

## The Dignity of Work

Being employed is important to the social well-being of the individual, as it allows for the earning of an income to meet the basic needs of food and shelter. Of equal importance, it provides for a level of financial independence. The nature of the job which an employee performs and/or their occupation, is a factor used in determining the wage or salary that is paid. Perceptions about the job and the profession tend to inform the measurement used in ascribing the status which is applied to the job and the profession. This tends to move away from the fact that all types of jobs are respected as being equal.

The fact that job distinctions are made strongly supports the thinking that some jobs are viewed as superior. With job distinction being a factor, there is the distinct possibility that discrimination and bias can take root. It is unfortunate that such perceptions are primarily based on an individual's social standing, and not on the value of the contribution that is associated with the work done. This way of thinking is demeaning, for it seeks to undermine, underestimate and create divisions amongst workers. It can also account for the sometimes bad and unfair treatment given to workers. Usually, those who are impacted are middle income employees and those at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder.

When it comes to the dignity of work, there are no lines to be drawn in determining the categories of employees to whom it applies. The dignity of work is about respecting the rights of workers, workers having a right to a decent and fair wage, the right to productive work, to a choice of work and the right to join a trade union of one's choosing.

The promotion of a minimum wage is one way of satisfying the dignity of work. While this is so, where such a wage is not pitched at a level in order that it matches the rising cost of living and the rate of inflation, then it does little to meet the basic living needs of the individual. A decent wage is meant to help to alleviate poverty, and where this fails to meet the expectation, it adds more pressure on the individual and the country's social system; given the responsibility of the social agencies of the state to assist in meeting the basic needs of those who are impacted.

It is fair to say that pay, remuneration, conditions of work and opportunity for growth and development, are key factors when discussing the subject of the dignity of work. It goes without saying that irrespective of the job one performs, each employee expects to be treated like a human being. The dignity of the individual at work is tied to being seen as trustworthy, respectful of others and oneself, tolerant and being able to have a listening ear. It is important that each employee is made to feel that he belongs.

The maintaining of confidentiality of information is critical to the preservation of the dignity of the employee. When this is breached, it results in a loss of confidence and tends to be demoralizing to the individual. This is where ethical behaviour comes into question.

In most modern-day societies, the practice of slavery and coercion are frowned upon, but yet there are pockets of this occurring in parts of the world. Needless to say, there continue to be

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practices in the workplace which are based on the exploitation of labour. Those who are socially excluded and who are deemed to be living in a state of poverty tend to become victims, as their circumstances are exploited. Those who fall in the category of the working poor are often subject to being treated less than they deserve.