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Conceptual Framework of Competency Mapping

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Conceptual Framework of Competency Mapping

2.1 Introduction:

In a dynamic business environment, managers need to constantly identify and build the desired competencies among the staff for ensuring rapid organizational growth and development. Tapping the existing competencies of the staff and enhancing them in the desired direction does not remain just an issue for effectiveness, it is a necessity for the very survival of any organization. The competencies required for making employees effective are also constantly changing with the ever changing business environment. It has, therefore, become necessary for all the executives and employees in the private sector to understand map and evaluate the current levels of competencies of employees for further individual and organizational effectiveness.¹

Competency Based Management is a proven methodology being used in the workplace by those who want to take an integrated approach to human resources management. At the centre of the system is the Job Competency Profile. The profile is based on the work descriptions and built by combining competency definitions from the behavioral and technical competency dictionaries.

Once the Job Competency Profile has been created, it forms the foundation of the Competency Based Management system and can be used for the complete range of human resources planning and management functions. This includes developing statements of qualifications, staffing using behavioral-based interviewing techniques, implementing self-evaluation and performance management processes, and supporting learning and career development².
2.2 Competency-The Concept and Components

The term ‘competencies’, ‘competence’ or ‘competent’ refer to a state or quality of being able and fit. The workplace definition of the ‘competency’ refers to a person’s fitness with reference to his or her job (Palan, 2003).3

But as stated by Prasad (2006) competence should not be confused with competency. Competence is akin to role definition as they specify the content of the job. It refers to abilities based on work tasks or job responsibilities. For example, it can be said that mobilizing the savings of customers as bank deposit is a competence expected from a manager of a bank. For this the individual requires competencies such as job knowledge, communication and interpersonal skills.4

Hogg B (1989) defined competency as “competencies are the characteristics of a manager that lead to the demonstration of skills and abilities, which result in effective performance within an occupational area. Competency also embodies the capacity to transfer skills and abilities from one area to another”.5

An analysis of the definition reveals:

❖ Competencies are the characteristics of a manager. This goes along with our promise that competency is a characteristic of a person.
❖ Competencies lead the demonstration of skills and abilities. Therefore, competency must be demonstrated and, hence, must be observable. It must not be inferred or extrapolated.
❖ Competencies must lead to effective performance. This means that the performance of a person with competency must be significantly better than that of a person without it. Competency, thus, refers to behaviour, differentiating success from merely doing the job.
❖ Competency also embodies the capacity to transfer skills and abilities from one area to another.
Sahu (2009) stated that competency is a capacity of an individual that leads to the behaviour, which meets the job demands within the parameters of the organizational environment and in turn brings about desired results. The competency mix comprises Knowledge, Skills and Attitude. Any underlying characteristic required for performing a given task, activity, or role successfully can be considered as competency.

Competencies are most often identified through a combination of “techniques” and “models” (Marrelli, 1998). Techniques include interviews, focus groups (including brainstorming), surveys, and observations. Models used include products or processes, job responsibilities and accountabilities, or differences between superior and other performers. Thus, one organization might use interviews focusing on superior versus other performers. Another might use brainstorming to identify competencies against job responsibilities, job profiles, or other combinations (Langdon and Marrelli, 2002).

The competency definitions describe the observable knowledge, skills, abilities and behaviors needed for successful job performance and include levels of proficiency that are described in terms of behavioral indicators. The indicators highlight the behaviors that are expected at a certain level of job performance ranging from the introductory and basic levels to the advanced and expert levels.

Gary Hamel and C. K. Prahalad (1994) in their book *competing for the Future* wrote, core competencies transcend any single business event within the organization. Certain projects are so massive and persuasive that no individual can possess the competencies required to see them through to completion. Therefore, organizations have to identify, develop and manage organizational core competencies that drive large enterprise critical projects. Workplace competencies focus on individuals instead of the organization, and they vary by job positions versus enterprise endeavours. The unit of measure is people rather than the business. There may be core competencies that appear in every competency model-most workplace competencies are typically specific to the position. Thus, there is an enormous amount of work to set up organization-wide competency-based applications. 'Competent' is when a person is qualified to perform to
a requisite standard of the process of a job. 'Competence' on the other hand, means the condition or state of being competent.

Philip Selgnick, in his book *Leadership in Administration*, was one of the first writers to acknowledge that factors internal to an organization, such as its personnel and its previous experiences, are crucial to its chances of success in executing a chosen policy. In essence in the field of business activity, the past determines the present. Selgnick said that an organization's developmental history results in its having special limitations and capabilities - a character or emergent institutional pattern that decisively affects the competence of an organization to frame and execute derived policies. He called the peculiar character of an organization its distinctive competence. The art of good management is the ability to make a practical assessment of an organization's suitability to its task or strategy. For instance, the management of a boat-building firm specializing in high quality craftsmanship decided to expand into mass production of low-cost speedboats. It proved impossible to adapt worker attitudes away from their historical commitment to quality and craftsmanship. Management was obliged to relocate the speedboat production and recruit a separate workforce. The new venture failed because the history and culture of the organization did not match with the new task. Thus a distinctive competence in one area - quality craftsmanship - may amount to a distinctive incompetence in another sector, which adequately has low-cost production. Strategy formulation and opportunity surveillance are useless exercises unless the company has the internal abilities to execute its decision, or at least possesses the chance of developing the required capabilities. Competence, both generic and specific, plays an important role in the success of an organization.

The competence mapped should be linked to the corporate strategy. Igor Ansoff, in his book *Corporate Strategy*, advocated that managers compile a comprehensive checklist of their firm's skills and resources, that is, a grid of competencies. Similar grids were to be compiled on competitors already operating in a given market. This document became a permanent reference guide for future strategy decisions and could be used in assessing the likely success of diversification.
On the other hand, Robert Hayes (1985) criticized what he called the ends-ways-means approach to strategy planning. He questioned whether managers should decide on a strategy before deciding on the means of implementing that strategy. He advised managers not to develop plans and then seek capabilities; instead they should build capabilities and then encourage the development of plans for exploiting them. Whether it is corporate strategy or internal competencies, competencies mapping is most important and has to be related to the corporate strategy\textsuperscript{9}.

Competencies are the set of knowledge, skills and behaviour attributes which are required to perform effectively in a particular job position. They are demonstrated capabilities and behavioural manifestations that are known to lead to success more often then not. Competency could also be defined as behaviour (i.e. communication, leadership) rather than a skill or ability.

To sum up, competencies are an organization’s most important resources because they are valuable, rare and difficult to initiate. Organizations can capitalize on these resource-managers, after identifying them, can make decisions about how to exploit them and also learn how to expand them\textsuperscript{10}.

**Components of Competency**

There are four major components of competency:

1. **Skills**: Capabilities acquired through practice. It can be financial skill such as budgeting, or a verbal skill such as making a presentation.

2. **Knowledge**: Understanding acquired through learning. This refers to a body of information relevant to job performance. It is what people have to know to be able to perform a job, such as knowledge of policies and procedures for a recruitment process.

3. **Personal attributes**: inherent characteristics which are brought to the job, representing the essential foundation upon which knowledge and skill can be developed.
4. **Behavior**: The observable demonstration of some competency, skill, knowledge and personal attributes. It is an essentially definitive expression of a competency in that it is a set of action that presumably, can be observed, taught, learned, and measured\(^1\)

**2.3 Types of Competencies:**

There are four types of Competency

1. **Employees Core Competency**
   Competency that relates to organization’s values, mission and strategy; these are competencies that reflect organizational core capabilities and should be possessed by all employees regardless of their functions. for example customer satisfaction, quality orientation.

2. **Managerial Competency**
   Competency that relate to skill needed to perform managerial work and process; it deals with the interaction process either with individual or group of people. Typically generic in nature, these competencies are common skills sets required by most companies; are not necessarily industry specific, and are not confined to managerial positions. In typical organizations, managerial competencies will play greater emphasis as the position progresses within the organization.
   In general, managerial competency could be divided into two categories:
   - **Human Competency**
     An ability to work, understand and motivate other people as an individuals or in groups. It relates to the individual’s expertise in interacting with others in a way that will enhance the successful completion of the task at hand.
• **Conceptual Competency**
  An ability to understand the degree of complexity in a given situation and to reduce that complexity to a level at which specific courses of action can be derived.

3. **Technical/ Functional Competency**
  Competencies that pertain to specific bodies of knowledge and skills required to perform the defined activities in an industry, function or job. It includes the abilities to use the procedures, techniques and knowledge of a specialized field.
  Example: Sales ability, behavior interview techniques.

4. **Personal Attribute**
  Competencies that relate to inherent personal characteristics (e.g. motives, self-image, self-concept. Etc.) and potentially affect work attitude and performance.
  Example: tolerance for stress, achievement motivation.

**2.4 Competency Mapping:**

Competency mapping is a process through which one assesses and determines one’s strengths as an individual worker and in some cases, as part of an organization. It generally examines two areas: emotional intelligence or emotional quotient (EQ), and strengths of the individual in areas like team structure, leadership, and decision-making. Large organizations frequently employ some form of competency mapping to understand how to most effectively employ the competencies of strengths of workers. They may also use competency mapping to analyze the combination of strengths in different workers to produce the most effective teams and the highest quality work.

A competency map is an assessment tool that outlines the skills and behaviors required to succeed as a manager and/or leader. Most importantly, it is a vehicle by which sponsors and team members are able to help focus and support a participant's learning process. It identifies key competencies for an organization and/or a job and incorporates those competencies throughout the various processes (i.e. job evaluation, training,
recruitment) of the organization. It is the process by which the required competency levels for any specific role or position in the business are defined.

Competency mapping, as a concept is relatively new to the Indian organizational environment, but due to the effectiveness of the concept, it is emerging very fast as a regular Human Resource Management Practice.

Competency mapping can also be done for contract or freelance workers, or for those seeking employment to emphasize the specific skills which would make them valuable to a potential employer. These kinds of skills can be determined, when one is ready to do the work, by using numerous books on the subject. One of the most popular ones is Now, *Discover Your Strengths* by Marcus Buckingham and Donald Clifton, initially published in 2001.

Buckingham and Clifton’s book, and others like it, practice competency mapping through testing, having the person sift through past work experiences, and by analyzing learning types. However, the disadvantage to using a book alone is that most people may have a few blind spots when they analyze their own competency. Their perception of how others react to them may not be accurate.

Competency mapping also requires some thought, time, and analysis, and some people simply may not want to do the work involved to sufficiently map competencies. Thus a book like the above is often used with a human resources team, or with a job coach or talented headhunter. Competency mapping alone may not produce accurate results unless one is able to detach from the results in analyzing past successes and failures. Many studies find that people often overestimate their abilities, making self-competency mapping results dubious.

The value of competency mapping and identifying emotional strengths is that many employers now purposefully screen employees to hire people with specific competencies. They may need to hire someone who can be an effective time leader or who has demonstrated great active listening skills. Alternately, they may need someone who enjoys taking initiative or someone who is very good at taking direction. When
individuals must seek new jobs, knowing one’s competencies can give one a competitive edge in the job market.

Usually, a person will find themselves with strengths in about five to six areas. Sometimes an area where strengths are not present is worth developing. In other cases, competency mapping can indicate finding work that is suited to one's strengths, or finding a department at one’s current work where one's strengths or needs as a worker can be exercised.

A problem with competency mapping, especially when conducted by an organization is that there may be no room for an individual to work in a field that would best make use of his or her competencies. If the company does not respond to competency mapping by reorganizing its employees, then it can be of little short-term benefit and may actually result in greater unhappiness on the part of individual employees. A person identified as needing to learn new things in order to remain happy might find himself or herself in a position where no new training is ever required. If the employer cannot provide a position for an employee that fits him or her better, competency mapping may be of little use.

However, competency mapping can ultimately serve the individual who decides to seek employment in an environment where he or she perhaps can learn new things and be more intellectually challenged. Being able to list competencies on resumes and address this area with potential employers may help secure more satisfying work. This may not resolve issues for the company that initially employed competency mapping, without making suggested changes. It may find competency mapping has produced dissatisfied workers or led to a high worker turnover rate \(^{13}\).

2.5 Need for Competency Mapping:

The competency mapping process is designed to arrive at attributes (inherent personal traits), and competencies (knowledge, skills and abilities required in a job), unique to the client organization. Once a competency map is developed and validated, it can be used to recruit and select, manage, evaluate and develop people for the roles
arrived at through the organization design process. It also can be used in compensation management and succession planning.

Typically, the process requires specification determination, which results in firming up the attributes and competencies required for each role in the organization. A preliminary project plan is developed and appropriate activities and communication plans are established to support the development of the maps. Employees are given the opportunity to review the maps to ensure they meet current and future needs. Competencies and attributes are evaluated to assess how accurately they describe performance requirements, and to ensure they are aligned with the strategic business objectives.

A critical requirement for any business, team and individual is mapping the competencies required to meet objectives at all three levels - business, team and self. Only by doing this can needs be identified in the areas of recruitment, career planning and training.

Competency mapping also helps in identifying needs for training, and in delivering that training to the individuals who need it. The key process is the development of a gap analysis - in simple terms, the difference between the required competency level and an individual's present level.

So, Competency Mapping is important for an organization and becomes a base for creating a performance-based culture, increasing the accuracy in selection, placements and in talent maximization.

With global economy and the world becoming a global village firms have become more aware of the need for having competent employees and developing distinguished competencies for every organization. Thus competency mapping has gained currency. This need arose due to the following reasons:

1. Increased costs of manpower.
2. Need for ensuring that competent people are available for performing various critical roles.
3. Down sizing ad the consequent need to get a lot of things done with fewer people and thus reduce manpower costs and pass on the advantage to the customer.

4. Recognition that technology, finances, customers and markets, systems and processes can all be set right or managed effectively if we have the right kind of human resources.

5. There is need for focus in performing roles- need for time management, nurturing of competence increased emphasis on performance management systems.

6. Recognition of the strategic advantage given by employee competencies in building the core competencies of the organization.

2.6 Steps in Competency Mapping:

The following steps may be followed in competency Mapping:

1. Decide the roles for which the competencies need to be mapped.

2. Identify the location of the roles in the organizational structure. This needs the clarity of organizational structure, defining the role relationships (reporting authority, subordinates, peers etc.).

3. Identify the role set members of the role holder. The role set members of the role consists of all those who have expectations from the role holder, all those to whom the role holder has obligations to fulfill. For example the role set members of the General Manager in a company may consist of his boss the Vice President Commercial and Marketing who is his boss, Four Regional Managers of Sales and Marketing who report to him, seven Managers in his office who are looking after various products and are reporting to him (Product Manager x, y, z etc.), some major Dealers with whom the GM services, the General manager production, GM Quality, the GM Personnel, the GM finance, the MD who often asks for information directly from the GM, the advertising agency MD who deals with him etc.

4. Identify the objectives of the function or the department or the unit or section where the role is located.
5. Identify the objectives of the role. Why does the role exist? What are the main purposes of the role etc. details.

6. Collect the Key Performance Areas (or KRAs, Tasks, etc.) of the role holder for the last two to three years from the performance appraisal records. If they are not available get them written by the role holder or a sample of the role holders if there is more than one role holder of the same role. Alternately collect the job descriptions if any of the role to make a list of all tasks and activities to be performed by that role holder.

7. Interview the role holder to list the Tasks and activities expected to be performed by the Individual. Or get the role holder to list all the activities he is expected to perform in his role. Group them into a set of tasks. An activity is the description of a specific action to be undertaken by the individual role holder as part of the tasks he is expected to carry out by virtue of holding the role. Thus contacting a Dealer to collect outstanding or get his new requirements or get to know his level of satisfaction with a particular product given to him etc. are all specific activities. They may all fall under the broad task of “Customer contacts” for a Manager Sales. The tasks list may be as many as 15 to 20 for some roles and as few as five to six for other roles. There is no rigid rule about the number of tasks. It depends on how complex the role is. It is useful to start with as many tasks as possible.

8. Interview the role holder to list the actual knowledge, attitude, skills, and other competencies required for performing the task effectively. The role holder should be asked questions like: “If you are to recruit some one to perform this task what qualities or competencies would you look for in him/her? What competencies do you think are required to perform this well? Whenever you had done a good job what qualities in you have helped you to do it well? Whenever you were not able to do a good job what are the competencies or qualities you lacked that you felt were preventing you from doing good job? Etc. It may be a good idea to prepare the role holder to understand the difference between knowledge attitudes and skills. These need to be listed for each task. The list of activities should be used in
listing the competencies. The critical activities determine the competencies needed to perform the task well.

9. Repeat the process with all the role set members. If the role set members are too many take those who are very critical. The boss subordinates and internal customers should be represented.

10. Consolidate the list of competencies from all the role holders’ by each task.

11. Edit and finalize. Present it to the supervisors of the role holder and the role holder for approval and finalization\textsuperscript{15}.

\textbf{2.7 Benefits of Competency Mapping:}

Radical changes in the nature of work and organization have far reaching implications for the practice of Human Resources Management. For instance, the transformation of HR from being an administration oriented service department toward a strategically oriented function responsible for much more than the hiring and firing of personnel, has indeed become a reality. Keeping with this fundamental change in the orientation of HR activities, practitioners as well as researchers in the field have been constantly trying to evolve appropriate structures around which every HR activity can be integrated and harmonized. It is against this backdrop that Competency Movement has gained ground.

Competency mapping can help to identify individuals who are eligible to be considered for promotion, or who are potential replacements for an unexpected vacancy. It can analyse manpower to identify strengths and weaknesses in skills and experience, assess trends and developments in competency levels over time, manage skills inventories as well as management and technical competencies compare job requirements with individual competencies analyse strengths and weaknesses and project training needs.

Competency mapping helps for succession planning. Succession planning is about making sure you have the right people in the right jobs at the right time. It is about identifying tomorrow's leaders today and ensuring continuity of top management to drive the business forward - a challenge in any organization. Competency mapping can identify
management development initiatives that address the needs of the organization, both today and tomorrow. It can identify individuals who can be developed to address the gaps, matching them with key job requirements, identify skills shortages that may require targeted recruitment or management development programmes and track key groups of employees, such as graduates, specialists or high-potential staff, to monitor their career progression and reduce the risk of losing these valuable resources.

Performance appraisal is being used by leading organisations to focus attention on “core competencies” — the small number of skills and attributes that are essential for an organisation’s success. Performance management is positioned as a process comprised of steps that include planning, managing, evaluating and rewarding performance. Often, definitions or a subset of the competencies are used in performance management. In addition, the performance appraisal process includes goals, expected results, and competencies as an ongoing process, which aligns and integrates the objectives of the organization, business units, teams and individuals. Competencies specify precisely how individuals can align their activities to the key strategies of the organization.

2.8 Competency Mapping Process:

Knowledge, skills and behavioural attributes required at all levels and job positions are identified they are grouped in asset of competencies. A clear and simple measurement scale is established. All associates and managers are mapped against the pre-determined set of competencies by a panel of trained people.

The processes involved in competency mapping with an end result of job evaluation include the following:

1. Conduct a job analysis by asking incumbents to complete a position information questionnaire (PIQ). This can be provided for incumbents to complete, or one-on-one interviews can be conducted using the PIQ as a guide. The primary goal is to gather from incumbents what they feel are the key behaviours necessary to perform their respective jobs.
2. Using the results of the job analysis, one is ready to develop a competency based job description. This can be developed after carefully analyzing the input from the represented group of incumbents and converting it to standard competencies.

3. With a competency based job description, one is on his way to begin mapping the competencies throughout the human resources processes. The competencies of the respective job description become the factors for assessment on the performance evaluation. Using competencies helps to guide one to perform more objective evaluations based on displayed or not displayed behaviours.

4. Taking the competency mapping one step further, one can use the results of the evaluation to identify in what competencies individuals need additional development or training. This will help him to focus the training needs on the goals of the position and company and help the employees develop towards the ultimate success of the organization.

Following are the major steps involved in competency mapping in organizations.

1. Conduct a job analysis by asking incumbents to complete a Position Information Questionnaire (PIQ). This can be provided for incumbents to complete or used as a basis for conducting one-on-one interviews using the PIQ as a guide. The primary goal is to gather from incumbents what they feel are the key behaviours necessary to perform their respective jobs.

2. Using the results of the job analysis, a competency based job description is developed. It is developed after carefully analyzing the input from the represented group of incumbents and converting it to standard competencies.

3. With a competency based job description, mapping the competencies can be done. The competencies of the respective job description become factors for assessment on the performance evaluation. Using competencies will help to perform more objective evaluations based on displayed or not displayed behaviours.
4. Taking the competency mapping one step further, one can use the results of one’s evaluation to identify in what competencies individuals need additional development or training. This will help in focusing on training needs required to achieve the goals of the position and company and help the employees develop towards the ultimate success of the organization.

To sum up, following stages are needed for competency mapping of the employees in an organization.

**First stage** of mapping requires understanding the vision and mission of the organization through interview method with the employees.

**Second stage** requires understanding from the superior performers the behavioural as well as the functional aspects required to perform job effectively through Interview method.

**Third stage** involves thorough study of the BEI Reports/Structured Interview Reports
  a) Identification of the competency based on competency frame work
  b) Measurement of competency
  c) Required levels of competency for each job family
  d) Development of dictionary which involves detail description of the competency based on the indicators. Care should be taken that the indicators should be measurable and gives objective judgment.

**Fourth Stage** requires preparation for assessment.
  a) Methods of assessment can be either through assessment centres or 360 Degree Feedback
  b) If assessment centre is the choice for assessment then tools has to be ready beforehand
     i. Tools should objectively measure the entire competency required.
     ii. Determine the type of the tools for measuring competency
     iii. Prepare the schedule for assessment
iv. Training to the assessor should indicate their thorough understanding of the competencies and the tools and also as to how the behaviour has to be documented.

**Fifth Stage** involves conducting assessment centre. Usually it is a two day program which would involve giving a brief feedback to the participant about the competencies that has been assessed and where they stands to.

**Sixth stage** involves detailed report of the competencies assessed and also the development plan for the developmental areas.

### 2.9 Methods of Competency Mapping:

It is a difficult task to identify all the competencies required to fulfill the job requirements of all the employees in an organization. However, a number of methods and approaches have been developed and successfully adopted in majority of the organizations. These methods have helped managers and employers to a large extent, to identify and reinforce and develop these competencies both for the growth of the individual and the growth of the organization. Following are few approaches or methods for competency mapping generally used by the commercial organizations.

### 1. Assessment Centres:

The term assessment centre does not refer to a physical place, instead it describes an approach. 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 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 at least 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 a passive recipient of it. 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 as much developmental as judgmental in nature.

Assessment centres typically involve the participants completing a range of exercises which simulate the activities carried out in the target job. Various combinations of these exercises and sometimes other assessment methods like psychometric testing and interviews are used to assess particular competencies in individuals. The theory behind this is that if one wish to predict future job performance then the best way of doing this is to get the individual to carry out a set of tasks which accurately sample those required in the job and are as similar to them as possible. The particular competencies used will depend upon the target job but one will often find competencies such as relating to people; resistance to stress; planning and organizing; motivation; adaptability and flexibility; problem solving; leadership; communication; decision making and initiative. There are numerous possible competencies and the ones which are relevant to a particular job are determined through job analysis.

The fact that a set of exercises is used demonstrates one crucial characteristic of an assessment centre - namely that it is behaviour that is being observed and measured. This represents a significant departure from many traditional selection approaches which rely on the observer or selector attempting to infer personal characteristics from behaviour based upon subjective judgement and usually precious little evidence. This approach is rendered unfair and inaccurate by the subjective whims and biases of the selector and in many cases produces a selection decision based on a freewheeling social interaction after which a decision was made as whether the individual's 'face fit' with the organization.

The historical development of the assessment centres shows that the existence of assessment centres back to 1942 when they were used by War Office Selection Boards. 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 when one considers that the system as it was relied on interviewing to select officers and had as selection criteria things like social and educational background. Even the criteria of 'achievement in the ranks' which one might imagine as being more job relevant included things like 'exceptional smartness'. No wonder unsuitable people were chosen as officers and potentially excellent officers overlooked. The assessment centre approach subsequently adopted was an attempt to accurately elicit the types of behaviour that an officer was required to display in order to be successful in their job. The tasks included leaderless group exercises, selection tests and individual interviews by a senior officer, junior officer and psychiatrist respectively. This new system resulted in a substantial drop in the proportion of officers being 'returned to unit' as unfit for duty. During the post war years this system was so successful that it was introduced for selection to the Civil Service and a variation of it is still used for officer selection in the armed forces to this day.

Assessment Centres are highly structured in their design, application, and assessment procedure. They are commonly conducted by outside consultants who have invested large amounts of resources into researching and designing Assessment Centres, which will produce valid measurements and a good predictor of future outcomes of test candidates for the business customer. In other cases, Assessment Centres may be conducted by trained personnel within the employer company. Each Assessment Centre is specifically adapted for the advertised position, to assess factors such as the candidate's level of skills, aptitude and compatibility with the organization’s culture. Each test measures a range of indicators within these factors. During each test, a group of trained observers will rate individual candidates on a range of set indicators, using a prescribed performance scale. Results are then cross compared against the same indicators, which are measured in other tests. Following test completion, observers meet to discuss the test results and reach a group consensus about each individual's ratings. Observers may be visible during the test, or more commonly, may view a videotaped recording e.g. telephone role-play.

At the beginning of the Assessment, candidates will receive an initial briefing about the timetable of tests, location of rooms etc. Prior to each test, they will be given
instructions describing the exercise, their role, timeframes, equipment etc. They will not be informed in detail about the individual indicators, which will be measured. Recruits are unlikely to receive feedback on their Assessment Centre results, unless they have been successfully selected.

Assessment Centre is a mechanism to identify the potential for growth. It is a procedure (not location) that uses a variety of techniques to evaluate employees for manpower purposes and decisions. It was initiated by American Telephone and Telegraph Company in 1960 for line personnel being considered for promotion to supervisory positions. An essential feature of the assessment center is the use of situational test to serve specific job behaviour. Since it is with reference to job, elements related to the job are simulated through a variety of tests. The assessors observe the behaviour and make independent evaluation of what they have observed, which results in identifying strengths and weaknesses of the attributes being studied.

The International Personnel Management Association (IPMA) has identified the following elements essential for a process to be considered as assessment center:

⇒ A job analysis of relevant behaviour to determine attribute skills, etc for effective job performance and what should be evaluated by assessment center.
⇒ Techniques used must be validated to assess the dimensions of skills and abilities.
⇒ Multiple assessment techniques must be used.
⇒ Assessment techniques must include job related simulations.
⇒ Multiple assessors must be used for each assessed.
⇒ Assessors must be thoroughly trained.
⇒ Behavioural observations by assessors must be classified into some meaningful and relevant categories of attributes, skills and abilities, etc.
⇒ Systematic procedures should be used to record observations.
⇒ Assessors must prepare a report.
⇒ All information thus generated must be integrated either by discussion or application of statistical techniques.
The generated data from the above steps should be useful in identifying employees with potential for growth. Following are the advantages of the assessment center.

1. It helps in identifying early the supervisory/managerial potential and gives sufficient lead time for training before the person occupies the new position.
2. It helps in identifying the training and development needs.
3. Assessors who are generally senior managers in the organization find the training for assessor as a relevant experience to know their organization a little better.
4. The assessment center exercise provides an opportunity for the organization to review its HRM policies.

Assessment comprises a number of exercises or simulations which have been designated to replicate the tasks and demands of the job. These exercises or simulations will have been designed in such a way that candidates can undertake them both singly and together and they will be observed by assessors while they are doing the exercises. The types of exercises include the Group Discussions, Case Studies, Role Plays, etc.

2. Critical Incidents Technique:

Critical incidents technique can contribute to the growth and decay of the system. Perhaps one way to understand the concept would be to examine what it does. Despite numerous variations in procedures for gathering and analyzing critical incidents researchers and practitioners agree the critical incidents technique can be described as a set of procedures for systematically identifying behaviours that contribute to success or failure of individuals or organizations in specific situations. First of all, a list of good and bad on the job behaviour is prepared for each job. A few judges are asked to rate how good and how bad is good and bad behaviour respectively. Based on these ratings a check-list of good and bad behaviour is prepared.

Critical incidents technique is useful and best for obtaining in-depth data about a particular role or set of tasks. It involves major steps such as gathering facts using
structured or unstructured approach, content analysis and feedback. Advantages of the critical incidents technique are:

1. Some of the human errors that are unconsciously committed can be traced and rectified by these methods.
2. Users with no background in software engineering or human computer interaction and with the barest minimum of training in critical incident identification can identify report and rate the severity level of their own critical incidents. It is important because successful use of the reported critical incident method depends on the ability of typical users to recognize and report critical incidents effectively.

3. **Interview Technique:**

   Interview technique is most universally used by every organization. As such, many of the research studies were also conducted on competency mapping using the interview method. The interview consists of interaction between interviewer and applicant. If handled properly, it can be a powerful technique in achieving accurate information and getting access to material otherwise unavailable. As stated in the Indira Gandhi National Open University Study Notes, for the successful functioning of the interview method for competency mapping following steps are suggested:

   1. Before the actual interviews begin, the critical areas in which questions will be asked must be identified for judging ability and skills. It is advisable to write down these critical areas, define them with examples, and form a scale to rate responses. If there is more than one interviewer, some practice and mock interviews will help calibrate variations in individual interviewers’ ratings.
   2. The second step is to scrutinize the information provided to identify skills, incidents and experiences in the career of the candidate, which may answer questions raised around the critical areas. This procedure will make interviews less removed from reality and the applicant will be more comfortable because the discussion will focus on his experiences.
3. An interview is a face-to-face situation. The applicant is “on guard” and careful to present the best face possible. At the same time he is tense, nervous and possibly frightened. Therefore, during the interview, tact and sensitivity can be very useful. The interviewer can get a better response if he creates a sense of ease and informality and hence uncover clues to the interviewee’s motivation, attitudes, feelings, temperament, etc., which are otherwise difficult to comprehend.

4. The fundamental step is establishing “rapport”, putting the interviewee at ease; conveying the impression that the interview is a conversation between two friends, and not a confrontation of employer and employee. One way to achieve this is by initially asking questions not directly related to the job that is, chatting casually about the weather journey and so on.

5. Once the interviewee is put at ease the interviewer starts asking questions, or seeking information related to the job. Here again it is extremely important to lead up to complex questions gradually. Asking a difficult, complex question in the beginning can affect subsequent interaction, particularly if the interviewee is not able to answer the question. Thus it is advisable for the pattern to follow the simple-to-complex sequence.

6. Showing surprise or disapproval of speech, clothes, or answers to questions can also inhibit the candidate. The interviewee is over-sensitive to such reactions. Hence, an effort to try and understand the interviewee’s point of view and orientation can go a long way in getting to know the applicant.

7. Leading questions should be avoided because they give the impression that the interviewer is seeking certain kinds of answers. This may create a conflict in the interviewee, if he has strong views on the subject. Nor should the interviewer allow the interview to get out of hand. He should be alert and check the interviewee if he tries to lead the discussion in areas where he feels extremely competent, if it is likely to stray from relevant areas.

8. The interviewer should be prepared with the precise questions, and not take too much time in framing them.
After these steps the interviewers have to identify the areas of strengths and weaknesses of competences in candidates. Based on such strengths and weaknesses, competency mapping should be made.

4. Questionnaire:

Use of questionnaire to map the competences of the employees is also universally used. The questionnaire gives rating type of scales to measure the competencies of the employees. The questions in the questionnaire consist of different skills and competencies of the employees in the organization including their work. Common Metric Questionnaire (CMQ) is the most popular scale used to design the questionnaire to map the competencies of employees in the corporate organizations.

Langdon and Marrelli (2002) had shown their dissatisfaction on the existing competency assessment models. According to them, a more complete model of performance, known as the Language of Work, can overcome these limitations in current performance models. The Language of Work provides the basis for defining jobs so that we can then build a system for identifying competencies. Competencies are the building blocks for high performance, but you first must have the blueprint for what high performance looks like for the particular job before you can select the correct building blocks. Before looking at the Language of Work model, we need a brief review of the problems inherent in the methods (interviews, focus groups, surveys, observations, etc.) of analysis. Hence, to assess and map the competencies of employees, it is essential need to assess the nature of job, skills required for the job, personal characteristics of the employees, etc. For this purpose, questionnaire is much useful compared to other methods of competency mapping.

References:
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6. Ibid., 2
10. Ibid., 8