

Module 1

Introduction to Labour Administration Today

What this Module is about

This module introduces the importance of good labour administration for promoting decent work; it gives an overview of the challenges and opportunities for labour administration in changing labour market conditions and mentions the role of ILO in strengthening labour administration.

Objectives

- Appreciate the importance of a good system of labour administration for promoting decent work
- Discuss the main trends, challenges and opportunities for labour administration in changing labour market conditions
- Compare the own country situation with other contexts and trends

Table of Contents

What is Labour Administration?
Labour Administration's Main Fields of Activity
How is Labour Administration Organized?
The Importance of Labour Administration
Strengths
Weaknesses
Challenges
The Role of the ILO

What is Labour Administration?

ILO Convention No. 150 and Recommendation No. 158 concerning the role, functions and organization of labour administration (1978) lay down an international framework within which the preparation, implementation, coordination, supervision and evaluation of national labour policy are carried out.

The Convention defines the concept of labour administration and the areas it covers as:

- A coherent national labour policy; a coordinated system; organization integrating the active participation of management and labour and of their respective organizations; and appropriate human, financial and material resources for an effective and efficient service

At the national level, this apparatus is generally found within a labour ministry or related agencies.

Labour Administration's Main Fields of Activity

The contribution of the national labour administration towards achieving conditions where "women and men obtain decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity" (Decent Work, p.3) concerns all or part of the following fields, depending on the individual country:

Labour - Working conditions - Wages - Employment conditions - Safety and health at work - Social security - Labour inspection - The working environment	Employment - National employment policy - Unemployment insurance schemes - Vocational guidance - Vocational training programmes - Employment services
Information and Research - Collection of information - Surveys - Forecasts - Dissemination of information - Statistics and policy development - Relations with mass media	Labour-management relations - Definition of the framework and rules for the representation of labour and management - Collective bargaining - Settlement of labour disputes - Workplace cooperation

How is Labour Administration Organized?

No specific form of organization or operation is promoted or to which precedence is given, since ministries and/or related agencies take many forms. They should, however, cover the main functions or fields of activity of labour administration (including an autonomous labour inspection system) and, above all, they should be coordinated.

Notes

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

EXERCISE

TASK: In group (country based) or individually, draft (on a flip chart or a power point) the organigram of your labour administration system, making reference to above table on the main field of activities. For the items which are not included among the functions of your labour administration, please specify which body is competent for them.

Present your work in plenary

TIME: 30' + 5 for each presentation

The importance of Labour Administration

The concept of labour administration contains the principal elements of what is understood by "good governance":

Participation	Social dialogue and tripartism
Credibility	Fair and adequate policies, laws and rules which are known and applied uniformly
Transparency	Decision-making, information and government services available for all
Responsibility	An open organization which is accountable for its mandates and activities
Flexibility	Dynamism to adapt to changes

Strengths

Labour Administration is an acknowledged actor in the formulation of government economic and social policies; a major source of information in its fields of competence for government, employer and worker and policy decision-making; an active intermediary for preventing and settling industrial disputes; an informed observer of the trends and development of society by virtue of its special links with the social partners; a provider of effective solutions to the evolving needs of its users.

Weaknesses

The conditions under which labour administrations operate have changed dramatically over the last few decades, due both to technological, economic and political developments and to the globalization of trade. Some labour administrations saw these developments as an opportunity to re-legitimize their existence and development and even to introduce a new dynamic. Others seem to have lost their *raison d'être* and their influence.

Challenges

Labour administration must - through social dialogue in particular - find means of redefining its organization and intervention strategy so that it can better respond to expectations. For this propose labour administration should reposition itself as a major actor in the development of a country.

Challenges faced by Labour Administration

In developing countries	The informal economy
Countries in transition	New political and social democracy and transition to the market economy
In industrialized countries	Budget restrictions, effectiveness, efficiency
In supranational groups	Clarification and harmonization of the principles and objectives of the member countries

Notes

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

EXERCISE

2 groups (or more, according to the number of participants):

- 1 group (or more) will discuss and list the main strengths for labour administration in the represented countries
- 1 group (or more) will discuss and list the main weaknesses for labour administration in the represented countries

A rapporteur for each group will report in plenary the findings, with the support of a flip chart or a power point.

A discussion will follow.

The findings will be typed and fixed on the classroom walls, to be considered for reference during the overall course.

TIME: 30' + 5 for each presentation + 10 for reporting.

In alternative, a brainstorming can be organized, using cards of different colours for strengths and weaknesses. Two participants (volunteers) will help the facilitator in clustering and prioritizing the outcomes.

The role of the ILO

The ILO is supporting the efforts of country members in strengthening and re-engineering their labour administration by different means:

- Providing Assessment and support for strengthening institutional organization and management
- Offering rich and updated information on comparative labour administration systems, examples of "good practices" and publications
- Strengthening the influence of labour administrations such as strategic information, social dialogue and policy advice
- Strengthening institutional capacity, in collaboration with the ILO International Training Centre.

Notes

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

EXERCISE

In small groups, using the computers of the classroom visit the ILO WEB site (<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/dialogue/ifpdial/areas/index.htm>) and familiarize with the services, studies and activities of the ILO in this field.

Visit also the web site of the International Training Centre of the ILO (www.itcilo.org) and explore the different types of courses organized by the centre in areas related to the main functions of labour administration.