

**Examination of Trends in Human Resource Selection and Placement
Programme**

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Abstract

Human resource selection is the process by which companies decide who will or will not be allowed into organizations. In this paper we examined the trends in human resource selection and placement. The work adopted literature review to gather information necessary for the study. The research discovered that assessment of decisions, computer technology and human resource information system usage, strategic involvement, and expatriate employees are the key trends in manpower selection and placement. The paper also recommended that personnel selection and placement should be consistent with and build up the emphasis prescribed in recruitment and job analysis.

Key Words: Human Resource, Trends, Selection, Placement, Management, Managers, Employee

Introduction

Any organization that intends to compete through people must take the utmost care with how it chooses organizational members, especially those at managerial ranks. These decisions have a critical impact on the organization's ability to compete, as well as each and every job applicant's life. These decisions are too important to be left to the whim of untrained individuals. Thus, manpower selection is the process of gathering information for evaluating and deciding who should be hired, under legal guidelines, for the short-and-long-term interests of the individual and the organization (Hakel, 1986). Placement is concerned with ensuring that job demands and organizational characteristics match individual skills, knowledge, and abilities and personalities, interests, and preferences. Traditionally, selection and placement have primarily been concerned with evaluating and matching employee skills, knowledge, and abilities with job demands (Carroll and Schuler, 1983). Current emphasis is also on matching employee personalities, interests, and preferences with job and organizational characteristics (Schneider and Schmitt, 1986). Concern here for both matches is consistent with our emphasis on serving individuals as well as organizations. Thus, discussion of selection and placement is consistent with and builds up the emphasis prescribed in recruitment and job analysis. Selection and placement use information on the characteristics and qualities of the organization, the job, and the individual. They also share many of the same purposes and goals.

Selection and placement procedures provide the very essence of organizations, that is, their human resources. And it is largely by effective selection and placement that organizations obtain and retain the human resources most likely to improve organizational productivity. Selecting only those employees likely to perform well can result in substantial productivity gains (Schmidt et al, 1982).

Purpose and Importance of Selection and Placement

Effective selection and placement are critical to any organization. Their purposes include to:

1. Evaluate and hire potentially qualified job applicants effectively and legally.
2. Help fulfill goals and quotas.

3. Evaluate, hire, and place job applicants in the best interests of the organization and the individual.
4. Engage in activities useful for initial hiring as well as future decisions for the individual.
5. Make decision with consideration for the uniqueness of the individual, the job, the organization, and the environment, even to the extent of adapting the job or organization to the individual (Rickard, 1981).
6. Make decisions that result in transferring, demoting, terminating, laying off, or placing someone on hold.

Scott (1983), posit that in order to serve these purposes effectively, selection and placement activities must be integrated with other effective personnel management activities.

Trends in Human Resource Selection and Placement

Selecting the right employees is important for three main reasons. First, manager's performance always depends in part on his subordinates'. Employees with the right skills and attributes will do a better job. Employees without these skills or who are abrasive or obstructionist would not perform effectively, and manager's performance and the firm will suffer. The time to screen out such undesirable is before they are in the door not after. Thus, with a pool of completed applications, the next step is to select the best person for the job. Trends in selection and placement include assessment of decisions, computer technology and human resource information system usage, strategic, involvement, and expatriate employees.

Assessing Selection and Placement Decisions

The quality and effectiveness of selection and placement decisions depend on whether the organization hires applicants who turn out to be good performers. If the organization can select and place applicants who turn out to perform well, organizational productivity will benefit. In addition, if the organization does not select and place applicants who would have performed poorly, organizational productivity will also benefit. The critical point is that when an organization makes selection and placement decisions based on activities that benefit organizational productivity, it is making decisions using predictors that are valid

and serve its legal considerations. Using predictors that do not result in selection and placement decisions that benefit productivity are counterproductive and generally are not consistent with legal considerations (Byrne and Cowan, 1986). Consequently, organizations must use valid predictors. Obtaining and using predictors that are valid is only part of making effective selection and placement decisions. The other parts include base rate, selection rate, the selection ratio, and the overall money costs and benefits of the decisions (Burke and Frederick, 1986).

Computer Technology and Human Resource Information System in Selection and Placement

On any given day, a human resource department will probably evaluate a number of candidates for a variety of positions. According to Bolda (1985), deciding which predictors are relevant (valid), for a particular case and administering a multitude of predictors (tests) makes personnel's work challenging. Effective management of predictors is critical in the face of extensive laws and regulations. Doing all of these effectively requires a great deal of information. Computer technology can enhance personnel's ability to coordinate the scheduling, administration, and evaluation of predictors by processing this information in a variety of ways (Boudrau and Berger, 1985). For example, human resource department could quickly do a validation study by correlating the current job performance data with any of several predictors if these data were stored in a human resource information system and analyzed by computer. With an human resource information system and computers, the determination of utilization rates for affirmative action programmes, can also be done quickly and easily. Results of tests to measure job applicants' skills knowledge, and abilities and personalities, interests, and preferences can be stored in an HRIS and used together with job analysis data also in the HRIS, to make better selection and placement decisions. This same information can then be used to help plot career paths for employees when they are hired.

Strategic Involvement of Selection and Placement

Over the past several years there has been increased recognition that there is a need to match the characteristics of top managers with the nature of the business. Formbrun (1982) posit that Reginald H. Jones and former Chairman and CEO of the General Electric Company observed that "when we classified our businesses,

and when we realize that they are going to have quite different missions, we also realized we had to have quite different people running them. Also, within academia there has been similar growing awareness of this need. Although this awareness is being articulated in several ways, one of the most frequent involves the conceptualization and investigation of the relationship between strategy and the personal characteristics of top managers. Here, particular manager characteristics such as personality, skills, abilities, values and perspectives are matched with particular types of business strategies. For example, Byrne and Carvan (1986) released a study conducted by Hay Group Incorporated, in conjunction with the University of Michigan and the Strategic Planning Institute, that when a business is pursuing a growth strategy it needs top managers who are likely to abandon the status quo and adapt their strategies and goals to the marketplace. The study report that insiders are slow to recognize the onset of decline and tend to persevere in strategies that are no longer effective; therefore, top managers need to be recruited from the outside. Thus, the research suggest that the staffing practices of top management be tied to the nature of the business because different aspects of business demand different behaviours from the individuals running them. The implication, then, is that selecting the right top managers is an important staffing decision.

Selecting Expatriate Employees

There are common traits that employees to be assigned domestically and overseas will obviously share. Wherever a person is to be posted, the employee will need the technical knowledge and skills to do the job and the intelligence and people skills to be successful employee (Charlene, 1994; Anne 1995). However, foreign assignments are different. There is the need to cope with a workforce and management colleagues whose cultural inclinations may be drastically different from one's own, and the stress that being alone in a foreign land can bring to bear on the single employee. And, of course, if spouse and children will share the assignment, there are the complexities and pressures that the family will have to confront, from learning a new language, to shopping in strange surroundings, to finding new friends and attending new schools. Thus, selecting employees for expatriate assignments therefore, means screening them for traits that predict success in adapting to what may be dramatically new environments. Therefore, a

key in selecting any employee is knowing what the job entails. In general, expatriate employees are involved in six major categories of relations:

- (1) internal relations with their co-workers;
- (2) relations with their families;
- (3) relations with the host government;
- (4) relations with their home government;
- (5) external relations with the local culture; and
- (6) relations with the company's headquarters.

Expatriate employees perform their daily activities in the context of the parent company's headquarters, the host country's government, the parent company's government, and a local culture that is often quite different from the home culture. Noer (1975) avers that expatriate managers typically operate in a culture with a different language, that is, a major obstacle for many of them. Thus, expatriate managers and other employees to be successful, they need the skills not only to perform the specific type of job but also to perform the general duties required by these six categories. Using these categories for selection, as well as for structuring a related management development programme, can go a long way to increase the likelihood of expatriate managerial success (Conway, 1984; Tung, 1988).

Winfred and Winston (1995), study identified five factors perceived by international assignees to contribute to success in a foreign assignment. They are job knowledge and motivation, relational skills, flexibility/adaptability, extra-cultural openness, and family situation. In this study 338 international assignees from many countries and organizations completed questionnaires; they were asked to indicate which of various listed managerial traits were important for the success of managers on foreign assignment. The items they reported include managerial ability, organizational ability, administrative skills, and creativity, were then statistically combined into a single "Job knowledge and motivation" factor. Respect, courtesy and tact, display of respect, and kindness were some of the items comprising the relational skills factor. Flexibility/adaptability included such items as resourcefulness, ability to deal with stress, flexibility, and emotional stability. Extra-cultural openness included variety of outside interests, interest in foreign countries, and openness. Finally, several items including adaptability of spouse and family, spouse's positive opinion, willingness of spouse to live abroad,

and stable marriage comprise the family situation factor. However, Davison and Betty (1995), opined that the five factors were not equally important in the foreign assignee's success, according to the responding managers. The researchers concluded that family situation was generally found to be the most important factor, a finding consistent with other research on international assignments and transfers. So, while all five factors were seen as important to the expatriate's success, the organization that ignores the candidate's family situation does so at its peril. Gretchen et al (1997), disclosed another study by researchers of the University of Southern California. In the research 838 managers from six international organizations and 21 countries were evaluated. The researchers specifically studied the extent to which personal characteristics, such as sensitivity to cultural differences could be used to distinguish between managers who had high potential as international executives and those whose potential was not as high. As demonstrated in Figure1, fourteen (14) personal characteristics successfully distinguished the managers identified by their companies as high potential. Consistent with results such as the characteristics in line with sensitive to cultural differences, business knowledge, bring out the best in people, takes risks, and is open to criticism that reflect a blend of technical expertise, openness and flexibility in dealing with people and getting things done.

Figure 1: Five Factors Important in International Assignee Importance Factors' Components

<p>(i) Job Knowledge and Motivation Managerial ability Organizational ability Imagination Creativity Administrative skills Alertness Responsibility Industriousness Initiative and energy High motivation Frankness Belief in mission and job Perseverance</p>	<p>(iv) Extra-Cultural Openness Variety of outside interests Interest in foreign cultures Openness Knowledge of local language(s) Outgoingness and extraversion Overseas experience</p>
<p>(ii) Relational Skills Respect Courtesy and fact Display of respect Kindness Empathy Non-judgementalness Integrity Confidence</p>	<p>(v) Family Situation Adaptability of spouse and family Spouse's positive opinion Willingness of spouse to live abroad Stable marriage</p>
<p>(iii) Flexibility/Adaptability</p>	

Resourcefulness Ability to deal with stress Flexibility Emotional stability Willingness to change Tolerance for ambiguity Adaptability Independence Dependability Political sensitivity Positive self-image

Source: Adapted from Arthur Winfred, Jr. and Winston Bennett, Jr. "The International Assignee. The Relative Importance of Factors Perceived to Contribute to Success" *Personnel Psychology*, Vol. 48 (1995), pp.106 – 107.

Figure 2: Traits Distinguishing Successful International Executives

SCALE	SAMPLE ITEM
Sensitive to Cultural Differences	When working with people from other cultures, works hard to understand their perspectives
Business Knowledge	Has a solid understanding of our products and services
Courage to Take a Stand	Is will to take a stand on issues
Bring Out the Best in People	Has a special talent for dealing with people
Acts with Integrity	Can be depended on to tell the truth regardless of circumstances

Is Insightful	Is good at identifying the most important part of a complex problem or issue
Is Committed to Success	Clearly demonstrates commitment to seeing the organization succeed
Takes Risks	Takes personal as well as business risks
Uses Feedback	Has changed as a result of feedback
Is Culturally Adventurous	Enjoys the challenge of working in countries other than his/her own
Seeks Opportunities to Learn	Takes advantage of opportunities to do new things
Is Open to Criticism	Appears brittle-as if criticism might cause him/her to break*
Seeks Feedback	Pursues feedback even when others are reluctant to given in
Is Flexible	Doesn't get so invested in things that she/he cannot change when something doesn't work
"Reverse Scored"	

Source: Gretchen Spreitzer, Morgan McCall, Jr. and Joan Mahoney, "Early Identification of International Executives" *Journal of Applied Psychology* 82 (1) (1997), pp 6 – 29.

Adaptability Screening

Adaptability screening is often recommended as part of the expatriate screening process. Generally conducted by professional psychologist or psychiatrist, adaptability screening aims to assess the family's problem, success in handling the

foreign transfer, and to alert the couple to personal issues, such as the impact on children, the foreign move may involve (Arvind, 1989). Thus past experience is often the best predictor of future success. Companies as observed by (Anne, 1995) look for overseas candidates whose work and non-work experience, education, and language skills already demonstrate a commitment to and facility in living and working with different cultures. Even several successful summers spent travelling overseas or participating in foreign students programmes would seem to provide some concrete basis for believing that the potential transferee can accomplish the required adaptation when he or she arrives overseas. Even both the potential assignee and his or her family also require realistic previews about the problems to expect in the new-job, such as mandatory private schooling for the children as well as about the cultural benefits, problems, and idiosyncrasies of the country in question. Indeed, international Human Resource Managers speak of using realistic previews to avoid culture shock. In any case Arvind (1989) suggested that the rule should be to “spell it all out” ahead of time, as many world-class firms do for their international transferees. There are also paper-and-pencil tests that can be used to help select employees for overseas assignments. The overseas Assignment Inventory is one such tool. Based on 12 years of research by Chan (1994) with more than 7,000 candidates, the test reportedly identifies in candidates the characteristics and attitudes international candidates should have

International Selection in Practice

The importance of factors such as “adaptability” and notwithstanding, job skills or competencies are still the major factor in selecting employees for international assignments. A survey of 323 companies by Madelyn (1989), 70% of the respondents listed “skills or competencies” as the most important selection criteria when choosing candidates for such assignments. “Job performance” ranked second. The presumed ability to adapt to new cultural situations, as measured by factors such as “prior international living experience or assignment” and “familiarity with assignment country”, were rarely ranked as most important or second most important by employers. One can only wonder whether this helps explain the higher future rate of foreign assignees.

Relationship of Selection and Placement with other Human Resource Management Activities

Selection and placement are associated with human resource planning, job analysis, recruitment, and performance appraisal (Bolda, 1985).

Human Resource Planning: Effective human resource planning can facilitate the organization's selection decisions by projecting when and how many such decisions will need to be made. If staffing needs for new jobs are identified, the human resource department may need to anticipate new selection procedures and job-relatedness studies. Effective human resource planning can also aid the selection process by ensuring that the maximum number of potential job applicants especially those within the organization, are identified, especially for promotion decisions. This can be done with an up-to-date human resource information system. It can store extensive banks of data on employees and jobs that can be readily matched when job openings are identified.

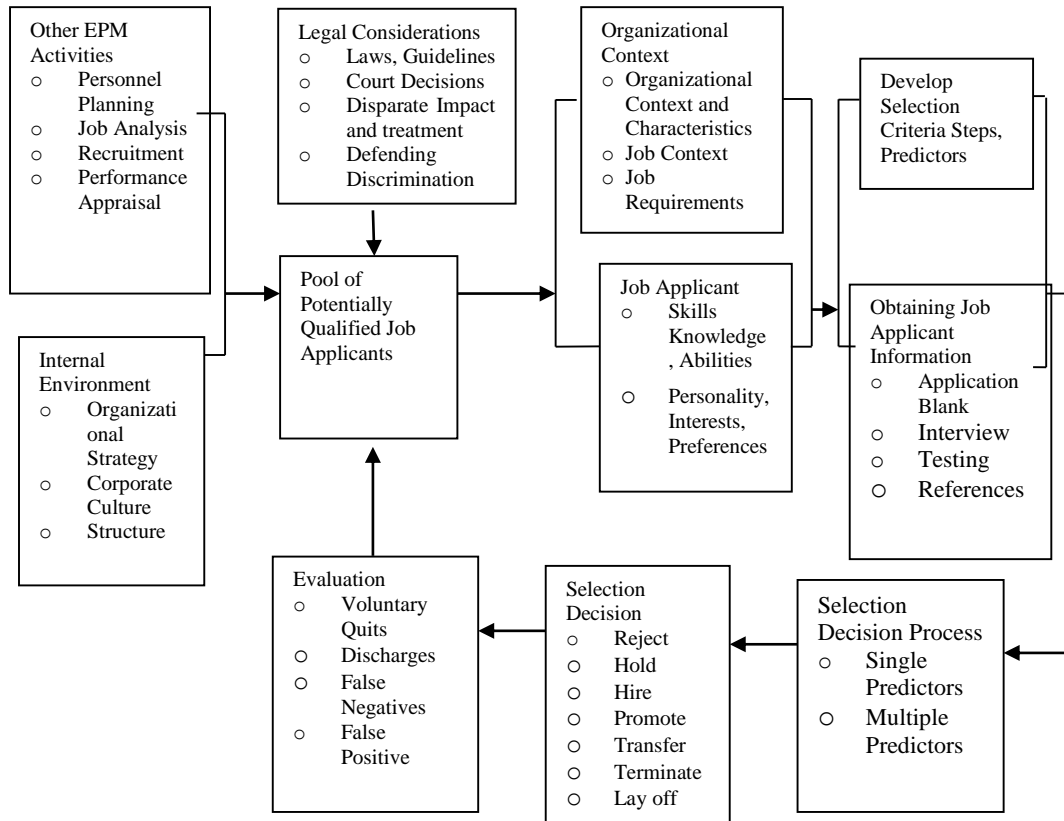
Job Analysis: Selection and placement decisions should be made to benefit the individual and the organization. In order to this, the qualities of the jobs to be filled must clearly be identified. When the essential job dimensions and worker qualifications are known, selection devices can be developed. Those based on a job analysis are more likely to be related, thus more effective and likely to serve legal considerations, that is, content validity is more easily demonstrated.

Recruitment: The success of selection and placement activities depends on the effectiveness of recruiting activity. If recruiting does not provide a large pool of potentially qualified job applicants, it is difficult for the organization to selection and place individuals who will perform well and not quit. Even if recruitment does provide a small pool of applicants, the potential utility of the activities is lessened because the organization cannot be selective.

Performance Appraisal: Selection and placement also depend on performance appraisals as a source of feedback. If the criteria used in the appraisals are not job related or the criteria is not communicated, the organization cannot easily develop and use selection devices to predict meaningful employee performance. In other

words, the devices cannot be empirically validated and selection and placement may not demonstrate job-relatedness.

Figure 3: Relationships of Selection and Placement



Conclusions

International business is important to almost every business today, and so firms must increasingly be managed globally. As a result, organizations today have pressing international human resource needs, for instance with respect to manpower selection and placement. Thus, any company that wish to compete through people must take utmost care with how it chooses organizational members, especially those at managerial levels. Therefore, the recent trends in human resource selection and placement such as assessment of decisions,

computer technology and human resource information usage, strategic involvement, and expatriate employees are important.

Selecting managers for expatriate assignments means screening them for traits that predict success in adapting to dramatically new environments. Such expatriate traits include adaptability and flexibility, cultural toughness, self-orientation, job knowledge and motivation, relational skills, extra-cultural openness, and family situation. Adaptability screening focusing on the family's probable success in handling the foreign transfer can be an especially important step in the expatriate selection process.

Recommendations

The study recommends the following:

1. Personnel selection and placement should be consistent with and build up the emphasis prescribed in recruitment and job analysis.
2. Organizations should make selection and placement decisions based on activities that benefit organizational productivity, and predictors that are valid and serve its legal considerations.
3. Computer technology should be used to enhance personnel to coordinate the scheduling, administration, and evaluation of predictors by processing information in a variety of ways.
4. Staffing practices of top management should be tied to the nature of the business because different aspects of business demand different behaviours from the individuals running them.
5. Top managers should be recruited from outside, because insiders are slow to recognize the onset of decline and tend to persevere in strategies that are no longer effective
6. There should be several staffing choices or promotion ladders. The decision to establish several ladders enlarges the opportunities for employees to be promoted and yet stay within a given technical specialty without having to necessarily assume managerial responsibilities.
7. What the job entails such as internal relations with their co-workers; relations with their families; relations with the host government; relations with their home government; external relations with the local culture; and

relations with the company's headquarters should be considered as key in selecting any expatriate employee.

8. Structuring a related management development programme, can go a long way to increase the likelihood of expatriate managerial success.

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