

LOCATION SWANSEA

LLEOLIAD ABERTAWE

LEVEL 7

LEFEL 7

EXAMINATION PERIOD

CYFNOD ARHOLIADAU

MAY 2017

2017

MODULE TITLE: Human Resource Management In Context

MODULE CODE: M7X00062

TIME: 2 HOURS

INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES:

This is an open book exam and students will have seen the exam questions.

A clean copy of the case study and exam questions will have been provided four weeks prior to your exam. Copies previously received, whether clean or annotated should not be used in the exam.

Answer the question in section 1.

Answer either question A or B for each question in section 2.

You should answer a total of 4 questions, 1 in section 1 and 3 in section 2.

The question in section 1 carries a weight of 40 marks, all questions in section 2 carry an equal weighting of 20 marks, so you should plan your time to reflect this.

SECTION 1: LO 5

Case Study: Why we love to hate HR...and what HR can do about it

(below)

This is an edited version of the original journal article - you will have had access to the full article.

Many businesses still follow the talent-management playbook written in the 1950s. For example, even though elaborate succession plans are rarely used, companies keep creating them. Instead of copying what large corporations did decades ago, HR should craft company-specific (and industry-specific) policies that respond to today's challenges.

Back in the 1950s, HR controlled the promotions and career of every manager at every level. For precisely that reason, William H. Whyte wrote in *The Organization Man*, it was the most glamorous job in business. The only other time that was true in the United States was in the late 1990s, when the labor market tightened up again and companies vied to become the "employer of choice."

HR hasn't fallen out of favor in other countries, however. In Japan it is still the preferred track to the C-suite. And in India, my studies with colleagues suggest, it's arguably the most powerful of all the functions. Indeed, across Southeast Asia, top executives are investing in the training and development of employees and more-sophisticated systems, especially for hiring. Even in Europe, which has a talent glut, HR appears to be growing in influence as companies recognize the importance of organizational culture, knowledge management, and so forth. The U.S. is the outlier.

The main reason HR is more vital elsewhere is that organizational power goes to the group that deals with the biggest problems—an idea dating back at least to the great economist Alfred Marshall. Businesses in the rest of the world have to deal with aggressive government regulation of the workplace, strong unions, political support for workers' interests, and often a real shortage of people who can even be trained for key jobs. Among developed countries the U.S. has the most favorable environment for employers—and the least incentive to make changes.

If you're wondering why that's not obvious, think of the simmering debate within HR about whether it should be a profession like accounting, with universal practices. This view has been championed by the Society for Human Resource Management and driven by its very successful certification programs, which teach and then document knowledge in designing compensation systems and other specialties.

Detailed knowledge of practices is essential, but it's more important to understand what works when and where. For example, rather than just knowing how to put a broad-based stock option plan in place, one ought to understand its pluses and minuses in various circumstances. Such plans add volatility to compensation that can be difficult for the business to control, so they may not be the top choice in an economy that's already unstable or even one that's in recovery but subject to unpredictable swings. And they are effective only when employees feel that they have sufficient autonomy and authority to influence stock performance.

To appreciate the importance of context, consider what's happening in consulting and tech firms, where developing skills and human capital is crucial to success. PwC and Juniper Networks have already abandoned traditional performance appraisals—perhaps the most reviled standard practice in all of management—and moved toward a model of ongoing conversation designed to improve skills and results. Microsoft and Deloitte are moving in a similar direction. Concerned about retaining key talent, Deloitte broke up the traditional promotion ladder, providing a more open and flexible framework for career advancement that accommodates both employee interests and changing business demands. And Infosys, in India, has figured out how to use the classroom to deliver the kind of contextual knowledge people previously assumed had to be acquired on the job. The company teaches managers how to do business in other cultures and in particular industries—for instance, how to tailor their IT services to chemical companies in Germany.

All this is a matter of looking more closely at the environment in which the organization operates. It's about continually identifying new challenges and designing tools to meet them.

Capelli, P. 2015, *Why we love to hate HR...and what HR can do about it*, Harvard Business Review Jul/Aug, 2015

Read the above case study. Answer all three of the following questions, taking care in each case to fully justify the arguments that you want to make.

1.1 Drawing upon appropriate theory/models/frameworks, in relation to your organisation or an organisation you are familiar with, and considering the argument put forward in the excerpt from Capelli (2015):

- i) what are the strengths and weaknesses of current methods used to scan the environment?
- ii) how do changes in the environment translate to changes within the HR function?
- iii) considering the opinion of Capelli (2015), what could be done to improve HR's performance in this area?

Section 2 (Not based on the case study)

Answer either A or B in each section.

All answers should be justified as far as possible using appropriate theory and evidence

To communicate your answers more clearly, you may use whatever methods you wish, for example diagrams, flowcharts, bullet points, you need to provide an explanation of each.

2.1 LO6

To date, we have witnessed a reappraisal but not a repudiation of globalisation. Globalisation has made borders porous to information, foreign investment and popular culture but also to cyber crime, pollution and human trafficking. Security is harder to achieve and to maintain. National governments are desperate to regain a measure of control.

So while the flow of ideas continues across borders, there are signs of a backlash — from the great firewall of China to Europe's insistence post-Snowden on locating data storage on its own continent. The internet is not (yet) Balkanised but the age of the seamless global internet has almost certainly passed. (Barber, L., Jan 2016, The Financial Times)

- a. Drawing upon appropriate theory/models/frameworks and reflecting upon your organisation's environment, or an organisation you are familiar with, critically analyse the global forces at play and how do they, or how could they, impact HRM and HRD strategy?

or

- b. Drawing upon appropriate theory/models/frameworks, and considering your response to Barber (2016) from a HR perspective, how do you view "globalisation" in the context of your organisation, or an organisation you are familiar with?

2.2 LO7

The Muslim population of England and Wales is growing faster than the overall population, with a higher proportion of children and a lower ratio of elderly people, according to an analysis of official data.

One in three Muslims is under 15, compared with fewer than one in five overall. There are also fewer elderly Muslims, with 4% aged over 65, compared with 16% of the overall population. In 2011, 2.71 million Muslims lived in England and Wales, compared with 1.55 million in 2001. There were also 77,000 Muslims in Scotland and 3,800 in Northern Ireland (Gani, A. Feb 2015, Muslim population in England and Wales nearly doubles in 10 years, www.theguardian.com).

- a. This newspaper article signals an emerging demographic shift, another example of such a shift would be an ageing UK population. Reflecting upon your organisation or an organisation you are familiar with, how should the HR function react to such shifts and why? (Your analysis should draw on appropriate theory/models and frameworks.)

or

- b. In the last ten years what significant demographic, social and technological trends have shaped your organisation, or an organisation you are familiar with? Analyse the causes of these changes and the impact they have had on HR strategies and practices.

2.3 LO8

- a. The United Kingdom has voted to leave the EU. Reflecting upon your organisation, or an organisation you are familiar with, how could the vote to leave the EU, and subsequent government policies, shape and impact your organisation's, or an organisation you are familiar with, HRM and HRD strategies and practices.

or

- b. Evaluate how up to **THREE** recent specific changes in government economic policy have affected your organisation. Discuss the extent to which these policies are affecting your organisation with particular reference to HR issues.