UNIT 12 : INDUSTRIAL GRIEVANCES HANDLING

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12.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to—

- describe the meaning of Industrial Grievances
- distinguish between Grievances and Dispute
- explain the sources/ causes of Industrial Grievances
- explain the procedures of Grievances Handling in small scale and large scale organizations.

12.2 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we are going to discuss the grievances or complaints that the employees have in a company or an industrial concern. Here, you will be able to know the meaning, feature and causes of grievances. This unit also states the differences between grievances and disputes. The unit discusses the procedures of grievance handling in small scale and large-scale organizations as well. Thus, you will be able to understand about the sources of grievances and how to redress the grievances in a formal and effective manner.

12.3 MEANING AND FEATURES OF INDUSTRIAL GRIEVANCES

Grievance is a feeling of dissatisfaction and distress among the workers. A dissatisfaction, which is orally made known by one employee to another, is known as a complaint. A complaint becomes a grievance when this dissatisfaction which is mostly related to work, is brought to the notice of the management.

Grievances generally give rise to unhappiness, frustration, discontent, indifference to work, poor morale and they ultimately lead to the inefficiency of workers and low productivity.

According to the definition of International Labour Organizations, "A grievance is a complain of one or more workers in respect of wages, allowances, conditions of work and interpretation of service stipulations, covering such areas as overtime, leave, transfer, promotion, seniority, work assignment and discharges constitute grievances."

Important features of grievance handling can be traced from the above are—

1. Grievance means dissatisfaction or discontent or a feeling of injustice with any aspect of the organization.
2. A grievance arises only when an employee feels that injustice has been done to him/her.
3. The dissatisfaction must arise out of employment and not from personal or family problems.
4. The dissatisfaction may be expressed verbally or in writing. Initially the employee complains orally or in writing. If this is not taken care of at the right time, the discontent grows and take the shape of a grievance.
5. Grievances are feeling, sometimes real, sometimes imagined, which an employee may have in regard to his/her employment situation.
6. Grievances generally give rise to—

a. Unhappiness

b. Frustration

c. Discontent

d. Indifference to work

e. Poor morale

f. Inefficiency of worker

g. Low productivity

h. Absenteeism



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1. Write down the meaning of industrial grievance. Why it should be taken care of by the management?

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Q.2. Mention two important features of grievance.

i) .....

ii) .....

12.4 DIFFERENCES BETWEEN GRIEVANCES AND DISPUTES

The Industrial Disputes Act, 1947 defines an industrial dispute as “any dispute or difference between employers and employers or between employees and employees or between employers and employees, which is connected with the employment or with the conditions of work of any person.”

On the other hand Keith Davis has defined grievance as “any real or imagined feeling of personnel injustice which an employee has concerning his employment relationship.”

However, the following are the differences between Grievances and Disputes.

GRIEVANCES	DISPUTES
1. Grievance is a feeling of dissatisfaction or a feeling of injustice by the employees.	1. Dissatisfaction which leads to collective violent actions by employees viz. *bandhs*, strikes etc known as disputes.
2. Grievances are less visible.	2. Disputes are more visible.
3. Grievances are natural to arise in an organization where large number of workers is employed.	3. Grievances, if not taken care of at early stage, give rise to disputes. Disputes are not necessarily natural.
4. Partial stoppage of work or production.	4. Complete stoppage of work or production.
5. Grievances, if not redressed in time tend to lower morale and productivity of employees.	5. Disputes if not settled in time may lead to even shut down of the company plant.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.3. Mention two differences between grievances and disputes.

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12.5 SOURCES OR CAUSES OF INDUSTRIAL GRIEVANCES

There are various economic, psychological and other reasons of industrial grievances. Some of them are as under:

(i) ***Employment Conditions:*** Workers may have complaints about wages (underpaid or mistakes in calculating the wages of a worker). Workers may also have complaints about unsafe and unpleasant working conditions. Inadequate labour welfare activities are also a reason for worker's grievance.

(ii) ***Collective Bargaining:*** Sometimes the company attempts to undermine the trade union and the workers who belong to that union, the contract with labour has been violated, the company does not deal effectively or expeditiously with union grievances, becomes the cause of grievance. At any case, if the management disregards the agreements already made with the workers/ trade unions, it leads to grievances.

(iii) ***Social Injustice:*** Social injustice may be the cause of grievances. Management sometimes fails to provide the facilities to the entire unit equally. Those workers of the units feel neglected and grievances arise.

(iv) ***Biasness to rules:*** Rules and regulations if followed in a biased manner may also become the cause of grievance amongst employees.

(v) **Difference of opinion:** Grievances occur when both management and workers stick to their own views, which are contradictory in nature.

(vi) ***Other reasons:*** Reasons like attitude of the workers, mind set etc. may also be the cause of grievance. A worker with a negative attitude always has feared and confusion in mind that gets reflected in the workplace which create grievances.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.4. Mention three sources of grievances in an industrial concern.

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12.6 PROCEDURE OF GRIEVANCE HANDLING IN SMALL-SCALE AND LARGE-SCALE ORGANIZATIONS

The grievance redressal procedure is a device by which grievances are settled, for the satisfaction of the trade union or employees and the

management. This procedure is an important part of labour relations. It is essential, whether a plant is an organized one or not. The grievance machinery enables management to detect any defects or flaws in the working conditions or in labour relations, and undertake suitable corrective measures.

Every management must have a procedure for redressing the grievances. There is no legislative provision for a well-defined and adequate grievance procedure. The management may adopt the following grievance procedure:

STEP 1: The aggrieved employee verbally explains his grievance to his immediate supervisor or in a conference or a discussion specifically arranged for the purpose. The grievance can be settled through the supervisor who has been properly trained for this purpose, and he adheres strictly to a basic problem solving method.

STEP 2: The second step begins when the supervisor does not settle the grievance. In this case, it is sent to a higher-level manager with a note in which the time, place and nature of the action to which the employee objects are mentioned. The higher level manager is generally the chief business manager, a superintendent or an Industrial Relations Officer who goes into the grievance and gives his decision on the matter.

STEP 3: The grievance, if not solved by the supervisor and the higher-level manager, is to be submitted to the Grievance Committee. This committee, which is composed of some fellow employees, the shop steward or a combination of union and management representatives, considers the record and may suggest a possible solution.

STEP 4: If the aggrieved employee does not accept the decision or suggestion of the Grievance Committee, he may approach the management or the corporate executive.

STEP 5: The final step is taken when the employee as well as the management refers the grievance to an arbitrator who is acceptable. They may agree beforehand that the arbitrator's award will be final and binding on both the parties.

Redressal of the grievances is a must to maintain good labour management relations and industrial peace. Therefore the management should ensure that the grievances should be received and settled promptly,

so that the workers get necessary sense of satisfaction. However, the following steps must be taken in handling the grievances.

1. The nature of the grievance must be defined clearly.
2. After the real issue is located, all relevant facts should be gathered out of the origin of the issue.
3. On getting a real picture of the grievance, the management should make a list of alternate solutions.
4. Before announcing the decision, management should gather additional information to bring out best possible solutions.
5. The final decision should then be conveyed to the employees in clear terms.

Follow up action should be the last step to ascertain whether the grievance has been handled satisfactorily or not.



ACTIVITY 1

A. Visit an industrial organization in your place and collect information about their grievance handling procedures.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.5. Identify the steps in grievance handling procedure.

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12.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have discussed the following aspects-

- Grievance is a feeling of dissatisfaction or distress among the workers, which give rise to unhappiness, frustration, discontent, indifference to work and poor morale.

- Though grievances are less visible, if not taken early will give rise to dispute.
- Disputes lead to complete stoppage of work/ production, which may eventually lead to shut down of the company.
- Unpleasant working conditions, social injustice, biasness to rules and difference of opinion are some of the prime causes of grievances.
- Redressal of the grievances is a must to maintain good labour management relations and industrial peace.
- The management should ensure that the grievances should be received and settled promptly for general satisfaction of the workers.



12.8 FURTHER READINGS

1) Khanka, S.S. (2009). Human Resource Management, S. Chand & Company, New Delhi.

2) Chabra, T. N. (2010). Human Resource Management, Dhanpat Rai & Sons, New Delhi.

3) Pathak, R.K. (2013). Human Resource Management, Ashok Book Stall, Panbazar, Guwahati.

4) Michael, V.P. (1995). Human Resource Management and Human Relations, Himalaya Publishing House, New Delhi.



12.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans. to Q. No. 1

A. Grievance is a feeling of dissatisfaction or distress among the workers. When an oral compliant related to work is brought to the notice of the management, it becomes a grievance.

If the grievances are not taken care of at proper time it may lead to disputes. Besides this, it should be taken care of by the management, failing which may give rise to unhappiness, frustration, discontent, indifference to work and inefficiency of workers.

i.) A grievance arises when an employee feels that injustice has been done him/her.

ii.) Grievance generally give rise to unhappiness, poor morale etc.

Ans. to Q. No. 2

GRIEVANCES	DISPUTES
1. Grievance is a feeling of dissatisfaction. employees is called disputes.	1. Dissatisfaction which leads to collective violent actions by
2. Grievances are less visible.	2. Disputes are more visible.

Ans. to Q. No. 4

The main sources of grievances of workers in an industrial concern are:

i. **Unpleasant working conditions: -** Workers may have complaints about unsafe and unpleasant working condition viz lack of proper space, ventilation, unsafe drinking water etc. Workers may also have complaints about wages. They may be underpaid or mistakes may occur in calculating the wages of a worker.

ii. **Collective Bargaining: -** If the management disregards the agreements already made with the workers/trade union it leads to grievances.

iii. **Social Injustice: -** Management sometime fails to provide the facilities to all units equally. Under these circumstances; the workers of the units feel neglected and become the cause of grievances.

Ans. to Q. No. 5

The following are the steps in grievance handling procedure:

i.) Verbal explanation of grievance

ii.) Submission of grievance to Industrial Relation Officer

iii.) Submission of grievance to Grievance Committee

iv.) Dissatisfied employee approach the corporate executive

v.) Referring the grievance to an arbitrator



12.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q.1. Write down the meaning of grievance and why it should be taken care of by the management.

Q.2. Mention at least four differences between grievances and disputes.

Q.3. Write down the sources of grievance usually workers have in an industrial concern.

Q.4. Write down the important steps in handling the grievances.

Q.5. Write short notes on:

a. Disputes

b. Importance of Grievance

c. Grievance handling procedure.

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