

Innovation in Management Education: Using a Contemporary Cinematic Fantasy to Teach Recruitment and Selection¹

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Abstract

This article focuses on the use of fantasy and fable genre motion pictures in management education. We argue that this genre of motion pictures is particularly helpful to management educators because it prompts students to be more imaginative, creative and critical. This approach is illustrated by describing how Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, and its two screen adaptations, can be used to teach different approaches to recruitment and selection. In particular, this paper explores how various subplots in the 2005 film can be used to inform students about the psychometric, social process and fit recruitment and selection paradigms.

Many scholars have argued that feature films can be a valuable teaching resource (e.g. Bumpus, 2005; Champoux, 1999; Huczynski & Buchanan, 2004). As Champoux (1999) notes, "films scenes can offer a visual portrayal of abstract theories and concepts taught in organisational behaviour and management courses" (p. 206). The films advocated are diverse as are the concepts taught, with *The Dead Poet Society*, *The Magnificent Seven*, *The Arturo Sandoval Story* and *12 Angry Men* used to illustrate a range of concepts from risk-taking and leadership, influencing strategies and effective communication (Bumpus, 2005; Champoux, 2001; Huczynski, 1994; McCambridge, 2003; Serey, 1992). These films all depict actors portraying either real or fictional people in scenes that appear socially real to a management student audience.

What many would consider to be a more 'high-risk' approach than the use of these social realism feature films is the introduction of fables and fairy tales to management education. Examples of this high-risk approach include Klenke (2002) who relates the themes presented in the fairy tale *Cinderella*, such as overcoming adversity, to the experiences of three successful, contemporary women leaders. Champoux (2001) suggests using a scene from *Snow White* in its animated form to teach organizational

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socialization. Bruhn and Chesney (1996) present a parable about animal behavior to illustrate the problems faced by supervisors dealing with organizational change.

The advantages of employing material from fables and fantasy, over the more 'realistic' of films, lie in their capacity to extend and augment the learning encounter (Shaw and Lock, 1993). In addition to illustrating management concepts, they can be used to prompt discussion and also for development through the enhancement of imagination, stimulating creative processes and provoking critical abilities (Cohen, 1998). The 'unreal' nature of these cinematic depictions of fables and fantasies is therefore an aid to the management educator who wants to use motion pictures for more than illustration as it prompts students to be more imaginative, creative and critical.

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory: Industry as aspiration

For centuries children have been told fables and fairy stories to teach them right from wrong. For example, the fable of the boy who cried wolf is to teach children why lying is wrong and Aesop's fable of the tortoise and the hare warns children about slapdash approaches to work. Roald Dahl is considered to be one of the greatest modern writers of children's stories and his work has its roots in the traditions of fable and folklore. It has been noted that the inspiration for Dahl's stories lies in the Norwegian and Welsh fables told to Dahl as a child (Treglown, 1994). Perhaps the most well-known of all Dahl's stories is *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, which has the structure and intent of "a morality fable" (Schultz, 1998, p. 3).

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory was first published in 1964, and has remained in print ever since. The book has sold over 13 million copies worldwide and been translated into 32 languages (Warner Bros.com, n.d.). The book's continuing popularity has been confirmed by the release and success of a second film adaptation of the book in 2005 (Grey, Zanuck & Burton, 2005).

The story of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* is particularly apposite story for use in management education. Dahl's story was inspired by his visits as a youth to the Cadbury Company, a chocolate manufacturer, for whom he acted as a taste-tester on new lines of chocolate. Dahl commented that he fantasized that one day he would invent a product that would delight "Mr Cadbury" (Schultz, 1998). The story of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* mirrors this fascination and thus presents industry as aspiration.

The story triumphs the ambition, achievements and values (e.g. innovation and honesty) of the factory owner, Willy Wonka. Since its publication, the name of Willy Wonka has become a byword for innovation, and the chocolate factory is the epitome of a successful, but unconventional work environment and organizational culture as the following examples illustrate.

In an article on the success of the company behind the internet search engine Google, Elgin, Hof, and Greene (2005, p. 28) write

At Google, much of the magnetism is also generated by a zany culture perfectly synced to the geek lifestyle. Engineers are encouraged to spend the equivalent of one day per week on their own pet projects. When they're not staring into their computer monitors, Google employees will often gather for roller-hockey games in the underground garage or race remote-control blimps through their cavernous offices. Free perks range

from gourmet meals at the company cafeteria to bathrooms equipped with digital toilets, where the seat temperature and bidet pressure can be controlled with a remote. “They have created a Willy Wonka effect,” says James E. Pitkow, CEO of Moreover Technologies Inc., whose former company, Outride Inc., was purchased by Google in 2001. “Engineers want to work on the coolest problems with the smartest people.”

In an interview with the owner and chef of the award winning restaurant, the Fat Duck, Heston Blumenthal, is referred to as

the Willy Wonka of modern British cooking ... [with] his distinctive brand of innovative and investigative cuisine ... This Willy Wonka has worked in the Swiss laboratory of Ferminich, the third largest flavour company in the world. “I wanted to make a mouthful of food with four separate flavours” he explains with fast enthusiasm ... Is Blumenthal heading a culinary revolution? He shrugs shyly. “I think Willy Wonka was the trailblazer” (Phillips, 2004, p. 5).

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory cannot be claimed to be a realistic portrayal of industry, or of a recruitment and selection process; the story is, in essence, Wonka’s attempt to recruit a successor to run the chocolate factory. Nonetheless, as a teaching device, its fantastic style is one of its strengths. The extreme nature of the situation and of the characters, not only openly appeals to readers’ imaginations, but it also encourages a critical approach to the issues being portrayed (e.g. recruitment of a senior executive, selecting for fit, assessment centre decision making, approaches to innovation, unorthodox organizational cultures and values) rather than to the accuracy of the portrayal of organizational life. This curtails criticism as to whether this is a realistic portrayal of the selection process or of problems in relating to the characters. Rather, this heightened involvement promotes contradiction, and similar to the use of satire in film, this distortion of norms as Champoux (1999) notes “highlights the foibles of a society or a person, compelling the reader or viewer to see the satirist’s criticism. Good satire presents the familiar and the common with a fresh, diverting perspective” (p. 210). The same attributes could be claimed in support for use of Dahl’s morality tale.

Teaching Recruitment and Selection

The traditional and well-established approach to teaching recruitment and selection is to focus on the psychometric paradigm (Schmitt and Chan, 1998). This paradigm considers recruitment and selection from the perspective of the organization and shows how good selection decisions should be made (i.e. selecting the person who will perform best in the role). The curriculum typically includes legal issues in staffing, economic/labor market issues, recruitment activities, testing and selection, validity generalization, new employee orientation, internal movement and placement of employees, and employee retention. In essence, this approach to recruitment and selection assesses individuals against the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) required to perform well in the post. The paradigm is that of a rational decision-making process operated by the employer. It is an important and deeply entrenched paradigm and many aspects of it are enshrined in law.

Two paradigms compete with the psychometric paradigm in recruitment and selection. The more well-established of these is the social process paradigm that emerges out of social psychology. This paradigm is primarily concerned with understanding recruitment and selection as a social process rather than as a series of obstacles to be overcome (Herriot, 1992, 1993; Iles, 1998). It is primarily concerned with the development of the relationship between the successful applicant and the employer during the recruitment and selection process. This process is seen as particularly important in the formation of working relationships because it is a period when the new recruits are particularly attentive and sensitive to cues about what appropriate behaviors at their new employer. Because it does not purport to offer an alternative to how staff should be selected, it has not replaced the psychometric paradigm at the core of the recruitment and selection curricula. Instead, it is commonly used as a critical adjunct to explore the impact of the psychometric process.

The second alternative to the psychometric paradigm is the emerging domain of person–organization fit (P–O fit). Primarily this field is concerned with the relationship between employees and employers, but it has always had a foothold in the recruitment and selection processes and it has been suggested that it could become a competing paradigm (Bowen, Ledford & Nathan, 1991; Levesque, 2005). From its base in interactional psychology, P–O fit considers the interaction between people and environmental factors and thereby avoids one of the greatest problems with the psychometric approach; namely, that it focuses on recruitment and selection from the organization’s point of view and largely ignores the perspective of the applicants. By looking for a ‘fit’ between applicants and organizations, the P–O fit approach has the potential to look treat the two sides of the recruitment encounter even-handedly. It is too early in the lifecycle of the P–O fit approach to recruitment and selection for it to have supplanted the psychometric paradigm on curricula, let alone in law. However, the growing importance of the area, not just in recruitment and selection courses, but also in the subjects of organizational behavior, human resource management and strategic management, means that increasing numbers of management educators are adding it to their curricula. The relative newness of the subject also means that few textbooks have included the paradigm and therefore the resources available to management educators are very limited indeed.

Versions of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory tells the story of Charlie Bucket’s tour, with four other children, around Willy Wonka’s chocolate factory. During the tour the children are whittled away until just one, Charlie, remains. Wonka announces that through this process of elimination, Charlie has won the opportunity to learn how the chocolate factory runs and to take over its management and ownership: “I have decided to make you a present of the whole place. As soon as you are old enough to run it, the entire factory will become yours” (Dahl, 1997, p. 162). With this action, Willy Wonka reveals that his intention in opening the factory to the children was an elaborate recruitment and selection exercise to find his own successor. The book, therefore, can be viewed as a fictional, single-company case study of leadership succession. As we will show, despite

being written over 40 years ago, it offers an opportunity to examine many contemporary recruitment and selection issues.

Before looking in detail at the recruitment and selection issues in the story of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, we must first acknowledge the different sources available to management educators. First, there is the original book that was first published in 1964 and has remained in print ever since. Second, there is the first screen adaptation of the book entitled *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory* (Margulies, Wolper & Stuart, 1971), which was released in theatres in 1971 and is now widely available on DVD and videotape. The screenplay for this first adaptation was written by Dahl himself and he added an important subplot around the 'everlasting gobstopper' that greatly added to the recruitment and selection applicability of the story. The second screen adaptation of the book retained the book's original title that was released in theatres in 2005 was made available on DVD and videotape at the end of the same year. Being directed by Tim Burton, this adaptation (Grey, Zanuck & Burton, 2005) developed the fantasy element of the story and moved away from the more traditional factory environment of the first film.

Recruitment and selection issues in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*

Before moving on to explain how the story of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* might be used in the management classroom, we shall highlight some of the main recruitment and selection issues in the story drawing from all three resources mentioned above. *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* seems particularly useful to management educators not only because it employs fantasy and fable, but also because it clearly illustrates the psychometric, social process and fit paradigms.

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory and the psychometric paradigm

As described earlier, the conventional model of personnel selection focuses the selector on assessing applicants' knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) against those needed to perform the job well. It is a rational model that assumes that jobs are relatively stable and that ability to perform a particular grouping of duties in a prescribed way is paramount; selectors should eliminate any factors that are not directly and measurably related to job performance (Schmitt and Chan, 1998).

Wonka's selection model is borne out of a role in which the incumbent succeeds through ingenuity, innovation, creativity, and non-traditional work practices thereby challenging the notion that jobs are relatively stable; the only thing that is stable is the constant need to innovate. The leader's job is completely at the discretion of the incumbent. The leader is portrayed as an entrepreneurial inventor with very few internal constraints. Given this profile, he argues that almost anyone would be able to do the job. "[T]here are thousands of clever men who would give anything for a chance to come in and take over from me, but I don't want that sort of person. I don't want a grown-up person at all. A grown-up won't listen to me; he won't learn. He will try to do things his own way and not mine. So I have to have a child. [...] I decided to invite five children to the factory, and the one I liked the best at the end of the day would be the winner!" (Dahl, 1997, p. 162-3). If a child without any knowledge of work could do it, then anyone could.

Wonka is concerned that the ‘magic’ of his enterprise is not lost and that his spirit lives after him: “I want a good sensible loving child, one to whom I can tell my most precious sweet-making secrets – while I am still alive” (Dahl, 1997, p. 162-3). In this way Wonka reveals the nature of his KSAs: He wants someone with particular terminal values (i.e. end states values) such as a belief that life should be fun and work should be ‘magic’, and instrumental values (i.e. ways of behaving) such as ingenuity, creativity and common sense. His mistake is his failure to link these KSAs with performance in any convincing way.

An important consideration in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* is that the children do not know that they are applicants for the role of factory manager. This is a crucial and deliberate ploy in Willy Wonka’s approach to recruitment and selection for he uses ignorance to allow the children to behave as they normally would, free from the impression management techniques adopted by job applicants (Dipboye, 1992). Wonka has just one day to assess the values of five children. His approach is an assessment centre with activities or experiences tailored to expose the values of each applicant. The principle underlying the design of Wonka’s tests of personal values appears to be the idea that you need to place the individual in a situation in which they cannot control their natural urges and drives. The diversity and richness of the Chocolate Room trigger Augustus’s greed. In the Inventing Room, the Great Gum Machine reveals Violet’s disobedience. The squirrels in the Nut Room tempt Veruca and surface her spoilt nature. Mike’s obsession with television is fed in the Chocolate-Television Room. Only Charlie does not appear to have an activity designed specifically for him.

In the 1971 film, however, Dahl does not allow Charlie to win so easily. It is not sufficient for him to survive the tests designed for the other children; he has to demonstrate his value congruence actively. Charlie’s test is the Everlasting Gobstopper and the money that could free his family from poverty. These tests have clear decision criteria (swelling up and turning purple, returning the Everlasting Gobstopper etc.) and thereby prevent the exercise of subjective judgment. Wonka only employs the briefest of interviews to confirm his assessment of values: “How I love my chocolate factory,” said Mr. Wonka, gazing down. Then he paused, and he turned around and looked at Charlie with a most serious expression on his face. “Do *you* love it too, Charlie?” he asked. “Oh, yes,” cried Charlie, “I think it’s the most wonderful place in the whole world!” (Dahl, 1997, p. 161). The leading nature and superficiality of this question are unfortunate from a selection perspective, but it confirms Wonka’s interest in understanding Charlie’s values.

An important feature of Wonka’s approach is the integration of the recruitment and selection phases. The high-profile nature of the search for the Golden Tickets gives Wonka vital information on each of the applicants that allows him to design the assessment activities that are customized to each child. This aspect of the process is illustrated well in the 1971 film as a television news reporter is present to interview each lucky winner soon after the ticket is found. These interviews reveal much about each individual child. So much, in fact, that Grandma Georgina is able to describe each of the first four winners as a ‘nasty little beast who doesn’t deserve it’ (p. 39).

Wonka’s use of prior information and his customization of selection to each applicant runs counter to much of the advice in the equal opportunities and the procedural justice literatures. In summary, these literatures advocate a uniform approach to

personnel selection in which every applicant is treated in a similar fashion, which is usually interpreted as the exclusion of any prior information or knowledge about any of the applicants and the use of identical selection tests and procedures for every applicant (Harris, 2000). Wonka's alternative approach has its foundations in the diversity literature. Whereas equal opportunities is, as the name suggests, concerned with ensuring that everyone has similar access to opportunities, thereby prompting a uniform approach, diversity concentrates on helping every individual reach their potential (Kandola, 1995). In essence, diversity focuses on the individual, rather than on the opportunity. So, for example, according to a diversity approach, assertiveness training would be offered to those that need it, rather than because they are members of a particular group. This approach to diversity accords with Wonka's alternative application of personnel selection. Instead of treating everyone in the same fashion, his 'multiform' approach treats each child in the way best suited to him or her. It seeks an understanding of each individual against each of the selection criteria and chooses recruitment and selection methods that are best suited to each person. Wonka takes this model to the extreme, by assessing each applicant using a different activity dependent on each applicant's character or personality.

Interestingly, whilst Wonka is prepared to customize the selection tests to each individual, he does not alter the selection criteria; a fun-loving child who will do things his way. Ironically, therefore, Wonka does treat every applicant in the same way in the sense that all are assessed against the same selection criteria. Where customized selection differs to the uniform approach is that it accepts that there are occasions when it is necessary to use different selection tests to assess the applicants.

Wonka's customized approach to selection is informative because it is clear that it can only work when the selector has some prior knowledge about the applicants. For example, had Wonka not known about Violet's chewing-gum obsession, he might not have shown the children to the Great Gum Machine. Wonka's integrated approach to recruitment and selection gave him the opportunity to observe candidates shortly after the moment of application (i.e. on finding the Golden Ticket) when their guard was down and emotions were running high. Organizational selectors are unlikely to have such an opportunity and it seems that in 'real' recruitment and selection situations, Wonka's ideas could lead to a multi-stage approach for personnel assessment in which selectors gather data at a preliminary stage to inform the development of tests later on in the process.

In another scene, we get hints of a second recruitment and selection exercise that Willy Wonka has used. In the Nut Room, Wonka explains why he employs squirrels rather than Oompa-Loompas. "Oompa-Loompas can't get walnuts out of walnut shells in one piece. They always break them in two. Nobody except squirrels can get walnuts whole out of walnut shells every time. It is extremely difficult. But in my factory, I insist upon only whole walnuts. Therefore I have to have squirrels to do the job" (Dahl, 1997, p. 121). We are left to imagine a selection process that would have focused on the ability to extract walnuts from their shells intact. This skill-centered approach contrasts sharply with the value-centered approach used for the factory manager, but both appear to sit comfortably within the psychometric paradigm of selector-centered selection.

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory and the social process paradigm

The social process issues in the story are handled in ways that are sharply contradictory to the recruitment and selection literature. Perhaps the strongest example of social processes in the story relates to the way that the 'failed' children are handled once they transgress. This is captured in Wonka's reaction to the children when Charlie and Grandpa Joe spot them leaving the factory. Grandpa Joe comments on Augustus, 'He used to be fat! Now he's thin as a straw!' (Dahl, 1997, p. 158). Wonka laughs away this outcome. Charlie spots Violet leaving back to her normal size, but purple in the face. "So she is", said Mr. Wonka. "Ah, well, there's nothing we can do about that." (Dahl, 1997, p. 159). Charlie observes Veruca leaving covered in rubbish. The last mischievous child to be seen leaving is Mike Teavee. He is 'ten feet tall and thin as a wire' (Dahl, 1997, p. 160). "They've overstretched him on the gum-stretching machine [...] he's very lucky. Every basketball team in the country will be trying to get him" (Dahl, 1997, p. 160), Wonka responds.

Wonka's amusement at the consequences of his selection tests on the four 'failed' children appears most callous. The effects are completely objectionable in their disrespect, pain, and unethical treatment of the 'applicants'. Moreover, they could also have strongly deleterious effects on his business. It seems, therefore, that this is one aspect of the fantasy that has no applicability to contemporary recruitment and selection. However, there is more here than first meets the eye.

The four obnoxious characters that Dahl creates are caricatures. They symbolize those negative features of children that Dahl found particularly loathsome (Treglown, 1994). These caricatures parody the brashness, greed, rudeness, selfishness and disobedience of modern children. And the sad fate of each 'nasty little beast' is simply its just desserts. The fitting nature of the unpleasant outcome is meant to teach both the child and their parents more appropriate ways of behaving. 'The punishments are meant to fit the crime and we are left feeling that those horrible children and their equally obnoxious parents will come out better and wiser after the treatment. At least, Mr. Willy Wonka assures us that they will' (Eccleshare, 1997, p. 168).

Applying this aspect of the story to contemporary recruitment and selection, Wonka would have us develop a process in which the unsuccessful applicants learn about themselves and the reasons for their failure. The goal of this information being to help the person change their behavior and to 'improve' themselves. In practice, most organizations adopt a very different strategy and provide just a short and vague letter that politely rejects the applicant (Heneman & Judge, 2005). This approach is adopted due to the perceived increased likelihood of appeal or legal remedy; the more information the organization gives the rejected applicant, the more hooks there are to hang a comeback on. The effect of Wonka's approach is that the children and their parents know that they themselves caused their own downfall by disobeying Wonka's instructions and warnings. Years later, when they hear that Charlie is running the factory, they will understand why it was not them and possibly learn something about their own character. Perhaps Wonka's lesson for contemporary recruitment and selection is that success or failure should not come as a surprise to the applicant. The process itself should make it clear to both parties, with decision criteria that are transparent to both sides, who is successful, who is not, and the reasons why.

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory and the P–O fit paradigm

As mentioned earlier, Willy Wonka's approach to recruitment and selection sits squarely in the psychometric paradigm: he adopts a one-way approach to the encounter in which the 'applicants' are tested and rejected without them even knowing that they are involved in a selection process. Although he may check that his successful candidate is happy with being selected ("How I love my chocolate factory ... Do you love it too, Charlie?" (Dahl, 1997, p. 161)), this hardly qualifies as a two-way process in which both sides access the suitability of the other. Moreover, Charlie's initial rejection of his offer in the 2005 version of the film, demonstrates that he has failed to address all of Charlie's needs.

There is another recruitment and selection episode in the 2005 film; the recruitment of the Oompa-Loompa workforce. On a safari in the jungle to find new flavors, Wonka encounters a village of very unhappy people who live by eating green caterpillars and worship the cocoa bean. He offers them the opportunity to come and work in his factory for which he offers warmth, safety and payment in cocoa beans. They are delighted to accept his offer. This is a merger between the two bodies with each one having something to offer the other: A fit is achieved.

In this fantasy, the Oompa-Loompas are shown as being delighted with their lot. They happily do the work of Wonka and appear to revel in their simple existence. However, there are other interpretations of their plight. We are told that they cannot leave the factory otherwise they will die in the chilly weather and they are subjected to Wonka's dangerous experiments. This creates the impression that Willy Wonka may not have been as open about working conditions in his factory as he should have been when he persuaded them to become his workers. If they had known that they would become imprisoned laboratory rats they may not have been so keen to uproot themselves from Loompaland.

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory in the management classroom

Although the book, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, is short and quick to read and the 1971 film includes the important everlasting gobstopper subplot, we recommend the use of the 2005 film to engage students' attention: It is visually striking, wonderfully acted, avoids some of racist baggage of the book, and contains a version of the Oompa-Loompa story that illustrates the person–organization fit paradigm. In addition, as it was recently released, its use creates the impression of being up-to-date. The use of the earlier film will inevitably lead to questions about why the more recent film is not being used.

Prior to viewing the film, we recommend that students are introduced (or re-introduced) to the three recruitment and selection paradigms (e.g. Bowen et al, 1991; Herriot, 1992, 1993) and given an instruction to find examples of these paradigms when they watch the film. In addition, following the advice of Mallinger and Rossy (2003), we suggest that students are introduced to the concept of values and their use in recruitment and selection. If there is sufficient time, students might be asked to complete the card-sort version the Organizational Culture Profile (OCP: O'Reilly, Chatman & Caldwell, 1991). However, if time is more limited, the shorter, Likert-scaled version by Sarros, Gray, Densten, & Cooper (2005) will provide both a useful introduction and a richer language with which to discuss value-led selection.

Time, technology and copyright constraints will shape how the film is shown. If time in the classroom is limited, the most natural approach is to ask students to view the film in their own time. If this approach is adopted, we recommend giving students some questions from those that follow later to guide their viewing.

An alternative approach is to show extracts from the film in the classroom. We recommend the use of the following scenes (All scene numbers and timings refer to the UK DVD release of the film):

- Scene 5: 12:57–16:02 Announcement of the Golden Tickets
- Scene 15: 42:28–46:15 Discovery of the Oompa-Loompas
- Scene 23: 1:08:41–1:13:42 Veruca’s demise in the Nut Room
- Scene 29: 1:32:24–1:36:29 Willy Wonka offers the job to Charlie

Management educators who have the opportunity to show the whole film are encouraged to follow Huczynski’s (1994) recommendation of dividing the screening into sections to prevent students losing sight of the purpose of the viewing. We have divided the film into five sections that correspond to the main recruitment and selection issues. We recommend pausing the film in these places and using appropriate discussion questions to focus students on the key points.

- Sequence 1: Scenes 1–12; 36 minutes 31 seconds; from the start until the entry to the factory
- Sequence 2: Scenes 13–15; 36:31–46:15; entry of the factory, Augustus Gloop’s demise and of the Oompa-Loompa story
- Sequence 3: Scenes 16–21; 46:15–1:06:43; end of the Oompa-Loompa story to the demise of Violet Beauregard
- Sequence 4: Scenes 22–27; 1:06:43–1:29:03; Willy Wonka’s childhood, the Nut Room and the demise of Mike Teavee
- Sequence 5: Scenes 28–31; 1:29:03–1:43:53; from the demise of Mike Teavee until the end of the film

Discussion questions and activities

The following questions are suggested to stimulate discussion on the main recruitment and selection issues in the film. The activities that follow prompt more in-depth consideration of the issues when management educators have more time to devote to the film. Postgraduate students should be encouraged to relate the questions and activities to their own experience.

Psychometric paradigm discussion prompts

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of Willy Wonka’s ‘Golden Ticket’ approach to applicant attraction?
- What selection tests is each child faced with?

- Critically assess Willy Wonka's selection criteria.
- How does Willy Wonka's selection of a successor compare to his selection of workers in the Nut Room?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of using individualized selection tests?
- What are the strengths and weakness of hiring for a specific job as opposed to hiring a 'whole person' who will grow and develop into a role?
- Are values and/or personality important in hiring for a specific job?
- What are the critical limitations of recruiting someone solely based on their value congruence with the owner?
- What are the conditions when a value-led approach might be appropriate?
- Is it ethical for Wonka to 'test' people without their knowledge?
- Is Wonka's approach to recruitment and selection legal?

Social process discussion prompts

- To what extent is Willy Wonka's approach to recruitment and selection an 'obstacle to clear' rather than part of the nascent relationship between Willy Wonka and his factory manager?
- What does Charlie's initial rejection of Willy Wonka's offer tell us about the effectiveness of Willy Wonka's approach to the social aspects of recruitment and selection?
- Do the songs performed by the Oompa-Loompas after the demise of each child play any role in the recruitment and selection process?

Fit paradigm discussion prompts

- To what extent do the Oompa-Loompas make an informed decision about their future?
- Is the deal between Willy Wonka and the Oompa-Loompas equitable?
- Did Willy Wonka take advantage of the Oompa-Loompas for his own gain?
- Compare the Oompa-Loompas to immigrant labor. Is Willy Wonka an exploitative owner?
- To what extent can the Oompa-Loompas be considered an exploited workforce?
- How could Willy Wonka have designed a fit paradigm approach to the recruitment of his factory manager?

Other discussion prompts

- Describe the culture of Willy Wonka's chocolate factory.

- To what extent does Willy Wonka's approach to recruitment and selection mirror the culture of his organization?
- How important are the founder's values on an organizational culture?
- Compare the values of Charlie Bucket and Willy Wonka.
- What impact will Charlie Bucket have as factory manager?
- If one of the other children had been successful, what impact do you think this would have made to the Chocolate Factory?
- How does Willy Wonka's approach to recruitment and selection accord with your own experience as (i) an applicant and (ii) a selector?
- What lessons can be drawn for 'real' recruitment and selection from Willy Wonka's 'fantasy' approach?

Activities

In addition to the discussion prompts above, we suggest some activities that might be useful for more in-depth consideration of the issues.

- Design a golden ticket that properly informs the recipient the true nature of the selection test they are about to embark on. Once completed, subsequent discussion should focus on the different impact, both during attraction and selection, that the revised ticket might have.
- Pick a 'real' job and imagine that you have interviewed and rejected a candidate. Write an Oompa-Loompa-styled song to inform failed candidate of the reasons for their failure. Subsequent discussion would focus on the nature of feedback given to failed applicants and the impact it might have.
- Compare Willy Wonka's approach to the recruitment of a factory manager to the managerial selection of a 'real' chocolate manufacturer.
- Ask students to design a selection test to reveal someone's values. This exercise might be followed by discussions on the nature of values and impression management during recruitment and selection.
- Start a campaign for the rights of Oompa-Loompas. Depending on resources, time, facilities etc., students might be asked to produce an Oompa-Loompa declaration of rights, a charter for a trade union, or even a fully-fledged liberation movement. This activity should provoke a lot of discussion on labor process issues, the nature of work, and workers' rights.
- Further ideas for activities can be found in Ryan (1993). Although these activities are designed for using *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* with children, many can be easily adapted for use with management students (e.g. response journals, quizzes, personality profiles, create your own invention, and conversations).

Conclusion

The story of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* has been presented, along with accompanying exercises, as a teaching resource. While, the story could be considered to be a lateral and unusual choice, it is also one which demands engagement and debate. *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* functions as a device which will encourage exploration of the theories, recruitment and selection paradigms as well as the practicalities of recruitment and selection. Ultimately, the objective of introducing such unconventional material to students is to facilitate a deep level of processing, develop a critical awareness, and to retain the lessons in students' memory.

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