

Unitary, pluarlist and radical theory essay sample

[Government](#), [Capitalism](#)



INTRODUCTION

Industrial relations are the relationship between the employee and employer within an organization. It is basically the interaction between the employers, employees and the government (Introduction to Industrial Relations, 2012).

Industrial relations are complex problems of modern industrial society.

Industrial relations has become one of the most delicate and complex problems of modern industrial society. Thus, it is in the interest of everyone to maintain good relations between employees and employers (Introduction to Industrial Relations, 2012). Organizations use different theories to maintain the relationship between the workers and the management, some of these theories are unitary theory, pluralist theory and radical theory.

Therefore, this essay will include the compare and contrast between these three theories.

UNITARY THEORY

To begin with, unitary theory to industrial relations is the assumption for each work organization is an integrated entity with a common purpose and a shared goal. In this approach the management and the staff share the same objectives, thus they work hand in hand to achieve that particular goal for the organization (Approaches to Industrial Relations) . According to this theory the management holds the power in decision making and in this theory the boss is always right. Organization following the unitary theory attracts mutual cooperation and in this theory there is high requirements for loyalty for all employees (The Theoretical Perspectives On Employee Relations Commerce Essay). However, in this theory conflict is not acceptable and it is said that since the management and the workers share

the same objectives and goals then there is no need reason to have conflict and if conflict arises than it is temporary. In this theory, the trade unions are also considered as intruders and there cause disturbance in the running of the management. There are four versions of unitary theory and there are, scientific management, human relations, neo-human relations and human resource management. Scientific management was developed in the 20th century by Frederick. W. Taylor.

This version is important because the approach towards management is almost t every industrial business operation across the world and influence the general business practices such as planning, process design and cost accounting (Scientific Management: Theories, Principles & Definition).

Human relations version is part of unitary but different from scientific management, as Elton Mayo said that scientific management was too strict and it demotivated workers. Elton Mayo use psychological analysis to suggest managers to use ' work groups' to achieve worker satisfaction and work efficiency. Neo-human relations was introduced by Herzberg, McGregor and Likert and just like Elton Mayo he used psychological analysis to focus on the individual and egoistic need of the workers and they are not focused on the social needs of the group. This version motivates workers through job rotation, job enrichment, job enlargement and self-realisation. Lastly is the human resource management. This is a function that maximizes the employee performance and its primary concerned is how people managed within organizations focusing on policies and systems (Human resource management, 2014). PLURALIST THEORY

Pluralist theory is also known as liberal collectivism and collective bargaining. The theory is borrowed from the field of political science. It argues that there are multiple interest groups in the society and there are also multiple interest groups in a firm, industry and not only the management. This theory is better understood by the generalization of power broadly distributed among more or less organized interest groups in the society that compete with each other (Johnson, 1994). Groups of individual try to maximum their interest and distributing the bargaining power amongst competitors for a fair solution for collective bargaining (Pluralism, 2014). Pluralist theory accepts that's conflict exists in firms and it is natural and inevitable for the firm and society. The conflicts that arise in the firm is said to be that it can be resolved by collective bargaining and it can be brought into the open and solve with everyone's involvement. Collective bargaining by the pluralist perspective is the most fairest and efficient method of institutionalising and generating employment rules. In this theory there is the right to form trade unions as the legitimate right of the workers and there is a bi-lateral decision making. This is where there is free negotiation between the managers and the trade union of an organization.

According to this theory there is less government intervention and uses less of industrial relations government machinery/legislation. The firm would not like the government interfering in the decision making of the firms processes but the government can only help in the process but has no say in what to do and what not to do. The major author of pluralist theory is John Dunlop. He was an American Economist and developed the ' systems models' of

industrial relations. This model provides tool of analysis to interpret and gain the understanding of the industrial relation. According to the Dunlop's system, three elements exist in the industrial relations. These three elements are actors, contexts and ideology. Actors are management, non-managerial employees and their representatives and specialised government concerned with the industrial relations. Context influences and constraints on the decision and actions of the actors which emanate from other part of the society. Ideology is the belief within the system which not only defines the role of each actor or group of actors (Salamon).

There are two versions of pluralist theory, which are, institutionalist theory and corporatist theory. Institutional theory is the basic industrial relations institutions in society, the three main industrial relations are, firms, trade union and state. In every firm it has its own rules of employment, rules or absenteeism and work dismissal policies. Trade unions are the collective institution of workers and they are the workers of the organization. The trade unions have rules as to who can join the level of workers who can join the trade union and the strike rule. Just like firms, every state has its own rules of employment/legislations and industrial disputes of handling machinery. For instance, employment act, trade union act. Corporatist theory is practice of organizing society into subordinating with the state. According to this theory, workers and employers would organize into industrial and professional corporations and in this theory there is government intervention and is against free market economy (Corporatism).

RADICAL THEORY

Radical or Marxist theory is a philosophy that is strongly influenced by Karl Marx. For the radical theory, Marx offered two sets of ideas. The two ideas are, that Marx has given a theory to the society that explains how the society works, and unfolds the account of the nature of capitalism. This helps in describing what is going in the world and understanding the problems that the society is facing today. Another idea was that Karl Marx regarded capitalism as unsatisfactory and he was concerned on how to get rid of these problems through violent revolution and establishment of a communist society. Therefore, it is also about political goals and action (Trainer, 2010). The general philosophy of radical perspective is that there is a fundamental inherent of conflict between the workers and the management, it is said that conflict is derived from the unequal distribution of income and wealth in a capitalist society (Chand, 2001). The power of this theory means that the person that owns the mean of production has power of superiority over those who sell their labour for wages.

In this, the state has a role in protecting the interest of those who owns the mean of production. (Chand, 2001). The union is formed when the vulnerability of employees. They challenge the control of management and the distribution of national product (Chand, 2001). According to a website, Marxist perspective is also called radical perspective. This perspective is to reveal the nature of the capitalist society. It thinks that workplace relations are against the history. It recognizes inequalities in power in the employment relationship and in wider society as a whole. Consequently, conflict is perceived as an inevitable result. What's more, a natural response regarding

workers against the capitalism exploitation is seen as trade unions. The management's position would be improved by institutions of joint regulation from the view of Marxism if having the periods of acquiescence, because they suppose rather than challenge the proceeding of capitalism (The Theoretical Perspectives On Employee Relations Commerce Essay).

There are two versions of this theory; one version is the labour process. Karl Marx saw that the labour process as the mean by which raw materials were transformed into products through human labour and the use of machinery and other forms of technology. He argued that one of the central tasks of management in the capitalist mode of production was to convert the workers capacity to perform work into actual work effort in order to contribute to the profitability production and achieve capital accumulation (Chand, 2001).

Another version is the work effort bargain. According to the website, this version means The exchange of effort for reward which lies at the core of the employment relationship. This sociological concept captures the tacit or customary nature of the economic exchange within work and assumes that accepted norms regulate the worker's input. As such, it can guide the analysis of workplace conflict, which may arise when an established effort-reward ratio is disrupted through management action; for example, by managers seeking to raise effort levels without offering a pay increase in return. It can also be used to analyse change in the employment relationship, and arguably a feature of much work restructuring in recent years has been to shift the effort bargain in the employer's favour so that effort has increased disproportionately to reward. Finally, the process of '

effort bargaining' refers to attempts by workers to seek compensation in pay for any increase in effort (Effort Bargain).

COMPARE AND CONTRAST

1. 0 TRADE UNION

According to the Wikipedia, trade union is a group of workers that come together to achieve common goals such as protecting the integrity of its trade, achieving higher pay and benefits such as health care and retirement, increasing the number of employees an employer assigns to complete the work, safety standards, and better working conditions (Trade Union, 1014).

In unitary theory, the trade union is considered to be an intrusion from outside; according to the management they think that the trade union only disturbs the smooth running of the business. Trade unions are seen as trouble makers for the company/organization (Chand, 2001). For example, a small firm in Fiji called the Sherani & Co has no trade union as they follow unitary theory. As stated by the management in the company, they think the boss is always right and the shareholders or the company makes all the decisions. In pluralist theory, the trade union is seen as a legitimate right of the workers because this helps the organization's workers get what they deserve such as better working conditions and incentives for workers that help keep them motivated and interested in working (Chand, 2001).

For example, the South Pacific Meat in New Zealand blocked the trade union from its plant Awarua plant and then the company was asked to pay a \$20,000 for blocking the trade union. (Ibbotson, 2014). In radical theory, the trade union exists when the employees respond to the capitalism of the

organization. In this, the trade union does not, and in the line with their task, composition and manner of recruiting members and cannot offer revolutionary program (Marxism and the Trade Union). In this theory, the trade union expresses and mobilisation the class of conscious (Chand, 2001). For example, the working class is drawn only by episodically into the struggle, during a period exceptional upsurge in the labour movement (Marxism and the Trade Union). Just like the trade union can be seen differently in the unitary, pluralist and radical theory. It can also be seen in a similar way. The similarity of trade union in the three theories is that they accept trade union at certain situations.

In the unitary theory, the management does not agree with trade union but when it certain situations the trade union is accepted but it is normally forced into the organization and they are still considered as intruders by the management. The trade union is only accepted in economic relations, which means, that the economic component of the labour power and the constraints that is placed on the labour forces so the trade union is forced in the organization that follows unitary theory (Boreham). In pluralist theory, there are multiple interest groups in an organization and that includes the trade union. The trade union is accepted in the organization as it is considered that there is equal distribution of power between the management and the workers. An organization following pluralist theory to run the business accepts the trade union in economic and managerial relations.

In this theory, the trade union is considered as a means of economical need to keep the economic running and not facing problems, for instance, there for a strike by the nurses in Fiji which affected the country badly because due to shortage of stuffs, they hospitals were unable to provide effective and efficient service. Even in radical theory, there is acceptance of trade union. Trade union is accepted in this theory because there is uneven distribution of power in the organization as the one doing production owns more power than the one who sells labour for wages. The trade union is then introduced to make the uneven distribution of power, economic and managerial friendly. The trade union makes sure that the management does not exploit the workers and provide good incentives with better working conditions to also keep the workers happy and motivated in working in the organization.

2. 0 AUTHORITY (POWER)

According to Wikipedia, authority means the power that is given to a group of people, for instance the authority that is given to trade union or management in an organization or even the power that the state holds in a firm (Authority, 2014). In the unitary theory, the power or the authority is hold by the management team only, in this theory it is said that the boss is always right and he or she is the only one that decides what to do and what not to do in the organization. The management is the only group to hold the power because the workers/employees do not have a say in the company as they have to do what the boss tells them to do. For example, small shops around the Pacific do not have multiple authorities in the shop but the owner is the only one that runs the shops and manages everything that happens. In pluralist theory, the power is distributed equally between the interested

groups in an organization. The management and the trade union and the state hold authority in the organization and there is a mutual agreement that they try their best to avoid conflict.

For example, when deciding some serious aspects of the company, the trade union and the management come together and come to a decision that all the interested parties are happy and benefit with it. In radical/Marxist theory the power is held by different groups but the distribution of power is uneven amongst each group. It is said that the one that owns production has more power than the one that sells labour for wages and in this case the management holds higher power than employees. For example, a manufacturing company holds more power than the workers working in that company because they are the one selling them to get wages for a living. Just as authority is seen differently in each theory, the similarity between them in relations to authority is that in all the three theories the management holds the power and the trade union or the state or any other interested groups hold the power but not over the management. In the unitary theory, the management holds the powers and has the say of what to do and what not to do.

In pluralist theory, the management shares the power with the trade union but the management has that much power to decide on what can be done and then discuss the matter with the trade union. In radical theory, the management holds the higher power because they are the one that provides the production and the labour provides its service for wages. The management are the head in decision making between they are the one that

has to decide whether the company is making any profit and not increasing cost for the company. In some organization, giving incentives and bonuses are just expenses to them so they try to avoid this cost but some company it is said to be investment so whatever it is the management has the upper hand in deciding. The feature of trade union can be seen differently in the three theories in terms of the distribution of power and it also can be seen in similar way that in three theories the management has a power of authority in decision making.

3.0 CONFLICT

Conflict is one of the central principles of organisational life and hence a very important feature of the three theories. While the three theories may be different with its respective features one element that is both shared by the pluralist and radical perspective is the recognition of inherent conflict of interest between employers and employees. The pluralist perspective accepts conflict and it suggests that conflict is natural and its existence is seen as inevitable. Likewise, conflict in the radical theory is also seen as inevitable (Cooper, 2013). This is because of the imbalance and division that is present in the industry which is usually reflected in strikes and other form of collective action. The radical perspective also infers that conflict is necessary in the running of the industry (Cooper, 2013). In the 2002 economic downturn period in Fiji, the garment industry came across an issue in which a conflict arose between the garment workers (and the trade unions) and the employers of Tanjing Garments after laying off a large number of workers and imposed a significant pay cut of remaining workers which was followed by consequences (Storey, 2006).

This conflict was purely inevitable due to the different interests that were present between the employer and the employee and its existence was accepted and not deterred. However, while both pluralist and the radical theory may accept conflict there are some visible differences in their conflict acceptance. Firstly, radical theory opposes the pluralist focus of conflict regulation and rule making. Radicals believe that the pluralists are placing too much effort on how conflicts can be controlled (Deery, 2001). Secondly, pluralist theory stresses that the conflicting parties share some common goals and there is no total conflict of interest present while the radical writers suggest that there is an existence of antagonism of interest between capital and labour which derives from the nature of class conflict in the capitalist society. On the other hand, conflict in the unitary theory is seen as almost nonexistent. It is perceived that the organisation is an integrated and harmonious entity where management and staff share mutual cooperation, shared goals, interests and objectives (Cooper, 2013). Hence, there is no existence of fundamental conflict between the suppliers of labour and the owners of capital. In the unitary theory, conflict, is not accepted as a part of work place. It is suggested that conflict in the workplace is not natural and wrong and if it does arise, then its existence is temporary. The unitary theory believes that if conflict does arise it is entirely due to poor management and bad communications (Gospel, 2002).

3. 1 SOLUTIONS PROVIDED BY THE THEORIES

As noted above, since conflict is not regarded as natural or normal in the work field and is just a result of bad communication in the unitary theory, solution offered by it is very basic and limited in the unitary theory.

Conflicting issues are corrected by increasing the role of management. Strong leadership is enforced and the communication systems are improved. Also, the unitary theorist strongly believe that workers who do not agree with the employer are “trouble maker” hence the unitary theory states that it is best to either discipline them or to sack them. On the other hand, unlike the unitary theorist, the pluralist and radical provide greater and much complex solutions as both the perspective accepts conflict as part of work place. The pluralist theorist believe that conflict can be resolved if collective bargaining is conducted. Hence, the solution that pluralist theorist provide is to introduce collective bargaining. Collective bargaining is seen as the most fairest and efficient way of resolving work place conflict without sabotaging employer-employee relationship (Mayriad, 2003). A strike in 1991 and 1992 was carried out by women garment workers which was organised Fiji Association of Garment Workers (FAGW) due to poor and unsatisfactory working conditions of the industry.

These workers demanded better working conditions and pay rises. The company made fair negotiations with the Fiji Association of Garment Workers after which the workers achieved some gains with respect to wages and working conditions (Harington, 2000). Moving on, while the radical theory believes that collective bargaining is a tool of resolving or controlling conflict within the capitalist society, it also provides a complex solution for conflict prevention and resolution. The radical perspective believes that by developing class consciousness and overthrowing free market society conflicts could be resolved to some extent.

4. 0 Role of the State

The state plays a very important part in all three theories. The pluralist theory shows less interest in government intervention. The pluralist theory does regard the state as the guardian of public interest whose role is to provide protection for the weak that can be easily treated unfairly by those in authority however; the pluralist theory makes very minimal use of government legislation as they want a society in which the political system is less interfering. The radical and unitary theory, however, do not share the same views as the pluralist do. Unlike the pluralists who only favour the weak, the radical and unitary theory protects the interest of the power holders and those in authority. The radical theory plays a vital role in protecting the interest of owners of means of production. The radical theory as mentioned above believes that one way of resolving conflict or rather preventing conflict is by overthrowing the power of free market society and moving towards a capitalist society with more government intervention and legislation that not only benefits those in authority but also provide some protection for the weak (Deery, 2001).

5. 0 Versions of the theories

The pluralist and unitary theorist each have different versions of the theory which discusses the theory in greater detail while the radical theory has no related version but elements which further discusses the theory. Under the unitary theory there are four versions; the scientific management. Under the unitary theory there are four versions; the scientific management, the human relation school of thought, the neo-human relation school of thought and HRM as an example of unitary theory. All these versions had one thing in common which was how to improve workers to improve productivity and

efficiency. To begin with, the first version under unitary theory, Frederic Taylor's scientific management was criticised by the radical theorist for being too harsh. The theorist stated that scientific management was extracting skills from workers and was making workers de-skilled which itself was not good for a company. The theorist stated that this version was simply exploiting workers.

It was also argued by the radical theorist on scientific management's idea that workers are dumb and can be just used as "puppets" of management (Deery, 2001). Secondly, the human relationship and the neo human relation school of thought were completely different from the scientific management theory. Under these two theories the main focus was providing worker satisfaction to improve worker efficiency. The human relation theory suggested that with the use of psychological analysis and work groups, workers will be highly motivated. The main focus in this theory was on group/team work. On the other hand, the neo-human relation theory, while it had the same idea as human relation theory of using psychological analysis, its main focus was on individual and egoist needs of workers. In this version of the unitary theory, workers were motivated by job rotation and job enrichment strategies. Finally, it was argued by many authors that human resource management is a part of the unitary theory. Moving on, like the unitary theory, the pluralist theory, also have versions to it.

The pluralist theory has two versions which are the institutionalist theory of industrial relations and the corporatist theory. While the various versions discussed under the unitary theory stressed on worker satisfaction

and increasing efficiency, the version under the pluralist theory stresses on rules of employment. The institutionalist theory basically discusses the rules of employment under each main actor of the Industrial relation institution. There are two types of the institutionalist theory which are the old institutionalist and the neo-institutionalist theory. The old institutionalist theory does not provide any theoretical analysis of industrial relation which basically means that it does not take into account how industrial rules affect and have impact on the working relationship between workers and management whereas the neo-institutionalist provides a detailed and analytical account of how these rules affect the relationship between the workers and the managers.

Secondly, the next version of pluralist theory is the corporatist theory that advocates the high involvement of state in business activity hence opposing capitalism. Finally, the radical theory, unlike the unitary and the pluralist theory has no versions attached to it. Rather, it has elements that help to discuss the radical theory in detail. To begin with, the radical theory argues that one of the major tasks of management in the capitalism/ free market production was to execute a worker's ability and capacity to carry out a task into actual work effort to ensure profitable production for the firm (Deery, 2001). This to some extent shares similarities with the unitary theory versions of human and neo human relation school of thought where the worker's capacity was matched with their efficiency.

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