



Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development

Advanced Level Qualification

Leading Managing and Developing People

May 2013

31 May 2013

09:50 –13:00 hrs

Time allowed – Three hours and ten minutes
(including ten minutes' 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 accidental.

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 per cent in either Section A or Section B.

Leading, Managing And Developing People

EXAMINERS' REPORT

May 2013

SECTION A – Case Study

Note: It is permissible to make assumptions by adding to the case study details given below provided the case study is neither changed nor undermined in any way by what is added.

Her Majesty's Diplomatic Service (HMDS) forms a significant part of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) – a major Department of State headed by the Foreign Secretary and six other government ministers. HMDS employs 14,000 people, of whom two thirds are 'local staff' hired in support roles to work in the UK's 270 embassies, high commissions, consulates and other permanent missions around the world. The remaining third (4,700 staff) are UK nationals, most of whom are career diplomats originally recruited as new graduates having successfully passed the Service's notoriously rigorous examinations and interview boards.

British diplomats either work in generalist or specialist roles and are based both at home and overseas. Most postings last for three or four years, the typical diplomatic career being made up of a series of such postings to a variety of different countries interspersed with spells working at the FCO in London. While diplomats are able to express a preference about where they are posted to, a requirement of the Service is that all are under a obligation to go wherever they are sent. Postings and promotions are determined by boards of senior diplomats using reports on individual performance. No interviews are held and there is no obligation for a board to explain its decisions.

The work that senior diplomats carry out is of huge importance. It is their job not only to represent the UK government in an official capacity, but also more generally to protect and enhance British interests overseas. They promote trade and human rights, negotiate agreements in fields as diverse as counter-terrorism, climate change and cyber-crime, provide assistance to UK citizens living overseas and handle applications from overseas residents seeking permission to enter the UK.

HMDS is a very hierarchical organisation, being made up of clearly defined ranks (attaché, third secretary, second secretary, first secretary, counsellor, minister, charge d'affaires, head of mission) up through which the most able get promoted early on in their careers, being appointed to ambassadorial posts in their 40's and 50's. Competition for entry-level posts is very heavy, the FCO being one of the top 20 most applied-to graduate recruiters in the country. As a result the calibre of the people who are recruited to HMDS tends to be very high indeed. They combine fierce intelligence with eloquence and an ability to work well under pressure, also having the presence, charm and self-confidence needed to deal effectively with senior political figures across the world. UK diplomats are generally recognised as being as highly skilled and principled in their activities as those of any other country.

Despite considerable progress having been made in recent years, senior HMDS staff are overwhelmingly male, while members of ethnic minorities are few and far between. Out of 270 heads of mission only 37 are women and there are currently just three women occupying any of the top 30 posts. Recruits have also traditionally come from a narrow social base, having been educated privately before attending

Leading, Managing And Developing People

EXAMINERS' REPORT

May 2013

either Oxford, Cambridge or one of a handful of other leading universities. HMDS has therefore gained a reputation for elitism, sometimes being likened to a traditional gentleman's club in which like-minded people select similar new recruits and promote one another up a very well-established career ladder. Resistant to change and possessing huge intellectual confidence, it is often said that senior

diplomats rarely question either their own ability or the established culture of their Service. Successive ministers have claimed that they had to fight very hard to have any real influence and that the diplomats sometimes treated their interventions as unfortunate irritations. The view that foreign policy is too important to be left to politicians is common in HMDS, as is the view that leading diplomatic posts must always be occupied by career diplomats. One recent Foreign Secretary described HMDS as being 'antediluvian' in its preferred management methods.

Change, however, is now very definitely in the air. Over the past year a new strategy has been developed by the FCO, its aim being to make the whole department (including HMDS) fit for purpose in the 21st Century and in a position to meet new challenges of the kind it can expect to meet over the coming 30 years. These include the following:

- the need to operate as effectively in a 'world dominated by networks' as it did in a 'world dominated by hierarchies',
- the capacity to influence and engage much more effectively with populations and business organisations, and not just governments in supporting British interests and concerns,
- the ability to 'get under the skin' of overseas cultures so that a greater depth of understanding can underpin bilateral relationships between the UK and other countries,
- an enhanced capacity for flexibility so that HMDS can respond in a far more agile and adaptable way as situations evolve in unexpected directions,
- greater competence in the field of 'expeditionary diplomacy' so that issues and problems can be spotted and responded to ahead of time,
- the ability to influence and work more closely with governments that are not among the UK's traditional allies in Europe, North America and the Commonwealth, but with whom some interests are nonetheless shared,
- maintaining British influence in a world in which vibrant, fast-developing economies such as China, Brazil, South Africa and India assume much greater geo-political significance,
- making full use in its work of the opportunities presented by the development of new information and communications technologies.

Leading, Managing And Developing People

EXAMINERS' REPORT

May 2013

Among the many challenges that currently faces FCO is the need to reduce its spending so as to help the government to meet its deficit reduction plans. While it has not yet been required to close any missions or reduce the scope of its activities, resources are tight and no significant, new recruitment is currently possible.

- 1. Summarise in what major ways will the established management systems, practices and culture at HMDS have to change in the near future. Justify your answer.**
- 2. Explain why it might prove harder and take longer for ministers to achieve these changes in HMDS than would be the case in other types of organisation.**
- 3. Set out a case for HMDS taking steps to increase the representation of women and members of ethnic minorities at its most senior levels.**
- 4. What particular implications does the change agenda being pursued at the FCO have for its HRD function and for HRD interventions?**

It is recommended that you spend equal amounts of time answering each of the four tasks.

Leading, Managing And Developing People

EXAMINERS' REPORT

May 2013

SECTION B

Answer FIVE questions in this section, ONE per subsection A to E. To communicate your answers more clearly, you may use whatever methods you wish, for example diagrams, flowcharts, bullet points, so long as you provide an explanation of each.

A

1. A CIPD-sponsored research report entitled '*Managing Employee Relations in Difficult Times*' was published in November 2012, its aim being to establish in what ways the management of the employment relationship in UK organisations had changed during the previous five years. The main finding was that there had been surprisingly little change:

- organisations continue to see themselves as travelling down the road 'from industrial relations to employee relations',
- there is a continued focus on developing the capacity of line managers to deal effectively with employee relations issues,
- relationships with trade unions remain good, more emphasis still being placed on preventing conflict than on managing it.

Explain why the researchers expressed surprise about how little had changed in the management of UK employee relations between 2007 and 2012. What explanations might be given for each of the three key conclusions from the report set out above?

OR

2. For many years researchers have established that organisations which perform best are more likely to have in place a 'bundle' of progressive HR policies and practices than those that perform less well. However, the precise nature of the link between HR activity and superior business performance remains a matter of some controversy.

Drawing on your reading, set out your views on this debate. Justify your answer.

PLEASE TURN OVER

Leading, Managing And Developing People

EXAMINERS' REPORT

May 2013

B

3. In his seminal book entitled *Human Motivation* (1985) David McClelland argues that employees in contemporary workplaces tend to be positively motivated when three types of needs are met:
- i. A need for achievement – the desire to accomplish difficult things, meet high standards, master tasks and surpass the performance of others.
 - ii. A need for affiliation – the desire to form close relationships and avoid conflict.
 - iii. A need for power – the desire to influence, be responsible for and have authority over other people.

It is interesting to note that the desire to earn enough money or even more money plays no role in McClelland's theories of human motivation.

- a) To what extent is your organisation effective at ensuring that McClelland's three major employee needs are met?
- b) Is McClelland right to argue that pay has only a minor impact on human motivation at work? Justify your answer.

OR

4. Looking back over your own working life, identify the time when you felt most actively engaged with your work and with the organisation you were working for. Then identify the time when you were least engaged or most disengaged with your work and with your employer.

In each case:

- a) Explain how your level of engagement affected your work.
- b) Explain what key factors can explain your positive engagement, lack of engagement or disengagement.

Reflecting on the time that you were least engaged at work, explain what steps your employer could have taken to improve your level of engagement.

Leading, Managing And Developing People

EXAMINERS' REPORT

May 2013

C

5. According to John Adair (2002) effective leadership can be broken down into seven functions which he likens to the seven colours of the rainbow:
- i. providing direction
 - ii. setting strategy and policy
 - iii. execution of strategy (ie: 'making it happen')
 - iv. organising
 - v. releasing the corporate spirit
 - vi. bridge building between the organisation and society
 - vii. developing the next generation of leaders.

Critically evaluate the performance of the leaders in your organisation using this model. Justify your answer.

OR

6. Baron Partners Fund is an American company which invests funds on behalf of clients with a view to gaining the best possible financial returns. Unlike many investment funds the criteria it uses to decide where to invest are based 100% on its perceptions of the leadership qualities of a company's senior executives. Companies with senior management teams that are 'smart, honourable and treat their employees right' are the only ones which Baron invests in. In recent years Baron Partners have always been ranked top or close to top in league tables of the best performing stock funds in the USA.
- a) Explain why there appears to be a strong correlation between superior financial performance by a company and the presence of 'smart and honourable' leaders who 'treat their employees right'.
 - b) Why are all companies not headed up by such leaders?

PLEASE TURN OVER

Leading, Managing And Developing People

EXAMINERS' REPORT

May 2013

D

7. In recent years there has been a strong tendency for HR professionals to downplay the administrative aspects of their role. Wherever possible, many HR departments have sought to outsource administration, sideline it, or delegate it to line managers. Some argue that this is a mistake. Administration is an important part of the HR function's role, and it will only be carried out both consistently and to a high standard if it remains central to the activities of professionally-qualified HR managers.
- a) Why have HR managers tended to downplay the importance of administrative activities to their role?
 - b) To what extent do you agree with the view that this is mistaken? Justify your answer.

OR

8. The past decade has seen a very considerable growth in the use of coaching in UK organisations both as a tool of performance management and employee development. In particular, we have seen spectacular growth in the employment of specialist coaches to work alongside senior managers. However, as yet precious little robust research evidence has been published which demonstrates that coaching plays any role in improving organisational performance.
- a) Why has the use of coaching grown so much in recent years?
 - b) What type of research study might be carried out as a means of demonstrating and measuring the impact of coaching in organisations?

Leading, Managing And Developing People

EXAMINERS' REPORT

May 2013

E

9. Research evidence suggests that employers are increasingly implementing 'zero tolerance' policies which aim to hold their employees to the highest standards of personal behaviour, both at work and in their private lives (Daft et al 2010:163). As a result, each year, thousands of people are either issued with final written warnings, are summarily dismissed, or are simply not hired in the first place as a result of activities that are entirely unconnected with their work. Increasingly the necessary evidence is gathered from social networking sites.
- a) Why are organisations more likely now to take a 'zero tolerance' approach to examples of unseemly personal behaviour that are unrelated to a person's work than was the case in the past?
 - b) To what extent do you agree with the view that they are right to take this approach? Justify your answer.

OR

10. Dave Ulrich and his co-authors (2012:203) state that the most successful, future, HR professionals will have to be 'informed observers and interpreters of the external trends and conditions that are likely to impact on business success' in order better to be able to 'co-create a strategic agenda that informs the human capital implications of business strategies and priorities'. In other words, they argue that in order to be effective, HR professionals now need to be as informed about what is happening people-wise outside their organisations as they traditionally have been about what is happening inside them.

As part of your commitment to Continuous Professional Development (CPD), assume that you have been asked to reflect on your own strengths and weaknesses as an HR professional as regards your understanding of your organisation's external environment.

You have also been asked to draw up a personal development plan for the coming 12 months, the aim of which is to enhance your professional development in this area. What key points will you make and why?

END OF EXAMINATION

Leading, Managing And Developing People

EXAMINERS' REPORT

May 2013

Introduction

The eighth cohort of students to sit the LM&DP exam numbered 310 and they achieved the best pass rate to date – 78%. There were also plenty of merit level marks, rather more marginal fails and rather fewer outright fails than usual. So, overall, a most pleasing set of results. As always there was considerable variation between the standards of the answers written by candidates from different centres, but the overall national marks breakdown was as follows:

| May 2013 | | |
|-----------------|---------------|----------------------------|
| Grade | Number | Percentage of total |
| Distinction | 7 | 2 |
| Merit | 58 | 19 |
| Pass | 177 | 57 |
| Marginal fail | 26 | 8 |
| Fail | 42 | 13 |
| Total | 310 | 100 |

The papers were marked and moderated by myself, Krystal Wilkinson, Alex Evans, Gail Swift, Andrew Hambler, Claire Roberts, Graham Perkins and Esther Park.

Section A

Learning outcomes: 4 and 6

This was the first time since the start of the LM&DP exams that the case study has related to a real, named organisation, drawing on published material to develop a scenario. CIPD exams have avoided doing this in the past for fear of giving an unfair advantage to students who may be working for the particular company or in the particular industry concerned. However, now that we have moved to seen cases, it would seem possible and probably more useful from a learning point of view, to include real cases from time to time, the expectation being that candidates will do some research into the organisation concerned ahead of the examination.

Here, when marking, we thought it reasonable to expect candidates to have carried out some research into the FCO and HMDS and thus to be familiar with the issues they face and their existing approaches to the management of people. A good deal of material is available on the web, not least on the FCO's own home pages and in its recruitment literature. We also decided that it was reasonable to expect candidates to be broadly familiar with the budgetary constraints that most government departments are currently required to work within and to reflect this understanding in their answers.

In most cases students did carry out research and their answers were greatly improved as a result. There remains, however, the problem of some students writing the answers they hoped we would be asking for, as opposed to those that actually

Leading, Managing And Developing People

EXAMINERS' REPORT

May 2013

appeared on the paper. I would urge tutors to advise them strongly against this danger. It is wise not to anticipate any particular line of questioning. Case studies are always focused around two of the seven learning outcomes, and the two chosen on any particular occasion may not be those which seem obvious when you first read the case. So it is wise to prepare for all eventualities and to think about how the case potentially lends itself as the basis for a variety of questions from across the LM&DP syllabus.

Task 1

This was answered well by a good majority of candidates, most of whom made a number of distinct points which they justified effectively. Failing to provide effective justification, however, remains a problem for some and I would urge tutors to remind students of the need to justify arguments effectively at every opportunity.

The need here is for much less rigidity and for much greater agility. A balance will have to be struck in order to ensure the maintenance of high standards of diplomacy, but there is a case for recruiting some senior personnel from outside the service and for seconding appropriate people in from outside (eg: business people with experience of working in/trading with particular countries), for introducing a range of much more flexible career paths, for operating more flexibly within missions by replacing hierarchies with self-managing teams. There is a case for the evolution of matrix-type reporting lines, for seconding people out of the Service for periods to broaden their experience. At the selection stage it is necessary to design systems which ensure the recruitment of a much more diverse pool of staff capable of communicating effectively with a greater range of people, and through the media, with overseas populations more generally. The practice of effectively reserving senior posts for generalists whose career backgrounds in terms of the geographic location of their postings are very varied may also have to change. Instead there will need to be more career development possibilities for regional specialists with a greater capacity to 'get under the skin' of an overseas culture.

Task 2

This was rather less effectively answered on the whole. Too often rather general stereotypical points were made about vested interests and conservative bureaucrats that did not fully reflect the particular characteristics of the HMDS workforce.

First it was useful to acknowledge that resource constraints are being very strictly applied across government departments at present, and this makes bringing about any significant change more difficult. Hiring new staff with a different background or approach in good numbers is not an option. There is thus a need very much to work with the existing staff. Another challenge is posed by the sheer distance of travel that is envisaged – both structurally and culturally. This is an organisation which operates along very traditional lines, with a rigid hierarchy and very well-established rules about career development. It is decidedly inflexible at present. So change will inevitably be harder to bring to fruition. Thirdly the people who are the target of change management are in the main very able, highly eloquent, and skilled at getting their way. Highly trained diplomats are likely to be very effective change resistors if

Leading, Managing And Developing People

EXAMINERS' REPORT

May 2013

they choose to be, especially in circumstances which make it hard to threaten them with dismissal the case here with the restriction on new hires. It is often argued that political skills are necessary to have and to deploy if meaningful change is to be achieved. Those skills will very much have to be in evidence here given the nature of the people whose active engagement with change is being sought. The arguments made in favour of change – namely the future needs of the UK as far as its diplomatic service is concerned – will also have to be totally watertight in order to be persuasive and, indeed, more persuasive than any counter-arguments deployed by opponents of change.

Task 3

For most candidates this proved straightforward. They put a persuasive case together rooted in the particularities of the case study organisation. Weaker candidates either made a very general case out which was not made relevant to the scenario in question or failed altogether to put a business case together. An ethical case is not the same thing as a business case, nor is it satisfactory to develop a case which is entirely focused on HR-related measures such as staff turnover, engagement levels or satisfaction.

That said a case here could *partly* be made here purely on grounds of fairness and equal opportunity – that is, an essentially ethical/legal case – supplemented by points relating to the benefits associated with attracting the widest possible field of candidates so as to increase the chances that the best are selected. However, to do well marks-wise candidates needed to advance a more sophisticated business case that related at least in part to HMDS specifically. This could be rooted partly in the benefits associated with diversity and the presence of senior diplomatic teams (in particular) with diverse backgrounds, skills and attributes. Organisations led by teams of clones are generally less effective than those led by more diverse teams. This is surely even more true than usual in an organisation which needs to be so global in its perspectives. Secondly a case could be made here in terms of future diplomatic needs; the ability to communicate effectively to wider audiences than government elites. Good points were also made about the potential advantages associated with having a diplomatic service whose make up more accurately reflects that of British Society, and of one which displays a face to the wider world that reflects the tolerance, opportunity, liberal thinking and other values that are perceived as being British and which it is our aim to build internationally.

Task 4

Most candidates answered this thoughtfully and effectively, but too many threw marks away by writing very generally about HRM, rather than specifically about HRD as was required in the question.

There were numerous good points that were made here. Improved language training is clearly significant given the wider range of overseas institutions and peoples our diplomats are going to have to develop closer ties with in the future. Better training in cultural differences and the history that gives rise to them will also help with the aim of 'getting under the skin' of overseas cultures. In addition strong candidates pointed to media-handling skills, PR / influencing skills and to skills relating to the use of new

Leading, Managing And Developing People

EXAMINERS' REPORT

May 2013

technologies. On the management development front the need is to develop more contemporary leadership styles – people who are at ease with greater flexibility, agility and unpredictability than is suggested have tended to be present among senior diplomatic cadres in the past.

Section B

Question A1

Learning outcome: 1

This question aimed to test learning outcome 1: Review and critically evaluate major contemporary research and debates in the fields of HRM and HRD.

This did not prove to be a widely-answered question. The advanced level learning outcomes specifically refer to recent research sponsored by CIPD, so we expected the strongest candidates to be familiar with this report. All, however, should have been able to develop reasonably well-informed answers to both parts of the question.

The reason for the surprise expressed was the apparently insignificant impact that the recession and subsequent slow period of recovery is having on the management of employee relations. This was, after all, the deepest and sharpest recession the UK has experienced since the 1930s, and the recovery is a great deal slower than was the case in all recent recessions. The authors also note that major employee relations consequences accompanied the recessions of the early 1980s and the early 1990s. Not this time though.

Continuity can probably be explained by the changes that took place in the thirty years prior to 2007, leaving employee relations in a more resilient shape. The trend from IR to ER refers in the main to individualisation of employment relations, as people look less to trade unions and are happier to negotiate their own terms and conditions, and work more flexibly. It follows that responsibility for managing employment relations should pass from HR to line managers, and that is what continues to happen. Where unions are represented, relations remain good because the partnership-type arrangements established prior to 2007 have served to prevent conflict. Instead unions are consulted and involved in decision-making.

Question A2

Learning outcome: 1

This question aimed to test learning outcome 1: Review and critically evaluate major contemporary research and debates in the fields of HRM and HRD.

This proved to be a popular choice as it tapped directly into the 'black box studies' undertaken by Purcell et al and published in a series of articles and research reports between 2003 and 2010. They amount to the most influential body of research in the field of HRM published in the UK in recent years, and candidates were therefore pretty familiar with them.

Leading, Managing And Developing People

EXAMINERS' REPORT

May 2013

Put crudely the key findings were that (i) good HR leads to better job satisfaction and on to discretionary effort, (ii) that HR practice tends to form part of a 'big idea' which helps to create a strong sense of shared purpose and organisational pride, and (iii) Effective line managers are needed to bring the HR policies and practices 'to life'. The 'black box' researchers went on to develop their AMO model, highlighting the necessity of creating conditions in which people have the ability, motivation and opportunity to perform well. Unless all three are present, effective performance is difficult. HR policies help ensure that all three are present. The stronger candidates went beyond descriptions of this research to evaluate it.

Question B3

Learning outcome: 2

This question aimed to test learning outcome 2: Understand, explain and evaluate major theories relating to motivation, commitment and engagement at work and how these are put into practice by organisations.

Candidates answered the first part of the question in many different ways, most from a solid HR perspective, developing links between the three needs and core HR activities such as job design, team working/employee involvement and the provision of career development opportunities. As always, the more convincing and effectively justified the points were, the higher the mark.

Part 2 was tougher because it taps into a long-standing debate among psychologists and other researchers about how far pay rises positively motivate over the longer term. Some argue that pay is utterly integral to job satisfaction and that therefore decent pay is a pre-requisite for any positive motivation. Others such as McClelland after years of research conclude that intrinsic needs such as those he highlights are far more significant. There was no definitive answer to this question. What mattered was that candidates engaged with the debate, developed a position and justified it effectively.

Question B4

Learning outcome: 2

This question aimed to test learning outcome 2: Understand, explain and evaluate major theories relating to motivation, commitment and engagement at work and how these are put into practice by organisations.

This proved to be a very popular choice, and because the answers varied so much they were also most interesting to mark. There were, evidently, no right or wrong answers to the question, but the fuller, more thoughtful, better informed and better justified the answer, the higher the marks that were awarded. It was, however, important that each part of the question was addressed to some extent if the candidate was to pass, and inevitably some failed to deal adequately with the last point about employer actions. It was also important that the term 'engagement' was accurately understood.

Leading, Managing And Developing People

EXAMINERS' REPORT

May 2013

Question C5

Learning outcome: 3

This question aimed to test learning outcome 3: Debate and critically evaluate the characteristics of effective leadership and the methods used to develop leaders in organisations.

There were clearly no right or wrong answers here. What we were looking for was a thoughtful and full answer to the question which drew directly on Adair's model and which genuinely provided a critical evaluation of leadership in the candidates' own organisation. It was important that both strong and weak aspects are identified and that points were made about where improvements could be made. This was generally answered very effectively, candidates often being pretty critical of their own organisations.

Question C6

Learning outcome: 3

This question aimed to test learning outcome 3: Debate and critically evaluate the characteristics of effective leadership and the methods used to develop leaders in organisations.

There was plenty of room here for a range of original arguments to be developed and justified well, but relatively few candidates took up the opportunity. Most of those who did first made straight forward links between smart leadership and positive business outcomes. Able leaders are better able than less able ones to understand their environments (internal and external), to weigh up the strengths and weaknesses of different options and to take the right decisions. They are also more likely to command the respect of customers, employees and opinion-formers and hence to carry stakeholders with them, creating a sense of shared purpose. Being honourable is also associated with attracting and retaining good followers. It is linked to the cultivation of an authentic style of leadership and to fair dealing, both of which help to build trust and reduce the extent of opposition / conflict in organisations. Finally 'treating employees right' should pose few problems for HR people as the basis of an approach which is sensitive to employee needs and which is associated with higher levels of satisfaction, motivation, engagement and effort.

The second part of the question was more challenging. It could be answered in a number of ways. Some argued that there are simply enough outstanding leaders around with the qualities that Barton are looking for. Paragons are in relatively short supply. Alternatively it was argued that the 'wrong' people often get to the top of organisations. This was because selection mechanisms are faulty (or insufficiently objective) or because the prizes tend to go to those who push hardest for them, not all of whom turn out to be truly effective. As always, it was the quality of the arguments that determined the final mark.

Leading, Managing And Developing People

EXAMINERS' REPORT

May 2013

Question D7

Learning outcome: 5

This question aimed to test learning outcome 5: Understand and explain the aims and objectives of the HRM and HRD functions in organisations and how these are met in practice.

A lot of candidates attempted this and while many produced a strong, well-justified argument, there was also quite a lot of fence-sitting and reluctance to come down on one side of the argument or the other.

The presence of admin activities in HR – payroll, record keeping (appraisal, absence, holidays, training etc), issuing contracts, carrying out exit interviews etc – has long been a matter of debate among HR people. The extent to which it is 'downplayed' varies greatly from organisation to organisation, but there has been a general tendency to sideline it in recent years. This is associated with the journey from 'personnel management' (traditionally viewed as adding little value for organisations, administrative and reactive) to 'human resource management' (strategic, pro-active, heavily integrated with senior management, business partnering etc). It is thus partly to do with moves to enhance professional status within organisations and hence to gain greater influence. Another aspect has been the fear that HR is too often seen by others as not adding value, as being a cost-centre that acts as a drag on organisational performance rather than a boost. While undoubtedly some HR departments do fit that profile, others don't and there remains a strong case for HR to undertake administrative activities with a degree of pride. The truth will always be that HR admin has to be carried out by someone. It is necessary to the operation of all larger organisations. Moreover, because of this it should be seen as an area where a professional HR function can add value, simply by carrying out the administrative aspects of the role to a high standard and as efficiently as possible. Doing that better than competitors can (that is, achieving excellence and cost effectiveness in HR admin) is thus a way in which genuine value can be added.

Question D8

Learning outcome: 5

This question aimed to test learning outcome 5: Understand and explain the aims and objectives of the HRM and HRD functions in organisations and how these are met in practice.

While coaching is not specifically mentioned in the list of learning outcomes for LM&DP, its increasing presence along with its broad role in motivating, managing performance and developing people should mean that most candidates are familiar with it. There was also a major CIPD research report published on coaching in September 2012 which discussed issues around measurement and evaluation. For these reasons the question was included, but in practice it tended to be answered by people who had some specialist knowledge of coaching and could therefore articulate some original points and justify them effectively.

Leading, Managing And Developing People

EXAMINERS' REPORT

May 2013

Coaching is best defined as an approach to HRD and enhancing performance which borrows techniques and philosophies long deployed on the sports field and deploys them in organisations. The focus is on individual needs and motivation, the approach is forward-looking, non-judgemental and potentially highly motivational. Its one-to-one nature means that it is both quite time consuming and expensive, so it tends to be used only at a relatively senior level. However, mentoring (a related activity that is often paired with coaching) is more commonly offered across organisations, albeit on a less formal and professional basis.

The reasons behind its spread are debated. It can be seen simply as part of a wider trend towards more individualised performance management and perhaps more sophisticated approaches too. It may simply be a question of management fashion, or it could be associated with the parallel rise of psychotherapy with which it has some similarities. Some may argue that it is necessary in order to help managers cope with the increased stress that their roles now encompass as a result of increased competitive intensity and greater pressure to produce short-term results. Others may simply take the view that its growth is associated with a perception that it works, and that word-of-mouth recommendation has led to its remarkable growth.

On research into its efficacy there are several suggestions made in the recent CIPD research study ('Coaching: The evidence base'), most of which have much in common with approaches used to estimate the impact of HRD interventions more generally. Business metrics of various kinds could be used (for example, employee surveys, performance data, absence statistics, financial data), as can evaluations/ case studies. Ideally a range of randomised control studies would be undertaken in which one group of staff would receive coaching over a prolonged period, while another similar group would not. Results could then be properly compared.

Question E9

Learning outcome: 7

This question aimed to test learning outcome 7: Promote professionalism and an ethical approach to HRM and HRD practice in organisations.

This question tapped into a debate that is receiving increasing coverage in the HR press, in particular the surveillance by employers (and would-be employers) of personal Facebook pages. It thus seemed to interest a good proportion of candidates, most of whom answered it well. It was interesting to note, however, how very divided the candidates were about these issues raised.

The reasons for the trend are probably related in the main to a fear of negative stories appearing in the media which link someone's private activities to their employment, hence threatening to bring the organisation into disrepute. The growth of social networking sites which render private lives much less private is thus a significant cause of the trend, as is the emergence of a highly competitive 24-hour media industry willing to put the worst possible spin on a story (or non-story) in order to boost its readership. The fear is that adverse publicity may have a knock-on effect on customer attitudes or that stories could serve to 'contaminate' a hard won and extremely valuable brand reputation. There have also been some examples reported

Leading, Managing And Developing People

EXAMINERS' REPORT

May 2013

of fellow employees complaining due to offence caused by views or pictures posted on Facebook. People had different views when answering Part 2. Most recognised this whole area of HR policy as being one in which there are genuine ethical dilemmas that need to be addressed. A purist perspective that is 100% on either side of the argument was thus less persuasive than one which focused on the nature of any offence caused and on the extent to which private activities really do have the potential to damage an organisation's reputation or cause it any financial damage. Much also should depend on the status of the individual, higher standards of personal behaviour being expected of senior people. This is because charges of hypocrisy stick. The potential for reputational damage is, for example, higher if a head teacher is discovered to have acted disreputably outside work than would be true in the case of a dinner lady.

Question E10

Learning outcome: 7

This question aimed to test learning outcome 7: Promote professionalism and an ethical approach to HRM and HRD practice in organisations.

There were no right or wrong answers here. What mattered was that candidates addressed both parts of the question fully, and that they provided reasoned answers to the 'and why?' part. Answers had to be self-critical to an extent and future-oriented in order to be awarded with high marks.

General points

On the whole this seemed to go very well. We had a high pass rate and read many interesting and effective answers. As always, the highest marks were awarded to those who were able to write answers which were:

- Full
- Direct
- Well-informed, and
- Well-justified.

The more a candidate can argue an original point and demonstrate that they have studied the subject, the higher the marks they will receive.

Stephen Taylor

Chief examiner