

6.3 Concept of Selection

Selection is the process of choosing the most suitable persons out of all the applicants. In this process, relevant information about applicants is collected through a series of steps so as to evaluate their suitability for the job to be filled. Selection is a process of matching the qualifications of applicants with the job requirements. It is a process of weeding out unsuitable candidates and finally identify the most suitable candidate. Selection divides all the applicants into two categories—(a) suitable, and (b) unsuitable. Selection may be described as a process of rejection because generally more candidates are turned away than are hired. Selection is different from recruitment. Recruitment technically precedes selection. Recruitment involves identifying the sources of manpower and stimulating them to apply for jobs in the organisation. On the other hand, selection is the process of choosing the best out of

those recruited. Recruitment is positive as it aims at increasing the number of applications for wider choice or for increasing the selection ratio. Selection is negative as it rejects a large number of applicants to identify the few who are suitable for the job. Recruitment involves prospecting or searching whereas selection involves comparison and choice of candidates. The purpose of selection is to pick up the right person for every job. Selection is an important function as no organisation can achieve its goals without selecting the right people. Faulty selection leads to wastage of time and money and spoils the environment of an organisation. Scientific selection and placement of personnel can go a longway in building up a stable work force. It helps to reduce absenteeism and labour turnover. Proper selection is helpful in increasing the efficiency and productivity of the enterprise.

The selection process can be successful if the following conditions are satisfied :

- (a) Some one should have the authority to select. This authority comes from the employment requisition as developed through an analysis of the workload and workforce.
- (b) There must be some standard of human resource with which applicant can be compared. In other words, a comprehensive job description and job specification should be available beforehand.
- (c) There must be a sufficient number of applicants from whom the required number of employees may be selected.

TABLE 6.1 : Distinction between Recruitment and Selection

<i>Basis of Distinction</i>	<i>Recruitment</i>	<i>Selection</i>
1. Meaning	It is the process of searching for prospective candidates and encouraging them to apply for vacant jobs	It is the process of choosing the right candidates
2. Nature	It is a positive process	It is a negative process
3. Purpose	It aims to create a large pool of candidates	Its aim is to identify and reject unsuitable candidates
4. Sequence	It always precedes selection	It always succeeds recruitment
5. Contract of service	It does not result in a contract of service	It leads to a contract of services between the employer and the selected candidate
6. Process	It involves searching	It involves comparison and choice

6.4 Steps in Selection Process

The selection process consists of a series of steps. At each stage, facts may come to light which may lead to the rejection of the applicant. It is a series of successive hurdles or barriers which an applicant must cross. These hurdles or screens are designed to eliminate an unqualified candidate at any point in the selection process. This technique is called "successive hurdles technique". According to Dale Yoder, the hiring process consists of go no go gauges. Candidates who qualify a hurdle go to the next stage while those who do not qualify are dropped out. However, every selection procedure does not contain all these hurdles. Moreover, the arrangement of these hurdles may differ from organisation to organisation. There is no standard selection procedure to be used in all organisations or for all jobs. The complexity of selection procedure increases with the level and responsibility of the position to be filled. The strategy and method used for selecting employees varies from firm to firm and from one job to another.

Steps involved in employee selection may be described as under :

1. Preliminary Interview. First of all, initial screening is done to weed out totally undesirably/unqualified candidates at the outset. Preliminary interview is essentially a sorting process in which prospective candidates are given the necessary information about the nature of the job and the organisation. Necessary information is also elicited from the candidates about their education, skills, experience, salary expected, etc. If the candidate is found suitable, he is selected for further screening. Preliminary interview saves time and efforts of both the company and the candidate. It avoids unnecessary waiting for the rejected candidate and waste of money on further processing of an unsuitable candidate. Preliminary interview helps to determine whether it is worthwhile for a candidate to fill up the application form. Some of the jobseekers may be totally unsuitable due to overage, physical handicap and lack of required education or experience. Preliminary interview is brief and generally carried out by a junior executive across the counter or at the reception office. Care should be taken to ensure that suitable candidates are not turned down in a hurry. Preliminary interview is the first contact of an individual with the organisation. Therefore, the interviewers should be courteous, receptive and informal particularly when the candidate is being turned down.

2. Application Blank. Application form is a traditional and widely used device for collecting information from candidates. Small firms design no application form and ask the candidates to write details about their age, marital status, education, work experience, etc. on a plain sheet of paper. But big companies use different types of application forms for different jobs. The application form should provide all the information relevant to selection. But reference to caste, religion, birth place may be avoided as it is regarded an evidence of discrimination. Generally, an application form contains the following information :

- (a) Identifying information — Name, address, telephone number, etc.
- (b) Personal information — age, sex, place of birth, marital status, dependants, etc.
- (c) Physical characteristics — height, weight, eyesight, etc.
- (d) Family background.
- (e) Education — academic, technical and professional.
- (f) Experience — job held, employers, duties performed, salary drawn, etc.
- (g) References.
- (h) Miscellaneous — extra curricular activities, hobbies, games and sports membership of professional bodies, etc.

Fudged CV

In the KPMG survey, respondents pointed out four main threat areas on a CV where information is generally fudged :

- Bloated salaries (23 per cent).
- Inflated accomplishments (20 per cent).
- Inaccurate dates to hide job-hopping or gaps in employment (17 per cent).
- Exaggerated job titles (12 per cent).

The survey also points out that in many cases (nearly 46 per cent), company head-hunters are taken for a ride and are not able to uncover the danger.

And, another tragic aspect of this problem is that even job contenders appear unaware of the impact such actions can have on their long-term careers.

Application form helps to serve several objectives. *First*, scrutiny of the form helps to weed out candidates who are lacking in education, experience or some other eligibility traits. *Secondly*, it helps in formulating questions to be asked in the interview. *Thirdly*, data contained in application forms can be stored for future reference. Application form duly filled in is also called biodata or curriculum vitae. It provides factual information required for evaluating the candidate. It is also used as a basic record of personal data for those finally selected.

3. Selection Test. Psychological tests are being increasingly used in employee selection. A test is a sample of some aspect of an individual's attitudes, behaviour and performance. It also provides a systematic basis for comparing the behaviour, performance and attitudes of two more persons. Tests are based on the assumption that individuals differ in their job related traits which can be measured. Tests help to reduce bias in selection by serving as a supplementary screening device. Tests are helpful in better matching of candidate and the job. Tests may also reveal qualifications which remain covered in application form and interview. No test, however, is fool proof. At best it reveals that the candidates who have scored above the predetermined cut off points are likely to be more successful than those scoring below the cut off point. Tests are useful when the number of applicants is large. Further, tests will be useful only when they are properly designed and administered.

Further details on selection tests are given later in this chapter.

4. Employment Interview. An interview is a conversation between two persons. In selection, it involves a personal, observational and face-to-face appraisal of candidates for employment. Interview is an essential element of selection and no selection procedure is complete without one or more personal interviews. The information collected through application and test can be cross-checked in the interview.

A selection interview serves three purposes : (a) obtaining information about the background, education, training, work history and interests of the candidate, (b) giving information to candidates about the company, the specific job and human resource policies; and (c) establishing a friendly relationship between the employer and the candidate so as to motivate the successful applicant to work for the organisation. In practice, however, interview becomes a one-sided affair serving only the first purpose.

Further details on interview are given later.

Selection Practices of Global Giants

Siemens India : It uses extensive psychometric instruments to evaluate short-listed candidates. The company uses occupational personality questionnaire to understand the candidate's personal attributes and occupational testing to measure competencies.

LG Electronics India : LG Electronics uses 3 psychometric tests to measure a person's ability as a team player, to check personality types and to find a person's responsiveness and assertiveness.

Pepsico India : The company uses competency-based interviewing technique that looks at the candidate's abilities in terms of strategising, lateral thinking, problem solving, managing the environment.

Infosys : After analysing resumes of potential candidates, Infosys selects a limited number of applicants for further tests. These tests consist of a set of puzzles and math algorithms in order to assess candidates' 'learnability'. The candidates who have been qualified in this test have to further undergo an interview round which determines their jobs at Infosys.

Source : *The Economic Times.*

5. Medical Examination. Applicants who have crossed the above stages are sent for a physical examination either to the company's physician or to a medical officer approved for the purpose. Such examination serves the following purposes:

- It determines whether the candidate is physically fit to perform the job. Those who are physically unfit are rejected.
- It reveals existing disabilities and provides a record of the employee's health at the time of selection. This record will help in settling company's liability under the Workmen Compensation Act for claim for an injury.
- It prevents the employment of people suffering from contagious diseases.
- It identifies candidates who are otherwise suitable but require specific jobs due to physical handicaps and allergies.

6. Reference Checks. The applicant is asked to mention in his application form, the names and addresses of two or more persons who know him well. These may be his previous employers, heads of educational institutions or public figures. The organisation contacts them by mail or telephone. They are requested to provide their frank opinion about the candidate without incurring any liability. They are assured that all information supplied will be kept confidential. In Government and public sector organisations, candidates are generally required to route their

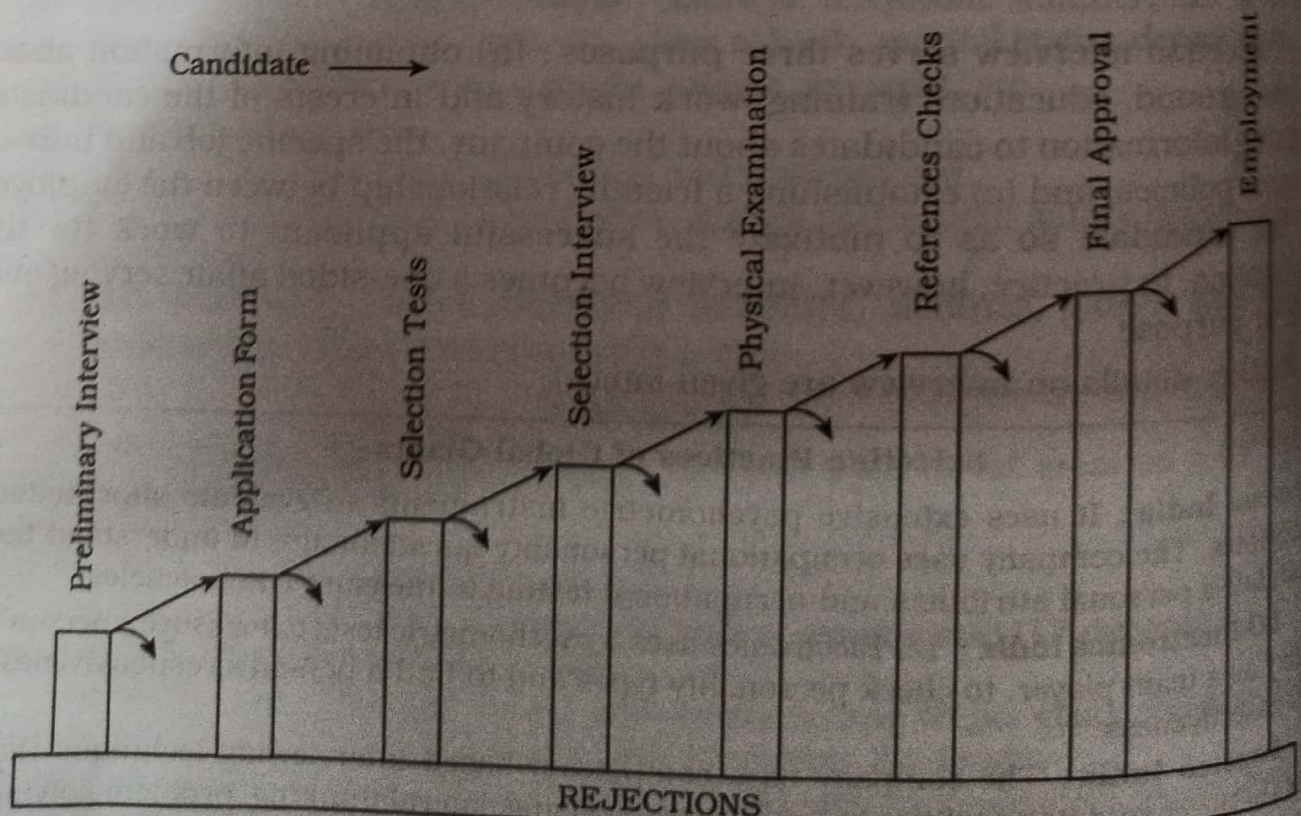


FIGURE 6.2 : Successive Hurdles in the Selection Process

applications through their present employers, if any. The opinion of referees can be useful in judging the future behaviour and performance of a candidate. But it is not advisable to rely exclusively on the referees because they are generally biased in favour of the candidate.

7. Final Approval. In most of the organisations, selection process is carried out by the human resource department. The decisions of this department are recommendatory. The candidates short listed by the department are finally approved by the executives of the concerned departments/units. Employment is offered in the form of an appointment letter mentioning the post, the rank, the salary grade, the date by which the candidate should join and other terms and conditions in brief. In some organisations, a contract of service on judicial paper is signed by both the candidate and the representative of the organisation. Appointment is generally made on a probation of one or two years. After satisfactory performance during this period, the candidate is finally confirmed in the job on permanent basis or regularised.

Hiring takes time and top level hiring is toughest. On an average a company takes two to four months to fill a top level position.

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- Positive mindset and attitude.
- Initiative to bring in change.
- Good communication skills.
- Leadership qualities.
- Ability to work as a team.
- Fair overview of the total business perspective.
- Ability to adapt to changing business environment.

Source : *Hindustan Times*, November 3, 2004.

6.5 Selection Tests (Psychological Tests)

A psychological test is an objective and standardised measure of a sample of behaviour from which inferences about future behaviour and performance of the candidate are drawn. Psychological tests are being increasingly used in selecting employees. These tests provide a systematic procedure for sampling human behaviour. Tests are also used in vocational guidance and counselling students seeking admission in educational institutions. Tests can also be employed in decision concerning placement, promotion, transfer, counselling and training of employees. Psychological tests are based on the assumption that no two individuals are equal in terms of intelligence, attitudes, personality and other traits. The nature and degree of one's psychological and other characteristics are measured through tests. The purpose of these tests is to judge the ability of a candidate in a given job situation. These tests are called psychological tests because they have been designed largely by psychologists.

Psychological tests help to predict the success of a candidate on the job. They help to reduce bias and subjective judgement in the selection process. Tests help to identify talent that may otherwise be overlooked. Another advantage of tests is that a large number of persons can be evaluated through one test and considerable information about a candidate can be collected within a short period of time. But tests measure only a part of the total candidate. Tests are not infallible or fully reliable. They are more useful for identifying and screening out unsuitable candidates. Tests are also criticised for invading the privacy of candidates. Tests should be used as a supplementary device in selection and the test scores should be verified through other devices.

The Shrink at Work

Traditionally, psychometric tools have been used to measure the difference between individuals and the reaction of the same individual to different situations. One can argue that the tests are useful as every organisation has a unique culture that a new recruit must fit into. Most often the tools are used in conjunction with interviews, to gain a better understanding of the psychological make-up of the candidate. Tests differ in the aspect of behaviour they cover. Some concentrate on assessing cognitive skills, others, a candidate's readiness to profit from college work, while still others restrict themselves to testing sensory or motor skills required for performing a simple, specific function. Then there is a whole battery of instruments for measuring emotional, motivational or interpersonal skills. Some of these tools have a high degree of predictive value, while others largely depend on a person's frame of reference while he/she is taking the test. A lot also depends on the instructor taking the test, how comfortable/relaxed he is able to make the candidate.

Tests can be classified on the basis of the type of behaviour they measure. For instance, ability tests score speed, accuracy, or both.

Some Common Psychometric Tools Used at the Time of Hiring

Type of test	Purpose of the test	Category of employee best suited for
MBTI	Measures on 4 parameters	All employees
FIRO-B	Inclusion, control, affection	All employees
Asufa		Supervisory & above
Ink-Blot	Gender affinity test	More suited for an isolated working environment
Belbins		Executive & above
Social skills inventory	Social skills	Supervisory & above
Emotional quotients	EQ level	All employees
Achievement motivation	For achievement motivation	All employees
Lead	Leadership adaptability	All managers & above

Experts have distinguished between achievement, aptitude, and intelligence tests. Here, achievement refers to previous learning; aptitude to the future potential for learning; and intelligence to a general potential for solving problems, adapting to change, abstract thinking and profiting from past experience.

— Dr. Yasho V. Verma, V.P. (HR & MS), LG Electronics India Ltd.

6.5.1 Types of Tests

Tests may broadly be classified as follows :

1. Aptitude or Potential Ability Tests. These tests measure the latent ability or potential of a candidate to learn a new job or skill. Peculiarities or defects in a person's sensory or intellectual capacity can be detected through these tests. These focus attention on a particular type of talent such as reasoning, learning, mechanical bent of mind, etc. Such test are of the following types :

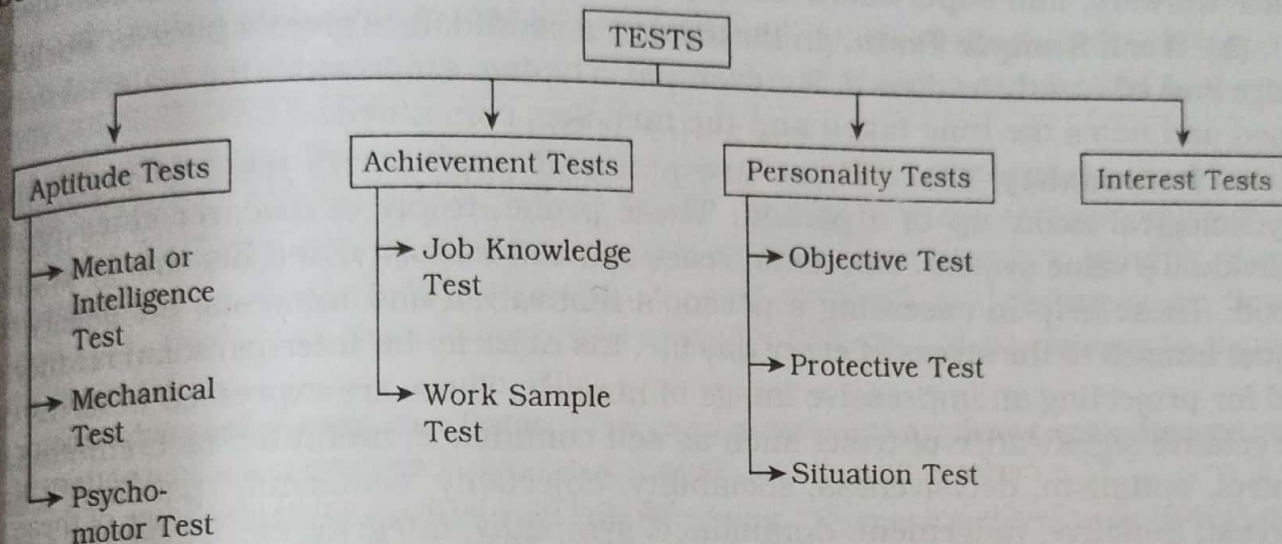


FIGURE 6.3 : Types of Tests

(a) Mental or Intelligence Tests. These tests measure the overall intellectual capacity [intelligence quotient (I.Q.)] of a person. These reveal whether an individual has the capacity to deal with new problems. These help to determine a person's word fluency, memory, inductive reasoning, comprehension, speed of perception and spatial visualisation. Intelligence tests measure the ability to understand instructions and to make decisions. These tests are useful in selecting employees for a wide variety of jobs. But administration of these tests is cumbersome and expensive. These are criticised on the ground of discrimination against weaker sections of society.

(b) Mechanical Aptitude Tests. These tests measure a person's capacity to learn a particular type of mechanical work. Capacity for spatial visualisation, perceptual speed, manual dexterity, visual insights, specialised knowledge for techniques, problem-solving ability, technical vocabulary, etc. are judged in these tests. These are useful for selecting apprentices, machinists, mechanics, maintenance workers and mechanical technicians. Thus, these tests are used for selecting lower level personnel who are entrusted with the job of operating machines.

(c) Psycho-motor or Skill Tests. These tests measure a person's ability to perform a specific job. These help to determine mental dexterity or motor ability, and similar attributes involving muscular movement, control and coordination. These are primarily used for selecting workers who have to perform semi-skilled and repetitive jobs like assembly work, packing, testing and inspection.

2. Achievement or Proficiency Tests. These tests measure what a person can do. These determine the skill or knowledge already acquired through training and on the job experience. These tests are of two types :

(a) **Job Knowledge Tests.** Also known as trade tests, these are used to judge proficiency in typing, shorthand and in operating calculating, adding machines, dictating and transcribing machines or simple mechanical equipment. These can be both oral and written. Such tests are useful in the selection of stenographers, typists, office workers, mill supervisors, sales persons, public utility employees, etc.

(b) **Work Sample Tests.** In these tests, a candidate is given a piece of work to judge how efficiently he does it. For example, a typing test provides the material to be typed and notes the time taken and the mistakes committed.

3. Personality Test. These are pen and paper tests used to judge the psychological make up of a person. These probe deeply to discover clues to an individual's value system, emotional reactions and maturity, and his characteristic mood. These help in assessing a person's motivation and interests, his ability to adjust himself to the stress of every day life, his capacity for inter-personal relations and for projecting an impressive image of himself. These are expressed in terms of the relative significance of traits such as self-confidence, ambition, tact, emotional control, optimism, decisiveness, sociability, objectivity, conformity, patience, fear, distrust, initiative, judgement, dominance, sympathy, integrity, etc. These tests are used to select supervisors and executives and for counselling people. These are widely used in industry as these provide an all-round picture of a candidate's personality. But these are criticised as superficial, easily faked and misleading. These are of three types :

(a) **Objective Tests.** These tests measure neurotic tendencies, self-sufficiency, dominance-submission and self-confidence. These traits are scored objectively.

(b) **Projective Tests.** In these tests, a candidate is asked to project his own interpretation on to certain stimuli like ambiguous pictures, figures, etc. The ways in which he responds to these stimuli reflect his own values, motives and personality.

(c) **Situation Tests.** These tests measure a candidate's reaction when placed in a peculiar situation, his ability to undergo stress and his demonstration of ingenuity under pressure. These usually relate to a leaderless group situation, in which some problems are posed to a group and its members are asked to reach some conclusions without the help of a leader. Group discussion and basket methods are used to administer these tests.

4. Interest Tests. These tests are inventories of a candidate's likes and dislikes in relation to work. These are used to discover a person's areas of interest and to identify the kind of work that will satisfy him. These are generally used for vocational guidance. A well-designed questionnaire is used to assess the likes and dislikes.