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 4
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

Unit 4 Development
   4.1 Introduction
   4.2 Management Learning
   4.3 Organisational Learning
   4.4 Creativity in Public Organisations
4.5 Conclusion
References, Notes on the Reading by Binyamin and Carmeli

Unit 5 Employee Relations
5.1 Introduction
5.2 Employee Involvement and Participation (EIP)
5.3 Managing Diversity
5.4 Formal Employee Relations
5.5 The Role of Trade Unions
5.6 Conclusion and Summary
References
Answers to Exercises

Unit 6 Reward
6.1 Introduction
6.2 Setting Rewards
6.3 Pay Structures
6.4 Human Resource Aspects of Public Sector Pay Problems
6.5 Paying by Performance
6.6 Rewards Other Than Pay
6.7 Summary and Conclusion
References, Notes on Readings

Unit 7 Contemporary Issues in HRM
7.1 Introduction
7.2 Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility
7.3 Work-Life Balance
7.4 Alternative Forms of HR Service Delivery
7.5 Conclusion
References and Websites

Unit 8 Applying HRM
8.1 Introduction – Applying ‘Best Practice’
8.2 Convergence and Divergence between Countries
8.3 The Limits of Strategic HRM in the Public Sector
8.4 Challenges and Prospects for HRM in the Public Sector
8.5 Conclusion
References, Notes on the Reading by Warner

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
Introduction and Overview

- 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.
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.

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 the Centre for Financial and management Studies examination 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 of 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 indifference curve analysis to
- Using any economic 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 law questions and to policy papers where advice is asked in relation to a policy problem. Your advice should be based on relevant law, principles, 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: Assignments**

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 im-
prove, 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.

**Post graduate Assignment Marking Criteria**

The marking criteria for your programme draws upon these minimum core
criteria, which are applicable to the assessment of all assignments:

- understanding of the subject
- utilisation of proper academic [or other] style (e.g. citation of references, or use of
  proper legal style for court reports, etc.)
- relevance of material selected and of the arguments proposed
- planning and organisation
- logical coherence
- critical evaluation
- comprehensiveness of research
- evidence of synthesis
- innovation / creativity / originality

The language used must be of a sufficient standard to permit assessment of
these.

The guidelines below reflect the standards of work expected at postgraduate
level. All assessed work is marked by your Tutor or a member of academic
staff, and a sample are then moderated by another member of academic
staff. Any assignment may be made available to the external examiner(s).

**80+ (Distinction).** A mark of 80+ will fulfil the following criteria:

- very significant ability to plan, organise and execute independently a research
  project or coursework assignment;
- very significant ability to evaluate literature and theory critically and make informed
  judgements;
- very high levels of creativity, originality and independence of thought;
- very significant ability to evaluate critically existing methodologies and suggest new
  approaches to current research or professional practice;
- very significant ability to analyse data critically;
- outstanding levels of accuracy, technical competence, organisation, expression.

**70–79 (Distinction).** A mark in the range 70–79 will fulfil the following criteria:

- significant ability to plan, organise and execute independently a research project or
  coursework assignment;
- clear evidence of wide and relevant reading, referencing and an engagement with
  the conceptual issues;
- capacity to develop a sophisticated and intelligent argument;
- 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;
- correct referencing;
- significant ability to analyse data critically;
- original thinking and a willingness to take risks.
**60–69 (Merit).** A mark in the 60–69 range will fulfil the following criteria:
- ability to plan, organise and execute independently a research project or coursework assignment;
- strong evidence of critical insight and thinking;
- a detailed understanding of the major factual and/or theoretical issues and directly engages with the relevant literature on the topic;
- clear evidence of planning and appropriate choice of sources and methodology with correct referencing;
- ability to analyse data critically;
- capacity to develop a focussed and clear argument and articulate clearly and convincingly a sustained train of logical thought.

**50–59 (Pass).** A mark in the range 50–59 will fulfil the following criteria:
- Ability to plan, organise and execute a research project or coursework assignment;
- a reasonable understanding of the major factual and/or theoretical issues involved;
- evidence of some knowledge of the literature with correct referencing;
- ability to analyse data;
- shows examples of a clear train of thought or argument;
- the text is introduced and concludes appropriately.

**40–49 (Fail).** A Fail will be awarded in cases in which there is:
- limited ability to plan, organise and execute a research project or coursework assignment;
- some awareness and understanding of the literature and of factual or theoretical issues, but with little development;
- limited ability to analyse data;
- incomplete referencing;
- limited ability to present a clear and coherent argument.

**20–39 (Fail).** A Fail will be awarded in cases in which there is:
- very limited ability to plan, organise and execute a research project or coursework assignment;
- fails to develop a coherent argument that relates to the research project or assignment;
- does not engage with the relevant literature or demonstrate a knowledge of the key issues;
- incomplete referencing;
- contains clear conceptual or factual errors or misunderstandings;
- only fragmentary evidence of critical thought or data analysis.

**0–19 (Fail).** A Fail will be awarded in cases in which there is:
- no demonstrable ability to plan, organise and execute a research project or coursework assignment;
- little or no knowledge or understanding related to the research project or assignment;
- little or no knowledge of the relevant literature;
- major errors in referencing;
- no evidence of critical thought or data analysis;
- incoherent argument.
The grading scheme: Examinations

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 practice writing exams in these conditions as part of you 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.

Details of the general definitions of what is expected in order to obtain a particular grade are shown below. These guidelines take account of the fact that examination conditions are less conducive to polished work than the conditions in which you write your assignments. 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.

Post graduate unseen written examinations Marking Criteria

80+ (Distinction). A mark of 80+ will fulfil the following criteria:
- very significant ability to evaluate literature and theory critically and make informed judgements;
- very high levels of creativity, originality and independence of thought;
- outstanding levels of accuracy, technical competence, organisation, expression;
- shows outstanding ability of synthesis under exam pressure.

70–79 (Distinction). A mark in the 70–79 range will fulfil the following criteria:
- 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;
- shows significant ability of synthesis under exam pressure.

60–69 (Merit). A mark in the 60–69 range will fulfil the following criteria:
- 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, and ability of synthesis under exam pressure.

50–59 (Pass). A mark in the 50–59 range will fulfil the following criteria:
- 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.

40–49 (Fail). A Fail will be awarded in cases in which:
- there is some awareness and understanding of the factual or theoretical issues, but with little development;
- misunderstandings are evident;
- there is some evidence of planning, although irrelevant/unrelated material or arguments are included.

20–39 (Fail). A Fail will be awarded in cases which:
- fail to answer the question or to develop an argument that relates to the question set;
- do not engage with the relevant literature or demonstrate a knowledge of the key issues;
- contain clear conceptual or factual errors or misunderstandings.

0–19 (Fail). A Fail will be awarded in cases which:
- show no knowledge or understanding related to the question set;
- show no evidence of critical thought or analysis;
- contain short answers and incoherent argument.

Specimen exam papers

CeFiMS does not provide past papers or model answers to papers. Modules 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 and to reflect the exam that will be set on this module.

Your final examination will have the same structure and style and the range of question will be comparable to those in the Specimen Exam. The number of questions will be the same, but the wording and the requirements of each question will be different.

Good luck on your final examination.

Further information

On line you will find 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/, setting out the rules by which exams are governed.
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.
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]
# Contents

1.1 Introduction to HRM 3
1.2 The Activities of HRM 3
1.3 The Context of HRM 5
1.4 Strategic HRM 9
1.5 Strategic HRM in the Public Sector 13
1.6 Conclusion and Summary 15

References and Websites 16
Notes on Readings 17
Unit Content

Unit 1 is an introduction to the study and practice of human resource management (HRM) in the public sector. The unit’s aims are to present an overview of HRM, and present and critique some of the current debates in HRM. You will consider the importance of understanding the context in which HRM is practised, which is the basis for an appreciation of strategic HRM. The emphasis on strategic HRM in this course is based on the connection between how organisations achieve their goals through the use of HR policies and practices. In recent years, governments have started to make this connection. Therefore, you will be introduced to one of the main theoretical models of strategic HRM before considering its applicability to public sector organisations. This unit thus provides the basis for considering the strategic implications of the functional aspects of HRM in the units to come.

Learning Outcomes

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

- discuss the basic principles of HRM, both as an academic subject of study and as an area of managerial practice
- explain how organisational context shapes the practice of HRM
- assess the relationship between organisational strategy and HRM, using a theoretical model
- assess the impact of public sector reform on HRM.

Reading for Unit 1

Course Textbook


The course textbook provides an introduction to the study of strategic HRM. As this first unit provides much of the theoretical basis for the rest of the course, there does seem to be a lot of reading to begin with! So, before going any further, please read Part 1 of Truss et al. (three chapters).

Course Reader


1.1 Introduction to HRM

This Unit introduces the main building blocks of the course. It begins with an overview of the main activities of HRM and how these link to the rest of the Units in the course. We then consider the importance of context, which is crucial in assessing the applicability of HRM to any given organisation before turning to the concept of strategic HRM. Here, a model is presented that forms a basis for the analysis in the rest of the Units on the course. Finally, we consider briefly how ‘strategic’ HRM can be in the public sector. Before going any further, we ask you to turn to the course textbook.

**Reading**

Please study Chapter 4 of your textbook now.

We realise there is a lot of reading from the textbook to begin with, but it will help to get you familiar with strategic HRM. However, before we go any further, we need to define HRM – if we should try to define HRM at all. Below in the unit, the main activities of HRM are outlined, taking a functional perspective of what HRM ‘is’, and section 4.3 of the textbook also takes this perspective to provide a series of models (or typologies) of the role of HR in an organisation. As the textbook authors note in their chapter summary: ‘despite the exhortation to move to a more strategic role…HR has not become more strategic, that administrative work continues to dominate’ (p. 75), and possibly more so in the public sector. The reasons for this will be discussed later.

You may also want to look at Table 4.1 to see how the role of HR is played out in your own organisation. Without pre-empting your answer, it is likely that for most public sector organisations your response will be somewhere between ‘the clerk of works’ and ‘functional expert’ or possibly ‘administrative expert’. Most organisations regard HR as a staff function belonging to a particular department (variously labelled ‘establishments’, ‘personnel’, etc. or more recently ‘HR’). As a consequence, the textbook authors extend the simplistic definition of HRM as ‘managing people’ to strategic HRM by suggesting that ‘it is a holistic approach to managing people geared towards helping achieve organizational objectives’ (p. 99). We will come back to the concept of strategic HRM later in the unit.

Your notes on the reading should include your own vision of the nature of HRM, and how your own organisation or experience has dealt with human resources.

1.2 The Activities of HRM

Although HRM is a contested field of study, which sometimes appears to be overcrowded with theories, models and concepts (especially when you first read the text book), there is a basic agreement on the main activities of HRM. Most writers assume HRM consists of a set of core activities – which also provide the structure of the course:

- recruitment and selection
- performance management
- training and development

Catherine Truss, David Mankin and Clare Kelliher (2012) Strategic Human Resource Management, Chapter 4 ‘The strategic role of the HR function’.
- employee relations
- pay management.

We discuss each of these below.

**Recruitment and Selection** (or ‘Resourcing’ – the subject of Unit 2)

This is the activity of HRM we all can relate to. Once an organisation has identified which jobs require filling, then it can proceed to recruit staff. Recruitment is about attracting candidates to apply for its jobs; selection is about finding the best person for the job or jobs from among the candidates it has attracted. Recruitment and selection refers to a set of techniques that are used to recruit and select staff to carry out the jobs that the organisation has identified.

**Performance Management and Appraisal** (the basis for Unit 3)

Once the best person for the job begins work, most organisations will wish to monitor their performance and to develop them as employees. Prior to the advent of HRM, this was done on a day-to-day basis, with the informal help of line managers. Now, many public sector organisations take a systematic approach to the management of individual performance including formal annual reviews, often known as ‘performance appraisals’. In some ways, this is similar to the civil service ‘annual confidential report’, but the key difference is that it is related to the overall strategy of the organisation. So, a key activity of HRM is linking individual performance to organisational performance.

**Training and Development** (the basis for Unit 4)

Although staff develop their skills ‘on the job’, organisations provide additional formal learning opportunities. These may vary enormously and as you will discover, there is a distinction between training and development. With the latter, there is recognition in HRM that staff need to develop new skills and competencies that not only meet their own needs, but those of the organisation.

**Employee Relations** (Unit 5)

Employee relations deal with the management of the relationship between the organisations and the staff as a whole. In many countries, and particularly in the public sector, staff are represented by a trade union or unions. However, employee relations goes beyond managing relationships with unions; managers still need to decide on aspects such as communication and the extent to which staff can participate in the management of the organisation.

**Pay Management** (or 'Reward' – Unit 6)

Deciding how much and in what way staff should be paid is a major part of HRM. It is probably the issue, along with recruitment and selection, that has the highest salience for employees. Pay decisions are often based on performance but, as you will see, this is a highly contentious area for public sector organisations.
There are several other activities that do not fit neatly into the course scheme, but will be mentioned from time to time. Although they are not examined in the course textbook in any detail, it is worth being aware of them:

- human resource planning
- job analysis
- employment reform.

**Human Resource Planning (HRP)**

HRP is a technical exercise to plan the staffing of an organisation. Usually related to large organisations, particularly in the public sector, it is used to forecast staffing needs. Changes to public policy will also trigger HRP, for instance, if a government decides it needs to deploy more police officers or qualified nurses, etc. Even where public policy is stable, ongoing estimates are still required as circumstances change – such as predicting if large numbers are due for retirement.

**Job Analysis**

Job analysis often accompanies HRP and is carried out at the level of the job or a ‘family’ of jobs. Job analysis also refers to a set of techniques used to determine job content (the outcome of which is the job description) and the knowledge and competences (skills and abilities) required to undertake the job (the person specification).

**Employment Reform**

The public sector is under severe fiscal pressure in most developed Western countries (particularly Europe), which is also felt in developing countries where budgetary pressures are brought to bear on World Bank or IMF sponsored structural adjustment programmes. Transitional, or post-communist states, have also sought to reduce the size of their public sectors. As a result, organisations have to retrench serving employees. Clearly, there is a HR aspect to managing this form of employment reform. Popularly known as ‘downsizing’, it receives scant attention in the mainstream HRM literature, including the course textbook (where on p. 279 it is noted that the HR role here ‘is to manage the process legally and fairly and to minimize the impact on the remaining workforce’).

### 1.3 The Context of HRM

This section is based on Chapter 2 of the course textbook.

**Reading**

If you haven’t already done so, please read Chapter 2 now.

Your notes should clarify the main issues raised.
Studying HRM in context has two aspects:

- the contrast between what textbooks say should happen in an ideal world (prescription) and what actually happens in the real world (description)
- the contrast between the view that organisations in different countries are essentially similar, or at least that they are becoming more alike (convergence – or the process of ‘institutional isomorphism’, which you studied in the first course of PPM) and the view that organisations in different countries are different, and possibly getting more different with time (divergence).

There is a huge market for textbooks on HRM but the question remains: how can we apply ‘good practice’ models in contexts very different from commercial organisations operating in the United States from where much of the literature derives? To what extent can it be applied in the public sector of non-Western countries?

Reading

Please turn now to your Course Reader and study the article by Richard Common. This reading reveals the complexities and challenges presented by adapting HRM practices and prescriptions from overseas agents in a country experiencing rapid political and social change. An aim of the article is to explore the limits of HRM when applied to government organisations. There are some themes that appear in the article that may recur. Section 2 refers to convergence and divergence. The concept of convergence considers that due to globalising pressures, the result will be greater organisational similarity as business and government respond to similar challenges and economic pressures. The counter argument is that globalisation in fact results in greater divergence between nation states, where cultures are reasserted. The article also considers the importance of understanding context and how public sector reform has impacted on HRM, which we discuss further on in this unit.

Once you have read the article, and made notes on the main issues, write your answers to the following:

1. What motivated the Georgian government to introduce HRM into its public service?
2. What prevented HRM from taking hold in the Georgian government?
3. Why was the political culture important when understanding the context of change in Georgia?
4. Can you find any similarities between your own experience and the Georgian case?

Notes on these questions are provided at the end of the unit, but please answer them on your own before looking at our notes.

The various perspectives that shape the debate about HRM in particular and management in general are for the most part specific to Western liberal market democracies. As we emphasise in the course as a whole, any organisation must be contextualised within its national setting. Even within national settings, context varies strongly. We pay a lot of attention to the
cultural environment in this course. Dowling and Welch (2004: 13) provide a strong justification for this:

Because international business involves the interaction and movement of people across national boundaries, an appreciation of cultural differences and when these differences are important is essential.

This statement applies equally to public administration, which has become more internationalised since the last century through processes such as policy learning (also explored in your first course on PPM).

1.3.1 The cultural context

National culture cannot be ignored, for it is regarded as a major determinant of work attitudes. Hofstede (1980: 25) defines culture as ‘the interactive aggregate of common characteristics that influence a human group’s response to its environment’. The work of Hofstede has also questioned the assertion that the applicability of management theory and concepts derived from the US can be applied across different national cultures.

The term culture is usually applied to societies, but it can also be applied to organisations located within particular societies. Culture can be used as an explanatory variable in management studies as it causes differences and affects the ‘transferability of management and organizational practices’ (Lachman et al. 1994: 40). However, culture may be uneven in its effects and often involves religious or ideological elements. For example, China’s civil service is often described as an example of Asian Communist/Confucian administration. Islamic principles are invoked in Malaysian public administration, which has attracted the attention of Saudi administrators who prefer to learn from a country with which it has a cultural affinity rather than the West.

Without an appreciation of national culture, HR theory and practices adopted from outside the national setting of the organisation may be inappropriate to local needs and circumstances. As Lachman and his colleagues argue:

...‘imported’ practices may fail, or be ineffectively implemented, if they are inconsistent with the core values of local settings.

For instance, the core value of individualism in the US, which is implicit in managerial prescriptions, conflicts with the notion of collectivism, which is prevalent in East Asia. Hickson and Pugh (1995) examined Asian management culture and found much of it differs sharply with Western management theory. In particular, the stress on ‘managing relationships in a harmonious manner’ and ‘managing authority firmly from the top’ conflicts with the ideals of devolved management, ‘freedom to manage’ and ‘brainstorming sessions’, for instance, that one finds in western textbooks. It is clear that HRM is required to be sensitive to cultural differences within and between countries and regions. Schuler and Tarique (2007: 724) thus argue that HR practice needs to be developed which is appropriate for an organisation’s context, including culture.
1.3.2 The institutional context

The institutional context is equally important as that of culture, although some writers do not distinguish between culture and institutions on the basis that both shape each other. However, institutions do exert a formal influence over HRM practices, both domestically and internationally. First of all, what do we mean by institution?

On the one hand, institutions reflect the values of a society and exist in its systems of governance, such as a national parliament. For instance, a recurring theme in HRM is equalities and, very often, equal opportunity legislation is the product of public policy. On the other hand, institutions may also exist to promote ideas or procedures that specifically influence HR practice, such as the UK’s Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development (CIPD). There are many studies that detail the importance of both the institutional and cultural context for HR practice. For example, Namazie and Frame (2007) examined HRM in Iran and emphasise the importance of political change and the role of culture in determining the direction of HRM within that country. By taking an institutional perspective, we can assume a divergence between HRM practices in different countries.

Reading

Now turn to 6.5.1 (in Chapter 6, ‘Resource-based and institutional perspectives on SHRM’) of the textbook.

You will see that in the institutional perspective on HRM, the work of DiMaggio and Powell (1983) is revisited from the first course on PPM, Public Policy and Management: Perspectives and Issues. The point here is that the textbook authors draw upon the work of Oliver (1997) to suggest that management practices reflect the rules, norms and structures prevalent within the society in which organisations are located, but these in turn can be subjected to the mechanisms identified by DiMaggio and Powell towards greater similarity or isomorphism.

Finally, the study of HRM within international organisations is a distinct field. International HRM is concerned with HR systems used by international organisations such as the IMF and the World Bank, while in the private sector it is concerned with Multi-National Corporations (MNCs). However, public management systems in individual countries also respond to external forces, such as the globalisation of the world economy and the need to accommodate the prescriptions of international organisations. The fact that organisations respond to their environments, either willingly or as a result of pressures, brings us to the concept of strategic HRM.
1.4 Strategic HRM

You should begin this section by studying again from your textbook.

Reading

Please read Chapter 5 of the textbook.

Make sure your notes on the reading clarify the models presented in the chapter.

1.4.1 Introduction

As you will have seen from this chapter of your textbook, it is difficult to disaggregate HRM from organisational strategy. If an organisation provides new services, or new products, then it must ensure it has the staff with the right skills, competencies and attitudes to be able to deliver them. It may need to recruit more people, or if it is unable to do that, it may need to retrain and develop existing staff to meet the new challenges. So, if an organisation acts strategically, in response to changes in its environment, HRM is a key part of that strategy. Thus, the field of strategic HRM has grown enormously over the last 30 years or so. Chapter 5 covers an array of key models that are influential in the field and presents them under two broad sets of approaches: the universalist approach and the contingency approach.

The universalist approach argues that as long as organisations implement ‘best practice’, such as Pfeffer’s (2005), organisations will be successful. The ‘best practice’ approach has intuitive appeal – it provides managers with a guide as to how HRM should be implemented in their organisation. In short, it is a normative approach. On the other hand, contingency approaches suggest that rather than thinking of ‘best practice’ in HRM, there should be ‘best fit’ – in that HRM practice varies with the contingencies of the organisation.

One of the most well known approaches is that of Devanna et al. As this course is part of the PPM degree, a caveat for considering such a model is that it was developed in a specific country (the United States) and in a specific context (increasing private sector competition). So, quite rightly, we must wonder how applicable such a model might be to a government agency operating in Asia or Africa, for instance. We return to this question later.

The analysis of Devanna and her colleagues takes the HRM activities identified at the beginning of the unit as a starting point. Although these authors are not concerned with their content, which they take for granted, it is the relationship between them that is considered. Their concern is with the way they are linked together (horizontal integration) and, moreover, with the way they are linked to the overall management of the organisation (vertical integration). Their argument is that the practice of those activities should be strategic, by which they mean that it should be linked to the organisation’s strategy. Research shows that successful organisations should articulate their human resource philosophy in the context of their overall philosophy, as revealed in mission statements, etc.
Devanna et al. also use the notion of the human resource cycle to make the link between the strategy of the organisation and how the staff within it are managed. Their argument is that performance (which you will study in Unit 3), whether of individuals or groups, is shaped by selection (people who are best able to perform the jobs), by appraisal (to facilitate the equitable distribution of rewards) motivating employees by linking rewards to high levels of performance, and by developing employees to enhance their performance now and in the future (Devanna et al. 1984: 41). Each of these aspects will be covered in detail in the units that follow. Now turn to your reading.

### Reading

Please now study the chapter by Devanna et al. in Fombrun et al.’s path-breaking book from 1984. This book introduced the ‘Michigan model’ (see p.85 of the textbook for a fuller explanation), which paved the way for strategic HRM, and became known as the ‘matching model’, based on the notion that HR systems and organisational structure should be congruent with strategy. The model also presented four generic functions of all organisations. These are

- **selection** – matching available human resources to jobs
- **appraisal** – performance management
- **rewards** – which take into account future achievements
- **development** – developing high-quality employees.

After reading this chapter, your notes should enable you to answer the following questions:

1. What are the features of ‘strategic’ human resource management in Devanna’s model?
2. What is meant by the notion of the human resource cycle?
3. How would taking a strategic HRM approach affect the practice of selection?

#### 1.4.2 The SHRM model: vertical integration

The central concept in Devanna et al.’s model is that of strategic integration. Strategic integration has two aspects; the first is vertical integration, which is visually represented below in Figure 1.1.

**Figure 1.1 Vertical Integration in the HRM model**

You should recall from the reading the examples that Devanna et al. give of how selection and the other activities in what they call the ‘human resource cycle’, can be strategic. You will notice in the figure above that the link between individual activities and the organisation’s overall strategy is its human resource strategy. In other words, organisational strategy is converted into a human resource strategy, and the latter is again con-
verted into the different human resource activities, which are the practical manifestation of strategic HRM.

1.4.3 The SHRM model: horizontal integration

However, there is a second type of integration which remains implicit in Devanna et al.’s work, that of horizontal integration. (It is sometimes known as ‘horizontal fit’ or ‘bundling’ in the literature.) While vertical integration refers to links between the HR activities and the organisation’s strategy, horizontal integration refers to links between the HR activities themselves, and to the fact that the conduct of one HR task may influence the conduct of another. So, for instance, the conduct of selection may influence the conduct of rewards, and vice versa. Again, Figure 1.2 should make it clear why the term ‘horizontal integration’ is used.

**Figure 1.2 Strategic Human Resources Management model: horizontal integration**

Let us now look at how this concept applies to one of the activities identified above, job analysis, which influences or is influenced by the other activities of HRM.

**Job analysis and recruitment and selection**

Job content as identified through job analysis is the basis for advertising the job to prospective applicants, attracting those who are eligible and deterring those who are not. The abilities that the jobholder will require, also identified through job analysis, form the basis for decisions about which candidates to invite to the final selection stage, about the design of the final selection stage, and the ultimate decision about which candidate to appoint.

**Job analysis and performance management and appraisal**

The duties of the job as identified through job analysis are often used to generate objectives for managing performance, and to provide an agenda for the annual appraisal interview.

**Job analysis and training and development**

One way of identifying training and development needs is through comparing the abilities that the job requires and the abilities of the jobholder – the difference between the two is sometimes called the ‘performance gap’.
Job analysis and employee relations

Job analysis can lessen damaging conflict that might otherwise occur between unions, or employees’ representatives, and managers as the representatives of the employer. It is possible to have an agreement on an approach to job analysis so that the results will be accepted as impartial by both managers and unions. Greater employee involvement and participation in relation to job analysis can also improve employee relations.

Job analysis and pay management

Judgements about how much to pay an employee are usually made, at least partly, in relation to the level of responsibility that the job requires, as stated in the job content. Job evaluation, one of the most important techniques for making pay decisions, can only operate based on reliable job analysis data.

Job analysis and human resource planning (HRP)

HRP identifies broad staffing needs at the level of the organisation. Job analysis translates them into the content of individual jobs and the abilities that jobholders will need to do them. So, if HRP has identified the need for better financial skills, for instance, job analysis will identify the content of finance jobs, whether the jobs are those of accountants, finance managers or pay clerks.

Job analysis and employment reform

Governments that have tried to reduce the number of public sector jobs have used job analysis data to help them identify where there is scope for reduction. For instance, comparing the content of jobs in two different ministries may reveal that there is duplication, with the same function being carried out in both, thus offering scope for reduction.

1.4.4 Other models of strategic HRM

Of course, Devanna et al.’s model of strategic HRM is one among many models that have emerged since the 1980s and fall into the category of ‘contingency models’. Although you will have seen that Chapter 5 of the textbook provides a detailed discussion of these models, contingency models (or ‘best-fit’ approaches) ‘are premised on the notion that the way in which people are managed in organizations will vary according to circumstances’ (Truss et al. p. 95). Linking back to the importance of context above, despite the criticisms levelled at such models in Chapter 5, they appear to be more appropriate and adaptable to public sector organisations in a variety of cultural and institutional settings.

Compare this to the universalist approaches, which are based on the assumption ‘there is “one best way” of managing people in order to enhance organizational performance’ (p. 90). In section 5.4.1, the authors reproduce Pfeffer’s best-practice approach, a list consisting of 13 prescriptions. Universalists believe that these elements can be applied anywhere, regardless of context.
Review Question

It is worth pausing at this point and thinking how applicable these ‘best practices’ are to your organisation and what prevents their implementation.

You will find this kind of comparison being asked of you throughout the course, and you might find it useful to compare your answers when you have finished the final unit.

1.5 Strategic HRM in the Public Sector

In line with much of the academic literature, Truss and her colleagues have very little to say on strategic HRM in the public sector. However, a literature on HRM exists which has embraced strategic HRM in the public sector but, again, it is limited to the United States and a handful of other developed countries. Other limitations on HRM in the public sector include financial costs, which may provoke negative reactions from politicians and voters, misunderstandings on the part of managers, lack of flexibility in relation to organisational change and lack of professional skills and knowledge amongst HR professionals. In addition, the reality of managing in a political environment means that strategic thinking is out of the hands of managers, as priorities quickly change in response to sudden political and budgetary priorities (Pynes, 2009). These themes recur throughout the course.

However, having introduced a model of strategic HRM and having placed some value on it, what happens when it is applied in a different context from where it was derived, such as the public sector? The ‘Michigan’ model of Devanna et al. was influenced by strategic management in that HRM follows organisational strategy and thus appears to fit the conditions of the public sector better than a private firm (Price 2004: 46). As a result, the model reflects the situation of public management, which is often constrained by its context and lacks much of the freedom assumed to exist in the private sector. In short, it takes a top-down approach while recognising the influence of economic, political and cultural forces.

As you saw earlier, we also have to consider whether any management model is going to be ‘appropriate’ in a particular context. One immediate problem when we apply strategic HRM to the public sector is that reward systems (both monetary and non-monetary) often lack flexibility (as you will see in Unit 6, on reward). Training and development may also suffer from similarly limited resources. However, Pynes (2009: 39) considers how the US Office of Personnel Management devised a five-step model based on the kind of strategic HRM promoted by Devanna et al.

- **Step 1: Strategic direction.** This involves linking the workforce planning process with the agency’s strategic plan, annual performance and business plan, and the work activities required to carry out long- and short-term goals and objectives.
- **Step 2: Analyse the workforce, identify skills gaps, and conduct workforce analysis.** This involves determining what the current workforce resources are and how they will evolve through turnover; developing specifications for the kinds, numbers, and locations of workers and managers needed to accomplish the agency’s strategic requirements;
and determining what gaps exist between the current and projected workforce needs.

- **Step 3: Develop an action plan.** This involves the identification of strategies to close gaps, plans to implement the strategies, and measures for assessing strategic progress. These strategies could include recruiting, training and retraining, restructuring organisations, contracting out, succession planning and technological upgrades.

- **Step 4: Implement the action plan.** This involves ensuring that human and fiscal resources are in place; roles are understood; and the necessary communication, marketing, and coordination are occurring to execute the plan and achieve the strategic objectives.

- **Step 5: Monitor, evaluate and revise.** This involves monitoring progress against milestones, assessing for continuous improvements, and adjusting the plan to make course corrections and address new issues.

These five steps are fairly unremarkable on their own, but the general point is that strategic HRM is now fairly well engrained in the US Federal Government and elsewhere, including the UK National Health Service.

In relation to development management, strategic HRM is linked to capacity building (explored further in Unit 4). As Farazmand (2004: 6) explains, this link refers ‘to building and enhancing a cadre of highly qualified, highly able, and highly motivated human resources at all levels of government’. Farazmand also itemises the key strategic areas for development in HRM based on an assessment of the public service of Iran. Below are some selected items:

- **E-governance and E-HRM** – to ‘enable public organizations to provide public service information’ (including HR) and to help governments communicate more effectively with their citizens (p. 11).

- **Strategic positions and leadership personnel** – ‘...preparing and promoting exceptionally skilled and knowledgeable personnel for leadership and managerial...functions of government organizations’ (p.12).

- **Strategic motivation** – ‘...to develop strategic HRM requires stepping beyond the traditional methods and approaches (of motivation), i.e. ‘creation and instilment of a “real purpose” of “public service” among strategic personnel’ (p. 13).

While public sector reform in general has required a change in the management of human resources in the public sector, there are criticisms around the potential harm to public services. This is largely the result of public sector organisations being expected to behave like their private sector counterparts. These are itemised by Hughes (2012: 245-8):

- **Reducing conditions of service** – similarity to private sector employment may demotivate public managers in the long run. The present economic climate has seen a range of Western governments also proposing changes to public service pensions, conditions of service and dismantling national pay agreements.

- **Performance management systems** – the use of formal appraisal systems (see Unit 3) has brought management control into the public service although it is often difficult to quantify the work of a civil servant, doctor or police officer. This has created a double-bind whereby public
managers have been given more ‘freedom’ by waves of reform but are subject to greater controls in terms of achieving results.

- **Performance pay** (see Unit 6) – has tended to be unsuccessful due to the rigidity of organisational hierarchies, perceived unfairness and the relatively small amount of extra reward on offer.

- **Problems of morale** – public sector employment was arguably a ‘valuable and valued profession, and one with substantial prestige’ in many countries. Attacks on the legitimacy of public administration, beginning in the West from the early 1980s, have contributed to poor morale in many parts of the public service.

Hughes (2012: 248) adds that HRM has generally helped to improve the competence of the public sector, and jobs themselves tend to be more challenging and thus rewarding. In sum, HRM has helped to professionalise public service.

### Reading

Please now study the article by Ingraham and Rubaii-Barrett on HRM as a core dimension of public administration.

The authors of this article emphasise the importance of HRM in a public service setting as well as providing a service with their select readings. However, if you take a critical perspective, the article is US-centric and as you read it, you will inevitably make comparisons with your own experience, as you did with the reading by Common.

After reading and taking notes on the article, write your own answers on the following:

1. Are the factors the authors identify as barriers to HRM universally applicable?
2. The authors suggest there are three priorities for HR practitioners in the public service: strategic HRM, managing modern merit, and flexibility and responsiveness to change. Can these priorities be realised?
3. Another recurring theme on this course will be competencies. The authors identify two, communication and accountability. Can you think of any others?

### 1.6 Conclusion and Summary

HRM has a relatively recent history as a discreet subject within the wider portfolio of management studies. Its lineage can be traced back to personnel administration, and the two terms are still used interchangeably. One interpretation is to consider HRM from a functional perspective, which is what this course will do in the forthcoming units.

In this brief introduction, the importance of context was highlighted – all organisations manage within a particular context primarily defined by institutional arrangements and the cultural characteristics within which they are embedded. Understanding the organisational environment is at the core of strategic thinking, and you were also introduced to one of the theoretical models of strategic HRM, the ‘Michigan’ model of Devanna et al. Although associated with ‘hard’ HRM, ‘with the focus on people as resources to be deployed to maximise performance’ (Truss et al: 2012: 85-6), it provides a
realistic view of public sector organisations. While the model is not promoted as an ideal type or as prescription for HR problems, it serves as a reference point when introducing the functional areas of HRM in the forthcoming units.

Finally, this unit considered the impact of public sector reform on HRM. As the following units reveal, the public sector presents particular challenges to the application of HRM, irrespective of economic or geographic location.

In this unit, you have been introduced to:

- the field of HRM, both as an academic subject of study and as an area of managerial practice
- an examination of how the organisational context shapes the practice of HRM, primarily through its cultural and institutional features
- the relationship between organisational strategy and HRM using a theoretical model – in this case, the ‘Michigan’ model of Devanna et al.
- the impact of public sector reform on HRM.

References and Websites


Civil Service, http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/


Notes on Readings


1 What motivated the Georgian government to introduce HRM into its public service?

The motivation to introduce HRM into the public sector in any country is complex. The internationalisation of public management approaches (such as HRM), the demands of globalisation, the desire for efficiency, greater effectiveness, etc. are often cited. In this case, Georgia was exposed to international organisations and consultants that attempted to implement HRM policies and processes into the government system. One particular motivation in line with post-communist states is that HRM is viewed as a way of ensuring public management acts independently of politicised elites and excessive centralisation. In addition, on page 428, it is noted that HRM offers the potential to avoid ‘bureaucratic ills’ such as corruption.

2 What prevented HRM from taking hold in the Georgian government?

The subsection entitled ‘Explaining the lack of progress in HR reform’ provides the answer, but what is clear that HRM was not able to address the problems that had been identified in the Georgian government. Of course, HRM did make a difference to management in the government, but not a substantial one.

3 Why was the political culture important when understanding the context of change in Georgia?

Context explains the success, or otherwise, of HRM in a particular country’s system of public administration. National or societal culture, in the case of Georgia, was less important than the persistence of strong political institutions. The report by GIPA, cited on p.430, summarises this very well. In addition, there was a lack of strategic direction from the government.
4 Can you find any similarities between your own experience and the Georgian case?

Developed countries, such as the UK, continue to experience similar problems to that of Georgia. Centralised public service systems find it difficult to find the flexibility that is prescribed by strategic HRM. In developing countries, where there are high degrees of politicisation in public services, along with corruption and a lack of transparency, HRM becomes more difficult to implement. Only you can decide on the similarities, or differences, with the experience of Georgia.


1 What are the features of ‘strategic’ human resource management?

Human resource management should be brought in line with the overall strategic management of the organisation. In the first instance, the organisation should articulate a human resource philosophy. This might indicate the extent to which the organisation prefers to ‘promote from within’ rather than recruit from outside, or it might indicate the extent to which the organisation prefers to emphasise the individual or the group as the unit of production (these are two of the four examples given by these authors). In the second instance, it means ensuring that the individual human resource elements are also aligned with the organisation’s overall strategy.

2 What is meant by the notion of the human resource cycle?

What Devanna and her colleagues mean by this is presented in visual form in Figure 2. The figure is based on the idea of a sequence of managerial tasks that are interrelated. The relationships are suggested by the figure, but not developed.

3 How would taking a strategic HRM approach affect the practice of selection?

Let’s take selection as an example of one of the main Human Resource activities that will be affected by taking a strategic approach. The same considerations apply to the other main activities that Devanna et al. discuss: performance, appraisal, rewards and development. The authors identify three strategic concerns:

- designing a selection system that matches the organisation’s strategy
- monitoring the internal flow of personnel to match emerging business strategies
- matching key executives to business strategies.

They illustrate each of the concerns with examples from American companies. In the case of the first concern, to take one example, the authors show how an oil company’s strategy of diversification (moving into new areas of business activity to reduce their dependence on oil production and marketing, and to capitalise on other opportunities for growth) creates a need to modify its selection of new employees in order to employ fewer staff who have technical skills that are specific to the oil industry, and more who have financial and marketing skills.
1 Are the factors the authors identify as barriers to HRM universally applicable?

The authors note five factors that act as barriers to HRM. The first being that people are treated as a ‘cost’ rather than a ‘resource’ is universally true. For the second, bureaucratic structures inhibit HRM and, as the authors note, there are good reasons for bureaucracy in the public sector. Bureaucracy is common to all governments. The third barrier they identify is increasingly familiar – resource constraints. Public services find it difficult to reward and incentivise people due structural constraints. The final barrier is the lack of strong leadership. Although leadership will be examined in Unit 3, the point is made about the difference between politicised and organisational leadership. This leads to the final barrier, the political nature of the environment, which means that organisational change and decision making rests with politicians, rather than managers.

2 The authors suggest there are three priorities for HR practitioners in the public service: strategic HRM, managing modern merit, and flexibility and responsiveness to change. Can these priorities be realised?

Strategic HRM is the subject of this course, and we are exploring this question now! However, there is a hint on page 8 of their paper that strategic HRM requires decentralisation for it to work convincingly – when they compare changes at the state level to the federal (central) government level. In relation to merit, the authors argue that rather than focus on the efforts of individuals, teamwork requires more consideration (again, explored in Unit 3) as well as contribution to organisational outcomes. Flexibility and responsiveness will require changes to organisational structure, or removing ‘traditional hierarchical models’, and this priority is possibly the most difficult to realise. In any case, the authors identify changing sectoral boundaries, technological change, and greater diversity as areas where sufficient change may occur.

3 Another recurring theme on this course will be competencies. The authors identify two, communication and accountability. Can you think of any others?

You may work for an organisation where there is a competency profile. In the UK civil service, for example, they include (and discussed in other units in the course) the following:

**Leadership**

Leadership qualities are to enable civil servants to:

- provide direction for the organisation
- deliver results
- build capacity for the organisation to address current and future challenges
- act with integrity.

**Core skills**

At Grade 7 the four core skills are:
• people management
• financial management
• analysis and use of evidence
• programme and project management.

In addition to these skills, those in or aspiring to the Senior Civil Service need to demonstrate skills in communications and marketing, and strategic thinking.

**Professional skills**

Job-specific professional skills are important, whether civil servants work in policy development, operational delivery or corporate services, or provide expert advice (for example, scientists, economists and communicators).

**Broader experience**

For SCS members and those aspiring to the SCS, both depth and breadth of experience are important. Breadth of experience also becomes increasingly important.

(Adapted from Civil Service, [http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/](http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/))

In addition to communication and accountability, other more generic competencies include team orientation, customer focus, results orientation and problem-solving.