

Employment relations

Business



Occupational Health and Safety 20th, October, Employment Relations

Occupational safety and health (OSH) is a field that deals with protecting the welfare, safety and health of people in their workplace or occupation. OSH is a cross-disciplinary field that incorporates principles from other related fields such as health science, social science, design and human resources. The main objective of OSH is ensuring that the products or activities of a business do not inflict harm on their workers, customers and other stakeholders by maintaining standards in the work environment (Lawrence, Weber, Post, 2005). Occupational health and safety provides a fundamental basis for legal and moral policies in an organization. Due to the economic constraints in developed and developing countries, contemporary issues such as stress, overwork and obesity have become a major concern. This has pushed governments to reinforce or restructure the existing industrial laws to deal with the menace. In New Zealand, the government is concerned with promoting workplace standards to ensure safety and health among its working population. This essay will explore some of the failures and issues inherent to the enforcement of policies, practice and occupational health in New Zealand. The first issue that hinders successful implementation of workplace policies in the country is the diversity of employment. Although New Zealand is a developed country, it has diverse economy that depends on agriculture, mining and manufacturing. Each of these sectors requires its own set of safety and health standards that are not applicable in other fields (Access Economics, 2006). Most governments or authorities mainly focus on manufacturing and white-collar jobs due to their economic value. For instance, the local authorities do not impose strict measures on farm and mine-owners to ensure that safety and health standards are observed.

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However, the country has active Acts such as The Petroleum Act 1937, Health Act 1956, Agricultural Workers Act 1977 and Coalmines Act 1982, which are supposed to protect the welfare of such workers. According to Alli (2001), New Zealand mines recorded the highest number of injuries and other work related problems due to government's laxity. Thus, the drafting of relevant legal framework is not sufficient in ensuring health and safety of workers. The Robens report on workplace safety and health has had a wide range of application in the countries health and safety practice. Robens report recommends a wide range of initiatives to promote occupational safety and health; it is adopted in many countries including New Zealand. The report recommends harmonization of safety policies and practice across different fields. However, due to the disparity in New Zealand's economy these recommendations are not applicable (Department of Labour, 2003). In addition, the report recommends protection of all workers and the public, which does not coincide with the country's policies. Like other developed countries, New Zealand government has minimal control on the country's economy. This implies that businesses in the country have the right to create their own policies according to their own interest. Most companies in New Zealand have organizational cultures that do not support workplace safety and practice (ERMA New Zealand, 2001). Coupled with the capitalistic nature of the country's economy, businesses are concerned with production and profit maximization. This makes them to overlook the welfare of their workers in relation to safety and health. Thus, lack of government control in the country's economy is the main factor that has contributed to low standards of workplace safety and health. Lack of well-defined government policies also hinders enforcement of policies and practice that promote

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health and safety in the country. For instance, most OSH acts define harm according to the following guidelines and conditions. Condition that results in permanent loss of bodily function Severe or complete loss of bodily function Illness resulting from exposure to harmful substances Physical and visual impairment Acute illness and other conditions This description indicates that the country's health acts define health and safety standards according to visible outcomes. It is evident that most problems affecting workers in the workplace are not incorporated in the description. For the policies, do not address issues of stress and fatigue resulting from work overload. This indicates a major weakness in the country's workplace and safety policies. In conclusion, New Zealand's health and safety policies are similar to those found in most developed countries. Although the country is concerned with the welfare of its workers, it has inherent issues that deter successful implementation of policies and practice. Firstly, the country has a diverse economy and hence faces problems of policy harmonization. Lack of government's involvement in business has resulted in development of profit-oriented economy that does not promote worker's welfare. Finally the country's policies are not all inclusive in their definition of injures and bodily harm. References Access Economics (2006). The social and economic costs of occupational disease and injury in New Zealand (Final). Alli, B. (2001). Fundamental principles of occupational health and safety, International Labor Organization, Geneva. Department of Labour, (2003). Fact sheet: Key changes to the Health and Safety in Employment Act. Wellington. Department of Labour. ERMA New Zealand, (2001). Development and approval of HSNO codes of practice (information sheet 13), Environmental Risk Management Authority New Zealand, Wellington. Lawrence, A. T., <https://assignbuster.com/employment-relations/>

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