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SIERRA INNOVATIONS

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Unit 3

Chapter 1

* Strategic Role of Human Resource Management
* Competency Mapping & Balanced Scoreboard
* Career Planning and Development
* Performance Management and Appraisal
* Organization Development, Change & OD Interventions
* Talent Management & Skill Development
* Employee Engagement & Work Life Balance

#The Strategic Roles of Human Resource Management

An organization cannot form a good team of working professionals without the aid of a sound Human Resource Management. The key functions of Human Resource Management team comprised of recruiting the right people, providing them the right training, administering performance appraisal, motivating workers and the workplace communication plus the workplace safety and lots more.

Recruitment and Training are a few of the primary responsibilities of the human resource team. Human Resource managers create plans and strategies for hiring the appropriate individuals. They formulate the criteria that are most suited for a certain job description. Their other tasks connected to recruitment involve creating employee obligations as well as the scope of tasks assigned to her/him.

Founded on these two factors, the contract of a worker with the firm is prepared. When necessary, they also offer training to the workers in accordance to the requirements of the company or organization.

Therefore, the staff members obtain the chance to sharpen their present skills or enhance specialized skills which will eventually aid them to take up some other roles. Performance Appraisals. Human Resource Management motivates the individuals working within the organization to function in accordance to their potential and provides them recommendations which can aid them to bring development in it.

Sustaining work atmosphere. This is a valuable aspect of Human resource Management since the performance of an individual within an organization is greatly directed by the work culture or work atmosphere which dominates at the workplace.

Handling disputes. In an organization, there are many issues in which conflicts may emerge between the employers and the employees. You can say that disputes are nearly inevitable.

Developing Public relations. The responsibility of building good public relations depends largely on Human Resource Management. They administer seminars, different official gatherings and business meetings on behalf of the firm so to establish relationships with other sectors of business. At times, the Human Resource department plays a vital role in preparing the marketing and business plans for the organization as well. Unwavering principles. Human resources guarantee the workforce grasps the firm's business principles and philosophy. From the point of view of a small enterprise, establishing a close-knit work environment is quite fundamental. The very first opportunity which human resources needs to attain is smart hiring decisions that determine the desirable professional attributes and on-boarding programs as well as the orientation.

Conflict Resolution. Needless to say, workplace issues are inevitable given the distinction of levels of experience, personalities, backgrounds, work styles and the like. A staff person or human resources manager who is trained to manage worker relations plays a vital role since he/she can determine and resolve the issue between two workers or a manager and worker and regain positive or a more pleasant working relationship.

Employee Satisfaction. Human resources experts often times are charged with the accountability of identifying the level of worker satisfaction- usually an unclear measurement at best. With thoroughly established focus groups, worker surveys and an exit interview strategy, human resources can clearly identify what governs worker dissatisfaction and addresses those problems in order to encourage workers.

Budget Control. Human resources hampers excessive spending by enhancing methods for cutting down management costs that composed of negotiating more excellent rates for benefits like health care coverage. In line with this, human resources guarantees realistic and cut-throat wage-setting relied on studying the employment salary and trends analysis relied on job functions as well as studying the labor market. Because small enterprises have budget restrictions, this type of human resources function is absolutely useful.

Cost Savings. The expense to hire replacement or new employees, including ramp-up time and training can be extravagant for employers particularly for the small businesses. Through a well-formed recruitment and selection procedure, the human resources function can reduce costs with regards to training new workers, advertising job postings, enrolling new workers in benefits plans.

Training and Development. Human resources administers needs evaluations for the firm's present workforce to identify the kind of skills training and worker development required for enhancing qualifications and skills. Firms at the start or growth stages can gain from determining training needs for current staff. It is much less costly as compared to the cost to hire more qualified candidates and additional staff. Indeed, it is a strategy which also can minimize turnover and enhance worker retention.

Sustaining business. By means of succession planning which human resources develop, the firm identifies workers with the requisite and promise capabilities to sooner or later transform into leadership roles with the firm. This is a crucial function since it can ensure the firm's success and stability.

Performance Management. Human resources develop performance management programs. Without a human resources staff to formulate a plan which evaluates performance, workers can wind in tasks or jobs which are not suitable for their expertise and skills. In addition to this, workers whose performance falls below the employer's expectations may continue on the payroll, in that, making wasted money on low-performing workers.

Corporate Image. Enterprises prefer to be regarded as the employer of choice. These refer to the firms which receive recognition for the manner they treat their workers; they are the firms for whom people wish to work. Being an employer of choice only means to say that human resources stabilizes recruiting the most qualified candidates, choosing the most deserving candidates and retaining the most skilled workers
Strategic Human Resource Management Process

1. Scanning the Environment: The process begins with the scanning of the environment, example both the external and internal factors of the organization. The external environment encompasses the political, legal, technological, economic, social and cultural forces that have a great impact on the functioning of the business. The internal factors include the organizational culture, hierarchy, business processes, SWOT analysis, industrial relations, etc. that play a crucial role in performing the business operations.
   The role of the HR department is to collect all the information about the immediate competitors – their strategies, vision, mission, strengths, and weaknesses. This can be done through the resumes being sent by the candidates working with the other rivalry firm. Through these, HR professionals can identify the workforce, work culture, skills of the staff, compensation levels, reasons for exit and other relevant information about the competing firm.
2. Identify Sources of Competitive Advantage: The next step in the strategic human resource management process is to identify the parameters of

competitive advantage that could stem from diverse sources as product quality, price, customer service, brand positioning, delivery, etc.
The HR department can help in gaining the competitive advantage by conducting the efficient training programmes designed to enrich the skills of the staff.

3. Identify HRM Strategies: There are major four strategies undertaken by an organization to enrich the employees capabilities:
   a) Learning as Socialization: This strategy includes the techniques as training courses, coaching sessions, education programmes to ensure that the employees abide by the rules, value and beliefs of an organization and are able to meet the performance targets.
   b) Devolved Informal Learning: This strategy helps in making the employees aware of the learning opportunities and the career development.
   c) Engineering: This strategy focuses on creating and developing communities of practice and social networks within and outside the organization.
   d) Empowered Informal Learning: Through this strategy, the HR department focuses on developing the learning environment such as knowledge about the new processes, designing of new work areas and the provision of shared spaces.
4. Implementing HR Strategies: Once the strategy has been decided the next step is to put it into the action. The HR strategy can be implemented by considering the HR policies, plans, actions and practices.
5. Monitor and Evaluation: The final step in the strategic human resource management process is to compare the performance of the HR strategy against the pre-established standards.

   At this stage, certain activities are performed to evaluate the outcomes of the strategic decision: establishing the performance targets and tolerance levels, analyzing the deviations, executing the modifications.

What is a Competency?

Competency: The combination of observable and measurable knowledge, skills, abilities and personal attributes that contribute to enhanced employee performance and ultimately result in organizational success. To understand competencies, it is important to define the various components of competencies.

TYPES OF COMPETENCIES

Daniel Katz (1955) has classified competencies into the following areas:

* Technical or Functional Competencies—These are the knowledge, attitude, and skills-related to technical or functional expertize required to perform a role.
* Managerial Competencies—These are the knowledge, attitude, and skills required to plan, organize, mobilize, and utilize resources.
* Human Competencies—These are the knowledge, attitude, and skills required to motivate, utilize, and develop human resources.
* Conceptual Competencies—These are the knowledge, attitude, and skills to visualize the invisible, i.e., the thinking at abstract levels and use of the thinking to plan future business.

Competency mapping definitions:

According to Boyatzis (1982) "A capacity that exists in a person that leads to behaviour that meets the job demands within parameters of organizational environment, and that, in turn brings about desired results"

The steps involved in competency mapping are presented below:

1. Conduct a job analysis by asking incumbents to complete a position information questionnaire (PIQ). This can be provided for incumbents to complete, or used as a basis for conducting one-on-one interviews using the PIQ as a guide. The primary goal is to gather from incumbents what they feel are the key behaviours necessary to perform their respective jobs.
2. Using the results of the job analysis, a competency based job description is developed. It is developed after carefully analyzing the input from the represented group of incumbents and converting it to standard competencies.
3. With a competency based job description, mapping the competencies can be done. The competencies of the respective job description become factors for assessment on the performance evaluation. Using competencies will help to perform more objective evaluations based on displayed or not displayed behaviours.
4. Taking the competency mapping one step further, one can use the results of one's evaluation to identify in what competencies individuals need additional development or training. This will help in focusing on training needs required to achieve the goals of the position and company and help the employees develop toward the ultimate success of the organization.

METHODS OF COMPETENCY MAPPING

It is not easy to identify all the competencies required to fulfill the job requirements. However, a number of methods and approaches have been developed and successfully tried out. These methods have helped managers to a large extent, to identify and reinforce and/or develop these competencies both for the growth of the individual and the growth of the organization. In the following section, some major approaches of competency mapping have been presented.

1. Assessment center

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

It is, however, worth remembering that there is a large body of academic research which suggests that the assessment centre is probably one of the most valid predictors of performance in a job and, if correctly structured, is probably one of the fairest and most objective means of gathering information upon which a selection decision can be based. From the candidate's perspective it is important to be natural and to be oneself when faced with an assessment centre, remembering always that you can only be assessed on what you have done and what the assessors can observe. The International Personnel Management Association (IPMA) has identified the following elements, essential for a process to be considered as assessment center:

A job analysis of relevant behavior to determine attributes skills, etc. for effective job performance and what should be evaluated by assessment center.

* Techniques used must be validated to assess the dimensions of skills and abilities.
* Multiple assessment techniques must be used.
* Assessment techniques must include job related simulations.
* Multiple assessors must be used for each assessed.
* Assessors must be thoroughly trained.

* Behavioral observations by assessors must be classified into some meaningful and relevant categories of attributes, skills and abilities, etc.
* Systematic procedures should be used to record observations.
* Assessors must prepare a report.
* All information thus generated must be integrated either by discussion or application of statistical techniques.

Data thus generated can become extremely useful in identifying employees with potential for growth. Following are some of the benefits of the assessment center:

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

Assessment Centre is a complex process and requires investment in time. It should safeguard itself from misunderstandings and deviations in its implementation. For this, the following concerns should be ensured:

* Assessment Centre for diagnosis is often converted as Assessment Centre for prediction of long range potential.
* The assessors' judgment may reflect the perception of reality and not the reality itself.
* One is not sure if the benefits outweigh the cost.

Assessment Centre comprises a number of exercises or simulations which have been designed to replicate the tasks and demands of the job. These exercises or simulations will have been designed in such a way that candidates can undertake them both singly and together and they will be observed by assessors while they are doing the exercises. The main types of exercises are presented below. Most organizations use a combination of them to assess the strengths, weaknesses and potential of employees.

a. <u>Group Discussions:</u> In these, candidates are brought together as a committee or project team with one or a number of items to make a recommendation on. Candidates may be assigned specific roles to play in the group or it may be structured in such a way that all the candidates have the same basic information. Group discussion allows them to exchange information and ideas and gives them the experience of working in a team. In the work place, discussions enable management to draw on the ideas and expertise of staff, and to acknowledge the staff as valued members of a team.

Some advantages of group discussion are:

* Ideas can be generated.
* Ideas can be shared.
* Ideas can be 'tried out'.
* Ideas can be responded to by others.
* When the dynamics are right, groups provide a supportive and nurturing environment for academic and professional endeavour.
* Group discussion skills have many professional applications.
* Working in groups is fun!

A useful strategy for developing an effective group discussion is to identify task and maintenance roles that members can take up. Following roles, and the dialogue that might accompany them in a group discussion have been identified.

Positive Task Roles: These roles help in reaching the goals more effectively:

* Initiator: Recommends novel ideas about the problem at hand, new ways to approach the problem, or possible solutions not yet considered.
* Information seeker: Emphasises "getting the facts" by calling for background information from others.
* Information giver: Provides data for forming decisions, including facts that derive from expertise.
* Opinion seeker: Asks for more qualitative types of data, such as attitudes, values, and feelings.
* Opinion giver: Provides opinions, values, and feelings.
* Clarifier: Gives additional information- examples, rephrasing, and applications about points being made by others.
* Summariser: Provides a secretarial function.

Positive Maintenance Roles: These become particularly important as the discussion develops and opposing points of view begin to emerge:

* Social Supporter: Rewards others through agreement, warmth, and praise.
* Harmonizer: Mediates conflicts among group members.
* Tension Reliever: Informally points out the positive and negative aspects of the group's dynamics and calls for change, if necessary.
* Energiser: Stimulates the group to continue working when the discussion flags.
* Compromiser: Shifts her/his own position on an issue in order to reduce conflict in the group.
* Gatekeeper: Smoothest communication by setting up procedures and ensuring equal participation from members.

b. In Tray: This type of exercise is normally undertaken by candidates individually. The materials comprise a bundle of correspondence and the candidate is placed in the role of somebody, generally, which assumed a new position or replaced their predecessor at short notice and has been asked to deal with their accumulated correspondence. Generally the only evidence that the assessors have to work with is the annotations which the candidates have made on the articles of mail. It is important when undertaking such an exercise to make sure that the items are not just dealt with, but are clearly marked on the items any thoughts that candidates have about them or any other actions that they would wish to undertake.

c. Interview Simulations/Role Plays: In these exercises candidates meet individually with a role player or resource person. Their brief is either to gather information to form a view and make a decision, or alternatively, to engage in discussion with the resource person to come to a resolution on an aspect or issue of dispute. Typically, candidates will be allowed 15 -30 minutes to prepare for such a meeting and will be given a short, general brief on the objective of the meeting. Although the assessment is made mainly on the conduct of the meeting itself, consideration are also be given to preparatory notes.

d. Case Studies / Analysis Exercises: In this type of exercise the candidate is presented with the task of making a decision about a particular business case. They are provided with a large amount of factual information which is generally ambiguous and, in some cases, contradictory. Candidates generally work independently on such an exercise and their recommendation or decision is usually to be communicated in the form of a brief written report and/or a presentation made to the assessors. As with the other exercises it is important with this kind of exercise to ensure that their thought processes are clearly articulated and available for the scrutiny of the assessors. Of paramount importance, if the brief requires a decision to be made, ensure that a decision is made and articulated.

2. Critical Incidents Technique

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

The next task is to train supervisors in taking notes on critical incidents or outstanding examples of success or failure of the subordinates in meeting the job requirements. The incidents are immediately noted down by the supervisor as he observes them. Very often, the employee concerned is also involved in discussions with his supervisor before the incidents are recorded, particularly when an unfavourable incident is being recorded, thus facilitating the employee to come out with his side of the story.

The objective of immediately recording the critical incidents is to improve the supervisor's ability as an observer and also to reduce the common tendency to rely on recall and hence attendant distortions in the incidents. Thus, a balance-sheet for each employee is generated which can be used at the end of the year to see how well the employee has performed. Besides being objective a definite advantage of this technique is that it identifies areas where counseling may be useful.

In real world of task performance, users are perhaps in the best position to recognize critical incidents caused by usability problems and design flaws in the user interface. Critical incident identification is arguably the single most important kind of information associated with task performance in usability - oriented context. Following are the criteria for a successful use of critical incident technique:

* Data are centre on real critical incidents that occur during a task performance.
* Tasks are performed by real users.
* Users are located in their normal working environment.
* Data are captured in normal task situations, not contrived laboratory settings.
* Users self-report their own critical incidents after they have happened.
* No direct interaction takes place between user and evaluator during the description of the incident(s).
* Quality data can be captured at low cost to the user.

Critical Incidents Technique is useful for obtaining in-depth data about a particular role or set of tasks. It is extremely useful to obtain detailed feedback on a design option. It involves the following three steps:

There are two kinds of approaches to gather information:

1. Unstructured approach: where the individual is asked to write down two good things and two bad things that happened when one was carrying out an activity.
2. Moderate structure approach: where the individual is asked to respond to following questions relating to what happened when he/she was carrying out an activity.

What lead up to the situation?

* What was done that was especially effective or non- effective?
* What was the result(outcome)?

Step 1: Gathering facts:

The methodology usually employed through an open-ended questionnaire, gathering retrospective data. The events should have happened fairly recently: the longer the time period between the events and their gathering, the greater the danger that the users may reply with imagined stereotypical responses. Interviews can also be used, but these must be handled with extreme care not to bias the user.

Step 2: Content analysis:

Second step consists of identifying the contents or themes represented by the clusters of incidents and conducting "retranslation" exercises during which the analyst or other respondents sort the incidents into content dimensions or categories. These steps help to identify incidents that are judged to represent dimensions of the behaviour being considered. This can be done using a simple spreadsheet. Every item is entered as a separate incident to start with, and then each of the incidents is compiled into categories. Category membership is marked as identical , quite similar and could be similar. This continues until each item is assigned to a category on at least a "quite similar" basis.Each category is then given a name and the number of the responses in the category are counted. These are in turn converted into percentages (of total number of responses) and a report is formulated.

Step 3: Creating feedback:

It is important to consider that both positive and negative feedback be provided. The poor features should be arranged in order of frequency, using the number of responses per category. Same should be done with the good features. At this point it is necessary to go back to the software and examine the circumstances that led up to each category of critical incident. Identify what aspect of the interface was responsible for the incident. Sometimes one finds that there is not one, but several aspects of an interaction that lead to a critical incident; it is their conjunction together that makes it critical and it would be an error to focus on one salient aspect.

Some of the advantages of critical incident technique are presented below:

* Some of the human errors that are unconsciously committed can be traced and rectified by these methods. For example, a case study on pilots obtained detailed factual information about pilot error experiences in reading and interpreting aircraft instruments from people not trained in the critical incident technique (i.e., eyewitness or the pilot who made the error)
* Users with no background in software engineering or human computer interaction, and with the barest minimum of training in critical incident identification, can identify, report, and rate the severity level of their own critical incidents. This result is important because successful use of the reported critical incident method depends on the ability of typical users to recognise and report critical incidents effectively.

Some of the disadvantages of critical incidents method are presented below:

* It focuses on critical incidents therefore routine incidents will not be reported. It is therefore poor as a tool for routine task analysis.

* Respondents may still reply with stereotypes, not actual events. Using more structure in the form improves this but not always.
* Success of the user reported critical incident method depends on the ability of typical end users to recognise and report critical incidents effectively, but there is no reason to believe that all users have this ability naturally.

3. Interview Techniques Competency Mapping: Almost every organisation uses an interview in some shape or form, as part of competency mapping. Enormous amounts of research have been conducted into interviews and numerous books have been written on the subject. There are, however, a few general guidelines, the observation of which should aid the use of an interview for competency mapping.

   The interview consists of interaction between interviewer and applicant. If handled properly, it can be a powerful technique in achieving accurate information and getting access to material otherwise unavailable. If the interview is not handled carefully, it can be a source of bias, restricting or distorting the flow of communication.

   Since the interview is one of the most commonly used personal contact methods, great care has to be taken before, during and after the interview. Following steps are suggested:

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

* The fundamental step is establishing "rapport", putting the interviewee at ease; conveying the impression that the interview is a conversation between two friends, and not a confrontation of employer and employee. One way to achieve this is by initially asking questions not directly related to the job that is, chatting casually about the weather journey and so on.
* Once the interviewee is put at ease the interviewer starts asking questions, or seeking information related to the job. Here again it is extremely important to lead up to complex questions gradually. Asking a difficult, complex question in the beginning can affect subsequent interaction, particularly if the interviewee is not able to answer the question. Thus it is advisable for the pattern to follow the simple-to-complex sequence.
* Showing surprise or disapproval of speech, clothes, or answers to questions can also inhibit the candidate. The interviewee is over-sensitive to such reactions. Hence, an effort to try and understand the interviewee's point of view and orientation can go a long way in getting to know the applicant.
* Leading questions should be avoided because they give the impression that the interviewer is seeking certain kinds of answers. This may create a conflict in the interviewee, if he has strong views on the subject. Nor should the interviewer allow the interview to get out of hand. He should be alert and check the interviewee if he tries to lead the discussion in areas where he feels extremely competent, if it is likely to stray from relevant areas.
* The interviewer should be prepared with precise questions, and not take too much time in framing them.

  Once this phase is over, the interviewers should discuss the interviewee, identify areas of agreement and disagreement, and make a tentative decision about the candidate. It will be helpful if, in addition to rating the applicant, interviewers made short notes on their impression of candidates' behavior responses; which can then be discussed later. If the interview is to continue for many days, an evaluation of the day's work, content of questions and general pattern of response should be made for possible mid-course correction.

4. <u>Questionnaires</u>: Questionnaires are written lists of questions that users fill out questionnaire and return. You begin by formulating questions about your product based on the type of information you want to know. The questionnaire sources below provide more information on designing effective questions. This technique can be used at any stage of development, depending on the questions that are asked in the questionnaire. Often, questionnaires are used after products

are shipped to assess customer satisfaction with the product. Such questionnaires often identify usability issues that should have been caught in-house before the product was released to the market.

a. Common Metric Questionnaire (CMQ): They examine some of the competencies to work performance and have five sections: Background, Contacts with People, Decision Making, Physical and Mechanical Activities, and Work Setting. The background section asks 41 general questions about work requirements such as travel, seasonality, and license requirements. The Contacts with People section asks 62 questions targeting level of supervision, degree of internal and external contacts, and meeting requirements. The 80 Decision Making items in the CMQ focus on relevant occupational knowledge and skill, language and sensory requirements, and managerial and business decision making. The Physical and Mechanical Activities section contains 53 items about physical activities and equipment, machinery, and tools. Work Setting contains 47 items that focus on environmental conditions and other job characteristics. The CMQ is a relatively new instrument.
b. Functional Job Analysis: The most recent version of Functional Job Analysis uses seven scales to describe what workers do in jobs. These are: Things, Data, People, Worker Instructions, Reasoning, Maths, and Language.
Each scale has several levels that are anchored with specific behavioral statements and illustrative tasks and are used to collect job information.
c. Multipurpose Occupational System Analysis Inventory (MOSAIC): In this method each job analysis inventory collects data from the office of personnel management system through a variety of descriptors. Two major descriptors in each questionnaire are tasks and competencies. Tasks are rated on importance and competencies are rated on several scales including importance and requirements for performing the task. This is mostly used for US government jobs.
d. Occupational Analysis Inventory: It contains 617 "work elements." designed to yield more specific job information while still capturing work requirements for virtually all occupations. The major categories of items are five-fold: Information Received, Mental Activities, Work Behavior, Work Goals, and Work Context. Respondents rate each job element on one of four rating scales: part-of-job, extent, applicability, or a special scale designed for the element. Afterwards, the matching is done between competencies and work requirements.
e. Position Analysis Questionnaire (PAQ): It is a structured job analysis instrument to measure job characteristics and relate them to human characteristics. It consists of 195 job elements that represent in a