Chapter 1

Competency Mapping – a bird’s eye view

1.0.0.0 Overview

The scenario of Human Resource development in India with a rich history has changed drastically in the last two decades. Challenges like business strategies, technology, quality concerns, cost effectiveness, management systems, and so on, have paved way for the need to incorporate liberalization of the economy and a path towards globalization. Needless to say, all these have attributed to bringing in new challenges in the functioning of human resource (HR). In the eighties, HRD was majorly the responsibility of the CEO and the top management, but in the nineties it has become a necessity of the business.

Establishing direct links with the aim of business improvement is the focal point of HRD in the post–liberalization period where many businesses are being threatened by global competition. The employees cannot be taken care of unless the corporation survives. The so-called careers, rewards, job rotations, training and jobs itself would not exist. Therefore, it is imperative that the business survives and it is a non-negotiable goal for the HRD to work towards business growth. As a result of clear and sharp focus on business growth, the factors like HRD systems, relevance and synergy have become more significant than before. And hence, with the changed scenario, a need to re-look at the functionality of HRD was felt.

Competition is the key to success and realizing this upward trend, business activities these days are centered round developing the competencies of the business in that particular environment. Articulation of the job skill, that is required in carrying out any work, is very crucial. This helps in picking the right kind of individual, who has the requisite skill as well as charting out what skills needs to be fine-tuned to improve the
work performance. Only possessing these skills is not enough for better performance. The skill has to be supplemented with the required knowledge and attitude. It is this collective of skills, knowledge and attitudes that are referred to as competencies.

In the changing scenario wherein the entire world is becoming one single village called the global village, the need for having competent and developing distinguished competencies has been felt by every Organization. And this is precisely where competency mapping plays a major role.

Competency mapping, targets at improving Organizations and the employees working in them. The main aim of this research is to explore the success of competency mapping in providing an upward growth to the Organization.

1.1.0.0 History of Competencies

In the mid-fifties in the USA, Benjamin Bloom and a team of Educationists began the process of identifying educational objectives and in turn getting to know the precise role of knowledge, attitudes and skills in the sphere of education. It took many years for the team led by Bloom to classify exhaustively, the objectives that were grouped under the cognitive domain.

David McClelland, the famous Harvard psychologist is considered as the pioneer of the competency movement around the globe. His books such as “Talent and Society”, “Achievement Motive”, “Achieving Society”, “Motivating Economic Achievement” and “Power the Inner Experience” threw light on an array of new dimensions of the competencies. These competencies exposed by McClelland dealt with the affective domain in Bloom’s terminology. In 1973 McClelland published an article in American Psychologist, which is considered as the turning point for competency movement. In the said article, he presented data that what is required is to profile the exact competencies required, to perform a given job effectively and measure them using a variety of tests,
and that merely traditional achievement and intelligence scores may not be able to predict job success. This article, combined with the work done by Douglas Brey, led to popularization of the competency movement.

In the later years, McBer a Consulting Firm founded by David McClelland and his associate Berlew specialized in mapping the competencies of entrepreneurs and managers across the world. In order to map the competencies, they developed a novel technique called the Behavior Event Interviewing (BEI). In the seventies, potential appraisal gained focus and assessment centers became popular, which was the result of increased recognition of the limitations of performance appraisal in predicting future performance.

1.2.0.0 Competency Mapping in Human Resource Management

Human Resource management is on a transformation spree in the present world of Organizations. Earlier the HR management practitioners were merely expected to be playing the role of traffic cops for the Organizations. They were entrusted with the responsibility of merely noting legal noncompliance or deviations from the policies of Organization and then take stringent action against the transgressors, exactly like traffic cops do by watching for and issuing fine tickets to drivers who exceed speed limits. Few HR management practitioners became averse to taking risks, as a direct consequence of this compliance orientation. With a strong aversion to taking new risks and probable phobia towards deviation from external legal requirements or internal policy standards, they opposed innovative actions to leverage the talents of Organizational members.

HR management is faced with a changed role that expects an outlook that is radically different from the compliance mind-set. Expertise in leveraging human talent that is available within the Organization with the sole motto of gaining a competitive edge is expected from HR management practitioners. To encourage the employees achieve the best results, the HR practitioners must exhibit new sensitivity to the full range of human capabilities, align HR efforts with strategic objectives, and integrate various HR activities.
Identifying the critical differences in individual productivity helps to know that more work might be done by fewer people, or rather better work can be done by the same number of people. Need to address the critical importance of individual differences was felt that creates exemplary performers, who at times may be more productive than others with the same job titles, education, and experience. All this is possible only with the help of competency mapping which aims at finding the best-in-class performers, discover what makes them different from their fully successful counterparts, and reorient towards recruiting, selecting, training, developing, rewarding, appraising, and otherwise managing these exceptional people.

Once the individual characteristics are identified, then all HR activities should be aligned around them. This helps in achieving quantum leaps in productivity and also in competitive advantage which is achieved by unleashing the power of exemplary performers, discovering their competencies and incorporating all those competencies into the aspects of HR.

The competency framework serves as the bedrock for all HR applications. Thus all the HR processes like recruitment, performance management, etc give better results because of competency mapping. The companies strive to increase a competitive advantage, innovation and effectiveness of their workforce with the help of competencies and skill management.

Competency mapping plays a pivotal role in any Organization. Every well managed Organization should have well-defined roles and a list of competencies required to perform each role effectively. This list can be a ready-reckoner during recruitment, performance management, promotions, placement and training needs identification, which in turn results in the overall growth and success of the Organization.

1.3.0.0 The Nature and Concept of Competency Mapping
Generally, every employee gives around 2000 to 2,400 hour of his active time in a year for the Organization. What is he/she expected to do in these 2,400 hours? What are the recurring and non recurring activities? How can they be grouped meaningfully? What are the critical abilities and competencies required to perform these tasks and activities? These are the basic questions to be answered in the early stages of an Organization.

With the world becoming one global economy, there is dire need for having only competent employees. Therefore, developing distinguished competencies for every Organization is the need of the hour. This is where competency mapping has gained currency.

The reasons for such a need can be capsulated as below:

- Costly manpower
- Critical roles to be entrusted only to competent people
- Cost-cutting by downsizing and getting more work done with less people and pass on the advantage to the customer
- Need to identify the right kind of human resources so that technology, finances, customers and markets, systems and processes can all be set right or managed effectively
- Focusing on performing roles essential for management, nurturing of competence and increased emphasis on performance management systems
- Finally, recognition of the strategic advantage given by employee competencies in building the core competencies of the Organization
In well-established Organizations with efficient HR managers, competency mapping ideally, should already be in existence.

Any remarkable quality required for performing a given task, activity, or role successfully can be considered as competency. Competency can be of various forms like knowledge, attitude, skill and other characteristics of an individual that includes motives, values, traits, self-concept etc. According to McBer (2001), competency has two relevant meanings: The first addresses the ability of an individual to perform effectively in a job – relevant area. The second is a definition of what is required of an individual for effective performance. These two are closely related but distinct. While, the first deals with the individual’s efficiency to do what is important to a job and the second meaning involves defining the performance area for success on a job.

Defining job competencies helps in assisting individuals develop their individual competencies for that job. Competencies are contextual, meaning that it relates to a context which is given by the Organization, the function, the role, the level and the timing. During competency mapping the factors like the Organizational, the functional and role related contexts are taken into consideration. This precisely is the reason why competencies developed in one context cannot be generalized from one Organization to other and from one function to another and from one role to another. For example, competencies needed for performing the role of General Manager differs from that of the Deputy General Manager depending on the Organization, its structure, function, timing etc. This, therefore, puts the onus on each Organization to define or map competencies for its role itself and not merely copy from others.

Having said that, it should be borne in mind that Organizations and functions, that are similar in nature or share the same context, could benefit from each other. They can therefore cut short the elaborate process of competency mapping. However, the disadvantage is that there is every possibility of missing out few details that are very much related to the unique context of the Organization, function and other related aspects. Hence there is a need for competency mapping to be done by each Organization.
1.4.0.0 Importance of Competency Mapping in any Organization

Each Organization must define or map competencies for its role itself depending on their goals. Competency mapping is nothing but an elaborate process of identification of the competencies required to perform successfully a given job or role or a set of tasks at a given point of time. It encompasses breaking a given role or job into its finer constituent tasks or activities and thus identifying the competencies needed to perform the same optimally.

In general, competencies can be identified by one of more of the aforementioned category of people: Experts, HR Specialists, Job Analysts, Psychologists, Industrial Engineers etc in consultation with: Line Managers, Current & Past Role Holders, Supervising Senior, Reporting and Reviewing Officers, Internal Customers, Subordinates of the role holders and Other role set members of the role (those who are in direct contact and interact with him/her)

Competency mapping can be carried out using a combination of interviews, observation studies including work studies, group work, task forces, task analysis workshops, questionnaire, use of job descriptions, performance appraisal formats etc and combination of the above.

Competency Mapping is unavoidable and thus a very crucial exercise. Every well managed firm should:

- Design a lucid Organizational structure
- Have well defined roles in terms of the KPAs or tasks and activities associated with each role
Necessarily have done the mapping of the competencies required for each role

Appropriate need should be identified along with the generic competencies for each set of roles or levels of management;

These help in recruitment, performance management, promotion etc. Hence for success and growth of the Organization, competency identification and mapping can be a starting point for an elaborate strategic development plans that are lined up for Organizational and individual needs.

Competency mapping is a tool to merge HR strategy with business strategy, thereby enhancing the performance value of the Organization. Competencies help the HR in concentrating on the factors that contribute directly to the Organizations success. The system of identifying, defining, and implementing competencies helps employees to decipher the core areas where in their efforts will improve their output and this automatically benefits the Organization.

Business plans help identify and earmark the Organizations competitive targets. Only the key decision makers design a plan for the purpose of clarity of the Organizations long term plans. A business strategy is nothing but a roadmap that chalks out the way the Organization plans, implements and evaluates its competitive process. In a nutshell, it is a means to a desired end.

Meeting the goal is always the key motto of any business and in order to achieve that the Organizations are always in the process of strategizing and implementing such practices that nurtures competence. Competencies have value when there is a strategy to apply and align them with Organizational objectives. It is the major function of HR to change workforce competencies, and thus it is imperative to adopt a very effective strategy. Strategic, collaborative and business focused to be successful should be the business strategy for alignment of workforce capabilities.
1.5.0.0 Benefits of Competencies

The top benefits of competencies are detailed below

1. Recruitment and Selection
2. Performance Management
3. Training and Development
4. Career Development
5. Pay and Grading
6. Succession Planning

1. Recruitment and Selection
The sole purpose of Recruitment and Selection is to seek a match between people and the demands of work before they are entrusted with a job. This is definitely affected by a variety of factors and amongst them the best match requires that as maximum factors are ascertained before a final selection is made. Competency based selection undoubtedly emphasizes the importance of competencies. The pre-defined competencies for a role are generally a guide for recruitment and selection. With the help of competency approach, it is easier to conduct a structured interview in which questions can focus on particular competency areas to gauge the depth of knowledge the candidates possess and can be cross-checked whether it meets the specification as set out in competency terms.

2. Performance Management
Performance reviews should not merely be focusing on the outcome but also take into account the behavioural aspects of how the work is carried out. And this is where the competencies in performance management are used. In case of performance reviews that are conducted on the basis of competencies, it helps to inform personal improvement,
development plans, and other learning and development initiatives. There are other alternative approaches, which are

1. On the basis of the entire set of core competencies, the assessment should to be made; or

2. One-on-one interaction between the manager and the individual by way of a joint assessment of the latter’s performance and agreeing on the competencies to be assessed, selecting those most relevant to the role.

The main motto of Competency Mapping is to align the employees performance with Organizational goals which can be done by setting individual employees goals as his key performance indicator and then measuring his performance achievements against the preset goals.

3. Training and Development
The staff should be kept abreast with the latest developments in the respective fields and thus the two key activities like training and development should be ensured frequently. Competency frameworks aids in identifying the gaps, role profiles, which are either generic (covering a range of similar jobs) or individual (role-specific). It also includes statements of the required technical competencies. Based on the outcome, the levels of competency achieved by individuals can be assessed and also future training and development needs can be identified.

4. Career Development
At each stage of Career Development, the competencies required are different. Once the competencies are formulated, a clear career map can be illustrated, which shows the competencies people need to develop in order to progress in their career. Competencies help participants to enhance their understanding of the competencies they require presently as well as in the future, so that they can work towards their own self-directed
learning programmes. Competency Mapping aids at defining a career path to the employees in line with the needs of the Organization.

Competency Mapping is a system where all the connected process like employee recruitment, selection, performance management career management and so on are based on individual competencies. Focusing on the competency of their employees, help any Organization that aims to generate better return on investment from their human capital. Competency Mapping assists the employees by providing them the requisite opportunity to chalk their career progression in the Organization. The employees can take up steps to fill the voids by undertaking a systematic development programme. Once the potential opportunities are clear, the employees can prepare themselves for higher positions. The Organizations will undoubtedly benefit through its competent employees.

Competencies are nothing but enablers. Our expectation from a competent person is one who can deliver desired results that meet Organizational standards on quality, quantity and costs goes up. However, other factors that influence output are job demands and Organizational environment. In order to achieve the desired results, all three should be in alignment; competencies by themselves cannot ensure results.

A foolproof business strategy can be created only when HR plays a significant role in it. For this, the HR department should be equipped with list of technical knowledge and skills in the Organization and should also be able to supply information about the Organizations cultural strengths and weaknesses. Business objectives are nothing but measurable targets that are to be achieved. When business objectives are clearly expressed in measurable terms, it is easy to link the same with the employees results and thus, to the competencies those employees must possess and use in order to provide the desired results.

5. Pay and Grading
Grading structures and the pay that is attached to the jobs that fall within that structure are two inter-connected issues. Having said that, it is to be borne in mind that they are
both to do with an attempt to apply relative values of job or an employee to the Organization. The value of a post is indicated by its relative position in the hierarchy of the grading systems. The value of employees is indicated by the job or role they are doing, how they are doing, and the rewards they receive.

The financial reward that an employee receives is directly proportional to his or her performance in the job. This is called competency based pay.

6. Succession Planning

As and when posts are vacant, competent employees ready to move into key jobs in the Organization should be selected. This is called Succession Planning. Matches between the job and the employee are made between existing employees and future jobs they might assume. These future jobs are usually to higher level positions.

An ideal succession planning system includes one or two, well qualified internal employees who are identified as ready to assume any key job should it become vacant and a record of successful promotions which indicates their achievements.

Succession planning systems based on competency, helps in identifying the competency requirements for critical jobs, assess employees competencies and evaluate job-person matches. It also assesses how many staff have the potential to develop or have the potential to perform well in key target jobs. Once an Organization is aware of the competencies, it needs to be successful and for the gaps between the needs it selects learning and development programs to close the gaps.

1.6.0.0 Need and Significance of the Study

Competency Mapping helps in any Organizations motto of determining the crucial elements and activities required to attain its goals. The basic reasons that lead to mapping of the competencies are as follows:
1. Appropriate training programme can be chalked out, once the competencies are determined. This in turn helps to work more efficiently on the processes to achieve their desired goals.

2. Gap between the actual and the desired results can be bridged by understanding the key performance areas.

3. Determining the competencies for the given job enables the person concerned to consider those competencies and can be ready for the same.

4. Competency mapping helps the employee in preparing himself for the next set of responsibilities.

5. Competency mapping enables the employee to alter the style of work where the gap exists.

6. When the difference in the desired level and the actual status of performance is reduced, the employee will start feeling the increase in the self confidence and the motivation level.

7. The employees who work with Competency Mapping based approach can direct to derive much efficient results (with more accuracy) as compared to those who work in a non competency mapping derived situation.

8. Grey areas where the development is required can be identified and employee can chalk out a self development plan.

Competency mapping plays a pivotal role in career planning of the employee in any Organization. By giving technical support, Competency Mapping helps their employees by developing their career growth.
As a result employer-employee relationship is built, which is the main reason for the success of many Organizations in the area of learning and development.

Competence and Competency are two different aspects. Competence is based on results and describes the features of the job. It consists of the various skills and knowledge that is expected from an employee to perform a job. It is measured by performance on the job and skill is more specific to perform a job and is specifically process oriented.

Competency is based on individual’s personal behaviour. It consists mainly of fundamental characteristics of a person which result in effective performance on a job and are measured in terms of behaviour or attitude. They are typically result oriented. These kinds of skills can be identified, when one is ready to do the work. Competency mapping is, thus, one of the most accurate means in identifying the job and behavioral competencies of an individual in an Organization.

Competency has been defined by Spencer and Spencer as “an underlying characteristic of an individual that is causally related to criterion-referenced effective and /or superior performance in a job situation.” An ‘underlying characteristic’ means the competency is a deep and engraving part of a person’s personality and can predict behavior in a wide variety of situations and job tasks. ‘Causally related’ means that a competency causes or predicts behavior and performance. ‘Criterion- referenced’ means that the competency actually predicts who does something well or poorly, as measured on a specific criterion or standard.

There are five types of competency where knowledge and skill competencies are the two that tend to be visible and relatively ‘on the surface’ characteristics of people while other three like self concept, trait and motive competencies are more hidden, deeper and central to personality.

Competency mapping is the process, which involves the following three steps:
1. Developing Competency Models to facilitate competency profiling for each job/role.

2. Identification of Competencies required to perform successfully a given job/role or a set of tasks at a given point of time.

3. Assessing Competency to measure the extent to which a given individual or a group of individuals possess these competencies required for a given role or a set of roles.

In a nutshell, Competency Mapping is nothing but a process wherein a design of the framework is done to identify competencies, using that framework to identify competencies required for a job/role, and to measure the competency deficiency of an individual or group of individuals in relation to existing or expected job requirements.

1.7.0.0 Conclusion

Competitive edge can be gained only on the basis of the ability of the employees of any Organization to maximize the advantages of state-of-the-art technology, superior products. A company’s technological tools are only as useful as its employers ability to employ them and they are perceived in terms of how effectively the benefits are communicated. It is not an easy task to determine whether the workforce possesses the abilities critical for its success. To aid in identifying the essential knowledge, skills and attributes needed for successful performance in a job aligned with the strategy and integrating it to the HR strategy for Organization growth and success, many Organizations have developed competency models. The Organizations as well as employees are immensely benefited with a well-researched competency mapping and competency based HR management practice. Needless to say, it achieves the goal of growth for both the Organization and employees.