**Assignment brief**

You are required to submit a report based upon three of the five discussion activities that you

will take part in throughout this module. This report should be an integrated piece of work

which relates your discussion activities to an appropriate theoretical framework and in

conclusion to current developments in labour relations. The entire portfolio should comprise

approximately 3,000 words. This word count does not include appendices that may be used

for illustrative or supporting material. However, appendices should be used with discretion,

not as a convenient dump when over the word limit.

Assignments should be in report format (i.e. with contents page, sections and subsections, a

clear introduction and conclusion, comprehensive referencing and bibliography). As this is an

academic piece of work you must support your analysis, arguments and recommendations by

using referencing to published material (this may be from journals, books or other media).

**Introduction**

In your introduction you should outline and evaluate relevant theories that relate to your

chosen discussion topics. The purpose of this section is to locate your subsequent discussion

in context and to demonstrate your understanding of how particular themes or concepts are

related to broader theories of the employment relationship. In other words your chosen theory

should act as a ‘conceptual wrapper’ that encompasses your portfolio. This section must

provide evidence of appropriate reading and demonstrate an ability to evaluate and synthesise

material to form coherent arguments and discussion.

**Main body of the report**

Here you should present your chosen 3 discussion topics. Taking each in turn you should

highlight the significant points of your group discussions and evaluate their significance for

labour relations practice and where appropriate for labour relations theory. It is important to

note that this section is not simply about writing up your class discussions. Instead, analysis

and evaluation of the discussion points must be privileged over their description. The purpose

of this section is to emphasise the implications of your discussions and the connections with

the theory that was discussed in the introduction.

**Concluding sections**

In the closing sections of your report you should draw connections between your preceding

discussions and contemporary events in labour relations. The purpose of this section is for

you to demonstrate that you have kept up to date with developments in labour relations

throughout the module and are able to locate their occurrence and significance within

appropriate theoretical frameworks that you have utilised within your portfolio.

Step 1: Decide what you want the central focus of your assignment to be. I suggest picking one of the following, although anything else covered in the module is fine too (employee voice, conflict at work, management’s approach to labour relations, trade unions, discipline at work, the State and labour relations)  
Step 2: Pick your 3 chosen discussion activities (voice, public sector/State, management, unions, industrial conflict or managing conflict)  
Step 3: Work out your line of argument that connects whatever you chose in step 1 with that chosen in step 2.  
   
The purpose of the assignment is to show that you understand how various aspects of the module, which you have chosen, are connected to each other and to present a line of argument that demonstrates this. The examples that you have looked at are on employee voice as that is what most students have chosen to look at. You could easily, however, look at management’s approach to labour relations as your central focus then consider unions (management’s approach to them), the public sector (management’s approach to LR within this sector and why it is the way it is) and voice (what forms of voice have management been using recently? Why?). Almost anything from the module can be connected to any of the discussion activities. Realising this, is in part what is being assessed.

Focus (choose 1) :

employee voice,

conflict at work,

management’s approach to labour relations,

trade unions,

discipline at work,

the State and labour relations

Discussion activities (choose 3):

**Employee voice : Read Hall, M. (2005) How are employers and unions responding to the Information and Consultation of Employees Regulations?, *Warwick Papers in Industrial Relations*, 77, available at:** [**http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/wbs/research/irru/wpir/wpir77\_mh.pdf**](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/wbs/research/irru/wpir/wpir77_mh.pdf) **[Accessed 14/11/2014] and then answer the questions below:**

1. What are the arguments for and against the establishment of legal rights for employees in this area of Labour Relations? Is legislation appropriate?
2. How significant is the detail of the regulations in diluting the impact of the Directive and subverting its purpose? Give examples.
3. Why are trade unions ambivalent about the legislation? On balance, what do they stand to gain and lose?
4. How would you categorise the arrangements required by the regulations – is this employee involvement or employee participation? Is employee apathy a good reason for not pursuing advances in EP/EI?
5. What is the potential impact on smaller organisations as the coverage of the legislation extends? Is it more significant for them?

**Management: Royal Mail** Copyrighted example:

prepare a short report on the factors which are likely to influence management approaches to Labour Relations within your allocated organisation

The Royal Mail is the UK's postal service which employs more than 150,000 employees. UK national heavily depend on the services provided by the organisation for the transmitting of mails, packages etc. However, due to deteriorating employer-employee relationship citizens have developed a 'no confidence' perception in the services offered.

The organisation has had a long history of irrational relationship with trade unions and have given the perception that employees and customers alike are at the bottom of their focus list.

Employees lack trust and respect for the employers and as a result the threat of industrial actions are forever looming over the heads of customers who depend on their services which in most instances are at a lower cost to that of the competition. However, we see that they are left with no choice but to use alternative channels which results in decreased productivity and income for the organisation.

A report by Former Labour Party General Secretary, Tom Sawyer indicated that Mail centre managers are known to exercise authoritarian approaches to work and they do not motivate their employees to do their job, there is a culture of "they and us."

The Royal Mail are being influenced by the trade unions and the state, Managers approaches are being influenced by economic and political factors. It seems to be the natural reactions by both the organisation and the unions in putting up resistance to proposals that are made by either side.

Royal Mail must realize that a medium must be established in order to get their employees on their side and working towards a shared common understanding of the goals and objectives of the organisation. Employees well-being, health, safety and sense of accomplishments must be taken into consideration in making strategic decisions should Royal Mail intend to see their business bloom and become second to none.

**public sector/State: Civil Service (Copyrighted please do not use)**

Your task is to prepare a short report on your organisation, providing an overview of its nature and purpose, size and Labour Relations issues. To assist you in doing so, there are some suggested questions which you may wish to answer.

* What is the size and make-up of the service (e.g. male/female, use of part-time workers etc.)?
* What is the nature of the work and occupations in the service (e.g. professional / white collar / low skill /mixed etc.)?
* What have been the key developments / changes for this service?
* Are there any specific government proposals for this service?
* What are the main employee relations issues (currently, recently, in the past)?

Role and Service

The role of the Civil service is to assist the government to effectively develop and implement policies. The Civil service is accountable to the public and is not politically affiliated with the government. It does not include any appointed government ministers or Armed forces, police officers, members of the Royal family and National Health Services but works along with central government departments, agencies and non-departmental government bodies. It is managed by the Prime Minister and the most senior personnel in the department is the Permanent Secretary. Civil servants are not elected to office but apply for a post in the Civil Service. The services provided include the payment of benefits and pensions, operating employment services and prisons and the issuance of driver’s licences. The civil service is more about providing a service or serving the people whereas the private sector seeks to maximize profits. Promotions are granted by the Civil service, not an electorate.

Unlike workers in the private sector, civil service employees may be prohibited from certain acts that would compromise their position as servants of the government and the general public. All civil servants are bound by the Official Secrets Act and need permission to communicate certain matters to the media.

Professions and Departments

Civil servants are employed either by the department itself or by public bodies. There are currently twenty-eight (28) professions being recognised in the Civil Service and membership is available for anyone employed in government departments and agencies or non-departmental public bodies and in some cases, the wider public sector, professionals outside of government. They provide a governance structure, raise standards, provide career development opportunities and promote collaboration.

The five largest delivery departments in the civil service are – the Department for Work and Pensions, HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC), the Ministry of Defense and the Home Office, which employs nearly 85% of all civil servants working in government departments and their directly line-managed public bodies.

There have been some changes in the Civil Service as it seeks its commitment to becoming the most inclusive employer in the UK. Flexible working hours, recognising the benefits in improving work-life balance and supporting health and wellbeing, is already a key part in the Civil service’s culture.

Almost one in four civil servants work part-time with the Department of Work and Pensions having the highest percentage with (39.0%). In 2019, just under a quarter of civil servants (22.8%) worked part-time.

Thatcherism-Privatisation

In the public sector of which the civil service is part of, the government has full control. Conversely, Private Sector companies enjoy less government interference; however, under the leadership of Thatcher from 1982 until 1997, the civil service underwent some restructuring after a period disputes about its future direction. Thatcher’s philosophy was centered on the basis of competition. She believed that in order to achieve an efficient allocation of resources and to get the economy back on track, it was necessary to minimise the intervention of the state and endorse markets. She believed that the private sector had the competence to promote competition which resulted in the implementation of a vast number of the programme of privatisations which included utilities, transport and telecommunications. This action led to a reduction in the size and scope of the civil service and some of the government’s central functions such as Recruitment and Assessment Services and HMSO were sold to the private sector. The private sector’s working environment is quite competitive which is missing in the public sector because they are not established to meet commercial objectives.

The Labour Force and Statistics

The total workforce of the United Kingdom is approximately 33 million, of which, about 16.5% (5.4 million) work in the public sector. On a full-time basis, Civil Service employment stands at 413,910 and also takes into account part-time workers. Based on the Cabinet office of National Statistics, the 2019 survey revealed an increase in the Civil Service headcount by 15,410 in the last year. There are more women numbering, 240,150 who are employed in the Civil Service. The overall representation of women in the Civil Service has remained above 50% since 2010. Based on recent statistics in 2019, 53.9% of civil servants comprise women, 12.7% are ethnic minorities and 11.7% are disabled and remains underrepresented.

In the Civil Service, seniority for promoting employees is typically used. Many civil servants started off in lower ranking positions as opposed to the private sector where performance is key. The age of 46 represents the median age of civil servants.

Disputes

The civil service years ago held a major protest over long-running dispute over job cuts, pay freezes, and increased contribution to pensions since the Coalition came into power.

In 2010, a two-year pay freeze was introduced across public sector jobs, followed by a one percent cap on pay rises in 2012. Some of those who protested included fire fighers, the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS) - which represents civil servants, the National Union of Teachers (NUT), Schools, courts, job centres and council services.

**Unions: UNISON COpyrighted Do Not Use**

UNISON

History:

UNISON was formed in 1993 through the merger of three public trade unions; the [National and Local Government Officers Association](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Association_of_Local_Government_Officers) (NALGO), the [National Union of Public Employees](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Union_of_Public_Employees) (NUPE) and the [Confederation of Health Service Employees](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confederation_of_Health_Service_Employees) (COHSE). Today, it is the largest union in the United Kingdom expanding over twelve UK [regions](http://www.unison.org.uk/about/our-organisation/structure/regions/) and has over 1,000 branches.

Membership:

The Union has over 1.3 million [members](http://www.unison.org.uk/about/our-organisation/our-members/) and [activists](http://www.unison.org.uk/about/our-organisation/activists/) who coordinate with local authorities such like NHS; police and justice; universities, colleges and schools; electricity and gas industries; water industry, Environment Agency, transport and the community and voluntary sector. Within the Private sector alone, there are 67,000 members.

Compared to other Unions, UNISON has the largest members in Health Care, Education, Community and voluntary sector and is also the largest union for police staff in England, Scotland and Wales.

Two thirds or 70% of its members comprise of women; 919,373 females and 274,618 males. UNISON’s members carry out work at every level in public services, private companies and community organization.

Equality

What is interesting and admirable about UNISON is its passion when it comes to Equality. The Union has fought hard and were victorious in numerous cases in respect of discrimination and equality in the workplace.

At UNISON, everyone shares responsibility for equality. The internal structure is such that there are four self-organised groups for [black members](http://www.unison.org.uk/about/what-we-do/fairness-equality/black-members/); the [disabled](http://www.unison.org.uk/about/what-we-do/fairness-equality/disabled-members/); [lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender members](http://www.unison.org.uk/about/what-we-do/fairness-equality/lgbt/); and [female members](http://www.unison.org.uk/about/what-we-do/fairness-equality/women/). There is also equality groups for [young](http://www.unison.org.uk/about/what-we-do/fairness-equality/young-members/) and [retired members](http://www.unison.org.uk/about/what-we-do/fairness-equality/retired-members/).

UNISON believes in democracy which plays a major part in their achievements. The Union boast itself as a member-led union with everyone having an equal voice.

Women in Leadership

As the majority, two-thirds of all of the union’s elected bodies must be female. Two-thirds of the seats on the NEC, which is the Union’s ruling body, are reserved for women. A number of thirteen seats are reserved for low-paid women

Recruitment

UNISON has representatives whose responsibility it is to go out to recruit and organise members. Its members are provided with information about issues pertaining to the union by the publicising of UNISON’s campaigns, distribution of leaflets and keeping their members up to date and involved in local negotiations. Advisers also communicate to members concerning any issues affecting the workplace as well.

In addition, the representatives and spokespersons for members in their establishments, act as a linkage between members, other union representatives and the national organisation. They help the union get messages to its members and act as a support system for those wishing to join the union. Stewards are the first point of contact between the members and the union.

UNISON considers Branches as extremely vital as without them there would be no union to support members at work and negotiate for improved deals.

Elections

UNISON has an election process and makes decisions by votes to elect members to particular positions within UNISON and to engage in pertinent decisions regarding policies.

UNISON and Politics

The union does not hold any political affiliation but strategically ensures that the debates in any election campaign cover issues which matter to their members and that they are adequately addressed. There is even a separate political fund established.

Legal Victories

· UNISON had a 5 year legal battle with Greenwich Council over holiday pay to term-time only staff and won a £4m settlement for 5,000 member at Employment Tribunal.

· The UK’s highest court, the Supreme Court has ruled unanimously that the government was acting unlawfully and unconstitutionally when it introduced tribunal fees four years ago. Because of UNISON’s legal challenge, anyone who has been treated illegally no longer have to pay to take their employers to court. The government was ordered to refund more than £27m to the thousands of people charged for taking claims to tribunals since July 2013.

· UNISON fought for all low-paid women working in the public sector in the case on behalf of the Royal Boroughs employees, over failure to properly calculate their annual leave. The 4m settlement, was approved and Councillors agreed to revise the formula used to calculate the holiday allowance and pay the correct rate, backdated to 1 January 2013.

· [UNISON](https://www.thompsonstradeunion.law/trade-unions/unison), won more than £30,000 compensation for a member forced to resign from her job after suffering months of harassment by a colleague. She will receive just £4,000 as the company has since gone into liquidation.

· UNISON fought for more than 150 Barnet Council workers to receive a share of hundreds of thousands of pounds in compensation UNISON argued that the Council failed to provide it with information on agency workers, as part of a wider consultation in 2012. The Tribunal decision upheld the requirement for employers to provide information on agency workers being engaged during TUPE transfers and collective redundancy consultation.

**industrial conflict or managing conflict: The Lindsey Oil Refinery dispute 2009 copyrighted do not use**

* **What were the root causes of these disputes?**
* **What were the roles of employers, trade unions and the State?**
* **What are the ‘rights’ and ‘wrongs’ of the disputes?**
* **Were the disputes successful?**

What were the root causes of these disputes?

On 28 January 2009, approximately 800 of Lindsey Oil Refinery’s local contractors went on strike. The strike happened because of the e appointment by the Italian construction contractor of several hundred European (mainly Italian and Portuguese) contractors on the site at a time of high unemployment in the local and global economy. The action attracted considerable media interest. It is mentioned that The Lindsey Oil Refinery construction workers went on strike because employment was not offered to them on a £200 million construction contract to build a hydro desulphurisation unit at the site. The action involved workers at around a dozen energy sites across the UK who walked out in support of other British workers at the Total's Lindsey Oil Refinery. The workers also felt that they were discriminated against.

What were the roles of employers, trade unions and the State?

During the strike, employees were not cooperative at all. ‘Workers contended that the strike was in defence of a national agreement determining wages and conditions in the industry’. They demanded lots of answers. The union on the other hand demanded that there should be no victimisation on employees, they should be protected as per the agreements. The unions however, were not in support of this strike because they believed that it was illegal.’If the unions were seen to be directly involved they could face substantial fines. As already mentioned, on the first day of the strike at LOR the entire shop stewards committee resigned (on advice from full time union officials).However, unions played a significant part inside movements that lead to the Lindsey strike. The

National Committee of shop stewards met in January to study the case of Staythorpe power plant where Alstom refused to hire a local workforce and instead was importing Polish and Spanish workers. During this meeting, it was decided that all sites regulated by the Blue Book must send delegations to Staythorpe to put pressure on Alstom. Furthermore, Unite had already organised demonstrations in Staythorpe for the same reason since October 2008.’

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown said: "When I talked about British jobs, I was talking about giving people in Britain the skills, so that they have the ability to get jobs which were at present going to people from abroad, and actually encouraging people to take up the courses and the education and learning that is necessary for British workers to be far more skilled for the future."

What are the ‘rights’ and ‘wrongs’ of the disputes?

Italian and Portuguese construction workers, felt that the dispute was wrong and the Government was divisive. A series of all other organisations joined the strike, Employees got sacked. All these were wrong. However, from the localisation point of view, the employees were exercising their freedom of expression.

Were the disputes successful?

The dispute was successful however on the 25 June, an agreement was reached and an agreement was reached to end the strike. Those that were sacked were eventually reinstated.

Module references:

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