

Role of Employers' Organizations in Industrial Relations in Bangladesh

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Abstract

This paper is a modest attempt to fill a huge gap in knowledge about the role of employers' organizations (EOs) in industrial relations in Bangladesh. It has been prepared basing on both primary and secondary data. Findings of the study indicate that EOs in Bangladesh follow a three-tier structure. In general, they pursue an individualistic tradition. They serve the purpose of their members by acting in different roles like advisory role, representative role, information-provider role, and health-care, labor welfare and community development role. Although inadequate in relation to actual needs, BGMEA, the largest industry level EO in the country has adopted some appreciable labor welfare programs, it might go a long way in serving the interest of the working class if these programs are implemented with real commitment, and EOs in other industrial sectors follow the suit.

Introduction :

Industrial relations is a whole field of relationships that exists because of the necessary collaboration (or otherwise) of men and women in the employment process of an industry (Dale Yoder, 1958, pp. 5-6). The concept of

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industrial relations may be conceived both at micro and macro levels. At the micro level, it refers to the relationship prevailing between employees and management in the day to day working of a particular firm or industry (RAO, 1999, p 490). At the macro level, on the other hand, it is conceived of as the complex of interrelations among (a) workers and their organizations, (b) employers and their organizations, and (c) government (Dunlop, 1958p.viii).

By acting and interacting under unique economic, social, technological and legal contents of any country, the three participants of the industrial relations system develop a peculiar pattern of industrial relations. Depending on the variations in the contextual factors, the nature and form of industrial relations may also vary significantly in the same country from one industry to another, or from one time to another (Khan, 1986, pp, 290-301),

The industrial relations system is largely shaped by the attitudes, value's, and philosophies of the actors participating in the system (Dunlop, 1958, p. 9; Reza, 1963, p. 121). The present paper concentrates on examining the influence and role of employers' organizations in shaping the pattern of industrial relations at macro level in Bangladesh.

Rationale and Objectives of the Study

A review of available literature on industrial relations in the content of Bangladesh reveals that although a lot of research has been done on the topic, almost all of them relate to such issues as industrial conflict (Chowdhury, 1977), dispute resolution (Bhattacharjee, 1982), role of trade unions (Awal, 1986 and Chowdhury, 1999), role of state (Reza. 1963), etc. Until now, not even a single study was undertaken to examine the role of employers' organizations in industrial relations in Bangladesh. Here lies the rationale of the present study.

