

Suggested lecture/seminar plan for Chapter 2

- Introduce with the question “What is personality?” Use responses to draw attention to the fact that the concept encompasses elements of behaviour and emotions. (5 minutes)
- Ask students to categorise themselves as either an extrovert or an introvert. Ask them to consider (in pairs):

(i) What behaviours they consider to exemplify their extroversion/introversion?
(ii) Whether they consider themselves to be extroverted/introverted at all times and in all situations? Ask them to provide examples to illustrate their answers.

Use answers to discuss the assumptions of trait theories. (10 minutes)

- Explain what is meant by OCB and outline the main dimensions of this construct (10 minutes)
- Outline the basic differences between nomothetic and idiographic approaches to personality. (10 minutes)
- Outline the concept of intelligence, including how it is defined and measured (10 minutes)

Place students into small groups and ask them to list what they consider to be the advantages and disadvantages of using tests of personality and intelligence as part of the selection process for:

- Senior management, professional and technical roles
- Service sector roles
- Part-time and temporary roles

Use the answers generated to explore some of the assumptions that underpin the concepts of personality and intelligence (15 minutes).

Discussion question guidelines for Chapter 2

1. Are the concepts of personality and intelligence simply products of history and culture?

The answer should examine how history and culture are implicated in the development of the concepts of personality and intelligence. The interest in individual differences, for instance, first emerged as Darwin's theory of evolution became better known and accepted in society. Based on the notion of natural variation in characteristics that all life on Earth demonstrates, this theory provided a scientific justification for the idea that individual human beings also differed from each other in terms of various 'social' characteristics.

The answer could also deal with the fact that interest in intelligence and personality has waxed and waned in different social and economic epochs. For instance, the concept of intelligence was very dominant in the early part of the 20th century as the problem of mass education became one that had to be engaged with across Western Europe. In organizations, intelligence was seen to be very important during the Fordist era, characterised by bureaucratic forms of organization, with the emphasis on person-job fit. In contrast, personality theories have gained in popularity along with the growth of the service sector of the economy and as jobs have become more 'flexible'. Here, the person's character or disposition is seen as critical to successful performance.

Personality and intelligence are additionally concepts that have far more meaning in Western than Eastern cultures, where advanced liberal democracies emphasise the importance of individual rights, freedoms and autonomy. In Eastern cultures, while people recognise individual differences, the emphasis on their centrality in work and non-work domains is far less apparent. In Asian and Oriental cultures, for example, work organizations are more concerned with issues surrounding collectivity and community (see on-line case for chapter 2).

2. To what extent is it possible to both measure personality and predict how it will influence future performance?

The answer should focus on nomothetic assumptions in personality theory, specifically the idea that traits are *comparable*: the behaviours that comprise extroversion are essentially the same in every person possessing that trait.

The answer should also address issues of the validity of self-assessment: to what extent is our self-view accurate or comparable with the views others have of us? Under what circumstances might we be motivated to distort the image we present to others?

The prediction of future performance is based on the assumption that neither people nor situations change over time. This is in contrast to idiographic approaches that see individuals as developing and changing across time and situations and see the relationship between the individual and the environment as essentially dynamic.

3. In what ways can the study of personality help managers become better managers?

Answers here should focus around two key themes:

- (i) Identifying specific ways that personality theories might help managers better understand and explain employee behaviour. The focus might be on the extent to which individuals *fit into* particular roles, a focus facilitated by trait theory and the idea that individuals and environments can be matched to achieve optimal fit. On the other hand, the focus might be on helping managers understand that people have different perspectives and beliefs about the world and appropriate ways of behaving, as exemplified by Kelly's theory of personal constructs. Such knowledge can help managers make better informed decisions in selection, promotion and appraisal situations.
- (ii) Using personality theory to help gain insight into the manager's own behaviour and attitudes thus increasing reflexive practice and self-awareness. The answer should include some discussion of why increased self-awareness might improve managerial effectiveness. Here the focus could be on using self-insights to produce development and action plans.

4. What problems can you identify in attempting to define what it means to be 'good' at a particular job?

This question attempts to get students to think about how notions of what counts as good or bad in terms of behaviour are never value neutral. That is, being good or bad is a judgement that is based entirely on the perspective of the observer and what they define good or bad to mean. So for example, a manager might think that a particular employee, Dave, is good at his job largely because Dave is very good at meeting deadlines and ensuring that the manager's department looks efficient. However, from the perspective of Dave's customers, he may not be considered to be very effective, because he is unwilling to spend time with them, and is too focused on, say, making a sale.

Conversely, we could get a situation where there is pretty much a consensus on what being good at your job means. For example, in the police service, being good at your job means being prepared to "go that extra mile" for the organization. However, women with children or members of certain ethnic minorities, who have specific religious commitments, may not be able to "go the extra mile" because of their circumstances. In such situations we have to examine why the job is carried out in ways that make life difficult for certain groups, and whether these methods are actually necessary.