

ABSTRACTS

Christian Koch

Information technology, working life and trade unions - a global challenge and a Swedish response

The article analyses the development of IT and presents the apparent paradox between, on the one hand the new challenges for unions inherent in the IT-development and on the other hand the relatively modest union activity in the area. The experience with the collective resource approach is discussed, and the article asks for a renewal of this policy which takes the situation of the institutionalised unions into account. The Swedish trade union confederation LO and its IT-policy is discussed as an example of a new answer to the IT-challenge. Although the LO is not that successful in its activities and ideas, including the creation of social movement among members in their role as consumers of IT, the LO work points to possible directions into the future.

Karin Mathiesen & Hans Hvenegaard

New forms of cooperation between management and employees in the state sector

This article discusses several pilot projects carried out by Danish state institutions to extend employee participation through changes in the structure, competencies and task areas within workplace cooperation committees and safety organizations. The pilot projects were initiated by employer and employee organisations and took place over a three-year period from 1995 to 1998. In extending these projects, the employers and employees' organisations agreed in 1999 to prolong the existing cooperation agreement as well as concluded a framework agreement which allows for new ways of organising cooperation and safety activities. The article raises a series of questions about the possibilities and difficulties for employees in formulating their viewpoints regarding the development of work and the institutions in which work takes place.

Peter Seglow:

Ideology and the Changing Regulation of the Labour Market - a British Perspective

The article attempts to explain the paradox that while the strength and influence of organised labour is declining and collective bargaining is becoming less and less important in setting pay and conditions, in many respects the position of employed workers in the labour market has improved and is continuing to do so.

The author analyses the ideological shift from collectivism to liberalism and individualism. It was strongly promoted by the British governments between 1979 and 1997, but also by other governments and social forces. He points out that although the increased power given to the market has weakened trade unionism, it appears that new rights, achieved mainly at the European Union level, has pulled in the opposite direction.

In Britain and other countries where collective bargaining has lost ground trade unions will have to redefine their field of activity. One important task is to secure that the legal rights of workers are

actually enforced at workplace level and that legal cases are taken up if rights are violated. Another is pressure group activity at the European level aimed at the continuing extension of workers' rights.

Peter Nielsen:

HRM in practice: Strategic integration and competency building

The article establishes an analytical framework utilizing principles and basic concepts from the human resources management perspective, and apply this framework on empirical data from a comprehensive survey on work organization and employee skills in the Danish private sector. The empirical analysis shows that the firms use different strategies to ensure that the personnel resources are in accordance with the needs. At the internal front work organizations are developed more or less in accordance with the HRM-principles (empowerment, teamworking, functional integration, job rotation, performance appraisals etc.). These developments imply changes in the content of work and in demands both in situations of recruitment and regarding development of qualifications. Focus is set on the need for continuous development of competencies in relation to the new principles of work organization and developments in the content of work. Here cross functional and group oriented approaches seem to emerge. Generally, production specific learning is important and formal training is tailored to the needs of firms. In the most developed firms continuous learning is often seen as of decisive importance for competitiveness.