

Free essay on qantas airlines: defining the unitarist and pluralist approaches to...

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Unitary and pluralist perspectives are employee management models that determine relationships between management and the employees. HR policymakers and practitioners use these models as points of reference for dealing with beliefs, assumptions, values, and interests, among others, in terms of the degree of compatibility between management and the employees. It is also a basis for conflict resolution between two warring parties. Considering the strengths and weaknesses of both employee relations (ER) models, the main subject for this paper is Qantas Airlines and how the ER models would explain the management and union disputes in Qantas.

Gerard Henderson (cited in Henderson, 2011), executive director of The Sydney Institute, asserts that the issue between Qantas and the employees is unusual in that the dispute between management and employees is not about pay. The main point that surrounds the issues is Qantas' contention of its "right to manage and the demand by trade union leaders that their members should enjoy job security" (cited in Henderson, 2011). However, considering the global economic situation, private companies are not in the position to guarantee security of tenure to its employees as always, companies must either consider the business operations first by reducing its number of workforce or declare near-bankruptcy if it is unable to compete with the world market (Henderson).

Using the arguments for unitary perspective of employee relations, Qantas management and employees must find common grounds of interests in order to keep employees committed and loyal to the company. Unitary perspective states that authority must come from a single source only, that

is, Qantas itself, while no leaders are supposed to oppose the organization. As such, Qantas is composed of various teams that work hand in hand towards a shared goal that renders conflict strictly non-existent. With this in mind, conflicts are viewed as sources of negativity within the organization. Any attempts to go against management, as what trade unions are known for, are considered illegal. Thus, it is expected that a strong leader who can motivate and keep employees happy and satisfied must lead the organization (Sarina & Russel, p. 2).

Pluralist perspective, on the other hand, is the opposite of unitary perspective. Applying the concepts about pluralist perspective on the Qantas and employee dispute, this employee relations model accepts that the workplace is composed of various personalities, beliefs, and values system, thus, making way for varying leadership styles and preferences. It further recognizes that because of the differences in people, conflict is inevitable. However, when handled correctly and at the right time, conflict is good especially when managed and addressed properly. Furthermore, it recognizes the role of trade unions as legitimate representation of the employees, giving the employees avenues to voice out their opinions. Because of the diverse backgrounds and interests, a consultative approach to decision-making is achieved (Ross & Bamber, p. 13).

Of the two models above, the pluralist perspective better explains what the real status is in Qantas airlines. The presence of management, employees, and the trade union simplifies the choice considering that trade unions are normal for pluralist perspective in order to give employees some level of protection against perceived issues that management could employ. While

unions are thought out of as illegal for unitary models, the pluralist approach embraces everything about trade unions. Aside from welcoming the practice of dealing with unions, the pluralist approach thinks that labor unions can be beneficial to the organization as well, especially when the union helps in aligning the corporate goals with the individual targets.

Despite the many advantages of pluralist models for employee relations, the approach has negative points as well. For instance, because it is acceptable in pluralist method, it has a tendency to become too entrenched in rules and policies, without regard to existing rules and policies as specified by management.

References

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