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Title: Human Resource Management and Trade Unionism at the University of Nairobi: Complementarities and Contradictions

ABSTRACT

The subject of Human Resource Management has attracted a lot of attention from both scholars and practitioners in the recent years. There is a general belief that human resource management plays a critical role in the performance of organisations, both public and private, by meeting employee needs which in turn enables them to be more productive. However, despite the acknowledged importance of human resource management in organisations, trade unions continue to exist in many public organisations. This study sought to establish the role of trade unions at the University of Nairobi in view of the increasing emphasis on human resource management.

The literature review revealed that the relationship between human resource management and trade unionism depends on whether an organisation assumes a unitaristic or a pluralistic approach to managing the employment relationship. A public organisation that assumes a unitaristic approach will normally embrace human resource management and discourage trade unionism while, a public organisation that assumes a pluralistic approach will generally accept trade unions.

Major findings of the study showed that although the University of Nairobi's human resource management system has some strong points, it has inherent weaknesses that need to be addressed. An examination of the different human resource management functions at the University of Nairobi including: human resource planning; recruitment and selection; training and development;

performance appraisal; compensation; health and safety; employee relations; equal opportunity employment revealed that they are generally inefficient and ineffective culminating in an overall inefficient and ineffective human resource management system.

The study concluded that the existence of trade unions at the University can be attributed to the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of its human resource management system. Employees generally form and join trade unions because they see them as a means of meeting their human resource needs, and solving their problems within the employment relationship. This implies that if employee needs are met through an efficient and effective human resource management system, it is unlikely that they will feel the necessity of forming/joining a trade union.

Master of Public Administration

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Title: Administrative Decentralization in Kenya: the District Focus Strategy