

WOMEN'S UNIVERSITY IN AFRICA



Addressing gender disparity and fostering equity in University Education
FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT AND ENTREPRENEURIAL SCIENCES

BSc HONOURS DEGREE IN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

MAIN PAPER

HRM121:

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

INTAKE 12:

FIRST YEAR SECOND SEMESTER

DATE:

TIME:

HOURS

INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

Answer Question **1** and any other **two**

Question 1

Read the following and answer the question that follows

A central element of the concept of a traditional worksite is that both production and employment is anchored to a particular physical location. In contrast, globalization and technological change have been associated with a spatial transformation of both production and work. One result is that, instead of nationally defined firms mass-producing goods for export, production sites are now routinely located around the globe and are themselves more easily relocated. Not surprisingly, then, industrial relations and human resources management researchers have recently turned their attention to the question of multinational corporations and the management of work and labour relations on the transnational level. Frenkel and Royal's contribution to this special issue tackles one much debated aspect of this issue the relative influence and interaction of transnational and local strategies in the restructuring of work in global corporations. The internationalization of production has partly been facilitated by the worldwide extension of capital markets and also by the fact that production technology (e.g., smaller scale) permits this strategy. Consequently, production sites are themselves becoming more dispersed. Firms can seek competitive advantage by selecting physical sites that are regulated by advantageous labour policies, competitive labour costs and other factors. This has given rise to fears over a race to the bottom in terms of worker living standards, by opening the door even further to the adoption of a strategy of achieving competitiveness on the basis of low labour costs.

This dimension of globalization poses important challenges, including how the state ensures that basic workplace standards (e.g., health and safety; minimum compensation levels) are satisfied when firms can choose the location of their facilities in part on the basis of labour policies, as well as how unions can protect their members, or organize new members, when firms can escape them through easy relocation. In the longer term, domestic labour policies that were created around established institutional arrangements increasingly run the risk of becoming ineffective as they adapt and change in response to the evolution of the new economy. This concern is further amplified in the context of the growing debate and concern over whether conventional notions of the nation state and, hence, of public policy make sense in an era of borderless regional economies that operate in an increasingly global world.

Globalization is clearly a process in itself as well as a factor that has served to generate further change in industrial relations, particularly in the various institutional arrangements around which labour markets and industrial relations have been organized within countries. Whether one considers the national or the industry-level "system" of industrial relations, the primary issue is how, and to what extent, the process of globalization and the related factors of technological change and trade liberalization have altered industrial relations systems. What is clear is that the conduct of labour relations and human resources management is intrinsically related to the set of legal, economic and social institutional arrangements within which the industrial relations system functions and that, even in a global economy, institutions and organizational arrangements matter (Card and Freeman 1993). The level of unionization in a country can affect such important macro-economic outcomes as the distribution of income, and within a country, institutional arrangements can facilitate adjustments and may even foster desirable outcomes that markets, left on their own may not. How production, the workplace, and the workforce are organized within organizations are increasingly viewed as central to the productivity and performance of production units (i.e., firms), which in turn underpins competitiveness. Industrial relations systems continue to differ across countries and they continue to matter. The key research question is how we should assess the varied issues arising from the complex array of factors at work in the globalization process. Moreover, conducting research at the many levels of analysis relevant to industrial relations, including such diverse aspects as the workplace, the firm and union, and the industry and labour market, many of which may be examined in a broader regional context, presents a daunting task. However, industrial relations is uniquely positioned to address this complexity, since its inherently multidisciplinary nature lends itself to bringing a range of perspectives and methodologies to bear on these issues. This is the guiding principle underlying the range of analyses found in this issue on globalization.

Richard P, (1998) Globalization, Work and Industrial Relations, Industrial Relations, Vol. 53, No. 1, (p6-7)

Required: - Discuss the influence of globalisation on industrial relations. [40]

Question 2

Discuss Robert Mitchell's (1969) Iron Law of Oligarchy and its relevance to trade union democracy. [20]

Question 3

Discuss the role of the State in industrial Relations. [20]

Question 4

Discuss the various employee voice arrangements and indicate why they might not be genuine forms of participation. [20]

Question 5

Discuss the industrial relations perspectives and their significance to employment relationship. [20]

Question 6

The decline in strike activity means that conflict between employers and workers is not an important feature of contemporary employment relations. Discuss. [20]

END