

Good Industrial Relations Practice

In this contemporary age, the term of 'Industrial Relations' has been replaced by that of 'Employment Relations'. There is the school of thought that the fundamental difference between the two terms, is basically that 'industrial relations' is perceived to relate to collective relationships between employers and their workforce, whereas, employee relations' goes beyond that to include the individual separate and apart to the collective workplace relationships.

The variation in the concept of the industrial relations practice as opposed to that of employment relations, is embodied in the fact that industrial relations is limited in effectively managing the human resources in an organization. It is considered that Industrial relations is primarily about establishing good relationships between employers and employees. The conclusion is that industrial relations is preoccupied with the four key concepts of industrial democracy, industrial competitiveness, social justice and job and employment quality.

It is to be understood that the legal framework, ILO Conventions, customs and practice are three important elements that guide the industrial relations practice. For the most part, the industrial relations practice is guided by rules, rights, authority, powers, roles and responsibilities, procedures and process. The observance of these form the basis for the observance of the good industrial relations practice. The purpose of following good industrial relations practice, is to reduce industrial disputes. Where there is a failure to address and resolve disputes, there can be adverse consequences, such as low productivity, an impact on efficiency, negligence in the execution of work, absenteeism amongst workers, high rate of labour turn-over and poor staff morale.

The integrating of the individual under the concept of employee relations, suggests that there is a requirement to specifically identify with the employee dispute resolution processes, which embraces procedures and the taking of appropriate action to correct any employee relations issues. This would directly apply to the managing and hearing of complaints, grievances and the dealing with disciplinary matters. How to handle employee relations issues becomes a sensitive aspect of industrial relations practice. Those who are tasked to discharge this function, whether as a human resources practitioner or a trained trade unionist, ought to be mindful that they are expected to understand the nature of the conflict, encourage employees to work it out themselves, nip it in the bud quickly, listen to both sides, determine the real issue, consult the employee handbook and to find a solution.

It is to be expected that circumstances will trigger conflict in workplaces and organizations. It requires that every effort is made to address these by first engaging in some preliminary steps, and/or seeking solution through the process of bipartite negotiation, mediation, conciliation and at a last resort, arbitration. Working on the premise that good industrial relations practice is founded on establishing communication between workers and management to maintain the sound relationship

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between the two and to establish support between managers and employees and management as a group, then it is important that all concerned do not lose sight of the objectives of Industrial Relations.

The main objectives of an Industrial Relations system, are to safeguard the interest of labour and management by securing the highest level of mutual understanding and good-will among all those sections in the industry which participate in the process of production. To avoid industrial conflict or strife and develop harmonious relations, which are an essential factor in the productivity of workers and the industrial progress of a country, and to raise productivity to a higher level in an era of full employment by lessening the tendency to high turnover and frequency absenteeism. (Whatishumanresource.com)

It is to be understood that good industrial relations helps in the improvement of cooperation, teamwork, performance and productivity.