

भारतीय प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान गुवाहाटी  
**Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati**

*Department of Humanities & Social Sciences*

End-Semester Examination (23-November-2021)

Course No. **HS-203: Human Resource Management**

Instructor: Dr. Nachiketa Tripathi

**Duration: Three Hours**

**MaxMarks: 40**

**Please note:** All questions carry equal marks. All the questions are compulsory. Your answers should be brief and precise. **GOOD LUCK!**

1. Explain the concept and significance of training. Cite the areas in which training is normally given in organizations. Do the organizations get back Return on Investment (ROI) corresponding to investment in training?

[3+5+2]

2. Evidence suggests that Japanese recruitment practices are embedded in their social structures (Robinson, 2003\*). Do you see merit in such practices that are embedded in their cultural context, especially when fast changing economic environment requires quick alignment with the overall strategy of the organization?

[10]

\*Robinson, P. A. (2003). The embeddedness of Japanese HRM practices: The case of recruiting. *Human Resource Management Review*, 13, 439–465.

3. Write short notes on any **two**:

- a. Management by Objectives (MBO)
- b. Internal mobility
- c. Compensation management
- d. Performance appraisal

[5+5]

---

**CASE : Appraising the Secretaries at Sweetwater University**

---

Rob Winchester, newly appointed vice president for administrative affairs at Sweetwater State University, faced a tough problem shortly after his university career began. Three weeks after he came on board in September, Sweetwater's president, Rob's boss, told Rob that one of his first tasks was to improve the appraisal system used to evaluate secretarial and clerical performance at Sweetwater U. Apparently, the main difficulty was that the performance appraisal was traditionally tied directly to salary increases given at the end of the year. So most administrators were less than accurate when they used the graphic rating forms that were the basis of the clerical staff evaluation. In fact, what usually happened was that each administrator simply rated his or her clerk or secretary as "excellent". This cleared the way for all support staff to receive a maximum pay increase every year.

But the current university budget simply did not include enough money to fund another "maximum" annual increase for every staffer. Furthermore, Sweetwater's president felt that the custom of providing invalid feedback to each secretary on his or her year's performance was not productive, so he had asked the new vice president to revise the system. In October, Rob sent a memo to all administrators telling them that in the future no more than half the secretaries reporting to any particular administrator could be appraised as "excellent." This move, in effect, forced each supervisor to begin ranking his or her secretaries for quality

of performance. The vice president's memo met widespread resistance immediately – from administrators, who were afraid that many of their secretaries would begin leaving for more lucrative jobs in private industry, and from secretaries, who felt that the new system was unfair and reduced each secretary's chance of receiving a maximum salary increase. A handful of secretaries had begun quietly picketing outside the president's home on the university campus. The picketing, caustic remarks by disgruntled administrators, and rumors of an impending slowdown by the secretaries (there were about 250 on campus) made Rob Winchester wonder whether he had made the right decision by setting up forced ranking. He knew, however, that there were a few performance appraisal experts in the School of Business, so he decided to set up an appointment with them to discuss the matter.

He met with them the next morning. He explained the situation as he had found it: The present appraisal system had been set up when the university first opened 10 years earlier, and the appraisal form had been developed primarily by a committee of secretaries. Under that system, Sweetwater's administrators filled out forms similar to the one shown in Table 1. This once-a-year appraisal (in March) had run into problem almost immediately, since it was apparent from the start that administrators varied widely in their interpretations of job standards, as well as in how conscientiously they filled out the forms and supervised their secretaries. Moreover, at the end of the first year it became obvious to everyone that each secretary's salary increase was tied directly to the March appraisal. For example, those rated "excellent" received the maximum increases, those rated "good" received smaller increases, and those given neither rating received only the standard across-the-board cost-of-living increase. Since universities in general—and Sweetwater U in particular—have paid secretaries somewhat lower salaries than those prevailing in private industry, some secretaries left in a huff that first year. From that time on, most administrators simply rated all secretaries excellent in order to reduce staff turnover, thus ensuring each a maximum increase. In the process, they also avoided the hard feelings aroused by the significant performance differences otherwise highlighted by administrators.

Two Sweetwater experts agreed to consider the problem, and in two weeks they came back to the vice president with the following recommendations. First, the form used to rate the secretaries was grossly insufficient. It was unclear what "excellent" or "quality of work" meant, for example. They recommended instead a form, which was more exhaustive and included dimensions of quality, productivity, job knowledge, reliability, availability and ability to work independently. In addition, they recommended that the vice president rescind his earlier memo and no longer attempt to force university administrators arbitrarily to rate at least half their secretaries as something less than excellent. The two consultants pointed out that this was, in fact, an unfair procedure since it was quite possible that any particular administrator might have staffers who were all or virtually all excellent—or conceivably, although less likely, all below standard. The expert said that the way to get all the administrators to take the appraisal process more seriously was to stop tying it to salary increases. In other words, they recommended that every administrator fill out a form (new form devised by the experts) for each secretary at least once a year and then use this form as the basis of a counseling session. Salary increases would have to be made on some basis other than the performance appraisal, so that administrators would no longer hesitate to fill out the rating forms honestly.

Rob thanked the two experts and went back to his office to ponder their recommendations. Some of the recommendations (such as substituting the new rating form for the old) seemed to make sense. Nevertheless, he still had serious doubts as to the efficacy of any graphic rating form, particularly if he were to decide in favor of his original forced ranking approach. The experts' second recommendation—to stop tying the appraisal to automatic salary increases—made sense but raised at least one very practical problem: If salary increases were not to be based on performance appraisal, on what were they to be based? He began wondering whether the experts' recommendations weren't simply based on ivory tower theorizing.

**Questions**

4 [A] Do you think that the experts' recommendations will be sufficient to get most of the administrators to fill out the rating forms properly? Why? Why not? What additional actions (if any) do you think will be necessary?

[5]

4 [B] What kind of performance appraisal system would you develop for the secretaries if you were Rob Winchester? Defend your answer.

[5]

**Table 1 : A Graphic Rating Scale with Unclear Standards**

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Quality of work				
Quantity of work				
Creativity				
Integrity				