

International Test Commission Conference – Hong Kong

19th – 21st July 2010

Symposium/Practice Forum

Overview

Title: Executive Assessments Across Cultures

Presenters:

Dave Bartram, SHL Group:

Construct equivalence across and between countries: Using forced-choice to control for cultural bias

Joseph A. Cook, Mobley Group Pacific Limited:

Individual Assessment Research with Client Partners

Ray Elliott, MLQ International:

The MLQ transformational – transactional scale and cross-cultural assessment: A research-driven platform for global leadership development

Christina Sue-Chan (City Univ. of Hong Kong), Stan X. Li (York Univ, Canada), Xiaotao Yao (Xi'an Jiaotong Univ):

Are Context-Aligned Management Practices Applicable across Nations?
An Investigation of Behavioral Observation Scales

Clara To & MGP Team, Mobley Group Pacific Limited.

Validity of Assessment Centre in Executive Selection and Development: A Tale of Chinese Executives

SYMPOSIUM ABSTRACT

Facing a complex and ever-changing business environment, organizations have increasingly realized the urgency to ensure business sustainability and enhance its adaptability by identifying and developing the right talents. Organizations attempt to apply various psychological assessment tools to assess and develop talents locally and globally. However, there lacks concerted efforts to evaluate the impact of culture on different assessment approaches. This symposium presents several practitioners and researchers who have extensively worked on this issue in the Asia Pacific region, Africa, Europe, and the United States. Issues involving the constructs, measurements (and their cross-cultural equivalence), and validities will be addressed. Additionally, implications for executive assessment and development in diverse cultures will be discussed. This symposium should be of great interest to anyone attempting to deploy executive assessment and development approaches in the different cultural contexts.

Individual presentation paper abstracts follow.

Construct equivalence across and between countries: Using forced-choice to control for cultural bias

Dave Bartram, SHL Group

Multinational organizations need to carry out assessments for recruitment and selection or for internal purposes that enable them to make comparisons between people from varying cultural, national and linguistic background. In doing so, they need to use instruments that are construct invariant across these demographic variations. OPQ32 (SHL, 1999, 2006) measures 32 traits that were identified as being of relevance within the world of work. It does so using items that are relatively transparent and work-related. To control for impression management in high stakes assessments, OPQ32i uses a forced-choice 'quad' item format. This can now be scored using a multidimensional IRT model from which latent trait scale scores can be recovered that have normative rather than ipsative properties. With the data available on demographics, it is possible to consider same-language and different-language between-country effects and within country effects relating to cultural factors indexed by first-language and ethnic group differences. Results of analysis from over 74,000 people are reviewed in terms of differences between 19 countries involving 14 different languages, and from a further 50,000 people on effects of between ethnic groups and between first-language groups within one country (South Africa).

Individual Assessment Research with Client Partners

Joseph A. Cook, Mobley Group Pacific Limited

The question of how to evaluate the quality of executive assessments is another leading edge issue. Are the assessments accurate in describing the individual's characteristics? Can they predict performance? Do clients find the assessments useful and relevant for decision making? The presenter will describe an innovative method for studying the accuracy and usefulness of the assessments of individuals who were being hired or promoted. The method involved deconstructing each individual's narrative assessment report to identify descriptors and create a customized questionnaire that was used to gather data about the accuracy of the assessment six months to three years after the report was written. The presenter will also describe how the process of partnering with the client organization to undertake this research had positive side effects such as greater thoughtfulness from the assessee's manager about how he/she could continue to develop this executive and others in the future.

The MLQ transformational – transactional scale and cross-cultural assessment: A research-driven platform for global leadership development

Ray Elliott, MLQ International

Thirty-five years of independent blind peer-reviewed research has now followed Bass's seminal publication concerning the Full Range Leadership Model (FRLM) as assessed by the original Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ). Many international studies in diverse cultures and organizational contexts have contributed to the acceptance of this transformational – transactional leadership paradigm and to the validation of the shorter 45 item MLQ5x scale. Examining extensive data-sets in global MLQ applications Antonakis, Avolio, and Sivasubramaniam (2003) concluded that the original nine factor model proposed by Bass was supported across data-sets when local context variables were controlled for as moderators. Consequently the MLQ5x occupies a respected position in transparent critical leadership research and it is frequently used as the research benchmark for leadership. Consequently, practitioners concerned with the assessment and development of leaders in cross-cultural contexts find the research-defined outcome orientation of the International MLQ Report important for developing optimal behavioral profiles predictive of many desired inter-personal and objective organizational outcomes. Cross-cultural comparisons using the MLQ5x scale are highlighted and important issues relating 360 feedback in some cultures considered.

Are Context-Aligned Management Practices Applicable across Nations? An Investigation of Behavioral Observation Scales

Christina Sue-Chan
City U. of Hong Kong

Stan X. Li
York U. (Canada)

Xiaotao Yao
Xi'an Jiaotong U.

The measurement of performance in work and other performance contexts (e.g., education, sports), has been the subject of much research in North America since the 1950s. North American scholars acknowledge that performance is “complex, dynamic, and multidimensional” (Hough & Oswald, 2000, p. 633); yet, there is a relative paucity of research that has examined the measurement and nature of performance in a context outside of the Western cultural context. We argue that one performance assessment method with empirically demonstrated validity and reliability (e.g., Sue-Chan & Latham, 2004) that is widely used in North America, behavioral observation scales (BOS) (Latham & Wexley, 1994) is applicable across cultures. This is because BOS fall into the category of what we refer to as “context-aligned” management practices. Unlike context-negated practices that are adopted in settings without accounting for contextual factors (e.g., GATB), context-aligned practices are applicable across different contexts but the reason for their predictive validity is influenced by culture values. Our empirical examination showed that BOS are valid in both China and Canada, and their validity stem from the atypical behaviors that are defined by the cultural context in which BOS are developed. Implications for adopting context-aligned measurement and management practices are offered.

Validity of Assessment Centre in Executive Selection and Development: A Tale of Chinese Executives

Clara To & MGP Team, Mobley Group Pacific Limited

The validity of assessment centers has been disputed back and forth ever since they became a popular means for measuring work related behaviors. As this approach has become ever more popular in the past decade for selecting executives worldwide, the need to pursue efforts to determine its integrity has become ever more pressing. The present study attempts to investigate the validity of an assessment center by examining the Profile of Success (POS) for leadership roles derived from different companies electing to employ an assessment center method. Commonalities across POS tend to address adaptability to change; learning agility; drive toward results; ability to work in the face of ambiguity; effective communication. We will conduct a qualitative analysis to study narrative comments that were developed in the form of psychological reports and derived from the assessment center which was aimed at measuring these POS constructs. These narrative comments are based on a participant's career history, personality metrics, cognitive metrics, interview data and behavioral observations obtained through simulation evaluations. Finally, resulting recommendations to the organizations will be examined. Issues relating to the constructs of POS and its proposed measurements, as well as implications of leadership effectiveness among Chinese executives will be discussed.