Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development

Advanced Level Qualification
Leading, Managing and Developing People

September 2019

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.

7LMP- Leading, Managing and Developing People

EXAMINER'S REPORT

September 2019

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.

Shawn Mungo is a very successful, high-profile businessman who has spent the last 20 years developing a fashion and accessories business called Snap-a-Dap. Having left school at the age of 16 without any qualifications, Shawn started importing clothes, shoes and costume jewellery to sell on a market stall in London. Observing what sold well, he started to design his own products which he then had manufactured by a sub-contractor. Very quickly his Snap-a-Dap brand became popular in the UK and in several overseas markets, making Shawn a wealthy man. The company went public in 2010, raising several millions more for Shawn from the sale of shares. The pace of growth has exceeded all expectations and has inevitably led Shawn to make some mistakes through inexperience. Snap-a-Dap now employs 50 people in its head office mainly undertaking design and marketing activities and a further 50 in its busy warehouse operation. The products are all now manufactured in India by a group of suppliers who employ many hundreds more in their factories.

Mr Mungo is articulate, energetic and charming, but also quite impetuous. These qualities, together with his passion for the business, have enabled him to become adept at effectively publicising his brand. He mixes very publicly with high profile figures from the worlds of show business and sport, goes to parties at which he is photographed with well-known personalities and has become something of a media celebrity himself. He entertains his friends lavishly and regularly voices some quite strident opinions in the pages of tabloid newspapers.

Earlier this year, after two decades of fast growth, things started to go wrong for Shawn and his business. A series of developments have damaged both his reputation and that of Snap-a-Dap.

First he got into a dispute with a group of his staff who joined a trade union and proposed to him that it should be recognised for collective bargaining purposes. Shawn refused to do this, arguing that he wanted to prevent a 'them and us culture' from developing at Snap-a-Dap. The employees concerned said that there already was such a culture and that it was grossly unfair that he should be earning vast sums personally when so many of the people he employed were paid low wages and felt insecure in their jobs. They also complained about a lack of proper grievance and disciplinary procedures at the company and Shawn's tendency to make policy informally on the basis of hunches and personal prejudices. The immediate storm blew over, but in the process trust was lost. Staff turnover increased rapidly, absence levels rose and Shawn perceives that his warehouse staff in particular are much less well-engaged than they used to be.

Secondly, an undercover reporter undertook an investigation into working conditions in some of the factories in Southern India which supply Snap-a-Dap with its merchandise. Film was taken showing what appear to be young children working in dirty and unsafe conditions. This has now been circulated extensively online along with articles alleging that Snap-a-Dap and Shawn personally are making millions from the suffering of some of the world's poorest people who are obliged to work long hours in hot factories for a pittance. The allegations are exaggerations of the true situation and such conditions are not typical of the factories that supply the company. However, on the day that they appeared on the front page of a national newspaper the price of Snap-a-Dap shares plunged by 40%, wiping millions off the value of the company and Shawn's personal fortune.

The third blow came a few days later when a group of women employed in Snap-a-Dap's HQ took to social media to complain about incidents of sexual harassment at social events organised for company employees. Some of these are alleged to have taken place in Shawn's box at a Premiership football ground when clients he was entertaining there had been drinking heavily, but the complaints relate generally to the laddish culture that the staff say prevails at Snap-a-Dap. A tabloid newspaper picked up on the story and interviewed some of Shawn's former employees about their experiences at the company. The headlines were lurid and in Shawn's opinion misrepresented things, but the upshot was further damage to his business's reputation as well as his own.

As a result of these three developments, Shawn has become a rather controversial public figure. An unflattering photograph of him leaving a night club where he had been drinking heavily accompanied by a young woman appeared in one newspaper under a headline referring to him as 'Shonky Shawn', and the nickname has stuck. Sales of Snap-a-Dap products are down as the brand, along with its creator, fall out of fashion.

Last week, just when Shawn thought that things could not get any worse, he received a letter summoning him to appear before a House of Commons Select Committee which is investigating business ethics. Its members want to question him about all three matters described above. The hearing will be in public with many journalists present and will also be televised. Shawn knows that some of the MPs on the committee dislike him and will use the hearing as an opportunity to attack him very publicly. This could fatally undermine his company's reputation if he gives them the opportunity. Shawn has a month to prepare for the hearing. He hires one set of consultants to advise him on how best to present himself and another to give him advice about HRM matters and business ethics. His plan is to apologise sincerely for what has happened, shoulder all the blame personally and to admit that the company has been managed in too informal a manner during a period of very fast growth. Lapses in ethical standards will not be repeated. He then plans to take the opportunity to set out in some detail a plan for radically improving the way that Snap-a-Dap operates. From an HR point of view his aim for the future is to turn things around completely. Shawn likes the idea of Snap-a-Dap being widely recognised as 'an employer of choice', winning awards for the way it manages people and embracing 'best in class' standards of business ethics.

You are one of the team of HR consultants who Shawn Mungo asks for advice ahead of his appearance before the select committee. You are asked to provide him with *evidence-based* and fully-justified recommendations on the following issues:

1.   What practical steps could be taken to increase levels of trust and employee engagement at Snap-a-Dap?

2.   What practically could Snap-a-Dap do to help ensure that good, basic standards of employment practice are adhered to by its major suppliers in India?

3.   What should Snap-a-Dap managers do to help ensure that sexual harassment does not occur in any of its operations in the future?

4.   Recommend THREE distinct measures that could be introduced at Snap-a-Dap to turn round the company's ethical reputation and help it secure recognition as a first rate employer. Justify your answer.

It is recommended that you spend an equal amount of your time on each of the four questions.

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) published a major research report entitled 'Health and Well-being at Work'. One of the topics that was investigated was the impact of new technologies on stress and mental health. On balance respondents were of the view that information technologies are having more of a positive impact on wellbeing among employees than a negative impact, but this was by no means a view held by all. Moreover a third stated that the positive and negative impacts were about equal.

  i.   Drawing on your own observations and reading, explain in what different ways introduction of new technologies in a workplace can help to ease stress among employees. In what ways can they serve to increase stress?

  ii.   What **TWO** steps would you recommend that your organisation could take to increase the use of information technologies in such a way as to improve employee wellbeing? Justify your answer.

  iii. What **TWO** steps could your organisation take to minimise the potential negative impact of information technologies on employee wellbeing? Justify your answer.

OR

2. Throughout most of the Twentieth Century productivity levels increased substantially across all industries and in all regions of the world. Since the 1990s, however, there has been little or no continued improvement. Productivity levels in countries like the UK have stagnated. Some researchers are beginning to argue that contemporary HR practices may be one of the causes. 'Soft HRM' which focuses primarily on keeping employees motivated and happy in their work has tended to displace 'Hard HRM' with its focus on maximising efficiency and reducing labour costs in order to generate greater profit. It follows that if productivity levels are to start increasing again, we may need to return to a harder form of HRM practice which is less concerned about employee interests and more focused on increasing operational efficiency.

  i.   To what extent do you agree with this point of view? Justify your answer drawing on published research or examples of organisational practice.

  ii.   What strategies can organisations adopt in order to increase productivity while at the same time providing people with a pleasant working environment and a high quality working experience?

PLEASE TURN OVER

B

3.   You receive the following email from your Chief Executive Officer (CEO) who is attending an overseas conference.

'*I have just heard a speaker arguing very convincingly that employers can never engage their staff fully if they do not ensure a good person-organisation fit. If staff do not share their organisation's core values and ambitions they will not engage and will not maximise their effort. It strikes me that we should take this message on board immediately and reassess our recruitment and selection processes so that we get a better person-organisation fit in the future. We should only be employing people whose values align with ours. Could you write a short briefing paper for me on this which I can read over the weekend?*'

What key points would you make in this briefing paper? Justify your answer.

OR

4.   In his writing on employee motivation, management consultant Michael Phillips (2018) argues strongly for an approach to people management which looks to management mantra 'light the fire within, not the fire below.' Threatening and bullying people destroys motivation according to Phillips. The way to motivate them is to find out what really inspires them as individuals and encourage them in that direction.

i.   Drawing on your own experience and observations explain how far you agree with Michael Phillips' views on motivation at work.

ii.   What could your organisation do to better 'light the fire within' you? How strong would the business case be for doing so?

C

5. Decades of research into effective leadership demonstrates that some outstanding individuals have the capacity to be truly transformative business leaders who inspire their teams to achieve great things. They build trust and take people with them in new directions. The result is superior individual, team and organisational performance.

Drawing on your reading and personal observations, also illustrating your answer with examples, explain:

i. What personal qualities are required if someone is to become a truly transformative leader in an organisational context;

ii. What approaches to leadership should a person take in order that their impact will be transformative in nature.

OR

6. In order to be an effective leader you need to engage seriously in continuous personal development (CPD), reflecting on events, learning from mistakes and always striving to improve your own effectiveness. It is helpful to write these points down in a CPD log or learning diary.

You have been invited to attend a one-day coaching event for people in your organisation who have been identified as having future leadership potential. The organisers have asked you to bring with you some written CPD logs or learning diary entries that focus on what you have learned about effective team leadership from your own recent experiences or from observing others. Three specific examples are what is needed together with a short account of what you learned in each case.

Which **THREE** would you choose? In each case give a short account of the experience and discuss critically what you learned from it.

D

7. In recent years the term 'organisational agility' has tended to be used more than 'flexibility'. Linda Holbeche (2015:11) defines an agile organisation as one which demonstrates a 'capacity to respond, adapt quickly and thrive in a changing environment'. Agility is thus less about specific types of flexible working and more about developing an underpinning philosophy of HRM that meets the needs of organisations operating in increasingly volatile and unpredictable business environments.

You are asked to write a briefing paper for your manager which achieves the following two objectives:

i. Assesses how agile your organisation currently is in practice. This section should contain examples to illustrate ways in which it is sufficiently and insufficiently agile.

ii. Makes **THREE** distinct, justified recommendations as to how your organisation could increase its level of agility in the future.

OR

8. You attend a business seminar at which a speaker argues that all the major change management models that have been published (Lewin, Rodgers, Kotter, CIPD etc) are fundamentally flawed because they assume that change is something that organisations can plan for and control. She thinks this is 'rubbish'. In fact most change in organisations is unplanned. Things continually happen which are neither expected, nor planned for or even desired, but a response is required nonetheless.

Explain how far you agree with this critique of mainstream research into effective change management and the models these researchers have published. Draw on examples from your reading, experiences and observations to justify your argument.

E

9.   N.R. Naryana Murthy, the very successful founder and chief executive of the Indian software company Infosys has strong views about performance management. He argues that we spend too much time addressing peoples' weaknesses and looking for ways to manage them out of our organisations. In   fact, he says, when individual employees under-perform it is usually because they are either in the wrong job or have been allocated tasks which do not suit them. It follows that efforts to improve organisational performance should focus on re-allocating people to tasks which better suit their skills and abilities.

   i.   How far do you agree with this point of view? Justify your answer.

   ii.   Reflect critically on your own performance in jobs you have done in the past as well as your current role. To what extent is it true to state that your level of performance was determined by the extent to which you enjoyed doing the work and were well-suited to it? Justify your answer.

OR

10.   The media services provider Netflix started out in 1997 as a company that sold and rented DVDs. Since 2007 it has been streaming video content, and since 2012 producing its own films and TV dramas. It now has over 125 million subscribers in 190 countries, produces 130 films and TV series each year, has won numerous awards and is worth over $3.5 billion. The company, however, has chosen to take a rather unconventional approach to aspects of its HRM. When it hires people no guarantees at all are made about long-term job security. Instead the Netflix model involves paying high salaries while employing a lot of people on a sub-contracted or fixed-term basis. Very limited formal training is provided, employees being obliged to seek out their own HRD opportunities. Instead the company is very transparent about its future plans so that staff can plan their own possible career trajectories in and outside the company.

   i.   What are the major advantages and disadvantages of the Netflix HR model for the company and its employees?

   ii.   Why does such a hugely successful company continue to avoid committing to people for the long term?

   iii. To what extent do you agree with the view that this kind of approach to HR will become standard across many industries in the future? Justify your answer.

END OF EXAMINATION

7LMP- Leading, Managing and Developing People

EXAMINER'S REPORT

September 2019

Introduction

A total of 354 candidates sat the 7LMP examination in September. The overall pass rate was excellent, being 82%. There were a large number of merits too.

As a cohort this was both one of the largest and highest performing in recent years. The final breakdown of marks was as follows:

September 2019		
Grade	**Number**	**Percentage of total**
Distinction	12	3
Merit	89	25
Pass	191	54
Marginal Fail	17	5
Fail	45	13
Total	**354**	**100**

SECTION A

Learning outcomes:

LO 6: assess the contribution made by HRM and HRD specialists in different types of organisation

LO 7: promote professionalism and an ethical approach to HRM and HRD in organisations

Task 1:
There were many possible ways of answering this question credibly. The key points candidates tended to focus on were employee voice and the need for greater equity, but in many cases they tended to do so in a rather general way without making reference to the case study organisation or its industry, and without putting forward a clear justification for specific types of new initiative. Employees need to be provided with multiple forums to voice their opinions and grievances, and these must be conspicuously heard. This does not mean that Shawn and his management team always need to do what their staff tell them, nor does it necessarily require any trade union involvement (although recognition is an option for which a case can be made). It is really a question of opening up channels of communication and being seen to value opinions and listen to them. Suggestion schemes, staff surveys, consultation exercises, focus groups, delegation of decision-making to teams etc are all possibilities here. These are necessary in order to restore trust and hence bring down absence levels, reduce staff turnover and start to build positive engagement. The best answers cited specific research or examples from reading to back up their suggestions. Equity is also important here as this is clearly perceived to be absent at present. Equity is not the same thing as equality, but it is important in creating a sense of organisational justice and fair dealing. Transparency in decision-making plays an important potential role here so that decisions which affect staff, particularly in areas such as pay and job security, are justified. Moreover there needs to be a conspicuous commitment to the principles of fair dealing, including for example the adoption as common practice of fair disciplinary procedures.

Task 2:
It was important that a realistic approach was taken when answering this question. The suppliers are independent and cannot be directed to do or change anything. Much will depend on how large a customer Snap-a-Dap is in each case. The more a supplier relies on the company for its trade, the greater the degree of leverage. It is also important that commercial and cultural reality is understood here. It is not possible, for example, to seek to impose UK good practice principles on an Indian workplace in any event. Nor would it generally be either possible or desirable to dissolve an established partnership speedily without that causing more harm than good to both parties and their employees. There were some rather glib and simplistic answers which took avoided the difficult realities of the situation, some apparently assuming that suppliers were essentially subsidiaries. That said, it is clearly possible to insist on some basic standards of decent work and to make long-term, future collaboration dependent on this. This would include hours of work, pay, basic health and safety arrangements, core terms and conditions and a ban on the use of child labour. To be effective advice and support would need to be offered during a transition period and some form of inspection arrangement established that suited both parties. There were some outstanding answers here which cited the experience of companies that operate under fair trade rules and which have successfully developed partnerships with suppliers in India and

neighbouring counties which ensure decent standards of employment practice are maintained in supply chains.

Task 3:
The prime need here is to introduce a written policy – ideally covering all forms of bullying and harassment – and then to ensure that it is widely disseminated and observed. Managers need to be provided with training too. Such a policy would state clearly what is considered to be sexual harassment, who complaints should go to and steps that are taken when complaints are received. This needs to cover third-party harassment as well as that which is carried out by fellow employees. There needs to be a link made to the disciplinary policy, a commitment made to view all sexual a harassment as unacceptable and potentially to constitute an act of gross misconduct that can lead to summary dismissal. The policy needs to state that it extends to social events organised by the company or its employees. Accurate reference to the relevant law was a feature of stronger answers, while rather vague generalised points tended to be a feature of the weaker ones.

Task 4:
There was plenty of scope for all kinds of answers to be developed and justified here. Some candidates suggested quite general approaches here (stakeholder perspective, commitment to CSR, professionalism, codes of ethics etc), while others took a much more practical approach by recommending specific initiatives in these and potentially other fields too. HR activities in fields such as HRD, employee selection and performance management featured in many answers. What mattered when we were awarding marks was that three clearly distinct recommendations were made, that these were practically and commercially achievable and that a good justification rooted in the case study was provided to support them.

SECTION B

Question A1

Learning outcome: LO1 review and critically evaluate major contemporary research and debates in the fields of HRM and HRD

Precise answers varied here depending on the reading students had done and the observations they had made. On the positive side the CIPD report noted that new technologies can help to reduce stress and increase wellbeing by removing dull and more routine tasks from a job and hence enriching individual work experience. In addition they can help to facilitate a range of flexible working arrangements such as homeworking and flexitime which help employees to achieve a better work-life balance. Strong answers to part two developed points such as these in the context of the candidates' own organisational context. On the negative side the main points made relate to presenteeism / leavism whereby employees are drawn into 'an always on' culture which means that they answer e-mails and continue working out of work hours, including late at night, at weekends and when they are on annual leave. The introduction of new technologies can itself also cause considerable stress when there is a steep learning curve and limited time available or limited training provided. The need here is for organisations to be pro-active in discouraging extensive use of e-mail and other forms of communication outside working hours, avoiding contacting people when they are on annual leave except when absolutely necessary and making sure that new technologies are introduced into workplaces in a timely and thoughtful way so that employees have the time and support required to help them adapt.

Question A2

Learning outcome: LO1 review and critically evaluate major contemporary research and debates in the fields of HRM and HRD

This was a tough question which focused on pieces of contemporary research which students were not expected to be familiar with. So we were not expecting to read especially well-informed answers. Pass marks were thus awarded for fairly basic analysis provided both parts of the question were attempted reasonably fully. Views on the first question varied very considerably. Most disagreed with the point of view expressed in the stem or even questioned its premise – often quite stridently. Many organisations remain very focused on efficiency and have not moved hugely in a soft-HRM direction. Moreover, many classic studies from the humanist school of HRM (Elton Mayo, Douglas Macgregor etc) show clearly that treating staff well is a more efficient strategy than treating them poorly because it leads to higher levels of engagement, lower staff turnover and lower levels of absence. Alternatively it can be argued that some organisations have become softer in their management style and hence sometimes more tolerant of inefficient practices. Too many people are employed to carry out compliance / process roles that add limited value. It is also entirely plausible to argue that productivity is determined by technology much more than by people management and that HRM has limited impact one way or the other.

Stronger answers to part 2 tended to follow the CIPD's view that productivity is best improved by ensuring that people are suited to their roles, happy in them and supported to do them effectively with appropriate HRD interventions, good knowledge management, work-life balance etc. Put simply, if someone is doing work that they enjoy and which they

are personally suited to, appreciated for doing and feel secure doing they will be more engaged, happier to go the extra mile and hence more personally productive. Measures to increase personal effectiveness are thus key to improving productivity in the long term.

Question B3

Learning outcome: LO2 evaluate major theories relating to motivation, commitment and engagement at work and how these are put into practice by organisations

As this is an 'own organisation' question there were no specific right answers. What mattered was that candidates did not simply state what their organisations currently do to ensure a good person-org fit. This question is about improving things in the future. It is also important that it is values and ambitions that are discussed rather than job duties and personal attributes as this is what the e-mail focuses on. Strong answers thus set out some suggestions as to how current recruitment and selection activities in the students' own organisations might be adjusted to put more focus on establishing people's values and ambitions so as to see how well-aligned these are to those of the organisation. We read some very thoughtful and well-articulated answers to this question.

Question B4

Learning outcome: LO2 evaluate major theories relating to motivation, commitment and engagement at work and how these are put into practice by organisations

Answers varied greatly to both parts here. There are no right or wrong answers. What mattered was that candidates fully addressed both sub-questions and demonstrated broad understanding of the issues they focus on. Stronger candidates tended to take a more critical or sceptical line, accepting that Phillips's views are aspirational but not always practical to implement in real organisations with customers to satisfy and tasks to complete which light very few peoples' fires within. Similarly, when answering the question in part 2 about the business case stronger candidates tended to point out that the business case does not always support a strategy of lighting fires within and that a degree of control needs to be exercised which can involve lighting small fires below or letting it be known that this may happen. Most, however, agreed with the points in the stem and gave sound organisational examples by way of justification.

Question C5

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

There is a great deal of research for students to draw on here and any number of examples to use by way of illustration. The key personal attributes that are associated with transformative leaders are energy, charm, charisma, relevant experience, intelligence (including emotional intelligence), effective communication skills, resilience, self-confidence (not arrogance) and integrity. The main conclusions reached by researchers on management styles associated with transformative leaders are involving people in decision-making, articulating a compelling vision, delegating responsibility, respecting and valuing the contribution of team members, acting as a positive role model, getting to know team members personally, showing an interest in their development and understanding what

makes them tick as individuals. It is also important that leaders resist the temptation to make things all about 'me' and not 'us'. Recent research stresses the importance of authenticity, being true to themselves and not pretending to be something that they are not. Some candidates wrote about types of leadership action in answering part one rather than personal attributes, further developing the same broad points in answering part 2. In so doing marks were sometimes lost.

Question C6

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

The key here was that the learning experiences discussed were clearly focused on leadership in some shape or form. We took quite a broad interpretation of what leadership means – encompassing for example leading on HR matters in an organisation – but other examples of CPD that did not relate to leading were not rewarded. It was important that three distinct examples were given, that each was explained sufficiently fully and that the examples of lessons learned were thoughtful and not too simplistic. The better justified the points made, the higher the mark awarded.

Question D7

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

There were no clear right or wrong answers here as so much depended on the circumstances of and approaches used in the candidates' own organisation. It was fine for examples of flexible working to be used (especially forms of functional flexibility), but to score really high marks candidates needed to go beyond this and draw on a wider range of ideas and examples. Responsiveness and readiness for change could be included, the development of a flexible or change-ready mindset / culture, planning for multiple contingencies were all good topics to draw on when thinking about agility. As always, the extent and quality of the justification used to support arguments was important in determining the mark that was awarded. Too often candidates make points without providing a good justification. Please do not assume that the justification is obvious to the examiner, even though it may be to you.

Question D8

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

A range of perfectly strong, alternative arguments could be presented here all of which were rewarded with good marks. What mattered was that a thoughtful and compelling case was made and that it was justified effectively with examples or points from the candidate's reading. The truth in most organisations, of course, is that change comes along regularly in both planned and unplanned forms, and this was clearly reflected in the answers we read. The models referred to in the question are focused on the planned variety. Unplanned change also happens regularly, particularly in HRM because people are unpredictable. They

leave organisations, become sick, develop new attitudes and fall out with one another. Fire fighting in response to unforeseen events is thus an important part of the HR management role.

Question E9

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

There were plenty of interesting and original answers to these questions. It is difficult to argue against the principle here. Researchers have demonstrated for decades that performance increases when people's abilities and preferences are nicely-suited to the work that they are employed to do. The bigger the mismatch, the higher the chances of sub-standard performance. But the view expressed by Murthy can be criticised on practical grounds. Many if not most jobs contain features which are intrinsically dull, repetitive or uninspiring. But they still need to be performed well. It is therefore necessary to use reward and discipline (or the threat of discipline) as part of a package of measures aimed at securing the desired level of performance. In other words, it is simply not practical in most organisational settings to ensure that everyone is continually working on tasks that play to their strengths. Sometimes we do therefore need to address weaknesses and manage people out of organisations if they are under-performing. Steps can and should be taken to play to people's natural strengths and abilities, but there is a limit to how far we can go in this direction. People also change over time. A set of tasks that we once found to stimulate us may cease to do so, but there is often no practical alternative career opportunity present for us to take up. The view expressed by Murthy could this be said to be a touch idealistic, even if basically correct.

Part two required some critical self-reflection. What mattered here as far as marks were concerned was that candidates provided a good justification for the arguments they put forward.

Question E10

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

The main advantage for the company is that it keeps training costs to a minimum, while maintaining maximum flexibility to hire and fire as required. The potential disadvantage is that it is unattractive to would-be employees of talent who are not in a position to take up insecure contracts. From an employee point of view the advantage is flexibility to develop a career in different ways, getting a period of work experience with a blue chip company on the CV and the high pay.

The company takes this approach because of its history which has been one of continuous development in new directions. The media industry is very fast moving and project based. Its managers thus need to plan continually to move their activities in new directions. They therefore feel unable to commit to people in terms of long-term job opportunities and seek to manage their expectations accordingly.

In tight labour market conditions when talent is relatively scarce the Netflix model only really works for high profile corporations which can afford to pay well and which people very much want to work for, even if briefly, because it makes them more employable. For lower profile organisations that cannot afford high salaries the approach is much less viable if they are to attract and retain high quality, experienced staff. When labour market conditions are loose, and people are struggling to find work, the model will have more general potential to be used in other industries.

Conclusion

It was good to mark another strong and effective set of papers. There were remarkably few really poor papers and many that were outstandingly good. Some answers to Section A were a touch general with insufficient reference made to the particular circumstances set out in the case. Some were also rather short which is unwise given that half of all marks are awarded for Section A answers. The strongest of all were both original and thoughtful, but also well-researched including reference to real organisations that have been faced with some of the challenges raised in the case. Overall a most impressive cohort which rose to the challenge of addressing some tough questions most effectively.

Stephen Taylor
Devon, October 2019