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Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development

Advanced Level Qualification
Leading, Managing and Developing People
May 2019

Date: 23 May 2019   **Time: 09:50 – 13:00**

Time allowed – Three hours and ten minutes
(Including ten minutes' reading time)

Instructions

- Answer **all** of Section A.
- Answer **five** questions in Section B (**one** per subsection).
- Read each question carefully before answering.
- Write clearly and legibly.

Information

- Questions may be answered in any order.
- Equal marks are allocated to each section of the paper.
- Within Section B equal marks are allocated to each question.
- If a question includes reference to 'your organisation', this may be interpreted as covering any organisation with which you are familiar.
- The case study is not based on an actual organisation. Any similarities to known organisations are coincidental.

You will fail the examination if:

- You fail to answer five questions in Section B (one per subsection) **and/or**
- You achieve less than 40% in either Section A or Section B **and/or**
- You achieve less than 50% overall.

SECTION A – Case Study

Note: In your responses, you are allowed to improvise or add to the case study details provided below. However, the case study should not be changed or compromised in any way.

Fashioned-by-Suzy (FBS) is a retail company which operates boutique stores at 95 locations around the UK selling wedding fashions and accessories. While the company is principally known for its stylish but affordable bridal gowns, it also sells many other items of clothing for brides, bridegrooms, pages and bridesmaids. Its range of merchandise includes shoes, lingerie, jewellery, fragrances, cosmetics, flowers and wedding stationery, as well as personalised gifts and luggage. The company operates its own stores located in upmarket suburban locations as well as some concessions within city centre department stores operated by partner organisations. The company employs 650 people at present. Most work in its retail outlets but there are also just over 100 staff employed in its warehouse, call centre and head office operations.

FBS has now been established for two decades. Its founder and chief executive, Brenda Hitchman, opened her first shop in 1999, since when she has expanded her operations steadily each year. The company is profitable, but Brenda and her management team do not consider that its finances are yet strong enough to fund the substantial international expansion that they are aiming for over the next ten years. In order to raise the capital required they are therefore planning to turn FBS into a public limited company (PLC) by listing its shares for the first time on the London Stock Exchange.

Like many retailing organisations FBS struggles to attract and retain employees. While there are a good number of long standing staff members employed in the head office and warehousing operations, the overall staff turnover rate topped 38% last year. Moreover, most store managers reported considerable difficulty recruiting staff with the required skills, experience and personal attributes. Mystery shopper reports indicate that low levels of engagement and motivation are common in FBS stores and that the level of service provided to customers can be poor as a result.

Despite the fact that FBS is led by a highly successful businesswoman and that over three-quarters of its employees are female, on average the men employed by the company are paid considerably more than the women. The company's statutory gender pay gap report for 2018 (published in April 2019) contained the following figures:

Mean gender pay gap (salaries):   57%

Median gender pay gap (salaries):   22%

Mean gender pay gap (bonuses):   69%

Median gender pay gap (bonuses):	31%
Proportion of male staff receiving bonuses:	88%
Proportion of female staff receiving bonuses:	64%
Women in top pay quartile:	29%
Women in upper middle pay quartile:	81%
Women in lower middle pay quartile:	93%
Women in lower pay quartile:	100%

In its accompanying commentary FBS explained that its reported statistics reflected the fact that almost all its store-based staff, like its customers, are women and that many work on a part-time basis. Men are disproportionately represented in senior management and warehouse-based roles which are generally more highly paid.
The company has made it very clear to its staff that it is wholly committed to the principle of equal pay between men and women and that the pay gap is entirely explained by male employees occupying a far greater proportion of senior roles and full-time positions than their female colleagues. Such statements have not, however, prevented a great deal of adverse comments about pay inequity at FBS being posted on its staff discussion forum webpages.

The senior management team is aware that when the company becomes a PLC later this year it will soon have to start publishing further pay information setting out how pay compares between staff and the highest paid individual employee, Brenda Hitchman. Brenda's total remuneration last year was £1.2 million and is likely to be higher this year. The likelihood is that the company's first executive pay ratio report will include statistics of the following order:

75th percentile employee remuneration: 1:28

50th percentile employee remuneration: 1:46

25th percentile employee remuneration: 1:63

Employees working in FBS stores will thus be made aware of the fact that it would take them 63 years (or more) to earn what Brenda earns in a single year.

PLEASE TURN OVER

7LMP- Leading, Managing and Developing People

EXAMINER'S REPORT

May 2019

Assume that you have been hired in an HR consultancy role to advise the senior management team at Fashioned-by-Suzy (FBS) about some of the issues raised in this case study. You are asked to write a confidential briefing paper which addresses the following:

1.   Drawing on published theories and research evidence, discuss the extent to which low levels of employee engagement and high levels of staff turnover in businesses like FBS may be linked to perceived inequity in the field of pay and reward.

2.   What advice would you give Brenda and her senior management team about the steps they could take to reduce the extent of the gender pay gap at FBS in a lawful manner? Justify your answer.

3.   What steps might the management team take before FBS becomes a public limited company (PLC) about how best to communicate the information concerning executive pay ratios that they will soon be obliged to publish for the first time? Justify your answer.

In each case, take care to provide a good justification for your recommendations, drawing on published research and examples where possible.

It is recommended that you spend roughly a third of your time on each of Questions 1, 2 and 3.

SECTION B

Answer FIVE questions in this section, ONE per subsection A to E. You may include diagrams, flowcharts or bullet points to clarify and support your answers, so long as you provide an explanation of each.

A

1. In 2018 the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) commissioned a representative survey of 3700 UK employees as a means of investigating the extent to which they considered that they were using their skills in their work. In the subsequent published report ('Over-skilled and under-used: investigating the untapped potential of UK skills') it was stated that 37% of respondents perceived that their skills were not being fully used in their jobs and that they could cope with more demanding job roles. By contrast only 12% perceived that they lacked the skills to carry out their jobs effectively. This skills mismatch was more marked among younger people, those working part-time and people working in the retailing and hospitality sectors. The report's authors concluded that the existence of such a significant 'skills mismatch' is damaging both for employers and employees. There is therefore a strong business case for addressing it pro-actively.

    i. Explain why skills mismatches have potentially negative outcomes for both employers and employees.

    ii. Why is this a problem that particularly affects younger workers and people employed to work part-time?

    iii. What advice would you give your organisation about how it might look to reduce skills mismatching in the future?

OR

2. Reflecting on research which links progressive HRM practices with superior business performance, Wall and Wood (2005) conclude that the evidence for such links is 'promising but only circumstantial'. They argue that it would not stand up in a hypothetical court case involving a company suing an HR consultancy having spent a lot of money on HR only to see negligible return on its investment.

    i. Briefly summarise the main points that have been made by researchers who have sought to prove the existence of a significant link between HRM practice and business performance.

    ii. How far do you agree with the assertion that the evidence in favour of a link is 'promising but circumstantial'? Justify your answer.

PLEASE TURN OVER

B

3. Psychologists who specialise in the study of human personality have identified five basic 'traits' which form the building-blocks of our personalities and explain the differences between us. They are often described as 'the big five':

- extroversion–introversion (the extent to which we enjoy socialising with others, excitement and change).
- emotional stability (the extent to which we exhibit tension and anxiety).
- agreeableness (the extent to which we avoid conflict and exhibit good nature, warmth and compassion).
- conscientiousness (the extent to which we are well-organised, concerned with meeting deadlines and the making and implementation of plans).
- openness to experience (the extent to which we are imaginative, flexible and view new experiences positively).

You are asked to put forward some proposals to your senior management team as to how the big five model might be used (or better used) in your organisation as a means of identifying people with future leadership potential.

   i.   Explain which combination of personality traits you think an effective leader is most likely to exhibit. Justify your answer.

   ii. To what extent would the big five model provide a good starting point for the selection of people onto a new fast track leadership programme in your organisation? Justify your answer.

OR

4 Research that focuses on the way that organisational and team leaders lead in practice has identified a strong tendency for team members to be in either an in-group or an out-group. Those in the in-group tend to be close to their leader personally, are more trusted, more loyal, prepared to 'go the extra mile' for the leader and are often also treated better by the leader. People in the out-group are less trusted, enjoy less attention and are often less supportive in return. Relationships between leaders and out-group members tend to be formal, whereas informal relationships with in-group members are typical. In-group members tend to be better performers than out-group members, to have higher levels of job satisfaction and to be less likely to seek alternative work.

   i.   To what extent does this observation about in-groups and out-groups accord with your experience of leading and being led? Illustrate your answer with examples.

   ii. What steps would you advise a leader to take to increase the size of their in-group and to reduce the likelihood that in-group members may choose to move into the out-group?

C

5. Change management episodes in organisations often fail to meet expectations, and it is widely acknowledged that a major reason for this is resistance on the part of people who perceive that they may be negatively affected by the changes that are being proposed. In fact overt resistance is relatively rare. Much more common is a situation in which large numbers of employees simply fail to engage positively with a change agenda. They do not oppose it, but neither do they go out of their way to support it with any enthusiasm. This is particularly true of culture change initiatives.

    i.   Drawing on published research, examples or your own observations, explain why a failure to commit to proposed change is common in organisations.

    ii.   What steps would you recommend a management team should take to minimise the likelihood of this kind of 'non-commitment' before embarking on a programme of cultural change? Justify your answer.

OR

6. You receive the following email from a former colleague who now works for another organisation:

'Hello. Could you give me some advice? My organisation is considering cutting our training budgets quite severely. If this goes ahead, almost all of the basic, day-to-day training that we carry out in classroom settings (health and safety, employee inductions, customer handling) will instead be delivered flexibly using e-learning. I have been asked to respond on behalf of the HR department putting arguments for and against. What would be your view?'

Provide a helpful and well-informed answer to this email.

D

7. You have been asked to advise a prominent charitable organisation about the HR consequences of relying more on volunteer workers in administrative and first-tier management roles. These jobs are currently carried out by paid employees. It is unlikely that there will be any compulsory redundancies, but over time as paid members of staff leave, the intention is to replace them with volunteers working one day or half a day each week.

    i. From a people management perspective, what are the major differences between the effective leadership of a team of paid employees and a team of volunteers?

    ii. What potential problems would you anticipate will be encountered by this charity as it moves over time to an approach to management and administration that relies more heavily on voluntary workers? Justify your answer.

OR

8. You attend a conference presentation about evidence-based HRM. The speaker argues that while basing HR decisions, policies and practices on robust sources of evidence is preferable, in practice this is not always practicable. This, she argues, is particularly the case for organisations operating internationally. While there are some recent exceptions, the vast amount of research into HRM has been undertaken in so-called WEIRD (western, educated, industrialised, rich and democratic) countries. Evidence-based HRM is thus not really possible to carry out seriously when an organisation looks to expand its operations into other parts of the world. Western approaches to people management cannot simply be replicated in Asia or Africa, however strong the evidence base might for their effectiveness in a WEIRD setting.

Drawing on published research in international HRM, explain how far you agree with this point of view. Justify your answer.

E

9. The philosopher Henry Sidgwick famously argued that the best way to live and act ethically is to live by his 'golden rule'. This states simply that we should treat others as we would like them to treat us. However, adhering to this principle is arguably very difficult for managers in larger organisations, and for HR managers in the private sector in particular. The problem arises because the interests of a company's owners often clash with those of its employees. The same is often true of customers. Managers are employed to meet shareholder objectives and customer needs. That often means that they treat their employees in ways that they would not wish to be treated themselves. This is true whenever pay is cut in real terms, hours are increased, redundancies with limited compensation are announced, one person is treated more favourably than another or when insecure contracts are established. Powerful people routinely treat less powerful people far less well than they treat one another. This is also true in other sectors.

    i.   How far do you agree with the proposition that the failure of managers to comply with Sidgwick's golden rule means that contemporary human resource management (HRM) is fundamentally unethical in key respects? Justify your answer.

    ii. Drawing on personal experience or observation, discuss a specific occasion when Sidgwick's golden rule either was or was not observed in your organisation.

    OR

10. You are asked to give a 15 minute presentation on 'the meaning of professionalism' which draws on your own observations and experience of working in HRM. Your audience will be made up of people from all walks of life who have no specialist knowledge of this subject.

    What **THREE** key points would you make and why? How would you illustrate each with a short explanatory example?

END OF EXAMINATION

7LMP- Leading, Managing and Developing People

EXAMINER'S REPORT

May 2019

Introduction

A total of 236 candidates sat the 7LMP examination in May. The overall pass rate was slightly lower than it has been for recent cohorts at 75%, but we were encouraged by the large number of strong passes and merits. There were rather more marginal fails on this occasion than has been the case recently.

Examination results of 7LMP, May 2019

May 2019		
Grade	**Number**	**Percentage of total**
Distinction	7	3
Merit	60	25
Pass	109	46
Marginal Fail	20	9
Fail	40	17
Total	**236**	**100**

SECTION A

Learning outcomes:

LO 2: Evaluate major theories relating to motivation, commitment and engagement at work and how these are put into practice by organisations.

LO 5: Critically discuss the aims and objectives of the HRM and HRD functions in organisations and how these are met in practice.

Answers to questions two were generally pretty strong here. Some struggled more with question 3 and a good proportion provided rather weaker answers to question 1. In the case of question 1 I think that some candidates were possibly reading much more into it than was intended, on occasion looking to develop arguments about ways in which poor employee engagement or high staff turnover might lead to greater inequality, rather than the other way around. The use of the term 'linked to' in the question may have led candidates to look for impact in both directions. In fact, our intention in setting this question was a good deal more straight forward. We were simply looking for evidence of good understanding about ways in which actual and perceived inequality can lead employees either to reduce their effort / contribution or look for alternative jobs.

There is of course a great deal of research evidence which demonstrates how perceived unfairness in areas of HR practice such as reward management is associated with reduced motivation and high staff turnover. This is why many organisations focus on internal relativities when determining rates of pay, using grading systems and job evaluation so that there is logic and a reasonably objective basis for deciding who should be paid what. The stronger candidates demonstrated good understanding here, going on to use theoretical contributions such as those of Adams (equity theory) and those relating to psychological contracts and organisational justice to develop persuasive arguments.

Part two was much more effectively done by most candidates, possibly because it was a question they were anticipating and had prepared some thoughts about.
Many organisations are of course currently grappling with the issue of how to reduce gender pay gaps without positively discriminating against well-qualified men. The most common approaches involve instituting programmes of positive action which are well-publicised but stop short of actual discrimination. These vary hugely from equal opportunities statements and policies to training programmes aimed specifically at women with leadership potential, identifying role models and mentors, target-setting and seeking to remove cultural barriers that sometimes unintentionally maintain glass ceilings. Improving the extent and range of family-friendly working arrangements is another approach as is encouraging part-time working and job share arrangements at more senior levels in organisations. All of these and other interesting initiatives were suggested. It was important though, as always, that arguments were justified properly. There is a tendency for some candidates simply to list suggested policy responses as bullet points, without explanation. At M level we really need to read a good justification, and candidates should not assume that everything is self-explanatory.

The final question was harder as there is less of a research base to draw on when answering this. There was thus a wider variety of answers, which was fine. Some focused on justifying the situation on the grounds that Brenda established the company in an

entrepreneurial fashion and is reasonably reaping the rewards associated with her risk-taking. CEO pay gaps are higher elsewhere. Others focused more strongly on the need for transparency and honesty, explaining why the gap is like it is and what steps are being taken to increase pay and career development opportunities in the organisation generally. Becoming a PLC might potentially increase opportunity for employees to advance their careers. Finally, some candidates focused on internal communications, managing expectations and focusing on ways in which Brenda supports hundreds of jobs and undertakes philanthropic work etc. All of these provided a basis for strong answers. The best of all looked at more than one area and also included stats from other companies in the retail sector as a basis for developing their arguments. As always with a seen case study, it is impressive to read answers which are clearly informed by prior research into a sector or area of HR work.

SECTION B

Question A1

Learning outcome: LO1 (Review and critically evaluate major contemporary research and debates in the fields of HRM and HRD).

This was a popular choice for candidates, some of whom answered it a lot more convincingly than others. One issue was a strong tendency only to focus on overskilling, rather than on skills mismatches more generally. Both are problematic in different ways, and at a time of low unemployment and relatively tight labour markets underskilling is as significant from an HR management perspective as overskilling. While the emphasis here is clearly on the latter, the questions refer to mismatching and not just to overskilling. This was acknowledged in the very strongest answers.

For employees working in a role which underutilises skills has the effect of reducing job satisfaction as well as earning potential and future career prospects. It is associated with low levels of engagement, poor wellbeing, higher reported levels of job-related stress and high levels of staff turnover. The consequent impact from an employer perspective is thus a poorer level of performance than could be attained from a more highly motivated group of employees. Achieving a better skills match would thus potentially lead to lower absence, a reduced recruitment bill and more discretionary effort. The existence of significant skills mismatches thus lowers organisational productivity.

On younger workers, some answers were rather thin, putting the whole issue down to an inability on the part of managers to appreciate how much their younger workers are capable of. In fact, of course, the issue is more complex than this. Younger workers often go into jobs and professions which they discover are not the ones to which they are fully suited. Over time as they gain skills and experience they then move across into work which better utilises their skills. It is an entirely natural process. Part-time roles tend to be lower paid than full-time roles and hence require their occupants to utilise a more limited range of skills. People often seek these jobs because of the flexibility they provide which enables home and work responsibilities to be combined. Others would prefer full-time work but struggle to find it, so settle for a part-time role while waiting for better opportunities. A third group take on additional part-time work as a means of supplementing income from another full or part time role. Each of these situations tends to lead to people who are over-qualified occupying part-time jobs for periods of time.

Answers to the third question clearly varied considerably depending on what the students' own organisations currently do. The stronger answers focused on HRD matters, providing career development opportunities for people and also developing a culture in which aspiration is encouraged. Another approach involves delegating decision-making and involving people more in the management of areas of a business. This gives people in lower graded roles more scope to draw on a wider range of skills and experience. Finally, in respect of part-time working there is plenty of scope to expand job-sharing arrangements of various kinds so that people can combine carry out more demanding and higher-paid work with career prospects on a part-time basis.

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EXAMINER'S REPORT

May 2019

Question A2

Learning outcome: LO1 (Review and critically evaluate major contemporary research and debates in the fields of HRM and HRD).

There is now a large body of research, both quantitative and qualitative which strongly suggests the existence of a link. There would appear to be in most sectors a statistically significant correlation between superior business performance and the presence of a range of high-performance HR practices (often labelled a bundle), but the size of this correlation varies very considerably across the different studies. Moreover, it is unclear whether the presence of a correlation indicates causation. In other words, it may not always be the progressive HR practices that are causing the improved business performance. Stronger answers cited some of the major studies of this kind (Huselid, Guest, Pfeffer etc). It is possible to argue that the large volume of studies means that the evidence is more than 'circumstantial' but that does not mean to say that one will always or even generally lead to the other. The main point to make is that all manner of other variables serve to determine business performance and that the HR contribution, however real, can always be rendered irrelevant by developments in other areas. There is also evidence from the work of Purcell and others that HR policies have much less practical impact if they are not implemented effectively in partnership with supportive line managers. The candidates who chose to answer this question were, on the whole, pretty familiar with the research in this field and also with the critiques. The really outstanding answers went on to develop original arguments in addition when answering part 2.

Question B3

Learning outcome: LO3 Debate and critically evaluate the characteristics of effective leadership and the methods used to develop leaders in organisations.

This was chosen by a good majority of candidates and most made a reasonably good fist of it too. There is a fair amount of research which suggests that most effective leaders tend to share some of the big five personality traits in common. There is a tendency towards extraversion, emotional stability, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness to experience. In other words, good leaders tend to score highly in each area when measured using psychometric tests. Conscientiousness and emotional stability are generally qualities people look for in leaders, the others being significant but not always so necessary. The main reason that marks were lost here was a tendency to go beyond personality when answering the first part of the question. We marked as generously as we could here, but there was a tendency for candidates to write answers that discussed leadership attributes generally (authenticity, experience, popularity with followers etc) which went beyond the requirements here.

That said, strong answers to part two accepted that effective leadership is about much more than having a particular mix of personality traits. Ability, experience and willingness to undertake the role are all equally important. It thus follows that the model is potentially useful to use when identifying future leaders, but it is insufficient on its own as a wider range of qualities are necessary. Nor is it always necessary to exhibit all five characteristics to lead others well. There are many effective leadership styles, some of which people who are

introverted or lacking in overt agreeableness adopt most successfully. As always with these kinds of question any number of valid arguments can be presented. It was the quality of the justification offered which determined the mark.

Question B4

Learning outcome: LO3 Debate and critically evaluate the characteristics of effective leadership and the methods used to develop leaders in organisations.

This was a very straight forward question that encouraged candidates to draw on their own experiences of being led. Accordingly, answers to the first part varied greatly depending on the experiences a candidate had had in the workplace. However, as always with CIPD papers we were happy to award good marks to people who only had limited organisational experience and preferred to write about membership of teams in settings other than workplaces. What mattered from a marking perspective was that good understanding was demonstrated and relevant examples fully discussed. Most did this without any difficulty. The fuller the answer, the higher the mark.

There were several effective ways of tackling part two. The key is to build trust and understanding – as would be associated with any human relationship. But because there is a power dynamic at work here, the initiative typically has to come from the leader. Social activities are important here as is the leadership style adopted. Leaders who are remote, sit behind closed doors or intimidate are unlikely to find it easy to expand their in-groups, even if they want to. Once trust is established it then has to be maintained in order to preserve the in-group. This can be difficult when tough decisions need to be taken. The need is therefore for effective and regular communication. Leaders also need to listen to in-group members and respond helpfully when they can. Most candidates made good, thoughtful suggestions here, and argued them well.

Question C5

Learning outcome: LO4 Contribute to the promotion of flexible working and effective change management in organisations.

We were rather disappointed with a lot of the answers to this question because they focused only on overt forms of resistance, typically describing change management theories in a wholly unoriginal or indeed uncritical way when providing advice in part two. At M level this really is not sufficient. The stem here specifically distinguishes apathetic responses from overt resistance. A good number of candidates also failed to focus on cultural change in particular as the question suggested, providing generic answers covering change theories instead.

Apathy when change is proposed, like resistance, is sometimes a result of disagreement with what is being proposed or a fear that one's own prospects or position may be adversely affected. Overt resistance tends to be associated with potential loss of income or job security. Non-commitment occurs when more minor disadvantages are considered to be possible or likely outcomes. Additional work, less interesting work, being required to work with new colleagues, being required to learn new skills or approaches, to adapt behaviours,

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bureaucratic hassle etc are all common situations of this kind. Cultural change is where this often occurs because it is about hearts and minds and is not directly anything that managers can control. The other major source of non-commitment is cynicism. People who have seen management-led change initiatives go nowhere in the past inevitably become cynical when further rounds are proposed. There is no need for overt resistance because people know that in the absence of enthusiasm for cultural change nothing significant will actually change.

The main arguments to make in part two relate to the need to ensure that the change proposed and the way it is presented represents something that people can get behind with genuine enthusiasm. Communication (upwards and downwards) is thus important here, as is meaningful employee involvement. It also has to be sustained over time because cultural change is a process not an event. We expected candidates to present models of effective change here (Kotter, Kubler Ross, Rodgers, Lewin etc), but not simply to describe them without thought, originality or comment. To score high marks candidates had to present and justify an argument with reference to the models too.

Question C6

Learning outcome: LO4 Contribute to the promotion of flexible working and effective change management in organisations.

The great advantage of e-learning in these kinds of areas, aside from cost savings, is the flexibility. People can learn at their own pace and using their preferred individual learning style at times and in places which suit them. They can also informally tailor the learning to their own needs, for example by fast forwarding through content that is already familiar to them or of limited relevance to their particular roles. A higher degree of consistency can also be introduced, ensuring that all are provided with the same learning experience, covering everything that needs to be covered fully. However, because e-learning packages are so standardised they can in fact be less flexible because of the inability to contextualise standard learning experiences so effectively for different audiences. For people who like to learn through face-to-face interaction, the learning experience is often inferior. There is some evidence to suggest that e-learning is typically less satisfactory in terms of outcomes, retention of knowledge etc. But much here inevitably depends on the quality of the materials. E-learning can also be very effective, particularly where it requires people to seek out answers themselves or makes use of gamification to make the experience more memorable and enjoyable. That though costs money, but it can lead to both improved effectiveness and greater flexibility. All these points and others were discussed effectively by most candidates answering this question. Some were able to draw on personal experience too as a way of making their arguments fuller and more persuasive.

Question D7

Learning outcome: LO6 Assess the contribution made by HRM and HRD specialists in different types of organisation.

This caused some problems as it was probably unexpected by many candidates and possibly took them outside comfort zones. The main problem really was just answers that were short and lacking in substance. There were in fact many potential points and arguments that could be made here, and markers took account of the fact that some candidates will have had much more direct experience of volunteering and working with volunteers than others. The key point is that because volunteers are not paid, they have a high level of bargaining power. If they are unhappy they can leave very easily without giving notice and at no loss to themselves. They do not need to find alternative work before resigning. Really good, reliable and experienced volunteers are also relatively rare, and so are in a position to demand that they are treated with respect, permitted to work flexibly, given interesting tasks to carry out, and generally that their feelings are taken into account by those who manage them. There is no possibility of deploying disciplinary sanctions as a rule, unless a major breach of trust occurs. Managers therefore have to rely on their ability to persuade and encourage when looking to raise standards of performance.

Some of the major problems effective answers focused on were associated with a period of transition in which paid workers are working alongside volunteers in this charity's administration. Managers will have to cut volunteers more slack and manage them on longer leads (for the reasons set out above), and this may well be a cause tension / resentment. Paid staff may fear that they will have to carry a higher burden of responsibility and will also rightly be demotivated by the removal of some promotion opportunities. These situations present tricky HR management challenges that can only be successfully overcome with plenty of understanding and thoughtful communication. The stronger answers developed these kinds of arguments fully and justified key points persuasively.

Question D8

Learning outcome: LO6 Assess the contribution made by HRM and HRD specialists in different types of organisation.

This was not at all a popular choice. In many ways we were surprised by this as questions focusing on issues relating to HRM in international corporations are typically answered by large proportions of 7LMP candidates. Those who did give this a go tended to be well-informed and to answer it pretty effectively. Views on the core issues were, as should properly be the case, nicely diverse.

There is considerable merit in aspects of what this speaker says. It is true that the research base for contemporary HR practices is derived to a great extent from studies carried out in the USA and European countries, as well as similar types of environment such as Canada and Australia. There is a major exception in the case of Japan, but these studies have tended to focus on the differences between Japanese practices and those of Western countries, thus reinforcing the genera point. Stronger answers cited research on cultural and institutional differences between countries (Hofstede et al etc), and also drew on studies of expatriate working and the adjustment issues that are central to many of these. However, while these points hold true for the detail of HR practice, there is also plenty of evidence to

demonstrate that all over the world people are looking for the same things from their work and thus have similar expectations on core matters. Cultures are different, but human nature is the same. People seek income, job security, self-esteem and engaging work everywhere. They also respond well to thoughtful management which gives attention to their interests. It can thus be concluded that the evidence base in some fundamental areas is equally applicable outside the WEIRD world. Moreover, there is also evidence of some convergence over time – particularly in areas such as HR strategy. Operationalising strategies has to vary with local conditions, but the core aims of an HR function are the same across the world.

Question E9

Learning outcome: LO7 Promote professionalism and an ethical approach to HRM and HRD practice in organisations.

This was another question that was answered by a minority, but nonetheless answered well. Good examples were a particular feature of the stronger answers.

While took an alternative point of view, most accepted that if Sidgwick's rule is used as the yardstick by which an organisation's ethics are judged it is difficult to argue that HRM meets it all the time. Indeed, looking for ways to justify differential treatment of different people is a feature of much HR work and these differences are inevitably often determined as much by power as by genuinely objective considerations. An alternative view is that the golden rule is a poor yardstick to use when judging ethics in organisations. If it was followed productivity would fall, objectives would not be met, the business would fail and no one would have a job. Different approaches to ethics thus have to be used in fields such as HRM based on principles such as equity, fair dealing, fair process or paternalism. There are also middle positions that can be adopted here. Organisations can, for example, commit to applying the golden rule as far as their economic position and operational restrictions permit.

Answers varied greatly in the second part. What mattered here when marks were being awarded was that a specific occasion was discussed and that a broad understanding of Sidgwick's rule and its implications was demonstrated.

Question E10

Learning outcome: LO7 Promote professionalism and an ethical approach to HRM and HRD practice in organisations.

Most candidates attempted this question. Answers were of very varied quality. Moreover, of course, because most did this at the end time was sometimes running out and understandable tiredness apparent. Most nonetheless managed to discuss three reasonably distinct points – some rather more fully than others.

Debates about what it means in practice to be a professional and act professionally in a job show that this is a heavily contested subject. The most commonly cited points associated with professionalism are the following:

- Mastery of a specialised body of knowledge or expertise that others have not mastered to the same extent;

- Holding a professional qualification, typically marked by passing examinations;

- Eligibility to join a credible and respected professional body;

- Loyalty to the profession and its values

- Activities are governed by codes of conduct, which if broken, can result in suspension or dismissal from the profession;

- Discretion and high levels of trust in dealings with others, particularly those who are being advised

- Emotional detachment allowing clear-headed advice to be provided.

Many others could and did, however, form the basis of good answers to this question. What was required here to score a high mark was simply a clear identification of three distinct qualities, a demonstration that these were understood, some persuasive justification for the choice and some effective examples to illustrate each of the key points.

Conclusion

It was good to record another high pass rate for this cohort. There were, however, fewer passes as a proportion than we have seen in recent rounds of exams, and a particularly large number of marginal fails. While it is difficult and probably unwise to generalise about the reasons, I think it is fair to say that there were quite a few answers that were lacking in persuasiveness. Candidates are well advised to remember that they need to justify their points and develop arguments at Level 7. Demonstrating core knowledge and understanding is important, but we also need to see some thoughtfulness, critical awareness and originality in terms of arguments presented.

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