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Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development

**Professional Development Scheme**

**Specialist Personnel and Development**

**Managing Organisational  
Learning and Knowledge**

**November 2007**

**9 November 2007      09:50-12:00 hrs**

**Time allowed - Two hours and ten minutes**  
(including ten minutes' reading time).

**Answer Section A and SEVEN of the ten questions in Section B.**

**Please write clearly and legibly.**

**Questions may be answered in any order.**

**Equal marks are allocated to each section of the paper.**  
**Within Section B equal marks are allocated to each question.**

**If a question includes reference to 'your organisation', this may be interpreted as covering any organisation with which you are familiar.**

**The case study is not based on an actual company. Any similarities to known organisations are accidental.**

**You will fail the examination if:**

- **you fail to answer seven questions in Section B and/or**
- **you achieve less than 40 per cent in any section.**

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#### SECTION A – Case Study

**Note: It is permissible to make assumptions by adding to the case study details given below provided the essence of the case study is neither changed nor undermined in any way by what is added.**

The National Finance Corporation (NFC) is a London based financial services company selling a range of financial products to corporate clients. It also manages pension funds and is involved in investment banking. Its corporate headquarters is based in the City of London where approximately 500 of the company's 700 employees work. The other 200 are located at the company's Hong Kong division and are on two year expatriate contracts. The company was formed by Jim Henderson, who left one of London's leading investment banks to establish his own business some 20 years ago. Since then, NFC has prospered and has an annual turnover of over £1billion.

Jim has created a culture where hard work and commitment are rewarded, and there is a strong emphasis on individual responsibility and performance. People come to work there because of its reputation as a high payer and because of the challenges the work there provides. Over 300 of the headquarters staff are professional or managerial employees who work in one of the company's five departments; pensions, investment products, insurance, corporate bonds and unit trusts. The Hong Kong operation represents the sixth operating department, but beyond taking some of the London based staff on two year contracts, it is largely autonomous in terms of day to day management. Each division is headed by a senior partner and operates relatively independently of each other in terms of management structures.

Although the company is successful in financial terms, Jim is aware that the pressure to perform and generate income has created problems for relatively junior employees. Although newly recruited graduates are given early responsibility for meeting financial targets, the company has no formal career or development strategy for its new graduates, and their early learning experiences are unstructured, unplanned and lack direction. The lack of support for their learning is not only affecting their performance levels, but is also a factor in the decision of some of the graduates to leave. Jim realises that action needs to be taken to address the situation.

Jim has had informal discussions with his senior partners over the possibility of introducing a mentoring scheme for the junior managerial and professional staff. Whilst expressing general support for the idea, none has had any direct involvement of mentoring and there is an obvious lack of understanding and experience of what such a scheme might involve and the ways in which it could enhance individual and collective learning and knowledge sharing. Jim also has the feeling that some of the partners believe that the current lack of learning support mechanisms is actually a good way of sorting "the wheat from the chaff" and that their commitment to a mentoring scheme is somewhat superficial.

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However, Jim is determined to explore the matter further and has contacted his regional university Business School where there are people who know about mentoring and have experience of introducing mentoring schemes.

In the role of a Faculty member you have been asked to attend a meeting with Jim and his senior management team to present a proposal to them. Produce a draft of your proposal making relevant reference to wider contemporary practice and research findings to include the following:

1. An explanation of what mentoring involves, how it will enhance the knowledge of graduates and the learning processes the scheme might use.
2. An outline plan for a mentoring scheme, which is to include the scheme's objectives, how it would operate, timescales, levels of commitment, resources needed, changes that might need to be made in the way managers operate and any other details that the management team might want to know.
3. A strategy for evaluating the effectiveness of the mentoring scheme.

*You should devote approximately 25% of your time to question 1, 50% to question 2 and 25% to question 3.*

**PLEASE TURN OVER**

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#### SECTION B

**Answer SEVEN of the ten questions in this section. To communicate your answers more clearly you may use whatever methods you wish, for example diagrams, flowcharts, bullet points, so long as you provide an explanation of each.**

1. You recently attended a CIPD organised conference on, 'Developing a Learning Culture for your Organisation,' and want to share with your colleagues the cultural features and practices associated with an effective learning environment. Outline and justify the key points you will make.
2. Your manager has been thinking about whether the organisation should develop an e-learning capability and reduce time spent on course-based learning. She has asked you to consider what forms of e-learning are available and what you would recommend. Make reference to literature sources to explain what you would say to her and why.
3. Writers such as Pfeffer and Sutton suggest that one of the problems many organisations face is not in creating 'new knowledge,' but accessing and using knowledge that already exists. Give **up to four** reasons why knowledge can remain hidden from senior management. Justify your answer.
4. You have been asked to attend a learning strategy planning meeting, the outcome of which will influence the organisation's approach to the management of learning. You have been asked to brief the meeting on the most effective ways people learn at work. Draw on contemporary research and/or organisational practice to justify what you will say.
5. An increasing number of writers are emphasising the importance of evidence-based management as a foundation for future practice. Give **up to three** examples of what you have learnt in the past year which contribute to what you know 'works' in relation to any aspect of the way people learn.
6. Organisations are increasingly using coaching as a way of helping people to learn and to improve their performance at work. Making reference to research and contemporary practice, explain why coaching is becoming so popular and what organisations need to do to make coaching an effective method of learning.

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7. Ikujiro Nonaka coined the expression the 'knowledge creating company,' in 1991. What do knowledge creating organisations do, that others do less well, to increase the amount and availability of organisational knowledge?
8. Explain the difference between competence and capability. Give **up to three** examples of how a training and development specialist can contribute to the development of important organisational capabilities.
9. You have been invited to give a presentation to the local CIPD branch on 'employee centred learning.' What main points will you make in your presentation to convince the audience that this is not just another 'fad'?
10. One of the challenges associated with the management of learning relates to assessment. How can learning, in a work context, be assessed and who should be involved in the assessment process?

**END OF EXAMINATION**

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### Introduction

Forty nine candidates sat the November 2007 examination, a number considerably in excess of the thirty who took the paper in November 2006. Of the forty nine candidates, thirty three achieved the pass standard, producing an overall pass rate of 67%. This is an improvement on the November 2006 position when 63% of candidates passed, and slightly higher than last May when 61% passed. However the results this year are broadly in line with the long term trend which is for the pass rate to fall within the 60% to 70% range. I think this is a healthy position and suggests that the majority of candidates taking the paper are, with the right preparation and tutor advice, likely to be successful.

In this diet, there was a noticeable difference in the pass rates for each of the two sections. Whilst thirty four of the forty nine candidates achieved a mark of 50% or better, only twenty eight were able to achieve this for Section B. On balance therefore, Section B questions proved to be more challenging, and weaknesses in candidates' knowledge, and their ability to apply their knowledge to the questions in this section, proved the undoing of the majority of the sixteen who failed the paper. Having said this, of the fifteen candidates who scored below 50% for section A, nine also scored below 50% for section B.

There was only one Distinction paper, although eight candidates produced Merit level scripts. At the bottom end of the mark range, three candidates can be considered to be weak overall, with each producing scripts with marks around 30%.

As far as centre performance is concerned, it is difficult to draw meaningful conclusions with such a small overall number of scripts and eight centres – numbers varied from fourteen to two. However, looking closely at the results profiles, it is clear that the centres with the most candidates tended to achieve a higher overall pass rate than those with fewer candidates. The three centres with the greatest number achieved pass rates of 70% and above; those with fewer, on balance, achieved lower pass rates. Whether the number sitting at a centre is significant or not is difficult to establish, but larger cohorts may benefit from learning with and from others as well as from their tutors.

Reasons for passing and failing the paper are broadly the same as in previous examinations. Some of these are not difficult to rectify and are about what can be described as examination technique. Learning how to pass the MOLK, (as well as any other) examination should be a central element of all candidates' preparation, and those who are 'on the margin' can quite easily accumulate sufficient extra marks to take them safely into the pass range by concentrating on several key 'technical' requirements. Others are more difficult to address and are often to do with a more restricted specialist MOLK knowledge base and a more limited knowledge about more general learning and development issues and those that relate to management and organisations in general. They may also reflect the nature of candidates' employment experiences and their ability to learn from and use these in the examination.

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Finally, for those who have not been successful this time, my message is that the majority have the potential to improve on their performance next time, but that to do so they must understand what their weaknesses are in relation to their knowledge base and examination technique, and take appropriate action to address these.

The following table summarises the results achieved.

<b>November 2007</b>		
<b>Grade</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage of total (to 1 decimal point)</b>
Distinction	1	2.0%
Merit	8	16.3%
Pass	24	49.0
Marginal fail	3	6.1%
Fail	13	26.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>99.9%</b>

*The figures shown are simply calculations based on the number of candidates sitting the examination in November 2007, whether for the first or a subsequent time, and are for interest only. They are not to be confused with the statistics produced by CIPD headquarters, which are based on the performance of candidates sitting the examination for the first time. It is from these figures that the national average pass rates are calculated.*

### Section A

The three tasks associated with the Section A case study were based on the introduction of a mentoring scheme in a London based financial services business which had had overseas office in Hong Kong. The case information provided an insight into its organisation and management structure and the lack of any formal support and learning opportunities for new professional recruits. This deficiency was associated with concerns over retention problems with their performance over which there was increasing concern. On the other hand, some senior managers - perhaps because they were unsympathetic to formalised learning interventions - seemed to believe that the lack of learning support, was not necessarily a bad thing as it 'sorted the wheat from the chaff.' This is the context in which the tasks are grounded and answers to all parts of the question needed to reflect an awareness of the way such organisations are

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managed, and what would need to be done to design a mentoring scheme that had a chance of being accepted, supported and consequently prove to be effective.

The three tasks addressed the core questions of what mentoring involves and how the participants will learn from it; what an effective scheme would look like and what changes would need to be made to facilitate its acceptance and operation; and thirdly, what the features would be of an effective evaluation strategy. This required candidates to provide evidence that they not only knew something about mentoring in general, but also that they understood what needed to be done to introduce one that would have a high probability of working. Quite simply, candidates who understood these requirements and could meet them passed. Those who had difficulty with them, struggled and, at best, produced marginal answers.

Answers that were supported by relevant and contemporary literature sources, research outputs and examples of mentoring schemes received significantly higher marks than answers that did not, or did not do so in a convincing way, and this difference will always be a differentiating factor in this particular element of the CIPD professional standards.

#### Task One

The first task required candidates to show that they knew what the mentoring process involved, and could also explain how it would enhance the knowledge of graduates and what learning processes would be involved. This is not, therefore, a question that only requires candidates to write what they knew about mentoring, and answers that failed to address all three aspects lost marks.

Clearly, answers needed to explain that mentoring is a process for creating learning based on a relationship between an experienced person and one relatively inexperienced, although this is not always the case - more experienced people can also have mentors. However, information was required on the nature of the process and its characteristics, emphasising such issues as trust, confidence building, sharing knowledge, exploring issues relating to work and performance, supported by references to the work of writers such as Clutterbuck and organisational examples of mentoring schemes.

Reference also needed to be made to knowledge enhancement. This would involve the identification of sources of organisational knowledge and how these could be accessed. It could also relate to the mentor helping the mentee to become more sensitive to the way they operate and how this affects the knowledge building process. Greater self awareness, using such concepts as the Johari Window would also help in the knowledge enhancing function. With respect to this part of the first task, relatively few candidates gave any real consideration to these issues and whilst I was not expecting much on this, I did expect all answers to contain some reference how mentoring helps to build knowledge.

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As far as the third element is concerned – the learning processes a mentoring scheme might employ - more could have been said than was, and again there were few convincing answers. Those that made reference to the use of Action Learning, modelling, reflection and the use of Double Loop learning techniques, all of which a mentee might encourage the mentee to use, achieved good marks. Taking the three elements as a whole, most candidates knew something about mentoring, but there were too many that displayed a rather superficial level of knowledge; relatively few had knowledge in depth, could support answers with relevant examples and addressed all of the question's requirements.

#### Task Two

The second task required candidates to explain what an effective mentoring scheme would look like in the case study organisation, taking into account the details provided in the case material. On the whole, this was done better than task one, but it was still surprising to find some candidates coming up with quite unrealistic and naïve ideas and suggestions. These frequently related to the time from joining the company new recruits would be assigned a mentor, the frequency of meetings, who would take on the role of mentors and the length of the scheme. There are no hard rules on these issues, but there is a wealth of evidence from both the literature and from the experiences of other organisations with similar schemes that could have been referred to in the context of 'good practice,' and those candidates who scored well supported and justified their proposals rather than simply presenting them. Several candidates suggested operating a pilot scheme before rolling it out to all new graduates, and this suggestion is not without merit in the context of an organisation that is not wholly committed to the basic idea of mentoring new recruits.

Building managerial commitment is an important requirement for the success of the scheme and better answers dealt with this in a realistic way – commitment needs to be generated rather than simply called for! Administrative arrangements do not need to be over-elaborate or extensive – answers that involved recruiting additional administrative support to help run the scheme needed to justify the cost of this in relation to the benefits; none did! Mentoring schemes can be effective with a minimum of formalisation and centralised control which often undermine the sense of ownership of those directly involved. I was looking for a sensible mix of formalisation, informal operation and decentralised ownership.

The scheme's objectives needed to be established, but this is not as straightforward as it might appear. Different stakeholders might have their own objectives and tensions could easily appear if these differences are not understood and resolved. Key objectives might be framed in relation to the speed of development of the new recruits in terms of them 'learning the culture,' acquiring important insights into the business and its operations, improving their job performance and reducing wastage rates. Others could relate to the attraction of working for the company because of the scheme and the benefits enjoyed by the mentors.

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Rarely do schemes such as this work without what I call 'enabling changes' which facilitate and support the introduction of the mentoring scheme. These might be educational, in the sense that people who may be involved need to be informed about the nature of the process and why it would benefit the business. Other changes relate to creating or freeing up time and possibly other resources, which in the context of a busy financial services company, would not necessarily be straightforward.

Answers which presented the scheme in a highly structured way, using a table for example, were acceptable, but on the whole they were less convincing than those that adopted a narrative approach, which tends to work better because the thinking behind the answers is much more transparent. It is an approach I would encourage candidates to adopt.

#### **Task Three**

The final task required candidates to devise a strategy for evaluating the effectiveness of the mentoring scheme they had proposed; this is not the same as evaluating a training scheme, although there are clear similarities. Answers that consisted only of a description of, for example, Kirkpatrick's evaluation model, without any attempt to use it to base a strategy on, were not deemed to be satisfactory. The task required much more than presenting an evaluation model. The notion of strategy means that candidates have to think about what purposes are served by exploring the effectiveness, or otherwise, of the mentoring scheme. Given the political nature of organisations, it is not just about employing evaluation techniques without any regard for the results that might follow. The strategy, therefore, needed to make reference to who would be involved, the timing and the kind of information that would be collected. It would also need to touch on one or two key criteria such as cost, benefits and general satisfaction on the part of mentors, mentees and line managers. Reference would also need to be made to the scheme's objectives such as performance levels, knowledge sharing and retention levels. Answers that included all or most of these points scored particularly highly. Many, however, were quite limited in their scope and underpinning thinking about the nature of the task, and therefore received lower marks.

#### **Section B**

##### **Question 1**

Thirty nine candidates attempted the question on learning culture, but only one was outstanding and received close to the maximum marks. The majority of the twenty nine who passed were limited in one way or another.

The question reflected the increasing importance given to organisational environments – in this case the learning environment – in order to more fully understand behaviour, attitude and performance. Answers that reflected this broader understanding, perhaps

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supported by one or two literature references, were marked higher than those that didn't.

A key point that few made relates to the formal and informal dimensions of the learning environment, with an associated recognition that most learning takes place in the informal domain. The degree of recognition and support for learning is also an important point and this can be established through resources and opportunities in support of learning which are potentially available to all employees. The key role of line managers in giving constructive feedback on performance, and through this highlighting individual and collective learning needs, is also a key point that needed to be made. Other relevant points include the importance of the close link between the learning and working environment, with a recognition that the use of what people know and can do is crucially important; learning can be an end in itself, but is, from a managerial perspective, a means to an end, and can be associated with a range of material and non material rewards.

#### **Question 2**

The question on e-learning was attempted by thirty eight candidates of whom twenty one produced pass level answers. The reasons for such a relatively low pass rate lies in the fact that far too few answers contained references to the context of the organisation in which advice on e-learning was being given. There was no specific organisation to relate to, but I did expect some comment on the relevance of organisational features such as size, structure and existing approach to learning.

The question required candidates to think carefully about what they were going to say and the advice they would give to a manager because what said might influence subsequent decisions on investing in e-learning. A number of stand alone bullet points would not constitute an acceptable. Answers also needed to contain at least one good literature reference to support the advice being given.

Many candidates used the most recent CIPD training survey and this was perfectly acceptable although it would have been encouraging to see more references to companies that had embraced e-learning. Better answers mentioned the full range of e-learning packages and approaches from company intranets, CD packages of various kinds, interactive packages and on-line web based learning.

As far as advice is concerned, reference needed to be made to the adequacy of current provision, consideration of using e-learning in a 'blended' way, capital and annual costs of either buying or licensing materials, the training implications of moving towards e-learning and the implementation strategy to be used.

#### **Question 3**

The question that focused on the difficulties organisations experience in using the knowledge they possessed was attempted by forty two candidates of whom twenty eight passed. That so many of those taking the paper felt confident about this subject is encouraging, because it means that they are aware that knowledge management is not

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just about creating new knowledge, but also about understanding what is preventing knowledge that currently exists from being fully utilised.

There were several particularly strong answers and one that was so outstanding that I awarded it the maximum marks. Better answers located the use of knowledge in a wider framework of knowledge management and then focused on literature such as that associated with Pfeffer and Sutton to identify reasons for knowledge being hidden from senior management.

Most answers did in fact offer four reasons, but differed in relation to their development and depth. Most commonly referred to reasons were linked to the fact that knowledge is a source of power and as such is not made freely available to other people higher in the hierarchy; to the negative implications associated with hierarchical and bureaucratic structures which affect upward flowing communications; to the lack of incentives or rewards to make knowledge available and to the difficulties of sharing certain kinds of knowledge, particular that which comes from experience and is described as implicit.

#### Question 4

Question four was also popular, with forty candidates producing answers which across the board were slightly disappointing. Only twenty two produced pass level answers although many that didn't pass were in the marginal fail category. What I believe caused difficulties was the way the question was framed – it required candidates to think about an effective learning strategy and to offer advice on how people learn at work.

There was very little evidence to suggest that candidates were able to take a strategic perspective on learning at work and present advice on this that reflected a wider understanding about how function and are managed. Therefore, whilst the majority of answers contained some useful content, very few went beyond offering a limited range of comments, many reflecting an emphasis on on-the-job learning.

From the strategic perspective the importance of learning from experience is clearly important and there is extensive evidence to support its importance as 'a way people learn.' There were many examples that could have been offered to illustrate this such as new and more challenging tasks, job rotation and secondment and project work. But there were very few references to the importance social learning, where learning comes from particular social and interactive working environments. Examples of this are communities of practice, action learning sets and working in teams/groups.

The distinction between formal and informal learning was rarely mentioned and this suggests that many candidates are unaware that most of what we learn at work is not the result of formal training interventions.

Finally the recent growth in the use of coaching and mentoring suggests that learning can be based on modelling principles where relationships between individuals can generate powerful learning and personal development.

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#### Question 5

Not surprisingly, the question on evidence-based management failed to attract much interest, with only eighteen candidates attempting it. Of these, ten produced pass level answers. The inclusion of this question reflects an increasing interest in the relationship between the practice of management and its theoretical foundations, and a belief that a critical and reflective engagement with practice and experience can provide practitioners, in whatever field, with the ability to develop 'their own theory.'

Unfortunately the question proved too difficult for some of those who attempted it; largely because they did not understand what the question was about and what it required them to do. The core task was not that difficult. It simply required candidates to reflect on up to three incidents or experiences connected to learning that contributed to their theoretical understanding of the subject in question.

One example could have been on the motivation to learn, where a situation in which employees were not involved in designing and implementing a learning experience failed to feel motivated to become engaged beyond the superficial level. The example could have gone on to look at particular theories of motivation to illustrate the point. Another example could have used learning styles, Accelerated Learning, reflection and many other situations based on learning to reach tentative theoretical propositions.

There were some convincing and knowledgeable answers, but others tended to limit themselves to the examples, and failed to use these to confirm the relevance of the knowledge base that supports a way of doing things or a particular approach to learning practice.

This question provided an opportunity for candidates to use their own experiences to provide at least part of the answer. Most could do this but fewer could then go on 'to make sense' of their experiences by connecting it to a body of relevant theory.

#### Question 6

The question on coaching attracted forty four candidates, of whom twenty seven produced pass level answers.

The question had two parts, the first asked for an explanation as to why coaching had become a popular way of helping people to learn and to perform better, and the second asked candidates to consider what organisations need to do to facilitate coaching. Both parts also needed to be informed by literature references and organisational examples which meant the question overall was quite demanding.

The reason why fewer candidates than I expected produced pass level answers was that they failed to deliver on all three requirements. The 'case for coaching' can be expressed in a number of ways. For example, it is a way of learning that delivers actual performance rather than creating the potential to perform, and this is because it creates a much stronger motivational impact on the employee than other kinds of learning

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interventions. Secondly the case could be made in terms of organisations developing more individual and tailored HRD policies and practices, and coaching fits well into this approach. A third case could be made in terms of costs, resources and flexibility. Many answers made reference to CIPD reports on training and development, but only the better answers went beyond this and gave examples of organisations' experiences of using the coaching approach. As far as the second task is concerned, I was looking for candidates to show that introducing a coaching scheme has to be associated with other supportive initiatives, such as creating awareness of the potential coaching has, building commitment to its use, training participants in coaching skills and building rewards into the environment for those who successfully deliver effective coaching experiences.

#### **Question 7**

Thirty seven candidates attempted the question on knowledge creating companies, of whom, twenty six produced pass level answers, several of which were outstanding and scored very high marks.

The work of Nonaka and others in the field of knowledge management is becoming well known and the popularity of the question suggests that many students studying for the MOLK paper are familiar with this body of knowledge. The question asked candidates to explain the knowledge management practices associated with organisations that are effective at creating and sharing knowledge.

Marks were allocated for answers that offered an interesting introduction to the role and importance of 'organisational knowledge, looked at practices that related to the creation and sharing of knowledge and supported their comments with good literature references. Better answers tended to take a more strategic approach to organisational practices and located these in the context of structures, vision statements and cultures in which learning and the sharing of knowledge was encouraged and rewarded. An emphasis on a results orientation is also linked to the generation and sharing of knowledge which is seen not as an end in itself but as being instrumental to individual and organisational success.

The question was not about 'learning organisations, but certain of the practices associated with them could have been used here. For example, environmental scanning, creating effective storage and distribution mechanisms, encouraging innovation and involving all in the process of learning and knowledge management.

#### **Question 8**

The question on competence and capability was not popular, with only thirteen candidates attempting it, of whom seven produced pass level answers.

The question required candidates to offer convincing definitions of competence and capability, but these did not need to suggest that the two concepts are clearly separable. In fact, an introduction that indicated considerable uncertainty over the meanings given to them would have actually gained marks.

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There is a considerable body of literature on competence and competency but there were few references to this. This suggested to me that this field is not being adequately covered in the syllabuses students seem to be following.

Competence can be defined in terms of the ability to carry out tasks/jobs to specified performance standards, but it is a term that is also used to describe characteristics of the individual, of a more general and transferable nature. A third way of understanding competence is to relate it to the results or outcomes people actually achieve. Capability is generally seen to have a wider meaning than competence, particularly in the context of job performance. Capability is sometimes used to describe what someone can do rather than what they are currently being required to do by the job they have. This suggests that most people are under-utilised in terms of what they can do. It is also used to describe peoples' potential; that is, what they might be capable of at some future point in their development.

Examples of how a training and development specialist can contribute to organisational capabilities - and again, there is an extensive literature on this subject - include creating and maintaining competency frameworks, creating a flexible workforce through deepening and broadening the skill base, creating mechanisms and processes that generate creativity, and, as many organisations are doing, building leadership capabilities through various learning interventions.

#### **Question 9**

The penultimate question on employee centred-learning was attempted by twenty five candidates, of whom only thirteen passed.

One of the difficulties some candidates experienced was in being able to offer convincing explanations of what the term meant, and why it is particularly significant for the training and development community. The question format is also significant because it required candidates to think about a presentation to an informed audience and identify the key points they would want to make.

Employee centred learning can be contrasted to trainer-led learning, where key decisions about what is to be learnt and how are taken by the training specialist. Effectively, they control the whole process, with trainees playing an essentially passive role. The new approach sees significant elements of control and responsibility devolved to employees who are encouraged to take ownership of their own development. The concept can be linked to the idea of life-long learning, a perspective where the individual progresses through a continuous 'learning journey,' influenced by what they want to learn and become and what is in the interests of the organisation they work for.

Advantages associated with employee-centred learning could be identified in terms of an increase in retention rates, improved performance levels and increased employee satisfaction/morale. The audience could also be presented with a number of reservations or caveats including the need to maintain a strategic overview of training

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and development which could be lost if there was an exclusive focus on the individual. It also raises questions about the role of the trainer which would need to be explored.

#### Question 10

The final question on assessment attracted thirty nine answers, but only seventeen of these were at the pass level or above.

I found this very surprising as the topic is used regularly as the basis of an examination question, and because the question itself was not difficult. However, as with several others on the paper, it did require candidates to think more widely and reflectively than many were able to do. By this I mean that any choice about assessment methods has to be made in relation to the kind of learning that is being generated.

Very few answers mentioned the link between what was being learnt and how, and the appropriate assessment mechanisms. So, where learning was linked to a set of job-specific competencies, it might be appropriate to suggest some form of work test; where knowledge is the 'product' of learning. Some form of examination could be considered appropriate and with management development programmes, the use of portfolios of evidence could be used.

Again, linking answers to contextual awareness, such as existing assessment capabilities and experience, is an important requirement, but few candidates were able to do this. References to different kinds of assessment – ipsative, formative and summative were found in many answers and generally the meaning of these terms was understood. Understanding the importance of using assessment methods that were met the criterion of validity was raised by several candidates, who then went on to link this to the existence of clear learning objectives that could be used to decide appropriate assessment mechanisms.

The final part of the question raised the issue of who should be involved in the making of assessment decisions, and a discussion around this should have referred to the involvement of the supervisor/manager specialist trainers, peer assessment and self assessment as part of an assessment framework, but again the actual decisions on assessment roles and contributions would reflect specific organisational environments.

One final point. There is still confusion in the minds of some candidates between the assessment of learning and the evaluation of training. Confusing the two is a fairly basic significant mistake and inevitably led to very low marks being awarded.

**Paul Banfield**  
Examiner