Human Resource Management and Development
Contents

1  Content and Objectives                  2
2  The Course Author                      3
3  An Overview of the Course              3
4  Learning Outcomes                      5
5  Study Materials                        5
6  Studying the Course                    5
7  Assessment                             5
1 Content and Objectives

This module is concerned with the management and development of staff in public organisations, known popularly as Human Resource Management and Development (HRM). The basic idea is simple – that all organisations, and not just those in the public sector, can improve their performance if they manage their staff properly. Very often, HRM is also associated with a series of practices related to the main activities of managing people and that we, as employees, experience directly. This may include recruiting new staff or training and developing existing staff.

An important focus is the organisation – where the management of people takes place. This element of HRM is particularly interested in how people behave in formal work settings. This module takes the public sector organisation as its primary formal work setting, but as you will quickly discover, HRM as a field of management study is derived from the private sector, primarily in the US. It is worth bearing this in mind throughout this module. Thus, the concept of HRM did not really begin to be applied to the public sector until the ‘second wave’ of New Public Management during the 1990s in the mainly Anglophone developed countries (UK, United States, Canada, New Zealand and Australia) and some other countries in western Europe. Typically, prior to the 1990s, ‘people management’ was referred to as ‘personnel administration/management’ or ‘establishments’ in some civil services and regarded as a discrete staff functional area.

This module will also concentrate on HRM issues in public sector organisations, rather than in the economy as a whole, or in society. In addition, we will be looking at HRM from a management perspective although there will be times, especially as the focus is on the public sector, when HRM will be viewed as a political activity. An example of this are the ‘Gulfization’ policies of the Middle East oil states whereby nationals are encouraged to work in the private sector rather than the public sector to improve the economic performance of the country as a whole. There will be similar illustrations of this nature later in the module.

The main objective of this module is to develop a critical appreciation of the strategic role of HRM not only in a public sector context, but within the overall constraints of different political, cultural and institutional environments. Although the module introduces you to the main features, or ‘good practice’ in HRM, we hope you can develop a critical awareness of its applicability to a given organisation. In addition, HRM is not a field of study independent of other modules in your MSc programme; it is related to many other areas including the management of change, project management and policy implementation.
2 The Course Author

Richard Common is a senior lecturer at Manchester Business School, the University of Manchester, UK. He was awarded a DPhil., from the University of York, a MSc (econ.) from the London School of Economics and a BA (Hons) from the University of Lancaster. Richard has many years of experience lecturing at Masters level, including MBA programmes, in the fields of public management, human resource management and professional development. He has also lectured extensively outside the UK in the Middle East and Asia. Richard has a variety of publications in this area, including an edited volume with Peter Carroll (Tasmania) *Policy Transfer and Learning in Public Policy and Management: International Contexts, Content and Development*, soon to be published by Routledge.

3 An Overview of the Course

Unit 1 Strategic HRM for the Public Sector
1.1 Introduction to HRM
1.2 The Activities of HRM
1.3 The Context of HRM
1.4 Strategic HRM
1.5 Strategic HRM in the Public Sector
1.6 Conclusion and Summary
References and Websites
Notes on Readings

Unit 2 Employee Resourcing
2.1 Recruitment
2.2 Selection
2.3 Retention
2.4 Contracts of Employment
2.5 Summary and Conclusion
References and Websites
Notes on Reading

Unit 3 Performance
3.1 Introduction – Organisational Performance
3.2 Performance Management
3.3 Performance Evaluation
3.4 Leadership
3.5 Teams
3.6 Conclusions and Summary
References
Exercise
4 Learning Outcomes

When you have completed this module and its readings, you will be able to:

- present a ‘strategic’ model of human resource management and development (HRM/D)
- assess the main functions of strategic HRM/D primarily, but not exclusively, in public sector organisations
- discuss the main contemporary issues for HRM/D in the public sector
- analyse the role of HRM/D as a managerial activity, while appreciating institutional and cultural constraints
- apply the main features of HRM/D to the public sector of developing and transitional countries with an understanding of its weaknesses and limitations

5 Study Materials

The textbook for this module is:


The text was selected not only because it was contemporaneous but because it offers the right and consistent blend of theory and practice commensurate with Masters level study at a world-leading University. However, it is a generic book in that it considers all sectors of the economy. Unfortunately, there is no single textbook currently on the market that focuses on HRM in the public sector and is of sufficient quality and with attributes that meets your needs as SOAS students. Most dedicated HRM textbooks on the public sector also focus exclusively on US organisations.

The course textbook is supplemented by articles, book chapters, etc. reprinted in the Course Reader. Taken together, we hope that these sources will equip you to understanding and applying HRM in a range of contexts and institutional settings, while being aware of the pitfalls surrounding ‘best practice’ approaches.

6 Studying the Course

When you work through the materials, there are various exercises, from the textbook or based on the readings, that are designed to consolidate your knowledge and skills. We recommend that you do the exercises, most of which take half an hour or less, before you look at the model answers, where they are provided, at the end of the unit.

You will be asked to submit your assignments and receive feedback through the Online Study Centre, and to ask questions of your tutor. The
OSC will also be the main way that we will communicate with you about administrative matters.

At certain points we will also ask you to reflect on various aspects of HRM in the context of where you work. It will be valuable for you and your fellow students to share these reflections on the OSC. Short notes setting out the issue and the approach will enrich your and your fellow students’ experience of the course.

7 Assessment

Your performance on each course is assessed through two written assignments and one examination. The assignments are written after week four and eight of the course session and the examination is written at a local examination centre in October.

The assignment questions contain fairly detailed guidance about what is required. All assignment answers are limited to 2,500 words and are marked using marking guidelines. When you receive your grade it is accompanied by comments on your paper, including advice about how you might improve, and any clarifications about matters you may not have understood. These comments are designed to help you master the subject and to improve your skills as you progress through your programme.

The written examinations are ‘unseen’ (you will only see the paper in the exam centre) and written by hand, over a three hour period. We advise that you practise writing exams in these conditions as part of your examination preparation, as it is not something you would normally do.

You are not allowed to take in books or notes to the exam room. This means that you need to revise thoroughly in preparation for each exam. This is especially important if you have completed the course in the early part of the year, or in a previous year.

Preparing for Assignments and Exams

There is good advice on preparing for assignments and exams and writing them in Sections 8.2 and 8.3 of Studying at a Distance by Talbot. We recommend that you follow this advice.

The examinations you will sit are designed to evaluate your knowledge and skills in the subjects you have studied: they are not designed to trick you. If you have studied the course thoroughly, you will pass the exam.

Understanding assessment questions

Examination and assignment questions are set to test different knowledge and skills. Sometimes a question will contain more than one part, each part testing a different aspect of your skills and knowledge. You need to spot the key words to know what is being asked of you. Here we categorise the types of things that are asked for in assignments and exams, and the words
used. All the examples are from CeFiMS exam papers and assignment questions.

**Definitions**

Some questions mainly require you to show that you have learned some concepts, by setting out their precise meaning. Such questions are likely to be preliminary and be supplemented by more analytical questions. Generally ‘Pass marks’ are awarded if the answer only contains definitions. They will contain words such as:

- Describe
- Define
- Examine
- Distinguish between
- Compare
- Contrast
- Write notes on
- Outline
- What is meant by
- List

**Reasoning**

Other questions are designed to test your reasoning, by explaining cause and effect. Convincing explanations generally carry additional marks to basic definitions. They will include words such as:

- Interpret
- Explain
- What conditions influence
- What are the consequences of
- What are the implications of

**Judgment**

Others ask you to make a judgment, perhaps of a policy or a course of action. They will include words like:

- Evaluate
- Critically examine
- Assess
- Do you agree that
- To what extent does

**Calculation**

Sometimes, you are asked to make a calculation, using a specified technique, where the question begins:

- Use the single index model analysis to
- Using any financial model you know
- Calculate the standard deviation
- Test whether

It is most likely that questions that ask you to make a calculation will also ask for an application of the result, or an interpretation.
Advice
Other questions ask you to provide advice in a particular situation. This applies to policy papers where advice is asked in relation to a policy problem. Your advice should be based on relevant principles and evidence of what actions are likely to be effective.

- Advise
- Provide advice on
- Explain how you would advise

Critique
In many cases the question will include the word ‘critically’. This means that you are expected to look at the question from at least two points of view, offering a critique of each view and your judgment. You are expected to be critical of what you have read.

The questions may begin

- Critically analyse
- Critically consider
- Critically assess
- Critically discuss the argument that

Examine by argument
Questions that begin with ‘discuss’ are similar – they ask you to examine by argument, to debate and give reasons for and against a variety of options, for example

- Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of
- Discuss this statement
- Discuss the view that
- Discuss the arguments and debates concerning

The grading scheme
Details of the general definitions of what is expected in order to obtain a particular grade are shown below. Remember: examiners will take account of the fact that examination conditions are less conducive to polished work than the conditions in which you write your assignments. These criteria are used in grading all assignments and examinations. Note that as the criteria of each grade rises, it accumulates the elements of the grade below. Assignments awarded better marks will therefore have become comprehensive in both their depth of core skills and advanced skills.

70% and above: Distinction As for the (60-69%) below plus:
- shows clear evidence of wide and relevant reading and an engagement with the conceptual issues
- develops a sophisticated and intelligent argument
- shows a rigorous use and a sophisticated understanding of relevant source materials, balancing appropriately between factual detail and key theoretical issues. Materials are evaluated directly and their assumptions and arguments challenged and/or appraised
- shows original thinking and a willingness to take risks

60-69%: Merit As for the (50-59%) below plus:
- shows strong evidence of critical insight and critical thinking
shows a detailed understanding of the major factual and/or theoretical issues and directly engages with the relevant literature on the topic
develops a focussed and clear argument and articulates clearly and convincingly a sustained train of logical thought
shows clear evidence of planning and appropriate choice of sources and methodology

50-59%: Pass below Merit (50% = pass mark)
shows a reasonable understanding of the major factual and/or theoretical issues involved
shows evidence of planning and selection from appropriate sources,
demonstrates some knowledge of the literature
the text shows, in places, examples of a clear train of thought or argument
the text is introduced and concludes appropriately

45-49%: Marginal Failure
shows some awareness and understanding of the factual or theoretical issues, but with little development
misunderstandings are evident
shows some evidence of planning, although irrelevant/unrelated material or arguments are included

0-44%: Clear Failure
fails to answer the question or to develop an argument that relates to the question set
does not engage with the relevant literature or demonstrate a knowledge of the key issues
contains clear conceptual or factual errors or misunderstandings

[approved by Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee November 2006]

Specimen exam papers
Your final examination will be very similar to the Specimen Exam Paper that follows. It will have the same structure and style and the range of question will be comparable. We do not provide past papers or model answers to papers. Our courses are continuously updated and past papers will not be a reliable guide to current and future examinations. The specimen exam paper is designed to be relevant to reflect the exam that will be set on the current edition of the course.

Further information
The OSC will have documentation and information on each year’s examination registration and administration process. If you still have questions, both academics and administrators are available to answer queries. The Regulations are also available at www.cefims.ac.uk/regulations.shtml, setting out the rules by which exams are governed.
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

CENTRE FOR FINANCIAL AND MANAGEMENT STUDIES

MSc Examination

Postgraduate Diploma Examination

for External Students

91DFM C302

PUBLIC POLICY AND MANAGEMENT

POSTGRADUATE DIPLOMA IN PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

Human Resource Management & Development

Specimen Examination

The examination must be completed in THREE hours.
Answer THREE questions. The examiners give equal weight to each question; therefore, you are advised to distribute your time approximately equally between three questions.

DO NOT REMOVE THIS PAPER FROM THE EXAMINATION ROOM.
IT MUST BE ATTACHED TO YOUR ANSWER BOOK AT THE END OF THE EXAMINATION.

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PLEASE TURN OVER
Answer THREE questions:

1. What is strategic HRM and can it be applied to the public sector?

2. With reference to your own organisation, or one with which you are familiar, critically examine approaches to recruitment and selection. What improvements, if any, would you make and why?

3. Evaluate the importance of teams in the workplace. Are they feasible within public sector organisations?

4. Can we dismiss management development as a perk, or does it bring genuine benefits to the organisation?

5. What methods of employee involvement and participation have you observed? Do they result in genuine employee empowerment?

6. ‘Reward systems in the public sector are anything but.’ Discuss.

7. What are the challenges to the implementation of public sector ethics within different cultural contexts?

8. Is convergence on ‘best practice’ HRM possible or even desirable, for the public sector? Discuss.

[END OF EXAMINATION]