

Differences and Similarities in Industrial Relations Systems

It starts with an understanding of what is Industrial Relations and how the process works.

Industrial relations which also known as labor relations looks at the relationship between management and workers.

The relationship is often between groups of workers that are represented by a trade union or staff association.

Governments set the framework for labour relations through a regulatory process that includes labour laws or statutes, and regulatory procedures.

The process is guided by labour laws, common law, customs and practice, labour conventions, and is subjected to the process of collective bargaining.

Theories

The principal theories or perspectives are the Unitary, Pluralist, Systems and Marxist.

The Marxist perspective is sometimes referred to as the Conflict Model.

Each offers a particular perception of workplace relations

Each offers different interpretations of such events as workplace conflict, the role of trade unions and job regulation.

Features of the Unitary Perspective

- ❖ The organization is perceived as an integrated and harmonious whole with the ideal of "one happy family", where management and other members of the staff all share a common purpose, emphasizing mutual cooperation
- ❖ At core of the unitary perspective is the achieving or attainment of consensus of opinion.
- ❖ Management driven organization.
- ❖ Membership or association with trade union is not encourage as they are perceived as disruptive, in as much that they promotes division in the loyalty between organization and union

Features of the Pluralistic Perspective

- ❖ Industrial democracy plays a limited role within the pluralist system.
- ❖ It recognizes a relationship between the employer/ management and trade unions. Both of the groups have their individual expressed loyalties.
- ❖ Trade unions are recognized and accepted as the legitimate representatives of employees
- ❖ It is based on limited industrial democracy
- ❖ It is perceived that the role of management is less enforcing and controlling, as it more leans towards persuasion and co-ordination.
- ❖ Collective bargaining is promoted as the mechanism to be used in addressing inherent conflict between the two groups.
- ❖ The system recognized that the functions and relations of the actors is based on the observance of established rules and regulations.

Features of Marxist/Conflict Theory

- ❖ Inherent conflict is perceived based on the fact that there is the exploitation of labour by capital.
- ❖ The system recognizes a fundamental division of interest between capital and labour.
- ❖ As conflict is seen as inevitable, a role is seen for trade unions, who become the representative voice of labour against exploitation by capital.

System Theory

The systems focuses on:

- ❖ Promoting good employee relations
- ❖ Establishing of systems of communication between the principal actor of labour and capital
- ❖ The observance of procedures and rules and guidelines
- ❖ The effective use of collective bargaining and negotiations

Common trends that emerge out of the differences and similarities of Industrial Relations Systems

- ❖ There is a relationship between two parties, that is underpinned by communication- consultation
- ❖ That each party has an interest at the enterprise level process
- ❖ There is the non organization of workers under the unitary model.
- ❖ Organization of workers is promoted under the Pluralist and Marxists theories.
- ❖ Pluralist and Marxists theories open the door to collective bargaining – promotes collectivism.
- ❖ Law and regulations govern the relationship between employer and trade union as the representative of employees under the Pluralist, Systems and Marxist theories
- ❖ With the exception of the Unitary theory, the place of collective bargaining in the employer - employee relationship is recognized.
- ❖ The theories generally recognize that the relationship allows for decision making