Chapter 6 Review questions and answers

1. What could employers learn from feedback from applicants who have been rejected at some stage of the selection process?

Note that this question is about applicants giving feedback to employers, not the feedback given to candidates by employers to explain selection decisions. Employers could get useful information about how applicants felt they were dealt with, the professionalism of the organization and also about the attributes of the organization that is being communicated. This is important firstly to look for ways of improving the quality of the process and secondly to see how the employer brand is being shaped by encounters during recruitment and selection. It would be important, for instance, to discover if any candidates feel that some part of the process might be unfair and thus discriminating against one or more equality groups. Candidates might reveal that parts of the process were not quite living up to the job, e.g., by not testing applicants on relevant intellectual abilities or social skills.

Applicant feedback should be useful in improving processes and possibly person-job fit of future appointments such that turnover in the first one or two years is reduced. Turnover in early tenure can be fuelled by selection processes that do not give very accurate information about what the job experience will really be like.

One angle on this question is to note that, while different cultures tend to accept and use the same selection methods, (resumes, interviews), they do not all see them as equally fair. Hoang and colleagues found, for instance, that US and Vietnamese students differed in the views towards the ‘warmth’ of different methods and the employer’s right to obtain information from different methods.


2. How culturally sensitive is the idea of obtaining applicant feedback on selection processes?

We can only speculate on this, but in more open, collective societies feedback may be more acceptable to employers and applicants may be more willing to give it. In more individualist cultures where social distance between people at work is higher, then individuals may be more reluctant to give feedback and employers may feel that they do not need to ask for it. If power distance is high for example, then a manager is perhaps less likely to want to know what someone his/her company has not appointed feels about the selection experience.

Another angle is that some people may be more likely to fake aspects of themselves to get appointed (see Konig et al., 2012). If faking is a real issue, and it may be more to do with personal need to get a job than social-cultural differences, then employers would need to be alert to feedback that may be illusory and thus not particularly helpful.

3. How might different local cultures shape the ways in which feedback is obtained?

HRM classes made up of mixed nationalities might be able to shed some light on this question. It is perhaps not so much the ways that employers give feedback, but of the acceptance of it that matters. Research suggests that applicant reactions are not much different across countries, which should give some relief to multinational companies (Anderson and Witvliet, 2008; Bauer et al., 2012). If applicants can see fairness and relevance in the methods they encounter, then their reactions are more likely to be favourable.


4. Think of a job-related selection process that you have experienced. How could the fairness and validity of selection processes be improved?

Responses to this question are person-specific. However, think about examples of past experiences that you feel were fair/unfair. This might tease out some reasons why you felt that a process did or did not seem to connect to the job in question, that you were not given opportunities to demonstrate your abilities, or that the reasons for a test or process were not explained.

5. What factors should an employer consider before sending employees on expatriate assignments?

This requires thinking about the organizational and resource-related factors that could improve the chances of success but also about the organization’s responsibility to its employees. This will take in a range of factors such as:

- The current understanding that the employee has of the target culture;
- Their cultural adaptability and, if appropriate, their dependents who will relocate with them;
- The economic, security and health situations in the target country and how reasonable it is for the company to ask the employee to relocate;
• The expatriate’s professional experience; are they really ready for this move at this stage of their career?

• Financial incentives; is the package financially attractive and fair to other employees?

Identify which skills and competencies will be most influential in determining success, e.g., communication, problem solving, emotional intelligence, empathy, knowledge of the business, team building.

6. What responsibilities do employers have when employees return from expatriate assignments to their home countries?

Repatriation should be seen by employers as a part of the total expatriation process. The return home needs to be handled well as the proportion of repatriates that leave the organization can be high (Kraimer et al., 2009). Assuming that the expatriate project was successful, employers need to guard against repatriation being unsuccessful and unsettling the psychological contract between expatriate and employer. Expatriates will need to see that the organization is taking steps to think about their situation and the well-being of their dependents otherwise they could develop thoughts around procedural unfairness. Repatriates will probably be looking for the organization to at least recognise the skills they developed on the assignment and may be thinking about career advancement. Thus employers are dealing with a big arena of expectations in this situation; expectations that if unmet would lead to negative situations.


7. What are the forces for and against the increasing adoption of Anglo-American selection methods and principles being adopted in other countries?

This question asks you to think about the convergence versus divergence debate. Another related debate concerns the idea in HRM of best practice or contingency. Advocates of best practice argue that some management practices should be adopted by all organizations, because they are the best, whereas contingency theory advocates that what works best is dependent upon context.

Forces pushing for convergence and thus some standardization of selection methods include increasing cross-border flows of labour, such that practices are transferred and shared, the increasing internationalization of business (more MNE activity) and increasingly easy communication across borders. Another factor with selection is that the different assessment methods are developed particularly in America and the UK where the language of communication is English and the working language of many MNEs is English - so practices are readily understood and adopted.
Forces for divergence are largely local and cultural and relate more to the ways that selection processes are used rather than whether or not they are used. Different ways of use stem from the different belief systems that managers have. In practice, both convergence and divergence co-exist. A multi-national company might implement standardized selection processes across different countries, but the precise details of how the processes are operated are likely to differ. In high power distance countries, for example, a selection team may simply defer to the views of the most senior person on the selection panel whereas in low power distance cultures there may be much more debate about who to appoint in which the views of subordinates are heard. Cultures that do not like to see visible displays of conflict and disagreement e.g., in some Asian countries, may also be less likely to have robust exchanges of opinion about an applicant’s suitability compared to countries where open disagreement among managers is common. High uncertainty avoidance cultures might be more likely to run a series of assessment events before reaching decisions whereas low uncertainty avoidance cultures may be more comfortable with one-off selection methods and less collective discussion about potential appointments.

8. How might employees react if they think the selection processes in their organization are unfair? How might these reactions vary between countries?

Employees who think that the appointment processes are unfair could become cynical about the motives of the employer. For instance, if they feel that people are being appointed with scant regard to how well they will fit in the organization (e.g., just appointing someone for their qualifications) or that people are appointed to levels above those that their qualifications and experience would justify.

9. Think of the job-related selection processes that you have experienced. Do any aspects of the processes discriminate against the selection or promotion of women?

Examples of direct discrimination might surface but it is perhaps more likely that cross-cultural interpretations of discrimination will surface around the same act. For instance, if a selection panel in the UK deliberately chose not to offer a job to a woman even if she was the most suitable applicant it seems likely that there was discrimination simply on the basis of being a woman. By contrast, in Gulf countries the same act might be seen differently. A woman might not be offered a job because the selectors do not feel that the work is appropriate for a woman to do. While this is direct discrimination by Western standards, Gulf nationals might see denying certain types of work to women as showing respect and consideration to them. They could see the act as respectful not discriminatory. Also in Gulf countries, women are less likely to travel far to work as this is less acceptable, and so recruiters might discriminate if they see that a woman applicant has far to travel. There may also be cross-cultural differences in accepting that women can opt-out of having children. This is common in the West, but less acceptable elsewhere. Socialisation practices may also have a discriminatory effect.
In cultures where women are socialized to be passive and quiet, the use of Westernized selection methods that, for example, put a value on assertiveness would put women at a disadvantage. Selection criteria that value networks and connections might also disadvantage women in cultures where women are not expected to socialize in the same way as men.


10. How does national culture affect the selection process? Give some examples of the different selection processes used in different countries and try to explain why these differences occur.

Previous questions have surfaced issues around applicant reactions to different methods based and differing views of what is fair (procedural fairness). Americanized selection processes look for information and data that will predict a person’s future performance. Many other countries are relatively unconcerned with objectified predictive data preferring to rely on assessments of a person’s general suitability and fit into a workplace based on personal appearance and connections.

Research by Ryan (1999) and others showed that there was considerable variation in the use of structured interviews across a range of countries. A plausible explanation is that some cultures find the inflexible question ordering structure as inappropriate to situations where a personal connection needs to be developed in an interview situation and may also see the structure as undermining the interviewers’ initiative and command of the situation. Higher uncertainty avoidance correlated with the use of different types of test (as predicted).