

activities to the right track especially in the South Asian context, for the trade unions to be contributory to the employee welfare and national development. The study proposes certain measures based on the observations in bringing the country's trade union movement to the right path.

Keywords: Trade unions, Unionization, Labour management relations, Politicization, State organizations

Introduction

Trade Unions (TUs) are the organizations which represent employees at work. Employees need a collective representation within the Labour Management Relations (LMR) framework, to redress the balance of power between employers and employees. TUs, as indicated by Freeman and Medoff (1984), provide workers with a 'collective voice' to make their wishes known to the management, and thus bring actual and desired conditions closer together (Armstrong, 2006). The Trade Unions Ordinance in Sri Lanka (No. 14 of 1935) identifies a TU as an association or a combination of workmen or employers whether temporary or permanent. The Ordinance gives right for unionization to both employer organizations and employee organizations. Accordingly Opatha (2009) identifies that there are various types of trade unions in Sri Lanka such as craft unions, industrial unions, professional associations etc. operating in the country.

Labour unions show a significant presence within both the private and public sectors of Sri Lanka. According to Wickramasinghe (2002), the Ordinance in its original form applies only to private sector workers and later on, a new chapter had been brought into cover the public sector workers as well. According to him the concept of trade unionism and its ideas had begun to find their way to Sri Lanka from aboard where it developed since 1890. He states that the Ceylon Printers Union was the first trade union in Sri Lanka. Historically, trade unions were at the forefront of the movement for independence (prior to 1948), and unions therefore had also