

Chapter Highlights

Definition, Selection Objective, Selection Process, Employment Tests, Selection Interviews, Background and Reference Checks, Employee Selection in Bangladesh -A Critical Analysis, Questions to Answer, Indicate True or False.

7.1 Definition

To select is to choose. Selection is a screening process. It is the process of picking individuals who have relevant qualifications to fill jobs in an organisation. The basic purpose is to choose the individuals who can most successfully perform the job from the pool of qualified candidates. Selection starts after the recruitment process is over and job applications have been received.

7.2 Selection Objective

The objective of selection is to pick up the right candidate who would meet the requirements of the job and the organisation best. To meet this goal, the company obtains and assesses information about the applicants in terms of qualifications, skills, experience, etc. The needs of the job are matched with the profile of candidates. The most suitable person is picked up after screening the unsuitable applicants through successive stages of selection process. How well an employee is matched to a job is very important because it directly affects the efficiency of the employee at work. Any mismatch in this regard can cost an organisation a great deal of money, time and energy, especially, in terms of training and operating costs. In course of time the employee also may find the job distasteful and leave out of frustration. S/he may even circulate juicy bits of negative information about the company, causing incalculable harm in the long run. Effective selection, therefore, demands constant monitoring of the 'fit' between the person and the job.

7.3 Selection Process

Selection involves a series of hurdles or steps. Each one must be successfully cleared before the applicant proceeds to the next. Figur 7.1 outlines the important steps in a typical selection process. The time and emphasis placed on each step will, of course, vary from one organisation to another and, indeed, from job to job within the same organisation. The sequencing of steps may also vary from job to job and organisation to organisation. For example, some organisations may give importance to testing, while others may emphasise interviews and reference checks. Similarly a single brief selection interview might be enough for applicants for lower level positions, while applicants for managerial jobs might be interviewed by a number of experts.

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1. Reception of Applicants

A company is known by the people it employs. In order to attract people with the required education, intelligence, skills and experience a company has to create a favourable impression on the applicants right from the stage of reception. People at the reception desk / counter should be tactful and able to extend help in a friendly and courteous manner. Employment prospects are to be presented honestly and clearly. If no jobs are available at that point of time, the applicant may be called back to the HR department after some time.

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2. Preliminary Interview

Such an interview is generally planned by large organisations for short listing the potential candidates in order to cut the costs of selection by allowing only eligible candidates to go through the further stages in selection. A competent executive from the HR Department may elicit responses from applicants on important items determining the suitability of an applicant for a job such as appearance, age, education, training, experience, pay expectations, aptitude, interests, choice etc. This 'courtesy interview', as it is often called, helps the department screen out obvious misfits. If the department finds the candidate suitable, a prescribed application form is given to her/him to fill and submit.

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3. Filling an Application Blank

Application blank or form is one of the most common methods used to collect information on various aspects of the applicants' personal, academic, professional, social, demographic and work-related background and references. It is a brief history sheet of an applicant's background, usually containing the things that indicate his/her suitability for the position concerned.

Application blank provides a brief history sheet of an applicant's background.

Application blank is considered a highly useful selection tool, in that it serves three important purposes :

- (a) It introduces the candidate to the company.
- (b) It helps the company to screen and reject candidates if they fail to meet the eligibility criteria at this stage.
- (c) It can serve as a basis to initiate a dialogue in the interview.

4. Employment Tests

Organization selects employees to get certain works done by them. So, it is necessary to test whether particular candidates have the capabilities to perform them. For this purpose, employers follow certain selection procedures. Most of the companies use employment tests in order to be sure that these tests are reliable and valid. Tests are aimed at predicting

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future success on a particular job. So these have to be designed on the basis of sound job analysis programme. If the job performance requires some kind of reliability or interpersonal skill, the test should be able to measure these attributes among candidates. A test is considered to be valid if it measures what it is supposed to measure. Validity is highly specific in nature and varies from job to job. So, it should be developed and administered by experts only.

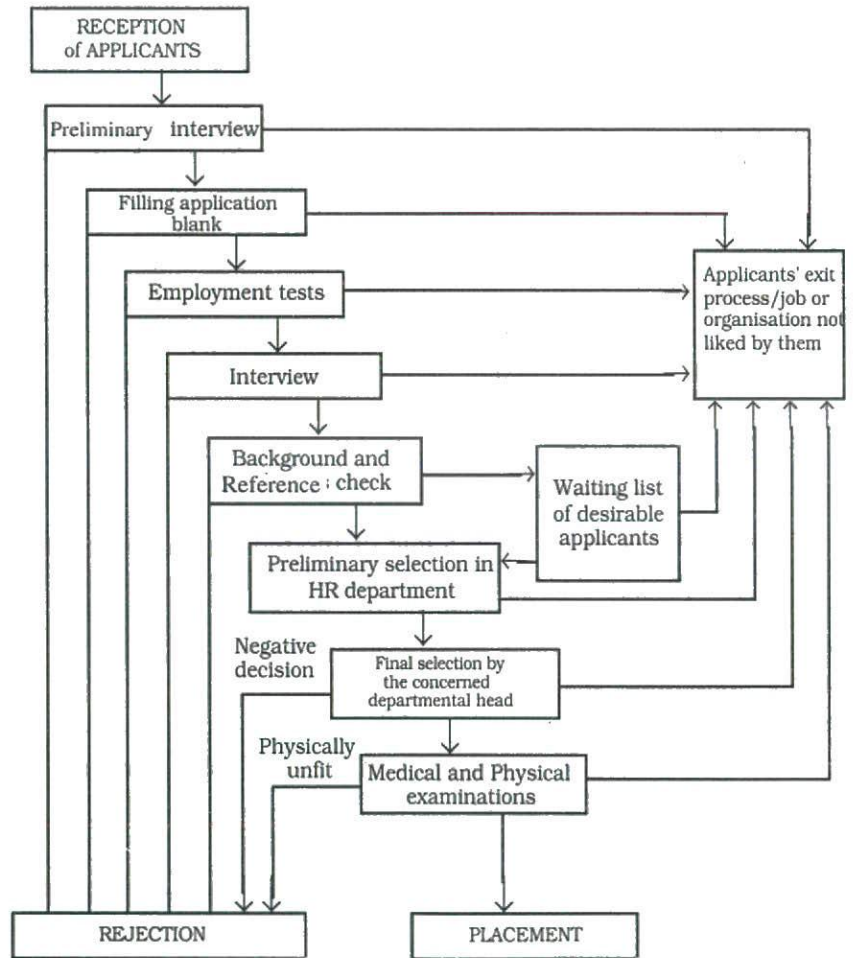


Figure 7.1 : The Selection Process

A variety of tests are usually used as selection tools. These may be classified as intelligence tests, aptitude tests, achievement tests, interest tests, personality tests, graphology tests, polygraph tests, etc. They are briefly discussed here :

- a. **Intelligence tests** are a measure of the individual's capacity in terms of reasoning, manipulation, vocabulary, verbal comprehension, etc. They are used to eliminate candidates who are insufficiently intelligent for efficient job performance.
- b. **Aptitude tests** measure the individual's latent ability to learn a job if he is given adequate training. It is required in order to determine their ability for effective job performance after the completion of the training period.
- c. **Achievement tests** are used to ascertain whether the individual actually knows what he claims to know. When a candidate claims that s/he knows some trade or art, these tests are administered to verify the veracity of her/his claim. Trade tests are the most common type of achievement tests. They are designed to measure knowledge or skill of a candidate in a specific trade. For example, a typist may be tested whether s/he can type at the required level of speed and accuracy.
- d. **Interest tests** are used to predict whether a candidate is really interested in a particular job or not.
- e. **Personality tests** are designed to measure such personality characteristics as emotional stability, tolerance, capacity to get along, habits, hobbies, maturity and psychoneurotic and psychotic tendencies. These are generally used for the selection of personnel for executive jobs. These are the least reliable and most controversial kinds of tests. In many cases, they need trained experts for their administration and evaluation.
- f. **Graphology tests** Involve using a trained evaluator to examine a person's handwriting to assess his/her personality and emotional make-up. The HR manager may, for example, ask applicants to write about why they want a job. This sample may be finally sent to a graphologist for analysis and the results may be put to use while selecting a person. The use of graphology, however, is dependent on the training and expertise of the person doing the analysis.
- g. **Polygraph (Lie-detector) tests** involve recording physical changes in the body of the candidate while answering a series of questions. It records fluctuation in respiration, blood pressure and perspiration on a moving roll of graph paper. The polygraph operator forms a

Graphology test examines a person's handwriting to assess his/her personality and emotional make-up.

The polygraph operator forms a judgement as to whether the subject's response was truthful or deceptive by examining the biological movements recorded on the paper.

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judgement as to whether the subject's response was truthful or deceptive by examining the biological movements recorded on the paper. Critics, however, question the appropriateness of polygraphs in establishing the truth about an applicant's behaviour. The fact is that polygraph records biological reaction in response to stress and does not record lying or even the conditions necessarily accompanying lying. The fact of the matter is that polygraphs are neither reliable nor valid. Since they invade the privacy of those tested, many applicants vehemently oppose the use of polygraph as a selection tool.

□ **Tests as Selection Tools :** Tests are useful selection tools in that they uncover skills and talents that can't be detected otherwise. They can be used to predict how well one would perform if hired, why one behaves the way one does, what situational factors influence employee productivity etc. Tests also provide reliable information that can be put to scientific and statistical analysis.

However, tests suffer from errors of estimate. Most psychological tests have one common drawback, that is, we can't use scales which have a known zero point, and equal intervals. As intelligence test, for example, starts at an arbitrary point where a person may be unsuccessful to answer questions properly. This does not mean that s/he is totally lacking in intelligence. Tests may also fail to elicit truthful responses from testees. Moreover, the test results are often interpreted in a subjective way by testers and unless these testers do their home work well, the results may not be reliable.

5. Selection Interview

Interviews are oral examinations of candidates for employment. This is the most essential step in the selection process. Interview gives the recruiter an opportunity to :

- a. assess subjective aspects of the candidate—facial expressions, appearance, nervousness and so forth;
- b. make judgements on candidate's enthusiasm and intelligence;
- c. size up the candidate's personally;
- d. ask questions that are not covered in tests;
- e. give facts to the candidate regarding the company, its policies, programmes, etc. and promote goodwill towards the company.

□ **Types of Interviews :** Different types of interviews may be used depending on the nature and importance of the position to be filled within an organisation. In a *non-directive interview* the recruiter asks questions as they come to mind. There is no specific format to be followed. The questions can take any direction. In *patterned interview* the interviewers follow a pre-determined sequence of questions. Here the interviewee is given a special form containing questions regarding his technical competence, personality traits, attitudes, motivation, etc. In a *structured or situational interview*, there are fixed job related questions that are presented to each applicant. In a *panel interview* several interviewers question and seek answers from one applicant. The panel members can ask new questions based on their expertise and experience and elicit deeper and more meaningful information from candidates.

□ **Interviewing Mistakes :** An interview is a good selection tool in the hands of the person who knows how to use it properly. If it is not used properly or the interviewer himself / herself is not having a positive frame of mind, mistakes may occur. The interviewer, for example, may :

- a. not be asking right questions and hence not getting relevant responses;
- b. favour applicants who share his own attitudes ;
- c. find it difficult to establish rapport with interviewees, because he himself does not possess good interpersonal skills;
- d. resort to snap judgements, making a decision as to the applicant's suitability in the first few minutes of the interview;
- e. may have forgotten much of the interview's content within minutes after its conclusion;
- f. may have awarded high scores by showing leniency (leniency error);
- g. may allow the ratings to be influenced by his own likes and dislikes (bias)
- h. may conclude that a poorly dressed candidate is not intelligent, attractive females are good for public dealings, etc. This is known as 'halo effect' where a single important trait of a candidate affects the judgement of the rater.
- i. have been under pressure to hire candidates at short notice;

□ **Steps in the Interview Process** : Interviewing demands a positive frame of mind on the part of the interviewers. Interviewees must be treated properly so as to create in them a good impression about the organisation. HR experts have identified certain steps to be followed while conducting interviews :

(a) Preparation : Effective interviews are planned. The steps involved are :

i. Establishing the objectives of the interview.

ii. Reviewing the candidate's application and resume, noting areas that may show candidate's strengths and weaknesses on which questions could be asked.

iii. Keeping the test scores ready, along with interview assessment forms.

iv. Selecting the interview method to be followed.

v. Choosing the panel of experts who would interview the candidates (list the number of experts to be called plus the chairman.)

vi. Identifying a comfortable, private room preferably away from noise and interruptions (neat and clean; well furnished, lighted and ventilated) where the interview could be held.

(b) Reception : The candidate should be properly received and led into the interview room. As a rule, all candidates—even unsolicited drop-ins should be treated courteously. The interview is to be started on time.

(c) Information Exchange : In order to gain the confidence of the candidate, start the interview with an informal mood. The interview may be conducted in the following manner :

i. State the purpose of the interview, give information about the job for which the interviewee is applying.

ii. Begin with open-ended questions where the candidate gets enough freedom to express herself/ himself freely instead of 'yes' or 'no' type of responses.

iii. Do not interrogate the applicant as if the person is a convict and do not be patronising, sarcastic or ultra-critical.

iv. Do not monopolise the conversation, giving very little chance to the applicant to reveal himself.

v. Do not let the applicant dominate the interview by rambling from point to point so that you cannot ask all your questions.

vi. Focus on the applicant's education, training, work experience, etc. Find unexplained gaps in applicant's past work or college record and elicit facts that are not mentioned in the resume. Avoid questions that are not job-related.

vii. Listen to the applicant's answers attentively and patiently.

(d) Termination : End the interview as happily as it began without creating any awkward situation for the interviewee. Regardless of the interview performance of the candidate and interviewer's personal opinion, the applicant should not be given any indication of his prospects at this stage.

(e) Evaluation : After the interview is over, summarise and record your observations carefully, constructing the report based on responses given by applicant, his behaviour, your own observations and the opinions of other experts present during the interviews. Better to use a standardised evaluation form for this purpose.

6. Background and Reference Checks

Once the interview and medical examination of the candidate is over, the HR department will engage in checking references. Candidates are required to give the names of two or three references in their application forms. These references may be from the individuals who are familiar with the candidate's academic achievements or from the applicant's previous employers, who are well-versed with the applicant's job performance but are not related to him/her. In case the reference check is from the course teacher at the university level, information regarding depth of knowledge, intelligence, character etc. may be sought. On the other hand if the reference is from the previous employer, information in the following areas may be obtained. Their job title, job description, period of employment, pay and allowances, gross emoluments, benefits provided, etc. Further, information regarding candidate's regularity at work, character, progress, etc, can be obtained. Reference checks are taken as a matter of routine and treated casually or omitted entirely in many organisations. But good reference check, when used sincerely, will fetch useful and reliable information about the candidate.

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7. Preliminary Selection in the HR Department

A wrong selection proves costly for the organisation. It will have enormous economic, social and technological implication upon organisation's performance. So, the HR department has to be careful in either accepting or rejecting a candidate. The successful candidates are to be informed that s/he has been found suitable by the selection committee.

8. Final Selection by the Concerned Department

A candidate, selected by the HR department because of her/his qualifications and over-all satisfactory performance in the selection process, may not ultimately be accepted by the line manager of the concerned department. This usually happens when the specific skill requirement of the job does not match that of the candidate concerned.

9. Medical/Physical Examination

Some jobs require physical qualities like clear vision, perfect hearing, unusual stamina, tolerance of hard working conditions, clear tone, etc. Medical and physical examinations reveal whether or not a candidate possesses these qualities. Such examinations can give the following information :

- (i) Whether the applicant's physical measurements are in accordance with job requirements or not.
- (ii) Whether the applicant is medically fit for the specific job or not.
- (iii) Whether the applicant has any psychological problem, likely to interfere with work efficiency or job attendance.
- (iv) Whether the applicant suffers from any physical disability which should be corrected before he can work satisfactorily.

As a matter of fact medical/physical fitness of a candidate has to be ensured before placement in a job having a long tenure and requiring the candidate to withstand some physical / mental strain throughout her/his career.

10. Placement

Placement is the final stage of the selection process. It ensures that the person concerned has finally got the job. Through proper placement, the objective of HRM to ensure "availability of right man at the right place and at the right time" is also fulfilled, if atleast for the time being.

7.4 Employee Selection in Bangladesh—A Critical Analysis

Employee selection in our country is often influenced by nepotism and favouritism and other personalized considerations. In Bangladesh, the word nepotism has become very much popular. The word has come out of the word nephew. In Italy, when the head of the church (clergyman) would not be able to lead the Sunday prayer, he used to ask his nephew to do the job on his behalf for fearing loss of job. The fear was that if an unknown person is allowed to conduct the operation temporarily and if his performance appears to be superior, authority might be tempted to select him replacing the old clergy. In this country, nepotism means putting on the job one's nephew or another intimate person or relative without considering his or her qualifications. This is done out of several considerations. For example, Mr. X may be related

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to myself, my wife or her relatives, my brothers and sisters or their relatives. The candidate may belong to my home district and he or she may be a student of the educational institution from where I graduated. The candidate may also be a ward or a close relation of my boss in the office or some high ups in the society from whom I can expect some benefit in future. Nepotism and favouritism reportedly takes place in the organizational life in exchange of money or some other personal give and take arrangement.

Prudent organizations believe that an organization stands on competition on the basis of meritorious performance by its trained, developed and competent personnel. So, potentially competent candidates are as dear to them as gems or pieces of diamond. This prompts them to be in the look out for talent hunting. Whenever they participate in any seminar or conference and get the opportunity of talking to people, they initially indirectly sound message of hope if they find any bright candidate. This is trapping for executive piracy. This is called informal selection. Some firms formalize it through complying usual formalities. This is called lateral entry. Some firms have formal arrangement for this. For example, if S.F. Bank has 12 posts of Assistant General Managers to be filled in, a provision is made in the service rules to take 4 from outside and the rest from among the insiders. At times, professional bodies like Management Association, Accountancy Association, Engineers Institute, etc. send out panel of competent personnel to the concerned employer in public sector for consideration with the good intention of helping the Govt. in raising the managerial effectiveness. Sometimes, the Govt. requests professional bodies or competent organizations to supply names of persons to be considered for appointment in specific technical position either as full timers or as part timers.

Govt. of Bangladesh in this way inducted many of the University teachers in organizations like Public Service Commission, Science Laboratories, Commercial Banks, Insurance Corporations, Social Marketing Companies and developmental organizations. This arises out of mutual trust and confidence. Again, assemblage of like minded people helps in constructive and unbiased consideration of issues and quickness of decision making process. Khan and Arif reported that non availability of competent person at the opportune moment is quite natural. These two scholars have mentioned disadvantages of recruiting external candidates for regular posts also. For example, morale of internal candidates who were expecting promotion may break down which might tell upon the level of efficiency. This may even cause harm to the organization. Besides, internal candidates may lose interest in learning and working harder to raise operational efficiency and objectivity of decision making process.

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Prudent organizations believe that an organization stands on competition on the basis of meritorious performance by its trained, developed and competent personnel.

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QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

1. (a) Do you find any difference between selection and recruitment?
(b) Discuss the selection process with the help of a diagram.
 2. (a) Elaborate the objectives of employee selection.
(b) Some employment tests are used to make proper judgement about a candidate—What are those tests? Discuss each of them in brief.
 3. (a) What is selection interview?
(b) Discuss the steps in the interview process.
 4. Write short notes : Preliminary interview, Application blank, Aptitude test, Graphology tests, Polygraph tests, Intelligence tests, Reference checks.
- Indicate True or False.**
- a. To select is to invite candidates.
 - b. Selection starts before recruitment.
 - c. Through selection the needs of job are matched with the profile of candidates.
 - d. Preliminary interview takes place after employment tests are completed.
 - e. Aptitude tests measure the candidate's latent ability to learn.
 - f. Interest tests are used to measure the ability of the candidate to perform as claimed.
 - g. Graphology tests measure truthfulness of the applicants.
 - h. Medical examination of candidates take place before preliminary interview.
 - i. Polygraph tests are designed to test whether the candidate is intelligent.
 - j. Aptitude tests measure interests of the candidate.
 - k. In non-directive interview the interviewers follow a set of predetermined questions.
-