Leading, Managing And Developing People

EXAMINER'S REPORT

September 2015

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development

Advanced Level Qualification

Leading Managing and Developing People (7LMP)

September 2015

30 September 2015 09:50 – 13:00 hrs

Time allowed – Three hours and ten minutes
(which includes ten minutes of reading time)

Answer Section A and five questions in Section B (one per subsection A to E).

Please write clearly and legibly.

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, A to E)**
  and/or
- **You achieve less than 40 per cent in either Section A or Section B**
  and/or
- **You achieve less than 50 per cent overall.**

Registered Charity Number: 1079797

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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.

Over the past decade some of the most highly-rated universities in the world have experimented with off-shoring some of their activities. Starting slowly, but gaining pace in more recent years, there is now a strong trend towards the establishment of branch campuses in overseas locations. The main aim is to enable these universities to expand their student numbers significantly and increase their income, but there are other objectives too. Sometimes innovative research opportunities are opened up, particularly where funding is provided by host country governments and corporations. They can also serve to enhance a university's international reputation. In addition, overseas branch campuses provide ready opportunities for exchange programmes whereby students from the University's main campus can study abroad for a period, while students based at the branch can travel to the main campus.

Estimates vary, but it is clear that there are now over two hundred and fifty overseas branch campuses being operated by universities based in the USA, the UK and Australia. They are mainly located in Asia and the Middle East, but one or two have also recently been established in Africa. Two prominent Chinese universities have recently opened campuses in Italy and it is estimated that there will be many more examples of such "south–north off shoring" in the higher education sector in the future. There are already known to be considerably more overseas-based students registered on degree programmes offered by UK universities than there are overseas students studying in the UK.

Some branch campuses are wholly owned and operated by the universities concerned, while others have been established through commercial partnership agreements. Either way the mission is to replicate as far as is possible the experience of studying at a university's main home campus. Governance, examination and assessment arrangements are the same, while every attempt is made to assure that teaching quality and other facilities are also maintained at an equivalent standard.

The establishment of overseas operations, sometimes on quite a large scale, poses some significant human resource management (HRM) and human resource development (HRD) challenges. There are also major risks, both financial and reputational, associated with the HR aspects of setting up and running overseas branch campuses. Moreover, because this whole development is so new, universities rarely have the required stock of specialist HR knowledge or experience to draw on when they first seek to establish an overseas presence.

According to the published research, by far the biggest problem is persuading established academic staff to work overseas for extended periods of time. In the commercial world undertaking an expatriate assignment is widely perceived to be a career enhancing step, but this is not generally the case in academia. Five years spent in a developing country is often seen as five wasted years without access to home-based academic networks, laboratory facilities and research libraries. The problem is compounded by the long-established practice of appointing academic staff to the main management roles in universities as this makes it hard to fill even the most senior jobs on overseas branch campuses.

In addition to these specific issues, universities are faced with all the usual difficulties associated with the recruitment, retention and engagement of expatriate workers. These include the requirement to take account of family needs as well as those of expatriates themselves and the relatively high likelihood that people will want to return home before their assignment is scheduled to end. Losing staff immediately following their repatriation is another common problem as people find it hard to adjust to life back in their home countries. It is also always difficult to find a balance between paying a sufficient salary to make it attractive enough for someone to move overseas whilst avoiding overpaying them compared with local market rates.

An alternative approach involves hiring local administrators in the host country to support a freshly recruited team of lecturing staff from all over the world. But this model makes it very hard, if not impossible, to replicate overseas the culture and standards that students experience when they study on the home campus. And this is exactly what has to happen if an overseas venture of this kind is to enjoy long-term success. The last thing a well-regarded university wants is to find that its hard-won international reputation is diluted or even contaminated as a result of inadequate performance at a branch campus.

You have been asked to advise a university based in the UK about HRM and HRD matters in connection with their plan to set up a branch campus in an Asian country.

In particular your advice is sought on the following matters:

1. **What steps should be taken to ensure that the academic staff recruited to teach on the overseas campus are capable of delivering a high-quality learning experience that is as good if not better than that encountered by students studying on its home campus.**

2. **What steps can be taken to minimise the possibility that expatriate assignments will fail to meet expectations by ending prematurely or provoking resignations at the repatriation stage.**

3. **What steps can be taken to maximise levels of employee engagement on an overseas branch campus among all kinds of staff.**

   What key points will you make? Justify your recommendations with reference to published research wherever possible.

It is recommended that you spend equal amounts of time between these three tasks.

PLEASE TURN OVER

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. Recent research conducted by CIPD and partner organisations found that a large proportion of employees perceive that their organisations regularly treat people unfairly in some respects. Some say that rules and procedures are not consistently applied, while others feel that rewards, resources and workload are unfairly distributed. A good majority complain about ineffective consultation before decisions affecting them are implemented. The trend is towards greater perceptions of unfairness rather than less.

   i. Explain why these findings should be a matter of concern for HR professionals.

   AND

   ii. Set out a business case for allocating some resources to reducing perceptions of unfairness in an organisation.

OR

2. Key findings from the UK government's 'futuretrack' research into students' experience of work while completing full–time higher education courses were recently published. It was reported that a majority of students undertake some form of paid or unpaid work while studying and that considerable benefits result. Those who work while studying greatly improve their chances of obtaining a good class of degree and of finding a graduate job on completing their studies. They are also more likely to command a good starting salary and are much less likely to be unemployed after graduating. The most positive outcomes are reported by those who undertake internships or periods of 'structured work experience' in roles that are relevant to their studies or future careers.

   i. In what ways do employers benefit from offering internships and periods of work experience to students in full-time education?

   AND

   ii. Explain why it is considered good practice to pay these students a reasonable level of remuneration while they are working.

B

3. It is often remarked that 'effective leadership is in the eye of the beholder' and that 'an effective leader is one who is widely seen to be effective'. If these observations are correct, it follows that there is no generally accepted set of personal attributes that are shared by 'effective leaders' or that would-be leaders can develop.

    i. Drawing on research, state to what extent you agree with this observation about effective leadership. Justify your answer.

    AND

    ii. Identify a leader you are familiar with and who you consider to be highly effective. This can be someone either from within or outside your working experience. Explain why you consider this person to be an effective leader. Discuss the extent to which your view is widely held and why.

OR

4. It is often argued that as far as Western industrialised countries are concerned, the twenty-first century will be 'the age of the female leader'. The case is based on the notion that approaches favoured by women in leadership positions (e.g.: empowering, participative, nurturing) are likely to be more important than those favoured by male leaders (e.g.: controlling, assertive, directive).

    i. To what extent do you agree with this point of view and why?

    AND

    ii. Drawing on research and your own experience, explain why so few women continue to reach the most senior posts in industry.

PLEASE TURN OVER

C

5. Your organisation is about to embark on major changes. There will be substantial organisational restructuring and job re-design, the introduction of new technology and innovative working practices. Some current jobs will be lost, but overall headcount will increase. Senior managers are also hoping to promote extensive cultural change so as to make the organisation more responsive to its customers.

   You have been asked to advise the management team on how practices in the area of reward management (including non-financial rewards) might be used and / or adjusted in order to support the effective completion of the coming change management episode. Set out three distinct proposals, in each case making recommendations as to how your proposed intervention should be implemented.

OR

6. Several forms of flexible working are regularly researched, written about and promoted. Some are criticised by commentators on the grounds that they bring with them reduced job or income security. By contrast, functional flexibility is widely considered to bring substantial benefits both to employers and employees. There remain, however, questions over how widely it can ever be used in practice, particularly in organisations which employ large numbers of professionally qualified staff.

   i. How do employing organisations benefit when they introduce functional flexibility? How do their employees benefit?

   AND

   ii. To what extent do you agree with the view that functional flexibility is inappropriate for some types of jobs or professions. Justify your answer.

D

7. According to Robertson & Cooper (2011) researchers can now demonstrate strong evidence of a causal link between psychological well-being and physical health. People who are stressed and depressed (or both) are much more likely to suffer from deteriorating health, while those who exhibit high levels of positive well-being tend to be healthier and much more resilient. They are ill less often and recover more quickly when they are unwell.

   i. Explain why this research might have significant implications for the HR function in organisations.

   AND

   ii. You are asked to advise your own organisation about how it might go about substantially improving employee well-being. What would be your top three recommendations? Justify your answer.

OR

8. Despite having been spread very successfully across the world, Human Resource Management (HRM) remains very controversial in some quarters. Critics often see it as no more than a modern, sophisticated tool which managers use in order to intensify work. Its purpose is to extract greater productivity at less cost. While the rhetoric associated with HRM is superficially attractive to employees, the reality is that employing organisations benefit much more than they do.

   i. Drawing on your experience and reading, set out how far you agree with this conception of HRM and why?

   AND

   ii. What arguments could representatives of the HR profession make in order to contradict this critical view? What evidence could they use in doing so?

PLEASE TURN OVER

E

9. Since 2007 the retailer Marks & Spencer has been implementing what its managers have called 'Plan A'. Their aim has been to meet 180 separate ethical commitments. Already the company can claim to be Britain's first 'carbon neutral retailer'. It no longer sends any waste at all to landfill sites, makes use of sustainable raw materials, trades ethically with its smaller suppliers in the developing world and promotes healthy living to its customers.

   i. In what different ways might Marks and Spencer anticipate benefiting from their Plan A initiatives over time?

   AND

   ii. How strong is the business case for your organisation taking a similar approach? Justify your answer.

   AND

   iii. What single 'ethical commitment' would you most like to see being given a prominent place were your organisation to embark on a project similar to 'Plan A'? Justify your answer.

OR

10. In the workplace 'paternalism' is usually defined as an approach to the management of people which restricts the autonomy of individual employees for their own benefit. Paternalistic managers, like concerned parents, require people to follow their advice or to act in different ways than they might otherwise do. The motive, however, is always to guide employees into taking courses of action that will benefit them in the long term.

   i. Drawing on your own experience or reading give an example of paternalistic management practice.

   AND

   ii. Explain why paternalistic approaches to management tend nowadays to be seen as out-dated and inappropriate.

   AND

   iii. In what circumstances can paternalism on the part of an HR function be justified and why?

END OF EXAMINATION

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September 2015

Introduction

A total of 312 candidates sat the Leading, Managing and Developing People exam in September. The overall pass rate was 68% which is slightly lower than has been the case with most recent cohorts, but was still quite pleasing. More encouraging still was the substantial numbers of higher marks achieved by students in this cohort, 36% of the passes being marked at either merit or distinction level. There was, as always, a very considerable difference between the standards achieved by students at different centres. Some manage to achieve highly impressive sets of results, while elsewhere the overall level of performance was just as unimpressive.

The papers were marked by Elisabeth Wilson, Andrew Hambler, Gail Swift, Claire Roberts, Graham Perkins, Julie Beardwell, John Mitchell, Penny Graham, Cecilia Ellis, Catherine Jones and myself.

The overall breakdown of marks was as follows:

September 2015		
Grade	**Number**	**Percentage of total**
Distinction	6	2
Merit	72	23
Pass	135	43
Marginal Fail	36	11
Fail	63	20
Total	**312**	**100**

Detailed feedback on each question is as follows:

Section A

Learning outcomes (LO): 2 and 6:

The standard of answers to the questions posed about the case study varied very considerably indeed. While a good number of candidates struggled somewhat with aspects of Task 1, there were nonetheless a good number of truly outstanding answers provided which were marked at distinction level. Not only did these candidates answer the questions fully and directly, making compelling points about HRM and HRD in the process. But they had also in many cases carried out considerable research into the people management issues faced by overseas branch campuses of universities and were able to give examples of these to enhance their arguments. At the other end of the scale we read answers which were thin, superficial and in some cases only slightly focused on the case scenario study itself. In too many cases students continue to write in rather general terms about issues such as expatriation, recruitment selection and employee engagement, without developing ideas and arguments about the particular challenges faced by the case study organisation.

This is surprising when the case is 'seen' and students have had plenty of time to digest its contents and think carefully about the particularities of the scenarios presented.

The other point to make by way of introduction is that when marking these answers we made sure to remind ourselves as a marking team that our own professional proximity to the world of university employment and hence our extensive knowledge of the HR challenges that are faced when establishing overseas campuses did not lead us to have too high a set of expectations here.

Task 1

For many candidates this first part was the weakest part of their answer to Section A. The key problem here was a tendency to avoid addressing the aspect of the case that concerned a reluctance on the part of UK-based faculty to relocate overseas for strong professional rather than personal reasons. Too often this was ignored altogether or sidestepped in favour of an answer focused on the need for robust selection methods that would ensure the appointment of strong candidates. The possibility that an organisation might sometimes face very severe recruitment difficulties resulting in a situation whereby inadequate numbers of experienced and well-qualified candidates are attracted by the jobs on offer did not always appear to have been given any consideration. Addressing this issue is challenging in the case of overseas university campuses, but it is by no means insurmountable as was demonstrated by the candidates who took it on and made strong, credible suggestions. Some, for example argued in favour of a polycentric recruitment policy in which applications are encouraged from across the world and a good period of training provided to successful candidates. Others suggested short visits of a few weeks by 'flying faculty' were the solution, reducing the need for so many to relocate overseas. Then there is the possibility of a recruitment strategy based on inpatriation, where by people are recruited internationally to work on an overseas site, but are first seconded to corporate HQ (in this case the home country campus) for a period so that they become familiar with the corporate culture, expectations and standards. Most, however, quite reasonably focused their answers on the traditional diplomatic-style expatriate posting model, but to take steps to ensure that:

a) postings were made sufficiently attractive to tempt staff into applying for them

and

b) that those who did so were rewarded conspicuously with genuine career development opportunities on their return.

Finding ways of rewarding people effectively and ensuring that no career hiatus is suffered makes considerable sense in this scenario. Other points of relevance here related to the maintenance of professional networks via regular communication/visits home, a variety of potential HRD interventions designed to enhance performance, decent benefits packages and steps take to allay security concerns (for example, evacuation procedures, private medical insurance etc).

Task 2

This was about expatriate assignments generally and the widely-cited research that shows they often fail altogether or fail to meet their expectations. We were pleased to see that many candidates were familiar with the published research in this area and that candidates appreciated the overwhelming need when recruiting expatriate staff to choose appropriate people who are culturally sensitive, able to get on with all types of people, have good language skills, and a stable and robust personality. It is also important to establish that they have the right motivation for going (that is, not trying to run away from something at home, genuinely interested in experiencing a different culture etc). Strong answers here, of which we read many, also stressed the importance of HRD interventions prior to departure and in the first months of the assignment to help with the period of transition and adjustment. Culture shock is a common problem, and it is as likely to be something that affects family as much as the expatriate him or herself. Preparation for repatriation is equally important as is the management of expectations on resumption of post back in the home country. Practical assistance with matters such as housing and schooling, repatriating household pets and taxation are often as important as the more emotional/relational adjustment issues.

Task 3

The primary purpose here was to test understanding of LO2. The expatriate/overseas context was less obviously significant, but we did still expect all candidates to make at least some reference to the case study and not just to answer the question in general terms. As far as passing was concerned the key was to demonstrate a full understanding of the concept of employee engagement and the ability to cite some research on how best to engage employees. This would include interventions in the fields of HRD, leadership development among line managers in particular, trust, positive psychological contracts, effective job design and above all voice/involvement. A good majority of candidates were able to meet these expectations without too much difficulty.

Section B

Question A1

Learning outcome: 1

This question was intended to test knowledge and understanding of Learning Outcome 1: Review and critically evaluate major contemporary research and debates in the fields of HRM and HRD. It was attempted by around half of the candidates.

Most correctly pointed out that the findings should be a matter of concern because of their capacity to have a negative effect on core HR objectives. A perception of unfairness is likely to make it harder to recruit, retain, engage and motivate people. It may lead to lower levels of trust and to a more adversarial employee relations climate. It makes discretionary effort less likely and hence can reduce productivity, competitiveness and standards of customer service. The best answers introduced some theory to their answers too, demonstrating their understanding of equity theory and psychological contracts in particular.

Answers to part 2 were also generally quite sound, pointing out that the results of widespread unfairness may ultimately affect an organisation's financial position. A study carried out in the USA estimated that unfairness in the Fortune 500 companies costs them around $64 billion a year, accounted for by lost productivity, unwanted staff turnover, avoidable legal action and disengagement generally. There is thus a strong business case for measuring perceptions of unfairness in an organisation and tracking it over time. There is also a good case for investing funds in tackling those areas of management practice which people see as being particularly unfair.

Poorer answers here tended to be inadequate rather than inaccurate, sometimes very brief and on other occasions rather repetitive or too narrowly focused.

Question A2

Learning outcome: 1

Some employers are reluctant to offer work experience/internships on grounds of cost and inconvenience. There is particular resistance in some quarters to paying interns a decent wage. However, there is plenty of evidence to demonstrate that structuring work experience and offering internships on a competitive basis pays dividends. This is partly because students tend to demonstrate enthusiasm to learn and will work hard during periods of work experience. They also tend to be flexible and to bring new ideas/perspectives with them into the workplace. They thus represent good value for money. The other advantage relates to recruitment. Internships can be seen from an employer's perspective as constituting an extensive 'work sample' from which to judge an individual's suitability for long term employment. Work experience thus potentially operates as a highly valid selection tool. All these points were made in the stronger answers, some of which also contained examples of the field where skills shortages might in part be overcome by making more use of internships when recruiting.

Most students recognised that the case for paying is partly reputational. Employers who fail to do so risk attracting negative publicity – as some have found to their cost in recent years. They also went on to discuss the second strand of the case for paid internships relating to the increased capacity this gives an organisation to attract the best potential interns. There is considerable competition among students for paid work experience opportunities and this allows employers to be choosy about whom they employ. Students who are paid are also more likely to feel an obligation to the organisation and to show greater levels of engagement.

Question B3

Learning outcome: 3

This question was attempted by a good majority of candidates with mixed results.
As far as the question was concerned researchers are all over the place, so it was interesting to read the student's perspectives. On the one hand there are qualities that are widely associated with charismatic leaders which cross cultures. These studies suggest that some people have the personal attributes required to lead effectively, while other do not. On the other hand there are studies which demonstrate how far opinion differs about the

'effectiveness' of individual leaders. This is particularly true of charismatic figures whose judgement is called into question, or who are tempted to become corrupt/dictatorial. So it is hard to conclude that some aspects of effective leadership are learnable while others are not. It is a combination of personality attributes and what the leader actually does when faced with difficult decisions to make. Most candidates took the view that there are some clearly identifiable traits that are shared by 'good leaders' and that some people possess these more evidently than others.

Answers to part 2 differed hugely depending on the leader figure chosen for analysis. Some candidates chose people who they had encountered in their working lives, while others opted for well-known business leaders or political figures. What mattered was that a coherent, well-informed and well-justified argument was advanced to back up the key points that were made and on the whole this second part was handled pretty well.

Question B4

Learning outcome: 3

There are two distinct issues here, both of which needed to be addressed (fully in the case of highly marked answers). First was the question of whether or not it is true that female and male leaders take different approaches. The second was the question of whether or not approaches associated with female leaders are more appropriate for the evolving twenty-first century business environment. Both are vigorously contested in the published literature and it is possible to take either side on both debates and to argue the case effectively.

Part 2 taps into another debate – namely why more men make it into senior leadership positions than men. Is it because of a lack of desire (preference for other types of work/ entrepreneurial options on the part of the most able women) or is it due to the maintenance of a glass ceiling by men stereotyping, favouring one another, old boys networks, bias in selection etc). Again what mattered as far as marking was concerned was that a good, thoughtful and well-justified argument was advanced to justify the position taken.

The best answers achieved these things and also cited research or the opinions of leading figures working in this field. We also read some very thoughtful answers that questioned the premise somewhat, seeing management in the twenty-first century as likely to be no different in key respects from that of the twentieth century.

Question C5

Learning outcome: 4

This was a straightforward question which students who have only studied reward management at an introductory level should be able to answer effectively. Numerous possible types of intervention could form the basis of an answer, much depending on the students' own organisation and its current reward practices. Incentive and bonus schemes of various kinds were commonly suggested, alongside profit-sharing, voluntary redundancy packages and schemes to buy people out of old contracts and into new ones. It was, however, important that non-financial rewards were included in some shape or form as well and most did so. Examples were award schemes, specific training and career development opportunities, the introduction of flexible benefits and opportunities to improve individual job design. Implementation issues included actions in the fields of involvement, consultation and effective communication. Here too the weaker answers tended to be inadequate, thin or just far too limited in terms of their length rather than wrong in any way. There was also a failure to justify choices in some cases.

Question C6

Learning outcome: 4

This was the only question on the paper which was consistently answered quite poorly by a good percentage of candidates. This invariably happened because they failed to demonstrate any understanding of what the term 'functional flexibility' means, choosing to write instead about flexible working more generally. Where relevant points were made some marks were awarded to these answers, but inevitably many were also lost. By contrast, where candidates did demonstrate a good understanding of the term, they tended to write good, strong and thoughtful answers.

Functional flexibility is really just another term for multi-skilling. It involves training groups of staff to be able to perform a wider range of tasks than is typically associated with any one job description. It is developed through different types of HRD intervention, including job rotation and job enlargement, as well as more formal training interventions. It can take either a horizontal form (working across job boundaries at the same level) or vertical (working across different hierarchical levels), and it is often associated with team working – particularly work systems which involves multi-skilled, self-managing teams. Any examples of these approaches were fine in the context of this exam, be they from the candidates' own experience or from published case studies. There are also, of course, plenty of well-known examples in the literature such as health care assistants in the NHS and jobs on board low-cost airlines.

Most candidates recognised that organisations gain in the main through greater efficiency. Functional flex allows people to be deployed as and when required across the organisation. This results in less slack time and reduced requirements for agency staff and overtime payments. It also allows organisations to achieve greater agility, so that they are able to institute change more rapidly and effectively than their competitors. Put simply, they tend to be more change-ready when new opportunities arise because their people are already trained to adapt to a new range of tasks/activities. It was astonishing, however, to read a number of answers which missed these kinds of points altogether, candidates focusing entirely on the advantages associated with recruiting and retaining people who were looking for flexible working. In fact employees benefit in the main because functional flexibility gives them a wider range of skills and experiences. This enhances their job security and future employability. It means that their skills are less likely to become obsolescent and also tends to mean that they are classed as part of the core workforce in models such as Atkinson's model of the Flexible Firm.

Part 2 was more challenging and we were not expecting answers to be as long or fully-argued as was the case for part 1. In truth there are, of course, limits as to how far functional flexibility can be deployed. Generally speaking the more specialised knowledge and the more experience that an individual requires in order to do a job, the less scope there s for multi-skilling. Cosmetic surgeons cannot be expected to double up as heart surgeons, for example. All kinds of examples were given of similar types of jobs, and plenty of marks were picked up in the process. Here too candidates who misunderstood what 'functional flexibility' involves, lost marks here as their answers did not really meet the question's requirements.

Question D7

Learning outcome: 5

The stronger answers explained that the main implication of this research is the way that it provides the basis of a strong business case for investing in improving well-being. There is a financial dividend to be gained, not just in reduced absence, but also in terms of staff retention and engagement. Most did this effectively. Some weaker candidates decided to question the research and argue that stress did not link with physical ill health. Not only is such an argument questionable, it was also not what was being asked about here.

The kind of initiatives that were recommended included steps to improve work-life balance, reduction in instances of 'presenteeism', the management of workloads, health screening, EAP/counselling initiatives, promoting healthy eating and exercise, as well as more conventional health and safety measures. The greater the range of potential initiatives cited, the higher the mark. Because some organisations are currently doing more than others in this area, the suggestions made for improvement varied greatly. What mattered as far as marls were concerned was that three distinct suggestions were made and that they were convincingly justified.

Question D8

Learning outcome: 5

It was attempted only by a small minority of the candidates, many of whom struggled to write really good answers. There were more fails than passes here and very few high marks.

Most of the poorer answers simply misread or appeared to misunderstand the question. They certainly failed to address it fully. It was common for students to describe models of HRM and generally to make points that appeared to have little, if any direct relevance to the central point about work intensification. Too often debates about 'personnel management' and how it differs from 'HRM' were rehearsed here without any clear linkage being made to the question itself.

Those who passed tended strongly to disagree with the jist of this argument, putting the case for HRM as an approach which brings benefits both to employers and employees. Its fundamental aim is to improve organisational performance, but this need not necessarily involve intensifying work. The view was put that HRM involves building human capital, developing people, improving job satisfaction, retaining people and engaging them in a positive sense. Some pointed out that while some HR functions are principally concerned with getting staff to work harder for less, this is by no means true of HRM as generally practiced. Part 2 allowed more room for individual argument/original thinking. The few strong answers pointed to evidence about high levels of perceived job quality/satisfaction, about the role of HRM in promoting flexibility, fairness and health/welfare, professionalism, career development, high trust employee relations, employee involvement and good practice generally.

Question E9

Learning outcome: 7

This was attempted by a majority of candidates, most of whom answered it pretty effectively.

M&S can anticipate a number of long-term benefits arising from their very conspicuous commitment to a range of CSR activities. It is partly a matter of reinforcing their position as a leading brand among more affluent and well-educated consumers, leading to higher sales. It will also help to build corporate reputation generally, gaining positive PR coverage in the media and this should lead to the reinforcement of the company's positive reputation among investors, including ethical investment funds. Suppliers and would-be employees may also be more attracted to the company as a result of its CSR activities. There may also be positive dividends in terms of employee attraction, retention and engagement - a point that a large number of candidates focused on.

The strength of the business case varies from organisation to organisation. The bigger a brand, the greater the extent of competition it faces, and the more consumer oriented a corporation's activities, the stronger will be the business case. It has less resonance in smaller organisations that have little by way of a national or international reputation to build on, and considerably less where an organisation is principally involved in B2B transactions that are driven primarily by price. In the public and voluntary sectors the business case may largely be restricted to labour market considerations. Some of the best answers came from candidates working in industries such as financial services and energy where issues of corporate reputation have tended to have particular resonance.

Answers to part 3 also varied greatly. What mattered as far as awarding marks was concerned, was that the case is put convincingly and was well-argued with reference to the particular organisation concerned. Good, full answers that were well-informed as well as being effectively argued scored well here.

As this was the last question attempted for many candidates, some answers lost marks simply because they were rather too rushed, lacking the thought and extent of others on these papers.

Question E10

Learning outcome: 7

This was quite a challenging question that required students to think theoretically as well as practically, a factor that was reflected in the marks that were awarded. Perhaps because this was evident Question E10 was attempted only by a minority of candidates. Those who did so, however, tended to do well. We read some impressively thoughtful answers here, some of which were pleasingly nuanced in terms of content, indicating maturity and depth of thinking.

Answers to part 1 varied greatly. The more common examples related to health, safety and welfare initiatives, hours of work and holiday issues. Others included career enhancement advice, training and enrolment in a pension or benefits schemes. However, in practice many candidates preferred to focus on individual managers they had observed who had a paternalistic style and to describe their particular approaches

Paternalism is sometimes seen as outdated because it can seem patronising and overbearing. Personal autonomy and freedom are seen as being more important than used to be the case. It is also often argued that people learn best from making mistakes and that it is actually in their interests that they be allowed to do so. Paternalism can also involve favouritism toward one individual or anther which can be seen as unfair and potentially discriminatory, particularly if creates perceived obligations. These points were all commonly and well-made.

HR needs to strike a balance. On the one hand it is important to foster competition and to require people to compete for preferment and other opportunities as and when they arise. A level playing field is needed and this makes paternalism that is directed at serving the interests of particular individuals hard to justify. However, when it is collective in nature, and generally applied, it is much more justifiable. Hence the ethical case for a degree of paternalism in organisational policy (for example, health and safety, pension enrolment etc) and a strong case for paternalistic advice-giving.

Here too for some candidates answers were limited simply because this was the last one they attempted. There was often nothing fundamentally wrong beyond their brevity and lack of meaty content.

Conclusion

On the whole marking and moderating these exam papers has been an enjoyable experience. The standards achieved by the best candidates are extraordinarily high. They are thoughtful, filled with examples and references, extensive and, above all, compellingly argued. The capacity of these students to write equally effectively about such a wide range of topics is testament to the hard work they and their tutors put in. Where candidates do less well it is almost always for familiar reasons of the kind that we spell out at every opportunity and in every examiner’s report. There’s a tendency to avoid answering questions directly, or more often parts of questions. Some candidates continue to neglect to justify their points, while others simply write too superficially or in too limited a way to pass at M level. Only in answering Question C6 did many candidates fail for a reason that was question-specific - in this case simply not knowing what the term 'functional flexibility' means. When this happens I always question my own judgement in setting the question, but on this occasion I think it was fair and justified. Functional flexibility is a very widely-recognised and widely-used term, and is one which students have always shown a keenness to write about when answering questions on this paper in the past.

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