

YEAR	TRIPOS	PAPER NO. & TITLE	NAME OF AUTHOR
2011	Engineering Tripos Part IIA	3E5 HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	Andreas Richter

1 (a) Describe three personnel selection methods (other than personality testing) that are commonly used by organizations. How do they fit with the four common human resource strategies? [40%]

(b) Evaluate the validity, reliability, utility and fairness of these three selection methods. [30%]

- Both the course book and the lecture treat various methods such as cognitive ability tests, situational judgment tests, etc., along with details about their validity, reliability, utility, & fairness
- Students need to explicate 3 methods of their choice
- Subject to which 3 methods students choose, validity, reliability, utility and fairness can be more or less clear cut; better students will provide a more in-depth and profound evaluation with respect to these criteria

(c) Discuss the benefits and drawbacks of personality testing for personnel selection. [30%]

- Students should outline the various benefits and drawbacks of personality testing; examples of drawback are problems with faking, limited predictive power in predicting job performance; examples of benefits are efficiency of use, and access to information otherwise unavailable
- Some students may also discuss that benefits and drawbacks may depend on which of the four common human resource strategies the organization pursues

2 (a) Briefly explain task analysis inventories, the critical-incident technique, and competency modelling. What are the respective strengths and limitations of each? Illustrate your answer with organizational examples. [40%]

- Each of these job analysis methods along with their pros and cons are discussed in both the lecture and the course book; for example, a task analysis inventory is very specific for a particular job, and hence provides little information for other

jobs; competency modelling on the other hand is more suitable for knowledge-based work, fluid and flexible, organization-specific, and has a broad focus on characteristics of applicants which can also include values, interests, and motivations;

- Better students will be able to provide illustrative examples from organizations

(b) Briefly explain two common organizational financial incentives. Discuss how well they fit with the four common human resource strategies. [30%]

- Both course book and lecture introduce various group and organizational financial incentives
- Subject to which of the four common human resource strategies an organization adapts, these incentives fit more or less well; e.g., a free agent strategy fits well with short term incentives, while a committed expert strategy fits well with long term incentives
- Students would need to discuss whether and to which extent each of the incentives they choose would fit with each of the four common human resource strategies

(c) When is it *not* advisable for managers to increase the autonomy of employees' jobs? Discuss. [30%]

- Some issues students might discuss are:
 - o Autonomy is an important motivator, but subject to which of the four common human resource strategies an organization follows (e.g., bargain laborer strategy), this might not be of high priority
 - o Too much autonomy can lead to misalignments of individual and organizational goals
 - o If not combined with other measures such as goal setting (e.g., MBO), autonomy on its own might be of limited usefulness
 - o A system perspective needs to be adapted in organizations – if autonomy is given to one unit but not the next, it might cause difficulties

3 (a) Explain the different elements of employee performance. Illustrate those elements with examples. [20%]

- The different elements task performance, citizenship performance, and counterproductive performance, need to be explained and illustrated with examples

(b) Which common rater errors affect the accuracy of managers' performance ratings? How can they be reduced? [30%]

- Both lecture and course book introduce numerous rater errors, such as central tendency error, as well as several remedies, such as frame-of-reference training

(c) What are the benefits and dangers of 360-degree feedback? Which measures should a manager take prior to application of this method in order to assure that the process improves employee performance? [50%]

- 360-degree feedback can be a very useful tool, at the same time it can be very dangerous; both course book and lecture content address 360-degree feedback
- Students should discuss deficiency and contamination as potential problems in performance evaluation
- Among other things, students need to discuss the difficulties that can emerge from discrepancies in ratings, and the problematic dynamics of anonymous negative feedback
- In particular, guided preparation and training of participants is essential prior to conducting 360 degree feedback

4 (a) Explain the three distinct steps of proactive training needs assessment. Illustrate your answer with examples. [20%]

- Organization analysis, task analysis, and person analysis need to be explicated and illustrated with examples

(b) Briefly explain four different training methods of your choice. What are the pros and cons of each? [30%]

- Four different training methods such as case study, role play, simulation, or modelling need to be explained and discussed regarding their pros and cons; e.g., simulations may be good for transmitting knowledge and skills, but less suitable for changing attitudes; at the same time, simulations might be costly; advantages of simulations over case studies, for instance, include a high likelihood of transfer

(c) How would you evaluate the effectiveness of a training of soft skills for engineers? Which evaluation criteria would you choose, and why? Which evaluation design would you choose, and why? Illustrate your answer with examples. [50%]

- The training evaluation process typically involves four steps: 1) determining the purpose of the evaluation; 2) deciding on relevant outcomes; 3) choosing an evaluation design; 4) collecting and analyzing the data and reporting results
- Evaluation outcomes include trainee reactions, trainee learning, transfer, and organizational results; each has particular pros and cons, which students should discuss; e.g., trainee reactions might be affected by factors unrelated to the training content, such as the trainer's personality
- Various evaluation designs will have been introduced to students, each of which has particular pros and cons; e.g., a post-test only design may be efficient, but doesn't allow to estimate performance increases relative to a baseline
- Better students will discuss whether, and if so how, the evaluation process for a training on soft skills should differ from the evaluation process for a training in other areas, such as quantitative skills

END OF PAPER