

The Role of Trade Unions in Industrial Relations

Definition of Industrial Relations

The state of the relationship between employer, unions and employees. It is also called 'employment relations'.

Industrial Relations concerns itself with terms and conditions of employment, and grievance handling procedures that lead to conflict resolution.

Types of Trade Unions

- **Craft:** For employees with a particular skill, e.g. electricians
- **Industry:** For employees in particular industry, e.g. coalminers
- **General:** Broad unions for wide range of employees usually unskilled or semi-skilled
- **White collar:** Clerical, professional or managerial staff, e.g. (teachers)
- **Staff associations:** For employees in a particular organisation, eg. Sugar Industry Staff Association

Trade Union Agenda

- Union Membership
- Trade Union Recognition
- Collective Bargaining:

It concentrates on promoting effective communication and consultation, which is aimed at ensuring that people are treated fairly, with dignity and respect.

It directs attention to following of Industrial Relations procedures, so as to allow for workers involvement in the process

- The Protection of Human Rights
Collective bargaining facilitates the observance of the principle of non discrimination as set out in the International Labour Conventions (ILO):
 - # 87 Freedom of Association
 - # 98 Collective Bargaining
 - # 100 Equal Remuneration
 - # 111 Discrimination in Employment

Collective Bargaining

It is concerned with the joint governance not only of pay but also to a greater and lesser degree, of many other important determinants of labour productivity. (William Brown)

It features an institutionalized voluntaristic system, where upon It is not premised on a legalized system.

Collective Bargaining provides for:

- Legal support for union membership
- The influence of trade unions beyond collective bargaining agreements
- Legal immunity for trade unions
- Legitimization of trade unions to influence tripartite institutions and public sector employment

Organizing / Unionization

Trade unions perform the dual role of organizing and representation workers.

Unions impact on the work lives of both unionized and non unionized workers.

Unionization allows for: established procedures to be followed as applied under the collective bargaining process.

It established a Collective Bargaining Unit, where the trade union is recognized by the employer as the representative body and bargaining agent of the employees. In the absence of this, employees at the enterprise become venerable.

The Collective Bargaining Unit Employee allows for the involvement of employees in Human Resources practices, as there is consultation, information sharing, joint problem solving. It affords the trade union the opportunity to set standards for employers to follow.