

BOOK REVIEW

Muchinsky, P., Kriek, H., & Schreuder, D. 1998.
Personnel Psychology. Johannesburg, International
Thompson Publishing. 342 pages.

On reading the table of contents it is already clear that the authors of this book covered the field of personnel psychology very fully and extensively. By combining American and South African theory and case studies, a national as well as international perspective on human behaviour and achievement in the workplace is obtained.

Another unique feature of the book is that in the descriptions of human behaviour in the work situation, the focus is continuously on the fact that it occurs within the context of a changing environment (as the situation is in a country like South Africa in particular), and recognition is given to the cultural diversity of readers. Recognition is also given to the foundations of Personnel and Industrial Psychology in Psychology as mother science. Academics and practitioners have indeed been advocating the necessity of maintaining the links between Personnel and Industrial Psychology with the mother science, and in the book this is achieved.

A good linkage between theory and the working world is established by means of case studies and field notes. The complexity of problems in the workplace is illustrated effectively by this linkage. In general the authors went to great lengths to make the book reader-friendly by using accessible language and style, learning aims as well as case studies, figures, field notes and cartoons.

Highlights from the various chapters will be discussed next.

In Chapter 1 (Historical background of Industrial Psychology) an explanation is given of the relation between Industrial Psychology and Psychology as a whole, what the most important sub-fields within the field of Industrial Psychology are, and what the reasons for cross-cultural interests in Industrial Psychology are.

In my opinion Chapter 2 (Research methods in Industrial Psychology) is a very important chapter in the book, as it is likely that either academics or practitioners could solve Industrial Psychology problems meaningfully and proactively without research in the industrial context. In this chapter the research process in Industrial Psychology context, among others, is demonstrated simply and practically.

Chapter 3 (Criteria standards for decision-making) again illustrates that the quality of decisions that are made can only be as good as the criteria and evaluating standards that are used. Included in the chapter are among others work analysis and evaluation.

In Chapter 4 (Predictions: psychological measurements) the effect of new legislation on psychological measurements, among others, is discussed. Non-test predictions are discussed as are several personnel selection methods on the basis of validity, fairness, application possibilities and costs.

Chapter 5 (Personnel decisions) contains a discussion of a model and aids (for example regression analysis) to assist in making important personnel decisions.

In Chapter 6 (Training and development), Chapter 7 (Performance evaluation), Chapter 9 (Human resource planning) and Chapter 10 (Remuneration) the functions are discussed in a practically feasible and useful manner. However, viewpoints

have conceptual foundations, and the latest principles in the various fields are discussed.

In my opinion Chapter 8 (Fairness) is a very important chapter in the current South African context, as among others the importance of fairness (particularly regarding decision-making in organisational context) and how it can be assured in South African organisations are examined.

In Chapter 11 (Careers) the focus is that diversity in the workplace and technological developments make it necessary to examine and study careers in flexible terms. Careers are therefore discussed in the light of changes in work and organisation structures with the focus on, among others, career development, career anchors and career patterns.

In Chapter 12 (Labour relations) the following are discussed among others: what labour relations are about, different approaches to labour relations, a systems approach to labour relations, and an overview of the South African system of labour relations.

The book ends excellently with Chapter 13 (The changing nature of work) which contains a discussion of among others political, economic, social and technological changes and how to adapt to these changes at individual, work and community level.

As stated earlier, the book is very relevant to the practice of Personnel and Industrial Psychology, and viewpoints are founded on the latest theories and principles. In the light of this, the book can be recommended without reserve to academics and practitioners alike, and specifically it is an essential book for the new millennium. Undergraduate students in particular will find it informative, but certain chapters could also be prescribed for postgraduate students.

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