



KCP learning

what is trainability?

MTT

Selecting people for work

There are two distinct situations facing us when selecting people for jobs:

- ***Situation A - the successful candidate will perform the job immediately they take on the role. The new incumbent will, as it were, "hit the ground running".***
- ***Situation B - the successful candidate will receive training before they can perform the role.***

In situation A the candidate must provide evidence that they are already capable (or very close to it) of performing the job effectively. This evidence is normally provided by an assessment of cognitive or other abilities, educational attainments, behavioural characteristics and evidence of relevant training and practical experience. However, this is not the case for those who must receive training.

In situation B the candidate does not have the immediate capability to perform the job. Frequently, they do not have prior knowledge, skills or experience for effective performance. Selecting such candidates has generally depended quite heavily on educational attainment even though this often has no, or at best only a tenuous, relevance to the job. In addition, there are legitimate concerns that using purely educational/academic results disadvantages candidates who, for whatever reason, may not have had access to a good education.

Thus, in situation B a fairer, more objective approach to selection for training is necessary. This requires an exploration of someone's trainability. Trainability can be defined as:

"The capacity of an individual to benefit from training and to gain proficiency in a particular skill."

This "capacity to benefit" and the "gaining of proficiency" is assessed by:

- ***Candidate is required to carry out a specific task***
- ***The candidate receives instruction (training) in the task***
- ***The candidate's learning is assessed in a structured way***

It should be noted that the task is always:

- ***A REAL part of the usual training procedure***
- ***Part of the training that is crucial to success***
- ***A task that causes the most difficulty for trainees***
- ***Carried out in the ACTUAL workplace***



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Trainability, then, fits into the category of a **work sample test**. Work sample tests are constructed to act as a mirror of what the person may be expected to do on the job. Typical work samples in selection situations might include group activities/discussions, inbox activities that require prioritisation, decision-making and communicating, and presentations.

The above, however, differ from a trainability test in that they are typically simulations. They are not an exact representation of the real-life task but are designed to measure certain attributes that may be required in the real job.

The second, and most important, distinction is that a trainability test involves learning and therefore is suitable for untrained applicants - no assumption is made about prior learning/experience.

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