A Proposal submitted in response

to the

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Employee Representation in the New World of Work: The Dynamics of Rights, Voice, Performance and Power

Author’s Contact Information

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<tr>
<th>Noel M. Cowell</th>
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<tr>
<td>Department of Management Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The University of the West Indies, Mona, Kingston 7, Jamaica W.I.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ph: 1-876-977-3808</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:noel.cowell@uwimona.edu.jm">noel.cowell@uwimona.edu.jm</a></td>
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Proposed Title: Telework and its implications for Employment Relations in Jamaica

Nature of the Study

The convergence of information and communications technology (ICT) has brought about fundamental changes in the methods of work execution, work location, delivery, and work relationships in many countries. This is also the case in Jamaica, where global technological advances combined with recent ICT policy initiatives have resulted, on the one hand in a dramatic expansion of access to communications technology and perhaps equally dramatic, though largely undocumented, changes in the way in which work and work-related relationships are organised.

Cowell and Dunn (2006) in a study carried out with the support of International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada and The University of the West Indies (UWI) explored stakeholders’ perceptions of the extent to which Caribbean technology infrastructure, labour policy framework and stakeholder attitudes support the growth of telework in Jamaica, Trinidad and Barbados found that telework is in fact being done in the three counties and that it had potentials to expand opportunities for knowledge workers.

While Cowell and Dunn (2007) report that telework is being conducted in Jamaica, there is no clear policy framework to guide and regulate its operation. When conducted without clear policy directives from the state however, telework might carry negative implications for managers/employees, trade unions, conditions of employment in general and worker rights.
Methodological Approach

This mixed methods study utilizes a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies to gather and analyze data from primary and secondary sources. Firstly, primary data will be drawn from three (3) sources: (i) the results of a regional study of telework done by Cowell and Dunn (2006); (ii) a survey of a convenience sample of persons deemed to be knowledge workers enrolled at the University of the West Indies, Mona and (iii) in-depth interviews with key stakeholders in the labour market in Jamaica, namely (employers, trade unionists and ministry of labour officials). Finally, textual analysis will be carried out on secondary data drawn from current labour legislation, policies and public discourses relevant to the problem area.

Main lines of analysis to be developed

The paper focuses on two questions: (a) How has the digital revolution transformed work and workplace relations in the Caribbean? (b) What are the implications of these changes for the relevance of contemporary labour policy?