



Ebony and Ivory

**Do Assessment
Centres strike the
right chords?**

Wilma Botha

Validity of AC

- Research established that AC's predict managerial success.
- Also in meta-analysis of AC research.
- AC are amongst the most valid predictors with a mean validity of $r = 0,41$

Byham (1970) Cohen, Moses & Byham (1977) Thornton & Byham (1982)

Hunter & Hunter (1984)

Schmitt et al. (1984)

Validity of AC

- **AC successfully predict:**
 - **Job Performance**
 - **Management Potential**
 - **Performance on Training**
 - **Career Development**

Blair (2003)

Fairness

If test scores predict job performance the test is deemed fair even if there are mean test score differences between groups.

Thacker, Blanchard & Camp (1989)

Adverse Impact

Occurs when a selection policy, practice or decision has the effect that a significant smaller proportion of a certain group makes the grade.

“Four-Fifths Rule”

A selection rate for any race, gender, or other group which is less than four-fifths (or 80%) of the rate for the group with the highest rate.

If there is Adverse Impact

- Are skills measured in a relevant way?
- Are skills measured appropriately?
- Is the test level appropriate for the job level?
- Do tests predict for all groups?
- Is there an alternative with less adverse impact?
- Can the selection rule be changed?
- Can the job or training be redesigned?
- Would customisation of exercises have an effect?

Some Group Differences

- **Race**
- **Gender**
- **Age**
- **Level of educational**
- **Work experience**
- **In-house / External candidates**
- **Prior AC experience**
- **Personality**

Race

Overall Results

Exercises

Approach

Preferences

Comments

- Explanation:**
- More race bias if many exercises have a cognitive component. Goldstein, e.a. (1998)
 - Language skills influence performance on in-trays. Baron & Janman (1995)

Culture Fairness in AC

- **AC less likely to result in Adverse Impact, probably because the focus is on observed behaviour.** (Boehm, 1982)
- **Conflicting evidence regarding the distribution of ratings for various population groups.** (Thornton & Byham, 1982)

Culture Fairness in AC

Research on subgroup differences had mixed results:

- **Differences in ratings of Blacks and Whites.**

(Huck & Bray, 1976) (Clingenpeel, 1979)

- **No difference in ratings for Blacks and Whites.**

(Alexander, 1975) (Russell, 1975)

- **Mixed results in earlier studies.**

(Hoffman & Thornton, 1997)

Individualism-Collectivism

- **Collectivist Cultures:**
 - **Personal goals are secondary to those of the group.**
 - **People are integrated into cohesive groups, often extended families.**
 - **The goals of the group are more important than the goals of the individual.**
 - **Collectivism prevails in African countries.**

Hofstede & McCrae
Sousa-Poza, Nystrom & Wiebe

The Philosophy of Ubuntu

- **Ubuntu means the person is a person through other people.**
- **Mbigi lists the principles of Ubuntu:**
 - **The spirit of collective contribution**
 - **Solidarity**
 - **Acceptance**
 - **Dignity**
 - **Stewardship**
 - **Compassion and care**
 - **Hospitality**

Gender

Overall Results

Exercises

Approach

Preferences

Comments

Research: - Results were equivocal.

Age

Overall Results

Exercises

Approach

Preferences

Comments

Research: - Results were equivocal.

Level of Education

Overall Results

Exercises

Approach

Preferences

Comments

Research: - Language skills influence performance on in-trays.
Baron & Janman (1995)

Work Experience

Overall Results

Exercises

Approach

Preferences

Comments



In-house vs External

Overall Results

Exercises

Approach

Preferences

Comments

-

AC Experience

Overall Results

Exercises

Approach

Preferences

Comments

-

Personality

Overall Results

Exercises

Approach

Preferences

Comments

-

A Few Solutions

- **Due to legislation on affirmative action companies use:**
 - **Top down selection strategies per group**
 - **Adding a constant score**
 - **Within group norms**
 - **Separate cutoffs**
- **Instruments with high face validity and job relatedness are more acceptable to candidates and employees - use AC more.**
- **Increase research to demonstrate that AC predict job performance.**

A Few Solutions

- **Customise simulation exercises.**
- **Discuss responses with the candidate.**
- **Use language proficiency test.**
- **Provide information about assessment procedures and results.**
- **Provide information about AC's.**
- **Provide practice opportunities.**

Reduce Subgroup Difference

Give attention to every aspect of the AC:

- **Job analysis**
- **Assessment matrix**
- **Nature and design of exercises**
- **Observer training**
- **Rating**
- **Feedback**

Job Analysis

- **Involve a diverse group of SME's.**
- **Cover all the KSAO's required for the job.**

Matrix and Exercises

- **Assign weights to assessment techniques.**
- **Interactive exercises have lower adverse impact.**
- **Give longer time for the in-tray.**
- **Use oral in-trays.**

Blair (2003)

Test Administration

- **Reduce requirements on reading comprehension.**
- **Give enough time for preparation.**
- **Increase exercise time.**
- **Schedule preparation time between exercises.**
- **Use diverse group of observers to increase validity and decrease subgroup differences.**

Observer Training

- **Emphasise recording of observed behaviour.**
- **Focus on competencies and behaviours.**
- **Familiarise with exercises.**
- **Practice with mock candidates from different subgroups.**

Blair (2003)

Rating

- **Use fewer competencies**
(Less rating errors).
- **Use rating forms that link behavioural examples to competencies**
(Increased accuracy, reliability & validity)
(Reduced observer fatigue)
- **Insist on integration meetings**
(Increased objectivity and reliability)

Feedback

- **Candidate feedback reduces subgroup score differences over time.**
- **Include in feedback:**
 - **Strengths**
 - **Weaknesses**
 - **Quotes**
 - **Statements from observers**

Blair(2003)

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A close-up, low-angle photograph of a computer keyboard. The keys are dark, and the lighting creates strong highlights and shadows, giving a sense of depth. The text "Thank You" is overlaid in a bright pink, bold, sans-serif font, centered horizontally across the middle of the image.

Thank You