



A Study on Awareness of Grievance Handling Mechanism in the Education Sector in India

¹Khushi Narwat ; ²Dr. Farhat Mohsin

¹Research Scholar, ²Professor

Faculty of Management Studies

Manav Rachna International Institute of Research and Studies, Haryana, India

ABSTRACT

Purpose: A grievance is any form of discomfort/dissatisfaction or a feeling of unfairness in the workplace about the work of the employee or related to the employment terms. Where there is a diverse group of individuals working together as a unit there ought to exist some or the other form of a grievance. Hence all organizations irrespective of any sector or industry tend to establish a grievance management mechanism that can help balance the needs and establish certain procedures as suited by the organization or institution. The main purpose of this paper is to study the level of awareness of grievance-handling mechanisms among the employees of the education sector in India

Methodology: The study is descriptive in nature purely based on the secondary data collected from various internet sources, research thesis, articles, and journals.

Findings: The study revealed that the teachers working as employees in the education sector has a moderate level of awareness about the grievance mechanisms established for the redressal of grievances. The paper also concludes that the teachers/employees are well aware as to whom they have to present and report to file their complaint/redressal.

Research limitations: The present study is prepared with limited research material available particularly for the education sector. The research focuses on the awareness of grievance-handling mechanisms only in the education sector and cannot be generalized for any other sector which is another limitation.

Practical implications: The results of the study will be helpful to the human resource department of the institutions concerned and will also help the management to get an idea about the level of awareness among the teachers. The finding of the study will also be significant to the employees/teachers to consider such processes useful and utilize this opportunity to resolve their problems whenever they are at a spot experiencing some grievance.

Keywords: Grievance handling mechanisms, Grievance, Employee-employer relations, Industrial Harmony , HRM

I. INTRODUCTION

Any organization or institution conveys a group of people working collectively with due cooperation and coordination to achieve a common purpose. There exists a great diversity in the workplace where several individuals work together and interact.

In an organisation it can be seen that employees generally have different minds and a difference of opinion can easily be converted into a conflict. Simply, when more than one person is working together there ought to be some level when they all don't agree on the same decision or same opinion. This is the reason why there are conflicts in an organization. Also, these reasons are then termed as grievances which may be left unmanaged and later take the form of a conflict. But cooperation and conflicts are the two unavoidable sides and an inevitable fact among any group.

The prevailing diversity at many workplaces around the world in terms of age, gender, nationality, ethnic and religious background among employees requires an organized way of managing or solving employees' problems. This is particularly because when there is dissatisfaction on the part of the employee, communication becomes poor and misunderstanding is more likely to occur, which is likely to result in a loss of morale and productivity of an employee, and in the end, that of the organization as a whole. According to Bemmels and Reshef (1991), in a specific group of employees grievances are in response to specific behaviors by the supervisors.

A grievance is said to take place when an employee shows his disagreement or feels dissatisfied with any situation which results in a complaint and has an impact on the whole organization. An employee can face any sort of discomfort in the organization whether minor or a major issue but it becomes important for the organization to take into consideration the raised issue and take the necessary action as soon as possible so that it may not harm the organization in any way. Hence it is a conflicting state which needs to be addressed accordingly so that the organization can sustain and maintain its growth throughout.

In the words of Michael Jucious, "grievance is any discontent or dissatisfaction whether expressed or not, whether valid or not, arising out of anything connected with the company which an employee thinks, believes or even feels to be unfair, unjust or inequitable".

In short, a grievance is any feeling of injustice, unfairness and any discontent among the parties working in the workplace. A grievance is sometimes regarded more as a complaint. Complaints are expressions of grievances, but a grievance is deep-rooted such that the employee takes appropriate remedial action to seek satisfaction.

In the education sector, the teachers who are the employees in any institution are firstly humans and as different individuals, they possess differentiated personal and professional characteristics. So the employees in the education sector too are not perfect and can sense a feeling of discomfort at any point of time during the employment period.

The institutions expect the teachers as employees to comply according to the set standards and code of conduct and perform their job/tasks as per these guidelines. On the other hand when these standards are not met then the management would be forced to put forward some disciplinary actions.

The right to seek redress for the issues relating to employment also lies with the teachers in cases where a first normal or casual communication is unable to provide a solution for the grievance. Grievance handling procedures help provide a platform and a mechanism that resolves all problems relating to the work or the work environment including workplace relationships, communication gaps, etc. can be raised and resolved. The institution will grow in all terms if the issues are seriously handled to identify and resolve the major problems and potential issues can be highlighted with a fair resolution of the grievances.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

J.M. Jucius defines, "A grievance is any discontent or dissatisfaction whether expressed or not, whether valid or not, arising out of anything connected with the company which an employee thinks, believes or even feels to be unfair, unjust or inequitable".

The National Commission on Labour 1969 (NCL) has worked on the question of “wage payments, overtime, leave, transfer, promotion, seniority, work assignment, and surcharges” stated as grievances. The NCL states that “complaints affecting one or more individual workers in respect of their wage payments, overtime, leave; transfer, promotion, seniority, work assignment, and discharges would constitute grievances.”

Dale S. Beach states a grievance as “any dissatisfaction or feeling of injustice in connection with one’s employment situation that is brought to the notice of management.”

Payal Rathod and Nimisha Jariwala (2020) has stated the general factors which influence employee grievance and also mentioned that the organization should try to resolve and work towards the problem maximum within a period of one month which will provide satisfaction to the employee also and would be justice to a proper formal redressal system.

M. Dhanushya, S.S. Gayathri, L.Anusiya (2018) concluded that the employees must be properly informed about the policies and practices, and procedures in the firm because the major reasons for grievances arise from misunderstanding and miscommunication of the organization’s procedures.

K. Vaitheeswari (2017) stated that grievance management is generally seen as a challenge for various organizations in today’s scenario. Also, the management is successfully performing the procedures of grievance management and handling. Both the Employers and employees should mutually try to understand that not any grievance can be solved to the maximum and absolute satisfaction of either of the parties. In many cases, compromise among all the parties is considered one of the most reasonable solutions. Therefore it is clear the main purpose of any grievance mechanism is to resolve or settle the issues between the employee and the management but also try to maintain and succeed in industrial harmony between them.

Ms.g.ramya(2014)concluded that the attitude and behaviors of the workmen are the main causes of grievances among them. The effectiveness of grievance procedures is shown by the satisfaction of the employee the unions and also the organization. “The grievance procedure provides a means for identifying practices, procedures, and administrative policies that are causing employee complaints so that changes can be considered.”

Prof. Sayli Wable (2017) stated that the organization must conduct surveys half-yearly or yearly to recognize the areas of grievance. it can help the organization to look into the matters in advance so that they can be prevented in near future and both employee and employer will be benefitted. He also talks about arbitration and states that even if the employee does not prefer the arbitration procedures so the firm itself must try to reduce external interference and solve the employee’s grievances within the organization only. The organization must focus mainly on the working conditions to reduce major reasons for grievances.

Rupali Dilip Taru (2016) stated that “a grievance is any discontent or feeling of unfairness and in the workplace, it should pertain to work.” The purpose of the paper was to determine the effectiveness of proper handling of the grievances faced by an employee. “The study identified the most common factor for arising the grievances are wages and salary, working environment, promotions, transfer, lack of communication, interdepartmental relationship, etc. The study also looked for the root of the grievance faced by an employee, grievance handling techniques, and the management procedures of resolving the grievances.”

Lechelle R. De Los Reyes(2017) in a research thesis has concluded that “Public secondary school teachers are moderately aware of the grounds for grievances, grievance procedure, grievance committee, grievance committees’ jurisdiction, and grievance committees’ responsibilities. They are knowledgeable about grievance management procedure as well as in penalties for disciplinary action but they do not know every aspect of it.”

III. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

A grievance is any form of discomfort/dissatisfaction or a feeling of unfairness in the workplace about the work of the employee or related to the employment terms. Where there is a diverse group of individuals working together as a unit there ought to exist some or the other form of a grievance. Hence all organizations irrespective of any sector or industry tend to establish a grievance management mechanism that can help balance the needs and establish certain procedures as suited by the organization or institution. The main purpose of this paper is to study the level of awareness of grievance-handling mechanisms among the employees of the education sector in India

IV. METHODOLOGY

The study is descriptive in nature purely based on the secondary data collected from various internet sources, research thesis, articles, and journals.

V. DISCUSSIONS

A grievance can arise in any workplace irrespective of any type of sector or industry. To provide a positive work environment and a safe workplace the teachers on their part are at times expected to confer to the standards of the code of conduct of the institution. Usually when the standards are left unmet then the role of disciplinary actions arises which would be used to encourage the teachers so that the desired performances per their profession can be achieved. Disciplinary actions are generally the means to handle and deal with issues relating to poor performance or misconduct. It must be directed consistently and equally while focusing on resolving the problem rather than penalizing the teacher. Through disciplinary actions, the teachers will be timely prompted about the quality of their current performance and what must be the desired performance.

There are many reasons for teachers' grievances that can directly or indirectly have an impact on the performance of the individual employee and hence lead to decreased productivity and performance of the entire institution.

Following are some of the most prevalent reasons for employee grievances in teaching institutions:

1. Workload and timing
2. Leave allowance
3. Problems relating to the pay scale
4. Attitude of the management toward teachers
5. Attitude among teachers
6. Promotions and transfers
7. Discrimination based on age, sex, religion, etc
8. Favouritism and biased behavior of the management and supervisors
9. Length of service and teaching experience

It is important that teachers should be familiar with the grievance procedures and must be aware that there is a formal system in the institution which will focus only on redressing the problems the teachers are facing. This will help to build up confidence among the teachers toward the management system and will foster healthy relationships between them.

It can also be said that not only employees, but even the general nature of any human being would also be such, that they will automatically tend to commit mistakes when there are no rules or regulations governing them. Hence it can also be said that the teachers who are unaware of the rules and procedures of the institution have a high chance to commit such actions that the institution does not promote.

Sometimes it is not easy to make someone follow a newly implemented set of regulations instantly. The rule makers must consider this fact that they must positively encourage the teachers and opt for ways to be flexible enough to modify the rules and regulations as per the situation demands.

Importance of Grievance Procedures

There is always a scope of grievances in any workplace. In a work environment with a diverse group of individuals, any organization can hardly operate without some or the other form of grievance. Talking of the education sector, however, the procedures carried out and the speed of recovery of handling and resolving the grievances can portray how organizations' harmony, organizational performance, and productivity would be. Hence we can conclude that through appropriate grievance procedures positive changes can be initiated in an organization which will in turn help in enhancing organizational productivity along with employee satisfaction. If an employee hesitates to express his or her grievance or does not get an opportunity to keep forward his/her grievance, it will lead to negative consequences including decreased productivity, employee absenteeism, declining quality of work, and various others.

Awareness of grievance management procedures

It is important that teachers should be familiar with the grievance procedures and must be aware that there is a formal system in the institution which will focus only on redressing the problems the teachers are facing. This will help to build up confidence among the teachers toward the management system and will foster healthy relationships between them.

When there is a sufficient level of awareness of the existing code of conduct and rules and regulations of the institution among the teachers, it can be seen in the actions of the teacher. This awareness will put a relative boundary to his/her actions which will subsequently reduce the chance of grievance in the mind of the teacher. Considering a teacher with a high level of awareness about the grievance handling mechanism in the institution, there is a high possibility on part of the teacher that he/she shall not present behavior that is not acceptable as per the regulations of the institution. The teacher would then be able to differentiate between acceptable and unacceptable actions.

The teacher's awareness of the grievance management procedures in their institution will act as a guide to them and help them carry out their moral duties and obligations in a proper manner. The researchers state that teachers who have been in this profession for a longer time make it a simpler task for them to perform and teach the students efficiently. The tenure of service is also a factor for work success. A teacher who is aware and obeys the procedures and regulations set up by the institution is somewhere more successful and obedient to his/her work. On the other hand, teaching experience also counts relevant skills and perceptions which also improve and facilitate the teacher's performance.

The awareness of the teachers towards the grievance handling procedure in the institution should be towards:

1. The grounds of grievances and grounds for disciplinary actions

Grounds or grievances:

1. Physical working conditions
2. financial issues relating to proper disbursement of salaries and pay concerning overtime
3. procedures in recruitment and promotion
4. benefits and incentives
5. termination and retirement
6. professional growth
7. school facilities

2. Grievance process and procedures:

1. Complaints are properly heard and addressed
2. grievance mechanism proves to be an effective tool to resolve teachers' complaints
3. the committee may entertain the grievance either orally or written or both
4. the grievance committee is capable to establish its procedure as and when required.

3. The grievance committee
4. The jurisdiction of the grievance committee
5. Responsibilities of the grievance committee
6. Penalties imposed for disciplinary actions

At times there exists a formal grievance system in the institution but the teachers are not aware of the platform. So here in such cases, it comes on the part of the management, they must ensure the teachers are fully aware and they properly understand the existence of the platform. So each and every teacher must fully utilize the platform established by the management in cases where they experience any sort of discomfort or dissatisfaction arising from their work or related to workplace .

VI. CONCLUSIONS

Awareness among the teachers of the grievance handling mechanism in the institution is moderate as per the research carried out. Such a system induces a sense of belongings among the employees working in the institution. When the teachers are duly aware of the systems prevailing in the institution that can help them resolve their issues increase their morale and build confidence in the system. Hence the management on its part must also take necessary steps to present the grievance systems procedures and processes to the teachers as well as facilitate proper communication among them so that they are comfortable putting forward their issues to the management.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

The procedures, rules, and regulations of the institutions and all the essential information must be dispersed and communicated to all the teachers working as employees to eliminate the miscommunication of the basic code of conduct and activities that can give rise to any sort of grievance.

The top management must put on some additional time and effort to improve the awareness of the grievance management procedure in an institution among the teachers to maintain harmony in the workplace. The formal grievance handling mechanism will be able to identify the issues which are arising frequently among the teachers and are a common cause for discomfort. The top management should then try to work on or resolve the grievance at the earliest.

There should be a proper flow of communication between the management and the teachers so that the teachers don't hesitate or restrict themselves to put forward their grievances. Miscommunications and misinterpretations can emerge as the most common reasons for employee grievances. To avoid this the institution's code of conduct and all other information must be properly discussed with the teachers to create a level of awareness about the redressal of their grievances

VIII. REFERENCES

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