

## CHAPTER 2.

### ASSESSMENT CENTRE METHOD

---

#### **Contents**

- 2.1 Introduction to Assessment Centre.
- 2.2 History of Assessment Centre Method.
- 2.3 Current Trends in Assessment Centre.
- 2.4 How an Assessment Centre works.
- 2.5 Advantages and disadvantages of Assessment Centre.
- 2.6 Growth of Assessment Centres in various countries.
- 2.7 Documentation of Assessment Centres.
- 2.8 Activities involved with Assessment Centres.
- 2.9 Assessment Centres enhance HR effectiveness.
- 2.10 Difference between Assessment Centre and Development Centre.
- 2.11 Competency mapping through Assessment Centres.

#### **2.1 Introduction to Assessment Centre**

Assessment Centre (AC) is a systematic method of evaluation of behavior of an individual based on the multiple criteria. To assess multiple trained observers and techniques are used. Assessment centre is a place where a person {staff} is assessed to decide whether he/ she is suitable for job or not. Assessment centre is a method used particularly in military or management. For e.g. to select officers; assessment centre method was used in World War II. In assessment centre candidate has to go from interview, psychometric test or certain examination to know his/her suitability for job. When a company wants to recruit fresher's from various engineering colleges as well as from various management schools then companies use this method to know whether the candidate is suitable for particular job or not. It is because the fresher candidate has only academic knowledge so with assessment centre method; the

company gets chance to know the potentials, skills, abilities and weakness of the candidate.

In short, an Assessment Centre consists of standardized evaluation of behavior based on multiple inputs. Multiple trained observers and techniques are used. With the received results judgments about candidate's behavior are made. These judgments are pooled in meeting among the assessors or by a statistical integration process.

In simple words assessment centres are used to know the suitability of candidate for particular job with the help of various assessment methods like interviews, business games, simulations etc.

Assessment centre is:

- i. Standardized procedure of evaluation.
- ii. A program designed to measure required skill sets / dimensions for particular job.
- iii. A key HR process especially of recruitment and selection.
- iv. Aim is to know the suitability of candidate for particular job.
- v. Series of activities to know the suitability of candidate for particular job.
- vi. Drawing conclusion with statistical process.

AC allows candidate to demonstrate skill sets and behaviors.

### **2.1.1 Characteristics of Assessment Centres**

The following are the characteristics of AC.

- i. Have a pass or fail criteria.
- ii. It is geared towards filling job vacancies or selection.
- iii. AC addresses an immediate organizational need.
- iv. It can be used with external and / or internal candidates.
- v. It may have fewer assessors and more participants.

- vi. It involves line managers as assessors.
- vii. Place less emphasis on self-assessment.
- viii. Focus on what the individual can do now.
- ix. Are geared to meet the needs of the organization.
- x. Assign the role of judge to assessors.
- xi. May give no feedback to the individual.
- xii. Retain ownership of outcome / feedback within the organization.

With above discussion the overall concept of what an assessment centre is must be clear. But for further clarification; following are not assessment centres:

- i. Multiple rounds of interview for job.
- ii. Written test for job.
- iii. Individual's clinical assessment.
- iv. Psychometric tests.
- v. Reliability on single evaluation method.

In addition to above explanation, to know more about assessment centres, it is important to know what the essential elements of an assessment centre are :

Assessment centres must meet the following given criteria:

- i. Job Analysis – to understand job challenges and the competencies required for successful execution of the job, the job or the position for which assessment centre is done has to be adequately analyzed.
- ii. Once the job analysis is done, measurement techniques are to be selected based on job analysis.
- iii. As it is clear from the above, AC does not rely on a single evaluation method, therefore, there must be multiple measurement methods selected based on job analysis.
- iv. Assessors' behavioral observations classified into meaningful and relevant categories.
- v. Multiple observations made for each dimension.
- vi. Multiple assessors used for each candidate.
- vii. Assessors trained to a performance standard.
- viii. Systematic methods of recording behavior.

- ix. Assessors prepare behavior reports in preparation for integration.
- x. Integration of behaviors through pooling of information from assessors

### 2.1.2 Use of Assessment Centre

The use of assessment centre is mainly for HR department, because HR Department looks after required and actual skill sets of candidates and then selects them. But assessment centre method is not restricted only up to selection; this can be used for various HR functions. Following is the list of HR functions where assessment centre method is effective / applicable:

- i. **Selection:** assessment centre method helps in getting right people for right job at right time.
- ii. **Career path:** It helps in deciding the candidate to decide his / her career path or career development. It is because candidate has got knowledge about the competencies required for particular job.
- iii. **Identify the potential:** It helps candidate to know his / her potential and strong areas. This helps him / her in performance appraisal.
- iv. **Identification of talent:** Assessment centre method clearly indicates the talents available within the organization, which helps in identifying potential people for particular position.
- v. **Training and development needs:** Assessment centres also facilitate training and development need identification for candidate.
- vi. **Succession planning:** as said above assessment centre method clearly indicates the skill sets or competencies of an individual, it helps in succession planning. This decision of succession planning based on assessment centre results helps in reducing errors or helps in accuracy of taking right decision.
- vii. **Development of candidate:** Skill enhancement through simulations

## 2.2 History of Assessment Centre Method

Assessment centre method is known to be in practice since last 1500 years ago as mentioned in Kautilya's Arthashastra.

Assessment Centre method was earlier used by German military in 1920's to assess the officers for selection of German Army. Assessment Centre method includes observations, performance appraisal, assessment by those who knew him, interviewing, and other forms of testing as mentioned in Arthashastra. German military mostly focused on both multiple assessment techniques as well as multiple assessors for measuring complex behavior with special focus on leadership and also without ignoring the skills and abilities.

After German Military there was British War Office Selection Boards (WOSB) set up in 1942 for identifying potential officers for the British Army. Assessment Centres of WOSB included different tests like group discussions, short lectures, leaderless group tasks and also used mixture of assessors like military officers, psychiatrists and psychologists to assess the candidates performance.

In 1945, Assessment Centre method was used for non – military purpose by British Civil Service Assessment. The main reason for using by them was for multi stage selection process for 2-3 days of assessment by test screening and interviews.

In India the Services Selection Board (SSB) is set up to identify officers for the Indian armed forces. The SSB selection process is spread over five days assessment of candidates with an aim to select candidates with Officer Like Qualities. These qualities include effective intelligence, sense of responsibility, initiative, judgment (under stress), ability to reason and organize, communication skills, determination, courage, self-confidence, speed in decision making, willingness to set an example, compassion and a feeling of loyalty to the nation.

“In 1956, American Telephone and Telegraph Company (AT&T) initiated its management progress study (MPS) under Douglas Bray. This was the first industrial application of the assessment centre method. Both individual characteristics of young managers as well as organizational settings in which they worked were studied and

evaluation at the assessment centre was used to predict whether the participant would make it to the middle management in the next ten years or less. The sample included both recent college graduates and non-management personnel who had risen to the managerial positions relatively early in their career. The dimensions assessed included managerial functions like organizing, planning, decision making, general ability such as intellectual ability, personal impression, sensitivity, and values and attitudes, both work related and social.

Assessment tools like interviews covering background, personal objectives, social values, interests, etc., in-basket exercises, business games, leaderless group discussion, and various projective and chapter and pencil tests were used. Assessors included industrial / clinical psychologists, Bell staff, and university faculty or consultants. Later, line managers were also trained (but supervisors of assesses were not used as assessors). Feedback was not given to participants, their supervisors, or other managers to minimize the effect of assessment on the individual's progress in the company. Criterion data were gathered in 1965 regarding the level of management attained and salary progress over approximately eight years since the assessment and have been summarized below: for college grads predictive validity coefficient = 0.46 in early years and 0.33 in the 16th year. For non-college graduates: predictive validity coefficient = 0.46 in early years above 0.40 in the 16th year. Later AT&T started using the assessment centre method for personnel decisions such as potential appraisal, promotions, etc.

The success of the earlier work of AT&T was followed by Standard Oil which was the second to start assessment centres. This was followed by IBM, Sears Roebuck, General Electric, and Caterpillar Tractors. By 1981 more than 2500 organizations applied the method to select potential managers".<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Rao T.V. and Juneja Mohit, in Is past performance a good predictor of future potential? W.P. No. 2007 - 06 – 06, June 2007, IIM, Ahmedabad,

### 2.3 Current Trends in Assessment Centre

There has been a trend towards using the term “Development Centre”, in place of “Assessment Centre”. The term Development Centre has helped to gain in reduced anxiety. Participants find the term “development” more friendly and less threatening than “assessment” because the difficulty with assessing 'strategic focus' is that it is often poorly articulated in the first place. Until we understand what it means in terms of concrete activities or behaviors in a specific job it's hard to assess. Maybe the increased use of assessment centre exercises is a reflection of the ever growing usage of simulations in all types of media in modern life. For example as we see TV shows demonstrating the insight to be gained from observing 'real' behavior in an entertainment context perhaps the wider population are being drawn to this concept as a means of fully understanding people's potential when recruiting.

There are certain commonly used ways of conducting an AC and the purposes for which they are conducted. These trends are listed below:

- i. Purpose:** Most often ACs are used for developmental purposes rather than selection. When used for selection, it is often for the selection of middle level managers wherein the dual purpose of development is also achieved. This is so because of the cost and time involved in conducting an AC.
- ii. Duration:** Most ACs are two and a half day long if the purpose is of mere selection. However if the AC is to combine selection with training, it is usually conducted for about five to six days. The duration increases with the increase in the responsibility level of those being assessed.
- iii. Group strength:** The number of candidates in each group is usually 5-6. Overall, the number of participants in an AC ranges from 12 – 21.
- iv. Feedback:** Feedback most often is provided orally than in written. Feedback is more frequent in case of developmental ACs for example in training etc. In case of evaluative ACs i.e. selection, feedback is provided at the end of the session.
- v. Tests:** In-basket tests are the most successful among all the other AC exercises followed by interviews. Mental ability tests and personality tests are the least effective in predicting the future effectiveness of the candidates.

**vi. Method of selection of participants:** The candidates selected for ACs are usually the ones recommended by the seniors. Performance appraisal data is also considered for the selection to assessment centres.

## **2.4 How an Assessment Centre Works**

Assessment centres are one of the most effective ways to find out the strengths and weakness of a person. It also helps to analyze if the person is a good fit for a role and whether he can handle the responsibilities. It also gives you a better sense of what is involved in the role you have applied for. It also helps in assessing our own self, where we are strong and where we need improvement.

An organization uses them because making the right selection decision is really important to them. It's a chance for them to see how a person behaves in work-based situations. Specially trained assessors evaluate each participant according to company's requirement. The assessment centre method involves multiple evaluation techniques, including various types of job-related simulations, interview, psychological tests, group discussions, group problem solving exercises, and role-plays.

The purpose of an Assessment Centre is for selection, promotion, training and development, it also aims to provide an organization with an assessment process that is consistent and fair. Usually AC's are used for development of employees rather than for selection purpose as AC consume a lot of time and cost. It is only used during the selection of middle level manager since it can also be used for their development later.

The duration of AC can be for two to three days but if the assessment centre also include selection and training, then it requires five to six days. The duration change according to the level of responsibilities faced by assesses. A traditional AC involves six participants in each group thus there can be 12 to 21 assesses in an AC at a time. The candidates selected for ACs are usually the ones recommended by the seniors.

Performance appraisal data is also considered for the selection to assessment centres. The participants are observed throughout the activities by assessors who are trained to observe and evaluate behavior and knowledge. They take notes on the assessed behavior during situations and discuss it later with other assessors. Feedback is provided often during development trainings.

#### **2.4.1 Stages in a Typical Assessment Centre**

AC normally involves the following stages. The list of critical responsibilities, at each stage is given below.

##### **i. Pre Assessment Centre**

- a. Defining the objective of AC.
- b. Get approval for AC from the concerned officials.
- c. Conduct job analysis.
- d. Define the competencies required for the target position.
- e. Identify the potential position holder and send them invitations.
- f. Identify the observers.
- g. Train the observers.
- h. Design the AC exercises
- i. Decide the rating method.
- j. Make infrastructural arrangements.
- k. Schedule the AC.
- l. Inform the concerned people of the schedule.

##### **ii. During Assessment Centre**

- a. Explain participants the purpose of the AC, the procedure it would follow and its outcome.
- b. Give instructions to the participants, before every exercise.

- c. Distribute the competency-exercise matrix sheets among observers.
- d. Conduct all exercises.
- e. Conduct a discussion of all observers on every participant's ratings, at the end of the session.
- f. Make a report of the strengths and improvement areas of every participant.
- g. Give feedback to participants.
- h. Get feedback from participants and observers about the conduction of AC.

**iii. Post Assessment Centre**

- a. Compile reports of all participants and submit the list of selected participants to the concerned authorities.
- b. Make improvements in the design according to the recommendations.
- c. Evaluate the validity of results after a definite period.

**2.4.2 Common Job Simulations Used In Assessment Centres Are:**

The following are some of the commonly job simulations used in assessment centres. It may be noted that these are the most commonly used job simulations, and there can be many other methods based on the typical requirement of the organization.

- i. In-basket exercises.
- ii. Group discussions.
- iii. Interviews with "subordinates" or "clients".
- iv. Fact-finding exercises.
- v. Analysis / decision-making problems.
- vi. Oral presentation exercises.
- vii. Competency-based interview.
- viii. Written communication exercises.
- ix. Business games.
- x. Paper-pen exercise.

In-basket tests are the most successful among all the other AC exercises. Mental ability tests and personality tests are the least effective in predicting the future

effectiveness of the candidates. The data collected through these activities are evaluated and analyzed and is used for decision making process. The assessor makes a written report of all the assesses, their detailed information, their strength and areas of improvement and relate it to the requirement of the target position also the most unique feature of AC is that it relates it to future performance by forecasting how a participant will handle the problem and what decisions he will make during challenging situations. AC's provides individuals an opportunity to exhibit their talent and performance through these activities which they cannot in the existing job. In addition to that the organization conducting Assessment Centre enjoys benefits in the form of improved efficiency and quality results. The candidates are also satisfied with the fairness in selection procedure for the position and readily accept it. The trainers polish their efficiency level and managerial skills by giving them constructive feedback and guidance.

### **2.4.3 What are the assessors looking for:**

Behavioral patterns are judged in the Assessment Centre. Team work is looked for how effectively have you put in the inputs across to your peers. Assessment Centres are used to quantify one's weakness, strengths and behavior. Do the people meet the objectives; note the various abilities or skills for the nature of the job. Are they suited for the post? To identify right person for the right job. The ultimate goal is career development plan of the participants.

#### **Assessors look for following qualities :**

- i. What a person says and acts.
- ii. Who is Observable and verifiable.
- iii. A person who avoids judgments and misinterpretations.
- iv. Can clearly describe actions.
- v. Collated for actions perceived.
- vi. Behavior displayed important/relevant to the role.
- vii. Intellectual, social, interpersonal, adaptability, result-oriented, versatile, creativity.

## **2.5 Advantages and disadvantages of Assessment Centres**

### **2.5.1 Advantages of Assessment Centres**

- i. It is a fair and accurate way of selecting a candidate.
- ii. It not only helps in selecting the right candidate for the position but also enhances the knowledge of the participants and boosts their thinking procedure and also improves their efficiency at work.
- iii. It gives opportunity to individuals who are talented and couldn't exhibit their talent because their job never demanded it.
- iv. They enable interviewers to assess existing performance as well as predict future job performance.
- v. It gives the candidates a better insight into the role they have applied for as the tests are similar to the role.
- vi. They help employers build an employer brand. Candidates who attend assessment centres which genuinely reflect the job and the organization are often impressed by that company, even if they are rejected.
- vii. Assessment Centres can be customized for different kinds of jobs, competencies and organizational requirements.

### **2.5.2 Disadvantages of Assessment Centres**

- i. ACs are very costly and time consuming. The assessment centre will take at least three days for each assessor one day for training, at least one day for assessing, and one more for making a decision.
- ii. ACs requires highly skilled observers as the observers may bring in their own perceptions and biases while evaluating.
- iii. Those who receive poor assessment might become de-motivated and might lose confidence in their abilities.
- iv. A personal characteristics examined via assessment centre exercises cannot be measured accurately even over a period of three or four days.
- v. Assessors might not be fully familiar with the details of the work that successful candidates will have to undertake. Hence the wrong qualities maybe assessed.

## **2.6 Growth of Assessment Centre's in various countries**

### **2.6.1 United States**

Assessment Centre's were introduced in the U.S. during the Second World War for selecting spies after which a lot of private companies started adopting it. The first company who introduced AC in the U.S. was American Telephone and Telegraph Company for the selection of managers. This program was basically started to make out the employees performance and their development with respect to their managerial role. Dauglas Bray, the architect of this study, had some concerns when he designed this study :

- i. How would AC's affect people and what change will it bring to them and the organization.
- ii. Will the desired change be achieved.
- iii. Career counseling and development.
- iv. How will this change affect the organization's climate, procedures and processes.
- v. Will they be able to select the right candidate for the right job not only for current job but also for future role?

Here the duration for Assessment Centre's is 3½ days which includes personality test, written test, mental ability, interviews etc. Assessment Centre in AT&T Proved to be very effective for assessing individual as well as group performance with various exercises, group discussions and activities involved and the concept of selecting managers through AC's also proved to be productive. A lot of organizations introduced assessment centre's in the organization after that like standard oil, General Motors, Ohio, IBM, etc.

The practices adopted by the UK are different from the US as the UK emphasizes more on group performance while US stress on leaderless group exercises.

### **2.6.2 Canada**

The Director of the Public Service Commission in partnership with Revenue developed this program for the assessment of Middle Managers. This Assessment Centre have their four set of exercises which is commonly performed by all middle managers which also simulate the activities and tasks. In Canada the assessors look for some competencies in a manager that are as follows:

- i. Communication skills
- ii. Co-ordination
- iii. Adaptability
- iv. Leadership skills
- v. Intelligence
- vi. Judgment

The above competencies are the most important competencies that a middle level manager should possess. Here Assessment centre is a one day session where the participants are rated by the assessors. Here the unique feature is that the participants are rated on a 7 point scale on each competency and this rating is given on the basis of performance expected of a middle level manager. Further the participant receives assessment report where in the required competencies and their individual ratings on each competency are mentioned. A comment is given by the assessor on their performance and their competencies and which competency needs improvement, they also get an opportunity to discuss their performance with a psychologist. Based on that report the participants receive a recommendation for career development.

### **2.6.3 India**

As already explained in the beginning of this chapter, the Indian armed forces have been using the AC technique to find Officers. The AC which is conducted by the Services Selection Board is a five days activity where the SSB looks for participants with Officers Like Quality. Pareek and Rao brought in the concept of Assessment Centre for the first time in the corporate sector in India in 1975 for Larsen & Toubro. Initially it took time for companies to understand the effectiveness of assessment centre's in an organization, but today there are more than 30 companies in India who are using it some of them are Bharti Telecom, Nestle, Castrol, Eicher, Wipro Ltd, GE,

Jhonson & Jhonson, Wockhardt etc. and many more willing to introduce it in their companies.

In last few years Assessment centre's have gained tremendous importance as the companies are becoming aware about the benefits of assessment centre's and how it also helps in boosting up the performance of employees .

#### **2.6.4 Global Practices In Assessment Centre**

i. Britvic operates a two tiered graduate assessment centre recruitment process for its young manger graduates and matured graduate training programmers. The first assessment centre typically involves up to 24 candidates across a general talent pool and test six key competency area within the following test and exercises:

- a. Numerical reasoning test
- b. One to one competency based interviews
- c. Practical problem solving risks
- d. Two group or discussion exercise
- e. Verbal reasoning test
- f. Working on exercise currently on graduate training program
- g. The second assessment centre focus on specific job types and typically involves between 10 -12 candidates. The format of the assessment centre is similar to the first but here the candidate should give a presentation on a pre- determined topic.

ii. KPMG operates on the one day assessment centre as a part of graduate recruitment process. Candidate assessment includes an in-tray exercise where candidate prioritize a large number of documents, group exercise presentation and a partner interview.

iii. Rolls Royce graduate assessment centre uses interviews ,psychometric test a case study and offer an opportunity to speak to current graduate trainee in the company .the company also test the applicant technical knowledge either on the assessment centre or on the final interview.

iv. Unilever operates a two tiered graduate assessment centre recruitment process where candidates undergo the following tests and exercises:

- a. Case study interview.
  - b. Competency based interview.
  - c. Group discussion exercise.
  - d. Work simulation / in-tray exercise.
- v. BP invites graduate candidates to a 24-hour assessment program held over two days.

The program consists of the following tests and exercises:

- a. Group exercises
  - b. Informal discussions
  - c. Interviews
- vi. Smithkline Beecham consumer healthcare used assessment centre to determine person position match. They use structured interviews, case study scenario discussion and portfolio presentation as a part of the process.

vii. U.S. aerospace and defense company Boeing operates a Pre-Management Assessment Process (PMAP), as a structured process for managerial candidate selection at twelve assessment centres across the U.S. Boeing uses four methods to measure candidates against the following competencies:

- a. Multi-tasking exercise-Interpretational skills, oral communication, planning and time management, positive work orientation, problem solving, teamwork.
- b. Role-playing exercise-Interpretational skills, oral communication, positive work orientation, problem solving, teamwork.
- c. Structured interview-Basic abilities, planning and time management, problem solving.
- d. Written exercise-Basic abilities, planning and time management.

viii. Philips Semiconductors: Leadership Potential Assessment

Philips Semiconductors relies on explicit leadership competencies to provide a common language for discussing the potential of individual employees by following the steps below:

- a. Rank Individuals by Competencies: Individuals are scored, weighted, and ranked on the following six core competencies:
  - Ability to develop self and others
  - Solutions-oriented thinker
  - Determination to achieve excellent results
  - Exemplifies strong market focus
  - Inspires commitment
  - Portrays a demand for top performance
- b. Identify Strengths and Weaknesses: A core management team uses these competencies to identify strengths and weaknesses of key individuals and to map out a specific development plan.
- c. Enroll in Assessment Centres: Once identified, top potential leaders may participate in a two to three-day program at the assessment centre. Participants engage in exercise formats to provide a total picture of their skill sets. Participants are assessed on the parameters mentioned above.

With globalization, the market has become increasingly demanding and competitive. There is a demand for a range of goods and services. To survive in this competitive environment, organizations need to align their strategic intent in line with the market requirements. The strategic intent thus shapes the mission statement of the organization, the structure of the organization and the values it follows. The organization then sets its performance goals according to its strategic intent. To achieve these performance goals it has become imperative for organizations to have competent people. ACs help organizations identify and develop these competent people and have thus become the need of the day.

### **2.6.5 Variety of purpose and benefits of Assessment Centres for the above organizations**

On the basis of the above examples of global practices in assessment centre, the use and benefits of AC's can be said as follows:

- i. Selection – AC’s help organizations in getting the right people in.
- ii. Career development – Identification of competencies possessed by individual helps organization decide his career plans.
- iii. Potential appraisal – AC’s help organizations identify if the person can handle the challenges offered in the next higher position.
- iv. Identification of high potential managers – This creates a pool of managerial talents & multifunctional managers that would be available across the business group etc.
- v. Succession planning – Identifying the right individual for critical positions such as CEO, CFO, Heads of other departments, etc. is very important for success of the organization. ACs reduces the risk of such wrong identification.
- vi. Allocations of challenging assignments – ACs provide the organization with the strengths and weaknesses of every participant. This helps the organization in deciding the candidates who would have the necessary abilities to undertake the proposed challenging assignments.
- vii. Management development – ACs provide ample opportunity to its participants to reflect on one’s capabilities and to improve by observing others perform in the AC managers. Assessment centre exercises measure the following mid-career-specific competencies:
- viii. Managerial teamwork-Role play exercise/task force preparation exercise
- ix. Conflict management- Role play exercise
- x. Degree of innovation-Task force preparation exercise

#### **2.6.6 Assessment Centre Method used in organizations – Indian Experience**

Assessment centres are the key areas which are worth the investment; they facilitate the identification of the competencies in potential internal candidates.

In assessment centres the future leaders are identified and groomed. It is similar to a military operation wherein the candidates are put to test and their skills are honed in order to scale new heights and responsibilities. Corporate India is increasingly using this popular tool to create processes that can identify the specific training needs for the functional heads, spot leadership competencies to be groomed and leveraged along with utilizing it as a recruitment tool to get the right aptitude and attitude required for the job positions.

Assessment Centre method is popular in India but not prevalent, and is used mostly as a recruitment tool whereas the real crux of the assessment centre is to identify strategic learning and mapping career orientation of the employees in the managerial cadre.

#### **Industry feedback and opinion of managers on assessment centre method**

Mr Jahangir Mehta (General Manager, Training and Resource Development, *Jet Airways*) Says, “Assessment Centres are primarily to identify the development needs of our professionals, create potentials for growth opportunities and thereby use HR as an intervention to initiate an efficient work culture.”

He also adds, “The managers are rated for 10 competencies through a host of operational modules. The competencies are only generic. They are global competencies required by any professionals to trigger the business ahead. This implies that the competencies could range from clarity in communication, quick decision making, and the ability to deliver solutions in the toughest of riddles among others. As a build up to determine and create HR strategies, there are designed simulations, performance reviews, one on one objective setting along with group discussions and case studies. The company has been able to create relevant training modules to enhance the competencies. More importantly, they have been able to understand the time span that the professionals would consume to grow and develop in the organization. From this, the company has been able to determine that certain professionals will be able to develop in 18 months to 2 years while some would consume less than a quarter.”

Mr P. Vijaykumar (Faculty, Personnel Management and Industrial Relations, *TISS*) says, “This tool is more to do with aligning employee development with the right organizational culture as much it is about enhancing competencies for career development.”

Mr Uday Chawla (Managing Partner, *Hedrick & Struggles*) says, “Assessment Centre is the major thrust of our business. And corporate come to us mainly for top level assessments in the wake of acquisitions or for assessing leadership for strategies and goals.”

At Philips India, assessment acts as a development centre too. Ms Padmaja Korde (Senior Manager, Corporate HR, Philips India Ltd.) says, “We are creating professionals who are in the voyage of discovering self-initiated development plans within the organization”.

“HSBC applies assessment centres for recruitment through an open and transparent system of competence assessment along with career development through training”, explains Mr Ronald Sequeira, Senior Resourcing and Development Manager, HSBC. He further tells that, we have clearly defined 13 competencies that the Bank expects to have in our managers. The assessment centre is used to measure these competencies through a series of aptitude tests, psychometric tests, group exercises. Each test may measure more than one competency and each competency is measured more than once during the process. According to Mr Sequeira, the assessment is done by senior line managers and a candidate is offered the job only if the candidate meets the minimum standard on a majority of the competencies. HSBC utilizes assessment centres to recruit on campus too. Further, co-relation studies are also done to match performance at an assessment centre with subsequent performance on the job. Then the assessment centres goes an extra mile to incorporate employee development.



The next process is making the Competency Dictionary – refer figure 2.2, which describes the various competencies and the associated behaviors. Once the preparation of assessment centre is done, the administrator’s job begins. The administrator has to be very exact in his job, and therefore, it is important to have a checklist – refer figure 2.3 to ensure everything is as per plan. As the AC is a complex plan, it is important to have a detailed schedule. There are experts who suggest to have an Assessor’s Schedule, but not to have a detailed schedule for the Assesses. The Assesses may be given a general briefing as to the schedule of the AC without giving them details of the various exercises which they have to participate in. Once the AC commences, there is the requirement of getting the Personal Information Questionnaire (PIQ) filled-in – refer figure 2.4. The Participants’ Distribution Sheet is an important document that has to be made as the assessors would like to refer it – refer figure 2.5. The Participants’ Distribution Sheet shows the distribution of the participants to the assessors in the various exercises.

### **COMPETENCY DICTIONARY**

**1. Customer Centricity** – Customer Centricity is the demonstration of passion for the customer and an active attempt to go beyond what is required in order to meet or exceed customer expectations. It includes an awareness of customer needs and how those issues impact and are impacted by business decisions and processes.

- Creates passion for customer satisfaction
- Establishes processes to achieve excellence in customer service
- Builds capabilities in people to deliver excellent customer service

**2. Strategic Thinking** – Strategic Thinking is the ability to apply industry knowledge and experience to assess a business situation broadly, define realistic goals, and conceive effective strategies and action plans. It includes addressing and recognizing wider implications of a situation, consideration of alternative scenarios and different paths to achieving long term business goals.

- Designs effective processes in view of industry best practices to achieve the business goals
- Establishes checkpoints to track progress towards achievement of the business goals

**3. Problem Solving** – Problem Solving is the ability to proactively think and effectively understand situations or problems by organizing or synthesizing information in a systematic way. It includes anticipating and identifying problems before they evolve, recognizing symptoms, evaluating root causes, and developing solutions.

- Approaches unfamiliar or unusual situations logically and identifies a range of solutions

- Takes preventive action to reduce future problems and establishes processes to prevent recurrence of the same

**4. Confidence and Decisiveness** – Confidence & Decisiveness is the capacity to present oneself in an assured, forceful, impressive and unhesitating manner. It includes a passion and excitement about ideas, work, people, a positive outlook, and a consistent display of a decisive presence

- Demonstrates confidence in own opinion, analysis or point of view when challenged maintaining a positive attitude
- Stays true to his/ her point of view and is not intimidated by others who are in a position of power

**5. Innovation & Creativity** – Innovation & Creativity is the drive to improve organizational performance through the introduction of completely new ideas, processes, products or services.

- Questions and challenges the adequacy and quality of traditional thinking
- Puts in place systems and processes to promote / reward / recognize innovation and creativity

**6. Commitment to Excellence** – Commitment to Excellence is the determination to pursue and deliver higher standards of quality, speed, simplicity and innovation.

- Champions continuous improvement in quality of products, services and processes.
- Instills attitudes and values in the team that supports a culture of excellence

**7. Result Orientation** – Result Orientation is the capacity to be energized and excited by challenging objectives and a concern for exceeding goals set by self or others. It includes executing actions in a focused manner, and pursuing alternative courses of action to increase the probability of reaching desired outcomes.

- Aggressively pursues stretch objectives that are not within immediate reach
- Builds long term credibility through consistent accomplishments of committed results

**8. Building high performance teams** – Building High Performance Teams is the ability to effectively influence and direct the activities of individuals / groups, by developing motivation, commitment and teamwork providing focus on business objectives. It includes creating and communicating a common vision, mobilizing team members and providing support and guidance in the accomplishment of tasks and objectives.

- Addresses issues of non-performance without hesitation and actively pursues development needs of his / her team members.
- Allows team members to assume a level of authority and empowering them to share leadership over a particular situation or problems.

**Figure 2.2 Sample Competency Dictionary**

<b>CHECKLIST FOR ASSESSMENT CENTRE ADMINISTRATOR</b>		
<b>Item / Activity</b>	<b>Qty.</b>	<b>Done</b>
Participants selected and informed		
Venue booked		
Assessors trained		
<b>Location</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Living arrangements</li> <li>• Meals</li> <li>• Main hall with flexible seating</li> <li>• Syndicate rooms</li> <li>• Furniture arrangement</li> <li>• Audio-visual aids (if required)</li> </ul>		
<b>Stationery</b>		
Name tags / Name boards	8	
Assessor's manuals	4	
Clipboards	4	
Schedule	4	
Blank paper	1 ream	
Scissors	2	
Punch	2	
Stapler pins	1 box	
Pencils	2 dozen	
Erasers	1 dozen	
Sharpeners	2	
<b>Preliminary Papers</b>		
Participants' Distribution Table	4	
Final Rating Sheets	8	
Envelopes A4 size	8	
<b>Group Discussion Exercise</b>		
Group Discussion Topic	12	
Observation Sheets	4	
Group Discussion Rating Sheets	8	
<b>In-basket Exercise</b>		
In-basket Exercise Papers	8 sets	
In-basket Participant Report Forms	8	
In-basket Assessment Sheets	8	
In-basket Rating Sheets	8	

**Figure 2.3 Administrator's Checklist**



## PARTICIPANTS' DISTRIBUTION SHEET

- A. \_\_\_\_\_ (Assessors' Names)
- B. \_\_\_\_\_
- C. \_\_\_\_\_
- D. \_\_\_\_\_
- E. \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Name	* Group Discussion	In-basket Exercise	Presentation Exercise	*Committee Exercise	Role Play Exercise	*Case Discussion	Personal Interview	Final Report
1.	C	A	B	D	C	A	D	D
2.	C	A	B	D	C	A	D	D
3.	A	C	D	B	A	C	B	B
4.	A	C	D	B	A	C	B	B
5.	D	B	A	C	D	B	C	C
6.	D	B	A	C	D	B	C	C
7.	B	D	C	A	B	D	A	A
8.	B	D	C	A	B	D	A	A

\* Group Interactive Exercise

**Figure 2.5 Participants' Distribution to Assessors**

### ii) Exercise Material

The exercise may be read out to the participants or it may be handed over to them. In case where the participants are to respond on the paper, there must be sufficient place for the responses to be written. Once the exercise begun, each of the assessors will require an observation sheet to enter his observations on – refer figure 2.6. The observation sheets can be designed specific for the assessment centre, or a blank sheet can be given to the assessor to record the observations.

<b>EXERCISE OBSERVATION SHEET</b>			
No.	Communication	Decision Making	Team Work

**Figure 2.6 Exercise Observation Sheet**

**iii) Rating Sheet**

Some exercise especially the evaluation interview requires a different type of observation sheet. The personnel interview rating sheet is devised to record biographical information and therefore it is similar to personnel information questionnaire. For interview is generally conducted by an assessor and does not require integration.

Once the exercise is over the assessor writes the summary of the behavioral observation and after the integration session, they write the rating for each competency. For this purpose there is exercise rating sheet. The exercise rating sheet is a mandatory requirement since this is final rating and gives the behavioral description based on the final report will be written. The final rating include all content of each exercise so that all rating received by participant is each competency and exercise is recorded together

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_ **DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

	Ranking exercise	Committee Exercise	Presentation Exercise	In-Basket Exercise	Role play	Case Discussions	Personnel interview	Final Rating
Analytical ability								
Communication								
Customer focus								
Decision making								
Interpersonal skill								
Planning and organization								
Strategic thinking								
Team Work								

**Figure 2.7 Final Rating Sheet**

### 2.7.1 Assessor's Manual

For the good assessment centre it should ensure that. The assessor's manual must contain the following:

- i. Complete assessment schedule.
- ii. Competency dictionary.
- iii. Primary and secondary competency matrix.
- iv. Assessment centre Design (Exercise-Competency Matrix)
- v. Distribution of participant to Assessors.
- vi. All exercise.
- vii. Briefing instruction for all Exercise.
- viii. Sample of rating sheet for all exercises.
- ix. Sample on writing rating sheet.

- x. Guideline on writing sheet.
- xi. Specialize rating sheet (where applicable).
- xii. Guideline for writing exercise.
- xiii. Guideline on Interviewing.
- xiv. Sample Final Report.

The assessor manual is confidential document since it contains information that may be helpful to the participant while undergoing the assessment centre. It is important to keep away the assessor manual from the participants.

### **2.7.2 The Role of the Administrator in Documentation**

There are some roles and responsibilities of the administrator those are as follows:

#### **i. Preparation of the Material:**

Before commencing the assessment centre, administrator has to prepare and check the material which is going to be used in assessment centre. The administrator also has to prepare the checklist.

#### **ii. Checklist:**

The administrator need to have checklist at all stages and the more comprehensive the checklists are, the more remote the chance will be of an error occurring. In fact it may be better for the administrator to have checklist for each exercise and to abide by it the way pilots carry out checks at every stage of the flight to avoid neglecting detail.

#### **iii. Carrying the material:**

It is always best if the work of separating the material and sequencing it to suit the exercises is done before the assessment centre commences.

#### **iv. Collating the material from the assessors:**

One of the more intricate aspects of the job is the collation of the completed rating sheets from the assessors. Experts say that assessors often delay the submission of the rating sheets to the administrator and the process gets telescoped so that finally a large

bunch of rating sheets is handed over together, which creates a problem for the administrator to organize.

## **2.8 Activities involved with Assessment Centres**

In Assessment Centre, candidates participate in number of job stimulations designed to allow them to demonstrate actual behaviors and skills which are important to be filled in a position.

Activities involved in Assessment Centre are as follows:-

**i. In-Basket Exercise:** In this activity, the candidate is required to handle, in writing, material that he/she finds in the basket. The items included in basket are memos, letters, personnel forms. Assessors may interview candidates regarding their strategies and rationale underlying their actions.

**ii. Group Discussion:** It is a method used to encourage group participation. It is able to bring out different view-points while covering the non-factual judgmental areas. In this activity, the assesses are asked to discuss among themselves hypothetical problems related to targeted position and arrive at a consensus decision or recommended solution. One example of a problem solving scenario includes a Tower Building exercise, using play building blocks. In this exercise, a group may be competing with other groups to design and build a tower in accordance with a construction brief which may stipulate minimum height, time period the completed tower has to stand 'unsupported', color, cost of block shapes, a time limit, and a budget. There may be monetary penalties for failing to reach particular aspects of the brief. Each group has access to a limited number of blocks.

**iii. Interview Simulation:** In this activity, the candidates are asked to role-play a person in the targeted job and to interview a subordinate, citizen, etc who is role played by the assessor. The candidates are given information on the reason for interview and any background information they may need.

**iv. Presentation and Report Writing:** Presentation is the oral presentation of material by assessee. The purpose of presentation is to convey new information and to persuade assessor to accept a particular point.

Assessment criteria for presentation methods are objectives, time, class, size, assessee proficiency, assessee background and facilities. The advantages of presentation is that it is effective for introducing a material or giving an over-view. The disadvantages of presentation is that what is “told” is not necessarily taught? There is a temptation to speed up telling to stay on time constraint. There is a limited opportunity for assessor participation.

In Presentation and Report writing, candidates are asked to give a presentation to an appropriate group or write a report on a specific issue, challenge or a case for e.g. – subordinates, city council, the press etc.

**v. Management Problems:** In this activity, the candidates are asked to analyze, in writing one or more problems. This analysis may be followed by a group discussion.

**vi. Qualification Screens:** Here certain questionnaires are designed. It is used to check whether the candidate possess specific characteristic which is needed to perform a particular job. They are best for screening out candidates who do not meet minimum requirements such as relevant experience, schedule availability, educational degrees or citizenship.

**vii. Structured Interviews:** In structured interviews, hiring managers, recruiters or trained assessors systematically evaluate candidates on the basis of their responses to predetermined question built around key job competencies. These structured interviews can be conducted face-to- face, by phone, or over the web.

**viii. In Tray exercises:** In this activity, you may be asked to assume a particular role as an employee of a fictitious company and work through a pile of correspondence in your In Tray. These tests commonly measure Job Skills such as: ability to organize and prioritize work; analytical skills; communication with team members and customers; written communication skills; and delegation (if a higher level position). This type of exercise may take from several hours to a day. A common example of an

in tray exercise at first level management may involve: placing you in a particular role within a work setting, where a crisis situation is developing. The situation requires you to take responsibility for the situation. During the exercise, mail is delivered and collected each half hour. The exercise will describe what resources are available to you: e.g. a list of internal phone contacts and who's who, a telephone, fax, personal computer, information such as a product reference chart, data showing the work area's performance, a calendar which notes key dates and relevant deadlines.

**ix. Job Simulations:** These evaluate how the candidate responds to simulations simulating actual job tasks. Job simulations can be conducted using “paper and pencil” trained role players or computers. In addition to being effective for assessing candidate competencies, job simulation provide candidates with realistic pre-view of key job roles. Their main drawbacks are that they are relatively labor intensive to create and non-automated simulations require extensive training if they are to be used effectively.

**x. Knowledge and Skill tests:** These assess knowledge and skills in specific subject areas such as computer programming or accounting laws. There are fairly complex to design, particularly in terms of establishing appropriate question and scoring guidelines.

**xi. Talent Measures:** These measure “natural“ personal characteristics that are associated with success in certain jobs. Some of the things assessed through talent measures are problem solving ability, work ethic, leadership characteristics and interpersonal style. On a broad level, talent measures tends to predict two kinds of performance :

- a. what a person can do For example, the ability to learn new task quickly or stay calm in stressful situation.

b. what a person will do For example, attendance, work ethics.

Talent measures, when appropriately matched to the job, are the best predictors of the superior job performance. They are also the most difficult to develop, because they require “looking below the surface” at underlying skills, abilities and work styles.

**xii. Case Studies:** Project Managers may be asked to plan for the release of a new product, which incorporates scheduling, budgeting and resourcing. This type of exercise may measure the ability to: analyze complex data and issues; seek solutions; project plan; and present findings, using a mixture of presentation skills.

**xiii. Culture Fit and Values inventories:** These help to determine how well an applicant will fit into a particular work environment .They are similar in many ways to talent measures, but focus on predicting tenure and organizational commitment as opposed to superior job performance.

**xiv. Background Investigations:** These gather information about candidate from sources other than the candidate him/herself. This includes employment verification, criminal–record checks and reference interviews. Background investigation are most useful for avoiding potentially catastrophic hires.

**xv. Integrity Tests:** These are the written tests that predict whether an applicant will engage in theft. They have proved to be effective in helping to avoid costly hiring mistakes especially where theft has traditionally been a problem. Integrity test can be less expensive alternative to background investigation, but they are not as reliable at detecting past criminal behavior.

**xvi. Physical Ability Test:** These involves having candidates complete physical exercises to assess talents and capabilities such as strength, endurance, dexterity, and vision. They tend to be used for only physically demand job.

**xvii. Fact Finding and Analysis Exercises:** Exercises may be particularly appropriate for self assessment since the fact base is finite and most interference can be anticipated.

**xviii. Business Games:** It can also be effective for self assessment. The candidate might select from a checklist of different response option or chose different approaches and take different paths through simulation. The simulation could branch through different stimulus presentation. This type of self assessment would help differentiate an employer as unique and sophisticated in their approach to candidate.

**xix. Role Play Exercises:** It will be good candidates as selection tools. Candidates would select and evaluate various response options at key points during the interaction. These exercises would be efficient in gathering multiple responses in relatively short period of time. If you are asked to do a role play, you will be asked to assume a fictitious role and handle a particular work situation. Customer Service Officers may be asked to respond to a number of phone inquiries, including customer queries and complaints.

This type of exercise may measure: oral communication, customer service orientation, and problem solving. Managers may be asked to provide feedback to a sales representative staff member, after viewing a videotape of the sales representative's call with a client.

There are many possible Role Play combinations depending on your purpose.

## **2.9 Assessment Centres enhance HR effectiveness**

Most companies find it difficult to make error-free decisions when it comes to identifying people for senior jobs, or when they want to promote. HR's challenge is to help management make the right decisions. The assessment centre concept is very powerful for such decision-making.

An assessment centre will have a standardized process for evaluation of behavior using multiple inputs. These centres need well-trained process observers and robust techniques are used. Compared to normal interviews, at assessment centres, judgment about behaviors are made by not one but many, using specifically developed simulations. Data is pooled by the assessors or by a statistical integration process. Trained assessors observe and evaluate candidates on their relevant managerial qualities, while those candidates are performing a variety of situational exercises. Assessment centre exercises (e.g., role-play, in-basket, fact-finding and group discussions), intend to measure dimensions such as leadership, planning, sensitivity, problem solving, and many others.

Assessment centres serve three main human resources functions:

- i. Selection and promotion
- ii. Diagnosis (e.g., identification of training and development needs)
- iii. Development (i.e., skill enhancement through simulations).

The following dimensions are normally assessed in assessment centres:

- i. Planning and organizing
- ii. Leadership and Analytical
- iii. Problem solving
- iv. Sensitivity
- v. Decision-making
- vi. Creativity

- vii. Sociability
- viii. Management control and delegating.

For success of the assessment centres, assessors have to demonstrate the capability to observe and record the behavior of candidates. This is demanding as assessors have to understand the difference between merely looking for concrete verbal and non-verbal behaviors and interpreting these behaviors. They should be able to withhold early judgments. These days video is frequently used to aid assessors in gathering behavioral information.

Assessors should be able to organize their behavioral observations by job-related dimensions. This means indicating to which dimension each behavior belongs. Another skill involves accurate rating of candidates on dimensions. They should have the ability not to make comparative judgments. This is critical.

Assessors should demonstrate the ability to integrate information from various exercises and be able to discuss the ratings with fellow assessors. Finally, they have to write formal reports and give feedback.

Studies reveal that if assessment techniques are robust, targeted, well-designed and properly implemented, then grouped together this multiple assessment technique can be the most valid and reliable approach when compared to single-method approaches—such as interviews and personality questionnaires.

Although setting up an assessment centre can be costly, the cost is worth it if one considers the risk minimization of recruiting the wrong person. Costs can be higher when organizations spend money in buying expensive off-the-shelf tools which tie them into an additional cost. Often these products are misaligned with competency models. Another cost is the time commitment required from internal participants and managers who play assessor roles.

The main advantage of assessment centres is that it allows key job success behaviors to be directly observed and measured. Designed and run properly, they provide a window to cross-check or challenge information gained through self report measures such as interviews. For example, someone may outline a ton of experience (e.g.

leadership experience) in a behavioral interview, but in a group exercise they are observed to dominate, do not listen to others and ignore the quieter group members. Assessment centres are powerful and are becoming increasingly popular. Organizations which have growth plans coupled with the desire to get people to man positions from within should get started on assessment centres.

## **2.10 Difference between Assessment Centre and Development Centre**

The difference between a development centre and an assessment centre is that candidates are not in a pass or fail situation. This is reflected in the definition of a Development Centre:

‘A Development Centre is a day or number of days where the participants are actively involved in the assessment of their own and others behaviors as part of their professional development.’

You will most likely take part in a development centre as you progress from front-line to managerial roles, or from a general role to a more technical or strategic role, often as part of an organizations graduate management programme. As a participant of a development centre your preparation will follow the same approach as that for an assessment centre in addition to specific preparation relevant to any internal promotion activity.

The fundamental differences for the participants are:

- i. They will actively be involved in assessing themselves.
- ii. They will be required to assess and give feedback on the competencies of other participants.
- iii. They are given detailed feedback on their results and what they mean for their future development.
- iv. They will be expected to ‘own’ the development requirements as part of their Continuous Professional Development.

The role of the assessors is focused more on facilitation and identification of the competencies that participants need to acquire or develop. The way in which the assessors score an individual during an exercise will emphasize their developmental needs rather than their competency to perform a specific role. This may alter the nature of the exercises so that the developmental aspects are emphasized.

The results of these tests will then be discussed and decisions made as to where the main focus of personal development should be. For example, Management, Research, or Technical. If you take part in a development centre, you can expect there to be more emphasis on your abilities to explore or brainstorm an issue or the potential of a situation; rather than simply to display particular competencies. It is important to focus on why you are taking part in such a centre and you may wish to assess your own level of competencies before your development centre.

Many centres also use a technique called 'Domain Mapping'. This is where you identify where you want to be in a particular skill or level of knowledge, e.g. become a Senior Consultant. You then work out a staged plan of personal and professional development of how to get there through discussion with your assessor or your peer group.

Throughout the development centre you will have 'Evaluation Sessions' where you will be given feedback on how you performed compared to the competencies of your potential future role.

Many internal candidates perform below par because they neglect to familiarize themselves with the latest internal policies, procedures and interpretation of the organization's mission statement. They also forget to review their personnel file, which will provide important clues as to how their strengths and weaknesses are perceived by others.

If you want to manage your career within an organization, then you must prepare for all internal assessment as diligently as you would for any external opportunity. Many people forget the importance of their preparation when attending internal assessments as they feel there will be no surprises during the process. Experience often shows that

these interviews are equally tough and in some ways more challenging than external ones.

Organizations are obliged to ensure that all recruitment is operated fairly and frequently incorporate ‘Assessment Day(s)’ as part of their internal promotion.

The term assessment centre does not refer to a physical place; instead it describes an approach. Development centres are assessment centres with key differences. An assessment centre should be used for selection purposes and a development centre for personal development leading to team and organizational development. Traditionally an assessment centre consisted of a suite of exercises designed to assess a set of personal characteristics, it was seen as a rather formal process where the individuals being assessed had the results fed back to them in the context of a simple yes/no selection decision. However, recently we have seen a definite shift in thinking away from this traditional view of an assessment centre to the one, which stresses the developmental aspect of assessment. A consequence of this is that today it is very rare to come across an assessment centre, which does not have some developmental aspect to it; increasingly assessment centres are stressing a collaborative approach, which involves the individual actively participating in the process rather than being its passive recipient. In some cases we can even find assessment centres that are so developmental in their approach that most of the assessment work done is carried out by the participants themselves, and the major function of the centre is to provide the participants with feedback that is much developmental as judgment in nature.

The history of assessment centres is connected with the army. In the UK we can trace the existence of assessment centres back to 1942 when War Office Selection Boards used them. Their introduction stemmed from the fact that the existing system was resulting in a large proportion of those officers it had predicted would be successful being “returned to unit” as unsuitable.

This is hardly surprising, as the system had relied on interviewing officers using selection criteria such as social and educational background.

For example, the criteria for assessing serving soldiers nominated for commissioning as officers included “exceptional smartness”. The new assessment centre approach attempted to identify the types of behavior required of officers to be successful in their job.

The tasks included the following:

- i. leaderless group exercises
- ii. various selection tests
- iii. individual interviews by a senior officer, junior officer and psychiatrist respectively

During the post-war years this new system was so successful that it was introduced for selection to the Civil Service. Its variation is still used for officer selection in the Armed forces.

In industry, the growth of assessment centres and development centres has accelerated more recently in the UK. In 1986 slightly more than one quarter of organizations who employed 500 people or more used development centres and by 1993 that had risen to 45%.

Organizations have come to realize that to be competitive they must constantly invest in the development of their staff in order to respond effectively to an increasingly uncertain marketplace. Rather than selecting new employees, organizations are now investing more in their existing workforce.

In the United States assessment centres were initially used by the Office of Strategic Studies to select spies during the Second World War. Subsequently, the use of assessment centres was taken up by the private sector especially the giant American Telephone and Telegraph Company, which began using assessment centres for management selection in 1956 as well as Standard Oil Ohio, IBM, Sears, and General Electric.

The reasons for the value of assessment/development centre are as follows:

They provide an objective and robust method of improving the individuals and the organizations, awareness of skills, strengths and gaps. They provide a unique

opportunity to objectively observe and measure how people actually perform tasks, make decisions, relate to each other, and demonstrate self-awareness.

A well-designed customized assessment or development centre is an effective tool for measuring the key behaviors important to employees' present success and future potential.

### **2.11 Competency mapping through Assessment Centres**

An Assessment Centre consists of a standardized evaluation of behavior based on multiple inputs. Several trained observers and techniques are used. Judgments about behavior are made, in major part, from specifically developed assessment simulations. These judgments are pooled in a meeting among the assessors or by statistical integration process. In an integration discussion, comprehensive accounts of behavior, and often rating of it, are pooled. The discussion result in evaluation of performance of assesses on the dimensions/competencies or other variables that the assessment centres are designed to measure.

Assessment Centre is a process, not a place which, generally, comprises a number of exercises or simulations designed to replicate the tasks demands of the job for which a candidate is being considered which are designed to replicate the tasks and demands of the job for which a candidate is being considered.

These exercises/simulations are designed in such a way that a candidate can undertake them both singly and together with others for which they are observed by assessors while they are doing the exercises.

#### **i. Objectives**

- a. Identify individuals with high potential to optimize their development and growth opportunities in order to increase their productivity and efficiencies.
- b. Develop organizational interventions on the basis of the assessment results to optimize the growth process.

## **ii. Purpose**

The purpose of the assessment is to judge competence on the basis of performance against the performance criteria set out under each element of competency.

A participant is judged whether competent or not and/or they can be developed to meet organizational needs.

Assessment results can also help in setting the direction and pace of career path and personal and professional growth.

## **iii. Coverage**

- a. Competency assessment
- b. Types of exercises to be used in assessment centre for competency mapping
- c. Gap analysis

## **iv. Tools and techniques used**

- a. Discussing with top management group to identify competencies for the target group
- b. Mapping the competencies of the target group (Using Assessment Centre approach)

Once the discussion is carried on with the top management, the assessors will decide to employ the necessary tools required for mapping competencies. As informed earlier various tools like In-basket exercise, role plays, business games, case analysis, psychometric tests etc. will be done to map competencies.

Due to all these tools and techniques used the competencies are generated and the organization gets a fair share of information regarding the competencies that need to be developed among the employees who are lacking in it. This gives the employers a chance to initiate a training schedule regarding the absence of specific competencies, which in turn not only help the employees to develop themselves but also improves the efficiency and productivity of the team and becomes congruent to the organizational goals and responsibilities.

Assessment centre exercise generates competencies and the assessors understand the competencies at work and the ones which are desired for a particular job position and accordingly the recruiters keep in mind the specific competencies and it becomes a guidebook in conducting the recruitment and selection process.