1999; Creswell, 2009). More specifically, research that aims to ‘understand’ or ‘discover’ a specific phenomenon fits best with a qualitative approach, as these verbs have emerged from qualitative terms (Creswell, 2009). For instance, qualitative research should be employed for a study in which the research questions ask about ‘how’ and ‘what’, since this kind of research is seeking to explore a problem or issue (Flick 1998; Creswell 2007; 2009). A qualitative method allows for an evaluation of the unique context to produce rich and descriptive data, since this methodology utilises a range of data collection methods including interviews, observation and documentation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Secondly, the present research takes account of unique aspects of Indigenous cultures and societies in doing research with Indigenous peoples in order to gain an in-depth and rich understanding of the issues (Chilisa, 2012; Louis, 2007; Nakata, 2007; Ruwhiu & Cone, 2010). This argument is derived from previous studies which assumes that Indigenous people have their own belief systems relating to the ontological assumption of the nature of reality, and the epistemology of their own standpoint on how reality is understood (Chilisa, 2012; Foley, 2003).
To ensure that Indigenous research is carried out in a sympathetic, respectful and ethical manner, Indigenous voice should be included in a process in which researchers embrace “Indigenous knowledges, languages, metaphors, worldviews, experiences, and philosophies” (Chilisa, 2012, p. 101). Foley (2003) argues that doing research in Indigenous communities should be conducted in flexible ways and should consider the involvement of Indigenous researchers and Indigenous languages. This is because Indigenous research is to “find a way to explore the actualities of the everyday and discover how to express them conceptually from within that experience, rather than depend on or deploy predetermined concepts and categories for explaining experience” (Nakata, 2007, p. 215). By doing so, the narratives of individual Indigenous participants relating to their motivations, their reasons, their actions, and the context for their beliefs and actions are produced in an in-depth way (Cooper & Schindler, 2003). Furthermore, Li et al. (2012) suggest that Indigenous research itself remains faithful to the cultural and historical context of a particular location, and cannot and should not follow narrowly defined quantitative methods. Instead, qualitative methods are particularly suitable for studying the content and process of inter-subjective social phenomena (Li et al., 2012, p. 12).

Thirdly, given that doing Indigenous research in Vietnam is still perceived as politically sensitive and could even put a researcher’s life or livelihood at risk, the present study only approached three case study organisations to conduct investigations (The Economist, 2015). With three such case studies, according to Cavana et al. (2001), qualitative methods should be good practices, since these methods suit such a small sample and because of the challenges in accessing data. Moreover, previous research on Indigenous people in Vietnam, such as by Badiani et al. (2012), also used qualitative research. Taking into consideration the reasons above, it can be argued that the present study suits the nature of qualitative research methodology. The present study is also consistent with the subjective ontology and interpretive
epistemology. This study applies qualitative methodology to capture individual concerns, voices, and the contextual evaluation of data in relation to Indigenous employee voice and inclusion in Vietnam’s public sector organisations.

5.5 Research design

This thesis is designed on the basis of case studies to address the interpretive paradigm. The next section will present definition and type of case studies and provide justification for this selection.

5.5.1 Definition of case study

This present study applied a case study approach, which is defined as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Woodside, 2010, p. 1). This approach allows a comparison of the differences among organisations in terms of social and historical context, ethnically diverse demographics, and locations. In addition, it allows the researcher to use a combination of several techniques including interviews, observation and documentation to develop theories and constructs of the research issues (Li et al., 2012). Because of using a combination of methods, multiple views on reality can be taken into consideration, which assists in the triangulation of data (Brinkmann, 2014; Greener, 2008). More importantly, case studies are based on a holistic view, natural settings, and multiple sources or methods (Denscombe, 2014).

5.5.2 Multiple case study design

The first and most important stage of this research design is design of the case studies. Yin (2003) suggests four types of case design: single-case (holistic) design, single-case (embedded)
design, multiple-case (holistic) design, and multiple-case (embedded) design. The single-case design suggested by Yin (2003) contains only one case study, and is considered as ‘holistic’ as the one unit of analysis is the case itself. If there is more than one unit of analysis inside the single-case design, this is defined as a single-case ‘embedded’ design. The multiple holistic case design includes more than one case study, however there is only one unit of analysis within the multiple-case study; while the embedded design of multiple-case study has more than one unit of analysis in each case.

This study applies a multiple and embedded case design which integrates three case organisations of which several departments within each organisation were involved in the investigations (Myers, 2009; Yin, 2003). Yin (2003) argues that the simplest multiple-case design is the selection of two or more cases which are expected to be a literal replication. A literal replication means that the cases are selected on the basis of their similarities, and the predicted outcomes from each case selected are also similar. According to Myers (2009), case studies must provide new and interesting stories, display sufficient evidence, have accessible and relevant evidence, reflect real life, be written in an engaging manner, and contribute to knowledge. Multiple-case studies are commonly used in social studies, as their analytic benefits are more substantial than the single-case design. For instance, the contextual analysis of two or more cases are more able to be generalizable (Zhu, 2003).

5.5.3 Justification for case study selection

The cases in this thesis are three public sector organisations in Vietnam. These three cases are selected purposefully and based on their particular characteristics, including their ethnically diverse workforce, their location, their size, and the presence of trade unions. All these organisations are located in the Central Highlands region of the country, and Indigenous peoples in this region are evidently indigenous to this land, although the Vietnam Government
does not acknowledge officially their social identity (Gupta, 2005; IWGIA, 2018; The Economist, 2015). One organisation is located in an urban area, which is the home of more than twenty Indigenous ethnic groups. The two other organisations are based in rural areas where the Indigenous population accounts for above 70 and 95 per cent of the population, and their cultures are very visible.

This selection meets the selected case framework suggested by Yin (2003), in which the author states that “each case must be carefully selected so that it either predicts similar results [a literal replication] or predicts contrasting results but for predictable reasons [a theoretical replication]” (p. 47). In addition, the selection of these case studies is underpinned by the view that cases should be chosen deliberately on the basis of specific attributes which are related closely to the practical problems or theoretical issues (Denscombe, 2014). The cases in the present study address satisfactorily the practical criteria, of expected findings to answer the research questions, the study’s policy concern, and covering different areas (Zhu, 2003). This selection also meets the theoretical concerns. For example, the selection is consistent with the suggestions that the size of organisation and workforce diversity lead to various forms of employee voice and participation (Wilkinson et al., 2018; O'Donoghue et al., 2007; Richardson et al., 2010). The organisations in these case studies are all medium size, with approximately 200 to 250 staff. These organisations are all considered to be representative bureaucracy agencies which take responsibility for formulating and implementing government policies for Indigenous communities (Painter, 2003). In addition, these organisations have different levels of workforce diversity, which may lead to the rich and reliable research findings since the proportions of Indigenous employee working in these public sector organisations are associated with their perceptions of participation and inclusion in the workplace (Andrews & Ashworth, 2015). More practically, this study received permission from senior managers of these organisations to use their agency as a case study site.
Taking into consideration the reasons above, a summary of case selection in this thesis is presented as follows (refer to Table 5.2). Case study 1 is an organisation in which non-Indigenous people dominate the number of staff and managerial positions. This organisation serves a community with a mainly non-Indigenous population. Case study 2 is an organisation which has Indigenous managers and a high proportion of non-Indigenous employees. This organisation is located in an area with a large Indigenous population. Case study 3 is an organisation where the number of staff and managerial positions are shared with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. This organisation serves a largely Indigenous community.

**Table 5.2: A summary of case study selection**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>Case 1</th>
<th>Case 2</th>
<th>Case 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic background of manager</td>
<td>Mostly non-Indigenous people holding mostly position of senior manager; non-Indigenous occupying mostly position of line manager</td>
<td>Indigenous people</td>
<td>Indigenous and non-Indigenous share the positions of senior and line managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predominance of employee</td>
<td>Mostly non-Indigenous people</td>
<td>Mostly non-Indigenous people</td>
<td>Mostly Indigenous people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Indigenous people account for approx.</td>
<td>Indigenous people account for approx.</td>
<td>Indigenous people account for approx.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size</td>
<td>30% of the total</td>
<td>73% of the total</td>
<td>92% of the total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence of unions</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence of unions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.5.4 Participant selection

This study utilised a snowball sampling strategy to find names and contact details of participants. According to Atkinson and Flint (2001), snowball sampling is where “one research subject gives the researcher the name of another subject, who in turn provides the name of a third, and so on” (p. 1). This thesis employs this strategy to address the challenges arising from recruiting Indigenous participants into the investigations, as the snowball sampling strategy is used to overcome sampling problems with a population that is hard to reach (Atkinson & Flint, 2001).

The original research plan for this study was to interview both Indigenous and non-Indigenous managers, union representatives and employees across all departments within each organisation, such as in human resources, finance, administration, and operations. A number of Indigenous and non-Indigenous managers and employees were invited to participate. However, none of non-Indigenous employees accepted, since Indigenous issues are still perceived as being very sensitive in Vietnam, particular in the Central Highlands region (The Economist, 2015). However, this study managed to interview at least one union representative from each case. It can be noted that most union representatives in public sector organisations in Vietnam are often also deputy managers or even managers of departments. Moreover, trade unions in Vietnam are under the control of the Communist party, and union representatives often support managers (Zhu & Benson, 2008). In total, there were 27 respondents, comprising
Details on the specific participants in each case are presented as follows.

In case study 1, in total, nine face-to-face interviews were carried out, with two senior managers, a line manager, and six employees. There were seven men and two women from various departments, educational backgrounds and years of experience. All participants were from different tribes and were full-time employees, and their service ranged from 7 months to 21 years. While some non-Indigenous managers were invited to join the interviews, no one accepted, as they explained that they were not in the right position to speak about Indigenous issues even though some of them were working in the Department of Ethnic Minority Affairs. Occasionally, the interview with Indigenous head of departments (i.e. line manager) went beyond the research questions, as they often discussed their experience of inclusion and participation when they were in an employee position before they worked in a managerial role.

In case study 2, the study included nine formal interviews and four informal discussions with managers and employees. Most participants were permanent full-time employees from different departments, and five of the respondents were female. Two formal interviews were conducted with managers and one with a union representative. In addition, several informal talks were held with local people to capture their perspectives on the local government’s policies on Indigenous people in their communities. The union representative in this study was working as a teacher, and she had been promoted to this position for one year. Most participants had been in their positions from 11 months to nine years. The participants’ ages ranged from 25 to 50 years old. Most the interviews with Indigenous employees and managers in this case were conducted outside their workplaces. Some Indigenous managers were reluctant to allow recording of the interviews or sign their name on the consent forms, since they feared that the investigator was a ‘spy’. By contrast, the non-Indigenous managers who agreed to be
interviewed were pleased to be recorded and to sign their consent, and they tried to demonstrate their commitment to the priority policies for Indigenous people.

In case study 3, nine formal interviews were conducted, with three head of departments, one union representative and five Indigenous employees. The investigator contacted several non-Indigenous managers, but only one agreed to participate in the research. In addition, the investigator had informal discussions with two Indigenous senior managers (the Secretary of the district’s Party and the Indigenous Vice-Chairperson), one member of the district People’s Council, and one non-Indigenous member of the Party. Most managers who joined the interviews had a long experience working in the district public agency. In addition, for them this was the first time to be in the position of manager. One Indigenous manager had spent time as a deputy manager in four different departments before being appointed to the current position of manager. Another Indigenous manager was also the leader of the Communist Youth League of Ho-chi-minh (CYLH) at the time of interview. The non-Indigenous line manager in this investigation had thirteen years working in the district, and was originally from an urban area. In addition, all these managers were managing both Indigenous and non-Indigenous employees in their workplaces. The Indigenous respondents in case 3 were working full-time and had experience working in different departments of the public agency, from two years to ten years. In addition, there were four females included in the investigations. One participant identified as being from a mixed-race family. In addition, two participants revealed that they were members of the Party. Three participants had worked under the supervision of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous managers; thus, during the interview, they sometimes compared their feelings in the contexts of these two different leadership styles. Furthermore, most of the respondents had a bachelor’s degree.
While the sample size satisfied the criteria of ‘sufficiency’ and ‘saturation’ at 22 interviewees, a further five Indigenous employees were interviewed across the case study sites to seek new insights into the research issues, but this stopped at the 27 interviewees since there was no new information to obtain (Bertaux, 1981; Morse, 2015). This number was suitable according to suggestions by previous scholars (Bailey, 2007; Creswell, 2007; Bertaux, 1981; Morse, 2015; Guest et al., 2006). For instance, Bertaux (1981) suggested that 15 could be the smallest sample size, whereas Morse (2015) claimed that this number could even be low as six for in-depth, phenomenologically exploratory study.

**Table 5.3: Summary of participants’ profiles across the three case studies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case study</th>
<th>Total participant number in each case</th>
<th>Senior manager number</th>
<th>Line manager and union representative number</th>
<th>Indigenous employee number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2 (1 non-Indigenous manager, 1 union representative)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4 (1 non-Indigenous manager, 1 union representative)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total participant number</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.5.5 *Data collection instruments*

Interview questionnaires were employed in the present study to collect the primary evidence. The interview questionnaires in the research plan were used to investigate Indigenous employee participation and to address the original research questions. There were two interview questionnaires. The first one (please refer to Appendix A) was designed to interview managers and union representatives in order to gain organisational views and perspectives on the research issues; and another one was used to interview Indigenous employees as means to catch their experiences of voice practice impacting on their inclusion (please refer to Appendix B). These questions are established on the basis of theories of employee participation, inclusion and empirical research mentioned in the literature review in Chapter 4. The study also utilised devices for recording and storage the evidence (e.g. a mobile phone, a laptop, file folder, and USB), and software (e.g. NVIVO 10) to organise the data.

5.5.6 *Data collection methods*

The four sources of data collected comprise: manager interviewees, employee interviewees, documentation, and field observation. The interviews with managers gained their views and perspectives on the effect of government policy on Indigenous voice, and the organisational implementation of Indigenous employee voice practices. The interviews with Indigenous employees gained their experiences of voice practice impacting on their participation and inclusion. The interviews with managers and employees were considered as being with key informants; and documentation obtained from the organisations and observations were added
to underpin the validity of data through the process of triangulation. By utilising multiple sources and methods, the study encouraged convergent lines of inquiry, as any finding or conclusion is triangulated to ensure that it would be more convincing and accurate (Zhu, 2003). The specifics of the methods used to collect the data are presented as follows.

*In-depth face-to-face semi-structured interviews*

This study utilised a semi-structured interview, which is defined as “an interview with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 3). The advantage of this method is that it enables the researcher to gain rich and deep descriptions of the research issues under investigation (Punch, 1998). Firstly, it is flexible, and allows considerable freedom for interviewees to express their perspectives around the topic, since the interview questions are not fully structured (Greener, 2008). Secondly, this interview method enables the researcher to understand deeply new and complex perspectives from individuals, because the researcher is able to ask extra questions and prompt in order to expand the interviewees’ ideas at the interview session. This is particularly important with Indigenous interviewees, given that their stories need to be explored through the lens of their culture and their ways of interaction such as body language and facial emotions (Brinkmann, 2014). In this study, the semi-structured interviews were followed by a list of prompt words which guided the respondents in focussing on the research issues.

Before conducting the interviews, a respectful email was sent to each interviewee to describe the purpose of the research, interview questions, and to check their availability. All interview tasks were only carried out based on the agreement of participants, and satisfied all ethical considerations. Most of the interviews with the managers took place at their offices. The interviews with Indigenous employees were conducted in their private homes or in coffee
shops. In addition, the interviewees were asked respectfully which location they preferred, due to the ethical concerns about individual privacy. Sometimes the interviews were carried out in an Indigenous language. The selection of interview place and language aimed to adapt to the requirements of convenience, safety, and comfort for interviewees (Bailey, 2007), and so as not to impinge on respondents’ work time. Each interview lasted between 30 to 40 minutes. Notes were taken, and some interviews were audio recorded with the participants’ permission and transcribed immediately.

**Documentary evidence**

Analysing documents contributes to exploring the ways in which the organisations’ respond to Indigenous employee voice practices at workplaces. Since there is a dearth of organisationally-based research on Indigenous employees, the study analysed related documents from both external and internal organisational sources. External resources comprised non-profit organisation reports, central and local government reports, newspaper clippings, and other articles appearing in the mass media or in community newsletters. The non-profit organisations’ reports were drawn from their official websites, including those of the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, International Labour Organization, United Nation Development Program, and United Nations Population Fund.

Similarly, central and local government reports were downloaded from official websites. In addition, the study also explored secondary documentary data from internal organisational sources including HR policies, annual reports, monthly briefing summaries, workplace regulations, local news, and the central and provincial governments’ decisions and directives in each case. It was useful, in terms of providing specific characteristics, to validate information from the interviewees, and also in making conclusions (Zhu, 2003). However, it was difficult to source secondary documents from the organisations in these three cases, as the government
staff perceived that these reports were ‘state secrets’ and that it might mean risk to their career if these documents were delivered to an investigator from an overseas university, even though the investigator was an Indigenous person from Vietnam. Most government staff asked the investigator to provide them with a permission letter from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which it was not possible to obtain. Only secondary documents posted on the website were free to collect.

Observation

According to Creswell (2009), observation is when “the researchers take field notes on the behaviour and activities of individuals at the research site” (p. 181). During fieldwork in this study, observation and note-taking took place in each case study site. These data contributed, along with secondary documentation, to validate the information from the interviews. Some examples of observation are presented as follows. In case study 1, the investigator spent more than two months living in the local area, and not only visited the workplaces but also Indigenous villages. The Indigenous people live in their own villages outside of the centre of the city and maintain their traditional houses and dress. Most of them (including government employees) are Christians, and there are Churches in each Indigenous village, whereas non-Indigenous people are Buddhists with temples around their communities. It appeared that both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people did not like to speak about racial discrimination, as it was perceived as being a very sensitive issue. For example, one non-Indigenous elder stated that Indigenous people in the region had protested violently against non-Indigenous settlement in the past as they claimed that the land of Central Highlands belongs to them. He believed that this was why the government considered this problem seriously and invested large amounts of money to improve Indigenous people’s lives, including employment priorities. In the workplace, it was noted that there were not many Indigenous staff, and that most Indigenous
employees just left the offices to their home after 5 pm; meanwhile, their non-Indigenous colleagues had a party together in restaurants. In addition, non-Indigenous people did not call Indigenous people by the common term, ‘dan toc’ [ethnic], since the Indigenous people perceived this term as discriminating against them and separating them from the Vietnamese people. Instead, they called Indigenous people by the term, ‘Dong bao’ [compatriot].

In case study 2, the investigator lived for more than two months in the local area. The last Friday of every month, there was a big meeting in the district hall among senior managers and all heads and deputy heads of departments. At the meeting, senior managers shared state and local news with employees, and answered questions and suggestions raised by them. Most of the non-Indigenous managers and employees were absent from this meeting, since they went back to their home in the city at the weekend. In addition, in several informal discussions with the local people who were not included in the interviews, non-Indigenous people perceived that government policies give many priorities to Indigenous people, and they felt that this was not fair to them. Meanwhile, the Indigenous local people said that racial stereotypes and discrimination still existed in the minds of non-Indigenous people. Many Indigenous local people and employees that the researcher met and interviewed were nervous if they spoke about ‘discrimination’ issues, and Indigenous managers often used the phrase, ‘brother Kinh’, to refer to their non-Indigenous colleagues.

The investigator lived in the region of case study 3 for over a month. Most of the non-Indigenous people in the district were government officials who worked temporarily in the public agency. The Indigenous people’s traditional art and culture were very visible, and they appeared everywhere in the public agency. For example, a traditional house of Indigenous people, which was called a ‘Gươl’, was built in the district’s government office precinct. In addition, some Indigenous staff wore their traditional ‘Sarong’ at the workplace.
Indigenous employees often talked to each other in their own language. Some non-Indigenous managers were able to speak this language, but some of them made fun of this language. The Indigenous managers seemed to be very proud of their traditional cultures, as they invited the investigator to come to visit their traditional forests and villages.

5.5.7 Interview procedure

Initially, a letter of recommendation from the Director of University of Danang-Kontum Campus, where the investigator worked as a lecturer and academic leader, was delivered to senior managers of these three public organisations to request their support in publicising the project to their staff. In any case study investigated in this thesis, permission from senior managers of the public organisations was essential to carry out the interviews with Indigenous people, given that Indigenous-related issues in Vietnam are considered as being politically sensitive, in particular for research projects conducted by overseas universities. Following suggestions from senior managers, the researcher approached potential participants confidentially. Approaching the first interviewee was the most difficult and time-consuming, because many Indigenous employees were suspicious of the investigator, believing him to be a government ‘spy’. To deal with this challenge, the investigator interviewed an Indigenous supportive senior manager first of all and then he gave the investigator suggestions for further interviews in a snowballing process. For example, through the interviews with senior managers, the names and contact details of head of departments and Indigenous employees working in the organisations were then requested.

These findings are consistent with literature suggesting that political sensitivity is a major challenge in Indigenous research in transitional countries (Tsui, 2004). In addition, it underpins the statements from international reports that suggest that Indigenous people are considered as political vulnerable and untrustworthy because of their protests in the past against the
government (Gupta, 2005; The Economist, 2015). In this situation, researchers need to seek the support from senior leaders in public organizations, particularly those Indigenous senior managers who not only play a role as ‘gatekeepers’ of Indigenous research in the workplace of public sector organizations but who also can exert power and influence (Weaver, 1997; Tsai, 2010).

After gaining the contact details of head of departments and employees, the investigator emailed and made phone calls to invite them to join the interviews. Not all invitations were accepted. However, some of invitees introduced their friends to the investigator if they rejected the invitations. For example, in case study 1, the first non-Indigenous line manager rejected the invitation but provided the details of other managers. Similarly, another non-Indigenous line manager declined the invitation but introduced another Indigenous line manager. In case study 3, no senior managers agreed to be interviewed; instead, they recommended their line managers. In addition, each employee participant was asked to suggest two or more others who might be willing to be interviewed (Bailey, 2007).

5.6 Data analysis procedure

5.6.1 Theoretical model of Indigenous employee voice and inclusion

As discussed in the literature review, this study uses an interdisciplinary approach to develop a theoretical model for Indigenous employee voice and inclusion, comprising: diversity management (focussing on representative bureaucracy theory) (Meier, 1993), employee voice theory (Nechanska et al., in press), and inclusion theory (Shore et al., 2011). The present study argues that Indigenous voice in a public sector organisation is promoted or constrained by government policy and legislation (i.e. EEO policies) on Indigenous workforce participation, organisations’ employee voice practices, inclusive leadership, trade union support, and
individual Indigenous employees’ characteristics. These factors could be considered as either enablers of and/or barriers to Indigenous voice and Indigenous people’s perception of inclusion in regard to organisational decision making. The analytical framework for Indigenous voice is presented in detail as follows (Figure 5.1).

Firstly, Indigenous employees would not have opportunity to present their voice without the impact of EEO policies in Vietnam. These policies enforce public sector organisations to recruit staff from Indigenous groups and appoint them into managerial positions, since public sector organisations act as bureaucratic representation of different segments of local populations (Meier, 1993; Peters et al., 2015; Pitts, 2005; Sabharwal, 2013). EEO policies may be considered as a crucial precursor of Indigenous EV occurrence in public workplaces in Vietnam, given that such policies give Indigenous employees a pathway of voice.

However, EEO policies themselves are not enough to enable Indigenous voice, as previous studies show that minority employees often lose their voice in participatory influence and consultative participation (Groeneveld & Van de Walle, 2010; Ng, 2008; Peters et al., 2015; Selden et al., 1998; Shen et al., 2009; von Maravić et al., 2013). This is because Indigenous voice can be impeded by barriers including individual employees’ characteristics, managers’ communication skills and awareness of Indigenous uniqueness and discrimination, and lack of union support (Biddle et al., 2013; Daldy et al., 2013; Haar & Brougham, 2013; Hunter & Hawke, 2002; Milliken & Martins, 1996; Milliken et al., 2003; Mowbray et al., 2015; Ng & Sears, 2012; Wilkinson et al., 2010).

Secondly, Indigenous voice occurrence by itself does not lead to their perception of inclusion in regard to organisational decision making, given that organisations’ practices of EV often apply the same way to all workers (Bell et al., 2011). In such a context, unique Indigenous aspects of culture and language are not taken into consideration (Haar & Brougham, 2013). In
addition, voices from individual minority employees have very little power to make change or a real contribution to organisational decision making, since employee participation and involvement is often token in nature (Brinsfield, 2014; Strauss, 2006).

Previous studies argue that inclusive leadership is the second driver of Indigenous voices and inclusion, since inclusive leaders who align their attitudes and mindset with inclusiveness intend to enhance minority voice via an equitable climate and fair treatment practices (Pichler et al., 2017; Trau, 2015). Inclusive leaders not only provide Indigenous employees with voice channels but also promote Indigenous perception of inclusion by satisfying their expectations of a sense of belongingness and uniqueness, such as by sympathetic, encouraging and inclusive communication (Andrews & Ashworth, 2015; Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015; Janssens & Zanoni, 2014; Randel et al., 2018; Robinson, 2000; Shore et al., 2011; Weiss et al., 2018).

![Figure 5.1. A theoretical model of Indigenous employee voice and inclusion](image)

**Figure 5.1. A theoretical model of Indigenous employee voice and inclusion**
5.6.2 Data analysis process

There are a number of approaches to analysing qualitative data, and any form of qualitative data analysis is not a concrete technical process but instead changes contextually and is influenced by the researcher, discipline, paradigm and research design (Gale et al., 2011). The present study utilised thematic analysis, which “is a method for identifying, analysing and interpreting patterns meanings or themes” (Braun et al., 2014, p. 95). Furthermore, thematic analysis focuses on “an interpretive process, whereby data is systematically searched to identify patterns within the data in order to provide an illuminating description of the phenomenon” (Smith & Firth, 2011, p. 4). The thematic approach is considered to be a traditional method for qualitative analysis, as it promotes rich and insightful understandings of complexities of the research issues and can be used to expand and test existing theory (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Green & Thorogood, 2014; Greener, 2008). Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest six steps of thematic analysis: becoming familiar with data; generating initial codes; searching for themes; reviewing themes; defining and naming themes; and producing a report. Following these steps, the data analysis process in the present study is discussed as follows.

This study began with clarifying the data as soon as possible, since Indigenous issues in Vietnam are perceived as being politically sensitive and participants were not willing to keep in contact with the researcher after the interviews. Clarifying the data with the participants also addresses the criteria of data reliability. To do this in this study, all the interview audio recordings and note taking were reviewed immediately in front of the interviewees at the interview places. At that time, the researcher discussed directly with the interviewees to clarify their ideas in terms of whether there was anything unclear in the recordings, and explained to them the research policy and the consent form. After that, the researcher read through the documents. During this time, the interview audio recordings were transcribed, read and
compared with the documents in order to become familiar with the data; and some contradictory ideas between manager and employee interviewees and amongst different sources of information were highlighted in order to confirm these later.

The second step focuses on generating initial codes and searching for themes. In this study, the raw data, including interview transcripts, documentation, fieldnotes and memos, were reread and arranged into different groups of sources of information within each case study, such as the manager interview group, employee interview group, group of policy, legislation, government and media reports, and group of foreign documents (Creswell, 2014). Then, these groups of information were ‘imported’ into the software, NVivo 10 for Mac, for the coding process, which is referred to as ‘creating nodes’ in Nvivo. According to Creswell (2014), “coding is the process of organising the data by bracketing chunks and writing a word representing a category in the margins” (p. 195). Each node contained several appropriate segments of text data. In order to create the nodes, the present study firstly used a ‘star list’ approach in which the initial nodes were drawn from the literature (Miles & Huberman 1994). Nodes in the ‘star list’ included such items as ‘direct participation’, ‘indirect participation’, ‘formal participation’, ‘informal participation’, ‘direct consultation’, ‘indirect consultation’, ‘influence’, ‘involvement’ and ‘inclusion’. The text data from interviews, fieldnotes and documents were reviewed again, and appropriate segments were selected and entered into the appropriate node in the starting list of nodes. There was no limitation on number of nodes. New nodes were created in case there was a new insight emerging from the data (Creswell, 2014). Some exemplars of new nodes identified in this data analysis process include ‘formal voice’, ‘direct voice’, ‘indirect voice’, ‘voice practice’, ‘Indigenous voice’, ‘underlying racism’, ‘gentle speaking’, ‘equal opportunity’ and ‘inclusive leadership’. Some nodes also contained sub-nodes, which are referred to as ‘child nodes’ in NVivo, such as ‘Indigenous voice’ containing ‘different communication’ and ‘understanding Indigenous people’. All nodes were
sorted and arranged into different categories. The nodes, categories and text data were checked again and searched for themes.

The third step focussed on reviewing, defining and naming themes. A list of initial themes, categories and nodes was sent to the thesis supervisory team to seek their support in identifying and defining themes, because they are experts on the relevant literature. The initial list of themes, categories, nodes and text data was also interpreted in some papers which were presented at several academic workshops and conferences and sent to journals in order to gain reviews and feedback from other scholars. Some of these themes were posted on social network media to gain feedback from people. All feedback and comments were taken into consideration and compared for further development. The final themes which contribute to analysing the research questions achieved the consensus of the supervisory team (see Table 5.4). Finally, a report on the findings was presented under the individual narrative of each participant within each case, since each narrative has a unique story. Furthermore, by following individual narratives, information from each participant in each case was compared and triangulated. A first draft of the interpretation of findings for each case study was developed and afterwards checked by the supervisory team. The findings across three case studies were compared, drawing conclusions, and then the initial research questions were revisited.

This study was initially investigating Indigenous employees’ participation and their perception of inclusion in workplaces. However, after analysing the data, the notions of ‘Indigenous voice practice’ and ‘experience of inclusion toward organisational decision-making process’ emerged from all case studies as the prominent issues. Hence, the data analysis in the present study focused centrally on ‘employee voice practice’ and ‘inclusion’. This argument is underpinned by the suggestions that qualitative data are often dense and rich and not all of the information can be used for analysis (Creswell 2014).
Table 5.4: Themes and coding categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Exemplars of coding categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The positive effect of government policies on Indigenous workforce participation</td>
<td>Prioritised applicants for recruiting; financial support for training; promotion to managerial positions; applying ‘prioritised’ policy to assess Indigenous employees’ performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple forms of voice implementation</td>
<td>Monthly assembly; monthly briefings; mailboxes; email; drop-in office; face-to-face discussion; survey; Union representatives; empowerment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differences in voice practices in adopting the Indigenous uniqueness</td>
<td>Gentle speaking; proactive asking; truly listening; encouraging; training in IT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous employees’ negative experiences of voice practices relating to their inclusion in regard to organisational decision making</td>
<td>Underlying racism; lack of support from trade unions; lack of responsibility of senior managers for the implementation of the policy; their low self-esteem; non-Indigenous managers’ lack of awareness of Indigenous differences and poor managerial skills; and government policy’s infantilisation of Indigenous people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The contribution of inclusive leadership in Indigenous voice practices and inclusion</td>
<td>Leaders’ listening and support; leaders’ sympathy and tolerance; fair and just</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.7 Validity and reliability

According to Creswell (2009), the validity of findings refers to where the “researcher checks for accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures” (p. 190). There are eight primary strategies to validate the findings: triangulating; using member checking; using a rich, thick description; clarifying any bias; presenting negative or discrepant information; spending a prolonged time; using peer debriefing; and using an external auditor (Creswell, 2014). The present study utilised triangulation to confirm the findings. Miles and Huberman (1994) argue that triangulation “[…] supports a finding by showing that independent measures of it agree with it or, at least, do not contradict it” (p. 226). The present study used several methods in each case to confirm the data from the interviews, including observation and documentation (Flick, 2009). In addition, perspectives across interviewees were compared to eliminate personal bias (Creswell, 2014).

With respect to reliability of data, this refers to being “consistent, reasonably stable over time and across researchers and methods” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 278). Creswell (2014) suggests four steps in reliability procedures: (1) checking transcripts to eliminating obvious mistakes made during transcription; (2) comparing data with the codes to removing a drift in definition of codes and a shift in the meaning of the codes during the coding process; (3) communicating among the coders; and (4) cross-checking codes. In doing so, all English transcripts of the interviews in the present study were checked independently by another Indigenous Vietnamese student studying at RMIT University. During the coding process, the transcripts of the interviews and other data were reread several times and compared with the
content of each code. In addition, during the coding processing and theme development, many comments and feedback from other scholars led to revising and defining the themes. The final categories and themes presented in this study had consensus from the supervisory team.

5.8 Ethical considerations

The present study gained ethics approval from RMIT University’s Human Research Ethics Committee and was classified as a low-risk research project (Appendix C). During the fieldwork visits to collect the data, the researcher had to consider sensitive issues relating to Indigenous Vietnamese peoples’ cultural and social norms, the Government of Vietnam’s concerns, and other ethical considerations to ensure overall research integrity. Since the researcher on this research project is himself an Indigenous person from Vietnam’s Central Highlands region and has been working in a public university, the researcher’s awareness reflected on the research process during data collection and interpretation. This reflection is important for situating the research and knowledge in order that ethical commitments could be sustained (Nagar & Ali, 2003; Sultana, 2007).

All participants involved in this investigation were provided with comprehensive information on the research project in an Indigenous language and Vietnamese before the interviews were conducted (Appendix D). This was to ensure that each participant had full understanding of the project’s objectives and expected outcomes, and of their rights and other potential issues related to themselves as a participant (e.g. risks, confidentiality, anonymity). They were able to join, stop and withdraw from the interviews at any time. The recoding was only carried out when the participants agreed to do so. Since the Indigenous issues are perceived sensitively in Vietnam, the interviews were conducted at the places that the participants perceived as being comfortable and private. After interviewing, the researcher opened the voice recorder and showed them the interview notes. This was to provide the participants with an opportunity to
rethink their narrative and confirm their perspectives before signing the consent forms. However, no participant asked to add or revise the contents of their narrative although they were given opportunity to do so. With the participants who were reluctant to sign the consent forms were removed from the analysis of findings. The informal discussions utilised in this research were not included those who rejected to sign. Most informal discussions were local peoples or some managers and government officials who had normal talks to the investigator in the fieldwork rather than the formal interviews. Thus, the information from these informal discussions just used to cross check. They were free to make a decision on whether or not to sign the forms. For reasons of personal safety, all the participants’ names and their organisations were treated as confidential. The three organisations are also anonymous, with pseudonyms being used in every part of the presentation of findings, in this thesis and any related publications. All the documents and interviews’ recorded audio are kept in a secure location for a period of five years.

5.9 Summary

This chapter presented the research methodology applied in the present study. It explained the theoretical and practical reasons to select a qualitative case approach through the lens of the interpretivist paradigm. The chapter presented the research design with three case studies. This chapter also explained the data collection procedures with several methods including interviews, documentation, and observation. The data analysis process, data validity and reliability were described in detail in this chapter. In addition, the ethical considerations and how they were addressed were described. Chapter 6 will present the findings of the first case.
6.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the findings from the first case study – Public Administrative Agency 1 (PAA1). The purpose of this chapter is to understand the impact of government policies on Indigenous employee voice, the organisation’s implementation of Indigenous voice practices, and the experience of Indigenous employees in regard to their inclusion in organisational decision making. To accomplish these objectives, nine interviews were conducted with three managers and six Indigenous employees. The study also utilised data from multiple sources including documentation and fieldnotes. Data from all sources were analysed and compared to cross-check the information.

This chapter is structured as follows. Section 6.2 introduces the case context, focusing on its demographic location, and the organisation’s characteristics and policies relating to human resources and voice practices. Section 6.3 highlights the profiles of participants involved in this investigation. Section 6.4 presents the findings. Section 6.5 provides a summary of the findings.

6.2 Case context

6.2.1 Demographic location

This organisation is located in Kontum city, which is known as ‘Lake Village’ by the Banar people who are one of the Indigenous tribes in the Central Highlands of Vietnam. Other Indigenous people in the region include the Gia Rai, Gie Trieng, Xo Dang, Brau, and Ro Mam (Table 6.1). According the Local Government’s website, non-Indigenous people (mainly Kinh ethnic group) began to do business and settle in Kontum in 1840 under the Nguyen Dynasty.
In 1913, after colonisation in Indochina, the French established Kontum as the capital of Kontum province. In the period of the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam), Kontum city was the capital of the province, and was well-known by American soldiers in ‘the battle to save South Vietnam’ (McKenna, 2011). Currently, Kontum city is the home of 20 different ethnic groups. Besides Vietnamese, which is the national and official language of the modern-day Vietnam, each Indigenous ethnic group has its own language and writing system. In Indigenous villages, local dialects are commonly used (World Bank, 2009). Indigenous languages are also taught in primary schools as part of the central government’s policy to maintain minority languages and cultures (Dang, 2010).

Table 6.1: Indigenous and Ethnic groups in Kontum city (source: Kontum Statistics Office 2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indigenous and ethnic groups</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Describing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kinh</td>
<td>229,893</td>
<td>The mainstream ethnicity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xodang</td>
<td>119,374</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bana</td>
<td>61,165</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gietrieng</td>
<td>36,064</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giarai</td>
<td>23,450</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brau</td>
<td>446</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romam</td>
<td>513</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>19,716</td>
<td>Cadong, Rongao, Tay, Nung, Chinese, Cotu, Vankieu, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.2.2 The characteristics of the organisation

According to Vietnam’s constitution and political system, PAA1 is an urban Local Government agency belonging to the Province of Kontum. The Agency is responsible for public administration, public policy, and other services in relation to a number of areas including education, healthcare, security, budget, business registration and infrastructure. As showed in Figure 6.1, it is organised into 37 departments and 21 Community Agencies and Services (formally named as People’s Committees of Wards and Communes). At the time of the present study, the Chairperson and one Vice-Chairperson came from the non-Indigenous group – the Kinh – while another Vice-Chairperson was from an Indigenous group. According to the organisational structure, the Chairperson manages eight departments, the non-Indigenous Vice Chairperson manages 12 economic-related departments, and the Indigenous Vice Chairperson manages 17 departments, related to cultural and social affairs.

It was unclear how many Indigenous employees worked in the Agency at the time of the present research. According to the non-Indigenous Vice Chairperson, there were 20 Indigenous employees, whereas the Chairperson claimed that 24 Indigenous employees were working in the Agency. However, information on the Agency’s website identified only six Indigenous employees, while a local media report indicated that there were 94 Indigenous employees (about 45 per cent of the workforce in the agency). These included Indigenous teachers and doctors and Indigenous employees working in Community Agencies and Services. Some Indigenous people held high positions in the Agency such as the positions of Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and heads of departments.
Figure 6.1: The Agency’s organisational structure (adapted from the organisational structure of Kontum City People’s Committee)
6.2.3 **Human resource (HR) policies**

As shown in Table 6.2, the Agency had a number of HR policies focusing on Indigenous employment. According to this policy (i.e. Planning 568/KH-UBND 2017), there is a regulation that stipulates that 10 per cent of vacancies in the Agency are reserved for Indigenous people. This policy also states that Indigenous employees are reserved between 5 to 35 per cent of work vacancies in the Community Agencies and Services. In addition, as stated in this policy, the Agency has quotas of Indigenous employees in managerial positions; for example, 20 per cent of managerial positions are reserved for Indigenous people. Another policy (i.e. Decision 1538-QD/TU 2015) expresses that Indigenous employees are also given priority in attending advanced training programs on their own languages, cultures and professional knowledge and skills. In addition, the Agency encourages the involvement of the smallest Indigenous groups by giving them first priority in relation to training and recruitment.

**Table 6.2: Government policies related to Indigenous HR practices**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Title</th>
<th>Place issued</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decision 1111/2011</td>
<td>Province</td>
<td>Planning for development of Kontum’s human resources in the period of 2011-2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision 33/2010</td>
<td>Province</td>
<td>Project on planning, training, advanced training for Kontum’s human resources to 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolution 03NQ-TU 2011</td>
<td>Province</td>
<td>Improving human resource quality for government officials at grass-root levels in the period of 2011-2015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Planning 568/KH-UBND City 07/03/2017 Implementation of the Project on developing Indigenous officials in Kontum for the New Period: regulating percentage of Indigenous employees at each level of the People’s Committee

Planning 1182/2015 City Training, and advanced training officials at the grass-roots level of the People’s Committee

Decision 1538-QD/TU City Project on training, advanced training for young, women, and Indigenous officials in managerial positions to 2020

Planning 1285/2014 City Conducting action programs for implementing strategies for Indigenous affairs to 2020

Project 01 City Recruiting Indigenous people in Kontum and Indigenous people from other places

Project 30 City Training Indigenous employees

**6.2.4 The organisation’s employee voice (EV) implementation**

The implementation of EV is explained in the Agency’s workplace regulations (i.e. Decision 01/2016/QD-UBND 2016) which are applied within each department. These regulations outline several forms of direct and indirect voice. Firstly, the regulations stipulate that senior managers have to have daily meetings with Heads of Department to discuss and solve work-related problems. In addition, weekly briefings happen every Friday among senior managers and heads of department, to which employees from the Office of the Chairperson are invited.
According to these regulations, summaries of the meeting are circulated to appropriate individuals.

Secondly, problem-solving meetings are organized when necessary by senior managers, for which participants are selected and invited to present their ideas and suggestions for potential solutions. In addition, the Agency holds monthly meetings for senior managers, heads of departments and heads of social and political associations (such as the Women’s Unions, the Labour Unions and the Communist Youth League of Ho-Chi-Minh). However, these regulations show that the final decisions in the meetings are made by senior managers and heads of department and delivered to the public after three days. Furthermore, as stated by these regulations, each department holds its own meetings and briefings among managers, supervisors and employees at the workplaces to solve related specific issues.

6.3 Profile of participants

In total, nine face-to-face interviews were carried out, with two Indigenous senior managers, one Indigenous Head of Department, and six Indigenous employees, from various departments, educational backgrounds, ethnic backgrounds, religions, and years of experience, and different genders (Table 6.3). All participants were full-time employees, and their service ranged from 7 months to 21 years. Three non-Indigenous managers were invited to participate in the interviews. The first non-Indigenous line manager declined the invitation but provided the contact details of a colleague who also declined but then suggested another non-Indigenous line manager. The third manager also declined the invitation, given the sensitive nature of the topic as a reason.
Table 6.3: Participants’ Profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Current position</th>
<th>Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manager1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Chairperson</td>
<td>21-years’ experience in managerial positions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager2</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Vice Chairperson</td>
<td>8-years’ experience in a managerial position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager3</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Head of Department</td>
<td>3-years’ experience as administrative staff, and 1 year in managerial position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Statistics Assistant</td>
<td>4-years’ experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>File clerk</td>
<td>5-years’ experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee3</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Program Assistant</td>
<td>9-years’ experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee4</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>HR Assistant</td>
<td>9-years’ experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee5</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Admin Assistant</td>
<td>7-months’ experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee6</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Doctor</td>
<td>4-years’ experience in GP and 3-months’ experience in a managerial position</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.4 Findings

The findings are presented in this section in the form of the individual narratives of the interviewees, as each interviewee provided a unique perspective on the organisational responses to Indigenous employee voice within the Agency. By following individual narratives, perspectives among interviewees are compared and cross-checked. The interviewees are also grouped according to their position in the Agency. The two Senior
Managers (Chairperson, present Vice Chairperson) and one Head of Department act as a policy informant group, in that their views are about the government policy and legislation and organisational voice practices within the organisation; while six Indigenous employees (including a Statistics Assistant, a File Clerk, a Program Assistant, a Human Resource (HR) Assistant, an Admin Assistant, and a Doctor) act as a validating group, in that their views are captured as to the reality of organisational practices.

6.4.1 The Chairperson

The former Chairperson had extensive experience in several managerial positions in the Agency. She was a high school teacher before she was appointed as the Manager of the Department of Education. She then moved to the department of Home Affairs, specialising in personnel management, and was appointed as the Manager. In 2010, she was selected as the Chairperson of the Agency, which is the top senior manager role in the public administrative agency. At the time of the interview, she was working in the office of the City’s Communist Party and held the position of Deputy Secretary.

The Chairperson claimed that senior managers had put their effort into increasing Indigenous workforce participation in the organisation. For example, they were searching for ethnic diversity by giving Indigenous people financial support in education, from high schools to tertiary education, and then recruiting them into the workplace. In addition, the highest priority of this policy was given to the most underrepresented groups to make certain that their voice would be included in public policy making. As the Chairperson stated:

"[...] every department is required to support financially at least 1 Indigenous high school student to complete their schooling and then attending university. After that, this student will be recruited by the departments. Currently, there is one employee recruited"
by this method in my office, and 3 staff recruited into other departments. In total, there are 24 staff recruited by this way in all departments. [...] we are very concerned about the representation of the Romang ethnic group which has very small population.

She also stated that Indigenous people also gained advantages in their career development as they were provided ongoing training programs to improve their working skills and then appointed to managerial positions. She considered this to be the way to facilitate fairness and justice for Indigenous people, particularly for Indigenous women. As the Chairperson stated:

[...] in each department, there should be at least 1 Indigenous person, especially Indigenous women in leadership positions such as Head or Deputy Heads of department. Because Kontum is the place of ethnic diversity, thus promoting Indigenous employees to executive position is necessary.

Furthermore, the Chairperson claimed that senior managers applied different ways of performance appraisal for Indigenous employees to give them confidence in work, as they sympathised with the difficulties that Indigenous people faced:

Regarding performance evaluation, we assess Indigenous staff in different ways because we consider the obstacles that they have to overcome to work as well as their non-indigenous colleagues [...].

Having turned to organisational response to employee voice, she pointed out some forms of voice that the Agency applied to encourage employees’ consultative participation and participatory influence over their work. In general, the Agency and its departments had formal voice regulations which were called ‘workplace democracy regulations’. In addition, they had quarterly meetings and mail-boxes in each department to collect every suggestion from staff. She claimed:
We have mail boxes in each department. These mail boxes are used in case Indigenous or Kinh [non-Indigenous] employees don’t have a chance to speak at the meeting, they can leave anonymous comments and papers here. The administrative assistant will pick it up and present in the meetings once every 3 months.

With respect to indirect forms of voice, the Chairperson identified the trade unions, and the Communist Youth League of Ho-Chi-Minh, as the representatives of employees to senior managers in protecting the employees’ interests, particularly Indigenous staff. She noted:

*I think that the Unions do a good job in supporting Indigenous employees in the workplace. [...] the Unions help their Indigenous members in bargaining with the senior managers about the policies of financial support for their training outside the workplace [...] The Youth League also collect employees’ suggestions from all departments and present them to the senior managers at the meetings.*

The Chairperson also recognised Indigenous weaknesses in having voices at work as they often kept quiet. To capture their voice, she encouraged them to speak first. She stated: ‘*we often ask Indigenous employees to speak first at the meeting because they are very quiet*’. In addition, the Chairperson claimed that Indigenous staff lacked IT skills, and she described how the Organisation uses IT communication with employees such as Email and Zalo (a Vietnamese version of social media network) and the training provided for Indigenous staff. She claimed:

*Indigenous employees don’t seem like to use IT such as Email and Zalo. But normally we use these communication methods to consult with the employees. Thus, we annually provide them IT training courses at the workplace.*

She also suggested the importance of applying inclusive leadership to work with Indigenous staff, as she saw herself as an inclusive leader who sympathised with Indigenous differences.
She claimed that she determined different communication approaches for Indigenous employees and encouraged their voice and inclusion through creating a comfortable working environment. From her perspective, this communication was very necessary because misunderstanding among leaders and employees would undermine the retention of Indigenous employees. She explained:

\[
\ldots \text{leaders should understand what their Indigenous employees’ strengths and what their weaknesses are. When the leaders ask them to do something, they should show them in a detailed way, not hasty talk. If they don’t understand [the leaders’ talking] they will leave their jobs, moreover they will never return to work. } \ldots \text{[they need a friendly workplace climate where they can share their ideas comfortably. Also, they are very nice and honest, and if the leaders are supportive, they will complete the job very well.}
\]

The Chairperson continued to explain the meaning of communication for Indigenous employees by giving an example from her experience of gentle speaking. She noted:

\[
\text{I speak in a gentle voice to Indigenous employees and encourage them to complete the goal successfully. In my office, I have to say that Indigenous employees are very good at being consulted.}
\]

In summary, the Chairperson was positive about the impact of government policy on Indigenous employment, outlined key practices of EV in the Agency both direct and indirect, and identified some key challenges in Indigenous inclusion. These challenges included low self-esteem of Indigenous employees and their lack of technical skills. Inclusive leadership through creating a sense of belonging was identified as one method for increasing Indigenous participation in decision making.
6.4.2 The Vice Chairperson

The Vice Chairperson had been in this position for eight years. Before this appointment, he was the head of a Community Agency and Service which was under the control of the Agency. He also had experience as an administrative assistant in several departments. At the time of interview, the Vice Chairperson supervised twelve heads of department and reported directly to the current Chairperson. He was from an Indigenous ethnic group.

The Vice Chairperson confidently claimed that Indigenous people were given advantages in recruitment into the Agency and also gained financial benefits from the Agency, which supported them to develop their working skills. He claimed:

*Indigenous people are required to attend the local government’s entrance examination to the public sector organisation, but they are preferred applicants and priority is given to them. We also have projects which support financially Indigenous staff to have ongoing training at work.*

He claimed that the Agency was seeking and nurturing talented young Indigenous employees in each department, which in turn supported the development of Indigenous communities. He stated:

*The Agency recruits annually young and capable Indigenous employees from all departments [...] to attend advanced training programs on the profession and political ideology. This project is preparing for Indigenous leadership in each department in the future.*

However, he refused to give Indigenous staff special encouragement in performance appraisal, as he believed that government policy did not include such treatment for Indigenous employees. He stated:
Performance evaluation is applied similarly to all employees. Everything is based on the regulations of the state and provincial governments.

In relation to employee voice practices, the Vice Chairperson claimed that formal regulations were set up in the Agency to make sure that all voices had the chance to be heard through either direct or indirect channels. More specifically, he indicated that some forms of voice were formalised in these regulations such as ‘briefings’ and ‘monthly meetings’. He noted:

Employee participation and involvement are based on the workplace regulations in each department. For example, these regulations show that employees are able to attend the weekly briefings and monthly meetings at the workplace [...]. At these meetings, they are free to present their suggestions or opinions related to their positions.

He stated that the Agency had its ‘assembly’ as the meeting for the whole Agency. He explained that this meeting was hosted by senior managers to communicate directly with all departmental staff. He noted:

The Agency often hosts a monthly assembly for all staff. At this event, the senior managers will present news and other information relating to the local government. They also give chance to staff to present their concerns.

He also described how he consulted his employees directly and appeared willing to listen their opinions before making his decisions. In addition, three direct forms of voice were captured from his views, ‘discussion’, ‘drop-in’ and ‘survey’. He argued:

I often get my employees’ opinions before making a final decision. Sometimes, I ask them to go to my room or attend the meetings, or even survey employees’ opinions
across departments. [...] they are free drop-in my office at any time [...] I take responsibilities to solve every problem relating to my staff [...].

Besides this, the Vice Chairperson emphasised that they applied digital technologies (e.g., emails and websites) to communicate with staff to collect their suggestions, and every staff member was encouraged to communicate directly to senior managers through these technologies. He claimed:

The information technologies have been applied within the departments, and the Agency also has its ‘IT Gate’ [Website]. All suggestions and opinions can be submitted via the email system [...]. Also, employees can email directly to us if they have some concerns.

With respect to indirect voice practices, he claimed that the Unions and the Communist Party of Vietnam supported their members’ voices through their role of employee representatives to senior managers. He stated:

[...] the Union and Party have their own regulations to their members on participation at work. If you are member of those organisations, your voice can reach the senior leaders easily because they will represent you to raise your issues with us.

He also expressed his concerns in regard to voice practices for Indigenous staff, as he believed that he understood Indigenous differences. He claimed that he and his colleagues (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous managers) paid attention to the views of Indigenous employees by creating informal channels of voice and proactive listening. He commented:

I think most managers at each level of the Agency take much care on Indigenous issues, but they [other managers] need to have more ‘open policy’ that allows Indigenous staff to have a say at any time.
He added:

For me, at the meetings, I often ask their suggestions about the work conditions and policies, and their opinions on the issue relating to the communities. All suggestions from the Indigenous staff are noted and considered carefully. The suggestions will be accepted, if we consider it necessarily and in the scope of the laws and the Agency’s regulations.

Briefly, in line with the Chairperson, the Vice Chairperson also was positive in regard to the impact of government policy on Indigenous workforce participation, and also provided many instances of direct and indirect EV. Moreover, he was particularly positive about the role of trade unions in providing a voice for Indigenous employees. In relation to Indigenous inclusion, like the Chairperson he felt that his own Indigineity enabled him to understand and communicate with Indigenous people and be aware of their issues.

6.4.3 Indigenous Head of Department

At the time of interview, the Indigenous Head of Department had been in his current position for four months. Previously, he had been an administrative assistant for four years. There were 23 staff in his department, and most of them were non-Indigenous. According to the Agency’s organisational structure, he reported directly to a non-Indigenous Vice-Chairperson.

Having commenced the interview, the Indigenous Head of Department was critical of government policy for Indigenous workforce participation, despite himself being recruited into the department due to the ‘Cu tuyen’ [priority] policy. He explained that there was a difference between what the policies purported and the reality of its practices, as they did not support Indigenous people. He argued:
I don’t see any policies encouraging ethnic diversity in my workplace. The central government’s policies on Indigenous employees that you may hear on the VTV [the National Television Broadcaster of Vietnam] are different from here [his department].

He drew on his previous experience as a staff member at a lower level for his current position, and claimed that on a number of occasions he had appealed to the Agency’s non-Indigenous senior managers to implement the policy regarding appointing Indigenous staff to managerial positions. However, he felt that his requests were ignored due to racial discrimination. He stated:

*It seems that they [non-Indigenous senior managers] don’t want to work with people from other ethnic groups, because they just feel comfortable work with their same racial colleagues. How can they recruit people from different races when they don’t know about their cultures and personalities? It is very difficult.*

He claimed that senior managers play the most important role in implementing HR policies for Indigenous people, rather than departmental managers within the Agency. For example:

*Last month I went to meet Indigenous people, and they asked me a lot about recruiting Indigenous people in the Agency [...] I couldn’t answer them because I don’t have the right to do this. Actually, if I want to recruit employees, I have to get permission from the senior managers.*

In relation to voice practices, the Indigenous Head of Department verified the existence of workplace regulations in the department. During his four months as a manager, he made sure that ‘face-to-face discussion’ and ‘sharing information with subordinates’ were used to capture employee voices. He claimed:
I normally arrange discussion at the meetings. But the time for meeting is not enough for solving a lot of issues. So, I mainly discuss directly with staff in my private room. All the information related to my decision is shared to employees. With the big issues, we arrange a meeting with all employees; with the small ones, employees in related divisions will be consulted.

He also described how he empowered his deputies to work directly with staff. In this case, each deputy took responsibility for consulting directly with their employees and reporting to him later. He gave an example:

[…] when my supervisor [senior manager] asks me to prepare a report for him I will consult my deputies. The deputies then work with employees to make a draft and show me. I will consider it and revise it by myself before I submit it to him [his supervisor].

However, although voice regulations existed in this workplace, the Head of Department felt that Indigenous people still lacked their voice at work. He argued that low Indigenous workforce participation impeded their voice and influence over work, since their opinions were not taken into consideration. He claimed:

It is very difficult for them to have influence over their work because the number of Indigenous representatives is very limited. […] Non-indigenous employees dominate and almost all decisions are made by them.

He also claimed that Indigenous employees were excluded from the non-Indigenous group in cooperation despite the former attempting to immerse themselves in the workplace, because of underlying racism. He claimed:

When I was staff, some of my opinions were rejected. This problem didn’t motivate me to participate at work. […] The cooperation was not very high at my workplace, and
this impacted on Indigenous employees’ involvement, like mine. I remember that I wanted to participate in work, but no one gave me a chance.

Besides this, he argued that there was lack of support from the Unions as employee representatives in the workplace, and that they did not protect their members’ interests at the lower level of the Agency. He commented:

The Union [laugh!]. No. To be honest, at the department levels, they almost do nothing. Sometimes, they just ask people to clean up the workstation. Based on the law, the Unions are to protect their members’ legal rights and benefits. But, here, they don’t.

The Indigenous Head recognised that he experienced different treatment from different managers, and he conceded that there were individual leaders and managers who understood and attempted to include Indigenous employees in work. He explained:

It depends much on the leaders’ attitude and behaviours. Some leaders are very friendly and pleasant, but others are very strict and want to show their ‘power position’ rather than listening to staff.

In summary, the Indigenous Head of Department expressed some very different views to the two senior managers. He did not believe that government policy had had a positive impact on Indigenous workforce participation. While he identified many voice mechanisms, he did not believe that they encouraged Indigenous participation, and he was critical of the role of the unions. He considered the challenges facing Indigenous employees as being due to underlying racism of the Kinh majority. He did accept that individual managers could make a difference through inclusive leadership practices. Such practices depended on listening to Indigenous people.
6.4.4 Employee 1 - Statistics Assistant

At the time of interview, the Statistics Assistant had worked in his department for four years. Before that, he was one of students graduated from the ‘Cu tuyen’ policy of the local government, which appointed talented Indigenous students from high school to attend universities without taking the entrance test for admission. In his current department, the Statistics Assistant worked under the supervision of an Indigenous leader, and half of the staff in his department were Indigenous. However, his Head of Department was non-Indigenous. The Statistics Assistant recognised that he and his friends gained advantages in recruitment and performance evaluation in the department. He believed that this was because the senior managers wished to increase Indigenous workforce participation in the Agency. He stated:

*We get preferential recruitment into the Agency because the senior managers want to balance the number of Indigenous and mainstream employees working within the department.*

He added:

* [...] my supervisor also gives us priority in performance appraisal at the end of the year. For example, the Indigenous employees would be rated as ‘excellent’ if we completed successfully the job while this standard of job performance is required to be higher for the mainstream [non-Indigenous employees].*

However, he expressed a negative view of the promotion policies. He felt that he was not involved in and did not have a voice over the department’s promotion policies for Indigenous employees as he was not a member of Vietnam’s Communist Party. He claimed:
I am not able to influence or get involved in promotion policies in my workplace because these jobs are belonging to the Party and I am not a member of the Party. I just know the final decision and don’t have any voice on this.

Having turned to his experience of participation at work, he was confident to claim that he had several channels to present his voice over work, such as direct suggestions and via email to his supervisor. He felt that his Indigenous supervisor often listened to and assisted him enthusiastically in conducting his ideas. He noted:

*I suggest directly my opinions relating to my tasks in discussion or through email to the supervisor, he listens and builds up my ideas by adding more information on these or he will support me on how to carry out my ideas.*

While he felt that his Indigenous supervisor made a significant contribution to his feeling of inclusion, he was not so positive in regard to his non-Indigenous Head of Department, and doubted that his voice was taken into consideration at this level. He claimed:

* [...] at the annual workers’ meeting hosted by the Head of Department and the Unions, I often present my suggestions relating to my rights and interests to the manager. Actually, I am free to have a voice at workplace, but I don’t know whether or not he [non-Indigenous Head of Department] considers my suggestions.*

In relation to the Unions, this Indigenous employee felt that the Union failed to represent his voice to the manager. He claimed that, while he had ‘full right to participate in all their activities’, and was ‘able to present any requests to the Union’s representatives’ in line with the Labour Law, in reality ‘they don’t help me to present my voice to the department manager’. He argued that the Unions did not protect their membership’s interests.
In summary, although this Indigenous employee was critical of promotion policy within his department, he felt that government policy in general had had positive impact on Indigenous workforce participation as it gave them priority in recruitment and performance appraisal. Like the senior managers, he had benefited from government policy. He experienced a number of voice practices but was critical of the role of the unions. He also raised the issue of the influence of the Party in decision making. Importantly, he felt that Indigenous inclusion depended on the leadership approach of individual supervisors and managers. However, he felt that his non-Indigenous manager did not understand or include Indigenous employees.

6.4.5 Employee 2 - File Clerk

The File Clerk had worked in the Agency for five years. There were seven staff in her department. The Head of Department and deputies were non-Indigenous. She worked under supervision by one of the deputy heads. The File Clerk was from the Jarai Indigenous group, and she was one of two Indigenous employees working in the department. According to the Agency’s organisational structure, her manager reported directly to the Indigenous Vice Chairperson.

The File Clerk commenced the interview by criticising government policy for Indigenous people. She explained that the non-Indigenous Head of Department in reality was not concerned about how many Indigenous people worked in the department, despite government policy. She argued:

I don't see that they [head and deputy of department] care much about ethnic diversity, because we still lack Indigenous staff in the department. But I know that they have a policy named Project No. 01 that provides opportunities for Indigenous employees to attend university and work in the public agency.
However, she recognised that voice practices were in existence, which gave her the opportunity to present her voice over her work. She was aware that employees were able to speak up directly through annual meetings, face-to-face discussion, surveys and email. She stated:

[…] there is an annual meeting among leaders and employees. At the meeting, we can present our suggestions if we have them. I also see they survey our attitudes and opinions. Normally, I meet directly my boss [her supervisor] to discuss something relating to my work. Sometimes, I just use email to send my report documents to her.

While she claimed that she worked directly with the supervisor, she felt that her voice was still missing in the departmental manager’s decision making. This was because she did not have an opportunity to speak directly to the Head of Department, but instead presented the issues through her supervisor and the Union representatives who would advocate for her. She claimed:

I see the problems relating my work and I talk to the Unions representatives and my supervisor in the meeting or outside the workplace […]. Then they will help me to talk about my problems to the head […], two or three times a year she asks my opinions […].

In addition, the File Clerk felt that her suggestions were not always taken into consideration because of racial stereotypes. She claimed that some leaders in her department did not listen to Indigenous people because they did not believe in Indigenous consultation. She claimed:

Some of my suggestions are noted and answered but with other suggestions they do not reply. It depends on the leaders […] it seems that they don’t believe in us (Indigenous) much. There are still people who discriminate against Indigenous employees in the workplace.
Besides this, she acknowledged that she herself was nervous about providing her voice at work, which also prevented her from inclusion at work. She argued:

*I am not included in the decision making. But the reason is not only from the leadership style, it also comes from me, because I am very shy to present my ideas.*

Having turned to inclusive leadership styles, the File Clerk claimed that her supervisor had awareness of Indigenous differences, attempted to encourage Indigenous voice over work, and encouraged their confidence. She explained:

*Sometimes, I see my leader [her supervisor] come to talk to us because they know that we are very shy. They always encourage us to work and express our voices in the workplace. I remember Mrs H. [her supervisor] last year asked me to come to her room and told me that I needed to be confident.*

She also recognised that the supervisor often spoke in detail, guided her in her work, encouraged Indigenous voices and cultures. The File Clerk explained:

*Some leaders are very concerned about Indigenous employees and they use suitable ways to communicate with us [...] talk to us in detail and even ask us to go directly to their office and show us how to do the jobs. In our festivals, they encourage us to wear our traditional uniforms. Sometimes, I use my own language to speak to my friends and they are fine with this.*

In summary, she believed that government policy was undermined by the practice of individual managers, particularly non-Indigenous managers, who she felt discriminated against Indigenous employees. She was the second interviewee to name racism, and she believed that underlying racism and ignorance of Indigenous people also undermined voice practices. However, she expressed positive views of the role of the Unions. She also recognised that
Indigenous peoples’ low self-esteem was important and gave examples of how inclusive leadership could overcome this. These included empathy with Indigenous uniqueness, encouragement of Indigenous voice and confidence, and inclusive communication styles.

6.4.6 Employee 3 - Program Assistant

The Program Assistant had worked in the public agency for nine years. He had a bachelor’s degree in IT. His department was small, with five employees, in which both he and the Head of Department were Indigenous. His immediate manager (the Head of Department) reported directly to a non-Indigenous Vice Chairperson.

The Program Assistant claimed that his department was not able to recruit staff because it was small, and that this job belonged to the department of Home Affairs. In relation to voice practices, he claimed that he had a say in organisational decision making, because his suggestions were often considered by the manager. For example, he commented:

*I and my boss [Head of Department] often discuss together on every issue before the meeting with all employees. I feel that I am important part of the department.*

According to the Program Assistant, his immediate manager was ‘open minded’ and ‘allowed all employees to have voices’ through multiple channels. In addition, he felt that his voice was enabled by his immediate manager who was Indigenous. He felt that Indigenous Managers understood their Indigenous subordinates. He claimed:

*I am a senior employee here and I do not hesitate to speak directly to my boss [Head of Department] in formal meetings, even in the coffee shop outside of the workplace. We use several ways to have influence over the work such as document reports. [...] Because my boss is also an Indigenous person, so it is easier for me to have voice over my work.*
For indirect forms of voice, he believed that senior staff acted as junior staff’s representatives to the manager. He explained that new staff were often nervous to meet the manager. He noted:

*Indirect voice just happens with new staff. Sometimes, I see that my new colleagues tell their problems to the senior ones. Then, the senior will be on their behalf to meet the leader.*

In addition, the Program Assistant was critical of the roles of union, as their jobs focussed mainly on welfare-based issues. He claimed:

* [...] the Unions just collect the employees’ opinions and present in the meeting at the end of the year. Also, if there is an urgent issue that needs to be solved, the Unions will ask people to gather together to work with the manager. But normally I see that the Union just takes the responsibility for visiting their members who get sick.*

In summary, this Indigenous employee believed that his voice was heard. This was largely due to the role and style of the Indigenous manager, who understood Indigenous people. This interviewee found that indirect voice happened through unofficial representatives (e.g., senior staff). Unlike the File Clerk, he was negative about the Unions as they just provided employees with pastoral and welfare benefits.

**6.4.7 Employee 4 - HR Assistant**

The HR Assistant had worked in the Agency for nine years. He had a vocational certificate, and was from the Cadong Indigenous group. There were ten staff in his department, and he was the only Indigenous employee. His supervisor was the deputy who reported directly to the Head of Department. This department was under the control of the Chairperson of the Agency.
The HR Assistant believed that Indigenous people had advantages in training and recruitment into the Agency. He was an example of this policy. He stated:

*In recent years, there are several policies for Indigenous people. For example, I was recruited into the department by the Agency’s project. Most of the policies focus mainly on training and recruitment Indigenous people into the public sector organisations.*

However, he also believed that performance appraisal was based on the ‘*real employees’ performance*’ and that there was no ‘*priority*’ given to Indigenous employees. In relation to voice practices, the HR Assistant felt that, mostly, direct practices were applied in his department through direct discussion and surveys. He stated:

*[…] I normally talk directly to the leader [his supervisor] or send him my reports. With the manager [Head of Department] I often present my suggestions through the supervisor [deputy manager]. In case he is absent from the work, then I can meet directly with him [the manager].*

He also believed that indirect voice occurred through his supervisor. He described this indirect voice as follows:

*In general, they give me a chance to present my voice to the managers at all levels. But supervisor will consider it first. After that my issues will be discussed at the monthly meetings among the Head of Department and senior managers.*

Despite the existence of these voice mechanisms, the HR Assistant expressed disappointment with his supervisor and manager. He explained that his supervisor only allowed him to undertake minor responsibilities for tasks, and he was not able to have a voice over his work. He claimed:
I am responsible for just small pieces of work. I don’t have any right to make decisions on my work. The leader [supervisor] makes all decisions on it. Most of my suggestions are not considered. I don’t feel inclusiveness at all in the decision-making process.

Though I am consulted to do something, my opinion is not included in their decisions.

He also claimed that there was no opportunity for him to work with other leaders (other deputies) and senior staff, because some of them did not allow him to talk directly with them, and there was existence of overt racial discrimination. He commented:

Not all people in the department allow an employee like me to talk directly to them, I just talk to some of them. [...] Some of my colleagues are good, and they try to include me in their group, but another doesn’t talk to me at all and gives me a ‘cold eyed’ stare.

The interviewee also felt that as an individual his supervisor contributed to the failure of voice practice in his department, since this non-Indigenous supervisor was not aware of Indigenous differences. He compared his current workplace with a previous workplace with an Indigenous leader where that he had felt included as that leader understood Indigenous uniqueness; whereas his current supervisor made him feel excluded due to his communication style. He explained:

I think most of this problem depends on the leader. My previous leader made me feel safe and comfortable to participate in work, but the current one makes me feel very sad. I feel that he is imposing on me.

In summary, like the File Clerk and the Statistics Assistant, this interviewee believed that, while government policy had made an impact on Indigenous workforce participation, voice practices failed to support Indigenous inclusion. Similar to the File Clerk, this interviewee had experienced open racism at work. He believed that non-Indigenous managers lacked
understanding of Indigenous uniqueness and had poor communication skills with Indigenous staff. Similar to the Program Assistant, his perception of inclusion came from an Indigenous leader who sympathised and understood Indigenous people.

6.4.8 Employee 5 - Admin Assistant

The Admin Assistant had worked in the public agency for seven months. He had a bachelor’s degree from a French university. In addition, he was a member of the Party. At the time of interview, there were more than nine employees in his department, and two of them, including the Head of Department, were Indigenous. The Admin Assistant worked under the supervision of this Indigenous manager who reported directly to a non-Indigenous Vice Chairperson of the Agency.

This interviewee claimed that his department was not able to recruit staff directly, but instead the department of Home Affairs took responsibility for Indigenous employment in his department. He was critical of government policy, as he identified two Indigenous employees working in the department. He claimed that the policy did not work well in reality, as senior managers were not interested in Indigenous employment. He explained:

 [...] the department of Home Affairs takes actions in recruiting and allocating Indigenous people a job in my department. I know that we [Indigenous people] are given priority in training and recruiting. [...] But I see that there are differences among the policy and the real implementation. In the reality, senior managers don’t care much about recruiting Indigenous people. There are only 2 Indigenous employees in my workplace.
Despite this, the Admin Assistant identified several forms of voice practices in his workplace. He claimed that he was able to reach the departmental manager by email, direct discussion, mailboxes and survey. He argued:

_I use several means to be involved in my work such as emails, reports and face-to-face meetings. Sometimes, I just knock on the manager’s door and drop in to his room. We also use mailboxes to present our opinions anonymously._

He also claimed that he was able to be heard at the higher levels of management in the Agency through his supervisor. He noted: ‘I also present my suggestions or opinions through my supervisor and he will represent me to the senior managers’. The Admin Assistant described that the manager in this case was treating every people equally and even organising several events to build a sense of inclusion in the workplace. In addition, he believed that his opinions were included in the manager’s decision making. He commented:

_The manager really considers my opinions in his decision making. For example, last month I was consulted about conducting a survey of the city people's satisfaction toward the public service, and my opinions were involved in the decision. I really love my work because the manager treats everyone equally. He also hosts sport competitions, retreats and even a welcome party to new staff._

He was pleased that a gentle way of communication was applied to him as an Indigenous employee, and recognised that this different communication style was not policy and depended on his manager’s individual leadership due to his awareness of Indigenous difficulties. He commented:

_I think because my manager is also an Indigenous person, so he understands that we are shy and don’t want to talk in front of many people. [...] He talks to me in very_
friendly ways. Actually, this is not the regulation but this stems from the manager’s leadership style.

In summary, he felt that government policy had had a negative impact on Indigenous workforce participation due to lack of support from senior managers. However, he appreciated the multiple voice mechanisms which he believed gave him voice over his work and a say in organisational decision making. Like other interviewees, he believed that his inclusion stemmed from his individual Indigenous manager’s inclusive leadership, because this manager sympathised with Indigenous uniqueness, which overcame Indigenous lack of self-esteem.

6.4.9 Employee 6 - Doctor

The Doctor had been working in the public agency for three years. At the time of the interview, he had just been appointed to the position of head of a Medical Station. The Medical Station is a sub-division of the department of Healthcare Services, the latter supervised by the Vice Chairperson of the Agency. The Doctor’s immediate supervisor was a non-Indigenous head of this Department. As the head of the Station, he supervised seven staff, most of whom were Indigenous. The Doctor was also a leader of the Communist Youth League of Ho-Chi-Minh in the Station.

The Doctor claimed that government policy had supported Indigenous workforce participation since he saw that a number of Indigenous doctors, who gained financial support from the government projects to study at medical universities, were recruited into jobs. He commented:

_In my department, there are many Indigenous doctors. We are graduates from the Central Government's project on training 600 doctors for the Central Highlands region._
However, he was disappointed with the treatment from the Head of Department in terms of performance evaluation and ongoing training policy, since these practices were influenced by the individual manager’s preferences. He stated:

*There is no fairness here. Actually, the treatment depends on the relationship with the manager. For example, your performance is poor but if you have a good relationship with the manager you will be safe [...] if you want to attend training programs outside the workplace you should have a good relationship with him.*

In relation to voice practices, the Doctor felt that direct voice occurred through formal meetings and random discussion in the manager’s room (drop-in). However, he explained that he was not always confident to speak out, and the lack of other forms of feedback were another problem for him. In addition, he argued that he had little influence over the manager’s decision making since he lacked the professional experience that could contribute to the decision. He claimed:

[...] Actually, I just have a say over minor decisions, such as improving work conditions, and service for young staff [...]. At the meetings, I am able to present my ideas directly to the manager, but I prefer to listen others rather than talk, because I feel that I myself still lack working experience to have a good contribution to the decision making.

He added:

*I also can drop in the manager’s room at any time to ask him about work-related issues. [...] we normally talk directly to the manager about everything. The manager does not have survey or mailboxes to collect staff’s opinions. Also, he often ignores anonymous messages from staff.*
The Doctor recognised that his Indigenous colleagues faced language barriers and a lack of confidence which prevented them from having a direct voice at work. He believed that indirect voice which happened through senior staff and team leaders could support Indigenous staff. He commented:

*My Indigenous brothers always keep silent at the meeting because most them are not able to present clearly their opinions in Vietnamese. But if they have problems, they usually find someone to represent them at the meetings.*

He continued:

*[…] Normally, before the meetings of the department or the Medical Station, the head of team and senior doctors will collect staff’s opinions and represent them to the manager.*

He felt that the Unions had a limited role in supporting their members’ interests and largely focused on enforcing some employee rights and employee welfare. He claimed:

*The Unions just take care of employees’ lives and they don’t have any impact on employees’ work. For example, if we don’t get annual leave, the Unions will help us to have a say to the manager.*

In summary, he had a positive view of the impact of government policy on increasing Indigenous workforce participation. However, he also realised that the policy implementation rested with the departmental manager. He identified multiple forms of voice practices within the workplace but did not think that these worked well for Indigenous employees. He identified issues such as low self-esteem and language barriers, as well as lack of support from managers. Like the Program Assistant, he did not believe that the Unions represented Indigenous voice, but instead saw their roles as pastoral and welfare-based.
6.5 Summary of the findings

The purpose of this chapter was to understand: the effect of government policy and legislation on Indigenous employee voice; the organisations’ implementation of government policy in Indigenous voice practice; and the experience of Indigenous employees of such voice practices’ impact on their inclusion in regard to the organisational decision making. Five themes emerged from the case study 1 (PAA1).

Firstly, government policy and legislation has had a positive impact on Indigenous workforce participation. According to one senior manager, government policy put great emphasis into increasing ethnic diversity in the workplace by proactively searching for potential Indigenous talents from high schools to attend tertiary education and then recruiting them into the public sector organisations. The policy was also given much prioritisation to the Indigenous groups, which have the smallest population in the local, to make certain that all voices from different groups have to be involved in public policy making. For two senior managers, Indigenous people gained advantages in recruiting as they were given a waiver of test for entry into the Agency. This policy is to adapt to the diverse segments of the population in the city, since the Agency is considered as the local representative bureaucracy.

Also, Indigenous people gained financial support for ongoing training at work to enhance their professional skills, and Indigenous women were the most prioritised by promotion policy. For one senior manager, Indigenous staff also gained advantages in performance appraisal as she gave them encouragement. Moreover, all of the Indigenous interviewees were aware of government policy, and some had benefited themselves from it. For example, the Doctor admitted that he himself had graduated from the government projects on training 600 doctors for the Central Highlands region.
The document analysis was also in line with the findings from the interviews. For example, the document analysis shows that the Agency had Indigenous quotas applied within the workplace. The participation of Indigenous people in the public sector organisations may reflect that the government pays attention to Indigenous people and attempts to capture their voice through giving them equal employment of opportunity. This may be necessary for both the Indigenous communities and the local government to effectively formulate and implement the policy so that they would prevent potential conflicts among Indigenous people and the government, which had happened twice in the past (please refer to Chapter 2, Section 2.3.1).

Secondly, a multiple voice mechanism was set up within the workplace. This voice mechanism had been formalised in policy such as the Workplace Democracy Regulations. In addition, while all the managers had shown how voice practices were carried out under the management by them, four Indigenous interviewees experienced that diverse forms of voice were provided to them. For instance, formal and direct forms of voice happened through workers’ annual meetings, monthly assemblies, formal meetings, and briefings. Informal and direct forms of voice were applied through face-to-face discussion, emails, survey, mailboxes, and informal catching up outside the workplace. One senior manager explained that the Agency set up the mailboxes within the workplace to support employees who were not confident to present their voice to managers at all levels. This Agency also used information technology (e.g. ‘ITGate’) to encourage voice from staff. The grievance procedure was also regulated in the policy, though both the managers and employees did not realize this.

Moreover, the present research found that indirect voice practices were applied in the workplace. For the two senior managers and two Indigenous interviewees, the Unions had positive impact on Indigenous employee voice, as they represented Indigenous staff to managers. One senior manager also gave an example of the Unions in that the Unions supported
their members by bargaining with managers for their interests. Another senior manager was very confident to claim that the Unions represented their members at the meetings. Meanwhile, one Indigenous staff recognised that the Unions supported his junior staff to bring their suggestions to managers. The existence of multiple voice mechanisms would provide employees with the platforms to reach managers, to have consultative participation and participatory influence over work. It also would support managers in identifying and responding to employees’ concerns on work-related issues just in time. It could be argued that, while government policy provides Indigenous people with equal employment opportunity as the pathways of voice, voice mechanisms are the means to capture Indigenous opinions which contribute to the organisational decision making. Furthermore, this may also imply that Indigenous voice is respected and valued by the organisation, which builds up their perception of inclusion.

Besides this, for many interviewees, indirect voice also happened through unofficial representatives such as team leaders, senior staff, supervisor and the Party. For example, one Indigenous interviewee reported that his Indigenous colleagues often looked for senior staff to represent them at the meetings, since they were not confident to speak up. Two Indigenous interviewees claimed that they themselves used to have their supervisors represent them with managers. The existence of diverse forms of indirect voice would support Indigenous voice, since they have more channels to express their concerns to managers. However, it is not certain that Indigenous voice would be heard through these unofficial representatives, since they may not have strong voices over managers. In addition, these unofficial representatives (i.e. supervisors and team leaders) may play roles as supporting managers in managing employees rather than defending employee rights.
Thirdly, voice mechanisms were applied differently to Indigenous employees to adapt to their difficulties. One senior manager claimed that she often gave Indigenous staff opportunities to speak first at the meetings. Indigenous employees were also gained IT training in the workplace to support them in using social media to communicate with managers. According to the Chairperson, she often spoke in a gentle voice with her Indigenous staff, and attempted to create an inclusive workplace climate for them. Meanwhile, the Vice Chairperson emphasized that he created informal channels as an ‘open policy’ to work with his Indigenous staff, and often listened to their voice. Both senior managers in the interviewees encouraged Indigenous voices as they themselves were Indigenous people and had awareness of Indigenous uniqueness. The implementation of these different voice practices may suggest that the voice mechanism in general was not supportive of Indigenous voice, as it was applied the same to all workers. Furthermore, it may be claimed that individual Indigenous managers play a key role in responding to Indigenous voice.

Fourthly, despite that senior managers were confident to make claims on government policy and their voice practices, Indigenous employees were critical of government policy and voice practices as they did not lead to their perception of inclusion. This is because of underlying racism, lack of support from trade unions, lack of responsibility of senior managers for the implementation of the policy, their low self-esteem, non-Indigenous managers’ lack of awareness of Indigenous differences and poor managerial skills, and government policy’s infantilisation of Indigenous people.

For one Indigenous line manager and two Indigenous employees, underlying racism existed in the workplace, while both senior managers did not realize this. This racism not only prevent Indigenous workforce participation but also impeded Indigenous voice at all levels of management. However, it appears that senior managers do not attempt to respond this issue, as
they maintained a positive claim that racism did not appear in their workplaces. It could be argued, in this respect, that racial discrimination was one of the reasons leading to Indigenous peoples’ protest against the government in the past (Gupta, 2005).

Although senior managers were very positive about the Unions, Indigenous people perceived that the Unions failed to support their voice and inclusion. The findings show that the Unions’ roles were not representing their membership, but instead that they were more likely to provide employees with pastoral care and welfare benefits. It could be argued that, because of lack of the Unions’ voice, Indigenous employees found their senior colleagues or team leaders to be their representatives with managers.

For many Indigenous employees, because of lack of responsibility of senior managers for the implementation of the policy, voice practices rested with individual departmental managers. This could become a problem for Indigenous voice under the management of non-Indigenous managers, because it is found here that non-Indigenous managers did not support Indigenous voice, lacked awareness of Indigenous uniqueness, and ignored applying priority policy for Indigenous people. Non-Indigenous managers did not communicate with Indigenous staff in friendly and encouraging ways. However, this explanation is questionable since non-Indigenous people had been living in this area for a long period and even dominated the population of the city at the time of investigation. Furthermore, as these interviews did not include non-Indigenous people, the answers on their lack of support on Indigenous voice will need to be further explored.

The missing of Indigenous voice also came from themselves as they had low self-esteem and were faced with language barriers and poor technical skills. With such difficulties, Indigenous employees are more likely to distance themselves from participation at work. This may be exacerbated by non-Indigenous managers who did not understand Indigenous differences and
attempt to include them into the workplace. Moreover, Indigenous employees perceived that government policy infantilises Indigenous people. They reported that non-Indigenous managers did not believe in Indigenous staff, as they did not listen to Indigenous voices in consultations.

Fifthly, the research found that inclusive leadership played important roles in supporting Indigenous voice and inclusion. For Indigenous interviewees, the voice practices under inclusive leadership were applied differently, such as providing IT training, giving priority to speak first at the meetings, speaking in a gentle voice, creating an inclusive workplace climate, and applying a different performance appraisal. It may be claimed that this leadership focuses more on facilitating justice and fair treatment for Indigenous people by increasing Indigenous workforce participation, and encouraging their voice by applying differences in performance evaluation. In addition, the inclusive leaders were open-minded and created multiple channels to capture Indigenous voice, which shows that they respected and valued Indigenous contributions. The inclusive leaders also attempted to create a sense of belonging for Indigenous staff. For example, they talked to Indigenous staff in detail, and even instructed them on their work. In addition, they encouraged Indigenous voices and cultures in the workplace and used suitable ways of communication with Indigenous staff such as gentle speech. Furthermore, working under the management of inclusive leaders, Indigenous employees perceived that their voices were taken into consideration, and they felt safe and comfortable to be involved in work.
CHAPTER 7 PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIVE AGENCY 2

7.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the findings from the second case study – Public Administrative Agency 2 (PAA2). The purpose of this chapter is to explore the effect of government policies on Indigenous employee voice, the organisation’s implementation of Indigenous voice practices, and the experience of Indigenous employees of their organisation’s voice practices that impact on their inclusion in regard to organisational decision making. In order to achieve this purpose, the study utilised in-depth and face-to-face interviews with managers and Indigenous employees to capture their narratives. In addition, documentation and fieldnotes were used to cross-check information. The chapter is structured as follows. Section 7.2 describes the case context including the demographic location, the structure of the organisation, and the policies relating to human resources and employee voice practices. Section 7.3 outlines the profiles of the participants. Section 7.4 presents the findings in the form of individual narratives. Section 7.5 summarises the chapter.

7.2 Case context

7.2.1 Demographic location

This Agency was based in Dong Giang - a mountainous district in the province of Quang Nam. It is located close to the city of Da Nang which is the largest city in the regions of the Central Highlands and the Central Coast. According to local government report, the district is the home of more than 17000 Indigenous people who account for 73 percent of the district’s population. Most Indigenous people in this district belong to the Katu ethnic group, who are considered as hill tribes and the first inhabitants settled in this area (Århem, 2015). Currently, they still dominate the district’s population. The remaining inhabitants of the district include the Kinh
group (mainstream ethnicity) and other ethnic minorities originating from the northern areas such as Muong, Tay, and Thai. Most non-Indigenous people came to live in the district after the American War (1975), encouraged by the central government program on ‘New Economic Zones’. They are now considered as locals and provide many businesses in the district. In addition, a number of non-Indigenous people from urban areas work and live in this district temporarily as their home in the city. Indigenous culture is very visible, including Indigenous language programs on the district’s radio.

7.2.2 The characteristic of the organisation

PAA2 is a rural Local Government Agency which takes responsibility for public administration, public policy and public services in relation to a number of areas including education, healthcare, business registration, infrastructure, public security and taxes. Its organisational structure consists of 40 departments and centres, and 11 Community Agencies and Services. As demonstrated in Figure 7.1, the Chairperson is the head of the Agency as well as one of leaders of the district, and is Indigenous. The Chairperson also held the position of Vice Secretary in the district’s Communist party, and reported directly to the Secretary who is the leader of the Party’s Standing Committee and is non-Indigenous. According to the structures of the Government of Vietnam, this powerful Committee has great influence in regard to staff appointments, particularly at senior levels. Its members include the Agency’s senior managers and line managers. At the time of the investigation, non-Indigenous people dominated the membership of the Committee in that it had six Indigenous and seven non-Indigenous people.

Working alongside the Chairperson were two Vice Chairpersons. According to the Agency’s organisational structure, one non-Indigenous Vice Chairperson was responsible for economic affairs and supervised 10 heads of departments. The Indigenous Vice Chairperson was in
charge of social and cultural affairs and supervised 17 heads of departments. A report from the local government shows that there were 738 staff working in the agency, of which 557 were employed in the education section. According to this report, Indigenous employees accounted for approximately 45 per cent of the number of Agency’s employees, but most of these worked in education, healthcare and Community Agencies and Services. Only 25 per cent of Indigenous employees worked in the Agency’s economics-related departments. This report also shows that about 29 per cent of managerial positions were occupied by Indigenous people.
Figure 7.1: The Agency’s organisational structure (Source: Adapted from the organisational structure of Dong Giang District People’s Committee)
7.2.3 Human resource (HR) policy

As located in rural and mountainous areas, the Agency applied both the local and central government policy for Indigenous people in their workplaces. For example, the Agency gave priority employment to Indigenous people who graduated from The Project 600 and The Project 500. The Project 600 of the central government aims to recruit 600 ‘outstanding’ Indigenous and non-Indigenous students from all universities across the country into their ‘special training’ programs, and then to allocate them to jobs in public administrative agencies in the 62 poorest districts. The Project 500 of the local government aims to recruit 500 ‘outstanding’ local Indigenous and non-Indigenous university students to work in the local public organisations.

In addition, the Agency also has its policy (i.e. the Resolution No.16 NQ/TU 2014) regulating a specific quota for Indigenous people working in the workplace; for example, 35 per cent of work vacancies in the Agency were reserved for Indigenous employees. Different from other districts, this Agency rejected giving priority of recruitment for Indigenous students who graduated according to another policy, namely ‘Cu tuyen’, which was also formulated by the central Government for appointing students from remote areas to study at universities followed by employment in public sector organisations. A report from the Agency explains that there was an overlap of Indigenous policy; and as a result, a number of Indigenous students who graduated from another project were still unemployed.

Indigenous employees also gained priority in permanent work contracts and appointment to managerial positions. The Agency’s policy regulated that 67 per cent of managerial positions within its departments would be reserved for Indigenous people. In addition, as stated by the policy, each department is required to allocate at least one deputy head position to an Indigenous employee.
7.2.4 The implementation of employee voice (EV)

The Agency had its official workplace regulations taking effect from 2016 to 2021 (i.e. Decision No.2816/QD-UBND 2016). The regulations state that, at the level of senior management, there be monthly meetings and random meetings in order to respond quickly to suggestions from employees. In addition, some special meetings should be arranged to discuss emerging issues from departmental levels and comply with higher Local Governments’ requests. According to these workplace regulations, attendees of such special meetings include senior managers, heads of departments, Council representatives and others associated with the meeting agenda. Individual employees are able to join the meetings if their issue is part of the meeting agenda. The Agency also has its conferences and meetings among senior managers, heads of departments and employees across departments, which aim to give all staff an opportunity to present their suggestions directly to the senior managers. Besides this, the Agency has regulations on grievance processes and daily meetings with staff within each department to solve specific issues relating to specific departments. The regulations also indicate that meeting summaries be shared to every employee at departmental levels and posted for the public on the Agency’s website.

7.3 Profile of Participants

Case study 2 comprised nine formal interviews, and four informal discussions which did not include participants signing consent forms. Three formal interviews were conducted, with one Indigenous Vice Chairperson, one non-Indigenous Head of Department, and one Union representative. In this case, the Union representative is the chief of the departmental level of the Labour Unions’ Executive Committee. Six formal interviews with Indigenous employees comprised one each with a Cashier, Admin Assistant, HR Assistant, Instructor, Doctor, and Nurse. The four informal discussions comprised ones with an Indigenous Deputy Head of
Department, an Indigenous Centre Deputy Manager, an Indigenous Head of Department, and an Indigenous Health and Safety Officer, and a non-Indigenous Head of Department. The informal interviews mainly discussed their experience of the implementation of government policy and organisational voice practice. These informal interviews did not follow the formal interviewing procedure such as one-to-one interview; instead, they allowed all participants to discuss the issues together. Most participants were permanent full-time employees and from different departments (Table 7.1). These participants had been in their positions from between 11 months to 9 years, half of the participants were female, and their ages were from between 25 to 50. All Indigenous participants were from the Katuic ethnic group.

Table 7.1: Participants’ profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Current position</th>
<th>Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manager1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Vice Chairperson</td>
<td>2-years experience in managerial positions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager2</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Non-Indigenous Head of Department</td>
<td>9-years’ experience in managerial positions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager3</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Unions Representative</td>
<td>1-year’s experience in managerial positions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Cashier</td>
<td>8-years’ experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee2</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Doctor</td>
<td>5-years’ experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee3</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>HR Assistant</td>
<td>11-months’ experience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Employee4  Female  Admin Assistant  4-years’ experience
Employee5  Male  Instructor  8-years’ experience
Employee6  Female  Nurse  3-years’ experience

7.4 Findings

The section presents the individual narratives from the nine formal interviews in relation to the effect of government policy on Indigenous employee voice, organisational responses to Indigenous voice, and Indigenous experience and perception of inclusion in regard to organisational decision making. The narratives each tell a unique story, from different perspectives. There are two groups of respondents according to their position in the Agency: policy informant, and a validating group. The policy informant group is made up of the Vice Chairperson, the Head of Department of Education, and the Union representative, as they had perspectives in common. The second group comprises a Cashier, a Doctor, a HR Assistant, an Administrative Assistant, an Instructor, and a Nurse. Different from case 1, this case presents separately the managers’ narratives, since they are from different management levels (e.g. one senior manager and one departmental manager). They also had different ethnic backgrounds, such as one Indigenous senior manager and one non-Indigenous departmental manager. These differences may shape their stories in unique ways.

7.4.1 The Indigenous Vice Chairperson

The Vice Chairperson had been working in the Agency for two years at the time of interview. She was responsible for social and cultural affairs, managing seventeen divisions, and reported
directly to the Chairperson. In addition, she was a member of the District Party’s Standing Committee. She had a bachelor’s degree in education. Until her appointment as Vice Chairperson, she worked as a Principal in a high school. Evidence from informal discussions with four Indigenous staff (Deputy Head of Department, Centre Deputy Manager, Head of Department, and Health and Safety Officer) suggested that the Vice Chairperson was appointed to this executive position due to her profile as an Indigenous woman.

As a Senior Manager in the public administrative agency, she was very positive about the impact of government policy on Indigenous workforce participation and the organisational response to Indigenous voice practice. She claimed that the Agency had made a significant contribution in building and implementing government policy for Indigenous people. She noted:

*Compared to the past, the policies have improved much [...] We work on these policies annually, and we also steer every department into paying attention to Indigenous employment.*

To increase Indigenous workforce participation, she identified several prioritised policies that were given to Indigenous people such as education, training, recruitment, career development and promotion. As a consequence of government policy, she believed that there had been an increase in the number of Indigenous employees in the Agency, particularly in the section of education. She explained:

*Currently the Central Government and the Party take very much care in developing human resources for Indigenous people [...] for example, giving them chance to attend training programs to improve their professional skills, political ideology and defence education. [...] I see a lot of Indigenous students appointed to attend universities and
then recruited as teachers in schools [...] more than a half the teachers here are Indigenous people. I would say that it is a big change in the education sector in our district.

Indigenous leadership also emerged from the interview, as she argued that the Agency had its plan for appointing Indigenous employees to managerial positions in each department since this would help to improve Indigenous people’s lives in the future. In particular, she claimed that Indigenous young people and women were given opportunities:

*We have several preparation programmes to enable young Indigenous employees to be promoted to managerial positions because we think of the long-term development of the local community. Currently they may be still ‘immature’, but through working they will be more confident.*

In relation to Indigenous employee voice, there were several different practices applied to Indigenous people. For example, she claimed that the Agency promoted democracy in performance appraisal by applying ‘two-sided evaluation’ in which both Indigenous and non-Indigenous employee voices are respected and heard. She explained:

*All employees attending the meeting will be able to give their opinions on evaluating their colleagues and their managers in terms of their advantages and disadvantages. The managers also give their own opinions on evaluating their staff. The managers later will be evaluated by the Chairperson (Vice Chairperson).*

The Vice Chairperson also emphasized her own efforts to include and value Indigenous voice in organisational decision making by providing Indigenous managers with a platform to present their perspectives in the meetings. She noted:
I think the Central Government does not have regulations on this [Indigenous voice], but each department such as my office often makes it a condition [channel] for Indigenous managers and employees to have a say. For example, all heads of departments are invited to attend the Agency’s monthly meetings; at those events Indigenous managers can take these opportunities to contribute their ideas, opinions, or suggestions to the decision makers.

She argued that Indigenous employees were also encouraged to communicate directly with the Senior Managers in the formal meetings and by face-to-face discussion or via emails, website, and phone calls:

*It is often [...] if staff need to talk directly with senior managers, we will make conditions [channels] for them, to meet directly with them. In case, they don’t have time to meet with us they can use phone calls, emails, and the website to contact us. I think that is the way that we give them a chance to have influence over their work.*

In addition to this, she outlined the practices in her own workplace:

*In the reality of my workplace, there are monthly briefings among managers and staff. At this event, I give them a chance to have a say. For example, if they have suggestions, they can talk directly to me.*

Indirect voice practices through Union representatives also emerged from the interview with the Vice Chairperson. She believed that the Unions supported employee voice, as some employees were not confident to speak up at meetings. She stated:

*It depends on the particular case; we do implement these practices. For example, some people are afraid of suggesting their opinions directly to the leader [Senior Managers]; so, they can present their opinions through the Union representatives.*
Moreover, in relation to Indigenous differences, the Vice Chairperson recognized that ‘they are very shy, hesitant, and more likely to keep silent in the workplace’. To encourage Indigenous employee voice at work, the Vice Chairperson said that she used different voice practices for them. For example, she claimed that she encouraged them to speak by giving them a ‘hint’, speaking gently and even instructing them in work. She stated:

*I always give a hint to the Indigenous staff to present their own opinions whether they are correct or not. For example, I often ask them to explain their ideas clearly. Also, I need to talk thoroughly and even instruct them in working.*

These practices happened because the Vice Chairperson explained that she herself was an Indigenous woman and she understood Indigenous differences and tried to capture Indigenous voice in different ways. She also paid attention to Indigenous inclusion and described her effort to include people in workplace without racial boundaries by organising leisure activities for all employees. She explained:

* [...] we organise exchange sessions, sporting competitions, and Vietnamese cuisine in the celebrations of the International Women’s Day and Vietnamese Women’s Day. In these events, we invite all female staff to join several activities. There is no racial discrimination at all. We divide randomly employees who join the events into separate teams, so that the playing teams will be include both Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff.*

In summary, the Vice Chairperson had a positive view of the impact of government policy on Indigenous workforce participation. As an Indigenous person, she felt that she understood Indigenous differences, and pointed out a number of different voice practices applied to
Indigenous staff. She also identified difficulties that Indigenous employees faced at work. Moreover, she was positive about the roles of trade unions.

7.4.2 The Head of Department of Education

The Head of Department of Education had been promoted to his executive position in 2008. Previously, he had worked as a teacher and also held managerial positions in a number of high schools in the district as Deputy Principal and Principal. He was a non-Indigenous teacher from an urban area, who originally moved to the district as part of the early provincial government’s policies which encouraged non-Indigenous teachers to come to mountainous and rural areas to develop education. His family lived in an urban area and he returned home every weekend. In his current role, he managed more than 17 schools and kindergartens. In addition, he had more than 14 staff working directly with him in his office. According to the Agency’s organisational structure, he reported directly to the Indigenous Vice Chairperson.

Like the Indigenous Vice Chairperson, the Head of Department was very positive, and commenced the interview by claiming that there were a number of human resource policies for Indigenous people. These policies included giving them equal employment opportunity and promotion, as he claimed:

*The government policy is creating the condition [opportunities] for Indigenous staff who have good conditions [qualifications] to work and approach to their jobs. The government also cares much about managerial positions for them.*

In relation to his Department, he outlined his efforts to increase Indigenous workforce participation in the education sector. He claimed that, in 2008 when he commenced his role, there were only ten Indigenous teachers, whereas in 2016 the number of Indigenous teachers had increased to 40 per cent of the overall district’s teachers (approximately 200 Indigenous
teachers). He argued that these results came from his implementation of prioritised policy for Indigenous people in the workplace:

“There is preferential recruiting for Indigenous people comparing to the Kinh [non-Indigenous] [...] if the Indigenous people just meet the minimum requirements they will be employed. For example, they will be employed with a vocational certificate of education, while Kinh people need to have a bachelor’s degree in education."

The Head of Department also claimed that they applied a prioritised policy to appoint Indigenous employees to managerial positions in high schools and in the Department, because of their potential contribution to the improvement of Indigenous lives. However, this policy was not applied to non-Indigenous people, since they were not living permanently in the district, which was supported by the data observation. He explained:

“If there are two people who have the same qualifications to be promoted to managerial positions, Indigenous employees will be preferred. Because they are the locals here and they will serve their communities for all their life, while most of the Kinh come here to work for a while and then return to the city – their home."

The Head of Department also outlined the challenges he faced in putting policies for Indigenous employees into practice, as he claimed that Indigenous employees had low self-esteem, and a lack of work skills and Vietnamese language skills. In addition, their educational backgrounds were major barriers impeding their productivity. He stated:

“ Their motivation is good and positive. But their approach to the jobs is limited, which may be because of their personalities such as shyness and hesitating. So, this makes them difficult to approach the new working methods and improve their working
procedure [...] Also, some Indigenous staff are not very good at the mainstream language [Vietnamese].

He added:

*If they are trained in good ways [at a good university] they will work as well as Kinh staff. But if they are not trained in good ways, after graduating their skills will be limited and they will get low productivity.*

In order to overcome Indigenous difficulties, the Head of Department claimed that he applied different ways in evaluating Indigenous performance, and took a more developmental approach, which is beyond the government’s regulations. He stated that Indigenous employees were evaluated in the same way as non-Indigenous ones only once they were at a reasonable level:

* [...] the Indigenous employees’ performance is evaluated differently from the Kinh. Once they have improved their performance as well as the Kinh, the practices applied to the Kinh will also be adopted for them. In the first step of their jobs, they should be treated in a delicate way.*

With respect to organisational voice practice, he showed that the Department had the official regulations on workplace democracy. These regulations were different from the very general Agency regulations, as the former were situated in the context of education. He explained:

*We have our own workplace regulations which were built up on the Agency’s overall regulations on workplace democracy. We consider what points fit our real circumstances and specific characteristics of educational jobs.*
More specifically, he showed that multiple channels of voice practice were applied in the workplace, such as face-to-face discussions, briefings, quality control cycles, document reports and via social network media (e.g., Facebook, Zalo, email). He believed that these voice mechanisms contributed significantly to the Department’s decision making, and benefited indirectly the communities, since all employees had a say over work. He noted:

\[
\text{We make the best ways to support them to work and contribute to the communities. We have diverse ways to communicate with them as I mentioned earlier, such as face-to-face meetings, briefings, quality control cycle [hoi y chuyen mon], emails, Facebook, Zalo and document reports. [...] my brother staff are free to talk with me about their jobs [...].}
\]

The Head of Department also indicated that empowerment was the way to capture employee views in the workplace through his deputies. He claimed that his two deputies worked directly with staff and responded quickly their suggestions. He described how empowerment happened:

\[
\text{I consult my staff following the organizing structure. I meant [...] I arrange each deputy for different sectors, and they have full right to make decisions on this issue. For example, the deputy who is responsible for secondary schools will make final decisions on this issue and the staff who work on this sector will be consulted by him (Head of Department).}
\]

The roles of Unions were also identified in his department and in each school, as he reported that the Unions represented the teachers’ voice and protected their interests. If teachers had suggestions and could not meet the manager directly, they would meet the Union representatives, and these representatives could take their suggestions to the manager. However, he was critical about the role of the Unions, since he recognised that they did not
take their responsibility as employee representatives to managers seriously. He claimed: ‘We have the Union representatives [...] but I have never seen the Unions intervene to present their members’ suggestions to the manager [laughs!]’.

There also appeared to be different voice practices applied to Indigenous employees in the workplace. For example, the Head of Department claimed that he tried to capture Indigenous employee voice by using different communication approaches such as ‘delicate ways’ to overcome their hesitation in speaking out. He explained:

- We talk with them in a delicate way, and different from communicating with the Kinh [non-Indigenous employees]. Because if we do in the same way [as with the Kinh], their pride will be hurt. They are very touchy, and this characteristic is not good for work relations.

He continued:

- We give them chance to have a say at the meeting. For example, we explain very clearly the issue to make sure that they understand it, and then ask them to present their own opinions.

Briefly, in similar views to those of the Vice Chairperson, he was positive on the effect of government policy and voice practices in his department. He also gave many examples of voice practices within the workplace, and pointed out some differences applying to Indigenous staff. He also identified Indigenous difficulties at work. Unlike the Indigenous Vice Chairperson, he was critical of the Unions’ role.
7.4.3 The Union Representative

The Union representative had worked as a cashier for seven years in the Centre for Continuing Education & Vocational Training until her appointment in her current role. She had been in this role for just five months at the time of interview. The Union Representative reported directly to the President of the District Union of Workers in Education and Training - a higher Union authority. In addition, she was under the supervision of the manager of the Centre, as she still worked as a Cashier. The manager of the Centre was also the head of the Party, and he reported to the non-Indigenous Head of Department of Education.

The Union Representative reported proudly that approximately 40 per cent of the Centre employees were Indigenous. She stated that she had been employed in the Centre as a result of government policy on equal employment opportunity for Indigenous people. She acknowledged that government policy gave Indigenous employees priorities in promotion to managerial positions, as she stated: ‘They give us priority in recruitment and promotion. For example, the Heads of teams here are mostly Indigenous people [...]’.

However, she recognised that the implementation of such policies depended on managers who sympathised with Indigenous people. She felt that her manager had lived in the Indigenous community for a long period, and that despite his non-Indigenous background, he understood Indigenous people and supported Indigenous employees. She explained:

*Mr AAAA [manager] has been living here for a long time, so he supports signing permanent contracts with the Indigenous people rather than the Kinh because he understands that most Kinh staff will leave the workplace after several years. Also, if there is a vacancy in the workplace, he often asks Indigenous staff to recommend their friends or relatives.*
She also claimed that Indigenous people could easily reach the manager as he was proactive in communicating with Indigenous employees. She stated:

 [...] the manager is very comfortable to communicate with us because he is quite familiar with the Indigenous people here. He often asks Indigenous opinions relating to their work.

The Union Representative acknowledged that, due to her role, she was able to access all information related to the organisational decision making, which was shared with management but not often shared to all staff. She noted:

 When I was a normal employee, I felt excluded from all the information because a lot information I didn’t know, meanwhile others have known it already. I felt I was discriminated. [...] now I know that only people having administrative roles and the Union representative can access important information related to the Centre.

She also outlined Union activities, which included not only collecting employees’ suggestions and working with management to implement them but also organising leisure activities for employees. She emphasized that the Unions were in a position to listen to employees’ suggestions and work with the Managers to solve work-related problems. She commented:

 [...] all suggestions will be collected through the Union meetings. Then, the Union Committee will present them to the manager. Normally I go directly to the manager’s office or make a call to him. Also, we are consulted directly at the meeting where the manager and deputy manager attend to listen to us. Also, the Unions take responsibility to organise sport competitions and art events.

In addition to providing indirect voice for members, she claimed that, as the Union representative, she was consulted directly by the manager for her opinions. She commented:
My opinions are always included in the manager’s decision making. For example, before making a decision the manager has a meeting with team leaders and the Unions, and he listens to all of us.

However, she admitted that acting on behalf of the members was new to her, as she explained:

I have just been elected as the Union President by staff in the last five months. Previously, I worked as a cashier, and I didn’t see the former Union President collect members’ suggestions and present them to the manager.

She also claimed that employees had many ways to present their voice to managers, not just through the union; for example, they were able to speak directly to management at weekly briefings and meetings or through their team leaders. She stated:

At the centre, every week there is a briefing on Monday, and if we have suggestions we can present at this event. We also have a meeting in each group, and we can present our suggestions through group leader who will be on our behalf to present our suggestions to the manager.

She felt included in the workplace, describing her colleagues as ‘very enthusiastic’ and ‘non-racially prejudiced’. However, she also claimed that jealousy and competition still existed among Indigenous and non-Indigenous employees, since Indigenous people perceived that non-Indigenous people took their jobs in Indigenous locations and distanced themselves from the Indigenous community. She felt such difficulties could be overcome if non-Indigenous colleagues attempted to understand Indigenous people and get involved in Indigenous communities. She noted:
A thing that needs to improve is people’s jealousy and competition to each other in our workplace [...]. I think that, since Kinh people come here to work for Indigenous community, they should understand people here and participate in our activities [...].

In summary, the Union Representative had similar perspectives to the managers on the positive impact of government policy on Indigenous workforce participation. Again, she understood the importance that the practices of individual managers had on Indigenous inclusion. However, she also showed that the actions and lack of awareness from non-Indigenous employees led to resentment from Indigenous employees. As a union representative, she identified two major roles of the Union: employee representation, and employee welfare.

7.4.4 Employee 1- Cashier

The Cashier had worked in the Department of Finance for eight years at the time of the interview. She had a bachelor’s degree in accounting. Her Head of Department was non-Indigenous and from the city and reported directly to Chairperson. There were nine staff in her department, and three of them were Indigenous people. The Cashier stated that most of her non-Indigenous colleagues lived in another district and returned home on weekends. However, while she claimed that her current manager and colleagues were ‘nice’ and she was happy to work with them, she described how as an Indigenous person she had faced big challenges when she was new in the department. In contrast to the Management and Union interviewees, the cashier felt that government policy had a less positive impact on Indigenous workforce participation. She claimed that the Agency’s regulations on the Indigenous quotas working in each department had actually impeded Indigenous workforce participation. She explained that many Indigenous candidates with good qualifications were unemployed because the quotas for Indigenous positions in each department were so low. She argued:
 [...] the polices require that the department should recruit at least one Indigenous employee, and they recruit only one although there is more than one Indigenous candidate with good qualifications.

She believed that this situation was exacerbated by racial discrimination against Indigenous people, from the Kinh Head of Department who preferred to recruit Kinh people. She commented:

*It actually depends on the racial identity of the leader. An Indigenous leader is different from a Kinh [non-Indigenous] leader. Most people just take care of their ethnic group.*

She gave a personal example: as the only Indigenous person at the time of her application, she claimed that the head of department was forced to recruit her to adopt the government regulations on the Indigenous quotas. However, despite the fact that she obtained better terms and conditions from the non-Indigenous manager, she was excluded from the work at that time. She explained that she did not have any influence over her work since the head of department did not allocate her jobs in the department. She claimed:

*Can I say the truth? [...] they [non-Indigenous heads of department] are not happy to work with us. But the Agency has its policies on preferential recruiting Indigenous people. [...] thus, they have to recruit us into the department.*

She added:

* [...] he [the head of Department] had never arranged work for me from the first. So, I have never been included into the workplace. [...] After a long time working together, he arranged work for me when he saw that I was able to work independently [...]*
The Cashier argued that Indigenous employees needed to take some control themselves, such as ‘open communication’ with the head of department, which could help Indigenous employees to actively get involved in work, since the non-Indigenous managers often did not understand Indigenous people when they first began to work in an Indigenous area. She commented:

I think if we don’t know how to do, we should ask him [Head of Department]. I meant we should have open communication with the boss […]. If we don’t talk with the boss, he will never understand us, then we will be excluded ourselves from the workplace.

She also believed that Indigenous employees would gain full respect from their non-Indigenous manager and colleagues once they achieved performance as good as non-Indigenous employees did. She explained:

I see that…most of my Indigenous colleagues work very well. For example, Mr T [another indigenous staff] has good skills and knowledge, I am qualified, and Mr T [another indigenous staff] is also very excellent […] the boss always gives us good comments on our performance. Therefore, our non-Indigenous colleagues fully respect us […].

Having returned to her current situation, the Cashier expressed that the Head of Department was confident to listen to her voice through face-to-face discussion, emails, and document reports. She stated:

I think the current boss [current Head of Department] now listens to us if we consult exactly on the issue he wants to do, but our suggestions or opinions need to be explained in more detail. […] when there is an issue needing to be discussed, my boss will call me to his office, and he will discuss with me on this issue.
Also, she claimed that because of her good performance and taking control herself, the current non-Indigenous manager and colleagues were happy to support her. She noted:

> If we don’t know something related to our work, we will ask them. The boss [current Head of Department] may shout at that but he will listen, explain and instruct us how to solve our problems. Also, our Kinh [non-Indigenous] colleagues are very enthusiastic to answer and support us.

In summary, in contrast to the managers and the union representative, the Cashier had a much more negative view on the impact of government policy workforce participation. She also explicitly called out racial discrimination. However, she did not see Indigenous employees as passive actors, and she believed that they needed to self-organise and communicate directly with managers and non-Indigenous employees.

### 7.4.5 Employee 2- Doctor

The Doctor had five-years’ experience working as a general practitioner in the Medical Station at the time of interview. His manager reported directly to the Vice Chairperson of the Agency as well as to the Director of the Provincial Department of Healthcare Affairs (a higher level of authority). The Indigenous Doctor had a medical degree, and he was a member of the Party. He claimed that most people in managerial positions in the Medical Station were non-Indigenous and from urban areas.

The Doctor was also negative about government policy, believing that, in practice, it did not give Indigenous people priority in employment despite there being Indigenous quotas. Furthermore, he believed that non-Indigenous people gained advantage from government policy as the non-Indigenous manager of the Medical Station preferred to recruit them instead
of Indigenous people. The Doctor denied that he was recruited into the Medical Station due to his Indigenous background. He commented:

*I see that non-Indigenous people get preferential recruitment into my workplace. For example, if Indigenous and non-Indigenous people have the same qualifications and another requirement, non-Indigenous people will be the first ones considered to be recruited.*

He added:

*My division has to recruit new employees every year to fill empty vacancies, and non-experienced people from the mainstream ethnic group will be selected. This is because most managerial positions are occupied by the mainstream ethnic people.*

The Doctor also believed that Indigenous employees were treated unfairly at work, as non-Indigenous staff received better treatment from the manager in relation to work arrangements and inclusion since the manager wished to improve non-Indigenous staff retention. He stated:

*She [manager] doesn’t have any policies for Indigenous employees which can encourage us to work and be included in the workplace. I see that the manager just takes care of brother Kinh. Perhaps, she is afraid that non-Indigenous may leave the jobs, but the Indigenous will never leave the job because their home is here. Also, the most important tasks are arranged for non-Indigenous employees.*

In relation to voice practices, while the Doctor identified several forms of voice that were applied to capture employee opinions, he felt that Indigenous voices were not taken into consideration by the managerial board. He claimed:
[...] to be honest, it is nothing [...] the democracy is only that you present your suggestions at the meetings and briefings. All employees can do so. But the suggestions I see as very necessary, such as suggestions relating to the organisation, the manager doesn’t care much about these. [...] not every suggestion is included in her [manager] decision making.

He went further and claimed that the non-Indigenous manager often ‘shouted at’ Indigenous staff who attempted to have a voice with management. The Doctor stated that this manager’s communication style discouraged his and his Indigenous colleagues’ voices at work. He commented:

[...] we don’t like to present our opinions because she [manager] often shouts at us, even though our opinions are right. If our opinions or suggestions are wrong, she never explains in a friendly way to make us understand the issue. She just shouts at us, and that’s why Indigenous employees don’t want to have say at her decision, because she doesn’t truly listen to us. It isn’t true democracy.

In addition, the Doctor believed that the manager’s racist actions impeded Indigenous inclusion. He explained:

I think the issue here is between Indigenous staff and non-Indigenous managers. This makes me feel it is very difficult to be included. She is not...how to say...friendly and sociable. If the manager is nice and friendly, it will be easier to get involved in work.

But there is a distance between the manager and Indigenous staff.

However, at the teamwork level, he felt that his non-Indigenous team leader was more supportive for Indigenous people as he sympathised with Indigenous differences and listened
to the Indigenous employees. In addition, this team leader applied multiple direct forms of voice practice to capture Indigenous perspectives. He noted:

*Some of them are pleased to help us. It doesn’t matter with them. Also, through weekly briefings, in general daily briefings, we can present our opinions and suggestions to them [...]. The team leader’s door always opens. It is, normally. If we have suggestions, we can meet him at his office anytime.*

In relation to indirect forms of voice, the Doctor recognised and valued the involvement of the Unions and the Party in supporting Indigenous employee voice in the workplace. He felt that the Unions in particular were ready to help Indigenous employees by representing their voice to the manager. In addition, as a member of the Party, he claimed that the Party supported his voice to managers. He commented:

*At the meetings, we present our suggestion to the Unions, and they say they will help us to send our suggestions to the manager... Besides that, a member of the Party may present their suggestions through the Party’s monthly meetings.*

In summary, like the Cashier, the Doctor had a negative view of government policy in regard to Indigenous workforce participation, and identified racism. He did not believe that all non-Indigenous people were racist, but pointed out the importance of the influence of a manager who was. He had a positive view of indirect voice to support Indigenous participation through both the Union and the Party.

**7.4.6 Employee 3 - HR Assistant**

The HR assistant had been working in the department of education for eleven months at the time of interview, and her direct supervisor was non-Indigenous and reported directly to the Vice Chairperson. She had a degree in public management. The HR Assistant was the only
Indigenous employee in her team, and most of her colleagues were from urban areas. She had responsibilities for performance appraisal and compensation in the department. She was aware of government policy relating to Indigenous people in her section, and stated that preferential policies were given to Indigenous people if they had good professional knowledge and skills, for example in preferential recruitment, promotion and performance evaluation. She claimed:

*I see that Indigenous people get prioritised promotion to managerial positions, I mean if we have real capacity, we will be more likely to be appointed to positions of head or deputy head in schools. The priorities are also given to our students in the recruitment process.*

She claimed that voice mechanisms were offered to all staff, which supported employees in having influence over their work. She was very positive about her own voice in the workplace, commenting:

*I can exchange my opinions on work conditions or whatever... with the boss at the meeting between the boss and the whole employees. In some cases, I can drop by his office. We also use intranet for communicate at our workplace. [...] If I have suggestions for the higher managers such as the Vice-Chairperson, I will present them through my representation, that is, my boss.*

The HR Assistant believed that her non-Indigenous manager listened to and included Indigenous voice in his decision making. He also used a gentle way of communication with Indigenous employees. She noted:

*When something important does not get done, he normally reminds me in gentle ways. He also explains to me about work in great detail. [...] I could say that my suggestion is taken into consideration by the manager for his decision making.*
However, she felt that the preferential policies for Indigenous people reinforced non-Indigenous managers’ racial stereotypes, as they often thought Indigenous employees were ‘low qualified workers’. In addition, she found that her non-Indigenous colleagues still had racial discrimination, which contributed more or less to her perception of involvement at work. She noted:

*Indigenous employees also get a little bit of priority in evaluating their performance (laugh!) because, in the Kinh people’s thought, Indigenous employees are considered as low qualified workers.*

She added:

*[…] some Kinh people [non-Indigenous people] still discriminate against Indigenous employees like me, although the boss [manager] often asks people about solidarity, not separated by racial differences.*

She claimed that this stereotype impeded the number of Indigenous employees in public agencies, since non-Indigenous managers would prefer not to recruit Indigenous people into the workplace. She claimed that, in reality, there were few Indigenous staff in managerial positions and that non-Indigenous staff dominated the number of school managers. She noted:

*Currently, there are more than 25 managers in 17 schools and kindergartens, of which three are Indigenous. Non-Indigenous managers do not work here for a long time, normally they will move back to the city after getting managerial experience.*

In addition, the HR Assistant was critical of the role of the Unions, arguing that they did not strengthen the voice of employees. Instead, they focused on a welfare role, mainly carrying out voluntary work for the community. She commented:
In the law, the Unions are considered as the employee representative which protects workers’ rights from employers. But in my department, I see that almost all their jobs are relating to participation in community activities, like they ask people to have financial support for the poorest families.

In summary, firstly, while the HR Assistant supported government policies towards Indigenous employees, she also felt that that there was a downside to prioritised policies in that they could infantilise Indigenous people in non-Indigenous eyes. Secondly, she felt that voice mechanisms alone did not support Indigenous voice; instead, this rested with the individual manager’s awareness of Indigenous people. Thirdly, underlying racism again emerged as a barrier impeding Indigenous participation and involvement at work. Finally, she believed that the Unions played a welfare role not a representative role.

7.4.7 Employee 4 - Administrative Assistant

The Admin Assistant had worked in the Department of Home Affairs for four years. She had a bachelor’s degree in economic development. The Head of her Department was also Indigenous, and he reported directly to the Chairperson. She was supervised by the Deputy Head, who was non-Indigenous and from an urban area. The Admin Assistant believed that the Agency was concerned about ethnic diversity in the workplace and had Indigenous employment policies. However, she was aware of the influence of the departmental heads in implementing these policies. She claimed:

[…] it [policy practices] depends on the Head of the Department. Actually, the Agency does have its policies such as priorities for recruiting Indigenous people and training them into managerial positions. But the Head will make decisions on implementing these policies [...]
In regard to employee voice practices, she outlined a number of ways in which employees could participate in the workplace, such as direct channels through face-to-face meetings and personal discussion with manager, and indirect forms via team leaders. She described as follows:

_When he [the Head] asks me to do something, if I don’t understand this, then I can come directly to his office. I also can ask the Deputy as my supervisor. In case the Deputy is off from work, I will work with the Head. In the meeting, I have a team leader who represents my team to report our collective suggestions to the manager. Also, I am able to present my opinions to them in person._

She added:

_Normally, the Head asks my opinion on something, then I prepare my opinions on a document and send it directly to him. He will consider and add more information on this and then send back to me, after he will make a final decision on this issue._

She felt that these voice mechanisms supported Indigenous inclusion, as her opinions were included in the organisational decision making. She argued:

_I think this is normal for me. If my suggestions are correct, the boss [the Head of Department] will listen to and take them into consideration. But if it is wrong, he will explain in detail._

Unlike the previous interviews, the Administrative Assistant saw no difference in the treatment of Indigenous employees, since the Head was also an Indigenous person. Moreover, she believed that the Indigenous Head of Department took care of all people in the workplace. She stated:
Because my boss is Katuic [Indigenous group], so everything implemented is the same to all people. Nothing different at all. At the meeting, he often asks everyone to have opinions, and if anyone has questions, they just put their hands up.

However, similar to the previous employees, she still perceived racism in the workplace. For example, the Administrative Assistant commented that her supervisor (the non-Indigenous Deputy Head of Department) did not help and was often unpleasant with her questions. In addition, she complained that this supervisor communicated with her ‘cruelly’, which impacted on her perception of inclusion. She explained:

*The Head is easier to catch up with, but the Deputy is very unpleasant. For example, he often talks loudly to us, like ‘why ask me a lot, you must do it by yourself’. [...] I think the way of his communication [...] is important to my perceived inclusiveness. [...] the leaders should train me in a friendly way rather than commanding or shouting at me.*

In relation to her non-Indigenous colleagues, the Administrative Assistant claimed that she had a ‘good relationship’ with them, and we ‘don’t have any racial discrimination at work’. However, she often experienced racial stereotyping from non-Indigenous people outside the workplace. She noted:

* [...] outside my workplace, Kinh people [non-Indigenous] are racially biased about Indigenous people. For example, they often say that Indigenous staff are shy and find it difficult to learn new work skills.*

In summary, this interview again highlights the role of the individual manager in implementing government policy and encouraging participation of Indigenous people. Again, it suggests that Indigenous managers are more likely to support Indigenous voice, and that non-Indigenous
managers who lack understanding of Indigenous people, and who have poor communication skills and racist attitudes, undermine Indigenous employee voice.

7.4.8 Employee 5 - Instructor

The Instructor had worked in the Centre for Culture, Information and Sport for eight years. He had experienced working with three different Heads of the Centre during that time. The first Head was Indigenous, and the two next Heads were non-Indigenous. The Heads of the Centre reported directly to the Vice Chairperson of the Agency. At the time of interview, the Instructor was a member of the Party, and he was supervised by the non-Indigenous Deputy Head. In addition, he was the only Indigenous employee in his team, and the other four employees were from urban areas.

Similar to the Cashier, Doctor and HR Assistant, the Instructor believed that there was a gap between policy formulation and implementation, since the implementation of government policy rested with the departmental manager and non-Indigenous managers often gave advantages to their ethnic group. He explained:

The district [Agency] has its decree on recruiting Indigenous employees, which regulates 1:3 [1 Indigenous and 3 non-Indigenous people working in each department]; but in reality, there are a lot of Kinh staff [non-Indigenous], even some departments do not have any Indigenous staff. The policies say that Indigenous students are prioritized recruitment, but the real process of application is similar to all people.

He added:

[…] the recruitment process does not follow the regulations. You know, in my workplace there are 90 per cent Kinh staff [non-Indigenous] without holding a formal
bachelor’s degree, meanwhile Indigenous staff are required to have higher qualifications.

Besides this, he felt that departmental managers’ poor managerial skills and lack of awareness of Indigenous differences contributed to the failure of the implementation of government policy for Indigenous people. For example, he argued that task arrangement was not based on employees’ educational qualifications, the managers ignored the provision of training for employees, and they failed to evaluate employees’ performance. He stated:

*I think they should assign the tasks to us in accordance with our knowledge and skills to improve productivity. [...] if my work is relating directly to my skills and knowledge, that will be ‘ok’ for me [getting good job performance].*

He added:

* [...] the centre does not make conditions [providing training opportunities] for us to attend any of these activities [training]. [...] the performance review here is not fair, as it does not emphasize how well employees are doing with their jobs; instead, it includes some issues unrelated to the jobs.*

He continued:

* [...] one thing needs to improved is that each staff has a different circumstance, so the managers [the Heads of Centre] need to understand and adapt their suggestions.*

Having described his perception of HR practices, he turned to discussion of his experiences of participation and involvement at work. He expressed that the Centre’s Workplace Regulations had been changed several times by each Head, and that the new regulations had not been issued
yet. He claimed that there was lack of formal voice mechanism in the Centre; which contradicted the interview with the Vice Chairperson. He stated:

The workplace regulations have been issued by the previous Head of the Centre, Mr XXXX, but when Mr YYYY came here to be the new Head, it has been changed again, and we are waiting for the new one. You know...the managerial position in my workplace changes regularly.

In the workplace, he believed that his non-Indigenous supervisor was supportive, who gave him a chance to present his opinions through either formal or informal platforms. He commented:

My supervisor is nice. I normally discuss about my work at the coffee shop or parties. At the workplace, I present my opinions at the briefings, and in the Party’s meeting too.

However, he felt that Indigenous employee voice was not taken into consideration at senior management level, since he felt that there was not any channel to meet them personally. In addition, senior managers overlooked Indigenous suggestions in the meetings. He claimed:

Mostly I present my suggestions to higher level of leaders [senior managers] through the meetings. I don’t have any chance to meet the senior leaders personally at their offices. At the meeting, the leaders may listen to my opinions but after that they refuse my opinions. That is the truth.

Meanwhile, the Instructor identified that the Unions failed to support his voice to senior managers as they were not confident to work with senior managers to respond to employee suggestions. He argued that the Unions’ roles were focussing on staff lives and organising leisure activities. He claimed:
[...] sometimes, I present my suggestions to the executive committee of the Unions [representatives], but they don’t dare to send my suggestions to the leaders [senior managers]. [...] the Unions are responsible for looking after people’ lives in the workplace, like they come to visit sick staff at home, and they host an annual trip for all staff.

In summary, again this interviewee had a negative view on the impact of government policy within the workplace and differences between policy formulation and implementation. Again, this lack of policy implementation was attributed to non-Indigenous departmental managers who had poor managerial skills and who discriminated on racial grounds. Finally, again this Indigenous employee was critical of the Unions and did not believe that they played a representative role. Instead, he saw the Unions as mainly providing pastoral care to employees and welfare benefits.

7.4.9 Employee 6 - Nurse

The Nurse had worked in the District Medical Station for 3 years as a Health Visitor. Her role involved giving advice to patients on health-related needs. The Director of the Station was non-Indigenous. The Nurse was supervised by the Chief Nursing Officer, who was also non-Indigenous. The Nurse felt that the implementation of government policy in this Medical Station did not support Indigenous workforce participation and voice, due to the Director’s racial prejudice. She felt very strongly that the Director of the Station preferred to employ non-Indigenous people, and claimed:

[...] they do nothing [recruiting Indigenous people]. [...] I see some Indigenous people are not employed into the Station although their qualifications are as good as the Kinh people’s ones [non-Indigenous].
The Nurse also stated that, while training took place in her department, it applied to all staff: there was no special training for Indigenous staff. She further claimed that, while senior managers talked about ‘priorities for Indigenous people’ in appointment to executive positions, in reality non-Indigenous staff dominated the executive positions in her workplace. In addition, there were no different voice practices for Indigenous people in the workplace. She claimed that her suggestions were not taken into consideration though there was an overall voice mechanism existed in the workplace. She commented:

*I am able to talk my problems to the leaders [people in managerial positions] through weekly briefings, and meetings. But my opinions are still limited. I mean I have suggested my ideas but sometimes they overlooked them.*

She added:

*My boss [the Director] is a very autocratic leader [with everyone]. Every final decision is just made by her. The deputy does not have right to contribute to the organisational decision making.*

She also claimed that the Unions were not willing to support employee voice, though they had strong voice over organisational decision making, since they gain financial support from the Director for their activities. In her words:

*I expect that the Unions would support Indigenous voice because I see that they have strong voice over the decision making, but currently they are not good at representing the members’ voices.*

While Indigenous voices were limited in the workplace, she felt that non-Indigenous employees were provided with opportunities to present their opinions directly to the Director
through ‘extending meetings’ and ‘the Party’s meetings’. She described these meetings as only open to those who are members of the Party. She claimed:

> Actually, there are ‘extending’ meetings among the managerial board and Heads of Division, but I can’t attend these meetings because I am not in a managerial position, also I am not a member of the Party.

She felt strongly that underlying racism existed in the workplace, as she claimed that the Director only responded to the non-Indigenous employees’ suggestions. She believed that this underlying racism applied to other non-Indigenous leaders who did not consider Indigenous employees as belonging to their group. She argued:

> I present my suggestions relating to work conditions, but she [Director] doesn’t respond my suggestions, meanwhile, at the same issue, others get her response. […] they don’t see us as their members. Their voice practices were applied in the same way to all. They don’t use different ways in communicating with the Indigenous staff.

Briefly, the nurse felt that the underlying racism of both her director and other non-Indigenous managers undermined government policy and Indigenous workplace participation. Her isolation was exacerbated due to the fact that she was not a Party member. She also felt that the Unions did not protect or represent her because they were too close to the Director and not independent.

### 7.5 Summary of the findings

The purpose of this chapter was to understand: the effect of government policy and legislation on Indigenous employee voice; the organisations’ implementation of government policy in Indigenous voice practice; and the experience of Indigenous employees of the impact of such
voice practices on their inclusion in regard to organisational decision making. Five themes emerged from the case study 2 (PAA2).

Firstly, government policy had positive impact on Indigenous workforce participation, which may be considered as pathways to capture Indigenous voice. A senior manager claimed that Indigenous people accounted for a half of the district’s total number of education staff since they gained priority in tertiary education training and recruitment. Indigenous employees also gained priority for permanent working contracts and promotion to managerial positions. The study also found that the organisation had regulations on Indigenous quotas working within each department, and that many Indigenous people gained managerial positions in the organisation such as Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, and Heads of Department. This suggests that government policy encouraged Indigenous workforce participation in public sector organisations. Furthermore, appointing Indigenous employees to managerial positions not only provided them with opportunities to contribute to public policy making, but the organisation also respected and valued Indigenous influences over the policy implementation, which in turn benefitted their communities.

Secondly, the study found that a multiple voice mechanism was established within the workplace. For a majority of interviewees, voice practices included formal, informal, direct and indirect forms. The formal voices were mandated by local government. Direct voice practices occurred through monthly meetings, briefings, quality control cycle, face-to-face discussion, emails, website, phone calls, reporting documents, intranet and empowerment. This study also found that a general meeting among senior managers and departmental managers took place each month. For a departmental manager and some employee interviewees, indirect voice happened mostly though unofficial representatives such as senior staff and team leaders. Meanwhile, both the senior manager and Union Representative claimed that the Unions had
represented employees to managers. The Union Representative stated that she had collected opinions from employees and presented them to the meetings with managers. The existence of a multiple voice mechanism could argue that employees were given opportunities to have participatory influence and consultative participation in the workplace. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous managers involved in the interviews were self-selected, and they believed in their voice practices that were good for Indigenous employees. It is questionable, therefore, about Indigenous voice practice within another department, particularly where Indigenous staff work under the supervision of non-Indigenous managers.

Thirdly, the study found that voice mechanisms were applied differently to Indigenous employees. According to the senior manager, she applied several different voice practices to adapt to Indigenous uniqueness; for example, face-to-face discussion, encouragement, instructing and gentle speaking. The senior manager also encouraged and valued Indigenous contributions to her decision making. The non-Indigenous manager claimed that he used delicate ways of communication and having patience with Indigenous staff. He also proactively asked for Indigenous opinions and applied different ways of performance appraisal to them. This finding suggests that both these managers sympathised with Indigenous difficulties and attempted to catch their voice through different ways. Furthermore, it could be argued that Indigenous voice practices rest with individual managers.

Fourthly, in contrast to the perspectives from the policy informant group, all Indigenous employees revealed their negative experiences of organisational voice practice as their voices were not taken into consideration. Multiple reasons were identified including underlying racism, lack of support from the Unions, lack of responsibility of senior managers for the implementation of the policy, Indigenous people’s low self-esteem, government policies’
infantilization of Indigenous people, and managers’ lack of awareness of Indigenous people and poor managerial skills. For a majority of Indigenous interviewees, the underlying racism impeded their effort to have voice at work. While this matter existed in the workplace, the senior management of the Agency did not recognise and speedily respond to it, which may have led to the failure of the government commission in eliminating any forms of racism at work.

In addition, the interviewees reported that there was lack of support from the Unions for Indigenous voice. One non-Indigenous manager was critical of the Unions’ roles, as they did not have any impact on voice practice. Meanwhile, an Indigenous employee recognised that the Unions’ voices were not strong, since senior managers often overlooked suggestions from them. Another Indigenous employee found that the Unions were beholden to the departmental manager. In addition, both the non-Indigenous manager and Indigenous employees claimed that the Unions’ roles focussed on employees’ pastoral and welfare-based issues and voluntary work for the communities. This suggests that the Unions failed to support Indigenous voices in public organisation sectors, since they were not an independent body from the Party. Furthermore, Union leaders within each department were appointed by departmental managers to this position of departmental Unions’ President, and they were still staff under supervision by departmental managers. In such contexts, the Unions roles are more likely to support managers in management rather than standing up for employees.

The missing Indigenous voice also stemmed from lack of responsibility of senior managers for the implementation of the policy, as they let the policy implementation and voice practices rest with individual departmental managers. This was exacerbated by non-Indigenous managers, since Indigenous employees perceived there to be unfair treatment from them. For example, under the management of non-Indigenous managers, the priority was given in return to non-
Indigenous people, there was no task arrangement for Indigenous staff, and they overlooked Indigenous voice in organisational decision making. This argues that the implementation of government policy and voice practice have failed at the departmental level. These findings suggest that higher levels of management should monitor the progression of government policy implementation within the workplace. This also argue that, despite some Indigenous employees gaining promotion to managerial positions which take major responsibilities for decision making, Indigenous departmental staff in general still have limited influence over their work. However, this study did not include interviews with non-Indigenous employees to determine whether this issue exists with them.

For the manager interviewees, Indigenous employees had low self-esteem, lack of work skills and poor mainstream languages skills, which impeded them from having a voice at work and involvement in organisational activities. These issues also impacted on Indigenous perception of inclusion in the workplace. Hence, it is important to sympathise with Indigenous uniqueness and give opportunities to present their voice at work.

According to employee interviewees, another downside of government policy was that it infantilized Indigenous people in non-Indigenous people’s eyes. For example, while one Indigenous employee explained that the prioritised policy led to racial stereotypes of Indigenous staff as ‘low qualified workers’, another found that a non-Indigenous manager recruited Indigenous staff to fill the Indigenous quotas in the department but did not give them any voice channels at work. In addition, three Indigenous interviewees experienced that their non-Indigenous managers did not believe in Indigenous consultation and often overlooked their suggestions. This may show that non-Indigenous managers perceive that the priority policy is unfair to their ethnic group and they react to this by giving Indigenous staff unfair treatment. In addition, non-Indigenous managers may lack awareness of the benefits of the governments’
prioritised policies for Indigenous people who can contribute to formulating and implementing the policy effectively in Indigenous communities, as they understand Indigenous languages, cultures and social norms.

Moreover, non-Indigenous managers’ lack of awareness of Indigenous differences and poor managerial skills may have led to Indigenous perception of exclusion and unfair treatment. This can be explained as being because non-Indigenous people just went to the District to find a job, did not live in the Indigenous communities for a long period, and came back on a weekly basis to their homes in urban areas (approximately 70 km distance). As such, non-Indigenous managers did not know leadership styles and communication skills that could engage Indigenous voices at work.

Fifthly, for the majority of employee interviewees, Indigenous voice just came from individual managers who sympathised with Indigenous people and applied inclusive leadership practices. These managers were much concerned with the Indigenous voice at work through increasing Indigenous workforce participation and appointing Indigenous staff to managerial positions, in order to include their ideas in policy making which supports directly the Indigenous communities. They also applied multiple informal voice channels to capture Indigenous perspectives. They encouraged and listened to Indigenous voice and took it into consideration, which contributes to formulation and implementation of government policy in Indigenous communities. This suggests that these managers respected Indigenous uniqueness and valued their contribution at work. In addition, they applied gentle speaking in communication with the Indigenous employees, which increased Indigenous perception of belongingness as it eliminated forms of racism.
CHAPTER 8: PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIVE AGENCY 3

8.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the findings from the third case study – Public Administrative Agency 3 (PAA3). The purpose of this chapter is to explore the effect of government policies on Indigenous employee voice, the organisation’s implementation of Indigenous voice practices, and the experience of Indigenous employees of the organisation’s voice practices in terms of their impact on their inclusion in organisational decision making. In order to achieve this purpose, this study utilised in-depth and face-to-face interviews with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous managers, and Indigenous employees, to capture their narratives. In addition, documentation and fieldnotes were used to cross-check information. The chapter is structured as follows. Section 8.2 describes case context, including introducing the demographic location, the characteristics of the organisation, and the policies relating to HR and EV applied in the workplace. Section 8.3 highlights the profiles of participants involved in this investigation. Section 8.4 presents the findings in the form of individual narratives. Section 8.5 summarises the chapter.

8.2 Case context

8.2.1 Demographic location

Public Administrative Agency 3 is located in the mountainous and remote District of Tay Giang to the west of Danang city. It shares a long border with Laos. In 2015, the District’s population was approximately 18,148 people, of which the Katuic Indigenous group comprised 92 per cent. Non-Indigenous people in the District were mostly Kinh from urban areas. Indigenous art and culture were recognised and valued and appeared throughout the organisation. For example, traditional Indigenous houses called a Gươl and a Long House had been built in the
government office precinct. In addition, some Indigenous employees wore their traditional Sarong in the workplace. This study also found that the District’s radio and television station had Indigenous language programs.

8.2.2 The characteristics of the organisation

The Agency at the time of investigation consisted of 30 departments and 10 Community Agencies and Services (formal People’s Committees of Communes). All departmental heads were supervised by the Chairperson and two Vice-Chairpersons. As shown in Figure 8.1, the Chairperson directly managed 12 departments and also held the position of Vice Secretary of the District’s Communist Party. One Vice Chairperson was in charge of social and cultural affairs and managed seven departments, the other took responsibility for economic affairs and the management of 11 departments. There were 77 (about 43 per cent) Indigenous employees working in the organisation. The Chairperson and one Vice Chairperson were Indigenous. According to a report from the local government (i.e. Tay Giang’s Annual Statistics Report, 2015), Indigenous people occupied about 31 per cent of managerial positions at the department level. In addition, the Secretary of the District Communist Party was Indigenous, and he was also the leader of the Party’s Standing Committee which had fourteen members and played a key role in formulating the District policies relating to Indigenous workforce participation. However, non-Indigenous people still dominated this Committee with eight members compared to six Indigenous members.
Figure 8.1: Organisational chart (Source: Adapted from the organisational structure of Tay Giang District People’s Committee)
8.2.3 Human resource (HR) policies

The District introduced several policies relating to Indigenous workforce participation to take effect from 2015 to 2025 (Table 8.1). Firstly, as stated in these policies (e.g. Resolution No.06-NQ/HU date 15/10/2011; Program No.10-Ctr/HU date 01/12/2015), it planned to increase the percentage of Indigenous staff to more than 50 per cent in the Agency’s departments and 95 per cent in its 10 Community Agencies and Services. Indigenous people also had advantages in relation to decision-making roles, as this policy (i.e. Instruction No.01-HD/HU date 18/01/2016) reserved two positions of senior management, such as Chairperson and Vice Chairperson, for them.

In addition, this policy also shows that there is a goal of 49 per cent of departmental heads to be filled by Indigenous employees and 50 per cent of deputy heads. Moreover, the policy commits to the increase of Indigenous members in the District Party’s Standing Committee to 67 per cent. A report from the local government (i.e. Report No.104-BC/HU date 19/4/2017) states that Indigenous training and development were also prioritised through opportunities to attend ongoing training for employees, and students who graduated through the ‘Cu tuyen’ policy were considered as preferential applicants for recruitment.

However, despite these initiatives, at the time of the investigation the report showed that there was still Indigenous unemployment. In addition, non-Indigenous people who did not live permanently in the District still dominated the proportion of staff and executive positions. According to the government report, this issue has resulted from departmental heads who overlook Indigenous workforce participation, and from Indigenous people’s lack of the capacity to meet the professional requirements of managerial positions.
8.2.4 The implementation of employee voice (EV)

There were two policies related to implementing EV practices in the Agency. Firstly, the workplace democracy regulations (i.e. Decision No.2685/QD-UBND date 12/12/2016) outlines a number of meetings and briefings among senior managers and heads of department such as an annual meeting, 3-monthly meetings, monthly meetings, random meetings, weekly briefings, and an annual survey. According to the policy, decisions made in these meetings are based on collective agreement of managers, and summaries of the meetings are distributed to departmental employees. In addition, at the senior management level, weekly briefings take place involving the Chairperson, Vice Chairpersons and the Head of Committee’s Office. At the level of the department, this policy explains that heads of department had the right to create their own workplace regulations and decide forms of employee voice to ensure that democracy was applied, while employees have a say over their work.

Secondly, the Agency has a code of conduct (i.e. Decision No.946/QD-UBND date 21/06/2017) which provides guidelines for the standards of conduct expected when performing duties as staff of the government agency. This code expects that employees should respect their supervisors, communicate with them in a honest and polite way, and have a say over their supervisors’ decision making. In return, the supervisors are required to sympathise with, instruct and encourage their subordinates to complete their work successfully. In addition, the code states that each employee is expected to treat their colleagues as family members, cooperate closely with each other, and attend meetings and briefings at the workplace. All employees are expected to be prepared before attending meetings to be able to contribute to organizational decision making. The code also requires staff to respect and value Indigenous people and cultures, and encourages them to wear their traditional dress in the workplace.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy name</th>
<th>Date issued</th>
<th>Describing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resolution No.06-NQ/HU</td>
<td>15/10/2011</td>
<td>Regulations on planning, training, and allocating jobs for the district’s government officials in the period of 2015-2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program No.10-Ctr/HU</td>
<td>01/12/2015</td>
<td>Regulations on implementing the Resolution of the 8th Party Assembly on building the local government’s strength and integrity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision No.156-QD/HU</td>
<td>04/11/2015</td>
<td>Regulations on managing the government officials in the public administrative agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision No.157-QD/HU</td>
<td>04/11/2015</td>
<td>Regulations on appointment of officials to managerial positions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action Program No.33-Ctr/HU</td>
<td>04/06/2015</td>
<td>Regulations on implementing the provincial government’s Resolution No.16-NQ/TU on Indigenous employment in the period from 2015 to 2025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidelines No.01-HD/HU</td>
<td>18/01/2016</td>
<td>Planning for the government officials’ appointment to executive positions in the period from 2020-2025</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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8.3 Profile of Participants

In total, nine formal interviews were conducted including three Heads of Department, one union representative, and five employees (Table 8.2). Although contact had been made with a number of non-Indigenous managers, only one agreed to be interviewed. All Heads of Department who joined the formal interviews had worked in the Agency for a long period and it was their first managerial role. The union representative in this interview was the Union President at the department of Justice, and he also worked as staff under the supervision by the Head of this department. All departments in the Agency have a union president who acts as a union representative and reports directly to a higher level of union authority. In addition, informal discussions were held with two Indigenous senior managers (Secretary of the District’s Party and Indigenous Vice Chairperson), one member of the District People’s Council, and one non-Indigenous member of the District Party’s Standing Committee.

All participants in these informal conversations did not sign a consent form due to the sensitive nature of this topic; hence, the informal conversations with these people only rather than formal interviews. These informal discussions aimed to have multiple perspectives on the implementation of government policy for Indigenous people and voice practice in the workplace, which were used to cross-check the information. The Indigenous employee interviewees all worked full time, and had experience working in different departments of the public agency for between two years to ten years. They comprised four females and two males. One participant was of mixed race. Two participants were members of the Communist Party. Three participants had experience of supervision by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous managers, and during the interviews compared these managerial leadership styles. Furthermore, most of them had bachelor’s degrees.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Current position</th>
<th>Experience</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Manager 1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Head of Department of Home Affairs</td>
<td>9-years’ experience in assistant position and 6-year’s experience in managerial positions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manager 2</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Head of Department of Agriculture and Rural Development</td>
<td>13-years’ experience in assistant position and 5-years’ experience in manager position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager 3</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Head of Department of Economics and Infrastructure</td>
<td>10-years’ experience in positions of assistant and deputy manager, 14-months’ experience in manager position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager 4</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>The Union Representative in Department of Justice</td>
<td>4-year’s experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee 1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Accountant</td>
<td>7-years’ experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee 2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>HR Assistant</td>
<td>6-years’ experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee 3</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Administrative Assistant</td>
<td>4-years’ experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee 4</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>10-years’ experience in position of file clerk and 3-years’ experience as secretary</td>
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8.4 Findings

The findings are presented in the form of individual narratives of the nine interviewees. These narratives are classified into two groups, of policy informant and validating employees, in order to compare and cross-check the information. The policy informant group provides managers’ perspectives on government policy and the organisation’s voice practice for Indigenous people; and these participants were from Departments of Home Affairs, Agriculture and Rural Development, Economics and Infrastructure. The Union Representative was also included in this group, since union leaders in Vietnam often identify with managers (Zhu & Benson, 2008). The validating group includes Indigenous employee interviewees who presented their experiences and perceptions on government policy, organisational response to their voice practice, and inclusion in regard to organisational decision making. This group comprises an Accountant, HR Assistant, Administrative Assistant, Secretary and Technical Assistant.

8.4.1 Indigenous Head of Department of Home Affairs

The Head of the Department of Home Affairs had worked in the Agency for nine years until her appointment to her current position in 2010. She was from an Indigenous background, and her current roles were in charge of personnel management and she reported directly to the Chairperson of the Agency. There were 12 staff in her department, five of whom were non-Indigenous people and came from urban areas. In addition, the Head had two non-Indigenous deputies. At the time of interview, she was also the leader of the District of the Communist Youth League of Ho-Chi-Minh which represented young employees’ voice in the Agency.
The Head, with her role as a consultant to senior managers in regard to HR policies in the Agency, was very positive about government policy, as she stated that several policies applied to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous employment. She claimed that the Agency had racial quotas on its employees working within each department, and that the policy gave training priority to non-Indigenous people to fulfil their needs for education qualifications. She argued:

*We had regulations on the ratio of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people working in the Agency. This ratio is as a priority for our people because we are the Indigenous locals here. [...] non-Indigenous people also get priority in recruitment from this, since senior managers are required to balance the number of the Agency’s staff among Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. [...] Training is applied in the same way to all staff, particularly Kinh people [non-Indigenous] because they lack qualifications, so they need to attend university during working.*

As an Indigenous manager, the Head of Department expressed her willingness to recruit Indigenous people, but she was not certain how much emphasis other senior managers put on Indigenous employment, and she appeared nervous when she spoke about the District’s emphasis on ethnic diversity. She was concerned that senior managers were reducing the numbers of Indigenous employees. She stated:

*I do not dare to say how much I emphasize on ethnic diversity. [Whisper!] currently, the District is halting the prioritised recruitment [for Indigenous people] because we are dominating the employees’ numbers in the Agency. But I still give a chance to Indigenous students who study in universities by the ‘Cu tuyen’ policy, because the Agency has appointed them and also pays their tuition fees to attend the universities.*
Furthermore, the Head herself applied the policy differently to Indigenous people, as she admitted that, while she did not formally prioritise the performance evaluation of Indigenous employees, she liked to give them encouragement in the short term. She reported:

*Performance appraisal is the same; sometimes I just give a little, very little priority for the Indigenous. But if they don’t improve their productivity, I won’t apply this different treatment to them anymore.*

She expressed her disappointment in regard to non-Indigenous people who she felt were not committed to working in the Agency for long although the Agency gave them the same priority as Indigenous employees. She commented: ‘[…] most Kinh staff [non-Indigenous] give up their job in the Agency and go back the city after they get a degree and experience’.

The Head of Department also reported that her department had formal workplace regulations, and she believed that she made an effort to encourage employee voice through different channels such as empowerment and direct discussion. She felt confident that her employees had a voice in her department. She noted:

*We are conducting in detail our department’s democracy regulations in the workplace based on the central Government’s Decision of No.04. In the past, […] we also arranged each staff for specific tasks and gave them chance to have voice over their work.*

She added:

[…] my staff are very confident to present their suggestions to me. For example, if they see something wrong, they meet me directly and say, ‘sister that is wrong!’ As the Head of Department, I consider their suggestions and revise if there is something not correct. You know, I am very busy. Actually, they have voice here. This is a democracy.
In relation to Indigenous voice practice, the Head of Department claimed that Indigenous employees were ‘shy and hesitating’ and often ‘they don’t want to have voice at work though they know the problems’, which may impede them from participation and inclusion at work. In order to adapt to the Indigenous differences in languages, cultures and life environment, she applied a ‘suitable and friendly way’ to communicate with them such as speaking in an Indigenous language and in informal meetings. She stated:

_Sometimes, I use the Indigenous language to communicate with my staff in my room and outside workplace, but in the meetings and conference I just speak the mainstream language. I just use the Indigenous language to instruct my staff in work._

She added:

_With the Indigenous employee, I work in a friendly and suitable way. It is not racial discrimination against the mainstream brothers. We all know that Indigenous people in mountainous areas have differences from the mainstream in urban areas in terms of cultures, languages and life environment. I cannot be weighing equally Indigenous people and non-Indigenous people._

In addition, she believed that the Unions were involved in supporting employee voice at work, as they organised annual meetings amongst managers and employees and oversaw the progression of voice practice within the department. She commented:

_The department has worker meetings annually conducted by the Unions. This meeting has the purpose to have staff’s suggestions on something related to their rights and interest in work. So, we respond their suggestions in this meeting. If we don’t do so, they will tell their problems to the inspector from a higher level of Union authority._
In summary, the Indigenous Head of Department was positive on the impact of government policy on workforce participation for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. She outlined multiple channels of voice practices in the workplace, and was positive about the roles of trade unions in supporting Indigenous voice. She did, however, identify challenges in Indigenous inclusion in that it depended on the practice of the individual Indigenous manager, and that Indigenous employees often had low self-esteem which undermined their inclusion.

8.4.2 Non-Indigenous Head of Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD)

The non-Indigenous Head of DARD had been in his current position for five years. Previously, he had worked for 13 years in engineering in several mountainous areas. At the time of interview, his family was living in the city, which is about 140 km from the District. In total, there were 10 staff in his department, and five of them were Indigenous. He had two deputies, both non-Indigenous people from urban areas. The Head of DARD reported directly to the non-Indigenous Vice Chairperson. He stated that he was unhappy with the government policy as it imposed constraints on his recruitment decisions. He claimed:

I cannot make any decision on recruitment. Someone who I know has capacity and I want to employee them, but I can’t. The Chairperson makes decisions on recruitment.

He will recruit employees and allocate them jobs in my department.

However, he was able to appoint staff to leadership positions as deputy heads in his department. He admitted that he did not apply priority for Indigenous employees in appointment to managerial positions. Instead, he claimed that he considered all employees, either Indigenous or non-Indigenous, based on their capacity and experience. He stated:
employees will be appointed to managerial positions if they are good at work knowledge and skills and have more than 5-years’ working experience. We do not give them advantages of promotion because of their racial background. For example, we just appointed one employee to a senior position in the department because of his great capacity and long experience, although he was just 37 years old and of non-Indigenous background.

He argued that he was able to include employee voice within his department. For example, he stated that his department did not have workplace regulations relating to employee participation, but he gave the opportunity for employees to ‘give feedback and present suggestions’. This included multiple channels of employee voice such as survey (e.g., report documents), and formal and informal meetings. He noted:

I always make opportunities for brothers to participate in discussion and suggestions with me on related work issues. For example, in a working report document, I ask them to report their daily tasks, and write their comments or suggestions if available.

He added:

Normally, we organise two meetings per year to evaluate employee performance […], and at those meetings all staff are required to present their voices over their work conditions.

He also described how he worked indirectly with his staff though his two non-Indigenous deputies, who were empowered to work directly with staff, respond their suggestions, and take responsibility for the decisions. He continued by giving an example:

With senior staff who have working experience and good knowledge and skills, I give them authority in making the final decision on their tasks. But I will make the decision
by myself with sensitive issues; of course I listen to their consultation before every decision making.

Although the non-Indigenous Head of Department appeared to have some awareness of Indigenous differences, he claimed that he treated all employees the same, such as through constructive communication and encouragement:

*I treat all employees in the same way. I have never sworn at my brother staff. Normally, I instruct them during working. We all know who has capacity and who lacks work skills. We know this, so we can communicate in a suitable way with staff who have low productivity. I always give them encouragement, advice and instruction at work.*

He recognised that, while some Indigenous employees consulted well with him, there were Indigenous employees who were not confident to present their suggestions at meetings and were more likely to keep silent in the organizational decision-making process. He argued:

*Some Indigenous brothers here are very good at consultation, but with others I have to explain and revise their ideas. That is the truth. [...] the culture of Indigenous people here is that they are very hesitating in face-to-face discussion. For example, in the department meetings and even the District meetings, I don’t see many of them present their concerns directly to the managers.*

He added:

*Not getting much feedback from them, actually my job is not perfect, sometimes I make mistakes during doing my job, but I don’t get any comments from them...maybe they are afraid that they will be repressed [laugh!].*
In summary, the non-Indigenous manager expressed different views to those of the Indigenous Head of Department of Home Affairs. He was negative on government Indigenous recruitment policy because he felt that it undermined his own decision making. He was also negative about the promotion policy, and in practice he did not give priority to Indigenous people. However, he was positive on his own voice practices. While he identified low self-esteem as a challenge for inclusion practices for Indigenous employees, he demonstrated limited empathy in overcoming this issue.

8.4.3 Head of Department of Economics and Infrastructure (DEI)

At the time of interview, the Indigenous Head of DEI had been in his position for 14 months. Before this appointment, he had worked as a deputy to non-Indigenous managers in several departments. In the current department, he had eight staff including two non-Indigenous deputies and one Indigenous employee. He claimed that he was the first Indigenous manager in this economic-related department as Indigenous people were more likely to be recruited into the department of Indigenous Affairs than an economic-related department, despite there being Indigenous quotas in every department. He claimed that, in this department, the quotas were applied to balance the racial background of managerial positions rather than recruitment of Indigenous employees. He stated:

*Actually, the department has its prioritised policies in recruitment and training in general, but they are not focussing on the Indigenous only. This is different from the Department of Indigenous Affairs where I worked as the deputy head in the past. In that department, the priorities were completely for Indigenous people (Head of DEI).*

He added:
The ratio [...] requires a balance between Indigenous and mainstream people. For example, in my department the head is me as the Indigenous, and it is required that the deputies are from the mainstream [...] (Head of DEI).

While he expressed his concern about Indigenous workforce participation, since they served their community directly, he reported that his department did not have enough Indigenous employees according to the regulations of Indigenous quotas. He claimed:

Currently, the department has one Indigenous staff member. [...] this number is not balanced as in the regulations [...]. [...] Frankly, I am really concerned about Indigenous employment. As you know, from the past till now...not many Indigenous people work in departments relating to economy. [...] as the Head of Department, I would like to have more Indigenous staff work in the department because they may contribute directly to the community development (Head of DEI).

He continued:

 [...] it is good for the Indigenous people when I am the Head of Department because I would be able to support their voice in the workplace (Head of DEI).

In addition, the Head claimed that he applied several different approaches to Indigenous employees such as giving them encouragement in performance evaluation, and gentle speaking. He recognised some difficulties that Indigenous staff faced at work which prevented them from collective voice and speaking up at meetings. He explained:

I just give a little priority for Indigenous employees to give them encouragement. They are very hesitant and shy [...]. They are also very touchy, and do not like if someone refers to their values such as culture, capacity, and performance. [...] Indigenous people are really different. I have to talk with them very gently and in the Indigenous
language. [...] I also plan to support them financially for their annual health examination, and organise a staff retreat to include people without racial and local boundary in the department.

While Indigenous people faced difficulties in the workplace such as ‘limited relationship networking’, the Head argued that non-Indigenous employees had a ‘good relationship with senior managers, wide networking’. Due to such advantages, non-Indigenous employees gained more benefit from government policy and voice practices. The Head of DEI also expressed his confidence about his own voice practices, and he criticised other managers. For example, he claimed that, although in theory employees were able to seek representation from the Unions and the Party, in practice employees rarely presented their suggestions through these representatives because of their risk perception of their managers. He stated:

They [employees] are scared to present their suggestions through representatives such as the Unions and the Party because they are afraid that their manager may be disappointed. [...] I see that other managers dislike their staff who have voice at the District’s meetings with the senior leaders.

In summary, unlike the previous interviews, the Indigenous Head of DEI was critical of the impact of government policy on Indigenous employment. In a similar view to the Indigenous Head of Department of Home Affairs, he was very confident on voice practices for Indigenous people in his department. However, he identified several challenges facing Indigenous employees in the workplaces such as the different implementation of Indigenous policy across departments, Indigenous low self-esteem, loneliness, and fear of speaking up.
8.4.4 Union Representative

At the time of interview, the Union Representative had worked as a legal assistant in the department of Justice for four years. There were two Indigenous employees in his workplace, while most of his colleagues and the Head of this department were non-Indigenous. The Union Representative was also a member of the Party. He claimed that government policy had significant impact on Indigenous workforce participation and their voice over work. He provided an example, that the Head of this department had meetings with senior managers to make suggestions on Indigenous employment. He also claimed that they gave opportunities for Indigenous employees to participate in workplace decision making. He commented:

They actually allow Indigenous staff like me to have voice in every decision. I think there is not any form of racial discrimination in the workplace. You know, the department manager just had a meeting with higher level of management to suggest recruitment, training and promoting Indigenous staff.

However, the Union Representative admitted that the individual departmental manager played important roles in the policy implementation and voice practice for Indigenous people. He explained that the current Head of Department had awareness of Indigenous people, which made him feel ‘energetic’ toward his work. Meanwhile, his previous manager was very difficult to work with, since he never listened to Indigenous staff. He stated:

The good thing is that my current boss is very nice, and he often values and protects the Indigenous staff. This makes me feel more energetic to work. He is different from the previous one who was very difficult to work with. I did not have any say at every meeting, or if I had presented my suggestions, he did not listen to them. I was very
bored, and I sometimes did not want to attend any meeting with him. You know, he often stopped me at the meetings.

He claimed that the current Head of Department created diverse forms of voice in the workplace to capture employee opinions. For example, there was a meeting in which information was shared to all employees beforehand. The Head drew conclusions only after every employee had presented their opinion. In addition, he used emails, document reports and collective suggestion schemes to capture employee voice. He described this as follows:

[

...] before meetings, information is shared to all people for preparing our ideas. For example, when we discuss an issue related to our work, I and my colleagues are free to contribute our ideas on this. My boss will make final conclusions in the meeting. [...] in case we don’t have face-to-face meeting, then we discuss via email. We will send our suggestions to the boss via email, and he will consider these and then make decisions. We also print our suggestions in hard documents and hand out to him. He will receive them and then respond to us. [...] Another form is that we as normal staff will have a collective meeting together, and then we will send our suggestion schemes to the boss. He will see these and give us his advice.

For Indigenous voice practice, he identified that this Head gave Indigenous employees different treatment, such as using different ways of friendly advising and instructing, which demonstrated his awareness of inclusion. He explained that this non-Indigenous Head of Department understood Indigenous people and respected Indigenous differences. He stated:

I see that the boss is very friendly with the Indigenous staff as he gives us an inclusive working climate. He also instructs us on some new issues [...]. He often reminds people
to spend time to visit the Indigenous villages and talk to them. [...] they never had offensive behaviour with the Indigenous. They even value our people and culture.

The Union Representative also claimed strongly that the Unions were involved in supporting their members’ participation and involvement at work. For example, he stated that the Union Committee within his department had monthly action programs and reports which were sent to this Head of Department and the higher level of Union Committee. He claimed that the Unions represented their members by presenting their suggestions to senior managers of the Agency; however, they were often required to get approval from the Party before the suggestions were sent out. He commented:

[...] The Unions Committee have monthly meetings and we draw up plans and suggestions that will be sent to the Head of Department and the higher level of the Unions’ Committees. Sometimes, we also have suggestions sent to the senior managers of the Agency, but before the suggestion is sent to the senior managers it will be sent first to the Secretary of the department’s Party. Then the Party will approve it and then we can send it out.

In summary, in line with the Indigenous Head of Department of Home Affairs, the Union Representative was very positive about the impact of government policy on Indigenous workforce participation, and the roles of trade unions in supporting Indigenous voice. However, he acknowledged the link between the Unions and the Party. He also believed that Indigenous voice and inclusion practices depended on inclusive leaders who were aware of Indigenous differences.
8.4.5 Employee 1 - Accountant

The Accountant had been working in the department of Finance and Planning for seven years where she was also a team leader. There were ten staff in her department, five of whom were non-Indigenous and living in urban areas. The Head of this department was an Indigenous person, and he reported directly to the non-Indigenous Vice Chairperson. In addition, there was one non-Indigenous Deputy Head in her department.

The Accountant was the first interviewee who self-selected to join this investigation in this case. She believed that both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people benefited from government policy. She explained that, while Indigenous people gained certain advantages from prioritised recruitment, non-Indigenous people received support from senior managers in policy implementation since these senior managers were more likely to recruit them. She claimed:

*The Agency regulates that each department should have a half of staff numbers from the Kinh people [non-Indigenous]. They [senior managers] said that the productivity may not be improved if departments have only Indigenous people because the Indigenous may work not as well as the Kinh does. Indigenous people are also given priority such as adding 20-score to the entrance examination.*

She was also critical of the implementation of government policy for the promotion of Indigenous women, as the policy formulation and implementation did not reflect the reality within the workplace. She explained:

* [...] many policies presented in the public media and also in the reports from the higher levels of government show that priority of staff promotion is given the most to Indigenous women, but no one cares about this issue in reality.*
Although she was not happy with policy implementation by the senior managers, she believed that her departmental manager listened to all employee voices. He also encouraged employees’ consultative participation in the organisational decision-making process through weekly briefings, emails, and document reports. She commented:

> [...] all people in the workplace are encouraged to have a voice and participate in the Department’s activities. For example, I had a say on the Department’s workplace regulations last month. Actually, he [the Head] listen to all people and then he makes final decision on this. [...] normally we have a weekly briefing in which we evaluate the productivity of the previous weeks and make a plan for next weeks. At these meetings, I am able to present my opinions about strategies and solutions to improve our performance. We also use email to exchange our ideas or whatever among people in the workplace. Sometimes, I send my report to the Head through email in case he is not in the office.

She recognised that the Head used different ways of communication with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous employees. For example, she believed that the Head treated Indigenous employees in a friendly way but evaluated their performance in the same way as he evaluated the performance of non-Indigenous employees. She commented:

> I see he applied different ways of communication [...] . With us, he works in pleasant and relaxed ways. But it doesn’t matter who you are if you don’t complete your job.

In addition, the Accountant claimed that she saw no racism in her workplace and that people were united in work. In her own words: ‘I love the way my colleagues communicate to each other. We are very close and share everything with each other. No discrimination at all’.
In summary, while the interviewee was critical of the impact of government policy on Indigenous employment, she was positive in relation to her manager’s voice practices, and the voice mechanisms applied in the workplace. She believed that her Indigenous manager was able to understand and communicate with Indigenous people, and that the number of Indigenous employees in her workplace helped to eliminate racism.

8.4.6 Employee 2 - HR Assistant

The HR Assistant had worked in the department of Home Affairs for almost six years. When she commenced work in the department, she had been the only Indigenous employee, and worked under supervision by a non-Indigenous Head of Department. At the time of interview, there were 12 people in her department, of whom a half were Indigenous. The Head of Department was an Indigenous woman. The HR Assistant also worked under supervision of a non-Indigenous Deputy Head. Most non-Indigenous employees who worked in the department lived in the urban areas.

The HR Assistant claimed that senior managers took a great deal of care in regard to Indigenous workforce participation. For example, Indigenous people were given priorities in recruitment, permanent employment contracts, and promotion to managerial positions if they met the Agency’s requirements. She claimed:

 [...] all the senior managers are concerned much on Indigenous workforce participation at work, because the District is their homeland. For example, when the department recruit an accountant, they will give first priority to Indigenous people [...].

She added:

Indigenous people are also prioritised on permanent work contracts, and promotion. If Indigenous staff meet the Agency’s common requirements for managerial positions
such as capacity, education, age, and their work style, then they will be appointed to 
managerial positions.

She also reported that she was able to have influence over her work due to her working 
experience. She claimed that she often discussed individually face-to-face with the Head, and 
also used online social networking (Facebook) and emails. She commented:

Because after a long period working here I have a little bit of experience in my work; 
so, I can make some suggestions to improve my work. Normally, I suggest directly to 
the boss at her room because the meetings aren’t organized frequently while there are 
many things occurring immediately at my workplace.

She continued:

I also use Facebook, email to exchange ideas with the boss. I just talk to the boss about 
what happens in my work in direct and individual ways. I don’t want to wait for 
b briefings or meetings.

The HR Assistant reported that, when she had worked with a non-Indigenous Head of 
Department, she often presented her ideas through the deputy who was her supervisor. If an 
Indigenous person was the manager, she felt able to speak directly. She noted:

Several years ago, most of my suggestions were conducted through the Deputy Head of 
Department who was my supervisor. But now I work directly with the manager [...].

The Indigenous Head of Department also represented her employees’ suggestions to senior 
managers since they did not have opportunity to work directly with the higher level of 
management of the Agency. She commented:
I cannot meet directly with the senior managers because I am not in the right position to do that. [...] normally I work through my immediate manager, and she will bring my suggestions to discuss with the senior managers.

She identified the differences in managerial style between her Indigenous and non-Indigenous managers. She claimed that her former non-Indigenous manager spoke bluntly and hurt her feelings. Moreover, under his leadership she sometimes experienced racism from her non-Indigenous colleagues; whereas, the current Head of Department treated everyone equally and her leadership style was inclusive. She commented:

*Three years ago, my boss was non-Indigenous, he was very straightforward speaking so it hurt my pride. But I had to go forward in my work because if my work is not improved at all he will ignore me. [...] Sometimes, my non-Indigenous colleagues talked about the Indigenous people and they looked at me.*

She added:

* [...] my current boss [Head of Department] treats us all equally. My boss’s leadership style is very nice, and it makes people in the workplace more independent, polite, punctual and inclusive. [...] She considers all opinions in her decision making, and normally the final decision is based on the collective not individual perspectives, because the individual maybe has its bias.*

In relation to the Union, the HR Assistant believed that the Union’s roles were more likely to focus on providing staff welfare service and organising leisure activities. For example:

*The Labour Unions in my workplace take care of all employees and equal treatment such as providing uniforms for staff, and host parties on the occasion of Women’s Day for both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff.*
In summary, the HR Assistant was very positive about the impact of government policy on Indigenous employment. In particular, she was positive about voice practices under the management of an Indigenous Head of Department. She believed that these practices rested with the inclusive leadership practice of individual Indigenous managers. She did not believe that trade unions supported Indigenous voice through representation of their members but instead played a welfare role.

8.4.7 Employee 3 - Admin Assistant

At the time of interview, the Admin Assistant had been working in the Agency for four years. There were six staff in her department, and two were non-Indigenous. In addition, both the Head and Deputy Head were Indigenous. The Admin Assistant reported confidently that, in her view, the implementation of government policy had supported Indigenous workforce participation, and that her managers preferred to recruit capable and Indigenous applicants. She claimed:

My boss just cares for people who have capacity. In particularly, he is really concerned very much about Indigenous people, and this is why there are many Indigenous staff working here.

She also stated how she was involved in organisational decision making; for example, she participated directly and formally through document reports, discussion in the meetings, and emails. She felt that she was able to have influence over her work through consultative participation. She commented:

[…] I normally send my document reports to the boss. Then he will check and revise it and send it back to me. At the meeting, we discuss a specific issue […] and I have presented my ideas on it. [...] I am also consulted directly about the work plan,
performance reports etc. If there is something that is not clear then he will ask me at the meetings.

She recognised that the individual manager’s leadership encouraged Indigenous employee voice. She explained that the Head of her department spoke very gently and treated everyone fairly. In addition, she reported that she often used her Indigenous language to communicate with her manager and colleagues; and she felt that using her own language was very good for her in consultative activities. She claimed:

My boss speaks very gently to all staff, and he treats all people in a similar way including the non-Indigenous. [...] In my work, if there is something that I don’t understand, I am comfortable to ask my colleagues. It is very easy to us to communicate by our mother tongue. I also speak Katuic [Indigenous language] with my boss to consult him. Presenting my opinion in Katuic is easier.

The Admin Assistant stated that she felt very included in organizational decision making because her opinions were taken into consideration. In addition, her manager spent his time to explain if her suggestions were not clear. She commented:

If my opinion is correct, the boss will note it, but if it is not clear he will explain to make me understand [...], I feel very comfortable to work here.

In summary, this Indigenous employee spoke positively in relation to government policy for Indigenous employment. She was also positive about voice practices in her workplace. In line with the previous Indigenous employees, she believed that individual Indigenous managers made a difference through applying inclusive leadership practices. She described these as inclusive communications, including the ability to be able to speak in her own language, applying diverse channels of voice, and fairness.
8.4.8 Employee 4 - Secretary

The Secretary had worked in the Agency since 2003. She was Indigenous. Before her appointment to the position of Secretary she was a file clerk for ten years. At the time of interview, there were five staff in her department, and only one of them was non-Indigenous. Both the Head and Deputy were Indigenous people. The Head of Department reported directly to the Vice Chairperson of the Agency. The interview with this Secretary followed the interview with the Admin Assistant, as their workstations were close together.

The Secretary was very positive in regard to the implementation of government policy in her department. She claimed that the managers were very concerned about Indigenous workforce participation by giving them priority in promotion and performance evaluation. She commented:

*Indigenous staff who have the qualifications are prioritised to appointment to management positions. There is also a little bit of priority for Indigenous staff in performance appraisal. For example, the performance standards for the Indigenous staff are a little bit lower than those for the non-Indigenous.*

The Secretary also identified voice practice provided by managers to staff in her department. She claimed that there were weekly briefings in the workplace, and she was able to speak out over work-related issues at these meetings. Moreover, her manager gave her opportunities for face-to-face discussion. She noted:

*When I was appointed to the position of manager’s secretary, I had a chance to attend every meeting in the workplace. Normally, the department has a weekly briefing, and monthly meetings […] People in the meetings are free to discuss together before the*
manager makes a final decision. I also meet the manager daily if I need to suggest something.

In addition, she reported that she was consulted on several issues by the manager and that this consultative participation occurred informally and individually in the manager’s room. She perceived that the manager made decisions based on agreement from all employees in the workplace. She commented:

*I am consulted on a lot of issues... I just come to his [manager] office and discuss directly with him. [...] With important issues, he will organise a meeting to ask people’s ideas before the decision can be made. Many things, we need agreement from all staff in the workplace.*

The Secretary stated that the managers treated Indigenous employees differently, such as communicating with them in a gentle voice and using Indigenous language, which contributed significantly to Indigenous employee participation and involvement. She stated:

*He often speaks gently to the Indigenous. [...] I sometimes speak my mother-tongue language to discuss something with the manager, though my non-Indigenous colleague is not happy at first, but later she is familiar with this language.*

She also felt that many non-Indigenous people still had racist attitudes towards their Indigenous colleagues in the workplace. She claimed that they often insulted and made fun of Indigenous people, even the Indigenous managers. She claimed:

*I remember when I was first in the workplace, my non-Indigenous colleague insulted the Indigenous people here when she looked at the Indigenous children. They also often make fun of Indigenous people here. [...] I think my boss should show his ‘leader*
power’ to the non-Indigenous staff, because the non-Indigenous staff do not respect him as a manager.

In summary, again this Indigenous employee spoke positively on the impact of government policy for Indigenous employment. Similar to the previous Indigenous interviewees, she believed that the implementation of this policy rested with the individual Indigenous manager. She also had many positive examples of direct forms of voice and inclusive leadership practices. However, she also identified underlying racism towards Indigenous people in the workplace.

8.4.9 Employee 5 - Technical Assistant

The Technical Assistant had responsibility for administrative and technical support in the Chairperson’s Office (formal name Committee’s Office). At the time of interview, he had two-years’ experience. Most staff in his department were non-Indigenous, including the manager and deputy manager. His office provided the support that the senior managers needed to govern effectively. The Technical Assistant was also a member of the Party.

Although working in the Chairperson’s Office, he expressed his doubts about the implementation of government policy for Indigenous workforce participation. He claimed that there were not many Indigenous staff in his department despite the policy stating that priority was given to Indigenous people in employment. He claimed:

*I could hear someone said that they [manager] give priority to Indigenous and another minority groups in terms of recruitment and training. But I don't see many Indigenous staff working here [laugh!].*

He recognised several forms of employee participation and involvement at work such as formal meetings, informal and individual meetings and mailboxes. Formal meetings were largely held
with the senior managers, and he sometimes was invited to attend these meetings since he was a member of the Party. He was able to meet his managers, directly and individually, as well as presenting his anonymous suggestions through the mailbox. He commented:

*I think I am able to have voice over my work, because at the meeting with senior managers, my immediate manager sometime invites me to attend and they ask me to present my ideas. Besides that, the department has its mailbox, so we can send our confidential suggestions to the senior managers. […] but I rarely meet individually with the senior managers because they are the top leaders. I just meet directly my immediate manager.*

Besides this, he identified the involvement of Unions and the Party in supporting employee voice at work as they arranged meetings among staff and managers, in that employees were able to have a say over work conditions. He claimed:

*I also work through the Unions. Normally the Unions conduct a meeting or conference at the end of year, and at that meeting we can present our suggestions on work conditions, labour rights […]. Generally, we can talk to them about everything. I am also a member of the Party, and I often meet with the senior managers in the Party’s meetings.*

However, these voice mechanisms did not lead to his perception of inclusion, as he explained that his suggestions were not taken into consideration because he lacked work experience. He stated:

*I am not completely included in the decision-making process because I am not really mature in work. So, they are not confident to listen to my consultation.*
Moreover, he felt that some non-Indigenous managers were discriminatory, since they did not share work-related information with him. In addition, non-Indigenous employees distanced themselves from their Indigenous colleagues in the workplace. He claimed:

[…] they [the non-Indigenous] do not tell us about important information related to our work such as promotion policy and training programs. They just share this information to their group. […] some brother Kinh [non-Indigenous] do not really want to get involved themselves in the workplace. For example, when the department organise staff retreats, the non-Indigenous colleagues do not join with us in this event.

In summary, the Technical Assistant was the second Indigenous interviewee who was negative about the impact of government policy on Indigenous workforce participation. Moreover, he felt that, even though direct and indirect voice mechanisms were in place, Indigenous employees were excluded from decision making. The reasons for this included Indigenous low self-esteem and underlying racism in the workplace.

8.5 Summary of the findings

The purpose of this chapter was to understand: the effect of government policy and legislation on Indigenous employee voice; the organisations’ implementation of the government policy and legislation in Indigenous voice practice; and the experience of Indigenous employees of the impact of such voice practices on their inclusion in regard to the organisational decision making. The findings from case study 3 (PAA3) indicate five themes in relation to the research aims, presented as follows.

Firstly, for a majority of interviewees, government policy had a positive impact on Indigenous workforce participation, as it gave them advantages in recruitment and promotion. The findings from documentation also support this theme, as they indicate several policies related to
Indigenous employment. To illustrate, the Indigenous quotas were set up within the Agency, which were not only for departmental staff but also for managers. Moreover, Indigenous people accounted for more than 43 per cent of the Agency’s staff. The increase of Indigenous workforce participation in the public sector organisation is necessary to include their voice over public policy formulation, given that they are the majority the population of the District. Furthermore, this implies that the local government took action in delivering justice and fairness to Indigenous staff since they usually had served their community for all their lives, while non-Indigenous people often left the community for periods of time.

Secondly, both managers and Indigenous employees recognised that multiple voice mechanisms existed within the workplace. The study found that voice in this case was formulated in two policies: the workplace democracy regulations; and the guidelines for voice behaviours among staff and their peers, leaders and followers, managers and subordinates. These voice regulations were applied at both organisational and departmental levels. In addition, for a majority of interviewees, direct voice occurred through various channels such as individual meetings, monthly briefings, 6-month meetings, annual meetings, survey, empowering, email, and phone calls. According to two Indigenous managers and one union representative, indirect voice practices occurred through trade unions, and the unions supported Indigenous voice and inclusion. These findings suggest that these voice practices encourage employees’ participation and influence over their work. In addition, this organisation had more than one regulation on voice. This is evidence that it would support non-Indigenous staff to communicate effectively with Indigenous people who had unique aspects of cultures, languages and communication styles. Furthermore, this may prevent any potential conflict among Indigenous and non-Indigenous employees in the workplace.
Thirdly, voice mechanisms were applied differently to Indigenous people. According to two of the Indigenous managers, they sympathised with Indigenous difficulties as they were also of indigeneity, and attempted to capture their voice by applying different practices. One Indigenous manager claimed that she used inclusive ways to communicate with them, and in an Indigenous language and in informal meetings. Meanwhile, another Indigenous manager gave his Indigenous employees encouragement in performance evaluation and spoke with them in a gentle voice. It is clear that voice mechanisms applied to Indigenous employee rested with individual managers who understood Indigenous people.

Fourthly, Indigenous people had negative experiences of organisational voice practice. A multiple reason was identified as including underlying racism, lack of support from trade unions, lack of senior leadership roles within departments, and Indigenous employees’ low self-esteem, non-Indigenous managers’ lack of awareness of Indigenous differences and poor managerial skills, and government policy’s infantilisation of Indigenous people. For a majority of Indigenous employees, there was existence of racism within the workplace. One Indigenous employee reported that non-Indigenous employees often insulted and made fun of Indigenous people, even of Indigenous managers. Meanwhile, two Indigenous employees perceived that non-Indigenous managers had practised racial discrimination to Indigenous staff in terms of sharing information and communication. This shows that underlying racism could lead government policy and voice practice to become meaningless. Furthermore, it could undermine Indigenous voice at work.

The lack of Indigenous voice also stemmed from the lack of support from trade unions. A majority of Indigenous employees and one non-Indigenous manager did not recognise the roles of union representatives as employees’ indirect channel of voice. Instead, Indigenous employees believed that trade unions provided them with welfare benefits and pastoral care.
Moreover, it appears that the trade unions were under the supervision of the Party, as the Union Representative showed a link between the trade unions and the leader of the Party. This finding could argue that the Party may impact on the union voice in the workplace. As such, the union role in supporting Indigenous voice could be failed.

Indigenous employees also realised that there was a lack of senior leadership responsibility within the workplaces, which hindered their voice at work. While manager interviewees claimed that senior managers took responsibility for recruitment, Indigenous employees recognised that senior managers recruited employees based on their preferences, and that voice practices mostly rested with departmental managers. This is evidence that senior managers were just concerned about number of Indigenous people employed into the Agency to address the Indigenous quotas, and that they overlooked actual Indigenous voice. As such, Indigenous voice practices rested with departmental managers. This could become a problem under non-Indigenous managers, since these often overlooked Indigenous voice. It could be explained that non-Indigenous managers may perceive that senior managers give much priority in recruitment to Indigenous people, and that this was unfair to their group. In turn, non-Indigenous managers may reflect their reaction to this policy by refusing to give voice channels to Indigenous staff. Furthermore, as senior managers recruited Indigenous staff on the basis of their personal preferences, this may raise questions about transparency and accountability of the policy in the progression of its implementation.

Indigenous people’s voice was also impeded by their low self-esteem. According to an Indigenous manager, while non-Indigenous staff had wide networking and good relationships with senior managers, Indigenous employees were very fearful of speaking and experienced loneliness. Indigenous employees also often kept silent at every departmental meeting. Clearly, Indigenous low self-esteem has become a hindrance to their voice and inclusion. This was
exacerbated since non-Indigenous managers lacked awareness of Indigenous differences and had poor managerial skills. One Indigenous employee reported that a non-Indigenous manager often spoke bluntly and hurt Indigenous employee’s feelings. Moreover, an Indigenous employee reported that government policy infantilised Indigenous people in non-Indigenous people’s eyes. For example, non-Indigenous managers did not believe in Indigenous staff and did not share work-related information with them. In addition, government policy only focused on addressing Indigenous quotas and overlooked Indigenous employees’ actual voice within the workplace.

Fifthly, for both Indigenous manager and employees, Indigenous voice and inclusion only came from inclusive leadership practices. This inclusive leadership stems from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous leaders who often sympathize and make effort to capture Indigenous voice. Indigenous employees perceived that these leaders contributed to eliminating racism. The inclusive leaders also used voice practice differently to Indigenous people in terms of the way of communication (e.g. gentle speaking and using Indigenous languages), encouraging and caring, and applying informal meetings outside the workplace. These inclusive leadership practices not only adapt to Indigenous uniqueness but also create Indigenous sense of belonging. While this study found that Indigenous employees often felt inclusion under the supervision of Indigenous managers because of their inclusive leadership, there was no evidence of non-Indigenous staff’s perception of inclusion under these Indigenous managers.
CHAPTER 9 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

9.1 Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to explore Indigenous employee voice practices in Vietnamese public sector organisations. The thesis focuses on three research questions: (1) How do government policy and legislation affect Indigenous employee voice in Vietnam’s public sector organisations? (2) How do public sector organisations implement government policy and legislation in Indigenous employee voice practice? and (3) How and why does the experience of Indigenous employees of voice practice impact on their inclusion in regard to organisational decision making? In order to gain a deep and broad understanding of the phenomenon of Indigenous employee voice, this study utilised a qualitative approach in three public sector organisations located in three different areas in the region of the Central Highlands. The data drew on several sources such as key documentation, fieldnotes, and face-to-face in-depth interviews. The findings from the interviews were considered as key sources of data; and during the analysis all the findings were triangulated across the different sources. The results of each case were presented consecutively in Chapters 6, 7 and 8. In general, the findings from across the three case studies are structured around five themes: the positive effect of government policy and legislation on Indigenous workforce participation; the multiple forms of voice implementation; the differences in voice practices in adopting Indigenous uniqueness; Indigenous employees’ experience; and the contribution of inclusive leadership to Indigenous voice and inclusion.

Chapter 9 compares these emerging findings to identify common and unique explanations and draw conclusions across the three case studies. Hence, this chapter will highlight similarities and differences among the organisations and evaluate the significance of these findings in relation to the literature. The chapter is structured as follows. Section 9.1 presents the
introduction to the chapter. Section 9.2 highlights and discuss the findings within the comparison of the cross-case study and in light of the literature review. Section 9.3 summarises the chapter.

9.2 Cross-case analysis of findings

9.2.1 The positive effect of government policy and legislation on Indigenous workforce participation

Case study 1, PAA 1, was located in an urban area where the Indigenous population accounted for approximately 30 per cent of the local population. There was lack of clarity in regard to the number of their Indigenous employees. Both case studies 2 and 3, PAA2 and PAA3, were located in rural areas and Indigenous people dominated the local population. In case study 2, Indigenous employees accounted for approximately 45 per cent of the number of the organisation’s employees. In case study 3, they accounted for approximately 43 per cent of employees. All three organisations had Indigenous managers at the senior and departmental levels.

All managers across the three organisations were supportive of government policy on Indigenous workforce participation through the implementation of priority policies. The policies provided Indigenous people with educational opportunities in universities followed by prioritised recruitment into public sector organisations. In particular, each organisation established quotas of Indigenous people working in the workplaces and quotas in managerial positions within departments. These quotas were applied differently in each organisation, since this depended on the Indigenous population in the areas where these three organisations were located. For instance, in case 1, 10 per cent of work vacancies and 20 per cent of managerial positions in the Agency were reserved for Indigenous people, while these percentages of work
vacancies and managerial positions in case 2 were 35 per cent and 67 per cent, respectively. Unlike the two organisations above, in case 3, 50 per cent of work vacancies and managerial positions were reserved for Indigenous people. Indigenous employees were also provided with ongoing training programs to improve their workplace and leadership skills. Such training programs not only focused on employees’ working knowledge and skills but also on their political ideology. Moreover, Indigenous employees were widely involved in leadership positions across the three organisations, as they occupied some senior managerial positions, namely Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, and even Secretary of the Communist Party.

The views of the managers on the positive impact of government policy and legislation on Indigenous workforce participation in public sector organisations suggest that the Vietnamese Government is committed to including Indigenous people in the nation’s shared development. In addition, the involvement of Indigenous people in the highest executive positions in the PAA reflects the Government’s effort in fostering Indigenous voice over policy making and implementation in the Indigenous regions. This is in line with previous studies that suggest that public administrative agencies should be representative of all segments of the population so that they can achieve policy outcomes which might better reflect the needs of a diverse range of citizens (Groeneveld & Van de Walle, 2010; Meier, 1993; Peters et al., 2015). Moreover, having voice from all employee minority groups over public policy making is crucial.

Furthermore, Vietnam’s government policy on prioritised employment for Indigenous people is similar to equal employment opportunity policy (EEO) often used in Western countries. According to previous studies, EEO policy is necessary to increase Indigenous and ethnic minority workforce participation and include their voice in workplaces (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015; Mor-Barak, 1999; D’Netto & Sohal, 1999; Oswick & Noon, 2014; Ronquillo, 2010; Sabharwal, 2014; Shen et al., 2009). EEO, which is often enforced through
legislation, is an essential precursor for Indigenous employee voice since it enables Indigenous workforce participation (Andrews & Ashworth, 2015; Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015; Shen et al., 2009).

As already stated, Vietnam is a transitional economy which has changed from being a centrally planned economy to a market-orientated economy. At such a new stage, Western perspectives on employment relations in Vietnam are valued and increasingly applied in workplaces, even in the public sector (Badiani et al., 2012; Thang & Quang, 2005; Zhu & Fahey, 1999). The findings from the present study suggest that the Vietnamese government is meeting its international responsibilities on eliminating racial discrimination in the workplace by supporting Indigenous people to have equal opportunity of employment as the pathway to having a voice in the workplace.

However, although priority policies were in place, the implementation of such policies were different across the three organisations. While PAA2 focused on Indigenous promotion to leadership positions (e.g. 67 per cent of its management positions would be provided to Indigenous people), PAA1 emphasized the participation of Indigenous women in managerial positions as well as focusing on the smallest groups of Indigenous people. PAA3 developed their own policy on the ratio of Indigenous and non-Indigenous manager; for example, if the manager was Indigenous then the deputy would be non-Indigenous.

The study also found that the understanding of the common policies was different across the three cases. For example, while PAA2 gave Indigenous employees permanent-working contracts and 100 per cent salary in their first year of working, both PAA1 and PAA3 were not aware of this common policy. The differences in understanding and of implementation of Indigenous policy in each organisation reflect the existence of a gap between policy formulation and implementation. One reason for this might be the lack of monitoring and
control from higher authorities on the implementation in public sector organisations. Another reason is that the implementation of policy often rested with individual departmental managers.

9.2.2 The multiple forms of voice implementation

Firstly, the findings of this study identify the existence of formal voice mechanisms regulated by the workplace regulations at both the organisational and departmental levels in each organisation. The majority of interviewees across the three organisations recognised the workplace regulations in their organisations. Secondly, the three organisations had a variety of voice practices implemented for all staff, including formal and informal, and direct and indirect forms. Formal and direct forms of voice included the organisations’ assembly, annual meetings of workers, monthly meetings, and weekly briefings; while informal forms of voice were applied differently among managers within departments of each organisation, occurring through face-to-face and individual discussion, drop-in meetings, coffee and party times, phone calls, emails, Intranet, surveys, and anonymous suggestions. These practices often happened at the lowest level of management where managers worked directly with employees.

Thirdly, indirect voices in the three organisations were applied through the employee representatives such as trade unions and other unofficial representatives such as team leaders, senior staff, the Communist Youth League of Ho-chi-minh (CYLH), and Women’s Union. The CYLH and Women’s Union are political associations under the control of the Communist Party, and very little was said about their role; and they are largely unexplored in the literature. On the other hand, the majority of interviewees recognised the presence of unions in the workplace which acted on their behalf. However, there was no agreement on what this meant in practice. For example, some interviewees stated that the unions acted on their behalf and represented them to management, while others saw the union as providing welfare provisions and social events. In addition, there was a slight bias in favour of the role of trade unions in
supporting employee voice from manager interviewees. This is because most managers and union representatives involved in this investigation were self-selected to join the interviews, and they were more likely to support the claim of the positive role of trade unions.

It is clear that voice practices in Vietnamese public sector organisations reflect the literature and include all forms of voice: formal, informal, direct and indirect channels (Boxall & Purcell, 2010; Cox et al., 2009; Dundon et al., 2004; Marchington & Suter, 2013; McCabe & Lewin, 1992; Wilkinson et al., 2013). Studies suggest that the formalisation of voice mechanisms fosters the implementation of voice for employees in general and Indigenous people in particular (Harlos, 2001; Marchington & Suter, 2013). Moreover, the existence of multiple forms of EV found in the present research suggests that managers are willing to listen to and consult with their employees and allow some participatory influence over their work (Groeneveld & Van de Walle, 2010; Pitts, 2005). The findings in the present study also suggest that EV mechanisms are valued and applied in the context of Vietnam, a country ruled by the Communist party.

Besides the findings on similarities, there was a difference in voice practices in PAA3. This study found that PAA3 had additional workplace regulations including workplace democracy and organisational culture and expected behaviours. These regulations guided how employees, managers and leaders behave and communicate to their peers, subordinates and colleagues. The existence of these provisions suggests that senior managers in case study 3, where there was a large Indigenous population, were aware of Indigenous peoples’ unique aspects of culture, language and morality. It could be argued that these extra voice practices in PAA3 support Indigenous inclusion in regard to organisational decision making.
9.2.3 The differences in voice practices in adopting Indigenous uniqueness

For most management interviewees across the three organisations, voice practices applied to Indigenous employees were different in their adaptation and unique application. As already stated, in case 1, PAA1, located in a place that is the home of more than 20 Indigenous minority groups, senior managers claimed that they had used “open policy” that allowed Indigenous employees to have say at any time. These managers also claimed that this open policy created a friendly and inclusive environment in the workplace where Indigenous employees felt comfortable to share and present their voice. According to one senior manager in PAA1, individual leaders and managers would play important roles in supporting Indigenous voice if they had understanding of Indigenous uniqueness and communicated with them in a gentle and encouraging voice. Another senior manager claimed that he supported Indigenous voice by providing Indigenous employees with an “IT training course” so that they could be able to use social media networks to exchange their ideas and present their suggestions directly to managers. In case 2, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous managers claimed that they proactively encouraged Indigenous voice, to cope with their shyness and hesitation. In addition, they communicated “thoroughly” and in a “delicate way”. In case 3, two Indigenous managers expressed that they treated their Indigenous employees differently, such as using Indigenous languages and speaking with a friendly, suitable and gentle voice.

These findings suggest that voice practices for Indigenous employees consisted of taking into account their unique cultures and languages, managers’ sympathies and support, and constructive communication skills. It could be argued that these practices suit Indigenous Vietnamese peoples’ diverse cultures, which are very visible and can become barriers that impede Indigenous participation at work if managers do not understand them (Badiani et al., 2012). As such, it may be necessary to have cultural knowledge and communication skills to
work with minority employees in general (Fujimoto & Härtel, 2017; Townsend, 2014) and Indigenous people in particular (Doyle & Hungerford, 2015; Mika & O'Sullivan, 2014). Furthermore, valuing and respecting Indigenous peoples’ unique culture and language are important to make them feel confident and included in the workplaces (Shore et al., 2011).

These findings are consistent with Milliken et al. (2003), who found that supervisors who had a supportive style contributed to employee voice. In addition, O'Donoghue et al. (2007) found that lack of management support, even if other contextual influences are present, undermines employee participation. Other evidence suggests that managers’ communication skills are important to capture employee voice, particularly with voice from minority groups (Townsend, 2014; Tang et al., 2015; Weiss et al., 2018). With respect to Indigenous employees, the findings from the present study suggest that communication skills include “gentle speaking”, which means talking in detail, taking time to understand, and encouraging employees to succeed.

Together, it can be argued that managers and leaders’ leadership styles identified in this study reflect some of the features of inclusive leadership (Randel et al., 2018), and are consistent with previous studies on inclusive leadership; for instance, some authors claim that inclusive leadership often uses constructive communication with their followers (Weiss et al., 2018), respects and treats employees as an insider of the workplace (Pelled et al., 1999), and understands and satisfies employee needs for a sense of belongingness and uniqueness (Randel et al., 2018; Shore et al., 2011).

9.2.4 Indigenous employees’ experience

Despite the positive narratives from the managers and union officials, for many Indigenous respondents across three case studies, their experience was much more negative. While they recognised the existence of various government policies and organisational voice mechanisms,
they still felt that their voice was not taken into consideration. The data from the three case studies identify several emerging themes explaining reasons for this. In general, Indigenous employees across the three organisations perceived that their voice and inclusion were impeded by underlying racism, lack of support from trade unions, lack of responsibility of senior managers for the implementation of the policy, their own low self-esteem, non-Indigenous managers’ lack of awareness of Indigenous differences and poor managerial skills, and government policy’s infantilisation of Indigenous people. These particular reasons are discussed as follows.

**Underlying racism**

There were many examples of the existence of overt and covert racial prejudice in the workplaces in this study; for example, an Indigenous manager from PAA1 reported that non-Indigenous managers were unlikely to work with Indigenous people; and an Indigenous employee in PAA2 claimed that non-Indigenous managers were reluctant to have Indigenous staff in their workplaces, or if there were Indigenous staff in their departments, they would not arrange work for them. Another Indigenous employee from case PAA1 reported that he was only given minor responsibilities with no rights to make decisions over his work. Indigenous employees across the three organisations claimed that non-Indigenous managers did not believe in Indigenous people and often ignored Indigenous voice in the workplaces. For example, one Indigenous employee from PAA1 reported that she was rarely consulted directly by her manager.

The missing Indigenous voice was also recognised by an Indigenous manager from PAA3 who felt that he was not heard by his non-Indigenous managers. Indigenous employees from PAA3 also perceived that they were not welcome in the workplace due to the racist attitudes of some of their non-Indigenous colleagues. Even in PAA3 where the Indigenous population dominated
the district, Indigenous employees still perceived racism and experienced racist attitudes from non-Indigenous employees towards the locals.

Together, these findings suggest that racism in Vietnamese workplaces exists at both organisational and departmental levels; and that is not addressed or even identified by the government (Badiani et al., 2012). These findings are consistent with previous studies on the existence of racism in Vietnamese workplaces (Molini & Wan, 2008; Wells-Dang, 2012). Moreover, this problem is often exacerbated if non-Indigenous managers perceive that government policy is unfair to the dominant mainstream group; and some managers expressed their opposition to the governments’ prioritised policy by rejecting Indigenous employees and ignoring their voice in the workplaces.

The underlying racism leads to unfair treatment of Indigenous employees, resulting in voice mechanisms being meaningless, and causing potential conflicts between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. The findings are all supported by the literature (Cavico et al., 2012; Fujimoto & Härtel, 2017; Goldman et al., 2008). Furthermore, these findings suggest that government policy (i.e. EEO) by itself does not lead to the elimination of racism in workplaces, especially if there is a lack of monitoring control from the higher authorities of government (Peters et al., 2015; von Maravić et al., 2013). Government policy needs to include in addition an education and awareness campaign as to why these initiatives are important, as an understanding of the uniqueness of Indigenous cultures and values is critical for success (Bell et al., 2011; Haar & Brougham, 2011; Hunter & Gray, 2002). In this way, non-Indigenous managers are more able to understand how to navigate their way through the fine line between compliance and merit at the lower level of manager, rather than at higher level of policy.
Lack of support from trade unions

Indigenous employees across all three organisations claimed that trade unions failed to represent their voice with managers, this finding contradicted the perspectives of the managers. One Indigenous employee in PAA1 reported that the unions “do not have any impact” on his work. Similarly, two Indigenous employees from PAA2 claimed that the unions “are not good at representing their members’ voices with managers”, since the unions’ voices were not strong enough to stand up for their membership and they were not willing to present their members’ suggestions to managers.

Instead, Indigenous employees argued that the unions’ role focused mainly on pastoral or welfare-based issues. For example, in cases 1 and 2, this meant “visiting their members who get sick”; and in case 3, trade unions provided employees with staff uniforms and organised a retreat for staff. Furthermore, the study found that union representatives in each organisation were not independent from departmental managers, as there was a link between trade unions and the Party; for example, a union representative from PAA3 stated that his work was under supervision by the Party. This study also identified that, within departments across the three organisations, managers also held, concurrently, the position of Secretary of the Party, which often monitors and facilitates the unions’ activities.

While previous studies have found that trade unions in communist countries are not independent of the Party and hence often support management in government and SOEs (Collins et al., 2011; Clarke et al., 2007; Do et al., 2013; Zhu & Benson, 2008), the lack of support from trade unions to Indigenous employees has not previously been identified. Furthermore, consistent with the literature, the roles of trade unions in these Vietnam’s public sector organisations are not considered as collective voice, since the unions are in a management ‘partnership’ (Collins et al., 2011; Clarke et al., 2007; Do et al., 2013; Littler &
Palmer, 1986; Van Gramberg et al., 2013). In addition, the findings from the present study are in line with previous studies on non-Indigenous workers in that trade unions just provided employees with pastoral care and welfare benefits (Do et al., 2013; Fry & Mees, 2016). The present study cannot make this general claim to all employees, since it did not manage to capture the perspectives of non-Indigenous employees. It could be that the lack of union support is the same for all employees, as the unions are not independent from managers in these three organisations. In addition, due to lack of support from trade unions, Indigenous employees sought support for their voices from unofficial representatives such as team leaders, senior staff and other associations (i.e. CYLH, Women Unions).

*Lack of responsibility of senior managers for the implementation of the policy*

Although management interviewees across the three organisations were positive in regard to the impact of government policy for Indigenous people, Indigenous employees from all three organisations claimed that, in reality, the implementation of the policy rested with individual departmental managers. One Indigenous employee from PAA1 reported that individual managers within departments monitored and controlled the implementation of government policy, rather than senior managers. According to another Indigenous employee, these departmental managers even evaluated employee performance based on their favouritism, which led to Indigenous employees’ perception of unfair treatment. In addition, a majority of Indigenous interviewees from PAA1 claimed that non-Indigenous managers were reluctant to apply government policy for Indigenous people despite there being Indigenous quotas in every department.

Similarly, Indigenous employees from PAA2 identified that senior managers let the policy implementation and voice practices rest with individual departmental managers. A majority of Indigenous interviewees perceived that the implementation of government policy and voice
practice failed at the departmental level since non-Indigenous managers did not give the priority of employment to Indigenous people. In addition, they overlooked Indigenous voice in organisational decision making. This is the same situation in PAA3, as Indigenous employees recognised that senior managers were only concerned that a number of Indigenous people be employed into the organisation to address the Indigenous quotas and then overlooked Indigenous actual voice happening within the workplaces.

It could be argued that the Vietnamese cultural values in management and leadership, such as ‘high power distance’, contributes to employees’ perception of a lack of senior leadership responsibility within the workplaces (Nguyen et al., 2018). Senior managers in the context of ‘high power distance’ are less likely to provide a formal voice mechanism to employees, since they consider voice as usurping decision-making power (Kwon & Farndale, 2018). Consistent with the literature, the present study found that departmental managers play key roles in responding to Indigenous voice in Vietnam’s public sector organisations, since there was a lack of monitoring control from senior managers across the three organisations (Nguyen et al., 2018; Pichler et al., 2017; Townsend, 2014).

The implementation of government policy may be failing in some departments of these organisations, as departmental managers often lacked understanding of the benefits of and the skills in implementing government policy (Fujimoto & Härtel, 2017; Gollan et al., 2005; Marchington et al., 2001; Townsend, 2014; Wilkinson et al., 2004). As previous studies suggest, this is particularly important in managing minority employees, as without relevant skills and training in cultural competency skills, voice mechanisms can become meaningless (Fujimoto & Härtel, 2017; Townsend, 2014). This would be exacerbated by underlying racism and non-Indigenous managers’ reaction to government policy, as they perceive government
policy to be unfair to their group. They reflect their reaction to this policy by refusing to give voice opportunities to Indigenous employees.

*Indigenous employees’ low self-esteem*

This study found several themes related to individual Indigenous employees’ characteristics which led to their silence at work. As already stated in case 1, management interviewees identified Indigenous employees’ sensitivity, shyness and fear to present their voices in front of their managers. Also, the interviews with Indigenous employees provided similar ideas; for instance, one Indigenous employee from case 1 acknowledged that she herself felt very hesitant to present any ideas. In addition, one senior manager and one Indigenous employee claimed that Indigenous employees’ professional skills and knowledge contributed to their missing voice in organisational decision making since they were not confident to present their suggestions relating to their work condition.

Similar to case 1, the study found that Indigenous employees in case 2 were also suffering from their “shyness and hesitating” to participate at work, and that this made it difficult for them to meet “the new working method”, as one non-Indigenous manager claimed. This non-Indigenous manager also found that some Indigenous employees were not good at the country’s official language, which may prevent them from daily communication with their colleagues. In addition, one Indigenous senior manager from case 2 identified that Indigenous employees lacked professional skills and knowledge, which impeded their voice at work.

As already stated in case 3, one Indigenous manager reported that Indigenous employees were also likely to keep silent. One non-Indigenous manager confirmed that he did not receive much feedback or comments from his Indigenous subordinates; and he claimed that the fear of negative results received from their managers constrained their voice at work. Another
Indigenous manager also expressed his perceptions of the reasons for Indigenous missing voice at work as being such as their shyness, hesitation, and fear of negative treatment from managers.

It can be argued that Indigenous employee voice and inclusion are constrained by their low self-esteem. As a result of their low self-esteem, Indigenous employees may feel psychologically unsafe to speak up. These findings are in line with the literature, as several studies have acknowledged the impact of individual employees’ perception of psychological safety on their willingness to speak up (Bell et al., 2011; Brinsfield, 2014; Detert & Burris, 2007; Dyne et al., 2003; Milliken & Martins, 1996; Milliken et al., 2003; Nechanska et al., in press; Pohler & Luchak, 2014). According to Milliken et al. (2003), employees who have low positions and/or lack of experience at work are more likely to remain silent. This is because if they raise their voice this may lead to negative outcomes from their voice behaviour such as retaliation or punishment (refer to Chapter 4, section 4.2.7). The missing of Indigenous voice may also stem from their perception of their voice’s low efficacy. In other words, Indigenous employees are reluctant to speak up because they perceive that their voice may be ignored by managers (Detert & Burris, 2007).

Indigenous employees’ low self-esteem in the present study could be understood as being a result of social categorisations and stereotypes in Vietnam. The findings suggest that Vietnamese cultural values in management and leadership such as ‘in-group collectivism’ (Quang & Vuong, 2002; Ralston et al., 1999; Rowley et al., 2007) lead to the marginalisation of Indigenous people from the mainstream ethnic group, since Indigenous employees may be categorised by their non-Indigenous colleagues as members of the ‘out-group’. According to social identity theory, racial and ethnic minorities have a high risk of classification into ‘out-
groups’, and deal with challenges in cooperating with others given that people often prefer to work with those who are in their ‘in-group’ (Bae et al., 2017).

This identity classification can lead to racial stereotyping which can threaten how Indigenous employees evaluate themselves in the workplace (Hogg & Terry, 2000). For example, they will be likely to perceive themselves as being less accepted by their organisations, and feel that they have less discretion in their roles (Greenhouse et al., 1990). Hence, this stereotyping will harm Indigenous voice opportunities as “it induces employees’ disengagement and exclusion from organisations” (McNulty et al., 2018, p. 835). Furthermore, this would be exacerbated by the Government, as they undermine Indigenous identity in the country (please refer to Chapter 2, section 2.2.2), and treat any Indigenous request for their identity as political sensitivity (IWGIA, 2018).

*Non-Indigenous managers’ lack of awareness of Indigenous differences and poor managerial skills*

For two Indigenous employees from case 1, non-Indigenous managers lacked awareness of Indigenous uniqueness, so that they did not understand to communicate with Indigenous people in friendly and encouraging ways. One Indigenous employee from case 2 claimed that a non-Indigenous manager often shouted at Indigenous employees who tried to have voice in their decision making although Indigenous employees voiced in a friendly manner. In addition, another Indigenous employee from PAA2 identified that a non-Indigenous manager did not use an appropriate way of communication with them, which made them feel excluded. In case 3, one Indigenous employee was critical of a non-Indigenous manager’s communication skills, as he often spoke bluntly and hurt her feelings.
It is clear that some non-Indigenous managers were unaware of Indigenous differences. In addition, they lacked communication skills to communicate effectively with Indigenous people in terms of workplace diversity. These findings are consistent with the literature, as some authors have suggested that line managers often lack important skills in implementing and using voice mechanisms as designed and intended, and thus undermine voice effectiveness and relevance (Gollan et al., 2005; Marchington et al., 2001; Townsend, 2014; Wilkinson et al., 2004).

**Government policy’s infantilisation of Indigenous people**

Indigenous employees in the three cases perceived that government policy infantilised Indigenous people in non-Indigenous people’ eyes, as it led to racial stereotypes of Indigenous staff. As a result of this infantilisation, non-Indigenous managers recruited Indigenous people to fill the Indigenous quotas in their departments but did not give them any voice channels at work. In addition, they did not believe in Indigenous consultation and often overlooked their suggestions. It could be argued that the Government’s undermining of Indigenous identity made the problem. As stated in Chapter 2, the Indigenous people in Vietnam are not recognised officially as indigenous to their land by their Government, and this is fundamentally different from other countries. Instead, the Government often maintains the claim that the prioritised policy practice for the Indigenous people stems from the CPV and the Governments’ sympathies with Indigenous challenges. As such, government policy for Indigenous people is treated as a ‘priority’, rather than giving Indigenous ‘equal employment opportunity’, which fuels non-Indigenous people’s perception of unfairness to their ethnic groups. Arguably, government policy and legislation for Indigenous EV can’t be changed unless the Government recognises the Indigenous people as native to their regions and deserving of special treatment through prioritised policies.
9.2.5 The contribution of inclusive leadership to Indigenous voice practices

All Indigenous and non-Indigenous leaders across three case studies tended to be positive about Indigenous voice, possibly because they self-selected to be interviewed and believed in what they are doing. Indigenous employees reported that their perception of inclusion came from inclusive leadership behaviours which address Indigenous differences. In case study 1, Indigenous employees identified that two Indigenous and one non-Indigenous had positive impacts on their voice. These leaders were likely to focus on building the confidence of their Indigenous staff to enable them to achieve, since they were culturally sensitive and understand Indigenous issues. Furthermore, these leaders were “open minded” and often used several informal and direct forms of voice to capture Indigenous voice. Two Indigenous interviewees reported that they encouraged Indigenous voices and cultures in the workplace and used suitable ways of communication with Indigenous staff, such as gentle speaking. According to one Indigenous employee, his leader often used informal channels such as meeting at coffee shops to exchange ideas with him. Another respondent from case 1 reported that this leader was easy to meet up with in his room.

In case 2, the findings show that one Indigenous and two non-Indigenous leaders contributed significantly to Indigenous voice since they were described as truly listening to Indigenous voice and spent time to make Indigenous opinions clear. They often used informal and direct forms of voice to Indigenous employees. In addition, they communicated with the Indigenous employees in delicate ways. According to two Indigenous interviewees, Indigenous leaders in this case often listened to and treated all employees in the same way. One Indigenous employee identified that one non-Indigenous manager in this case understood and was sympathetic to Indigenous employees.
In PAA3, Indigenous employees identified that there were four Indigenous and one non-Indigenous leaders positively influencing Indigenous voice. Two Indigenous employees identified that these Indigenous leaders treated them in very friendly, gentle and inclusive ways, and even spoke using Indigenous languages to Indigenous staff. Similarly, a non-Indigenous leader in this case gave them friendly advice and instruction in work. He also respected and valued Indigenous people and their cultures.

With respect to the managers’ claim of their applying different voice mechanisms to Indigenous employees, it is clear that leadership can be seen as a key part of Indigenous voice in practice (Ruwhiu & Elkin, 2016). The findings from this context suggest inclusive leadership behaviour that promoted Indigenous EV consisted of sympathy, open-mindedness, inclusiveness, encouragement, and a gentle communication style. These inclusive leadership behaviours not only addressed the diversity such as facilitating employee belongingness and uniqueness (Randel et al., 2018), but also attempted to create demographic workplace diversity. This present study found that inclusive leaders are the ones to look for diversity by intending to support financially Indigenous university students and then recruiting them into the workplaces. This behaviour may arise from their recognition of potential benefits such as creativity and innovation that which may achieve from their diverse composition of staff (Farndale et al., 2015; Otten & Jansen, 2014).

In addition, this is more important for public sector organisations since they not only provide public services to communities but also play a role of public representatives of the population (Pitts, 2005). It is argued that, since these inclusive leaders intend to promote diversity within their workplace, their attitudes and mindset may align with their inclusiveness practices which could foster Indigenous employee voices and inclusion (Buengeler et al., 2018; Shao et al., 2017). This finding is in line with previous studies that explain how leaders who are in favour
of diversity practices often welcome and take account of different voices in their decision making (Farndale et al., 2015; Roberson, 2006; Sabharwal, 2014). In addition, it is argued that this finding extends the current theoretical model of inclusive leadership by adding ‘creating workplace diversity’ as the third behaviour of inclusive leadership (see Randel et al., 2018). This difference may also reflect the contextual nature of inclusive leadership in the public sector and from a particular group (van Dick et al., 2018).

Inclusive leadership seeks Indigenous voice through asking proactively and speaking in gentle voice. This finding may challenge some previous studies, as several authors claim that employees are the ones who often looked for their voice over management (i.e. upward voice), by considering meaningful voices and choosing appropriate ways of voice to present to their managers in order to ensure that their voices could be taken into account (Burris, 2012; Liu et al., 2017; Morrison, 2011). The behaviour of inclusive leadership by proactively seeking voice may reflect the uniqueness of this particular leadership behaviour in dealing with the challenges in the context of Indigenous people, as it removes the Indigenous obstacles and values their contribution, which may promote Indigenous employees’ sense of uniqueness (Roberson, 2006; Shore et al., 2011).

Equally important is the way that the leaders expressed their voice to their Indigenous followers such as ‘gentle speaking’ which included talking in detail, taking time to understand, and encouraging employees to succeed. Most previous research focussed on perceived leadership styles and behaviours, instead of examining leaders’ actual communication process (Weiss et al., 2018). Furthermore, it is argued here that there are not many previous studies exploring inclusive leaders’ communication styles toward Indigenous employees. This finding is partly in line with a previous study by Weiss et al. (2018), in which this author found that leaders’ use of first-person plural pronouns impacted positively on subordinates’ voice behaviour. The
finding from the present study may argue that inclusive leadership communication can be understood as engaging with, actively listening to, and building confidence and self-esteem for, Indigenous employees. Together, this may claim that inclusive speaking is a characteristic of inclusive leadership behaviour since it may be able to embrace different cultures and languages in order to engage minority employees into workplaces (Sabharwal, 2014; Shore et al., 2011).

Moreover, the findings from the present study may broaden current understandings of inclusive leadership in the context of Confucian and collectivist cultures, where Indigenous people are a marginalised group often overlooked in workplace-based studies since Indigenous people are not recognised officially by governments (IWGIA, 2018). This argues that, in the context of Confucian and collectivist-influenced countries where the power distance between leaders and followers is high (Nguyen et al., 2018; Tang et al., 2017), inclusive leadership plays a crucial role in fostering minority employees’ need for belongingness via distributing justice and fair treatment to them, since this particular leadership style focuses on an individual perception of belongingness (Buengeler et al., 2018; Shore et al., 2011; Tang et al., 2015).

Meanwhile, collectivist leadership cultures often emphasize a sense of communality which considers a feeling of belongingness as arising from common interests and goals (Buengeler et al., 2018). This may raise a classification among majority and minority employees into ‘in-group’ and ‘out-group’, since different voices from minority employee groups may not be taken into consideration as their voices are weak and often hindered by threats of stereotyping (Brinsfield, 2014; D’Netto & Sohal, 1999; Kwon & Farndale, 2018; Randel et al., 2018; Strauss, 2006). This argument is consistent with findings from a previous study by Kwon and Farndale (2018) in which these authors assert that employee voice is often limited in organisations in a culture of high power distance, since employees feel unsafe and ineffective
to have a voice. In such contexts as in the present study, the minority voices depend on inclusive leadership behaviours, which supports findings from previous research (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015; Carmeli et al., 2010; Randel et al., 2018).

9.3 Summary

The summaries from each case study presented in Chapters 6, 7 and 8 identified themes relating to Indigenous voice and inclusion in the contexts of each case. This chapter presented a comparison of five common themes across three organisations. In general, the present study draws four key conclusions relating to Indigenous voice and inclusion in public sector organisations. Firstly, government policy and legislation play key roles in increasing Indigenous workforce participation which is considered as the main precursor of Indigenous voice. Indigenous voice only occurs once government policy for Indigenous workforce participation (i.e. EEO) is enforced by legislation, since Indigenous people are twice as more likely to suffer from racism. Secondly, given that voice is treated as a universal concept, this does not adapt to Indigenous peoples’ unique aspects of culture, language, and morality. In order to capture Indigenous ideas, applying different voice practices is crucial in the workplace with Indigenous employees. Thirdly, voice mechanisms designed by organisations by themselves do not lead to Indigenous perception of inclusion in regard to organisational decision making. Instead, inclusive leadership behaviours make the difference, as they meet Indigenous demands of uniqueness and belongingness. Finally, the present study concludes that the barriers to Indigenous voice and inclusion in Vietnam’s public sector organisations consist of underlying racism, Indigenous peoples’ individual characteristics (e.g. low self-esteem), and lack of support from trade unions, senior leaders, and non-Indigenous managers. The next, and final, chapter will revisit the research questions and indicate the key theoretical and practical contributions of the thesis.
CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to revisit the key research questions in light of the findings from the three case studies, the contextual literature reviews presented in Chapters 2 and Chapter 3, and the key theories and underlying conceptual framework outlined in Chapter 4. Through this synthesis, the theoretical and practical contributions of this thesis will be identified. This chapter is structured as follows. Section 10.2 summarises the key points that make up the chapters of this thesis. Section 10.3 revisits the research questions. Section 10.4 outlines the theoretical contribution of the thesis. Section 10.5 presents the practical contribution of the thesis. Section 10.6 highlights the limitations of the thesis and suggestions for further research. Section 10.7 provides a chapter summary.

10.2 Overview of the thesis

This thesis aimed to understand: the effect of government policy and legislation on Indigenous employee voice in Vietnam’s public sector organisations; the organisations’ implementation of government policy and legislation in Indigenous voice practice; and the experience of Indigenous employees of such voice practice and the impact on their inclusion in regard to organisational decision making. This thesis utilises qualitative research with three case studies located in the Central Highlands region of Vietnam.

Chapter 1 explained the problem statement that underpins the present research. The problem statement was outlined in relation to the absence of Indigenous employee voice in policy making and implementation as their voice is often ignored by organisations and researchers in general and in Vietnam particular. The context of the research was also established in Chapter 1 with a brief narrative of Indigenous issues and the Vietnamese Government’s approach to
promoting Indigenous employee voice in the workplace. The response of the Vietnamese Government to Indigenous voice is considered as ‘well begun but not yet done’, as Indigenous people are still marginalised from the mainstream population. Key definitions, of Indigenous people, employee voice, inclusion, diversity, and public sector organisations, were presented. Chapter 1 also presented the research objectives and the research questions in order to understand the impact of government policy on Indigenous voice, the organisations’ responses to Indigenous voice, and Indigenous experiences of inclusion in regard to organisational decision making.

Chapters 2 and chapter 3 expounded the contexts established in Chapter 1. Chapter 2 elaborated the definition of Indigenous people utilised in the present research, and outlined Indigenous histories, cultures, languages, and religions that have shaped them differently from non-Indigenous people in Vietnam. Indigenous workforce participation and their barriers to participation at work were also discussed in Chapter 2. Chapter 2 also outlined government policy and legislation in relation to Indigenous employment and voice practices. As the present research investigates Indigenous employee voice in public sector organisations, the characteristics of public sector organisations in Vietnam were elaborated in Chapter 3. Chapter 3 also explored the role of trade unions as employee collective voice channels in Vietnam, and outlined Vietnamese cultural values in management and leadership which shape an organisation’s voice practices for Indigenous people.

Chapter 4 elaborated the key definitions presented in Chapter 1 and expounded in detail the theoretical underpinnings of the present research. Definitions, practices, influencing factors and conceptual models of EV were outlined and discussed in this chapter. Chapter 4 also highlighted the characteristics of minority EV and Indigenous employee workplace experience worldwide. Since this thesis investigates EV in public sector organisations, the literature on
public management relating to EEO, diversity management practices and inclusion was also elaborated to clarify the ways in which minority EV and inclusion are shaped in workplace diversity. The roles of management and inclusive leadership in applying EV for Indigenous employees in the workplace were discussed. Furthermore, this chapter presented the unions’ response to Indigenous EV as indirect/collective voice in workplaces. On the basis of the literature and contextual background, research questions were also framed in this chapter.

Chapter 5 elaborated the selected research design and methodology utilised in this thesis. This chapter explained the theoretical and practical reasons to select a qualitative case approach through the lens of the interpretivist paradigm. The chapter also elaborated the research design with three case studies; and also explained the data collection procedures. The theoretical model of Indigenous voice and inclusion, data analysis process, data validity and reliability were described in detail in this chapter. In addition, the ethical considerations were described in Chapter 5.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 presented the findings from each of the case studies. On the basis of the findings from the three case studies, a cross-case analysis was presented in Chapter 9. Chapter 10 revisits the research questions, and underlines the key findings, contributions and limitations of the study.

10.3 Revisiting the research questions

The research questions that this thesis investigated were: (1) How do government policy and legislation affect Indigenous employee voice in Vietnam’s public sector organisations? (2) How do public sector organisations implement government policy and legislation in Indigenous employee voice practice? (3) How and why does the experience of Indigenous
employees of voice practice impact on their inclusion in regard to organisational decision making?

In order to address these research questions, the thesis utilised a qualitative approach with three case studies. Since the research subjects of the thesis focused on Indigenous employees working in public sector organisations, Indigenous uniqueness was taken into consideration to support the research process such as in access to fieldwork, interviews with Indigenous people, and data interpretation. This Indigenous approach was to address the Indigenous research challenges that have been recognised by previous scholars (Burgess & Dyer, 2009; Chilisa, 2011; Louis, 2007; Ruwhiu & Elkin, 2016). In total, twenty-seven in-depth interviews were conducted with Indigenous and non-Indigenous managers and Indigenous employees. Besides this, the study utilised documentation and fieldnotes as another source of data to triangulate the results. Thematic analysis was applied to interpret the findings.

The theoretical model of Indigenous employee voice and inclusion depicted in Chapter 5 was also utilised to guide the analysis of Indigenous EV in this thesis. This theoretical model of Indigenous EV and inclusion utilised several theoretical premises to address Indigenous contextual uniqueness and the lack of Indigenous voice research in the extant literature. Firstly, this model considers EEO as a crucial precursor of Indigenous EV, since this policy can enforce a public organisation to recruit its staff from Indigenous groups and appoint them to decision-making positions (Hunter & Hawke, 2002; Kensington-Miller & Ratima, 2015; Peters et al., 2015; Pitts, 2005; Sabharwal, 2014).

Secondly, EEO by itself does not lead to the occurrence of Indigenous voice if there is no different voice mechanism applied to them (Bell et al., 2011; Trau & Härtel, 2007; Weiss et al., 2018; Wilkinson et al., 2018). Previous studies claim that lack of appropriate voice mechanisms applied to employees from marginalised groups impacts on their perception of
less inclusiveness, since their uniqueness is not taken into consideration (Bell et al., 2011; Shore et al., 2011; Wilkinson et al., 2018).

Thirdly, the occurrence of Indigenous voice does not lead to Indigenous experience of inclusion in regard to organisational decision making (Brinsfield, 2014; Strauss, 2006). This is because Indigenous EV practice is impeded by barriers including: racism, managers’ knowledge, skills, and awareness of Indigenous uniqueness, lack of union support, and individual Indigenous employees’ characteristics (Bell et al., 2011; Biddle et al., 2013; Daldy et al., 2013; Haar & Brougham, 2013; Hunter & Hawke, 2002; Milliken & Martins, 1996; Milliken et al., 2003; Mowbray et al., 2015; Ng & Sears, 2012; Wilkinson et al., 2010). In such contexts, inclusive leadership behaviour that intends to enhance minority voice via an equitable climate and treatment practices is the second driver of Indigenous voice and Indigenous perception of inclusion (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015; Janssens & Zanoni, 2014; Pichler et al., 2017; Randel et al., 2018; Robinson, 2000; Shore et al., 2011; Trau, 2015; Weiss et al., 2018). The next sections explain the meaning of the findings from this thesis, addressing each of the research questions in turn.

10.3.1 Research question one

How do government policy and legislation affect Indigenous employee voice in Vietnam’s public sector organisations?

The findings from the present study show that government policy and legislation had a positive impact on Indigenous voice. This policy is known as ‘Indigenous prioritised policy’ [Chính sách ưu tiên người dân tộc], and can be considered as being similar to EEO policy in Western countries, since this policy is enforced through legislation similar to in many Western countries (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015; Shen et al., 2009; Webb, 1997). The first positive effect of EEO
policy for Indigenous employee voice is to encourage Indigenous workforce participation in public sector organisations. This finding is in line with the literature, as previous studies have found that public sector organisations have provided most jobs for Indigenous people (Badiani et al., 2012; Dang, 2012; Wells-Dang, 2012). Secondly, this effect promotes Indigenous voice and participation in organisational decision-making processes since government policy gave Indigenous people quotas and targets for line, middle and senior managerial positions. As stated in previous chapters, this study found that there were a number of Indigenous people in positions at departmental and senior levels across the three organisations. As the literature shows, not only do minority employees need to be visible in the workplace but they also need to be represented in leadership positions from which they have an opportunity to have an influence over organisational decision making (Andrews & Ashworth, 2015; Groeneveld & Van de Walle, 2010; Meier & Nicholson-Crotty, 2006; Shen et al., 2009).

In general, government policy and legislation are considered as the main precursor of Indigenous voice. It could be argued that Indigenous voice would not happen if there is no support from government policy for them, since Indigenous people are twice as more likely to suffer from racial discrimination and sexual harassment than others in the workplace (Hunter & Hawke, 2002; Kensington-Miller & Ratima, 2015).

10.3.2 Research question two

How do these public sector organisations implement the government policy and legislation in Indigenous employee voice practice?

The findings from the present study show that a range of voice mechanisms existed within the public sector organisations, including indirect and direct channels, and formal and informal forms. Consistent with the literature, these formal voices were expressed in each organisation’s
regulations and mandated by the government (Wilkinson et al., 2014; Wilkinson et al., 2018). For instance, each public organisation implemented the Workplace Democracy Regulations which was drawn from the Labour Law. As stated in Chapter 9, formal and direct forms of voice included annual meetings, assembles, monthly meetings, weekly briefings, and surveys. Informal voices were not regulated in organisational regulations, but these forms happened daily, such as email, phone calls, face-to-face meetings at either the workplace and/or outside the workplace, and Intranet.

All these forms of voice mechanism found from the present study are consistent with previous studies (Boxall & Purcell, 2010; Cox et al., 2009; Dundon et al., 2004; Marchington & Suter, 2013; McCabe & Lewin, 1992; Wilkinson et al., 2013). In addition, there was trade union presence within each organisation, and trade unions were recognised officially as worker representatives that represent workers’ rights and interests in the workplace. Trade unions provided employees not only with an indirect form of voice but also with pastoral care and welfare benefits (Clarke et al., 2007; Collins et al., 2013; Do & Broek, 2013; Van Gramberg et al., 2013).

More importantly, the present study found that managers and leaders who were sympathetic to Indigenous voice applied this voice mechanism differently to Indigenous employees as a response to Indigenous differences. This is consistent with the literature, as many previous studies suggest that the unique contexts of Indigenous people determine leadership behaviours (Ruwhiu & Elkin, 2016) and shape management approaches (Mika & O’Sullivan, 2014). As already stated, the present study found that Indigenous employees were encouraged to present their voice through informal channels such as catching up at coffee shops rather than at the formal meetings. ‘Some’ managers or ‘sympathetic managers’ or even ‘inclusive’ managers were the ones who proactively asked for the Indigenous voice in the meetings and briefings,
and used inclusive communication (e.g. gentle speaking) with them. These managers and leaders also respected and valued Indigenous cultures and languages, and treated them equally in the workplaces.

In general, voice mechanisms were applied differently to Indigenous people. These differences include using inclusive communication (Weiss et al., 2018), respecting and treating them as an insider of the workplace (Pelled et al., 1999), and addressing all their demands for belongingness and uniqueness (Randel et al., 2018; Shore et al., 2011).

### 10.3.3 Research question three

*How and why does the experience of Indigenous employees of voice practice impact on their inclusion in regard to organisational decision making.*

The study found that a majority of Indigenous employee had identified their negative experiences of voice practices since their voices were not taken into consideration. In general, there are six common reasons across three organisations: underlying racism; lack of support from trade unions; lack of responsibility of senior managers for the implementation of the policy; Indigenous employees’ low self-esteem; non-Indigenous managers’ lack of awareness of Indigenous differences and poor managerial skills; and government policy’s infantilisation of Indigenous people.

The existence of racism amongst managers threatens any attempt to capture Indigenous voices in public sector organisations, which is in line with previous studies (Molini & Wan, 2008; Badiani et al., 2012). The present study suggests that this racism is often exacerbated and there could be a backlash if non-Indigenous employees feel that Indigenous employees are receiving extra benefits or preferential treatment – in other words, at the loss of non-Indigenous employees. This ‘zero-sum’ perception contributes to the reason why non-Indigenous
managers may be reluctant to recruit Indigenous people; or why, if they are forced to comply with the policies and targets, they undermine Indigenous contribution if they do not value their skills and talent.

While managers were positive about the roles of trade unions, a majority of employees perceived that there was a lack of support from union representatives for their voices. This is not surprising given that union leaders were appointed by managers and under the control of the Vietnamese Communist Party (Clarke et al., 2007; Collins et al., 2011; Van Gramberg et al., 2013). This situation has also been acknowledged by other studies which claim that the role of Vietnamese trade unions is limited to welfare and social issues rather than representation on key industrial issues (Collins et al., 2013; Do & Broek, 2013; Van Gramberg et al., 2013). Furthermore, it could be argued that the roles of trade unions as protecting workers’ interest from management in Vietnamese public sector workplaces are more a symbolic representation than a real employees’ collective voice (Clarke et al., 2007; Do & Broek, 2013; Fry & Mees, 2016).

The negative experience of Indigenous employees also resulted from the lack of responsibility of senior managers for the implementation of the policy. This study found that interpreting and implementing government policy was different within departments of each organisation, as well as across the three organisations, since these rested with departmental managers. Meanwhile, there was little or no overall monitoring or measuring of impact at the departmental level. As a result, individual managers and leaders played crucial roles in interpreting policy in regard to Indigenous voice practices.

The Indigenous negative experience of voice practice also came from their individual characteristics such as their low self-esteem. As already stated, the present study found that Indigenous employees were often hesitant, shy, sensitive, and lacked confidence to present
their voices in front of their managers. These individual characteristics impede Indigenous employees’ willingness to speak up (Bell et al., 2011; Brinsfield, 2014; Dyne et al., 2003; Milliken & Martins, 1996; Milliken et al., 2003; Nechanska et al., in press; Pohler & Luchak, 2014). It could be explained that, if the Government undermines or does not value Indigenous identity, this may impact on their low self-esteem since it marginalises Indigenous people from their non-Indigenous colleagues in the workplace (Bae et al., 2017; Gupta, 2005; IWGIA, 2018; McNulty et al., 2018).

Another barrier to Indigenous employee voice and inclusion is non-Indigenous managers’ lack of awareness of Indigenous differences and poor managerial skills. This finding is consistent with the literature (Fujimoto & Härtel, 2017; Townsend, 2014). For example, previous studies assume that managers’ lack of awareness of cultural differences and working skills with minority people will undermine diversity and interaction between minority employees and their managers (Fujimoto & Härtel, 2017; Townsend, 2014). Moreover, the government policy’s infantilisation of Indigenous people impeded Indigenous voice and inclusion as this led to racial stereotyping of Indigenous staff. This stereotyping harms Indigenous voice opportunities as “it induces employees’ disengagement and exclusion from organisations” (McNulty et al., 2018, p. 835).

For some Indigenous employees who were very positive about their voice and inclusion, inclusive leadership was a key element of their voice practices. Compared with the managers’ claim of their applying a different voice mechanism to Indigenous employees, it could be argued that leadership can be seen as a key part of Indigenous voice in practice. The theoretical advance offered by this inclusive leadership is that it values Indigenous uniqueness and shows how Indigenous people can be encouraged to contribute to organisational decision making through applying different voice mechanisms (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015; Echols, 2009;
Randel et al., 2018; Shore et al., 2011). This inclusive leadership also facilitates Indigenous perceptions of belongingness through using constructive and encouraging communication mechanisms (Janssens & Zanoni, 2014; Pless & Maak, 2004; Randel et al., 2018; Weiss et al., 2018). Moreover, this leadership style is able to embrace Indigenous unique cultures and languages in order to engage them in the workplace (Sabharwal, 2014; Shore et al., 2011).

10.4 Theoretical contribution

Arguably, this thesis is amongst the first studies on Indigenous employee voice (see Wilkinson et al., 2018), certainly outside of Western countries. Moreover, the study was conducted in a country where Indigenous people are not officially recognised as Indigenous by their government due to historical and political reasons (Gupta, 2005; IWGIA, 2018). This thesis also makes a significant contribution to the extant literature on EV, inclusive leadership, and social identity.

In regard to the contributions to the EV literature, this study addresses a potential gap in voice literature by providing insights into enablers of EV practice for Indigenous employees at the organisational level (Wilkinson et al., 2018). Two enablers of Indigenous voice emerged from this thesis: EEO policy, and inclusive leadership behaviour. It is argued that EEO is considered as a main precursor of Indigenous voice since it gives Indigenous people opportunities for workforce participation and pathways to voice practices (Andrews & Ashworth, 2015; Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015; Hunter & Hawke, 2002; Kensington-Miller & Ratima, 2015; Peters et al., 2015; Pitts, 2005; Sabharwal, 2014; Shen et al., 2009). However, EEO and voice mechanisms by themselves do not lead to the actual occurrence of Indigenous voice and their perception of inclusion in regard to organisational decision making, given that Indigenous voice is ‘twice’ as more likely to be overlooked by organisations (Biddle et al., 2013; Haar & Brougham, 2013; Hunter & Hawke, 2001, 2002; Kensington-Miller & Ratima, 2015; Mika &
O'Sullivan, 2014). Instead, inclusive leadership behaviour makes the difference, as it addresses Indigenous peoples’ needs in terms of uniqueness and belongingness (Shore et al., 2011). This finding may contribute to the extant literature on voice by arguing for the effect of inclusive leadership on voice from a particular group (Shore et al., 2018; Weiss et al., 2018; Wilkinson et al., 2018). Furthermore, this finding may extend understanding of Indigenous leadership in the context of non-Western countries, since Indigenous leadership and management are often shaped by unique contexts (Doyle & Hungerford, 2015; Mika & O'Sullivan, 2014; Randel et al., 2018; Ruwhiu & Elkin, 2016; Van Knippenberg et al., 2004).

Another contribution to the EV literature is that this study extends the work of Milliken et al. (2003) on the model of employee silence, and the work of Nechanska et al. (in press) on the sensitising framework of HRM voice and silence, by providing insights into the barriers to EV practice for Indigenous employees at the organisational level. It demonstrates that the underlying racism, lack of support from trade unions, lack of senior leadership responsibilities within workplaces, Indigenous employees’ low self-esteem, non-Indigenous managers’ lack of awareness of Indigenous differences and poor managerial skills, and government policy’s infantilisation of Indigenous people, shed light on the missing Indigenous voice in the workplace. These findings extend the current knowledge on voice and silence by taking account of the Vietnamese context - a transitional economy which has changed their government structure from being a centrally planned economy to a socialist market-oriented economy (Riedel & Comer, 1997).

In regard to the contribution to the literature on inclusive leadership, the findings show that inclusive leadership behaviours can address diversity in the workplace by seeking out and creating opportunities for Indigenous people to join the workforce (Randel et al., 2018). The active recruitment strategies of the inclusive leaders might arise from their recognition of the
potential benefits such as creativity and innovation that organisations can achieve from a diverse composition of staff (Farndale et al., 2015; Otten & Jansen, 2014). However, there does need to be a critical mass of the minority group in order to make a difference. This is particularly important in public sector organisations who not only provide public services to communities, but also play a role as public representatives of the population (Pitts, 2005). Also it could also be argued that inclusive leaders promote diversity because their attitudes, values and mindsets align with inclusiveness practices in other words they believe in minority employee voice and inclusion (Buengeler et al., 2018; Shao et al., 2017). This finding is in line with previous studies which explain why leaders who are in favour of diversity practices often welcome and take account of different voices in their decision making (Farndale et al., 2015; Roberson, 2006; Sabharwal, 2014). This finding extends the currently theoretical model of inclusive leadership by adding ‘creating workplace diversity’ as the third behaviour of inclusive leadership (see Randel et al., 2018). Also, this difference can suggest that inclusive leadership can be contextual (van Dick et al., 2018).

The finding also shows that inclusive leadership can facilitate employee belongingness and uniqueness. Inclusive leaders in this study sought Indigenous voice through proactively asking questions and speaking in ‘gentle voice’. This finding may contradict other previous studies that claim that it is employees who try to improve their voice to management (upward voice) by choosing appropriate ways of voice to ensure that their voices are taken into account by managers (Burris, 2012; Liu, Song, Li, & Liao, 2017; Morrison, 2011). The findings in this study suggest that the behaviour of inclusive leaders in proactively seeking voice may reflect the uniqueness of this particular leadership behaviour in the context of Indigenous minorities. Actively seeking voice from subordinates by managers helps remove obstacles for Indigenous employees and helps value their contribution which in turn promotes their sense of uniqueness (Roberson, 2006; Shore et al., 2011). Equally important is the way the leaders expressed their
voice to their Indigenous followers such as ‘gentle speaking’ which included talking in detail, taking time to understand and encouraging employees to succeed. Most previous research has focussed on perceived leadership styles and behaviours instead of examining leaders’ actual communication processes (Weiss et al., 2018). Weiss et al. (2018) found that leaders use of first-person plural pronouns impact positively on subordinates’ voice behaviour (p.391). There are few studies exploring inclusive leaders’ communication styles with Indigenous employees (see Weiss et al., 2018). This finding fills this gap and shows that inclusive leadership communication can be understood as engaging with, actively listening to, and building confidence and self-esteem for Indigenous employees. In this way inclusive speaking can be seen to be a characteristic of inclusive leadership behaviour as it helps leaders embrace different cultures and languages in order to engage minority employees in the workplace (Sabharwal, 2014; Shore et al., 2011).

Another contribution to inclusive leadership literature is that this study may broaden the current understandings of inclusive leadership in the context of Confucian and collectivist cultures, where the power distance between leaders and followers is high (Nguyen et al., 2018; Tang et al., 2017), and leadership behaviour emphasizes common interests and goals (Buengeler et al., 2018). It assumes that, in such contexts, inclusive leadership plays a crucial role in supporting Indigenous voice, since this particular leadership style focuses on an individual perception of belongingness (Buengeler et al., 2018; Shore et al., 2011; Tang et al., 2015).

Besides that, the present study provides an insight into social identity studies on Indigenous voice. The findings from all the three case organisations in this thesis show that Indigenous employees had low self-esteem which impeded them from voice practice in their workplaces. This assumes that Indigenous employees’ low self-esteem has resulted from the Government’s lack of recognition of Indigenous identity (Gupta, 2005; IWGIA, 2018). This means that
Indigenous cultures, histories, moralities may not be respected and valued. In addition, this causes Indigenous people to be marginalised themselves from non-Indigenous people. This would be exacerbated by non-Indigenous people’s prejudiced attitudes. In a such context, Indigenous employees will perceive themselves to be less accepted by their organisations and feel that they have less discretion in their roles (Greenhouse et al., 1990).

10.5 Practical contribution

The practical contribution of this thesis is fivefold. Firstly, it could be argued that the non-Indigenous managers’ lack of awareness of Indigenous people and the aims of the public policy cause problems in interpreting and implementing the government’s prioritised policies within public sector organisations. The government should raise public awareness of Indigenous people by acknowledging them as indigenous to their land. This does not necessarily mean the ownership of the land or political autonomy which the government fears. This recognition of Indigenous people is to educate the next generations and express the government’s respect towards the Indigenous peoples and histories. It argues that, if Indigenous people feel valued and heard, then they are more likely to feel a sense of belonging in their country.

Secondly, as discussed earlier, while the government regulations are a significant enabler, they do not automatically translate into increased Indigenous participation and inclusion, since there was evident in the present study a lack of responsibility of senior managers for the implementation of the policy within the workplaces. Hence, it is necessary to improve senior leadership responsibilities within the workplace to eliminate racism and unfair treatment to Indigenous people. The governments also need to have accountability measures in place to monitor and evaluate progress.
Thirdly, it may be necessary to review all government policies for Indigenous employment, since Indigenous people perceived that these policies infantilise them in non-Indigenous people’ eyes. This infantilisation may lead to racial stereotyping of Indigenous peoples. This suggests that the Government should acknowledge that Indigenous people deserve to gain advantages in employment policy since they are suffering from racial discrimination and social marginalisation. These policies should be based on job qualifications, equal employment opportunity and anti-discrimination rather than on racial preferences.

Fourthly, this study identified several inclusive leadership behaviours that may be useful to apply within the workplace with Indigenous people. It is argued that understandings of these inclusive leadership behaviours may support managers and leaders to reduce potential conflict among Indigenous and non-Indigenous employees, encouraging Indigenous voice and inclusion as well as creative and innovative ideas. In addition, the findings suggest that both central and local governments need to provide Indigenous and non-Indigenous managers with inclusive leadership practice training. This training will equip Indigenous and non-Indigenous leaders and managers with understanding of Indigenous uniqueness, inclusive communication skills and managerial skills.

Finally, the present study provides insightful understanding of Indigenous research from non-Western societies by extending Indigenous perspectives on research methodology. It highlights that the sensitivity of Indigenous research in non-Western countries stems from political issues rather than cultural and colonial oppression (Chilisa, 2012; Louis, 2007), given that the Indigenous communities in Vietnam are not recognised officially by the Government (IWGIA, 2018b) and the Government considers increased Indigenous voice as politically threatening (Gupta, 2005). Such a situation may put researchers on Indigenous issues at risk. Hence, the present study argues that in doing Indigenous research in Vietnam both the political context
and Indigenous needs should be kept in mind (e.g. Indigenous peoples’ cultural and social norms).

10.6 Limitations of the thesis and future research

As discussed in Chapter 3, doing Indigenous research in Vietnamese public sector organisations has a political sensitivity which limits the research access to organisations’ documents and in the recruitment of interviewees. In particular, this study involved three limitations that need to be explored further. Firstly, this study only conducted the investigation of three organisations in different areas of Central Highlands region. With this small number of organisations and regions, the findings from this study may not be necessarily representative of the public sector organisations as a whole, which limits the generalisability but provides a rich basis for further investigation. Secondly, there were only two non-Indigenous managers involved in the investigation of managerial perspectives. Thus, perspectives from these two non-Indigenous managers may not be suitable to make generalisations about Indigenous EV practices. Thirdly, this thesis only investigated the Indigenous employees’ perspectives and did not capture any perspectives from non-Indigenous employee. Hence, it may not be possible to make general claims on employee voice for all people in the workplaces, which may help to explain the differences in voice practices for the Indigenous employees.

This thesis also suggests further research in three areas. Firstly, it is clear that voice studies need to provide deep insights into non-Indigenous perspectives, particularly from those in decision making and representative roles and responsibilities including government officials at all levels. Future research could further explore the role of external stakeholders such as unions and other associations, including their engagement and participation in implementing voice policies and practices. Furthermore, this study identified barriers and enablers to Indigenous voice and inclusion, and future research could explore further insights into these factors.
Secondly, the present study identified inclusive leadership as a key driver of Indigenous voice. Hence, it is necessary to have further research on the impact of this particular leadership style on voice practices in general and minority groups in particular. Thirdly, the present study claims that Indigenous employees’ low self-esteem as a result of their lack of social identity has hindered their voice in their workplaces. Hence, this suggests that future research could focus on social identity theory to explain the phenomena of Indigenous employees’ low self-esteem and their missing voice in the workplace. Fourthly, the present study focuses on the analysis of voice practices that organisations provided to Indigenous employees (voice at organisational level) rather than considering types of issues raised from employees (individual level). It suggests that future research could explore voice at individual levels to look for reasons why indigenous employees choose to take up to speaking or remain silent.

10.7 Summary

This chapter provided the explanation of the thesis findings and their significance in relation to the each of the research questions. It also presented the theoretical contribution to the existing literature on EV and other research areas. The thesis’s practical contribution was identified and implications for government, managers, leaders and whoever is concerned with Indigenous employee voice practices in public sector organisations. Like other research studies, this chapter also described the thesis limitations, and suggested further research directions. Overall, this thesis has illuminated the Indigenous employees’ voice and inclusion in public sector organisations.
REFERENCES


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APPENDIX A

KEY INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR MANAGERS

1. Could you introduce your position, your length of working time here, your education level, your age, and your ethnic group?

2. What are the indigenous policies from the government that may influence EP practices for indigenous employees in your organisation?

3. What are organisational characteristics associated with EP practices that potentially impact on indigenous employees in your organisation?

4. What are individually indigenous characteristics impacting on EP practices in your organisation?

5. In terms of organizational response to EP practices, what is your organisation doing to respond employees’ direct influences over the work?

6. What is your organisation doing to respond employees’ indirect influences?

7. What is your organisation doing to consult directly with employees?

8. What is your organisation doing to consult indirectly with employees?

9. Relating to indigenous employees, could you tell me current percentage of indigenous employees in your organisation?

10. Are the EP practices implemented for indigenous groups in different ways to the mainstream? If so, how?

11. How much emphasis your organisation put into ethnic diversity?
APPENDIX B

KEY INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR EMPLOYEES

1. Could you introduce your position, your length of working time here, your education level, your age, and your ethnic group?

2. Are you able to influence directly over your work in the organisation? If so, how?

3. Are you able to influence indirectly over your work? If so, how?

4. Are you consulted directly by management on the decision-making related to your work? If so, how do managers consult directly with you?

5. Are you consulted indirectly by management on the decision-making related to your work? If so, how do managers consult indirectly with you?

6. Are the EP practices implemented for your group in different ways to the mainstream? If so, how?

7. Is the organisation concerning ethnic diversity in workplace? If so, what is the organisation doing related to ethnic diversity?

8. In terms of inclusion in workplaces, what are some factors in your organisation that may make you feel included?

9. How are you feeling about inclusion in influences over decision-making process in your organisation?

10. How are you feeling about inclusion in information network in your organisation?

11. How are you feeling about inclusion in formal activities in your organisation?

12. How are feeling about inclusion in informal activities in your organisation?
APPENDIX C

ETHICS APPROVAL FROM RMIT UNIVERSITY

Notice of Approval

Data: 16 June 2016
Project number: 20139
Project title: Indigenous People’s Participation and Inclusion in the Workplace: Perspectives from Vietnamese Public Sector
Risk classification: Low Risk
Chief Investigator: Dr Raymond Trau
Other Investigators: Professor Pauline Stanton
Student Investigator: Tho Alang
Project Approved: From: 16 June 2016 To: 20 July 2019

Terms of approval:

Responsibilities of the principal investigator
It is the responsibility of the principal investigator to ensure that all other investigators and staff on a project are aware of the terms of approval and to ensure that the project is conducted as approved by BCHEAN. Approval is only valid while the investigator holds a position at RMIT University.

1. Amendments
   Approval must be sought from BCHEAN to amend any aspect of a project including approved documents. To apply for an amendment submit a request for amendment form to the BCHEAN secretary. This form is available on the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) website. Amendments must be implemented without first gaining approval from BCHEAN.

2. Adverse events
   You should notify BCHEAN immediately of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.

3. Participant Information and Consent Form (PICF)
   The PICF must be distributed to all research participants, where relevant, and the consent form is to be retained and stored by the investigator. The PICF must contain the RMIT University logo and a complaints clause including the above project number.

4. Annual report
   Continued approval of this project is dependent on the submission of an annual report.

5. Final report
   A final report must be provided at the conclusion of the project. BCHEAN must be notified if the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.

6. Monitoring
   Projects may be subject to an audit or any other form of monitoring by BCHEAN at any time.

7. Retention and storage of data
   The investigator is responsible for the storage and retention of original data pertaining to a project for a minimum period of five years.

Regards,
APPENDIX D

PROJECT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

Project Title:

Indigenous Peoples’ Participation and Inclusion in the Workplace: Perspectives from Vietnamese Public Sector

Investigators:

1. Professor Pauline Stanton; Ph.D., MSc. (Employee Studies), BA. (Economic and Social Studies)
2. Mr. Tho Alang; MBA., BA. (Economics)
3. Dr. Raymond Nam Cam Trau; Ph.D. (Human Resource Management and Organizational Behaviour), BB. (Honours; Accounting; Management)

Dear participant,

You are invited to participate in a research project being conducted by RMIT University. Please read this sheet carefully and be confident that you understand its contents before deciding whether to participate. If you have any questions about the project, please ask one of the investigators.

Who is involved in this research project? Why is it being conducted?

The research is conducted by Mr. Tho Alang who is a doctoral student under the supervision of Professor Pauline Stanton and Dr. Raymond Nam Cam Trau of the School of Management at RMIT University, Melbourne Australia. The research is partly funded by the Australian Commonwealth Government through proving a doctoral scholarship for the student and is
being conducted as a part of the PhD Degree in Management. The research has been approved by the RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee.

**Why have you been approached?**

You are being asked to participate in this research thanks to the recommendations from your colleagues. Your experience working in public sectors relating to indigenous employee participation (EP) and inclusion is admittedly important to the research.

**What is the project about? What are the questions being addressed?**

The specific aims of this research is to explore indigenous employees’ participation in Vietnamese public organizations by: a) determining the contextual factors influencing EP and inclusion of indigenous employees; b) uncovering organizational EP policy and practices in workplace diversity in these organizations; and c) capturing the experience of indigenous peoples and their perceived inclusion in regard to the purported organizational EP practices. To attain these objectives, we attempt to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the contextual factors impacting on EP and inclusion for indigenous employees in public organizations?
2. What is the organizational response to EP in general and for indigenous employees in particular?
3. How is indigenous employees’ individual experience and perceived inclusion to the intended organizational EP practices?

**If I agree to participate, what will I be required to do?**

Your participation will involve taking part in an interview organized by the researcher. The interview will take place at a mutually agreed upon time and place and should last about one hour. The interview will be audio taped to allow the researcher to transcribe and then analyse
data. Your expected involvement would be to provide answers to the questions the researcher will ask.

**What are the possible risks or disadvantages?**

Your colleagues may know your involvement in this research because they have recommended you to the researcher. Thus, it is possible that they could tell someone else about your participation in the research. However, the researcher will ask that all participants respect the privacy of everyone in the interviews.

**What are the benefits associated with participation?**

There are no direct benefits as a result of participation. Your contribution may provide valuable insight into the factors that may influence employee participation and inclusion policies for indigenous employees in public organisations. Further, the findings of this research may assist with evaluating the effectiveness of employee participation and inclusion policies and therefore it enhances the performance of indigenous employees and their organization.

**What will happen to the information I provide?**

The results from this research may appear in publication, be included in thesis, and be presented at conferences. However, all information obtained in connection with this research will be anonymous. The names of participants and or the names of their organizations will not be used without their express permission. In case, it is essential to link participants to their responses, a coded system may be used such as allocating a number to each participant, which only investigator is aware of. No one outside of the research will have access to the audiotapes. The tapes will be destroyed five years after the end of the study. Any information that you provide can be disclosed only if (1) it is to protect you or others from harm, (2) if specifically required or allowed by law, or (3) you provide the researchers with written permission.
**What are my rights as a participant?**

As a purely voluntary participant, you have:

- The right to withdraw from participation at any time
- The right to request that any recording cease
- The right to have any unprocessed data withdrawn and destroyed, provided it can be reliably identified, and provided that so doing does not increase the risk for the participant.
- The right to be de-identified in any photographs intended for public publication, before the point of publication
- The right to have any questions answered at any time.

**Whom should I contact if I have any questions?**

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Mr. Tho Alang via email: tho.alang@rmit.edu.au. We will discuss your concerns with you confidentially and suggest appropriate follow-up, if necessary.

*Yours sincerely*

Professor Pauline Stanton

Mr. Tho Alang

Dr. Raymond Nam Cam Trau
If you have any complaints about your participation in this project please see the complaints procedure at Complaints with respect to participation in research at RMIT [ctrl + click to follow]/ http://www.rmit.edu.au/research/human-research-ethics

CONSENT FORM

1. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the information sheet
2. I agree to participate in the research project as described
3. I agree to be interviewed; and that my voice will be audio recorded
4. I acknowledge that:
   (a) I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied (unless follow-up is needed for safety).
   (b) The project is for the purpose of research. It may not be of direct benefit to me.
   (c) The privacy of the personal information I provide will be safeguarded and only disclosed where I have consented to the disclosure or as required by law.
   (d) The security of the research data will be protected during and after completion of the study. The data collected during the study may be published, and a report of the project outcomes will be provided to Mr Tho Alang. Any information which will identify me will not be used.

Participant’s Consent

Participant: __________________________ Date: __________________________

(Signature)