

Guidance for marking the 3E5 Exam 2007

1. 'On its own, Human Resource Management (HRM), with its individualistic overtones, is inadequate as a recipe for organisational success. To be effective, it has to be balanced with a collectivist policy of recognising the independent representation of employees by a trade union.' Discuss. [100%]

This question refers to John Storey's view that HRM on its own is too individualistic to be effective. There are collective matters such as pay, health and safety, working conditions and a whole range of matters which affects everyone on the work organisation. Similarly, a complete reliance on the old system of reliance on collectivism alone takes no account of genuine concerns affecting individual workers such as job satisfaction, training, personal development job involvement etc. A good answer would mention that the WERS98 and WERS2004 employment surveys indicate that those organisations which adopt the best features of each have the most investment, higher productivity and lower labour turnover.

2. What are the features of the traditional Japanese Model of Industrial Relations? [40%]

Discuss the view that this Japanese Model is in decline.
[60%]

This question can be answered in a number of ways. The first part refers to the three distinguishing features of Japanese employment practices: long-term employment, a seniority-based wage system, and enterprise-based unions. Some commentators would also include the use of lean production. These practices have been instrumental in stabilizing labour relations in post-war Japan, and have contributed immensely to Japan's high rate of economic growth. The second part of the question refers to the twin forces of change, new technology and globalisation which have had an impact on all developed economies. In addition, an ageing Japanese workforce has added to these pressures.

A good candidate would consider each feature in turn and explore its impact in Japan. Kwon (2004) in his address to the International Industrial Relations Association, claimed that there has been very little change in the model as Japanese model as Japanese managers in large corporations have continued to support seniority and long-term employment. However, evidence from other sources would be equally acceptable.

3. Jeremy Rifkin (1996) claimed that we are now entering a new period in history where the twin forces of globalisation and automation will lead to the replacement of human labour by machines. He foresees 'the end of work'. Discuss. [100%]

This question is very general and should enable students adopt a critical view and to put forward an argument based on their knowledge of the all the literature on new technology. There is no particular answer to this question and candidates will be rewarded on the persuasiveness of their argument, their focusing on the question and their knowledge of the literature. A really good candidate will show a spark of originality in their answer.

4. 'Global capitalism will eventually eclipse the power of the nation state.' Discuss. [100%]

This question gives the students a lot of freedom to explore their knowledge of globalisation and labour. A good answer would define globalisation, indicate how it has been facilitated by the development of new technology and put forward an argument about how global capitalism has grown in importance. Although the turnover of several global corporations exceed the GNP of several smaller developed countries eg Belgium, Netherlands, Norway etc), that does not necessarily mean that the power of global capitalism will supersede the nation state. A good answer will be familiar with the growth of the nation state from the latter part of the 19th century and into the 20th century. The crux of the answer is concerned with whether or not the nation state, or a number of trade blocs eg EU, NAFTA can regulate globalisation.