

Tutorial Letter 201/2/2017

Contemporary Issues in Human Resource Management

HRM3704

Semester 2

Department of Human Resource Management

IMPORTANT

THIS TUTORIAL LETTER CONTAINS FEEDBACK ON ASSIGNMENT
01 AND INFORMATION ON THE EXAMINATION.

BARCODE

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Dear Student

1 INTRODUCTION

We trust that you have begun your studies and that you are looking forward to completing this module successfully. The purpose of this tutorial letter is to give you feedback on Assignment 01. We also include information on how to prepare for the examination.

You should have received the following tutorial letters for HRM3704:

TUTORIAL LETTER	CONTENT OF TUTORIAL LETTER
HRM3704/101/3/2017	Information about your lecturer, prescribed book, study material, examination preparation and assignments, as well as comments on Assignment 03 (self-assessment assignment)
HRM3704/201/2/2017 (this tutorial letter)	Feedback on Assignment 01 and information on how to prepare for the examination

2 FEEDBACK ON ASSIGNMENT 01

The purpose of this assignment was to test your knowledge and application of theory in study units 1 to 6.

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|--|
| 1. A number of paradigms explain the contribution of human resources to organisational performance. Which of the following is NOT one of these paradigms?

1 the new executive paradigm
2 the process paradigm
3 the resources-based paradigm
4 the best practices paradigm |
|--|

The correct answer is option 1. See chapter 1 and study unit 2.3 of the prescribed book.

Three paradigms can be identified as correct in this question. The process paradigm is anchored in both the resource-based and best practices paradigms. The process paradigm refers to human resource management (HRM) processes as the deeply embedded company-specific dynamic routines by which a company attracts, socialises, trains, motivates, evaluates and compensates its human resources (HR). The resources-based paradigm suggests that HR systems can contribute to a sustained competitive advantage by facilitating the development of competencies that are company specific. For example, it supports the allocation of a bigger portion of the profits to employees by means of gainsharing or share options. The best practices paradigm implies that certain HR practices such as compensation, selection and training are directly linked to company performance.

2. According to authors Nadler and Spencer, the following leadership activities must be performed by executive teams in order to lead an organisation successfully, EXCEPT _____.
- 1 governance
 - 2 developing strategy
 - 3 maintaining the present operational environment**
 - 4 leading strategic-change teams (SCTs)

The correct answer is option 3. See chapter 3 and study unit 3.5.3 of the prescribed book.

Teams play a very important role in the leadership models of groups. Power is shared between the chief executive officer (CEO) and top management members who form an executive team. One of the important activities that the executive team performs includes planning and developing governance, developing strategy and leading strategic-change teams. The team is also required to create a high-performance operating environment and not to maintain the present operational environment.

3. The _____ period was characterised by tremendous organisational changes such as globalisation, mergers, acquisitions, re-engineering and downsizing.
- 1 organistic**
 - 2 mechanistic
 - 3 strategic
 - 4 legalistic

The correct answer is option 1. See chapter 1 and study unit 1.1 of the prescribed book.

Changes in business affected HRM during four distinct periods, namely the organistic, mechanistic, strategic and legalistic periods. During the organistic period, tremendous organisational change took place that included globalisation, mergers, acquisitions, re-engineering and downsizing. These changes created an environment in which the HRM function faced numerous challenges such as a diverse workforce and an awareness of work and family issues. During the mechanistic period, manufacturing was the driving force in business. This period resulted in the birth of the personnel/industrial relations profession. During the strategic period, the HRM function became a true strategic partner and included strategic thinking and planning. The legalistic period was a period that ushered in an unprecedented amount of legislation in the social and employment areas. Training and development began to emerge as a separate and specialised area of HRM during the legalistic period.

4. The process paradigm is anchored in both the _____.

- 1 **resource-based view and the best-practices theory**
- 2 structural design view and the best-practices theory
- 3 resource-based view and the performance theory
- 4 structural design view and the performance theory

The correct answer is option 1. See chapter 2 and study unit 2.3.3 of the prescribed book.

Of the three paradigms, namely the resource-based view, best-practices theory and the process paradigm, the process paradigm describes the contribution of HR to company performance. The process paradigm relates to the other two paradigms, namely the resource-based view and the best practices paradigm.

5. While charismatic leadership seeks to keep followers weak and dependent, _____ leadership seeks to empower and to elevate followers.

- 1 transactional
- 2 **transformational**
- 3 strategic
- 4 behavioural

The correct answer is option 2. See chapter 3 and study units 3.6.3 of the prescribed book.

Charismatic leadership is one of the organisational leadership theories. Charismatic leaders usually articulate an appealing vision, and because of their inborn charisma, others see them as heroes. The dark side of charismatic leaders is that they are known to instil personal loyalty and dependence in followers, which makes their followers less empowered. Transactional leadership theory refers to the relationship between the leader and the followers that is based on exchanges in the form of rewards for work well done and punishment for work not well done. Transformational leadership is a leadership theory that is grounded in interaction between the follower and the leader. It raises both the leader and the follower to higher levels of motivation and morality – followers are made to achieve more than they think is possible. Strategic leadership refers to a leader's ability to anticipate, envision, maintain flexibility, think strategically and work with others to initiate changes that create a viable future for the organisation. The central purpose of the behavioural approach to leadership is to explain how leaders combine task behaviours and relationship behaviours to influence followers in their efforts to reach a goal.

6. A social influence process mediated by advanced information systems to produce a change in attitudes, feelings, thinking, behaviour and/or performance in individuals, groups and/or organisations is called _____.

- 1 **e-leadership**
- 2 management
- 3 leadership
- 4 e-learning

The correct answer is option 1. See chapter 3 and study unit 3.6.7 of the prescribed book.

E-leadership is gaining momentum in organisational leadership today because of the dominance of information technology in organisations. This leadership approach operates in the context of advanced

information technology. Management refers to the attainment of organisational goals in an effective manner through planning, organising, staffing, directing and controlling organisational resources. Leadership refers to the ability of a leader to influence a group of people towards the achievement of a vision or set of goals. E-learning refers to the use of technology to select, deliver, administer, facilitate and support learning.

7. A leadership training technique that can be used to train technical skills is called _____.
- 1 a procedural manual
 - 2 interactive computer tutorials**
 - 3 a case study
 - 4 simulation

The correct answer is option 2. See chapter 3 and study unit 3.7 of the prescribed book.

Techniques for leadership training and development involve a variety of tools such as a procedural manual. A procedural manual is a book of instructions about a specific training programme. Interactive computer tutorials could be used to train technical skills, and involve an interactive software program created as a learning tool. Case studies and simulations are used to learn conceptual and administrative skills.

8. The formulation of an HR strategy does not take place in isolation but is influenced by both external and internal factors. Which of the following is NOT an external factor?
- 1 economics
 - 2 social factors
 - 3 operational factors**
 - 4 politics

The correct answer is option 3. See chapter 4 and study unit 4.3 of the prescribed book.

Economics is representative of external factors, for example, international trade, finance, the country's rate of exchange as compared to other countries' currencies, and changes in the repo rate. Social factors are representative of external environment factors of the business and HR function, for example, family, education, location and children. Operational factors are representative of factors that are inside the organisation, for example, employee demographics and organisational structure. Politics is representative of external factors, for example, who becomes finance minister and which labour and economic policies the government in power supports.

9. Which form of flexibility is concerned with encouraging and facilitating the establishment, development or relocation of enterprises through the relaxation, amendment or exemption of public policy?
- 1 financial flexibility
 - 2 regulatory flexibility**
 - 3 procedural flexibility
 - 4 numerical flexibility

The correct answer is option 2. See chapter 5 and study unit 5.1.6 of the prescribed book.

Financial flexibility provides the duality of allowing market forces to dictate relative wage rates and providing cost-efficient numerical flexibility to the organisation. It provides incentive for the core workforce to increase its skill base by relating pay to skill levels. Regulatory flexibility refers to encouraging and facilitating the establishment and development of enterprises through relaxation, amendment or exemption of public policy. Procedural flexibility refers to the establishment of consultative mechanisms for introducing changes or negotiating variations in work practices, primarily through changes in both legal and traditional practices covering employment. Numerical flexibility is based on the principle of relating the size of the workforce to the levels of economic activity easily and at short notice.

10. Which one of the following statements is applicable to the new talent mindset?

- 1 HR is responsible for people management.
- 2 Bold actions are taken to build the talent pool needed.**
- 3 A two-day succession planning exercise is done annually.
- 4 Managers have to work with people they inherit.

The correct answer is option 4. See chapter 6 and table 6.3 of the prescribed book.

Talent management is one of the sources of competitive advantage for any organisation. The HR function is not the only one responsible for people and talent management – all managers are accountable for managing and strengthening their talent pool. The new talent mindset proposes that bold actions must be taken to build the talent pool that is needed in an organisation – the notion that managers must just accept and work with people they have inherited is not enough in talent management. Talent management is a central part of how the organisation is run – a two-day succession planning exercise is not enough according to the new talent mindset.

11. In their seminal work on talent management, Michaels et al (2001) identified five key areas for organisations to act upon, if they are going to make talent a source of competitive advantage. Which of the following is NOT one of them?

- 1 instilling a talent-focused mindset
- 2 crafting a winning employee value proposition
- 3 focusing on talent management in periods of skills shortages**
- 4 weaving development into an organisation

The correct answer is option 3. See chapter 6 and study unit 6.3 of the prescribed book.

The five key areas include the instilling of a talent-focused mindset into the organisational structures – this means developing talent reviews and investing real money in talent management strategies. Crafting a winning employee value proposition is another key area of talent management that relates to how the organisation fulfils the employees' needs, expectations and aspirations. Weaving/merging development into an organisation is one of the key areas for creating organisational competitiveness through talent – this relates to the development of talent at levels of the organisation.

12. Which of the following is NOT a potential advantage of flexible patterns of work for employees?

- 1 greater job satisfaction
- 2 constant change**
- 3 improved motivation
- 4 less tiredness

The correct answer is option 2. See chapter 5 and study unit 5.5.2 of the prescribed book.

Flexibility comes with some advantages for employees, including greater satisfaction with the job, improved motivation and less tiredness because of less traveling to work. Options 1, 3 and 4 are therefore incorrect.

13. Which form of flexibility is based on the principle of relating the size of the workforce to the levels of economic activity easily and at short notice?
- 1 financial flexibility
 - 2 regulatory flexibility
 - 3 procedural flexibility
 - 4 **numerical flexibility**

The correct answer is option 4. See chapter 5 and study unit 5.1.2 of the prescribed book.

(See also question 9) Financial flexibility provides the duality of allowing market forces to dictate relative wage rates and providing cost-efficient numerical flexibility to the organisation. It provides the incentive for the core workforce to increase its skill base by relating pay to skill levels. Regulatory flexibility refers to encouraging and facilitating the establishment and development of enterprises through relaxation, amendment or exemption of public policy. Procedural flexibility refers to the establishment of consultative mechanisms for introducing changes or negotiating variations in work practices, primarily through changes in both legal and traditional practices covering employment. Numerical flexibility is based on the principle of relating the size of the workforce to the levels of economic activity easily and at short notice.

14. Hoteling as an alternative workplace option involves _____.
- 1 allowing employees to work from their hotel rooms by connecting to the internet
 - 2 creating a network of smaller workplaces located close to the employee's home or the customer
 - 3 supplementing traditional office spaces instead of replacing them, by doing work electronically from where the employee chooses
 - 4 **sharing workspaces that are furnished, equipped and supported with typical office services and that can be reserved by the hour, day or week instead of being permanently assigned to workers**

The correct answer is option 4. See chapter 1 and study unit 1.4.2 of the prescribed book.

Alternative workplace options are organisational strategies used to increase employee commitment and productivity. Hoteling is one of the strategies of alternative workplace options. It is about sharing workspace that is supported with typical office services. Workspace can be reserved by the hour, day or week – it is not permanently assigned to workers. The concept of hoteling is not directly associated with normal hotel rooms. Creating a network of smaller workplaces located close to the employee's home or the customer means creating satellite offices. Supplementing traditional office spaces instead of replacing them, by doing work electronically from where the employee chooses, is called telecommuting.

15. In terms of the _____, a compensation range is specified and companies stay within this range.
- 1 old talent mindset
 - 2 old recruiting strategies**
 - 3 new talent mindset
 - 4 new recruiting strategies

The correct answer is option 2. See chapter 6 and table 6.5 of the prescribed book.

The old talent mindset refers to a talent mindset that no longer supports organisational competitiveness, such as management only working with the people it has inherited from the previous management. The new talent mindset refers to talent mindsets that support organisational competitiveness, such as ensuring that all managers are accountable for strengthening the talent pool. Old recruitment strategies are ideas of recruitment that have become obsolete and do not promote organisational competitiveness such as having a compensation range and staying within it. New recruiting strategies are talent-recruiting strategies such as hunting for talent all the time. In this new strategy the organisation cannot just stay within the same compensation range – the compensation range can be broken to get the candidates/talent that is needed in the organisation.

16. Author Tichy suggests that certain aids/support should be used to manage the political, technical and cultural systems within an organisation properly. Which of the following is NOT one of the aids?
- 1 the mission and the strategy of an organisation
 - 2 the structure of an organisation
 - 3 the employment equity and skills development plan of an organisation**
 - 4 the HRM system of an organisation

The correct answer is option 3. See chapter 4 and study unit 4.2 of the prescribed book.

At the strategic level of the organisation, where the relationship between strategic management and strategic HRM is very important, Tichy has highlighted that organisations are continually confronted by three basic problems, namely political, technical and cultural problems. According to Tichy, certain aids must be utilised to manage these problems, namely the mission and the strategy of an organisation, the structure of an organisation and the HRM system of an organisation. Tichy does not regard the employment equity and skills development plan of an organisation to be of assistance in the management of political, technical and cultural challenges.

17. Which role, according to Ulrich's model, requires HR professionals to design and to deliver efficient, ongoing HR processes, such as staffing, training, appraising, rewarding and promoting?
- 1 strategic partner
 - 2 change agent
 - 3 employee champion
 - 4 administrative expert**

The correct answer is option 4. See chapter 1 and study unit 1.2 of the prescribed book.

The HR professional strategic partner role refers to the ability to align HR and business strategy. The HR professional change agent role refers to managing transformation and change, and making fundamental cultural changes in the organisation. The HR professional employee champion role requires day-to-day involvement in problems, concerns and employee needs. The HR professional administrative expert role refers to the design and delivery of efficient HR processes such as staffing, training, appraising, rewarding and promoting people.

18. According to Tichy's research, organisations are continually confronted by three basic problems that must be managed effectively. Which of the following is NOT one of these problems?
- 1 a cultural problem
 - 2 a political problem
 - 3 a functional problem**
 - 4 a technical problem

The correct answer is option 3. See chapter 4 and study unit 4.2 of the prescribed book.

A cultural problem refers to the notion that a company's culture is what holds the company together – the company must continually decide which values, beliefs and views it wants its employees to have. A political problem refers to the notion that companies continually have problems with the allocation of power and resources in organisational structures. A functional problem is not one of the problems identified by Tichy. A technical problem refers to the notion that the company is faced with external threats and opportunities that can cause production problems for the company.

19. Which function makes use of an integrated set of HR activities to ensure that an organisation attracts, retains, motivates and develops the talented people it needs now and in the future?
- 1 HR planning
 - 2 talent management**
 - 3 recruitment
 - 4 HR development

The correct answer is option 2. See chapter 1 and study unit 1.4.4 of the prescribed book.

HR planning refers to the process of identifying current and future HR needs for the organisation to achieve its goals. Talent management refers to the use of an integrated set of HR activities to ensure that an organisation attracts, retains, motivates and develops the talented people it needs now and in the future. Recruitment refers to the overall process of attracting, selecting and appointing suitable candidates for jobs in an organisation. HR development is the framework for helping employees develop their personal and organisational skills, knowledge and abilities.

20. Which type of team usually includes employees from each of the functional subunits and allows for the flexible, efficient deployment of personnel and resources to solve problems as they occur?
- 1 cross-functional team**
 - 2 self-managed team
 - 3 executive team
 - 4 strategic change teams (SCTs)

The correct answer is option 1. See chapter 3 and study unit 3.5.1 of the prescribed book.

A cross-functional team usually includes employees from each of the functional subunits and allows for the flexible, efficient deployment of personnel and resources to solve problems as they occur. It is normally creative and generates different ideas and solutions to organisational challenges. A self-managed team takes the responsibility and authority of making important management decisions. It is normally responsible for the production of distinct products or services. An executive team is composed of the CEO and the top management team – these executives take on the responsibility for providing leadership to the whole organisation. Strategic change teams are appointed by the executive team – they are responsible for driving critical business priorities and initiatives by generating innovative solutions for challenges affecting the organisation’s capabilities.

3 EXAMINATION

Refer to Tutorial Letter HRMALL6/301/4/2017 for guidelines on answering the examination questions.

3.1 Format of the examination

The examination is your opportunity to demonstrate that you have achieved the learning outcomes for this module. As you know by now, there is a list of learning outcomes in each study unit of the study guide.

Format of the examination paper	<u>As indicated in Tutorial Letter 101/3/2017, the examination paper will consist of five (5) questions of which you must answer any three (3) questions (25 marks each).</u>
Format of the questions	Essay/case study/scenario-type questions Note that the examination paper will contain no multiple-choice questions.
Duration of the examination	2 hours
Total number of marks for the paper	75 marks

3.2 Case studies

- The format of the case studies used in the examination will be similar to that of case studies used in Assignment 02 (the compulsory assignment) and Assignment 03 (the self-assessment assignment) in Tutorial Letter HRM3704/101/3/2017, as well as the case studies at the end of each chapter in your prescribed book.
- To answer assignment (and examination) questions, you should organise your thoughts logically and systematically in your answering approach. You are welcome to use the following guidelines to answer your assignment (you will not have access to the additional sources in the examination, but you can follow more or less the same approach in answering the examination questions):
 - Step 1. Create a heading, for example “Theory”. Read each question carefully. Collect the necessary information by determining the key terms per question that identify the theory that you must use in your answer. Make sure that you understand any unfamiliar words by consulting the HRM3704 study guide, prescribed book, recommended books, additional

resources or any relevant academic publication or website to ensure a clear understanding of subject-related terms. Briefly write down the theory as part of your answer.

- Step 2. Create a heading, for example “Case study examples that link with theory”. Read and/or study the case study/scenario/tables/figures carefully and determine the links with the theory that you identified in step 1. Briefly write down the examples of the case study.
- Step 3. Create a heading, for example “Integration of theory and case study”. This is the most important part of your answer. Integrate steps 1 and 2 to answer the question.

4 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, please note that we are in the process of revising the study material for this module to incorporate recent sources and research findings. When marking Assignment 01, we based the correct responses and answers on the current prescribed book. However, we realise that some of this information is outdated and that some of you may have consulted sources that are more contemporary. Therefore, we saw the need to expand on some of the options in our questions. We hope that in this process, we have created a better learning experience and illustrated our commitment to resolve any perceived quality issues in the formal study material.

For question 12, we regard option 2 as correct according to the current prescribed book. However, new HRM research insights would suggest that option 2 could well be a potential advantage for flexible patterns of work for employees – the constant change leads to autonomy and challenges in the workplace. In the same question, you may also indicate that “less tiredness” does not mean that flexible patterns lead to increased energy levels – you are less tired because of less travelling to and from work.

For question 7, we regard option 2 as correct according to the current prescribed book. However, option 4 can also be correct according to new HRM research insights – pilots, for example, normally use simulations to prove their technical skills.

I trust that the assignment case studies guidelines will help you prepare for the examination. If you have any questions about the content of this module, do not hesitate to contact me.

I also urge you to submit Assignment 02 online via myUnisa. The benefits of submitting Assignment 02 via myUnisa are that you would avoid the postal service and would receive feedback on Assignment 02 much quicker.

Wishing you every success in your studies!

Kind regards

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