Chapter 14 Review questions and answers

1. **What is the difference between an immigrant and a migrant worker? Why is this distinction important in the discussion of labour markets?**

An immigrant is a person who goes to a country to settle there permanently. A migrant worker only goes to the country on a work visa for a limited period of time and normally does not have the opportunity to settle permanently.

Migration is an important topic when labour markets are discussed. International migration contributes to the destination countries by filling gaps in the labour market and brings social, cultural and intellectual dynamism to those societies. Immigration also contributes to the economic development of the countries they leave behind through the remittances they send back (GCIM, 2005:23). It should not be forgotten, however, that migration also constitutes a huge brain drain for many developing countries, but at the same time the prospect of opportunities overseas in the future motivates the young at home to study for higher qualifications.

2. **The OECD suggests that governments in their immigration policies are not responding to the needs of the labour markets across the world. In your opinion, what do governments need to do? What changes should be made to policies on migration and immigration in your country?**

This question requires your opinion in the context of your country. In many countries, even developing ones, labour markets need unskilled labour for jobs which local people do not want to do. Yet governments do not recognize this is a long term issue which needs to be addressed either by increasing wages for those jobs, to make them more attractive to locals, or by providing more work permits for unskilled labour. Migration policies need to be more responsive to labour market needs, but should not increase migrant workers at the expense of local people’s jobs or do so to push down wages.

3. **Why is migrant labour problematic? Why are there so many illegal immigrants in many Western countries?**

Migrant labour may be problematic if it is perceived that governments are allowing migrants to take jobs which locals could do, especially when there is high unemployment. Migrant labour can also push down wages, as migrants are often willing to work for lower wages as the cost of living in their own countries is lower.
There are many illegal immigrants in Western countries because of poor immigration controls or lack of enforcement of laws. Students and visitors can easily overstay after their visas have expired in the UK and there is little effective follow-up. Opportunities for work are plentiful as there are many unscrupulous employers and there is a well developed ‘black’ or ‘underground’ economy in many countries in Europe and the UK.

4. To what extent do you think multinational organizations are responsible for the employment of migrant workers? What would you suggest should be done to improve the conditions of migrant workers?

Multinational organizations and many smaller organizations may be responsible for the employment of migrant workers. This is in areas of low skilled and seasonal work especially, for example, in agriculture, tourism, elderly care, cleaning services, the food industry etc., where temporary agencies are often the middlemen. The conditions of migrant workers could be improved by better enforcement of laws and the implementation of codes of conduct. Multinationals need to ensure that their subsidiary companies are complying with the employment laws of wherever they operate.

5. Employers favour the use of migrant workers for a number of reasons. What are the reasons for this?

Employers favour the use of migrant workers because they are under pressure to reduce costs; the use of migrant workers allows flexibility. Workers can easily be employed on short term contracts often at lower rates than local employees (especially if they are ignorant of local pay rates); they can be used to fill seasonal vacancies.

6. Explain the reasons why sectors such as agriculture and tourism will always need temporary workers or a flexible workforce. In your opinion, should different sectors of the economy have different regulations regarding the use of temporary or migrant labour? Why?

Agriculture and tourism are seasonal industries in Europe with higher needs for employees in the summer. They need the flexibility of being able to employ workers for a short period of time and often pay lower wages than other sectors. (Many employed in tourism have part of their salaries deducted for accommodation, and often they rely on tips as a significant part of their salary.) Specific regulations are needed to ensure migrant and seasonal workers are not exploited in these sectors.
7. To what extent is the availability of migrant labour responsible for lowering wages in your country? Does this have to be the case? How can the government regulate this?

Answer this according to the information available in your country.

8. Some people suggest that the presence of migrant workers is threatening their culture. How would you reply to this?

As society is becoming more diverse, the predominance of one group of people from a specific culture may be threatened, to a degree, by the presence of people from other cultures. However, migrant workers are often in a country on a temporary basis and are often not encouraged to integrate into the society, except perhaps in the USA. Unless they are immigrants, they are not going to change the country’s demographic profile permanently.

On the other hand, some of the world’s most progressive areas are benefitting from the influx of people from other cultures; areas such as the Silicon Valley in the USA. Cities which are cosmopolitan are places where the interaction between cultures is providing opportunities for learning, development and change.

Cultures do not remain static and are the result of gradual evolution, so people might wish to retain what is excellent about their own culture, its values and traditions, but be open to new ideas and the benefits associated with integrating these.

9. In what ways do Human Resource Managers need to improve their knowledge and understanding of diversity issues in your country? How can diversity training improve the management of a workforce from a variety of countries and cultures?

This question needs to be answered by considering the situation in your country. Local Human Resource Managers have a duty to improve their knowledge of the cultures of their diverse workforces. They need to ensure that mutual respect and dignity exists among their employees and as such diversity training programmes should aim to deepen this understanding and respect.
10. **Consider two of the cases in this chapter and explain the similarities and differences exposed in the treatment of migrant workers.**

Students might like to consider any of the following issues, illustrated in the cases: wages, employment security, employment conditions and length of contracts, integration or acceptance of the migrant workers by the local population, the role of the HR manager or MNE Headquarters in managing migrant workers, a comparison of migrant workers’ wages with local people’s wages, the use of employment agencies, and the ways that jobs are obtained.