

Chapter No. 3

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CHAPTER NO. 3

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

3.1 INTRODUCTION

To be relevant within organizations, become vital to clients or customers and for workplace learning professionals must continually re-evaluate their competencies, update their skills and have the courage to make necessary changes. Businesses and managing business has and will always become complex.

The performance of companies depends mostly on the quality of their human resource. For obvious economic and business reasons, organizations have always been concerned about the competence of its people. A lot is going on in recent times on the issue of competency mapping. A lot of resources are spent and consultants are being invited to do competency mapping. Organizations go for competency mapping to accomplish their strategic objectives with competent human resource.

Competency mapping is important and is an essential exercise. Every well managed firm should have well defined roles and list of competencies required to perform each role effectively. Such list should be used for recruitment, performance management, promotions, placements and training needs identification.

In performing competency mapping, it is essential that the required job skills first be articulated. This information not only helps to identify individuals who have the matching skills for doing the specific work but also the skills that will enhance the successful performance of the work. Yet often to perform well, it is not enough just to have these skills. It is also critical to complement the skills with the necessary knowledge and attitudes. For example- the necessary knowledge will enable an individual to apply for any work situation while having the right attitude, will motivate him to give his best efforts. These skills, knowledge and attitudes required for the work are usually collectively referred as competencies.

Sometimes competency mapping runs the risk of being just another innovative process which happens because of time, so this powerful organizational tool is often resorted just because there is no genuine appreciation of its process and benefits. Competency mapping should not be seen as just another mean to assign and dispense rewards.

3.2 HISTORY OF COMPETENCY MAPPING

The competency approach to human resource management is not new. The early Romans practiced a form of competency profiling in attempts to detail the attributes of a 'good Roman soldier'. The introduction of competency based approaches within the corporate environment initiated around 1970 and their development and use since then has been rapid.

A team of educationists lead by Benjamin Bloom in the USA in mid fifties laid the foundation for identifying educational objectives and there by defining the knowledge attitudes and skills needed to be developed in education. David McClelland the famous Harvard psychologist has pioneered the competency movement across the world. His classic books on "Talent and Society", "Achievement Motive", "The Achieving Society", "Motivating Economic Achievement" and "Power the Inner Experience" brought out several new dimensions of the competencies. These competencies exposed by McClelland deal with the affective domain in Bloom's terminology.

The turning point for competency movement is the article published in American Psychologist in 1973 by McClelland. where in he presented data that traditional achievement and intelligence scores may not be able to predict job success and what is required to profile the exact competencies required to perform a given job effectively and measure them using a variety of tests. This article combined with the work done by Douglas Brey and his associates at AT&T in the US where in they presented evidence that competencies can be assessed through assessment centers and the job success can be predicted to some extent by the same. He has laid foundation for popularization of the competency movement.

Latter, McBer a consulting firm founded by David McClelland and his associate Berlew have specialized in mapping the competencies of entrepreneurs and managers across the world. They even developed a new and yet simple methodology called the Behavior Event Interviewing (BEI) to map the competencies.

With increased recognition of the limitations of performance appraisal, Assessment centers (AC) became popular in seventies. The setting up of an Assessment center was an integral part of the HRD plan given to L&T by the IIMA professors as early as in 1975. L&T did competency mapping and could not start assessment centers. latter on it was not supposed as a priority area.

3.3 BASIC CONCEPTS, MEANING AND DEFINITIONS

The various terms related to competency mapping are-competence, competency, competency profiling etc.

1. Competence

‘Competence’ is about turning knowledge into action. Any underlying characteristic require for performing a given task, activity or role successfully can be considered as a competency. (McClelland, 1973) defined competence measurement as a tool for distinguishing superior performer from average performer. (Ernest, 1989) Presented the competence as a statement which describes the integrated demonstration of a cluster of related skills and attitudes that are observable and measurable necessary to perform a job independently at prescribed proficiency level.

2. Competency

‘Competencies’ are measurable human capabilities that are required for effective work performance demands⁵. Competencies are the combination of skills, attributes and behaviors that are directly related to the successful performance on the job⁶. Most fundamentally, competencies provide organizations with a way to define in behavioral terms what their leaders need to do to produce the results the organization desires and do so in a way that is consistent with and builds its culture. They should provide the ‘North Star’ by which leaders at all levels navigate in order to create synergy and produce more significant and consistent results⁷.

David McClelland (1988) explains that “definitions for various competencies, which contains real life example of more competent behavior, provide specific guideposts as how to develop the competency. The feed back information also provides a basis for career counseling or explaining why a person should or should not be promoted”. Competencies are important, as they help to communicate what an individual stands for or what the expectation is (Ernest, 1989).

The proper and careful use of competencies is important as it will help to increase clarity in an organizational system, bring transparency and build trust by avoiding multiple interpretations of the competence concept, both by the employees and the organizations.

⁵ Marrelli (1998) <http://imu.ntua.gr/Papers/J53-IMCC-Draganidis+Mentzas-2005.pdf>

⁶ Kofi Annan (1999) <http://www.paho.org/English/HSP/HSR/HSR05/competencies-report.pdf>

⁷ Intagliata et al. (2000) <http://imu.ntua.gr/Papers/J53-IMCC-Draganidis+Mentzas-2005.pdf>

3. Competency mapping

Competency mapping determines the extent to which the various competencies related to a job are passed by an employee. Therefore competency mapping is a process of HR expert uses to identify and describes competencies that are most crucial to success in a work situation.

Competency mapping is the process of identification of the competencies required to perform successfully a given job or role or a set of tasks at a given point of time. It consists of breaking a given role or job into its constituent tasks or activities and identifying the competencies (technical, managerial, behavioral, conceptual knowledge, attitudes, skills etc.) needed to perform the task successfully.

4. Competency profiling

Competency profiling is the process of identifying the knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes, and judgment required for effective performance in a particular occupation or profession. Competency profiling is business or company specific.

5. Competency model or Competency mapping model

A competency model is a valid, observable and measurable list of the knowledge, skills and attributes demonstrated through behavior that results in outstanding performance in a particular work context. Competency mapping model begins the process of building tools to link employees' performance to mission and goals of organization.

3.4 BROAD CATEGORIES OF COMPETENCIES

The competencies may be grouped in to various areas. In classic article published a few decades ago in Harvard Business review **Daniel Katz** (1960) grouped competencies under three areas generic, managerial and technical which later expanded in the following-

1. Generic competencies

The competencies which are considered as essential for all employees regardless of their function or level are known as generic competencies.

For example- communication, initiative, listening skills etc.

2. Managerial competencies

The competencies which are considered essential for managerial or supervisory responsibility are known as managerial competencies.

For example- knowledge, attitudes, skills etc. required to plan, organize, mobilize and utilize various resources

3. Technical or Functional competencies

The specific competencies which are considered essential to perform a specific type of task are known as technical or Functional competencies. (Role in the organization within a defined technical or functional area of work.)

For example- competencies required for Finance or Environmental management.

4. Human competencies

Human competencies are knowledge, attitudes and skills required to motivate, utilize and develop human resources.

For example- Team building

5. Conceptual competencies

Conceptual competencies are the abilities to visualize the invisible thing at abstract levels and use the thinking to plan future business.

For example- creativity, innovations etc.

A given competency may fall into one or more areas and may include more than one form. For example 'Teamwork' or 'Team Management' competency can be defined in terms of organization specific and level specific behaviors for a given origination. At top levels it might mean 'the ability to identify, utilize and synergize the contributions of a project team' and at another level it might mean 'the ability to inspire and carry along the top management team including diversity management'. In competency mapping all details of the behaviors (observable, specific, measurable etc.) to be shown by the person occupying that role are specified.

3.4.1 Other major Categorization of Competencies

Besides the above major types of competencies, competencies can be also in the following two broad categories as -

1) Threshold competencies-

These are essential characteristics required for all job incumbents to perform the job at a minimal level of ability.

2) Differentiating competencies-

These distinguish superior from average performers. Threshold and differentiating competencies are identified within the context of a specific job.

3.5 COMPONENTS OF COMPETENCY

Competency consist of three major components as-

1. Knowledge
2. Skill
3. Attitude

1. Knowledge

It refers to the information a person possesses about specific areas. Knowledge comprises many factors like memory, numerical ability, linguistic ability etc. therefore, it is a complex competency. It can be either Scientific, Technical or job related knowledge.

2. Skill

It represents intelligent application of knowledge, experience and tools. Skill is the procedural "know how" (what one can do), either covert (e.g. deductive or inductive reasoning) or observable.

For example- active listening skill. Skills are demonstrated abilities or proficiencies, which are developed and learned from past work and life experiences.

3. Attitudes

Attitudes are tendency to other individuals, groups, objects, situations, events, issues etc. For example- attitude to a particular occupation or type of machine or a particular technology all influence our behavior.

For example -If a person does not have a positive attitude to computers or IT, he is not likely to use a computer. Attitudes determine the kind of things we choose and whether we are likely to approach a particular situation or not. Attitudes decide our approach or avoidance behavior. They are normally conceptualized as positive or negative. A positive attitude makes us to treat that object, technology, method, situation and person or group more positively and therefore we appreciate it and promote the same.

Knowledge and skills tend to be visible and relatively surface. characteristics of people. But attitude, trait and motive competencies are more hidden "deeper" and central to personality. Surface knowledge and skills are relatively easy to develop, but core motive and trait competencies are at the base of the personality and are more difficult to assess and develop.

3.6 BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS OF COMPETENCY

A Competency is described in terms of a key behavior that enables recognition of that competency at the work place. These behaviors are demonstrated by excellent performers on-the-job much more consistently than average or poor performers. These characteristics generally follow the 80-20 rule, in that they include the key behaviors that primarily drive excellent performance. Following are some key behavior indicators in an employee:

1. Independently researches for information and solutions to issues
2. Ability to know what needs to be done or find out (research) and take steps to get it done
3. Ask questions when not sure of what the problem is or to gain more information
4. Able to identify the underlying or main problem
5. Shows willingness to experiment with new things
6. Develops a list of decision making guidelines to help arrive at logical solutions

3.7 BASIC NEED OF COMPETENCY MAPPING

The intention or the basic purpose behind competency mapping can be stated as follows-

1. Gap analysis

To minimize the gap between job expectations and actual performance of employees with mapping of key competencies require to that job.

2. Role clarity

Competency mapping process makes clear the role or job by identifying basic required competencies and at what degree they are required to perform that role efficiently.

3. Selection, potential identification and for growth plans

To select the competent workforce to perform required job, identification of required potential of human resource and to develop growth plans for employees and organization.

4. Succession planning

To develop a continuous procedure of systematically identifying, assessing and developing organizational performance and talent management.

5. Restructuring

Restructuring of human resource activities from traditional job analysis and description to meet current job needs.

6. Inventory of competencies for future planning

To find out competencies according to job as an inventory to meet future organizational demands.

3.8 PERSONS CONDUCTING COMPETENCY MAPPING

Competencies can be identified by one of the following category of people-

- i) Experts in competency mapping
- ii) HR Specialists
- iii) Job analysts
- iv) Psychologists
- v) Industrial Engineers

3.9 METHODS USED FOR COMPETENCY MAPPING

The following methods are used for competency mapping:

- i) **Interview-** interview with persons who gives excellent performance or play a major role in their field or task.
- ii) **Task analysis workshops-** workshops which give information about any task with respect to essentials, key areas, standards or methodology etc.
- iii) **Questionnaire-** fill up questionnaire from the key personnel of related job.
- iv) **Use of job descriptions-** as per the requirements in the job descriptions and job specification.
- v) **Performance appraisal formats** – use of the performance appraisal methods or standards.
- vi) **Through Assessment Centers (AC)** – process considered by Assessment centers used for competency mapping.

3.10 COMPETENCY MAPPING MODEL OR COMPETENCY MODEL BUILDING

A competency model is an organizing framework that lists the competencies required for effective performance in a specific job. job family (e.g. group of related jobs),

organization, function or process. Individual competencies are organized into competency models to enable people in an organization or profession to understand, discuss and apply the competencies to workforce performance.

Typically a competency model includes-

1. Competency titles
2. Definitions of those titles
3. Key behavior indicators

The competencies in a model may be organized in a variety of formats. No one approach is inherently best; organizational needs will determine the optimal framework. A common approach is to identify several competencies that are essential for all employees and then identify several additional categories of competencies that apply only to specific subgroups. Some competency models are organized according to the type of competency, such as leadership, personal effectiveness or technical capacity. Other models may employ a framework based on job level, with a basic set of competencies for a given job family and additional competencies added cumulatively for each higher job level within the job family.

The following are the general steps involved in designing and developing the competency mapping model-

1. **Strategize** – to assess business needs, evaluate contextual drivers, engage stakeholders and set goals.
2. **Initiate** – to identify methodologies, develop project plans, review existing data, benchmark competencies and collect competency data.
3. **Model** – to analyze, synthesize data, identify competencies, develop models and validate models.
4. **Pilot** – to develop implementation and evaluation plans, develop and initiate competency applications and continuously communicate activities.
5. **Link** – to link to all human resources system components and phase in implementation of other competency' based applications.
6. **Evaluate** – to establish and evaluate measures and continuously improve the system.

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3.10.1 Steps in Competency Model Building

Following are the Steps in the Competency Model Building-

1. Background information about the organization

First and basic step of the competency mapping is to collect the basic information about organization i.e. organization structure, levels of organization, departments, job designations, job analysis and description etc.

2. Decide on the occupation or job Position(s) that require competency model(s)

After understanding the background and nature of organization the key job positions or occupations are selected for development of competency mapping. These job positions are selected on the basis of importance and responsibility of that job designation towards organizations vision, objectives and strategy.

3. Discuss application of the competency model

In this stage organization decide the level of application and methodology of competency model in overall organization and personnel management. Methodology of competency model with concerned jobs and at what level competency model is to be implemented.

4. Select a data collection method and plan the approach

In this stage plan is made for collecting the data about key job positions. This can be done through reviewing job description, understanding the performance criteria of that job, discussion with persons who gives top performance about that job, listing of top competencies etc.

5. Organize data collected

The competencies which are collected from above step are organized and arrange as most important to least important competencies. We can also make classification of competencies as technical, physical, managerial etc.

6. Identify main themes or patterns

The key competencies or behavioral patterns are determined with level of importance.

7. Build the model - defining specific behavior indicators

In this stage competency model is prepared for all key job positions in organization as described above.

8. Review the model

Take review of that model with respect to organizations goals, objectives and strategy.

3.11 COMPETENCY MAPPING IMPLEMENTATION AREAS

Competency mapping can be applied to the following areas of Human Resource Management and Organization.

1. Recruitment and selection

Competency mapping help to choose the right people to join and progress of an organization. Competencies can be used to construct a template for using in recruitment and selection. Information on the level of a competency required for effective performance would be used to determine the competency levels that new hires should possess. Depending upon the accepted definition, competency data may take the form of behaviors, skills, abilities and other characteristics that have been associated with effective performance.

2. Training and development

Competency mapping also useful in identifying gaps and helping employee's to develop in the right direction. Knowing the competency profile for a position allows individuals to compare their own competencies to those required by the position or the career path. Training or development plans could focus on those competencies which are needed for improvement. Additionally education and development curricula would be linked to improving competency levels needed for effective performance.

3. Career and succession planning

Assessing employees' willingness or potential to take new challenges, to determine person's job based competency profile and to set the competencies required for excellence within a profession. Individuals would know the competencies required for a particular position and therefore would have an opportunity to decide whether they have the potential to pursue that position.

4. Rewards and recognition

Competency based pay is compensation for individual characteristics for skills and competencies over and above the pay of job or organizational role itself. Individual characteristics that merit higher pay may come in the form of competencies. Competency pay is the best way to rewarding employees for their ability to make the best use of their skills and competencies in accordance with the organization's needs.

5. Performance management System

Competencies are critical behaviors demonstrated on the job and as such are often included as a part of performance management. Performance management is about achieving results in a manner that is consistent with organizational expectations and

desired behaviors. Competencies provide expectations for “how” the job is performed, not just “what” gets done. Assessing competencies as a part of performance management is an important mean of assisting employees in understanding performance expectations and enhancing competencies on-the-job. Most departments have their own performance management systems. Competencies may play an important role in these systems. Besides this competency mapping is also useful for shifting from traditional job analysis to exact needs of the human force. Talent retention to link between organizational and personal objectives, to measure Processes and standardized across organizational and geographical boundaries.

3.12 DATA COLLECTION METHODS OF COMPETENCY MAPPING

Following are the methods for collecting data of competency mapping-

1. Literature review

A preliminary approach to defining job content and identifying required competencies is to conduct a review of the literature to learn about previous studies of the job or similar jobs. Quite often, no previous studies have been conducted, however, if they do exist, they can be extremely helpful in providing an introduction to the job and a preliminary list of competencies to consider. The literature review supplements, but does not replace other data collection methods. It simply provides a quick overview. Sources of published literature include books, professional journals, association magazines, theses and dissertations. Unpublished studies may be available from professional associations, consulting firms, colleges and universities that offer training programs for your target job and through the Internet. The quality of these studies will vary widely and they need to be critically evaluated before use.

2. Focus groups

In focus groups, a facilitator works with a small group of job in office with their managers, supervisors, clients or others to define the job content or to identify the competencies they believe and which are essential for performance. A series of focus groups is often conducted to allow many people in the organization to provide input. There are different approaches to conducting focus groups. Typically, the facilitator will use a prepared protocol of questions to guide a structured discussion. Expert panels are a special type of focus group in which persons who is considered highly knowledgeable about the job and its requirements meet to develop a list of the

competencies required for success. The members of expert panels are typically persons who write about or do research in the relevant discipline, such as published academics.

3. Structured interviews

In structured interviews, carefully planned questions are asked individually of job incumbents, their managers or others familiar with the job. Benchmarking interviews with other organizations are especially useful in achieving a broader view of the job or determining which competencies are more universally deemed necessary for a particular job. However, it is important to be cautious in applying the information collected from other organizations. There are many variables such as work environment, culture and differences in job responsibilities that may limit the relevance of the information.

4. Behavioral Event Interviews

In behavioral event interviews (BEI), top performers are interviewed individually about what they did, thought, said and felt in challenging or difficult situations. The competencies that were instrumental in their success are extrapolated from their stories. Often, average and low performers are also interviewed to provide a comparison. The interviewer will ask questions such as- "Tell me about a time when you had an extremely challenging client" or "Give me an example of a situation at work in which you had to make a difficult decision."

5. Surveys

In surveys, job incumbents, their supervisors and perhaps senior managers complete a questionnaire administered either in print or electronically. The survey content is based on previous data collection efforts such as interviews, focus groups or literature reviews. The respondents are typically asked to assign ratings to each listed job element or competency. For example, respondents may be asked how critical a competency is to effective job performance, how frequently the competency is used on the job, the degree to which the competency differentiates superior from average performers and if the competency is needed on entry to the job or can be developed over time. Survey respondents are usually asked to provide in writing any additional information that they feel is important.

6. Observations

In this data collection method, the research team visits high performing incumbents and observes them at work. The more complex the job and the greater the variety in job tasks, the more time is required for an observation. For a very routine job in which the

same task is repeated over and over throughout the day. an observation of a couple hours might sufficient. For very complex jobs. observation of a week or more may be required. If the job changes based on work cycles, seasons or other factors, the observations may have to be conducted over a period of weeks or months. The observation process may include asking employees to explain what they are doing and why. Sometimes observations of average and low performers are also conducted to establish a basis for comparison. The competencies required for effective performance are then inferred from the observations by persons who are experts in competency identification.

7. Job descriptions

Job descriptions are a basic human resources management tool that can help to increase individual and organizational effectiveness. For each employee, a good, up-to-date job description helps the incumbent to understand their duties and responsibilities, relative importance of the duties and how their position contributes to the mission, goals and objectives of the organization. For the organization, a good job description contribute to organizational effectiveness by ensuring that the work carried out by staff is aligned with the organizations mission and helping management in clearly identifying the most appropriate employee for new duties and realigning work loads.

8. Work logs

In the work log method of data collection, job incumbents enter into logs or diaries their daily work activities with stop and start times for each activity. Depending on the complexity and variety of the job, incumbents may be asked to make log entries for several days, weeks or months.

9. Assessment Centers or Development Centers (AC or ADC)

Assessment Centers are centers set up by an organization for periodic or continuous assessment of competencies required to perform current, future likely or higher level jobs or roles or tasks. They are increasingly used to identify high improvement areas and develop leaders or competencies for the future. They are also being used for recruitment purposes to assess the suitability of the candidate for entry level as well as for senior levels positions. Assessment Centers use multiple methods like in-basket presentations, role plays, simulation exercise, leadership group discussions, case studies etc. They are also called as development centers or ADCs in the recent.

3.13 ADVANTAGES OF COMPETENCY MAPPING

There are several advantages of competency mapping over traditional job analysis. Following are the advantages of competency mapping for organization, managers and employees.

1. For the organization

The advantages of competency mapping for the organizations are as follows-

- i. Establishes expectations for performance excellence
- ii. Improved job satisfaction and better employee retention
- iii. Increase in the effectiveness of training and professional development programs because of their link to success criteria
- iv. Provides a common understanding of scope and requirements of specific role
- v. Provides a common, organization wide standard for career levels that enable employees to move across business boundaries
- vi. Help organization to 'raise the bar' of performance expectations
- vii. Help teams and individuals to align their behaviors with key organizational strategies

2. For managers

The competency mapping provides following advantages to the managers-

- i. Identify performance criteria to improve the accuracy and ease of the selection process
- ii. Provide more objective performance standards
- iii. Easier communication of performance expectations
- iv. Provide a clear foundation for dialogue between the managers and employees for performance development and career-oriented issues

3. For employees

The employees in an organization get the following advantages by competency mapping-

- i. Identify the behavioral standards of performance excellence
- ii. Provide a more specific and objective assessment of their strengths and the tools required to enhance their skills
- iii. Enhances clarity on career related issues
- iv. Helps each to understand how to achieve expectations

3.14 CONCLUSION

As competency mapping is an effective tool of measuring the competencies of the employees, it is important to improve and retain talents in the organization.

In today's competitive environment it is necessary for any organization to develop competency model of employees by considering organizations objectives, strategies and job needs with its functional areas. Competency model help organizations about competency-based human resource management methods of defining and measuring human performance, its impact on individual and organization's overall performance.