# UNIT 7 TRADE UNION STRUCTURE, LEADERSHIP AND RECOGNITION

**Objectives**

After reading this unit one would be able to:

- understand structure of the Indian trade union functioning at different levels;
- understand how trade union structure at national level are linked to the regional, industry and plant level;
- understand the problems of multiplicity of trade unions; and
- analyse the future prospects trade unionism.

**Structure**

7.1 Introduction

7.2 Trade Union Structure in India

7.3 The Informal Sector And Its Alternative Forms Of Organisation

7.4 Government of Trade Unions in India

7.5 Summary

7.6 Self-Assessment Questions

7.7 Further Readings

## 7.1 INTRODUCTION

The origin and characteristics of trade union movement vary across countries depending on social and economic compulsions of industrialisation, political and economic factors and the institutional framework of the respective societies. Hence, one would come across a variety of bases for the formation of trade unions. For example, in the UK, guild system, the occupation/ trade were the basis for the formation of trade unions, in the USA it began with the formation of local associations of skilled craftsmen (craft unionism), and subsequently the labour movement developed slowly from workshop societies to local unions, city central bodies, industrial unions/ national unions; and finally to federations of unions (Sandver: 1987). However, a new model of union structure emerged in the USA in the 1990s which is based on geographical area/occupations - which though are craft unions but without craft skills. On the other hand in many of the European countries like In Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands one would find that the trade unions were formed not only on industrial/occupational/sectoral/company or plant basis, but also on religious denomination (European Industrial Relations Observatory: 2000).

In Japan, the trade unions are predominantly enterprise unions comprising of both white collar and the blue-collar employees belonging to one industrial unit rather than uniting people of different companies doing similar jobs. In addition there are industrial

unions and national Iabour organisations in Japan but the enterprise unions constitute the dominant framework of their union structure.

As discussed earlier, various structural types of unions have emerged over a period of time. These are as follows:

i) craft/occupational unions,

ii) industrial unions,

iii) general unions,

iv) enterprise unions,

v) state sponsored unions and

vi) national unions/federations.

The main features of each of these unions are discussed below.

**i) Craft Unions/Occupational unions:**

A craft/occupational union is an organisation of workers engaged in a particular craft or a trade or in a single or related trades/crafts. Such organisations comprise of those workers who have similar skills, craft training and specialisation. These type unions emerged during the pre-industrial revolution period for the purpose of controlling labour supply and improve wages. The logic behind the formation of such unions is that the skilled workers belonging to the same craft face similar problems. In spite of having a long existence in the UK and the USA these unions did not survive because of the impact of the modern factory system. With the advent of the factory system the craft unions began to be referred as unions of blue collar workers in most of the countries. These unions strived to improve their wages and working conditions mostly resorting to collective bargaining. However, with the advancement of technology in the production system the nature of work changed converting many of the blue collared workers to white collared employees. This resulted in the emergence of white collar unionism comprising of clerical, supervisory and professional workers. Thus, craft/occupational unions are found amongst non-manual employees and professional workers, examples of which can be the Crane Drivers' Association, Pilots' Association, stenographers' associations etc. One of the advantages of the craft unions is that they provide firm basis for solidarity of trade unions. The natural bonds of common interest, friendship and mutual respect among the members of a craft ensure intensive solidarity.

**ii) Industrial Unions**

An industrial union is an organisation of workers which covers all categories of workers in any one industry regardless of the differences in craft, skill, grade, position, or sex. The membership strength of an industrial union is normally large. With increased mechanization and mass production at the beginning of the twentieth century industrial unionism became a dominant model. Initially though the formation of these unions were resisted by the craft unions, in the US and the UK. But subsequently a number of industrial unions emerged in many countries including the US and the UK.

In many respects industrial unions have the advantages over the other type of unions. An industrial union in a particular industry can cover the interests of all categories of workers in a single agreement with the employer(s). Further, the industrial unions which consists different categories of workers- skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled- bring out a homogeneous organic groups, and create a feeling of solidarity among the workers A major weakness of the industrial unions is that these unions, with majority of the members being unskilled workers, evidently, may not be able to meet the specific needs and protect the interests of the skilled workers whose number is relatively small.

**iii) General Unions**

A general union is one whose membership covers workers employed in many industries, employments and crafts. Such unions thus cut across the boundaries of occupation and industry. The general unions are ideal from the solidarity point of view. However, it requires a very high degree of consciousness among the workers representing various industries to form this type of unions. The growth the service sector and consequent increase in employment is considered to instrumental for the emergence of white-collar and general unions in most of the countries.

**iv) Enterprise unions**

These are the unions which are formed at the enterprise level cutting across craft or occupation. Enterprises assuring a lifetime employment make the employees tied to the enterprise resulting that both the labour and management to focus on harmonious relations. Hence, most of these unions are organized without any resistance from either the employer or the state. Most of the other unions in the western countries, however, were apprehensive of the enterprise unions because of their narrow focus and lack of a wider solidarity. This is a dominant form of unionism in Japan where nearly all the unions in the country representing the vast majority of union membership are of enterprise level.

**v) State sponsored unions**

These types of unions mostly are prevalent in socialist countries and centrally planned economies and also in the authoritarian and military regimes. In the socialist and centrally planned economies, the state organizes unions aiming to integrate the role of the unions in fulfilling the objectives of the state. On the other hand in the authoritarian and military regimes it is for the purpose of repression and denial of trade union and human rights. However, in many of these countries which have gone through the process transition resulting into democracies and competitive authoritarian regimes, these unions still have remained the dominant workers' organizations despite few internal reforms and regional variation. They continue their authoritarian legacies which to influence labour politics in new democracies (Fedorowycz, *et al 2020*).

**vi) National Unions/Federations**

As trade unions gradually realised that in the competitive business environment most of their problems cannot be tackled on their own, they associate themselves to form large central trade unions or trade union federations at the industrial, national and international

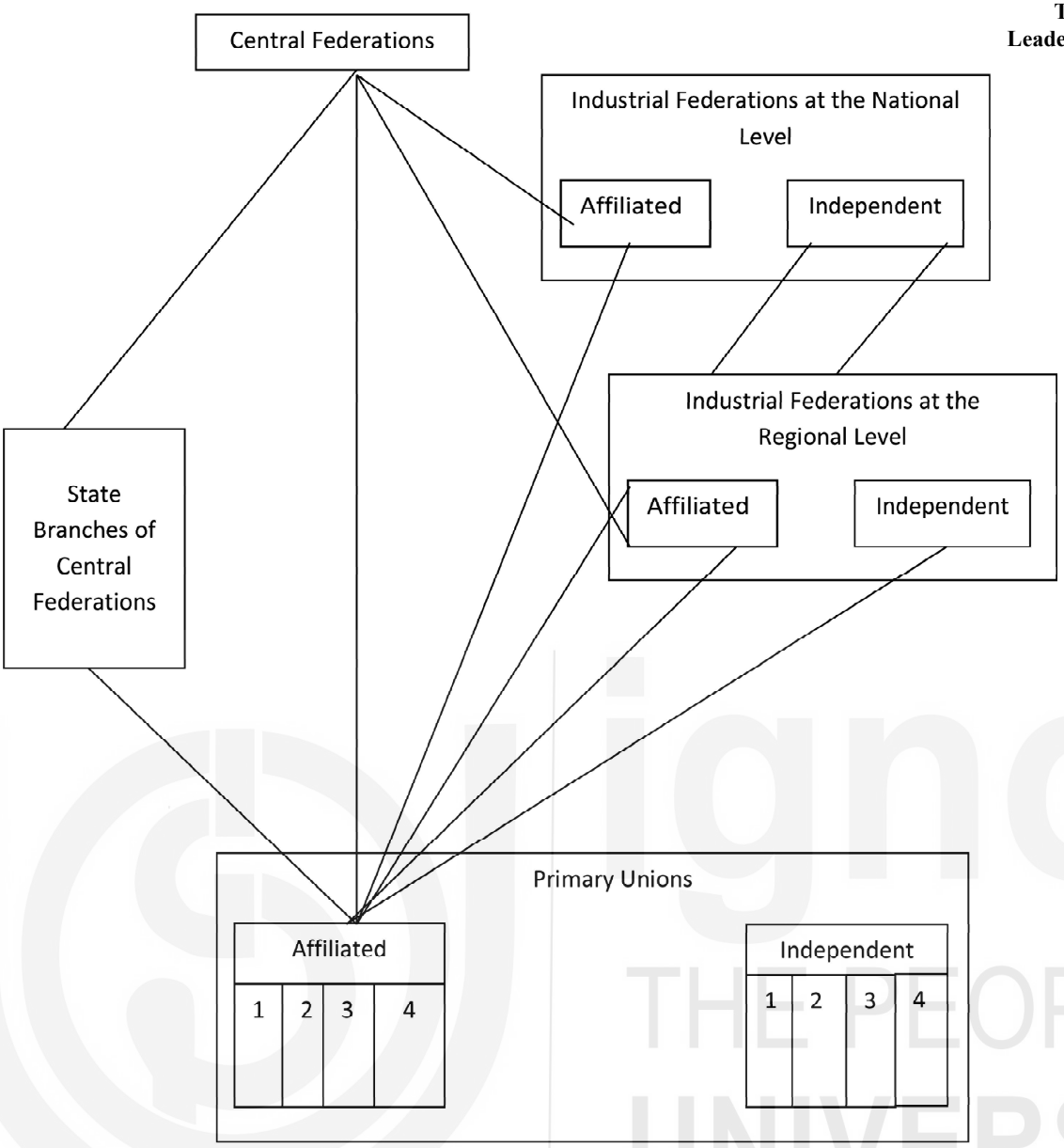
levels.. These are federations which combine workers' unions horizontally, vertically or on the basis of political ideology with a view of coordinating them. The British Trade Union Congress and the AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labour and Congress of Industrial Organisations) which are national federations are examples of horizontally structured of unions. There are vertical federations separate for blue and white collar workers like in Sweden like TCO (Confederation of Professional Employees Associations) and LO (Trade Union Confederation of blue collar workers) and ASPA (Australian Sugar Producers' Association) and ACTU (Australian Council of Trade Unions) in Australia. The All India Port and Dock Workers' Federation and UP Chini Mazdoor Federation functioning in India are example of industrial federation operating at the national and regional level respectively are horizontally structured unions. The other confederations in India like BMS, AITUC, INTUC, HMS, UTUC and CITU are the examples of national level unions following different political and ideological lines.

The World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) are examples of international level federations. The federations are loose associations. The individual unions that affiliate to the international body retain the real power and enjoy maximum autonomy due to their direct and day-to-day contact with the rank-and-file workers. While the federations formulate policies and provide guidance to the unions that are under their fold, it is the local units that implement the policies. Further, as these units are the main sources of providing funds to the federations they play an influential role in the federations.

## 7.2 TRADE UNION STRUCTURE IN INDIA

While studying Indian trade unionism when one attempts to analyse structure of the Indian trade unions one would find the prevalent diversity of the bases on which the primary unions have been formed and their relationship to the hierarchical order of the movement. Apart from the multiplicity of trade unions compete for the same jurisdiction and splits along political lines making the situation complex. The existence of a variety of bases such as plant, employment, industry, craft, and so on, make the task of analyzing the structure of the Indian trade union movement doubly complicated. An attempt has been made here to describe the pattern underlying the structure of the Indian trade unions. The picture that emerges, though not uniformly representative, gives an idea of the structure of the trade union movement in India.

These unions may function independently on their own or they may get affiliated to the regional and /or national level industrial federations (which may or may not be affiliated to the State branches /central federations of the central federations of trade unions). The primary unions may also be directly affiliated to any of the Central Federations and/or State branches of the central federations. The structure of the Indian trade unions can be discussed under three heads namely – Primary Unions at the base, Industrial Federations and Central Federations.




Source: Sinha, Sinha, and Shekhar, *Inustrial Relations, Trade Unions, and Labour Legislation*, Pearson education, 2006.

## I. Primary unions at base:

The primary unions are the basic units of the structure of the Indian trade unions. They are nearest to the work-place and to the workers. They recruit their members; run the local offices maintain the closest touch with the union members and conduct industrial disputes. They are being organized on a variety of bases depending upon the concrete local situations and problems. The bases of these primary unions are so diverse as to preclude any attempt at a systematic classification. The primary unions in India fall under three categories in order of their numerical importance, that is, (a) industrial unions, (b) general unions, and (c) craft unions.

### (a) Primary unions of the Industrial Type:

In the western countries while the craft unions heralded the emergence trade union movement, it is the plant or establishment level unions which marked the advent of the movement in India. In the initial stage of industrialization the typical industrial worker mostly being unskilled or at best semiskilled didn't had a strong craft base, migratory in

nature from industry to industry or from industrial to rural area and *vice versa,* acquired any degree of specialization to form craft unions for their protection. In addition, the outsiders who provided the impetus to organize the workers focusing on the common interest of the workers as a whole, the spirit of the national freedom movement and anti-employer speeches facilitated the workers coming together to unite themselves in industrial unions at the plant or establishment levels. Further, the concentration of certain industries in a particular locality and the provisions of industrial relations legislations in certain provinces gave rise to the industry-cum- region based unions. The Primary unions of the industrial type thus may be classified on the basis of their unit of organization namely; (i) plant-level industrial unions and (ii) region-cum-industry level industrial unions.

**i. Plant-level Industrial Unions/Establishment-level Unions**:

The plant-level industrial unions are the most common form of unions under the category of the industrial type primary unions. Such unions cover a single plant, such as a factory, a mine or a plantation. Membership in these unions is open to all employees working in these units of employment, cutting across of their crafts or their occupation. Therefore, these primary unions are called 'plant-level industrial unions'. The majority of the trade unions functioning in India belong to this category. However, there are many organizations/ establishments engaged in different activities providing which employment to people but are not covered under the term 'industry'. These may be organizations like community and social services, personal services, agriculture etc. The unions which are formed in these establishments covering all categories of workers employed in them are therefore called as Establishment-Level Unions.

**ii. Region - cum-industrial level unions**:

Primary unions of this type are those whose membership is open to all workers employed in a particular industry located in a particular city or a particular region. In such cases, though the base is industrial but the unions of this type differ from the former in that they cover employees in the whole industry in a particular locality, irrespective of the number of plants or the employers. The Rashtriya Mill Mazdoor Sangh and the Girni Kamgar Union at Mumbai can be taken as examples of this type of unions. Such unions are generally larger in size and for the purpose of day –to-day operation, may have their branches of factory committees for each factory in the industry covered.

**(b) Primary unions of the General type:**

The primary unions of the general type may be grouped under two categories namely: a) Employer-cum-local level general unions; and b) local-level general unions.

Primary unions of a general type which have emerged in a number of industries belonging to one owner and located in the same location are the employer-cum-local level general unions. These unions cover all employees working in a variety of industries owned by one employer and located at same place. For example, the Rohtas Workers' Union functioning in Dalmianagar, having a a cluster of industries such as cement, sugar, paper, chemical, asbestos and hydrogenated oil which are owned by the Rohtas. As evident, the common employer and common place of work, in spite of the diversity of the industries, prompts the workers to form a common union. If these industries would

have been located at different places, but under the same owner, a number of unions would have been formed for different industries.

However, there may be general unions operating at the local level covering not only a number of industries but also a number of employers. These type of unions are called as local-level general unions. In these unions workers employed in different industries which are owned by different employers but located in the same location join to form a common union. The Jamshedpur Labour Union, located at Jamshedpur can be an example of this type of union. The Jamshedpur Labour Union draws its membership from a variety of industries located at Jamshedpur covering the steel industry and the engineering industries such as cable, tube, locomotive, tin plate, wire-product and so on.

**(c) Primary unions of the craft type:**

The employees having a belonging to a common craft when join together to form trade unions at any levels like at the local, or at the regional, or at the national are called as primary unions of the craft type. In many of the industries like the coal, textile, port and dock, railway, air transport, and Posts & Telegraphs industries one can find the existence of such unions in India.

For example in the coal industry, the Indian National Mines Overmen, Surveyors, Sardars Association functioning at the national level is a prominent craft union. The Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association covering the different craft unions of the textile industry at Ahmedabad can be taken as an example of the craft union functioning at the regional level. Further, grades which if can be considered as equivalent to crafts, one can also find such associations among the civil employees working at the State and Central Governments on the basis of their grade of employment. The association formed by the Grade III employees irrespective of their location of employment at different and circles of the erstwhile Post and Telegraph Department of Government of India, is an example of the above. However, the number and type of craft unions operating at the local or regional or national level in the country are very few.

**Affiliation of the primary Unions:**

Many of the primary unions, which share common links amongst themselves, also join together to form industrial or regional federations seeking affiliations with the central federations. Hence, the primary unions in India simultaneously may be members of a regional federation, an industrial federation at the national level and also be affiliated directly to a central federation and to its branch operating at the State level. On the contrary a union may remain totally independent without having any affiliation. In India the majority of the primary unions prefers to function and operate independently at the local level and has kept themselves away from being affiliated with the state or national level bodies.

**II. Industrial Federations:**

Industrial federations constitute the second tier in the hierarchy of the structure of trade union movement in India. Workers who belong to a particular industry may have some common problems, attracting them to be resolved at the industrial level. In spite of the fact that different trade unions may be functioning in the different units belonging to an industry to handle their local problems , but when they have some common problems which cut across all the units, it is pertinent for them to come together to resolve the problems effectively at the industry level. Hence, in order to handle these problems

effectively, some of the plant level and locality level unions join together to form federations at two levels, namely; regional level and national level.

The Indian National Mine Workers' Federation, Indian National Iron and Steel Workers' Federation, the All Indian Railwaymen's Federation and Indian National Defence Workers' Federation etc are some of the examples of the industrial federations functioning at the national level. In addition to the examples cited above it is also seen that such industrial federations have been in operation in different other industries, like cotton textiles, cement, engineering, sugar, plantations, chemicals, banks, ports and docks, insurance, etc at the national level. The UP Chini Mazdoor Federation and the Bihar Sugar Workers' Federation are the examples of the regional level industrial federations.

After independence a number of factors like setting up of Wage Boards for fixation of wages in some industries, greater reliance on industry level collective bargaining, formation of industrial committees and increased scope for consultation for formulation and implementation of labour policy in general have paved the path for the formation and strengthening of the industrial federations. The First National Commission on Labour taking a positive note of the trend of formation and strengthening of the industrial federations in India has observed "formation of such national federations should be encouraged, as these will be more effective at collective bargaining forums and also as agencies to which educational and research activities for the benefit of the workers in the concerned industry could be entrusted (First NCL Report, 1969)

Industrial federations functioning at the regional level may become a constituent of a national level industrial federation. The regional federations in addition can have affiliation with the national centres. However, many of the regional industrial federations have preferred to remain independent without having any link with the industrial federation at the national level or with a central federation. At the same time many of these federations in spite of having affiliated to one or other federations have maintained their independent existence. The All Indian Railwaymen's Federation and Indian National Defence Workers' Federation are the examples of such independent federations.

It may, however, be noted that industrial federations have not been formed in all the industries in the country. In those industries in which industrial federations have been formed may not have affiliation of all the primary unions operating in the same industry. Further, depending upon the political affiliations of the primary unions, which are also affiliated to an industrial federation, may create rival industrial federations under the aegis of political parties. For example in the coal mining one can find the existence of parallel federations formed both by the different central federations. In the coal industry, one can find a number of national level industrial federations lke, the INTUC-affiliated Indian National Mine Workers' Federation; the AITUC-affiliated Indian Mine Workers' Federation; the CITU- affiliated All India Coal Workers' Federation; the HMS affiliated All India Khadan Mazdoor Federation; and the BMS-affiliated Akhil Bharatiya Khadan Mazdoor Similar examples of existence of parallel industrial federations can also be found in some other industries like, engineering, cement, sugar, jute, plantations, banks etc. It can also be seen that not all of these industrial federations have got themselves registered under the provisions of the Trade Unions Act, 1926. In practice, whenever the issue having nominees from the workers side in any of the national level bodies like the Wage Boards, etc. constituted in an industry arises, the government consults the central federation of the concerned industry having the maximum membership to send the workers' nominees instead of the industrial federations.

**Central Federations:**

The central federations of trade unions are at the apex of the structure of trade union movement in India. The primary unions, the regional and the industrial federations get themselves affiliated to these central federations according to their convenience and political inclinations. These federations coordinate the activities of the affiliates , provide guidance and formulate broad policies of the unions that are affiliated to them and give these policies a national character. They come to the rescue of the affiliates whenever the latter face crises. However, it is these affiliates are the real centres of trade union activity and that they are only loosely controlled by the central federations. The central federations may come to the rescue of their affiliates whenever they are in difficulties in the conduct of industrial disputes by providing publicity, appeal for funds and political support and so on. But in the actual conduct of negotiations at lower levels, their role is extremely limited.

There are a number of central federations functioning in India like ; All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) , Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC), Hind Mazdoor Sabha(HMS), United Trade Union Congress (UTUC), United Trade Union Congress-Lenin Sarani (UTUC -Lenin Sarani), Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), Bharatiya Mazdoor Sabha (BMS), National Federations of Indian Trade Unions (NFITU), Trade Union Coordination Committee (TUCC), National Labour Organisation (NLO), Hindu Mazdoor Kisan Panchayat (HMKP), Indian Federation of Free Trade Unions (IFFTU), Labour Progressive Federation (LPF), Trade Union Coordination Centre (TUCC), All India Central Council of Trade Unions (AICCTU), Swashiayi Mahila Sewa Sangh (Self Employed Women's Association – SEWA). Some of these central federations have relationship with different political parties like the AITUC with the Communist Party of India, the INTUC with the Indian National Congress, CITU with the Communist Party of India (Marxist), BMS with Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, AICCTU with Communist Party of India (Marxist–Leninist) Liberation, UTUC with Revolutionary Socialist Party. Out of these, five federations namely; INTUC, BMS, HMS, AITUC, and CITU are considered to be major ones.

The central federations have their state branches consisting of the affiliates unions functioning within the territorial jurisdiction of the state concerned. The state branches can manage their own affairs subject to broad guidance from the central federations. The central federations have their branches at the state level. Broadly speaking the state level branches are free to manage their own affairs. However, in actual practice these federations seek the guidance of the central federations on various issues.

**Activity 1:** Describe the structure of a trade union that is known to you.

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## 7.3 THE INFORMAL SECTOR AND ITS ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF ORGANISATION

The foregoing discussions relate to the trade union structure in the organised sector / formal sector which accounts for around 7% only of the total labour force in the country. Thus the informal sector/ unorganised sector accounts for nearly 93% of the country's working population. In spite of having a large majority of the workforce the sector has been neglected by the trade union movement in the country. One significant feature of this sector is the predominance presence of women labour. One can also find employment of substantial number of child labour and migrant labour. The sector is characterised by the absence of any form of employment security, payment of statutory minimum wages unless enforced through collective effort which is uncommon or through the intervention of the enforcement wing of the government which is not that effective. Thus it is considered to be the abode of the unprotected workers. The majority of the labour engaged in this sector, are unskilled, have virtually no formal educations as most of them are illiterate, have no permanent employer or place of work. These factors not only make them vulnerable for exploitation by the employers but also do not make them to be united to form any trade unions. Further, the mainstream trade unions have not shown much interest in this sector, and also that their methods are singularly unsuitable. In the recent past, the informal sector has witnessed emergence of some alternative forms of labour organisations. Although these organisations may call themselves trade unions and register under the Trade Unions Act, they do not have any identification with the trade union movement. The best known example of such form of organization is the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), which was formed in 1972 in Ahmedabad. This organisation brought together around 2 lakh women employees engaged in varying occupations like; vending and hawking, carrying head-loads of goods, pulling hand-carts, rag-picking, home-based production, and other forms of self-employment. It had membership strength of 6.88 lakh in December 2002 (Ministry of Labour, Government of India,2007) and the claimed membership on the basis of the returns submitted under the Trade Unions Act to the Ministry of Labour was around 13 lakh in 2013 (The Economic Times ,E- Paper, April 2013) . Thus, SEWA has emerged the largest trade union of the self-employed women in India. It gets its membership from five states; namely Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Kerala. However, SEWA plays a dual role of both as a trade union and a cooperative. As a trade union, it organises women to fight for their rights, and as a cooperative it promotes different activities for their development. Apart from SEWA there are also some similar important organisations in the informal sector in different parts of the country. Some of the examples of such organizations are; the Tamil Nadu Construction Workers' Union, unions of fish workers in Kerala and forest workers in Uttar Pradesh. Unlike conventional unions, which refuse to move beyond collective bargaining, these alternative forms of organisations have been vastly more innovative in their choice of strategy. Fish workers of Kerala and forest workers of Uttar Pradesh have followed the footsteps of SEWA, like functioning both as a trade union and a cooperative. For construction workers, the combination is of trade union struggle with mass mobilisation to influence legislation. However, considering the size of the informal sector in terms of the volume employment it provides, the number of the organizations as cited above is relatively very small. But it can be considered to be a humble beginning and over the time their number will increase covering more number of workers. With the initiative taken by SEWA, a national forum of unorganized workers was formed

under the name National Centre (NCL) for making their presence at the national level in the early 1990s. Apart from SEWA, the NCL had the unions of fish workers, construction workers, forest workers, other independent unions concerned with the unorganized workers, and academics engaged in the field of unorganised sector during the period as its members during 1991 -95. However, the NCL has not yet got registered under the Trade Unions Act, 1926.

## 7.4 GOVERNMENT OF TRADE UNIONS IN INDIA

The government of trade unions in India can be discussed at three levels as follows

a) Primary level unions

b) Industry level federations and

c) Central federations

**a) Primary unions**

As discussed earlier these are the unions which function at the plant level, covering the employees of one plant as members, their size is usually small. They have a simple governing structure comprising of: i) Executive Committee, and b) General Body. The primary unions, irrespective of their diversity in the bases of their organization and whether have any political affiliation or not, they usually have a common pattern of governance having the two forums cited above.

General Body:

The General Body is comprised of all the members of the union and is at the apex of the administrative structure. The General Body can meet as and when required to guide, advise, and approve the decisions taken by the Executive Committee. In addition, it has its Annual meeting in which it elects its office bearers and other members to constitute the Executive Committee.

Executive Committee:

The Executive Committee is vested with the administrative powers to manage the day-to-day affairs of the union. It usually comprises of a President, few Vice-Presidents, a General Secretary, a Treasurer and other members. The General Secretary is the most powerful position of the union. In some cases the position of the President just a figure head and may be occupied by an outsider. The Vice-Presidents, however, is usually elected from the rank –and- file. The decisions relating to the routine day-to-day affairs and important issues are taken by the Executive Committee. Some of these decisions taken may have to be placed in the General Body for its consideration and approval. The Executive Committee may also have outsiders as office bearers and/or members subject to the limitation provided for the trade unions functioning in different type of establishments under Section 22 of the Trade Unions Act, 1926

**b) Industrial Federations**:

The industrial federations normally consist of three organs as follows:

I. General Body or Conference

II. General Council and

III. Working Committee

**i. General Body or Conference**

The delegates who are elected by the affiliated unions constitute the General Body or Conference. As per the respective constitutions of the affiliated unions and their membership the number of representatives is elected and such it differs from union to union. The General Body elects its members to constitute the General Council and the Working Committee. The meeting of General Body should be held at least once in a year and in addition it can have special sessions. It deals with policy matters and prepares guidelines for the functioning of the General Council and the Working Committee.

**ii. General Council:**

The General Council is formed by the members elected by the General Body. Since the number of members elected depends on the membership of the affiliated unions, the size of the Council is not the same all the federations. It has to meet at least once in a year. The General council looks after the functioning of the Working Committee.

**iii. Working Committee:**

The Working Committee comprises of different office bearers like President, Vice-President, General Secretary, Treasurer and other members elected by the General Body. Some federations even have provisions for inclusion of outsiders in the Working Committee. The Working Committee looks after the day-to-day affairs of the federation including any emergency situation as per the guidelines framed by the General Body. It can also frame rules in conformity with its constitution and appoint sub-committees if required for any special purpose.

**c) Central Federations:**

Almost all the Central federations have a three tier administrative structure consisting of the following:

i) Annual Delegate's Meeting

ii) General Council and

iii) Working Committee

iv) Annual Delegate's Meeting

The Annual delegate's Meeting which is also called as the Annual Conference is attended by the delegates who are elected by their respective affiliated unions on the basis of one's membership strength. Evidently there is no uniformity in this regard as the INTUC and the HMS affiliated unions send delegates at the rate of one for every five hundred members, the same for the AITUC affiliates is one for every two hundred members. In conformity with the constitution of the federation, the policy guidelines are formulated in the meeting. In the meeting of almost all the federations with the exception of INTUC, the office bearers like President, Vice-Presidents, General Secretary, Secretaries, Treasurer are elected . The election of the office bearers in the INTUC is done in the General Council. In general routine matters are decided on the basis of majority of

votes. But important and sensitive issues are decided on the basis of a three - fourth majority of votes. In addition special meetings can also be convened if there is such a request from the prescribed number of affiliated unions.

ii) General Council

The General Council consists of the office bearers like the President, Vice-President, General Secretary, Secretaries, Treasurer and some other member who are elected in the Annual Delegates' Meeting along with some co-opted members. There is no uniformity in the size of the Council as the number of office bearers and other members varies from one to the other. The meeting of the General Council is supposed to be held at least once in a year. Election of members to constitute the Working Committee is held in the Council. However, in the INTUC it in addition to the above it also elects its office bearers. Various functions of the Council include *inter alia* framing of bye laws and regulations, hearing and deciding appeals against the decisions of the Working Committee, affiliation and disaffiliation of unions etc.

iii) Working Committee

The day-to-day management of the Centre is vested on the Working Committee which comprises of the different office bearers and other members as cited earlier. Apart from looking after the routine day-to-day functions it has also to carry out the resolutions adopted in the Annual Delegates' Meeting and the General Council.

## 7.5 SUMMARY

The foregoing discussion has presented the structure of the trade unions functioning in India. As evident, we come across a variety of unions functioning at different levels like primary level, industry level, regional level and national level. The structure of the trade unions at different levels also has different coverage and shape. The industrial, regional and central federations provide a platform for affiliation of the base level unions. But, as may be seen not all the primary unions get themselves affiliated to these federations or centres. The union structure is politicized with different political parties both at the national and also at the state level having their trade union centres to have say on labour issues. However, there are unions which remain totally apolitical but their numbers are few. Though for pretty long time the trade union movement in the unorganized or informal sector remains neglected, of late this sector has also witnessed the formation of unions at the national as well as at the state level.

## 7.6 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the different types of structure of trade unions and their characteristics
2. What are the types of primary unions functioning in India. Discuss their features
3. Enumerate the types and features of the Industrial Federations and Central Federations functioning in India.
4. Distinguish between primary unions of general type and craft type.
5. Discuss the structure of governance of the Primary Level Unions, Industrial Level Federations and Central Federations

## 7.7 FURTHER READINGS


- Sinha, P.R.N., Indu Bala Sinha and Seema Priyadarshini Sekhar. 2004. *Industrial Relations, Trade Unions, and Labour Legislations*, Delhi: Pearson Education.
- C. S. Venkata Ratnam,2006, *Industrial Relations*, New Delhi, Oxford University Presss
- Government of India, 1969, *First National Commission on Labour*,