Assessment centres- Platform for Building leadership readiness

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Abstract

This research paper focuses on the details of designing and executing an assessment center towards an endeavor for leadership readiness in organizations. The paper is designed to help today's managers and professionals about the fundamental information required to create the assessment centers that can act as a springboard to develop the employee's leadership abilities. Being a talent development practitioner, the author could trace and provide insights on how assessment centers can provide an ideal platform for the high potential performers in organizations to be successful in an increasingly complex world. Based on literature review and the contemporary work done the most critical need today in business leadership is a new kind of leader: authentic leader- and the assessment center approach can serve as a pedestal and tool in evaluating the leadership traits and competencies. The efforts involved in designing and executing an assessment center is outlined that can be used in nurturing the high potential performers for leadership readiness. The assessment center is depicted to be a reliable platform and tool for gauging and evaluating the existing leadership pipeline in an organization revolving around the scope of this work. Assessment center methods can help organizations achieve the mission critical goals- helping its leaders to be successful in hostile, turbulent, ambiguous and uncertain business environment on increasing the organizational competencies to sustain the strategy. An original piece of work, this research paper can be of immense value not only for the academicians but also for the HR and Talent Development professionals more in terms of identifying, nurturing and developing leaders of tomorrow.

Key words
Core competencies, evaluation, dimensions, passions, analysis, and judgement.

1.Introduction
Over the past six to seven decades, various scholars have conducted research, studies and analysis with an intention to explore the varied and different styles, characteristics or the personality attributes of successful business leaders. However, it is surprising to observe that nothing definite has emerged that would authenticate a clear profile of the ideal leader. This is not surprising as there cannot be a specific formula or panacea that the individuals would be forever trying to imitate. Moreover, by doing so their originality would be lost and the authenticity would be in question. As a matter of fact the team members would like their leaders when they are genuine and not a replica of another individual. Authentic leaders demonstrate a passion to whatever they are involved in, they adhere strictly to the values and use both the head and heart to lead. They are in a mode to establish long term relationships and demonstrate self-discipline to get the results.

Over the years several industry captains have indicated their strong desires to become authentic leaders and have tried to explore the ways and build platforms that can help them to realise their potential. Can there be a platform that would help identify the budding leaders core competencies that would highlight and enhance the individual's capability and productivity as a leader, evoking passion in others and personal effectiveness? Increasingly, the industry captains are

realising that the challenge today is not only leadership development but also leadership readiness. This is where the need and role of assessment centres arise. The objective of the research paper is :

1. To understand the importance of assessment centres in leadership development.
2. The challenges faced by the assessors
3. Develop a conceptual model for leadership assessment

2.Literature Review

Gratton (1985) explained the theory and research practice of Assessment Centres. Researchers described that the process of evaluating and developing individuals for their current occupations as well as for positions they may hold in the future is a difficult and sometimes unreliable endeavour. However, in many companies when the number of employees has been reduced because of increased competition, finding the proper individual to fill each open position may be a crucial factor in determining the company's future success. Murdoch (1992) observed that it had always been one of the key responsibilities of any company, regardless of whether it is private or public, to locate, cultivate, and maintain a staff that is knowledgeable and capable. Researcher discussed the present practice as well as some ongoing trends, as well as a summary of the lessons that practitioners have learned over the last five years. The paper discussed the possible future paths of assessment centres and how they might aid in the process of resolving problems that pertain to businesses. Lowry (1996) conducted a study of public sector human resources experts, police and fire chiefs, and other personnel, and found that the assessment centre approach is being used more often. In addition to this, it exposed a number of significant problems with the evaluation centres that are used in the public sector. It was not always necessary to do job analyses, and it was noted that validation was either insufficient or improper. Additionally, assessors were not always given the needed training, and feedback to and from participants was not always supplied. Shore et al (1997) explained the role of gender in development assessment centres. Ripamonti and Scaratti (2012) devised an essay with the purpose of demonstrating the significance of local knowledge in the construction of evaluation instruments that are designed to develop and improve human resources in businesses. The article used a case study to illustrate the potentialities and shortcomings of using a local approach in relation to the standardisation of assessment procedures that was brought about by the application of universal and global reference models. This was done by comparing the local approach to the universal and global reference models. The article begins with a brief overview of the most important theoretical frames of reference before moving on to describe how local knowledge was utilised at an assessment centre set up at a multinational corporation that operates in the maritime transport sector. The purpose of the assessment centre was to develop the competencies that are required by the company. The article detailed and examined the many methods in which specific traditional knowledge management circumstances were modified at the assessment centre to local demands and conditions, in addition to the primary outcomes that were produced. The discussion concludes with a look at the consequences of a local approach to evaluation, both practically and socially, as well as its limits and its potential for transferability. Paulo (2019) designed and validated a tool called an Assessment Centre (AC), which focuses on the identification of skills that impact teaching and learning outcomes. This instrument is used for the assessment and selection of school leaders. Research conducted on a global scale suggests that assessment centres should be used to choose applicants for these professions because of the better predictive power they provide compared to more conventional techniques. The purpose of this study was to develop and validate a model that simulated the most important responsibilities of a school principal. This model consisted of four face-to-face instruments, which were as follows: an interview to evaluate one's competencies; a human resources exercise; a class observation exercise; and a strategic analysis exercise. In order to determine the outcomes of performance that were wanted, three competencies and fifteen indicators were chosen, with reference to both worldwide and regional norms. A total of 164 individuals, including teachers, school administrators, and principals, took part in the study, and their responses were used to conduct an analysis of the participants' performance. The findings revealed that there was good evidence for concept validity, concurrent criterion validity, and reliability between the evaluators. In addition, the data collected from a subsample of principals who had served in their current role for at least three years allowed for the association of those principals' AC scores with the outcomes of their school organisations in 2013 and 2016, as measured by the National System for the Measurement of Educational Quality (NSMEQ). Evgeny (2022) made a conceptual contribution to the substantiation of the foundations in personnel management for the development and decision-making in personnel assessment based on the biographical technique. This was accomplished by providing a biographical approach for personnel assessment.

3.Research Methodology

Based on literature review and the contemporary work done, the most critical need today in business leadership is a new kind of leader: authentic leader- and the assessment centre approach can serve as a pedestal and tool in evaluating the leadership traits and competencies. The efforts involved in designing and executing an assessment centre is outlined that can be used in nurturing the high potential performers for leadership readiness.

4.Analysing Assessment Centers

4.1 Assessment centers: what are they?

The origin of the idea of assessment centres may be traced back to Military Science, and to be more specific, to the time period of the Second World War. The annals of history tell that this strategy was used by the German army in order to pick its officers, and this approach is being utilised in the selection process for new military personnel today. It is interesting to note that in South Africa this method has been used in the selection process for the mining supervisors. As the Director of Human Resources at American Telephone & Telegraph Company, Douglas Bray oversaw research that practically spanned twenty years and served as a guide for the career advancement of aspiring business managers as they progressed up through the ranks of the company.

Following the success of the assessment centre method at the American Telephone and Telegraph Company toward the organisational achievement, it was later adopted as a standard practise. Subsequently, many other companies including IBM, Sears, and Standard oil adopted it for their selection and identification processes.

1975 was the year that brought to light the principles for using the assessment centres in a way that was both organised and standardised. It safeguarded the process's integrity, along with the authenticity of the data, which was peppered with the credentials that were needed of the assessors, and most importantly, it protected the rights of the delegates who were nominated. Over the course of the years, these principles have been revised with a number of different considerations in mind, including legality in different parts of the world, global insights, and technical advancements. In point of fact, over the course of many years, the Assessment Centre technique has progressed both in the public and commercial sectors, making the selection process more robust and characterised by talent development in a variety of fields.

An assessment centre is a means of assessing a person's knowledge and abilities by having them participate in a series of activities and other initiatives that generate responses from the individual. It provides the opportunity to evaluate an existing role holder’s competency as well as their future potential in a structured, reliable, and controlled manner that is marked with the keen observations of the nominated delegates, regardless of whether the evaluation takes the form of discussions, problem solving, or other standardised activities and tasks.

The ultimate reason for creating the assessment centre in any organisation is to procure all relevant inputs and information about a role holder capabilities and competence to demonstrate and perform a given task. Assessment centres are often the preferred choice of methods for selecting the senior leaders in Government and municipal jobs including the police personnel. Today as a part of organisational Development initiative this method is used extensively to identify and develop the high potential performers across all sectors in industry.

It has been noticed that assessment centres have also been utilised widely to assist managers in the process of succession planning. Diversity is the rule of the day, and businesses are becoming more interested in analysing and forecasting the behaviour of job holders regardless of the educational level, age, nationality, or gender of the individuals in question. The perspective and inclination of an employee toward diversity management may be readily discerned via the use of assessment centres.

4.2 Development of The Assessment Centre

The writers, who have held positions as Heads of Talent Development at global businesses, have had the chance to establish assessment centres for the purpose of training high potential leaders. The authors would want to provide a comprehensive breakdown of the process that goes into planning and carrying out an assessment Center. During the course of their time at an assessment centre, applicants will often take part in a variety of solo and group activities that imitate important components of the position they are applying for. It is interesting to take notice that the assessors go through training just before the assessment centre. The most important aspects of this training are practise and feedback, which are delivered via the use of videotapes, written examples, and assessor report forms of the actual exercises that are performed. When it comes to the administration of the assessment centres, the nominated delegates

take part in activities during the rigorous evaluation period. Each and every activity is planned out in advance, and each and every process is overseen by an administrator. The production of reports is another essential component of the assessment process. Here, the evaluator summarises the observed behaviours and assigns a numerical score to each job-related aspect that was tested by the exercises at the assessment centre. The evaluators come at their conclusions independently, without consulting the opinions of any other raters. Not only are the numeric scores recorded, but also the particular instances of conduct that were seen throughout each exercise are taken into consideration when determining each grade. Following the completion of the activities and the preparation of the reports, the data pertaining to the candidates are integrated. A statistical combination of the data is what allows for this integration to take place. Multiple ratters will evaluate performance in a variety of tasks, and their combined scores will be used to determine the final grade for each performance attribute. As a consequence, a complete picture of each candidate's skills and a quantitative judgement on aspects of the work relating to those capabilities have been produced. It is important to point out that there seems to be a substantial connection between the assessment dimensions that have an influence on validity. This is something that should be mentioned here.

4.3 Behavioural Dimensions:

In an assessment centre, each candidate's behaviour is evaluated on several behavioural dimensions. Assessors assign a rating to the relevant dimensions in each exercise. Ratings are then combined across assessors and exercises to reach a final numerical score for the behavioural dimension. The behavioural dimensions used to evaluate candidates are listed and defined in the tables 1-4 below:

Table 1. Candidate's behaviour

Interpersonal Insight	Perceiving and reacting to the needs of others. Objectivity of perceiving impact of self on others.	Perceiving and reacting to the needs of others. Objectivity of perceiving impact of self on others. Behaviours that demonstrate skill in **Interpersonal Insight** • accepting personal differences • eliciting ideas, feelings, and perceptions from others • encouraging open communication • providing constructive feedback Action verbs that describe skill in **Interpersonal Insight** • Consider • Acknowledge • Respond • Understand Activities that will build skill in the area of **Interpersonal Insight**: • Evaluate how others perceive you. Seek out objective and creative ways to gather this information. Consider the impact that your actions have on others.

Table 2. Problem analysis

Problem Analysis	Skill in identifying problems, securing relevant information, and identifying possible causes of problems.	Behaviors that demonstrate skill in **Problem Analysis:** • reviewing all relevant information • identifying related items and issues • interpreting data • assimilating new information into existing framework Action verbs that describe skill in **Problem Analysis**: • Recognize • Interpret • Investigate • Relate

		• Corelate Activities that will build skill in the area of **Problem Analysis**: 1. Identify questions that are unanswered in a newspaper article. (WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, WHY) What information has been left out? 1. Request additional information (both oral and written) from others.

Table 3. Behaviors that demonstrate skill in Decisiveness

Decisiveness	Readiness to make decisions, render judgment, take action, or commit oneself.	Readiness to make decisions, render judgment, take action, or commit oneself. Behaviors that demonstrate skill in **Decisiveness**: • Decide • Assign • Make clear • Agree/Disagree • Indicate • Take action Activities that will build skill in the area of **Decisiveness**: 1. Only delay decisions when specific additional information is needed. In that case, set a deadline for review. 2. Decide ahead of time (e.g., "I'll buy it if the price drops 10%.") 3. Share information in order to make informed decisions. 4. Take responsibility for decisions made even when the decision is a joint one. 5. Take risks when warranted. 6. Be prepared to respond to questions and challenges, and to defend a decision or action. Anticipate the questions and challenges you will receive.

Table 4. Delegation & Control

Delegation & Control	Effective use of subordinates and establishing procedures to monitor and regulate activities of subordinates.	Behaviours that demonstrate skill in **Delegation & Control**: • understanding the roles within an organization • clearly communicating assignments • setting up objectives • establishing goals and deadlines • requesting feedback • providing back-up plans • preparing "to-do" lists and "tickler" files Action verbs that describe skill in **Delegation & Control**: • Assign • Appoint • Delegate • Empower

		Activities that will build skill in the area of **Delegation & Control** 1. Delegate. Relinquish control when work is appropriate at a lower level. 2. Communicate assignments clearly and ask if there are questions. 3. Provide training to develop subordinates' skills.

5.Proposed Findings and Managerial Implications

The lessons that we have learned over the course of the last several decades have made it very evident that volatility is ubiquitous. Nobody has been able to accurately forecast how deep COVID-19 will go. The executives of a company need to get their heads around the fact that the Leadership Development process can only be altered if it can be adapted to the existing culture of the company. Rather of focusing on the accomplishments of the past, the most essential thing is to identify the skills. However, it has been noticed that any discussions about the process of defining the essential skills have the potential to quickly become contentious. The topic of whether or not competences can even be defined at all raises the eyebrows of many people. However, it is important to note that the vast majority of business leaders are of the opinion that once the competencies have been defined, one can without a doubt anticipate consistent results regardless of location, role, or the business entity in question. This fact bears mentioning because it is relevant. At this point, the assessment centres have an opportunity to make a significant contribution.

It is becoming more usual for businesses to bring in executives from outside the company in order to broaden their range of capabilities and expertise when they undergo structural changes in order to adapt to new forms of technology, new types of clients, and new types of markets. The leaders need to rely on the development function throughout this process of picking the leaders from external sources, bearing in mind the cultural challenges, and so introducing the newly recruited leader to the company's ethos, norms, culture, and values. Because diversity is the order of the day, organisations have a responsibility to work toward including members of a broad community into the process of leadership development. To a greater extent, since the unique experiences and viewpoints brought by the members of the group contribute to the overall acceleration of the learning process. As a result, it is not uncommon to find that many organisations in today's world are working toward incorporating a diverse range of nationalities, cultural perspectives, and business savvy into their leadership development programmes. Evaluation carried out at assessment centres thus serves as a pivot point to entwine this preparedness for leadership. . The design of an effective assessment centre has the potential to reflect and unfold changes in the underlying processes, practises, and systems that have an effect on the fundamental aspects of an organization's performance. Assessment centres are beneficial to leaders because they encourage them to think about developing new methods of working together, which in turn sparks new ideas. This is true despite the fact that such leaders may have a variety of titles and responsibilities. Let's all agree that organisations will keep on focusing on identifying and developing a small set of essential competencies. The design and establishment of assessment centres are increasingly taking place within this framework. An organised effort that is made in the assessment centres may shed light on the way that one thinks about leadership. This is because the leadership practise entails increasing the capacity of role holders who are involved in actual change processes to prepare themselves today to react tomorrow.

The use of assessment centre methods can assist organisations in accomplishing their mission-critical objectives, such as assisting their leaders in achieving success in an unfriendly, turbulent, ambiguous, and uncertain business environment, and in increasing the organisational competencies necessary to maintain the strategy. This study paper is a novel piece of work that may be of tremendous importance not just for academics but also for HR professionals and talent development experts more generally in terms of recognising, cultivating, and developing future leaders.

6.Conclusion

The higher echelons of many organisations maintain the practise of promoting individuals into management and leadership roles based on a single particular ability such as technical proficiency. On the other hand, there are plenty of situations in which that level of expertise does not always translate into strong leadership preparedness and performance. When people assume new leadership responsibilities, they frequently fail to recognise the ways in which their previous roles have evolved. They may not realise that their jobs are no longer merely mechanical but instead involve assisting others in achieving their goals; that driving the bus may require them to take a backseat; or that

forming a team is frequently more important than striking a deal. The authors of this article advocate how assessment centres can enable organisations to shape the leaders of tomorrow by focusing on the unique circumstances of individual managers, investing in them early on in their careers, providing effective mentoring and coaching, and providing real-life experiences. This can be done by focusing on the unique circumstances of individual managers, investing in them early on in their careers, offering effective mentoring and coaching, and providing real-life experiences. The development of high potential leaders may be aided through assessment centres. Even more so, since they give transformative experiences that mould their leadership ideas and styles in ways that may continue to plague and handicap them over the whole of their career.

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Biography

Dr. Asha Bhatia is currently working as the Director of Research at the Universal Business School, Karjat. She comes with more than two decades of experience as an academician, researcher and mentor in social entrepreneurship. She is on the Board of Directors, SIFE India. She holds an MBA degree in HRM & Finance and a Ph.D. in management studies. Her areas of expertise are research, change management, higher education, entrepreneurship, CSR & sustainability. She has conducted numerous training programs for corporate and government organizations like Mumbai Police & Indian Navy amongst others. Her work has been recognized at several global platforms. She is the only faculty from India to represent Asia at the ENACTUS Global Faculty Research Network. She has won international grants like 'Classrooms with a cause' and recently a grant of 3000 USD from Combat Blindness International for a collaborative project with the University of Whitewater, Wisconsin U.S.A. Asha has published more than 30 research papers, articles, and book chapters in quality journals and has been invited to present her work at various international conferences in U.A.E., Switzerland and Australia.

Nilanka Chatterjee comes across as an elegant HR, capability building, and leadership development professional dotted with exposure as an academician in university and business schools. Currently working as a CHRO and Program Director at a well-known Business school, through his over two and a half decades of professional journey, Nilanka could demonstrate proven abilities in managing multiple stakeholders with astute collaborative skill sets, synchronizing the intersection of talent pool with the changing business requirements and scenario. After completing his MBA, Nilanka was selected as Assistant Professor of Management Studies at Institute of Modern Management, Kolkata (affiliated to Vishwa Bharti university) west Bengal. Thereafter he joined at Banasthali University in Rajasthan as a founding faculty member in setting up of WISDOM (Women's Institute for Studies in Development Oriented Management). Subsequently, he joined NIS Sparta- (a reputed training & performance enhancement solutions organization of Reliance Group) and as Head of Training Delivery (East & North East), could curved out and delivered over one thousand executive, management and transformational leadership development interventions covering the entry, mid and top level leadership teams across the industry sectors. Aligning and partnering with senior business leadership team at a strategic level as Head (L&D) at United Spirits limited currently known as Diageo , Nilanka could lead several change management efforts across the organization, architected leadership development strategies, could bring in technology to the learning space, created sales academy and centre of excellence using a combination of case studies, OTJ facilitations, stretched assignments, class room simulations, online learning to address gaps in performance and build the bench strength. Nilanka has Partnered organizations in achieving their

mission critical goals by conducting concern validation studies, action research and scripted white papers using proven methodologies that enhanced effectiveness of their people and processes and productivity. This includes the organizations like ITC, HLL, IOCL, ICICI, Tata Steel, Maruti Udyog limited, Peerless General Finance and investments limited. Besides his sublime business and people skills, Nilanka had a successful stint as a visiting faculty member with several business schools and institutions and he likes to devote some energies in philanthropic activities being an ardent lover of art, literature, games and sports.