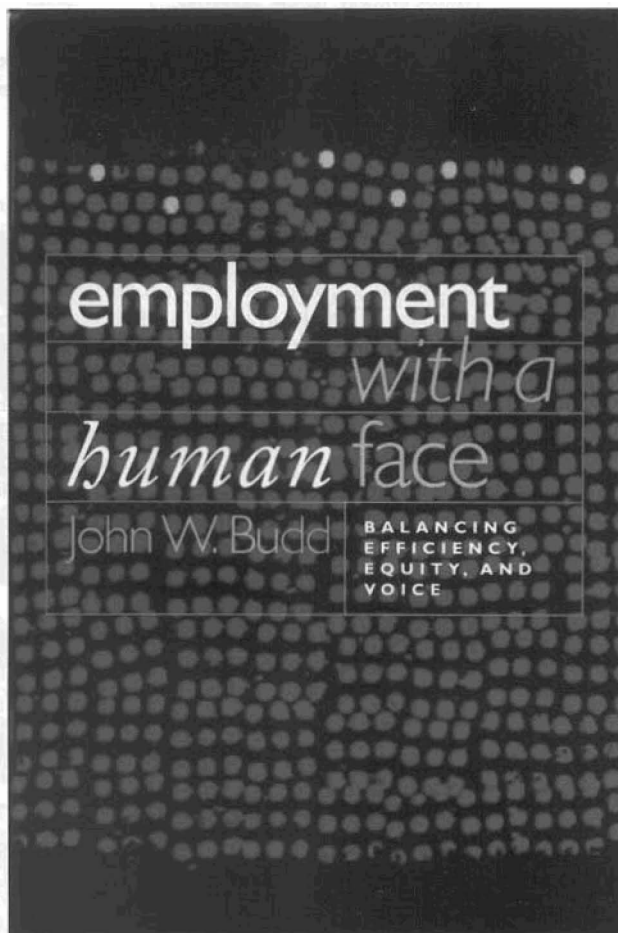


Employment with a Human Face:

Balancing Efficiency, Equity and Voice.

Budd, J.W. (2004)



The book comprises nine core chapters apart from the Introduction, plus a Conclusion and Epilogue. In the Introduction, the employment function and ramifications of the world of work are initially elaborated. Chapter one, titled "The Objectives of the Employment Relationship" rationalizes the employment relationship and amplifies the interfaces with the variables of efficiency, equity and voice as the determinism. Chapter two, with the caption "The Balancing Imperative: Human Rights in Conflict" explains how conflicts between efficiency, equity and voice are likely to be manifested in practical human resource and industrial relations (HRIR) applications and labor administration, as well as the necessity for their harmonization within the context of employment. In Chapter three, entitled 'Balancing Outcomes: The Environment and Human Agents', the wider latitude or contexts (various environments) of modern sector employment and the role of organizational actors, especially employers and employees, are spotlighted.

Further still, in Chapter four, the focal subject matter is paraphrased as 'Balancing Outcomes Revisited: The Ethics of the Employment Relationship'. The particular pondering of issues at this juncture is significant, given that the basic employment relationship is naturally laden with values, sentiments, judgments and horrendous issues of morality, etc. Chapter five is on 'The Balancing Alternatives: Workplace Governance'. Here, the various demands of and approaches of managing the employment relationship effectively are exhaustively chronicled, with the aid of critical authorities, associated labor laws and practical scenarios. Thereafter, Chapter six discusses 'The New Deal Industrial Relations System', based on the trajectory of the employment system in the United States.

In Chapter seven, 'The Geometry of Comparative Industrial Relations' is the attention. Here, it is reasoned that the concept of the geometry of the employment relationship is a heuristic device for analyzing the extent of contributions of individual industrial relations systems (IRS) to the effective harmonization of the interactive outcomes of efficiency, equity and voice. Chapter eight addresses the 'Alternatives to Job Control Unionism'. The author proffers one alternative to job control unionism, which is labeled as "employee empowerment unionism". He further rationalizes that, because the nature of unionism is critical for the grant of the benefit of voice in the employment relationship, corresponding union strategies must take cognizance of how such employee voice is attained. The final of the inclusive chapters is nine, with the title 'Balancing the Global Workplace'. This is meaningful, in view of the incremental demands of globalization. The author also suggests that the research function should capture the concomitants of globalization in relation to contemporary employment relationships.

It is well known that the extant organization management literature, from scientific management to lean production approaches, is replete with a seeming overemphasis of the ideals of rational organization and optimization, almost always from the superlative angles of shrewd economism, profitability, marginal productivity, efficiency, and, indeed, an entire regime of workplace management psychology that is so plainly work-centered, and whose control structure is skewed in favor of capital rather than people-centered. Even, the diehard

traditional approaches of personnel management had tended to place such a high premium on organizational control and compliance tactics rather than on the more enduring stimuli of employee commitment and human resource involvement.

This work by Professor John W. Budd, a Land-grant Term Professor of Industrial Relations at the Carlson School of Management, University of Minnesota, USA, has again brought into the fore the longstanding debacle about the competing demands of ethics, industrial justice, employment fair play, workplace democratization and representation within the context of the modern sector employment relationship. The underlying management paradigm in John Budd's book is robust, appealing and very welcome. The work is succinct, solid and coherent. It is a bold attempt to proselytize the emergent demands and ideals of humanistic employment conditions as well as the quality of work life experience (QWL). It is also a practical illustration of the mutual benefits that are derivable by labor and management in the modern work settings, where inter-actor synergy is meant to be nurtured and embraced for public good and corporate survival.

By and large, this enterprise on the subject matter is a significant and useful contribution to the status of management philosophy as applicable to the increasingly globalized employment contexts of the 21st century. The scholarly feat should also ideally influence training methodology and objectives in the contemporary management and business schools, and particularly for the longitudinal propagation of competencies in comparative industrial relations and international human resource management. It is an invaluable text for the students and practitioners of HRIR as well as the managers of complex organizations and business conglomerates.

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