Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development

Advanced Level Qualification

Leading, Managing and Developing People

January 2017

Date: Thursday 26 January 2017   **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.

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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.

Oldbridge District Council provides a range of local government services to a predominantly rural population of 75,000 people living in a market town and surrounding villages in the north of England. Chief responsibilities include council tax collection, refuse collection and recycling, the administration of housing benefit, planning matters and the promotion of tourism. The authority employs a total of 250 people, many of whom work on a part-time basis. There is a small human resources team which consists of four people: a manager, two officers and an administrator. The human resource manager, Lisa Porter, has recently taken up her position, having been promoted from her previous HR officer position.

Like all local government bodies, Oldbridge has had to make very substantial savings in recent years. Pay rises have been restricted to 1% for some years now, while strict restrictions on recruitment have been in operation. When staff leave or retire, they are not replaced unless a very strong business case can be made. Most new appointees are being employed on temporary contracts. The financial situation is likely to remain very challenging for the foreseeable future. So far redundancies have been avoided, but this may not be the case in the future as further cost savings are sought.

Soon after taking up her post, Lisa decided that it was time to carry out a staff survey in order to establish levels of satisfaction and engagement among the staff. A confidential questionnaire was designed and a consultant employed to analyse the results and write a report. 75% of staff responded. Key metrics featured in the executive summary included the following:

- 65% state that they look forward to going to work in the morning;

- 62% state that they find their work to be rewarding, 13% enjoying it 'greatly';

- 43% say that they are satisfied with the variety of work they are required to do;

- 80% state that they feel valued and supported by their work colleagues, 55% by their line manager, but only 20% by senior managers;

- 70% are satisfied with the level of responsibility they carry;

- 60% are satisfied with their physical work environment;

- 21% state that they are satisfied with their pay and benefits, but no-one says that they are 'very satisfied' with these;

- 55% state that they are happy with their work life balance;

- 90% state that their jobs have become increasingly stressful in recent years;

- 33% are satisfied with the training and development opportunities offered by the council;

- 83% say that their workload has increased in the past year;

- 70% are satisfied with their promotion opportunities;

- 15% say that change is managed well by the council;

- 90% say that they 'sometimes feel stressed' when they are at work;

- 74% say that they 'feel safe' when they are at work;

- 88% are happy with the council's equality and diversity practices;

- 28% say that they are 'listened to when they are at work';

- 37% are satisfied with the 'amount of discretion' they are allowed to exercise in their jobs;

- 36% say that they are happy with their job security;

- 27% say that they feel their efforts at work are properly recognised;

- 54% state that they are actively seeking alternative employment.

The Chief Executive Officer at Oldbridge Council asks Lisa to draw up some responses to the survey and to present her thoughts to him and his senior management team next week. He is particularly keen that the Council should soon be able to send an e-mail to all staff headed 'You Said, We Listened', summarising management perceptions of the staff survey findings and setting out what practical steps it is intended should now be taken.

Lisa asks you for some advice.

1. Which of the key findings from the survey should Lisa be most concerned about? Justify your answer.

2. Drawing on published research and your own experience, explain what THREE initiatives Lisa should develop first in response to the survey results. Justify your answer.

3. How should Lisa approach the task of drawing up the proposed 'You Said, We Listened' e-mail? What should her main objectives be? Justify your answers.

It is recommended that you spend 25% of your time on each of Questions 1 and 3, and 50% on 2.

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<u>SECTION B</u>

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 2015 CIPD published a research report entitled 'The View from Below: What employees really think about their Chief Executive Officer's (CEO) pay packet'. It reported the results of a survey which showed that while most people agree that senior management pay should be performance-related, in many cases this was perceived not to be the case. When asked about their own CEO's pay, 44% said that it was either 'too high' or 'far too high'. The survey also reported that 60% of employees agreed that high CEO pay was demotivating for most employees. Only 13% disagreed with this statement.

    i. Drawing on published research and your own observations, explain why it can be de-motivating for employees when senior managers are paid very highly.

    AND

    ii. What, if anything, can or should be done about the rapid increases we have seen recently in the size of boardroom pay packages? Justify your answer.

OR

2. A great deal of research has been carried out into the advantages and disadvantages of e-learning and the use of technology to deliver self-directed learning activities at a time and place which employees choose. Surveys demonstrate that while employers are currently investing a great deal of money into e-learning, it is not rated particularly highly by employees. According to CIPD surveys only around 15% of employees consider it to be the most effective approach to human resource development (HRD).

    i. Drawing on research, explain why e-learning is so often poorly rated in comparison to alternative forms of HRD intervention.

    AND
    ii. In what ways might your organisation either introduce or improve e-learning interventions so as to make them more effective?

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B

3. The distinction between 'leadership' and 'management' has been debated for many years. Some argue that effective management is easier to carry out than effective leadership. This is because good leaders are required to inspire teams to achieve rather than simply to control and co-ordinate their activities. It follows that outstanding leaders are harder to recruit and retain than outstanding managers.

   i. Drawing on your own observations and experience, as well as your reading, explain how far you agree with this point of view.

      AND

   ii. What practical advice would you give to an organisation which is looking to appoint an inspirational leader capable of significantly improving its performance?

OR

4. Reflect critically on a situation or episode in which you were personally required to exercise leadership. This may be in or outside the workplace. Explain what you did well, what you did less well and what main learning points you took from the experience. Discuss and justify what you will do differently in a similar, future situation.

C

5. In the UK women are much more likely than men to work part-time, to job share, to make use of a flexitime scheme and/or to be employed on a term-time contract. Most agency workers are female, while in recent years, a good majority of new homeworking jobs have also been taken up by women. By contrast, men are much more likely than women to work in excess of fifty hours a week and to be paid for overtime. The proportion of women who undertake paid work is higher in the UK than in most comparable countries, but the percentage of managers who are female is lower (35%) and the percentage of board members in larger companies who are female is very small (8%).

    i.   Why are employers reluctant to employ managers and senior managers on a flexible basis?

    AND

    ii. How far do you agree with the argument that the challenges many women face combining flexible working with senior management work represents an insurmountable barrier to the achievement of full gender equality in the workplace?

OR

6. Managers who want to bring about significant change in organisations to make them more competitive or resilient often find that the people they seek to inspire demonstrate cynicism. Cynics tend not to resist proposed changes, but neither do they enthuse or engage positively with the change agenda.

    i.   Why do many people take a cynical view of proposed changes when they are first advocated by managers?

    AND

    ii. What advice would you give to a new manager wishing to advance a positive change agenda about how to minimise cynicism on the part of employees? Justify your answer.

D

7. In recent years the term 'employee value proposition' (EVP) has been adopted by the human resource management community. It was defined by Chambers et al (1998) as a compelling answer to the question 'why would a talented person want to work here?' and by Davenport (2013) as an idea which encompasses 'everything that matters to employees about their work and their organisations; the things they brag about at the neighbourhood barbeque'.

    i.   To what extent does your own organisation put forward a compelling employee value proposition?

    AND

    ii.   How might it be improved?

    AND

    iii.   What business case would you advance in support of the improvements you have recommended?

OR

8. In the summer of 2015 the front cover of the Harvard Business Review pictured a ball of dynamite alongside the slogan 'It's time to blow up HR'. The cover reflected a commonly held view among business leaders that HR functions are overly bureaucratic, too powerful and out-of-touch with business needs. HR managers are useful when people need to be dismissed, but 'a nuisance' the rest of the time. They add little, if any, real value and should be dispensed with.

    i.   Why is this view of HRM commonly voiced? To what extent is it justified?

    AND

    ii.   What can the HR profession do to counteract this negative image?

E

9. In recent years the term 'workplace bullying' has been increasingly used. Survey evidence suggests that instances of bullying are increasing over time. While everyone agrees that bullying is unacceptable and unethical, views differ about what exactly constitutes 'bullying' in the context of the workplace.

   You have recently been appointed to an HR management role in a small but growing private sector organisation that currently has no position or policy on workplace bullying. You are asked to prepare a briefing paper for the Chief Executive Officer. Your brief requires you to:

   i.   Set out a concise definition of the term 'workplace bullying' with some illustrative examples.

   AND

   ii. Suggest some practical initiatives aimed at preventing it from occurring in the company. What major points would you make? Justify your answer.

OR

10. A large retail organisation has received several complaints from customers about a lack of professionalism on the part of staff working in its stores. Most concern the manner in which younger employees behave in front of customers and the way that they talk to them. Managers decide to develop a half-day training course for all existing and newly-recruited staff who are employed in customer-facing roles and are under the age of 18. The course will be called 'being professional'.

   You are asked to advise the organisation about what should be included in the course. Managers are keen that course participants are shown both how to behave in a professional manner while they are at work and why it is important that they do so. What advice would you give?

END OF EXAMINATION

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Introduction

277 candidates sat the Leading, Managing and Developing People exam in January 2017. The cohort performed well, achieving a healthy overall pass rate of 71%. As always we observed rather different pass rates at different centres, some also accounting for a much higher proportion of the merits and distinctions than others.

The final breakdown of marks was as follows:

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Grade	Number	Percentage of total (rounded up)
Distinction	10	4
Merit	52	18
Pass	135	49
Marginal fail	24	9
Fail	56	20
Total	**277**	**100**

The papers were marked by Gail Swift, Graham Perkins, Julie Beardwell, Penny Graham, Cecilia Ellis, John Mitchell, Catherine Jones, Esther Park, Andrew Hambler and myself. Krystal Wilkinson kindly assisted with some of the moderation.

Detailed feedback on each question is as follows:

Section A

Learning outcomes: 2 and 6

The case study questions were intended to test knowledge and understanding of Learning Outcome 2 (evaluate major theories relating to motivation, commitment and engagement at work and how these are put into practice by organisations) and Learning Outcome 6 (assess the contribution made by HRM and HRD specialists in different types of organisation).

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Question 1

Our aim when setting this question was to test students' ability to pick out from the range of findings that were presented those which should cause most concern; in other words to prioritise and justify their choice. We were less concerned about the particular points chosen for analysis than the capacity to justify the choice and there was thus plenty of room here for different views to be expressed. Many sensibly focused their analyses on the 'intention to leave' statistics which are worryingly high given the inability of this organisation to replace leavers readily. Others focused more on the statistic which suggests that few feel valued by senior managers and the high/growing levels of stress. There was also a problem with employee involvement suggested. Surveys of this kind always show most people to be dissatisfied with pay and benefits, so that should not perhaps be seen as being particularly alarming or surprising. The more knowledge and understanding that was demonstrated, and the more compelling justification was put forward, the higher the marks. The best answers did not only focus on employee issues such as staff being less motivated than they might be, but developed strong business-focused arguments which explained why a lack of engagement or a propensity to look for alternative jobs carried significant risks for future service delivery. Simply discussing employee welfare is not sufficient at this level. The highest marks were awarded to those who did this while also citing relevant research findings in fields such as employee engagement, commitment and staff retention.

Some candidates wrote answers that were far too descriptive to score well at Level 7, in far too many cases doing little more than summarising the findings of the case. Often only very limited justification was provided or even none to speak of at all, candidates simply reciting points from the survey results set out in the case study.

Question 2

Here too there was plenty of opportunity for originality, so examiners avoided being overly prescriptive when marking. The quality of the justification advanced and the extent to which research and personal experience were used as part of an effective justification determined the mark more than the choice of initiatives. That said, the suggestions must, of course, have been credible and appropriate. There also had to be three of them and these had to be clearly distinct from one another. Candidates lost marks when their three suggested priority initiatives resembled one another too closely. Most wrote strong and thoughtful answers here and scored well as a result. Most recommended initiatives in the areas of management development (especially in relation to the effective management of change), employee involvement, organisation-wide team-building, delegation of decision-making, formally recognising individual contribution and improved upward and downward communication. Wellbeing and stress-reducing initiatives were also commonly discussed with good evidence being presented to back up the case for introducing them. Again we were looking to award most marks to those who cited research findings and made strong business-focused justifications. Answers that focused

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exclusively on HR concerns (for example staff morale etc) without going on to explain why this mattered from a business perspective attracted fewer marks. It was also important that the resource constraints affecting this organisation were recognised and that expensive courses of action were not recommended without a clear indication that a good return on investment would be achieved. Another common reason for lower marks was a failure to relate answers to the case study organisation at all. Too often we read rather descriptive accounts of Kotter's model of change management and Maslow's hierarchy which had some relevance, but were not related to the facts of the case.

Question 3

The key here was to design an e-mail which was positive and forward-looking, but also authentic, accurately reflecting the concerns that staff have expressed through their responses to the survey. This is always a difficult balance to strike, but could be achieved if the content is honest about the environmental challenges faced by all public sector organisations at present. There are also some positive messages in the survey results that can legitimately be given prominence so that a positive overall tone is achieved. Most took this kind of approach and offered a good justification too. The strongest answers made compelling and original suggestions such as testing reaction to a draft e-mail using a focus group, involving a good range of managers in the drafting of the messages and inviting further dialogue with staff as a longer-term response to the survey was formulated. Some students harnessed theory very effectively here too, for example demonstrating their understanding of psychological contracts and the potential role that can be played by management responses to staff surveys in building positive psychological contracts. The overriding need was to be honest, avoiding appearing synthetic or unconcerned, while also providing some kind of credible statement about future management intentions.

The weaker answers here tended to be rather brief and/or limited in terms of the justification provided for the chosen approach.

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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)

A great deal has been written about increasing levels of senior managers' pay in recent years and this is a subject which candidates sitting the LM&DP exam have shown a keenness to write about in the past.

On this occasion though, only a minority took up the opportunity. Question A2 was answered by many more.

Views about the impact of high executive pay on motivation always differ and a wide variety of arguments were developed here. Some argued that high levels of pay for senior people are justified if there is a clear link to organisational performance. Others explained that they were comfortable with high pay in the case of individuals who have founded businesses and built them up, particularly if substantial risks were taken in the process. Concern about pay which is not justified or which is excessive is the big problem from an HRM perspective and that was broadly reflected in the answers that candidates wrote.

The strongest answers made reference to relevant theory, notably Adams' equity theory which suggests that employees' contribution and level of effort typically varies according to their perceptions of fairness. However, to do really well here, candidates also needed to draw on their own observations. These were very interesting to read, not least because so many argued that high executive pay in their own organisations was neither particularly problematic nor de-motivational.

The CIPD research report referred to in this question argued for transparency around both the level of senior manager pay and the way that it has been determined. It suggested that perceptions about 'reward for failure' were especially damaging as far as staff motivation is concerned. It also suggested that there are motivational and reputational advantages to be garnered from policies which limit CEO pay to around five times that of an organisation's average salary. The strongest candidates developed arguments of this kind. However, some also chose to argue that little can in practice be done about the trend towards higher boardroom pay and suggested that there was little in practice that can be done to restrict it at all. These points were all rewarded well with marks when they were accompanied by a compelling, business-based case. Some candidates struggled quite badly with this second question, often having written rather

stronger answers to the first one. They tended to be brief, insubstantial or rather poorly justified.

Question A2

Learning outcome: 1

This question was also 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.
This proved to a popular choice of question, most candidates presenting strong arguments and justifying them reasonably well. I think it hit a bit of a nerve as many wrote about the strengths and weaknesses of e-learning with some passion.

There are many arguments advanced as to why employees so often rate e-learning experiences poorly. Take-up tends to be law, as are completion rates. This may be because the e-learning packages that are generally offered are poorly designed, inflexible and, by their nature, limited as genuine interactive experiences. They are anything but bespoke and in these respects compare poorly to some more traditional classroom based approaches to delivery which allow for more dialogue, questions, group discussion etc. Strong answers here also contained discussion about learning styles and research demonstrating that different people learn best in different settings. A common conclusion was that e-learning suits some people, some settings and some topics, but not all. A common theme advanced was that younger people are keener on it than older colleagues. Arguments were also be made around the impersonal nature of e-learning activities. After all, being told you have done well by a piece of software is not as motivating as is the case when a person delivers such a message. The fact that some e-learning activity is simply less enjoyable than more traditional approaches was also made a lot.

Answers to part two differed greatly depending on the experiences of candidates and the approaches used by their organisations. Some were rather brief and lacking in original argument. The stronger candidates justified arguments with reference to research and theory, often reflecting quite broadly on the whole learning process, discussing e-enabled training needs analysis and training evaluation as well as learning interventions. Gamification was also a common suggested way of tackling the reluctance of some people to engage with e-learning in the same way that they happily do in the case of more traditional forms. The more valid examples that were given to illustrate points, the higher the mark.

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Question B3

Learning outcome: 3

This question was intended to test knowledge and understanding of Learning Outcome 3 (Debate and critically evaluate the characteristics of effective leadership and the methods used to develop leaders in organisations).

We had expected that Question B4 would be chosen more commonly here as it focused on students' own experience, but this was not the case. Debates about the distinction between 'management' and 'leadership' clearly interest people and they have a lot to say about it.

There were, however, quite a lot of weak answers here, the main problem being a simple failure to answer the question in part 1. A lot of candidates decided to write what they knew about management and leadership without focusing on what we were specifically asking here, namely to what extent it is true to state that outstanding leaders are fewer in number than outstanding leaders. Some gave us a half-answer, others setting out a broad point of view without justifying it at all effectively. Too many lost marks here because they appeared not to have read the question sufficiently carefully and failed to address it directly at all.

There are many views that are commonly expressed about the distinction between managers and leaders. Some see leadership as a facet of management, others see both as necessary in organisations and argue that some people are stronger on the leadership side while others are better at other types of management activity. Most strong answers agreed with the general suggestion here that good leadership skills are rarer than good management skills, arguing that the ability to inspire a higher level of performance really effectively is less common among the population than the ability to organise and direct a team efficiently. It requires a blend of characteristics (judgement, experience, energy, charisma, resilience etc) which are found together in relatively few individuals. Some, however took an opposing view, a number arguing that good management skills are in short supply as those required by effective leaders. This was fine provided that a compelling and well-justified argument was advanced which drew on experience and personal observation. As always the more relevant references to rading that were included, the more marks we were able to award.

There were different ways of tackling part two. Here, it was important that advice of a practical nature was given and not one that was entirely theoretical. Some focused on recruitment processes, others on the development of leaders through internal programmes. Either were plausible interpretations of the question. Stronger candidates demonstrated understanding of tools such as competency frameworks and sophisticated selection methods. Involving future followers in appointment processes is often a good

approach to take, as is careful consideration of a track record of past achievement. The stronger answers included arguments of this kind.

Question B4

Learning outcome: 3

This question was also intended to test knowledge and understanding of Learning Outcome 3 (Debate and critically evaluate the characteristics of effective leadership and the methods used to develop leaders in organisations).

This is was a straightforward question that we expected most would choose to tackle. That was not the case, possibly because of the requirement to be self-critical as well as self-congratulatory. The key to doing well here was to focus on analysis rather than description, and this is where some candidates tended to lose marks. The question specifically asked for critical reflection and not simply a description of an episode.

Answers were very varied, covering all manner of situations. Strictly speaking, not all candidates really described leadership episodes, but we decided to be liberal in how we defined the term 'leadership' here.

What mattered was that all parts of the question were addressed reasonably fully and that a broadly self-critical rather than a self-congratulatory approach was taken. Some struggled to find any significant fault in their own actions, saying that they would do the same again. That may be true, but were looking at least for some understanding that there always learning points to take forward however successful an activity may be. While there was no specific instruction here to draw on theory or reading, we rewarded candidates who drew on their reading as well as experience when answering this question.

Question C5

Learning outcome: 4

This question was intended to test knowledge and understanding of Learning Outcome 4: Understand and contribute to the promotion of flexible working and effective change management in organisations.

While most candidates who tackled this question did so reasonably effectively, some seemed to confuse the two parts of the question, focusing heavily on gender issues when answering part 1 when a more general response was what we were looking for there. Answers to part 2 were stronger, although very varied indeed in terms of the type of arguments advanced.

The main reasons that research suggests managers are relatively rarely recruited on a flexible basis is due to the size of the responsibility carried and the need for very substantial levels of commitment. Continuity is also important as is the need for ultimate decision-making to reside in a single mind. It means that most senior roles can only practically be carried out on a part-time/job-share/term-time basis with some disruption to established organisational procedures and are simply not, by their nature, appropriate to be carried out on a fixed-term or agency basis. For the same reasons senior posts also generally outside flexitime schemes. There is a fear on the part of managements that introducing too much formal flexibility for senior people may result in ineffective decision-making and reduced performance. That said of course, there are examples of situations in which some flexibility works well, particularly when technology can be harnessed to support it.

Answers to part 2 differed greatly, reflecting the relative ease with which this question can be argued both ways. On the one hand it is generally true that occupation of a senior post is incompatible with many forms of flexible working. This makes it difficult for women with young children or with elder care responsibilities to combine these with working in more senior positions unless they have a partner who is willing/able to shoulder the domestic responsibilities. On the other hand it is possible to argue that better access to affordable childcare should be achievable, allowing women to combine motherhood with a senior management career. Arguments can also be deployed here concerning the traditional roles played by men and women and the need for these to change in order to bring about true gender equality. All of these were rehearsed with some passion by candidates answering Question C5, often drawing effectively on personal observation and examples.

Question C6

Learning outcome: 4

This question was also intended to test knowledge and understanding of Learning Outcome 4: Understand and contribute to the promotion of flexible working and effective change management in organisations.

The main problem here was an apparent failure on the part of some candidates to appreciate or demonstrate appreciation of what the term 'cynicism' means. Many defined it as 'hostility' or 'resistance', and while there are situations in which these things are fuelled by cynicism, this was not what this question was asking about. In the context of change management, cynicism is much more about apathy, dis-engagement and a lack of enthusiasm on the part of employees than outright hostility or resistance to what is being proposed. Stronger answers focused on this narrower concept, often writing with reference to candidates' own experiences.

Cynicism tends to develop among staff who have experienced change episodes in the past which have been oversold. This means that expectations have been set or built up that have subsequently been dashed as a change management episode either fails or falls short of expectations, as many if not most do in practice. It can also develop when there is a lack of trust in organisations more generally or a lack of respect among staff toward the judgement, and sometimes the motives, of those who lead them. A great deal has been written about the dangers associated with pseudo-consultation and other practices that are used by managers when seeking to bring about change. Here it is the processes which generate the cynicism rather than the fact of the proposed changes themselves. The best advice is to take account of research findings on successful change management. These emphasise the importance of genuine employee involvement (people support what they help to create) and careful management of expectations. It is important not to mislead people into thinking that things are going to be better or more successful than they are. Under-promising and over-delivering tends to work better than over-promising and under-delivering. More general points are often also made in this context about authenticity and trust. Stronger candidates gaining higher marks discussed these kinds of issues, also drawing on published research or examples when justifying their answers.

Question D7

Learning outcome: 5

This question was intended to test knowledge and understanding of Learning Outcome 5 (Critically discuss the aims and objectives of the HRM and HRD functions in organisations and how these are met in practice).

A good proportion of candidates attempted this question, most of whom wrote thoughtful and well-justified answers. Some were rather descriptive in their answers to part 1, others offering rather too little of substance when answering part 3. A further group took the view that their organisations already offered such a strong EVP to would-be employees that there was little significant scope for improvement. This tended to lead to rather weak and unconvincing answers in response to part 2.

The concept of an EVP extends beyond terms and conditions and pay. It encompasses the whole range of opportunities provided to employees and also the culture and management style they can expect to find if they take up employment in an organisation. This breadth needed to be reflected in answers to parts 1 and 2. The more examples that were provided to justify the points made, the better. It was also important that these answers did not simply describe, but also evaluate what the organisation concerned offers. The more extensive and thoughtful the answer, the higher the mark.

Answers to part 3 focused mainly on recruitment and the need for the organisation to attract effective and experienced workers. More broadly, however, a compelling EVP is

associated with the development of a positive labour market reputation / employer brand. There are also potential business advantages associated with links between EVPs and employee retention, employee engagement and hence superior business performance. This broader perspective was reflected in the stronger answers. As always with questions about 'a business case' higher marks were awarded to candidates who avoided focusing too much on HR matters (staff morale etc) without also explaining why these contribute to the achievement of wider business objectives.

Question D8

Learning outcome: 5

This question was also intended to test knowledge and understanding of Learning Outcome 5 (Critically discuss the aims and objectives of the HRM and HRD functions in organisations and how these are met in practice).

The quality of answers here varied very considerably, some candidates failing to answer sufficiently directly. A good number used the question as an opportunity to rehearse arguments about things like the Ulrich model and employee engagement which were not always completely relevant to the question on the paper. By contrast, those who tackled it head on, particularly when they drew on personal experience and observation, often wrote interesting and original answers.

While many HR people might not be happy to admit it, the view expressed in the question stem is commonly advanced because there is sometimes truth in it. Some HR functions are very much like this. They are overly bureaucratic, tend to be inflexible and are more focused on the needs of employees than the business. This type of approach to HRM frustrates many managers and can serve to make an organisation less effective than it otherwise would be. So the view is justified to some extent. It is, however, a misleading generalisation, because there is plenty of good HR alongside the bad. Some candidates argued that the reason for the negative view is rooted in ignorance of what HR managers do and how they add value. In other words, it is a communication problem rather than a real one. That is a reasonable argument to make, but it cannot simply be stated without justification, and on a number of occasions the justification provided was weak or limited.

Answers to part 2 varied hugely. Some focused primarily on communication issues and the need to show what value is added by demonstrating in financial terms how organisations benefit from having a dedicated HR function. Others preferred to write about more substantial matters, arguing that the best way to improve the image is to improve the reality by being more business-focused, involving more managers in developing HR practices, reducing bureaucracy and generally getting better at the meeting core HR objectives (that is, attracting, retaining, motivating, engaging people). The more wide-ranging and well-justified the answer, the higher the mark.

Question E9

Learning outcome: 7

This question was intended to test knowledge and understanding of Learning Outcome 7 (Promote professionalism and an ethical approach to HRM and HRD practice in organisations).

A good number of candidates attempted this and, for the most part, did so effectively. Both parts were generally answered well and it was interesting to read people's different takes on this important issue.
There is no generally agreed definition of the term 'bullying' and there is much disagreement about how severe an act needs to be before it qualifies. One person's bullying is another person's 'firm management instruction'. So there was plenty of room here for candidates to develop and justify their own preferred definitions. Those which are advanced by bodies such as ACAS and the TUC tend to suggest that an act of bullying is unjustified or overly aggressive / humiliating or both. Some definitions also stress persistence, labelling as 'bullying' a series of incidents directed at a single person over a period of time. Another common feature of definitions concerns power relationships, the implication being that bullies abuse their power. It is also acknowledged that co-workers bully one another and that groups of staff sometimes bully their managers, so it is not all about formal power structures. Clients also sometimes bully staff. To do well here, as was clearly stated in the question, candidates had to illustrate their general points with some credible examples. This was something most managed to do well.

Answers to part 2 needed to be quite broadly-based in order to score the higher marks. The proposals advanced also had to be practical and not theoretical or very generalised. Many wrote thoughtfully about formal policies or codes of conduct, discussed disciplinary sanctions, management training, credible whistle-blowing/grievance procedures and more generally the communication of a zero-tolerance policy stance.

Question E10

Learning outcome: 7

This question was also intended to test knowledge and understanding of Learning Outcome 7 (Promote professionalism and an ethical approach to HRM and HRD practice in organisations).

While there were some very strong answers here, too often candidates wrote about process issues, which was not what the question asked. We read far too much about training methods and not enough about what of a substantial nature should go into the training course the candidates were being asked to consider.

We were looking for content that focused on issues such as timekeeping, dress/ appearance, body language, addressing customers politely, anticipating their needs and finding out answers to questions that they do not know. Some focused quite effectively on what not to do as much as what to do (for example, not gossiping in front of customers etc.). The better answers were broadly-based and well-justified, and when this was done effectively high marks were awarded. As always the strongest candidates were able to use examples and to draw on reading and research to back up their points.

On the question of why professionalism is important, the key points related to organisation performance, corporate reputation and meeting/exceeding customer expectations. Stronger candidates also developed points around personal development and future job prospects.

Conclusion

We enjoyed marking these papers and commend the 71% of students who passed. Their answers were interesting, original and nicely varied, illustrating how diverse views can be on some fairly fundamental HRM and HRD issues. I do not think that I would want to offer any new advice as a result of marking and moderating this cohort's work. The same broad reasons for success and failure applied here in the same way that they always do. The key points to remember are as follows:

- answer all parts of the question reasonably fully;

- answer the question on the paper directly, do not drift into writing about what you want to or have rehearsed;

- always take care to justify your points, do not assume that the justification is too obvious not to need stating;

- avoid description, focus on evaluation and analysis;

- illustrate points with examples and evidence gathered from your reading;

- always make as strong a business case as you can when asked to, avoid simply justifying something as being in the interest of employees.

- take every available opportunity to demonstrate that you have been studying the subject;

- in Section A take care to focus as much as you can on the scenario presented and the particular challenges faced by the case study organisation (or industry), avoid writing in very general terms without relating points to the case;

- read the question carefully before developing your argument.

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