

# Unitary perspective views



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The Unitary perspective views the organisation as a team 'unified by a common purpose' (Fox, 1996: 2), namely the success of the organisation. This perspective views all the people in the organisation as part of one big team. Unitarists view everyone within the organisation as part of one team with one loyalty structure. This immediately says that there are no barriers between different groups and departments which could lead to poor communication and animosity, which would go against the notion of common values and common goals as that would not be advantageous to the common goal, of the success of the organisation. The set of common goals and values that are put in place are there to try to create and maintain the order within the organisation, the 'common' set of values and goals are important so that all of the employees are working in unison. This is important as it makes employees at the bottom of the organisation feel valued too as they have the same set of values and goals to achieve as the people at the top of the organisation. Unitarists believe that the sectional interest of the employees is important too however they are very much secondary to the general profitability and the success of the organisation. They see the states as an external agency which they can take their beliefs into. This means they that they believe the notion of the common values and goals should not be confined to organisations but to the nation so that we all have a set of common values which are in the national interest. One of the main factors for conflict within the organisation is the lack of communication and Unitarists see this as dysfunctional and counterproductive. The Unitarists believe that conflict is not inherent in employee relations as it does not make good sense for the organisation. They see conflict as an opposite to what they stand for because it is not structural and not organised, they

see it as frictional as it can cause rifts and create different sub-cultures within an organisation which goes against their notion of the whole organisation working together as members of one team. Trade unions can also be seen a potential source of conflict as they are an external factor which are an intrusion to the organisation. They are viewed as not necessary within the organisation as they can create an alternative misplaced focus for some employees. The employee may see the trade union as part of the organisation thus placing their loyalty with them also, which could be tested if the trade union we unhappy with something and chose to strike. For this reason they are seen as an unnecessary external factor.

The Pluralist perspective is just as the name suggests, they see organisations as constellations of different groups. The organisation is seen as multi-structured in terms of groups, leadership, authority and loyalty. A miniature democratic state composed of sectional groups with divergent interests over which the government tries to maintain some kind of dynamic equilibrium. The main groups within this perspective that find themselves at the opposite ends of the scales often are the workers and managers. This can be down to a number of issues such as pay, working conditions, bonuses and working hours and it is over issues like these that conflict often occurs. Pluralists believe that the interests of their employees compete with the organisations interest as there are always tensions over the price of labour and the levels of taxation. Trade unions are seen as helpful as they are seen as reflecting and regulation emergent conflicts between employees and the employer and they also help to defend the position of the employees so on their behalf at least they are seen as legitimate. The Pluralist view of conflict

differs vastly to that of the Unitarists who believe that conflict is fractural, not structural and avoidable, the Pluralists believe the conflict is inherent within the employee relationship. They believe this because they acknowledge the differences between different employees and different groups within the organisation. Whereas Unitarists try to make the whole organisation into one team Pluralists acknowledge the different groups within an organisation and understand that at times they will not see eye to eye and their interest may differ. The answer to this conflict is to for the different employees and groups to not dwell on the problems and concentrate on resolving their differences and work together for the good of the business. This is how Pluralist try to maintain the order, with the management of conflict in place of trying to pretend it doesn't exist or giving up on trying to resolve it, like Unitarists and Marxists. Pluralists see conflict as something constructive on occasions as it can indicate times when things need to be changed in the organisation and it can indicate differences that need to be resolved.

The Marxists perspective is one based on conflict. Industrial and employee relations can only be understood as part of a broader analysis of (capitalist) society. In contrast to any implicit or explicit assumptions about a balance of power in the industry, Marxists emphasise the asymmetry of power between the employer and employee. Marxists see the role of employees as sellers of their labour and employers as exploiters of that labour. The whole Marxist perspective is based on the proletariat and the bourgeoisie and how the bourgeoisie have with the help of capitalism kept the proletariat down. The different firms in an organisation are a reflection of society and the class

divide. Marxists believe there are structured inequalities within organisations that are there to maintain the status quo and that any worker resistance is systematically suppressed by the powers of the state. The interests of the employees conflict with the employer, even the managers who perceive themselves as 'higher up' than the workers and identify with the employers in fact they are seen in the same light as the workers at the bottom. Marxists believe. Trade unions are seen as a product of class conflict and are locked in 'antagonistic co-operation' (Hyman) with capitalism. There is little need for order within the Marxist perspective as the conflict is structural and is necessary to that end they believe conflict is constant and is inherent within the employee relationship, more so than the Pluralists. They see conflict as endemic and ultimately inevitable and any type of management, team working or resolution of hostilities is just a temporary fix. Ultimately Marxists believe the only way to resolve the conflict would be the abolition of capitalism. The Marxist view on the state is that it is an agent of capitalism and acts in its interest, as the organisations who are profitable are good for the economy as they are paying taxes and as long as they are doing that they maintain the status quo and the state will not want to change anything for fears of a revolution.

In conclusion conflict within the employee relationship can be inherent dependant upon your view point. Unitarists believe that conflict is non structural and frictional and try to limit it, however the conflict could occur within the actual employee as they may feel they have to ignore or keep quiet about things which may harm the togetherness of the employees. The Unitarist perspective can be seen as a perspective with an omnipotent

management who exercise total and unilateral control of an organisation through stereotypical integration of unilateral management control of employment relationship. Unitarist see employee relations as a very important aspect.

At the other end of the scale the Marxist perspective is a broad theory that blames society and capitalism for the conflict within the employee relationship through structured inequalities and the glass ceiling. They see the field of employee relations as a waste of time because in fact there is no 'relations' as the workers are just being exploited by the employers, the state and capitalism. Many disregard the Marxist perspective as it is a very old theory and believe it to have been more meaningful during the industrial revolution, although it still does have a strong following by workers who feel suppressed by work and the state.

The Pluralist perspective in some regards sits in the middle of the Unitarists and Marxists perspectives as it does believe that conflict is inherent in the employment relationship however it believes that the conflict can be resolved by management. This may be the best compromise as many organisations use the pluralist perspective over the 'ideal' Unitarist perspective and the conflict driven Marxist perspective.