

Role of Trade Union in Conflict Resolution

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ABSTRACT: A Trade Union signifies an organization of workers engaged in securing certain economic benefits for its members. In the modern context, trade union's role is not only confined to securing the economic benefits but also the political and welfare benefits for its members. Trade union is a historical necessity and by product of the Industrial revolution. For good Industrial Relations, trade Unions play a vital role. With a view to self-protection and self-help, labour has organized itself under employee associations and unions. Conflict between capital and labour in Europe and American resulted in the origin of the trade union movements. With growing prosperity workers have organized their own Trade unions and thus gained a bargaining power enabling them to establish their rights in the Industrial society.

The study is carried out with the objectives of analysing the attitudes of Trade unions towards technological changes, to study Trade unions use of technology to grow and maintain membership and to examine the role played by the Trade unions in expansion of steel manufacturing industries. The sample of the present study comprised of about 60 including 30 executives and 30 non-executives.

Hence this paper throws light on the growing importance of technology and support given by the trade unions.

Key words: Technological changes, Attitudes, Trade unions and Industrial relations.

Date of Submission: 20-12-2019

Date of acceptance: 31-12-2019

I. INTRODUCTION:

Technology plays an important role in the growth and development of a nation. The technological inventions and innovative practices improve the standard of living in the country. The technological innovations in developed nations have changed income patterns, lifestyles and communications in that country. The technology has made countries interdependent on each other. According to Virmani B.R. and Kala Rao (1997) the extent of technology and expertise differ from country to country and accessibility to such technology, expertise or resource has made countries inter-dependent on each other. Further, it has become imperative that technology is shared for achieving better living standards among all nations for mutual gain.

The term 'technology' differs in sociology aspect, where it means that the technology is not simply a machine and a scientific instrument but is an appropriate attitude, habits of thought and action because mere installation of the machine doesn't work on its own. Kingsley Davis (1949) observed that technology and science deal with the intrinsic relations. Whereas G.M. Foster (1950) stated that technological development is a complex process because it is not only the overt acceptance of material and technical improvements but also cultural, social and psychological process as well. D. Rosseau and R. Cooke (1984) say's the technology is a tool that enables to deliver greater value to customers, increase market share and revenue to the organization. Technology is the sum of Knowledge, tools, techniques, and processes used to transform organizational inputs into outputs. The United States is considered as a global leader in the development of new technology. However, Japan, South Korea and china from Asia and Germany, France and the United Kingdom are some international competitors in the area of development of new technology. Since 1990 implementation of new technology and its adoption is a challenge for Indian organizations. Miriam Coe (2011) based on his studies concluded that technology is beneficial as it has more impact on the quality of life. But people in the USA have more belief on the usefulness of new technology than in India.

Hence, technology increases the pace of gathering, deleting and logical arrangement of information. Further, technology helps for the integration of data from different sources of organization. This integration of data can be at the national level (Macro level) or at the organizational level (Micro level). The organization which adopts new technology will experience a broader set of organizational changes both technically and economically. In fact, new technologies will reduce the number of inputs especially the human resources required for manufacturing and results in improving business's competitive strategy. The consequence of using technology in organization makes the organization more competitive by reducing costs and improving the quantity and quality of goods and services to meet the objectives of organization and society with effectiveness and efficiency.

Role Of Trade Unions In Technological Change :

Trade unions are important institutions in a steel manufacturing units organization and they play a vital role in providing proper working environment, congenial and harmonious industrial relations in the steel manufacturing plants. The key role played by the trade unions in encouraging increased production, maintaining discipline and acting as agent of social welfare is well acknowledged both by the management and the employees of the steel manufacturing plants. Trade unions work together with the employees and the management for a common purpose in a cooperative spirit avoiding conflicting situations. With a lot of technological developments taking place in recent years and with more competition which the steel manufacturing plants has to face in present day scenario, trade unions have changed their approach and they have become now more innovative and creative. They have reoriented themselves towards employees' based systems which focus on the employee's motivation, empowerment , disciplined working and large participation in the decision making process.

Research Objectives:

1. To analyse the attitudes of Trade unions towards technological changes.
2. To study and understand the behaviour of the trade unions towards use of technology in the organization.
3. To study Trade unions use of technology to grow and maintain membership.
4. To examine the role played by the Trade unions in expansion of steel manufacturing industries.
5. To analyse the grievances faced by the employees during the phase of expansion.

Research Methodology:

The relevant data has been obtained from secondary and primary sources. The various secondary information sources used for the present research include journals and magazines. The primary data was collected from 60 respondents containing executives (30), non executives(30)of steel Manufacturing industry. The data was analyzed using Percentage Method. The data collected through survey was analyzed for accomplishment of the stated objectives.

Questionnaire Design:

The questionnaire was designed in such a way that the first five questions are pertaining to the personal data which are in agreed nature such as designation, department etc.

The quantitative data was designed with forced choices of 5 scales method i.e. 0-5 level like Highly satisfactory (5), Satisfactory (4), Can't Say (3), Dissatisfactory (2), Highly Dissatisfactory (1). The qualitative data was designed by administering the open-ended questions with the ranking method so as to ascertain the quality information from the survey findings.

II. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTREPRETATION:

1. Distribution of Sample respondents , according to their cadre:

Table No:1

Sl.N O	Type of Employees	HD	D	CS	S	HS	Total
	Executives	2(6.6%)	3(10%)	6(20%)	5(16.6%)	14(46.6%)	30(100%)
	Non-Executives	6(20%)	3(10%)	2(6.6%)	7(23.3%)	12(40%)	30(100%)
	Total	8(13.33)	6(10%)	8(13.33)	12(20%)	26(43.33%)	60(100%)

INTERPRETATION:

From the above table, 46.6% of executives are of the opinion that technology advances will enhance the Industrial Relations in Steel manufacturing units , whereas 16.6% of the executives are satisfied .where 16.6% of the executives were dissatisfied that technological changes may effect negatively towards the industrial relations.

40% Non – Executives feel that Industrial Relations in Steel manufacturing unit is Highly satisfied ,6.6% of them felt satisfied , 27% of them feel that it is average and the remaining 13% of them feel that it is poor.

2.GRIEVANCES FACED BY THE EMPLOYEES DURING THE TECHNOLOGY CHANGES :

Sustainability of an organization depends upon the Grievance Redressal mechanism as the employees feel satisfied and work effectively, when grievances are attended quickly and positively. About thirteen items are identified for the present study and data collected on each such items are analyzed and presented in table no.2.

Table No.2
Percentage of Respondents' Opinions on Items of Grievance Redressal

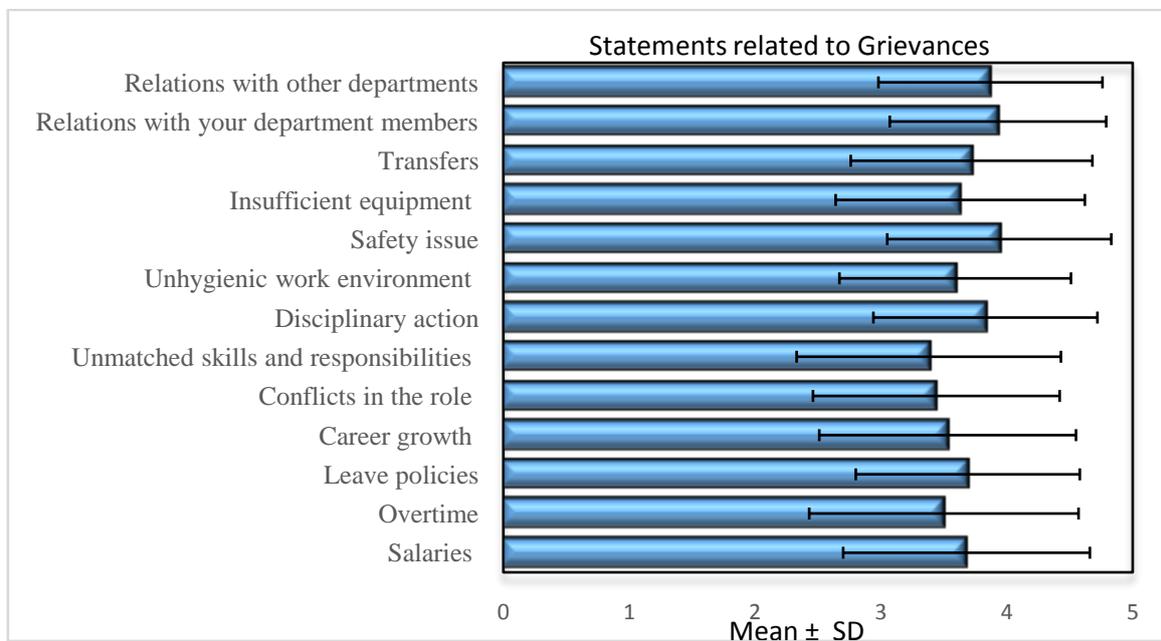
S.No	Items	HD	D	CS	S	HS	Mean	SD	PS
1.	Salaries.	4.1	11.2	10.7	60.2	13.7	3.68	0.98	67.01
2.	Overtime.	6.8	12.2	18.0	50.5	12.4	3.50	1.07	62.38
3.	Leave policies.	3.7	8.3	13.9	64.1	10.0	3.69	0.89	67.13
4.	Career growth.	6.8	11.2	11.7	62.7	7.6	3.53	1.02	63.17
5.	Conflicts in the role.	4.1	15.4	20.0	52.9	7.6	3.44	0.98	61.10
6.	Unmatched skills and respondents.	6.6	14.4	22.2	47.8	9.0	3.38	1.05	59.57
7.	Disciplinary action.	2.0	8.0	13.7	57.3	19.0	3.83	0.89	70.85
8.	Unhygienic work environment	1.7	11.5	26.8	46.6	13.4	3.59	0.92	64.63
9.	Safety issue.	1.5	7.3	12.4	53.4	25.4	3.94	0.89	73.48
10.	Insufficient equipment	2.4	11.2	25.9	42.0	18.5	3.63	0.99	65.73
11.	Transfers	2.9	8.3	21.2	49	18.5	3.72	0.96	67.99
12.	Relations with your department members	2.4	5.9	8.3	62.7	20.7	3.93	0.86	73.35
13.	Relations with other departments.	2.4	6.3	13.4	57.8	20.0	3.87	0.89	71.65

Source: Primary data

According to the data, it can be observed that the percentage score is as high as 73.48% among the respondents towards safety issues while nearly 59.5% of the respondents felt unhappy at attending the problem of unbalanced skills and responsibilities at work by management. On the whole, they expressed satisfaction and on another occasion higher levels of satisfaction.

The weighted mean oscillates in the range 3.38 to 3.94. The weighted mean for conflict in roles is second from last. The grievances about relations within the department and with other department are markedly present in the organization.

The graphical representation is provided in bar chart



III. DISSCUSSIONS:

This paper is an attempt to understand the behaviour of trade unions in maintaining their relations with the employees and management during the technological advancement or expansions of their units. As the coin has both the sides similarly trade unions have two approaches, one approach is to cooperate with the management or else they have to be with the employees.

Reasons for resistance by the employee are:

1. Resistance To Learn New Skill:

The respondents were recruited with certain qualifications and the necessary skills learned to operate the Existing Technology. The Organisation has earned profits and saved money within the internal process. The technology change requires advance automation skills. The age and stage in the life cycle interfered with the willingness to change; therefore some resistance is there to learn a new skill.

2. Disturbance From Status Quo Or Refusal To Come Out Of Comfort Zone:

The employees are accustomed to the policies, practices, rules and regulations in the Steel manufacturing units . Any change will result in disturbance of the existing culture; therefore some resistance against status quo exists.

3. No Incentives To Work In New Or Both Areas Where There Is Technological Change:

The employees feel there are no special incentives for working in the new plant. The employees are getting the same performance incentives and salary for working in the new automated area.

4. In New Areas Manpower Decreased And The Workload Increased:

The New Technology and areas where Modernization or Upgradation has taken place the level of automation was advanced. The manpower requirement at such areas, especially Expansion area and area were Modernized technology is in operation is lower in comparison with other areas.

The Employees Complain That Workload Is More In The Expansion Area And Modernized Areas Of Technology.

1. Manning Area Is Large In The New Technology Area: The area for manning work in the New Area is larger in meters. The distance between the panel board operations is larger and any attendance requires moving physically.

2. Malfunctioning Of Machinery: Any interruption due to malfunctioning of machinery is taking more time for finding fault in a New Area. Further, in case of any small technical snag, the complete operation of the machinery stops.

3. Willingness Letters: The Organization has circulated a notice to all employees to give consent to work in the Areas of New or Modernized Technology. The Existing Area employees did not give willing letters, Only one percent of the workforce has given willing letter to be transferred to the New Area.

4. Responsibility: The responsibility towards the new automated machinery is more, further the employees have more responsibilities in loss of production due to computer related or automated problems. Previously the responsibility is distributed among more number of human resources.

5. Risk: There is a feeling of risk to operate in the New Technology Area or Modernized Area of Technology. The automated or integrated manufacturing is difficult to stop immediately and the risk of an accident carries over a larger area.

Role Played By Trade Unions:

Trade unions work together with the employees and the management for a common purpose in a cooperative spirit avoiding conflicting situations. Hence forth they are considered to be a vital link between management and the employees and the above problems were sorted out by trade unions in convincing the employee to accept the change in the organization.

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Dr. D.Vijaya Lakshmi "Role of Trade Union in Conflict Resolution" International Journal of Business and Management Invention (IJBMI), vol. 08, no. 12, 2019, pp 01-04