

PERSONNEL POLICIES AND PRACTICES AND THEIR IMPACT ON INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS - A STUDY OF THE FLYING CREW IN AIR-INDIA AND INDIAN AIRLINES

by

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ABSTRACT

Human Resources are the vital resources for the effective functioning of an organisation. In an organised service industry, like airline, flying crew consisting of pilots, flight engineers, flight pursers, and airhostesses assume a lot of significance because of the unique characteristics of high technology, tough working conditions and greater job insecurity. These add special dimensions to the industrial relations situations in the airlines.

In India, air transportation has had more than five decades of existence and the industrial relations in Air-India and Indian Airlines, over this period experienced significant rough patches. Both the airlines have lost crores of Rupees, attributable to the industrial unrest, viz., Air-India lost 8.4 crores of Rupees by the pilots' strike in 1974.

The statistics of industrial relations problems in India have indicated different personnel policies and practices as the causes. However, there seems to be no research undertaken earlier, studying the linkage between personnel policies and practices and industrial relations.

In the present analytical and descriptive study, an attempt has been made to study the personnel policies and practices and their impact on industrial relations related to the flying crew in Air-India and Indian Airlines. The focus of the study is on the areas of : personnel policies and practices, training and development, scheduling and working conditions, career progression, wage and salary administration, collective bargaining, workers' participation in management, technological change and job security, motivation and job satisfaction and grievance procedure.

The major findings of the study include :

- a) Technical training is extremely satisfactory in both the airlines and management development is not emphasised
- b) Manpower planning was not being done with adequate seriousness resulting in artificial shortage of flying crew. Though scheduling is not unsatisfactory, the working conditions were desired to be improved upon, more so, for the cabin crew of the Indian Airlines
- c) Career progression of the pilots was more satisfactory than the other flying crew

d) Collective bargaining was powerful in both the airlines, though craft unionism is prevalent

e) Wages and salary administration has been significantly influenced by adjudication and pressure of the government, in addition to collective bargaining

f) Grievance procedures and workers' participation in management was not effective in both the airlines

g) Motivation and job satisfaction of the flying crew in Air-India and Indian Airlines was quite low

h) Legal orientation was governing personnel practices and working conditions than by bilateral agreements and progressive management thinking and both airlines were reactive than proactive in their approach to human resource management.

Majority of the industrial relations problems of the flying crew in both the airlines have been primarily caused by the personnel practices of these organisations. It also appeared the absence of well formulated personnel policy does not necessarily result in progressive personnel practices and thus, creates industrial relations problems in the long run. Personnel policy making does not appear have been a thrust area in Air-India and Indian Airlines.

The study has made a number of suggestions based on the research, highlighting the framework of management development, harmonious industrial relations, and forums of policy making in different areas. The limitations of the study and directions of future research have also been indicated at the end.