PART I

CHAPTER I

PERSONNEL SELECTION

A. Selection of Technical and Professional Personnel

B. Pseudo-scientific Methods of Selection

C. Need for Scientific Selection System.

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CHAPTER I

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PERSONNEL SELECTION:

Personnel Selection is the process whereby applicants are segregated into various categories according to their acceptability for employment. [1] An applicant may be accepted and hired immediately, he may be rejected, or he may be placed in a deferred category for further consideration. Regardless of the decision, it should be made on the basis of a careful and thorough analysis of the applicant's qualifications. Otherwise, selection is nothing more than a meaningless formality.

Selection refers to the process of offering jobs to one or more applicants from the applications.[2] Great attention has to be paid to selection because it means establishing the 'best fit' between job requirements on the one hand, and the candidate's qualifications on the other. Faulty judgement can have a far reaching impact on the organisational functioning.

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1. Personnel Management: Chruden J.Herbert and Arthur W. Sherman Jr., South-Western Publishing company Inc.,1963 Cincinnati, Chapter-7.

2. Personnel Management: Arun Monappa and Mirza S.Saiyadain, Tata McGraw-Hill Publishing Co.Ltd., New Delhi, p.106.

Increasing numbers of employerss are realizing the value of a sound selection programme and are willing to spend more money for this important function. Applicants who have been selected carefully usually learn job tasks easier, become better producers, and are usually happier in their jobs than those who are selected on a casual basis. There is an additional incentive for management to improve itss personnel selection policies and procedures if employees are represented by a union. If a poorly qualified applicant is hired and permitted to remain on the job, it becomes increasingly difficult for management to discharge the employee without encountering union objections.

The achievement of a sound selection programme is the responsibility of the personnel department. It should, however, work closely with line and other staff departments in order that the combined efforts will produce a competent work force and make all participants aware of the need for giving their careful and thoughtful attention to selection.

A. Selection of Technical and Professional Personnel:

It is anticipated that the composition of the labour force will continue to change in the direction of an increase in the proportionate number of white-collar workers. The

greatest increase, and a drastic one, will occur in the professional-technical group.[1] Because the time required for selection and indoctrination of professional and technical personnel is greater and more costly, companies will find it desirable, if not necessary, to improve methods of selecting personnel for these jobs. The fact that qualified personnel are highly mobile and are willing to move toward jobs with the greatest opportunities for self-realization will require that companies have attractive offerings and be reasonably quick and thorough in screening such personnel. The use of special application forms, scored on the basis of known relationships between personnel data and job performance, can provide one approach to this problem.

i. Engineers and Technologists:[2]

This is the era of research and technology, of the Engineers and Technologists. The influence of these men is all-persuasive. Their activities affect the farm and the factory the home and national defense. The effective recruitment, selection, placement, development, and utilization of high-cabiber talent are essential to economic progress and indeed to national survival.[2]

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1. United states Department of Labour, Manpower, Challenge of the 1960's (United States Government Printing Office Washington, 1960), p.11.

2. Milton M.Mandell, The Selection Process, D.B.Taraporevala Sons & Co.Pvt. Ltd., Bombay, 1970, p.362.

No organisation can hope to obtain and retain superior engineers and technologists unless it recognises, by word and deed, that they may be different from other people. The recruitment methods used to attract them, the criteria for their evaluation as applicants and as employees, and the working conditions provided for them must reflect the fact that, in addition to those aspects of the job that appeal to most human beings, they want freedom to invent, devise, and produce--and that they value recognition by their professional peers more than the approbation of their lay supervisors.

These animadversions flow directly from the fact that, with notable exceptions, scientists and engineers are being judged on such mundane characteristics as industriousness, sincerity, and dependability. These virtues ~~of professional~~ are prized by all laymen, but are they associated with creativity or quality of professional work? Are the criterial in current use designed to achieve the objectives of the organisation or to simplify the life of the man who must manage engineers and technologists? To what extent do they take into account the fact that the second-raters in technical and professional ability are often the ones most likely to be industrious, sincere, and dependable and so become administrators? Can anyone who himself is not outstanding in technical or professional ability be allowed to evaluate a technical or professional?

No refinement in recruiting, selection, or placement techniques can be of substantial help until these questions are answered satisfactorily. For example, the working ~~conditi~~ conditions in some organisations are such that the most able and intelligent leave and the mediocre stay. In other organisations the most productive technologists are rated low in cooperation and flexibility. We can easily guess the ~~lati~~ technological ability of the people who come up with these ratings and the parochial definitions of the attributes they purport to measure.

ii. Validity of Qualifications:

The wide range of engineering, technological and other professional jobs precludes the possibility of there being a definite set of qualifications which will be valid for them all. The work of a designer, for instance, is so closely allied with the work of an artist that we are not likely to come up with any verbal statement indicating the different qualifications needed beyond the Gertrude Stein-like explanation that "a good design engineer is a good design engineer". On the other extreme, many sales engineering jobs require the same abilities as those of any type of sales work, except that they also require the relevant technical knowledge.

The intelligence demanded by technical and engineering positions is equal to, but not greater than, that required to master the appropriate subjects in college and graduate school. In other words, if the applicant has attained satisfactory grades in mathematics and physics, he probably has sufficient intelligence for industrial work. His achievement or lack of achievement will doubtless be due to other factors. Creativity and intelligence, it should be pointed out, cannot be equated; they seem to be two different characteristics.

Because of the rapidity of technical developments, a thorough grounding in mathematics and physics is needed to avoid technological unemployment.

Accuracy and thoroughness are essential attributes in most of these jobs; their nature does not lend itself to a slapdash technique. Many engineers with these attributes are, however, so completely inflexible that the virtue of thoroughness is seduced by the vice of rigidity.

The illiteracy of many engineers drives the supervisors who must read their reports to despair. The engineer is typically non-verbal in interest and ability; consequently, emphasizing verbal ability in his selection, as distinguished from his placement and training, may be as foolish as requiring report-writing ability in salesmen.

The research technologists in the physical sciences seems quite different from the engineer. Confidence in his professional ability, associated with a feeling of self-sufficiency, is part of his hallmark. If he is, indeed, superior in ability, he need not be supervised (except to direct his efforts), because his high level of aspiration for professional recognition leads him to produce a satisfactory quantity of work. But his desire to select the projects he will work on leads to frequent conflicts and tension with supervisors.

B. PSEUDO SCIENTIFIC METHODS OF SELECTION:[1]

Selection as a process is not new to organisations. It has been practised in one form or the other in practically all organisations. The history of selection suggests that formerly stereotyped impressions of personality and characteristics were used as a basis for selection. The nineteenth century particularly, saw the growth of several "Pseudo-Scientific" methods like Phrenology, Physiognomy, and Graphology. They were utilised to make decisions concerning the individuals' conduct and predisposition. It is difficult to evaluate these methods because casual observation and introspection by their very nature are incapable of providing scientific proof of their effectiveness. These methods will be very briefly discussed.

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1. Arun Monappa and Mirza S.Saiyadain, Personnel Management, Tata McGraw-Hill Publishing Co.Ltd., New Delhi, pp.106-108

i. PHRENOLOGY:

One of the most popular doctrines of the early nineteenth century was the Phrenology of Gall, Spurzheim, and Combe. It assumed that the strength of each faculty was indicated by prominent bumps on certain parts of the skull. Thirty seven faculties and propensities like combativeness, and sentiment, and perceptionwere identified, and judgements on the conduct and character were made on the basis of these bumps. Gall did not provide any evidence that these faculties are independent of each other and that they are fundamental to all behaviour. It is now known that traits and abilities are not all located in the brain and it is also very difficult to locate one trait that does not have an effect on the others. Indeed, it has been said that "the bumps on a man's skull tell more about his wife's characteF than his own".

ii. PHYSIOGNOMY:

About the same time Lavater published his Essays on Physiognomy which suggested a definite correlation between facial features and psychological functions and behaviour. He indicated the structure of features to be reflective of personality traits and characteristics. For example, thin lips indicated determination, broad jaws signified tenacity

and so on. Later Kretschmer, and Sheldon and Stevens, indicated that physignes reflected three kinds of temperament. An overly-fat individual enjoyed eating and loved good life; muscular build was associated with toughness; a slight build indicated in introverted, shy, and oversensitive person. In 1930, D.G.Paterson's Physique and Intellect evaluated the studies of the preceeding 40 years and revealed a consistent trend of negative results.

iii. GRAPHOLOGY:

As early as the eleventh century, the Chinese drew attention to the relationship between handwriting and personality. It was not until the close of the nineteenth century that a study of the writing movement itself attempted to provide a unified approach to the graphological theory. It was classed an expressive movement whose features were assumed to be determined internally, reflecting the inhibitions and strains people experience every day. Such characteristics of handwriting as size, width, slant, simplicity, ornamentations to letters, and spacing were examined. Except for matching or verifying handwriting in a court of law, graphology as a science cannot meet the demands of empirical rigour.

Methodology, however, is still used by many firms in India though the objective has changed. Many companies, in their application form, ask applicants to write about a paragraph

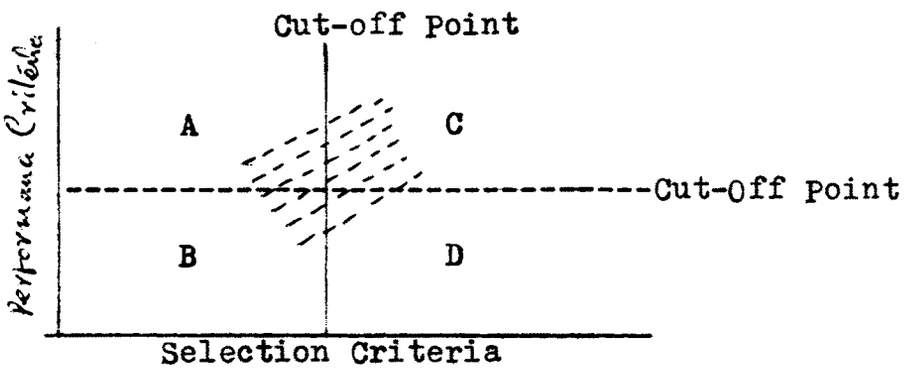
in their own writing about themselves, to seek information other than structured information asked for in the application form. Alternatively, it is to give the applicant an opportunity to give information about himself which is not sought by the company in the application form. Except for jobs that require drafting as a necessary ability, writing a paragraph in one's handwriting would not be of much value and in fact can give disorted impressions about the candidate.

C. NEED FOR SCIENTIFIC SELECTION SYSTEM:

Several other Pseudo-scientific bases for selection, such as astrology, pigmentation, height, weight, caste, creed and family background can be added. Yet, for more objectivity and greater confidence, the need to use more scientific and reliable methods of selection is immense. There are three fundamental reasons for this:

i. No matter how scientific the method of selection, some margin of error will always prevail. The purpose is to reduce this as much as possible, and this means selecting those who will, by and large, perform well in the organisation and reject those who will not. However, in attempting to do so, some mistakes invariably occur. Let us look at the Figure-1 which is drawn in the next page. The horizontal axis gives that ~~for performance~~ cut-off point for selection and the vertical axis gives that for performance. The diagram divided into four Zones.

Figure-1: Selection Criteria.



In the above diagram, 'A' refers to those who were not selected on the selection cut-off score but who would have been successful had they been selected. This error, false positives (see'D'), is where persons have been selected on the selection cut-off score, but have not performed well on the job. Contrast these with 'B' or true negatives, and 'C' or true positives, which refer respectively to those who are rightly rejected or rightly accepted. An objective, scientific system should reduce the number of false negatives and false positives.

ii. Related to the first point, and of concern for several companies, is the cost of selection and training. Cost refers to monetary and man hours. In those organisations, particularly where a large number of vacancies have to be filled, the error of false negative or false positive can be an expensive one. The man days spent in processing the application, screening

the candidates, and finally interviewing them, are many; a rough estimate suggests that as much as 20 to 25 per cent of the time of personnel managers and the personnel department is spent on this activity. Often candidates called for an interview are paid travelling and dearness allowances as well. If selection methods are not appropriate, the cost rises.

Once people are offered the job, the company spends money (salary) and man hours in training them. If, after all these efforts, the employee does not perform well, it not only demotivates him but upsets the corporate planning. If he leaves, the manpower budgetting is disturbed.

iii. Organisations do not exist in isolation. They are greatly influenced by the social and cultural milieu. A sound selection system goes a long way in establishing an image of impartiality and helps attract the most qualified candidates for vacancies. Hence, organisations should not only have an objective system of selection, but should also communicate this to the environment. An equal-opportunity employer whose selection practices are free from the bias of caste, creed, religion, parochialism and sex, is perceived to be more merit than person-oriented. Article 16 (1) and (2) of the Constitution very clearly lays down the guidelines for opportunity in public employment.

> There shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the state (Article 16, Clause 1.)
>
> No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, residence or any of them, be uneligible for or discriminated against in respect of any employment or office under the state (Article 16, Clause 2.)

Though this article is concerned with state employment agencies, the recent realization of social responsibility by private organisations is a move in the direction of equal opportunity employment.

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