



Trade Union's Role in Human Resource Development

KEYWORDS

Trade Union, Human Resources

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ABSTRACT *Trade unions evolved to protect workers' rights against management's atrocities in the modern industry. They raised a collective voice for the improvement of workers' wages, working conditions, and their social welfare. Unions can play important roles in setting the stage, designing and participating in HRD programmes.*

Human Resource Development is an exciting and important challenge. Working with people and helping them grow and develop— both personally and professionally— will bring mutually rewarding results.

Nadler has been using the now-popular term human resource development since 1969. He defines HRD as “organized learning experiences in a definite time period to increase the possibility of improving job performance growth.”

An attempt is made in the present paper to examine the following issues:

HARMONIOUS ORGANISATIONAL CLIMATE:

Human Resource Development (HRD) in an organization has its two prominent foci: HRD for workers and HRD for managers. HR interventions made for one is likely to influence another. There needs to be a pre-consideration about the possible effects on each other before implementing any action program.

HRD programmes and mechanisms have to be designed and implemented in such a way that they leverage the differences and motivate workers.

DEVELOPMENT FOR WORKERS:

Workers are sufficiently motivated, trained, informed, managed, utilized and empowered. Working with executives and department managers within an organization, an HRD manager assesses the need for training of employees within each department. This may include individual or group training, or training programs for the entire organization. After assessing the needs of training for employees, the HRD manager develops training programs. The National Commission on Labor (NCL) also emphasize on the same concept.

HARMONIOUS INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS:

There has been a phenomenal growth in employment, wages, benefits, working conditions, status of the worker .educational facilities etc, with the growth and spread of industry. Moreover, career patterns have also changed widely by providing change for wide varieties of jobs to the working communities. This has been possible only through fast industrial development which, in its turn, depends on Industrial peace.

The increase in Industrial labor led to the formation and development of trade unions and various social groups. It has also been recognized that management would be disorganized ill- equipped and ineffective It is realized that the concrete co-operation between labor and management is highly essential to fulfill the demonstrated the fact that, an economy organized for planned production and distribution, aiming at the realization of social justice and the welfare of masses

can function effectively only in an atmosphere of industrial peace. All these necessitate the maintenance of harmonious industrial relations so as to maintain higher productivity to fulfil the goals of the Five Year Plans in India. In industrial relations the employees, trade unions and management are the three major players.

COORDINATION OF TRADE UNIONS:

Trade unions evolved to protect workers' rights against management's atrocities in the modern industry. They raised a collective voice for the improvement of workers' wages, working conditions, and their social welfare. Basically, workers joined trade unions to protect their economic, social and political interests and to satisfy their need for belongingness. With the advent of globalization and privatization, these unions fear that their importance and power will decline. The survival of these unions largely depends on their adaptability and improvement in their functioning. Their future success depends on their ability to develop healthy relations with employers and the government by redesigning their objectives, roles and strategies. By virtue of their participation, employees are bound to abide by all the decisions taken. This also helps in boosting the employee morale and enhancing their commitment to the organization. Today trade union movement in the country is undergoing metamorphic changes. An important but less visible challenge to trade unions lies in the need to respond to the diverse sets of expectations and aspirations of workers. They are trapped between the factors calling for change and forces opposing the change. Unions can play important roles in setting the stage, designing and participating in HRD programmes. Over a period, these efforts are likely to build higher involvement of the employees, create more satisfaction and give expression to workers' aspirations. Some of the developmental roles that unions can play are mentioned below:

Initiation of HRD Unions should focus attention on the workers' development. In fact unions should be HRD Departments for the workers and the union leader as HRD Manager. When developmental climate prevails in a company, unions can play an effective role by becoming a partner in such an endeavour. Where developmental climate does not exist or management is apathetic to workers' development, unions should take up HRD issues relating to workers with the management. It is not necessary that initiative should always come from management. Unions can play a proactive role and be a partner with HRD in communicating with workers about the organisation's mission, goals etc., in counseling workers about personal and work issues, in education and training, family and vocational guidance and welfare activities. This will mean HRD within the unions. Traditionally unions have been focusing on the economic well-being of the workers and have built certain roles to achieve that. The new developmental role will require several new skills in the union

leadership to enable them to play the roles. The government also has a key role to play, but steps in only when the major players fail to maintain harmonious industrial relations. The government also provides the basic framework for industrial relations through its legislation. The industrial disputes prevention machinery helps in averting situations of conflict between the management and the workers that might lead to a strike or a lock-out. Some of the basic requirements for prevention of industrial disputes are an effective grievance redressal system, worker participation in management and collective bargaining.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING:

Two-way communication, training and motivation would be examples of HRM functions if, for example, reward systems geared to performance and skills proliferate, as they are likely to, it will have an impact on pay determination through collective bargaining. Unions may have to recognize that collective bargaining may need to be redesigned to cover a lesser quantum of pay increases than in the past, and that they should seek to be involved in the flexible and skill-based elements of pay. This would involve a greater emphasis on enterprise level negotiation. IR will be the chief means of maintaining industrial peace, and would concentrate on the means to avoid and settle conflicts and disputes. Some countries may, for instance, opt for legal machinery such as labour court, arbitration and conciliation processes which are external to the enterprise and in which there is a role for all the tripartite constituents. But the relevance of unions would also have to be in the area of conflict avoidance, and not only in the area of conflict resolution "Either unions and collective bargaining adapt to the changed environments, where markets take precedence over hierarchies and managerial power is enhanced as regulation and protectionism recedes, or their future is increasingly questioned." In essence IR may have to accept that in the future its relevance will be more at macro level e.g. in formulating overall IR policy through tripartite processes, delimiting the boundaries of action for the two other parties and providing a measure of social protection where needed through labour law and judicial or semi-judicial bodies, and providing the necessary framework for the two other parties to function e.g. freedom of association.

WORKERS PARTICIPATION IN MANAGEMENT (WPM):

It refers to the processes in which employees involve themselves and contribute towards the positive functioning of the organization serving as the members who influence the managerial decisions that shape their work. Formal schemes of WPM have been the focus of considerable interest and at the same time a controversial issue all over the world. There are many models of WPM, which have the potential to bring changes in structural arrangements, functional arrangement and even statutory control. The concept of workers' participation in management is considered as mechanism where workers have a say in the decision-making process of an enterprise. Worker participation in India has achieved only

partial success due to factors like lack of proper education among workers, lack of understanding between the management and the workers and multi-unionism.

INDUSTRIAL DISCIPLINE:

To maintain harmonious relations and promote industrial peace, a Code of Discipline has been laid down which applies to both public and private sector enterprises. According to the Calhoun Richard D., "discipline may be considered as a force that prompts individuals or groups to observe the rules, regulations and procedures which are deemed to be necessary for the effective functioning of an organization." The maintenance of harmonious industrial relations within an industry depends on the extent of promotion and maintenance of discipline in the organizations. No organizations can grow and prosper without effective disciplinary system. Discipline on account of employees means complying with the predefined rules and regulations of the organization.

GRIEVANCE COMMITTEE:

Grievances generally arise out of the day-to-day working relations in an organization. An employee or a trade union protests against an act or policy of the management that they consider as violating employee's rights. One of the effective ways of minimizing and eliminating the source of an employee's grievance is by having an 'open door policy'. Employers with the range of challenges associated with human resource/industrial relations management, from assistance with offer of employment letters, drafting of disciplinary/grievance procedure and schedule; to termination of employment and assistance with interpretation of the labour laws.

LABOUR LAWS:

Labour Laws are the laws designed to ameliorate the conditions of labour, establish industrial peace and ensure increase in productivity by creating conditions leading to the efficiency of labour and to promote mutual understanding between labour and management. The inspiration is the recognition of the wider responsibilities which the state has undertaken to protect the economically weaker sections. But here to regulate the relationship between employers and their associations in one hand and workers and their organizations are in other hand. Therefore the laws enacted on this principle are Trade Union Act, 1926, Industrial Disputes Act, 1947 and Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act. 1946.

These factors are guiding the human resource development in proper way. A good organizational environment built on mutual trust and confidence between the management and the workers would help in effective and success. Trade unions are also equally concerned about this and it is they who are required to play a symbiotic role in achieving the organizational goal. Hands off approach on that part of the unions will seriously undermine the basis of objective HRD. Moreover, HRD strategies must recognize the collective aspect of the workers.

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