

Final Exam

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PADP 6920: Public Personnel Administration

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December 9, 2020

Question 1

The workforce in the U.S. continues to grow increasingly diverse as women, non-whites, various ethnic and religious groups, individuals with physical and mental disabilities and various sexual orientations or gender identities are now more visible than in the past (Pynes, 2013, p. 111). Cross-cultural intelligence is a core element of Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM), and this becomes even more essential as organizations themselves interact with a more diverse labor market (Pynes, 2013, p. 39). But even as the general workforce changes, it is not a given that public organizations will reflect those changes. Organizations are required to comply with federal laws regarding diversity and equal opportunity in employment. Employers need to demonstrate fairness in all elements of SHRM, including recruitment and selection (Pynes, 2013, p. 112). This has created legal and policy challenges for organizations over the last several years.

Compliance with federal laws, however, does not guarantee that an organization will reflect the diversity of the broader workforce or that it will value diversity as an organization. Public organizations must balance compliance with federal laws regarding diversity and equal opportunity in employment while also proactively managing diversity in its workforce (Pynes, 2013, p. 127). Organizations can choose between two approaches to diversity: an active approach or a passive approach. In an active approach, the organization strives to pursue the level of diversity in the labor market and mirror that diversity within its workforce (Kim, 2020a). This proactive method is morally desirable, as it demonstrates a strong commitment to diversity to its employees. This commitment aligns well with the theory of bureaucratic representation, which details the importance for a public organization to reflect the diversity of its constituency. When an organization's workforce is more diverse, it is likely that it will be more attuned to the needs of its clients, customers or constituents because of the cultural competency, sensitivity and

knowledge of the employees. This approach is also legally desirable, as the organization will likely face fewer challenges on the grounds of equal opportunity laws, assuming that the organization is delivering on its commitment to diversity in its recruitment, selection and policies.

Arguments against an active diversity strategy claim that the emphasis on diversity could lead to claims of reverse discriminations, where members of the majority groups are not hired for positions on the basis of their demographic or cultural profile. Hiring should be dependent on merits and qualifications, so organizations have to exercise care in allowing demographic factors to determine whether a candidate is hired or not. In addition, a significant amount of work is required to align the culture of an organization with an active diversity strategy. This effort takes time, money and effort to transform an organization to ensure that the employees would be accepting of diverse employees. If an organization does not recognize the benefit of diversity, it may choose not to incur the cost of investing in diversity. The passive approach is correct in its recognition that diversity takes time and assimilation is important to the process. It could potentially allow for a more organic process as an organization transforms. However, its weakness is that it does not demonstrate the leadership's value of diversity. In addition, the organization will not reflect its customers, clients or constituents, so it will continue to lack cultural expertise in serving a diverse citizenry.

Whether an organization chooses an active or passive approach to recruiting and selecting more diverse individuals, it is critical that the organization manage diversity within its organization. This will lay the groundwork for the future diverse workforce that both approaches anticipate. Pynes details several ways in which an organization can actively promote diversity. At a strategic level, the organization must incorporate diversity as a pillar of its vision and values.

Then, it should develop programs that promote cultural awareness and appreciation and invest in training and development to build cultural competency among its existing workforce. To ensure diverse leadership and administration in the future, organizations should incorporate diversity as a priority when developing succession plans. Lastly, leadership must prioritize inclusion of diverse perspectives in its major decision-making processes. That will help the organization make better strategic moves, even if its leadership lacks diversity.

Question 2

The selection system to assess HR manager candidates for the state government must do a sufficient job of matching KSAOCs to job requirements. The job requires the successful candidate to possess considerable experience in the area of human resource management (HRM) administration and knowledge of principles and practices of HRM. The HR manager will be responsible for planning and administration of HRM programs, including planning and policy making, recruitment and selection, test administration, personnel training and performance management. It is important to keep those KSAOCs in mind when considering each potential method for selection.

Job knowledge tests are highly valid, meaning they do a good job of predicting job performance. They also have a relatively low cost to develop and administer and receive a favorable reaction from applicants. A job knowledge test also measures key areas that directly relate to job KSAOCs and are commonly used in situations like this, when candidates must already have a certain amount of knowledge prior to beginning a job (Kim, 2020b). Because of these reasons, I would use job knowledge tests in the selection process. The only downside of this method is its adverse impact on minority groups, so that would be a factor to consider in interpreting results and comparing candidates.

A medical exam and drug test occurring at the beginning of the selection process is not appropriate. According to Kim (2020b), drug tests and medical exams should be exclusively used as contingent assessment methods for legal compliance and not as a selection method at the beginning of the process. If it is absolutely necessary to use these methods to ascertain the health of the individual as it relates to job tasks, they should be used after the offer has been accepted with employment contingent on results.

Integrity tests are designed to predict counterproductive behaviors related to honesty, trustworthiness and dependability in an individual (Kim, 2020b). They have proven to have moderate to high validity in predicting negative behaviors and have low adverse impact and cost. However, candidates often have less favorable reactions to integrity tests (Kim, 2020b). This raises the question: is an integrity test necessary in evaluating candidates for a position like this or would the test lead to negative reactions from candidates who may otherwise be good fits? Given the nature of the HR manager position, the importance of policies and the handling of sensitive information, I would recommend using the integrity test in this situation.

Structured behavioral interviews, which are conducted based on a specific set of questions to assess KSAOCs for a job, can be very effective in matching KSAOCs to job requirements. They can also assess soft skills as well. As long as these questions are based on job analysis and consistently used for each candidate, they can have high validity, low adverse impact and more favorable applicant reactions. They are costly to develop and administer, though. Answers to questions should be measured numerically and detailed notes should be taken (Kim, 2020b). Despite the high costs, this is a crucial method to compare job candidates based on KSAOCs and soft skills. I would include this method within the selection system for this job, considering the importance of matching KSAOCs and job requirements.

General cognitive ability tests have shown high validity, low costs and somewhat favorable reactions from applicants. However, they have a high adverse impact against minorities and are more general in the information they assess (Kim, 2020b). Given that I am recommending inclusion of job knowledge tests already, I do not recommend including cognitive ability tests. This is because using both would result in too much adverse impact against minorities and would not be as helpful as the more narrowly focused job knowledge test in matching KSAOCs with job requirements.

I would not recommend including a personality test as part of the selection system for the HR manager. Personality tests identify typical traits and characteristics in a candidate but they are very subjective and personal. They have low to moderate validity and less favorable reactions (Kim, 2020). To assess personality as it relates to fit, perhaps the soft skills and questions in the structured interview could help. But I do not think this area requires its own selection method that would add another step in a burdensome selection process and lead to less favorable attitudes.

I would not recommend using the interview questions included in the original question. First, the questions are too general. In developing a selection system for the HR manager role, we want to be as focused and precise as possible, which is why the structured interview is a better method. Second, some of the questions in this method are not legal or appropriate. For example, it is not permissible under the Americans with Disabilities Act to ask a candidate if they have a disability that would interfere with their ability to perform a job (Pynes, 2013, p. 193). Question 2 in this proposed set of questions violates that law. Second, asking about the candidate's sports preference does not apply to this position and seems unnecessary and inappropriate.

As a whole, my proposed selection system for assessing HR manager candidates would include a job knowledge test, an integrity test and a structured behavioral interview. These three methods would allow for a reasonable selection process that is not too lengthy for candidates. It also features methods that are all moderately to highly valid. Most are favorable to candidates and have low costs. Due to the importance of this HR manager role, I think the costs to develop and administer the interview are justified.

Question 5

In general, organizations view turnover as a negative due to the high costs associated with recruiting, hiring and training replacement employees. However, there are situations in which turnover is in the interest of the organization. When turnover is voluntary and works well for the purposes of the organization, it is called “functional turnover” (Kim, 2020c). One example of functional turnover is when a poor performing employee exits the organization. This voluntary choice made by the employee prevents the organization from incurring the liability that comes with terminating an employee and gives the organization the opportunity to replace the poor performing employee with an individual who will provide increased value to the organization.

Another situation in which functional turnover occurs is when an organization needs to decrease expenses. This was common in the second quarter of 2020, as the coronavirus pandemic hit economies hard. For many public organizations, anticipated revenues were expected to take a significant hit. As organizations looked to decrease payroll expenses and cut certain programs or services provided by employees, employee turnover could help the organization meet budget goals. That explains why some organizations make attempts to create turnover in certain situations. An example of that would be early retirement initiatives in which the organization temporarily changes the criteria to allow staff nearing retirement to leave the organization earlier

than originally planned. However, that does not prevent the organization from losing high-performing employees who are nearing retirement.

There are similar challenges with some pay systems, like those based on seniority. When pay is based on how long an individual has been with the organization, compensation is not necessarily rewarding performance. In that sort of system, an employee who is not a good performer but has been with the organization a long time would be incentivized to stay with the organization at a continued high cost to the organization. To make matters worse, a high performing employee who is newer to the organization may see a poor performing employee receiving better compensation and feel under-rewarded. This may lead to the opposite of functional turnover, where the high performing employee leaves the organization while the poor performer remains (Pynes, 2013, p. 224). However, there could be employees who have been with the organization for a long time and who perform at a high level. For those individuals, longevity pay methods could be appropriate. That method would reward employees who have reached the maximum pay level in their pay grade, indicating good performance over a long period of time, by tying pay to the number of consecutive years of service (Pynes, 2013, p. 224). That would continue to incentivize high performers to remain with the organization.

There are ways in which an organization can facilitate turnover of poor performers while promoting retention of high performers. One way of doing this could be through performance-based pay. By rewarding employees who perform at a high level, an organization can increase the employees' willingness to remain with the company because that employee will feel adequately compensated and valued. Organizations should embrace performance management systems that attempt to improve poor performers through performance improvement plans and tactics of a progressive discipline system (Pynes, 2013, p. 322).

However, part of that approach could mean that employees who are not performing well may not receive bonuses or raises, as pay would be tied to performance. This would facilitate the voluntary turnover of poor performers who are not able to improve sufficiently, helping the organization with positive, functional turnover.

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