A Problem-based Approach for Management Education

Preparing Managers for Action

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CHAPTER 14

EMPLOYEE SELECTION

ABSTRACT

This chapter presents the design and use of a problem-based learning project on the topic of Employee Selection. The PBL project is organized around a problem that challenges students to design and implement a selection process for hiring a new shift supervisor for a branch of Starbucks (Thailand). Students engage in all tasks in the selection process starting with screening resumes for a vacancy that has been posted. Student teams design selection tools including resume screening, an interview schedule, and a work sample activity. They then use their selection tools in a role played scenario with live candidates culminating in a selection decision. The chapter describes this process and discusses design considerations.[1]

INTRODUCTION

> *Recognition of the need to create and maintain a quality workforce has taken on a new urgency over the past 15 years in organizations throughout the world. Emergence of the "knowledge economy" has highlighted the importance of an organization's human capital to its sustainable, long-term success. Hiring and keeping the people with "the right stuff" has become an imperative in a globally competitive economically.*[2]

This imperative is no less urgent in Asia than in the United States or Europe, though the nature of the challenge is somewhat different. Asian organizations face the challenge of meeting increasing international standards that are, in many cases, higher than traditional local benchmarks. Moreover, organizations in Asia have traditionally viewed human resource management as a personnel processing function rather than from a strategic perspective.

Asian organizations increasingly compete in a global marketplace with firms from more developed economies with access to a more educated workforce. Thus, Asian organizations are seeking a workforce with quite different qualifications from the past. They need staff with IT literacy, strong English language capability, decision-making and problem-solving skills, and up-to-date knowledge in their field of work. Finding and hiring the right people has become a priority for Asian organizations operating in a global economy.[3]

At the same time, however, competition for quality employees has become fierce in local labor markets. Staff with desirable capabilities jump from company to company seeking better pay and benefits. The organization's investment in selection and training is lost each time a valued employee leaves.[4]

If this is the emerging context in which Asian organizations are operating, how can managers create and maintain a quality work force? The answer to this important question is multi-faceted. Managers need to mount a comprehensive approach to the problem that addresses recruitment, selection, induction and socialization of new hires, and on-going job skill and career development. Although this project emphasizes only one aspect of this approach, namely, selection, it is important for the manager to consider these other issues as well.

The effectiveness of any selection process depends in part on the quantity and quality of the applicant pool. Hiring mistakes are much more likely when there is a high selection ratio (that is, the organization is forced to hire from a small applicant pool). To increase the size and quality of the applicant pool, managers should treat recruitment as a marketing problem. Marketing specialists identify the consumers' needs (in this instance the applicant is a potential consumer) and then proceed to show how the product or service (in this instance the organization represents the product or service) will satisfy their needs. The marketing specialist realizes that consumers continue to buy the product only if the product or service delivers on its promises.

Once the applicant is hired, the organization needs to create conditions under which successful performance is most likely to emerge and be sustained. The quality of employee performance is affected by several factors. The most obvious determinants are competence and motivation. Less obvious are the level of difficulty of the work assignment, the level and type of support the new employee receives, and resources that the organization provides to help carry out his/her role.

Unfortunately, most new hires do not work under conditions that are conducive to success. Compared with more experienced staff, the newcomer often has more tasks but fewer resources to meet these demands. To maximize the possibility that newcomers will be effective and find their role satisfying, managers should strive to create more favorable working conditions for new hires. If newcomers are to succeed and to experience job satisfaction, they should receive an assignment with a reasonable level of difficulty, sufficient resources to meet the demands, and also social-emotional support. It is the manager's responsibility to create these conditions.

Even if conditions are conducive to effective performance, the new staff member may fail to meet the organization's standards of performance. Hiring mistakes are inevitable because there are no fool-proof selection procedures or tools. The probationary period offers the manager an opportunity to verify whether the newcomer is fully competent and deserves full contractual status. It is virtually impossible for an organization to create and maintain a quality work force unless these decisions are sound ones.

Few managers relish the thought of having to dismiss someone after they've been hired – either at the end of probation or later on. They much prefer to hire new staff members that have "the right stuff." Managers are in a much better position to improve their percentage of *successful hires* if they are familiar with what research has to say about various selection tools and approaches. They also are more likely to make a sound hiring decision if they can overcome the human tendency to focus only on individual behavior while failing to consider the context in which this behavior will be conducted. Organizational fit if often as important to employee success as job fit.[5] As Stevens and colleagues have observed:

> Given this range in types of organization, the tasks performed by first-line managers (supervisors) vary widely. While a first-line manager in a traditional organization may spend most of his or her time directing and controlling, the same manager in an organization with a more participative culture may spend most of his or her time facilitating, coaching, or consulting. Likewise, the tasks performed by rank-and-file workers within an industry will vary widely depending on the way that organizations have structured work. While a worker in a traditional organization may not participate in the planning and organizing of his or her work and has a narrowly defined job, the same worker in an organization with a more participative culture may be empowered to make planning and organizing decisions and may have a broadly defined job.[6]

In designing the selection process, managers need to realize that they are attempting to predict how an applicant will behave in their context. Accuracy increases if two conditions are met.

- First, the selection process is structured to elicit the behaviors that one is trying to predict.
- Second, the context in which the behavior is being observed resembles the context in which the person will subsequently perform.

Managers also need to realize that the selection process entails a choice by the applicant, as well as the organization. Individuals who are treated poorly during the recruitment and selection phase may decline an offer of employment. To increase the chances that a candidate who is ultimately offered a position will accept, managers should structure the process in a way that reflects a concern for the individual. Moreover, the offer of employment should be personalized and exhibit a willingness to assist the individual in making the transition to the organization.

In this project student teams begin with a problem of selecting a new shift supervisor for a branch at Starbucks (Thailand). The branch has been experiencing increasing turnover due to problems arising from its location in a neighborhood with a highly multi-cultural clientele. The teams begin the selection process at the point of screening resumes that have been provided by corporate HR. Each team of students must then design the process and tools to be used for candidate selection. The teams then execute their selection processes with live candidates, after which they make and communicate their selection decisions to the HR Manager as well as to the candidates.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This project provides students with an opportunity to learn about and develop skills in executing the following features of the employee selection process.

1. To be able to design an integrated process that increases the likelihood that you will hire the right person for the right job.

2. To understand the purposes of different selection tools and research about the effectiveness of each of them.
3. To be able to design and use systematic tools to gather information on candidates and make selection decisions.
4. To know how employee selection links to and impacts business objectives, employee satisfaction and productivity.
5. To understand how to develop and execute a means of evaluating and selecting job candidates on clear defensible criteria.
6. To understand how employee selection can provide a sound foundation for staff entry and socialization into the organization.

In our College, most students who study this project will have completed *Principles of Management* and *Organizational Behavior and Human Resource Management*. We assume that students will have gained the following pre-requisite knowledge and skills prior to studying this project:

- Team management skills including meeting management, problem-solving, and decision-making;
- Memo writing, including elements of format, style, and communicating to achieve a purpose;
- Understanding of relevant OB concepts concerning human motivation, emotional intelligence, personality type, job satisfaction, goal-setting, values, job design, and corporate culture.

The project challenges students to apply and integrate these management skills and OB/HR concepts with new knowledge about employee selection. The *Employee Selection* project was originally conceived to appeal to students in our *Human Resource Management* and *General Management* Master Degree programs. As time has passed, however, the project has also become popular among students in *Entrepreneurship Management* as well. These students are often working in small and medium sized enterprises in which human resource staffing is often limited in size, capability, and scope of work. Thus, in these enterprises it is even more important for line managers to become involved in the hiring process.

THE PROBLEM

As suggested above, companies in Thailand are plagued with a problem of high turnover. This saps the productivity of organizations whether they are local or multinational, public or private sector, large, medium or small in size. Of course, effective selection strategies alone will not bring about a sustainable reduction in employee turnover. They need to be integrated into a system of well-designed induction, reward, career development, and talent management strategies. Nonetheless, we believe the focal problem in this project gives it both high impact and wide relevance to the current and future work of our Master Degree students.

This project was originally designed by Edwin Bridges as a project on *Teacher Selection*.[7] We adapted his project for use in our business management curriculum and have since designed several versions. Here we focus on the version of the PBL project that focuses on the selection of a Shift Supervisor for Starbucks (Thailand).

Later in the chapter we will discuss design considerations concerning adaptation of the *Teacher Selection* project as well as our use of alternate versions.

Employee Selection at Starbucks (Thailand)

The reader will note that the "presented problem" in this project is neither "messy" nor do significant value dilemmas come into play. While we want students to investigate relevant business issues impacting on hiring at Starbucks, the main focus in this project is on implementation of a solution to the selection problem.

In the Starbucks version of the project, we convey the problem through a combination of video and text. In order to provide a rich introduction to the problem environment, we produced a videotape with the Country Manager of Starbucks (Thailand). In this 20 minute videotape, he discusses a range of issues relevant to the problem and tasks that the student teams will face. These include:

- Vision, mission and guiding principles of Starbucks,
- Corporate culture at Starbucks (Thailand),
- Human resource policies, norms and practices at Starbucks.

The supplementary text presentation of the problem is straightforward (see below).

Employee Selection at Starbucks (Thailand)

> You are employed as a middle level manager at Starbucks (Thailand). Assume that a vacancy has arisen for a new *Shift Supervisor*, an entry level supervisory position in the company at its *Tong Lor* site in Bangkok. The site is an especially high volume location but has been experiencing a troubling trend of customer complaints in recent months. Concurrent with the rising number of customer complaints has been an increase in staff turnover.
>
> The customers at this upscale location include a high percentage of foreigners of many nationalities, Austral-Asian, European and North American. There is an especially high concentration of Japanese customers. Meeting their needs with efficiency and a strong service orientation and focus is essential to the site's success.
>
> This position will require someone with a variety of organizational, interpersonal, and technical skills. You have been appointed to the Selection Committee to hire for this position. One individual in your team will serve as the chair of the selection committee.
>
> Starbucks (Thailand) HR policy requires that selection committees use two methods in its selection process:
>
> - A personal job interview.
> - A work sample involving job tasks to be performed by the employee.
>
> Your selection team will be responsible for planning and implementing the full selection process including each of these selection tools. Your six-week project can be divided into several phases.

Phase One: Planning

First, your team must develop a project plan for the relevant tasks and timelines for their completion. Over the next three weeks you will then design the selection process and procedures you will use for:

- Understanding the job requirements;
- Method of screening candidate resumes;
- Interview of the candidates (including type of interview, interview questions and method of assessing interview responses);
- Work sample used to assess other competencies;
- Method of integrating your data for the purpose of decision-making;

Along with the process you will need to provide a description of the details of the procedures your committee will follow when implementing each method. Then explain why you intend to use these procedures. Be sure that your procedures are *legally defensible*.

Phase Two: Implement your Procedures

Three individuals have volunteered to participate in the selection process as applicants for the vacant shift supervisor position at Starbucks (Thailand). Your instructor will supply the names and phone numbers of these individuals. You will need to make *all the necessary arrangements with them* except scheduling for the selection process.

- They will first have to supply you with resumes.
- Then they will role-play the candidates as you implement the procedures that you have outlined in your selection process. You will use the interview and work sample that you design with each of the candidates according to the schedule provided by your instructor.
- After gathering data on the candidates from the resumes, interviews and work samples, you will analyze the results.
- Finally, you will select the candidate whom you recommend to hire in a memo to the HR Manager.

Phase Three: Provide Feedback to Each Applicant

As a condition of participating in this simulation, each candidate wants to know what suggestions your committee might have for helping the person to improve, regardless of whether they are selected for the position. You will also be expected to provide each candidate with feedback regarding perceived their strengths and areas in need of improvement. This information should be communicated in writing.

LEARNING PROCESS

This project requires a high degree of monitoring and coordination by the instructor and TA in order to complete required tasks in six weeks. Our students study the project in six three-hour class sessions. They are also expected to complete a substantial portion of the project work outside of class time.

We operate this project with a maximum class size of 24 students organized in teams consisting of four to six students. Relative to team size in some other projects, we use large teams in this project. We note several reasons.

- The amount of required and suggested *reading* is substantial and much of it must be completed in the first three weeks. Students do not have the luxury of reading (or procrastinating) for several weeks before starting the reading. Even using a jigsaw strategy to distribute the reading, much must be done up-front concurrent with other tasks.
- The scope of work products designed by the teams is substantial and continuous with deadlines to be met throughout the project.
- The time frame for completion of products prior to the role play in the 4th week is a major constraint in successful execution of the project.
- The instructor must do a large amount of assessment in a short time.

Work Flow of the Project

We use the first three weeks to prepare students for their role play in the 4th week. During each of the first three weeks the instructor conducts mini-lectures ranging from 20 to 45 minutes on scheduled topics. However, the large majority of class time is devoted to the teams working on:

- Weekly instructor-designed activities,
- Student-facilitated meetings in which they allocate roles, plan and delegate responsibilities, discuss the problem and develop solutions;
- Intra-team, jigsaw sharing of reading among members,
- Student work on the design of selection tools (e.g., interview questions in Week Two and Work Sample Activities in the 3rd week).

The basic work flow of the module is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. *Employee Selection Project Work Flow*

Week	***Topic***	***Reading***	***Assignment Due***
1	Introduction Resume Screen	Employee Selection Project Billsberry, Chapters 3 & 4 Starbucks Competencies Job Profile: Shift Supervisor	
2	Job Competencies Interviews	Billsberry, Chapter 6 (128-145) Dinteman, Chapter 8, 9, 13	Project Plan
3	Interviewing Work Samples Knowledge Review	LeTendre Edenborough, Chapters 2 & 3	Selection Matrix Draft Selection Tools
4	Role Play	Billsberry, Chapter 7	Selection Tools Analysis Matrix
5	Student Presentations	Billlsberry, Chapter 9	Interview & Work Sample Summary VCD of Role Play
6	Exam	*Supervision,* 15-17	Memos

Talk-back Evaluation	Lehman-Smith et al., 55-57	Peer Evaluations

In the 1st week we orient students to the module including a presentation of the problem and our expectations of how they will work during the six-week period. The students break into teams and organize themselves. They review project materials including the videotape that supplements the text version of the problem.

At this time we also alert them to some key issues and questions they will face in the project. These are encompassed in the *Guiding Questions* that we provide. These do not need to be answered, but they orient students to the nature of the tasks they will conduct in the coming weeks. Examples of *Guiding Questions* include:

- How do the business environment and public perceptions of the company impact on recruitment and selection?
- What information will you be seeking? Why have you chosen to gather this information? What tools will you use to gather it?
- Which selection tools are most suitable and defensible in light of research?
- What are some of the purposes, other than choosing the person with the right stuff, for which the interview and work sample can be used?
- How can you design the selection process to increase the likelihood that the employees that you select will accept your job offer?

We also introduce an activity that addresses the concept of a job profile link this to the task of resume screening. We end the class by specifying two products to be completed for the next class session: a resume sorting activity and a project plan using MS Project for the 2nd week.

In the 2nd week, the teams turn in project plans for our review. They hold team meetings to review their understanding of the problem and to share what they learned from their readings. We use about one hour of the session to debrief the resume screening homework activity and for a mini-lecture on the role of interviews in the selection process. The mini-lecture is intentionally brief and does not provide an in-depth knowledge of interview strategies. We expect them to gain that knowledge from their readings.

In the 3rd week we ask the teams to conduct a Qualification Identification. The Qualification Identification is an analysis of job fit and organizational fit and describes what they are looking for in the job candidate (i.e., key job competencies, knowledge, skills, and attitudes). This must be linked to a Selection Tools Matrix which shows how they plan to gather data to assess the candidates on their qualifications (see Table 2). For the 3rd week they must also submit a draft of interview questions. Note that students develop the above products using their analysis of the problem, the company's job profile (i.e., position description), and the corporate job competencies.

Table 2. *Sample Selection Tools Matrix*

	Weight	Resume	Interview	Work Sample
KSAs				
• Ability to present facts and recommendations effectively in oral and written form	10%			X
• Ability to work with detail	10%	X	X	
• Ability to coach and counsel, assess needs, manage performance, manage change, and facilitate groups and teams	10%		X	X
• Ability to set priorities and meet deadlines	10%		X	
• Superior influencing and communications skills	10%			X
Competencies				
• Customer Focus	20%		X	X
• Result Oriented	15%		X	X
• Dealing with ambiguity	5%		X	
• Interpersonal Savvy	5%		X	X
• Personal Learning	5%		X	

In the 3rd week, the teams use class time for discussion of their draft interview questions as well as brainstorming and refinement of possible work sample activities. The instructor uses class time to review draft products, check the teams' project plans, and provide coaching as needed. The instructor also provides a mini-lecture on work samples and alerts the teams to the issue of how they will actually assess the responses of the candidates. We share examples of assessment rubrics and their purpose. We also demonstrate how assessment rubrics can easily be constructed by using the corporate competencies.

For the 4th week the teams will have prepared all of their selection tools as well as an agenda for their use of the time allocated for their candidates. We provide them with the candidates' resumes in advance. The teams coordinate with the TA concerning preparation for videotaping the sessions.

The role play with live candidates takes place in the 4th week.[8] The instructor arranges for live candidates to come for interviews scheduled during the three-hour block of classroom time. If the instructor is working with four teams, we arrange for six "candidates" to participate in the role plays. Each of the candidates goes through the selection process with two different teams.

The teams conduct 45 minute sessions that include both the interview and work sample sessions with each of their three candidates. These are made to be as real and lifelike as possible. The students often dress up in Starbucks aprons and arrange the location for the work sample to be as true as possible to the real context—all without instructor prompting. These sessions are videotaped and converted into video CD's for later viewing by the students and the instructor.

Following the conclusion of each interview session, we ask the candidate to complete a rating form concerning the efficiency and professionalism of the interview team (see the section on Student Assessment later in this chapter). Data from this form are integrated into the instructor's team feedback at the end of the project.

Between the 4th and 5th weeks, teams analyze data gathered during the interviews in order to rank the candidates and make their selection decision. For the 5th class session each team makes a short presentation in which they present:

- The tools they developed and the rationale for their design;
- How they used those tools in the selection process;
- A summary of the data they gathered;
- Their selection decision and rationale.

During the first few terms in which this project was used, we did not require these presentations. However, in their absence, we felt that students lost the benefit of learning about and from the experience of the other teams.

During the 6th week, the teams turn in a one-page memo written to the HR Manager in which they communicate their selection decision. The final class session is devoted to instructor feedback and the final exam.

Facilitating the Learning Process: Role of the Instructor

Staffing for the project includes an instructor and one teaching assistant per class section. We would characterize the key role for the instructor in this project as "light coaching." The teams have many tasks to be completed in a short period of time. In the early days of this project, we provided very little direction for the students and the results were rather disappointing. As time passed we increased the amount of structure somewhat and the results have improved.

There is an ever-present temptation on the part of the instructor to become too directing in the face of student ambiguity and anxiety. This is why we refer to the instructor's role as "light coaching." The instructor's coaching tasks include

- Providing timely, useful feedback to students;
- Monitoring team progress in relation to their project plans;
- Ensuring that the teams understand our expectations;
- Providing some direct input through mini-lectures.

Our teaching assistants have Master degrees in Human Resource management as well as work experience in the HR field. They are a critical resource for students and the instructor. Given the qualifications of our TA's, we involve them in most instructional tasks.

As noted in the prior section, we have organized the project so that most products are submitted in draft form as the teams move through the project (e.g., project plan, interview questions, work sample activity). We try, but do not always succeed, in reviewing these during class time while the teams are working. Quick feedback enables the students to stay on track during this intensive project.

A lot of planning goes into organizing the 4th week session devoted to the role play. Instructor/TA tasks include:

- Identifying appropriate rooms for teams to conduct their role plays;
- Identifying and organizing candidates before and after the role play;

- Coordinating with IT staff concerning videotaping of the role plays;
- Coordinating between the teams and the candidates.

In our setting we have used two types of candidates for the role play: 4^{th} year students from a community college and our own full-time Master students. The objective in identifying candidates is to find people who reflect the characteristics of candidates for the job position used in the role play. We require "candidates" to submit CV's ahead of time and to meet with us in order to understand their role during the role play. We have developed orientation materials for this purpose.

Although we pay a small stipend to candidates, we emphasize that the benefits of participating go beyond the stipend. First each candidate receives feedback on their CV. Second, they gain potentially valuable interview experience including a VCD for their self-reflection. Third, they receive feedback on their interview and work sample performance.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Our broad goal in this project is for students to develop a comprehensive picture of the role of employee selection in the human resource system of the organization. More specifically, however, we want students to develop an understanding of up-to-date methods of selection and the ability to implement a systemic approach to selection as a manager in an organization. As students apply these approaches and tools we are also confident that they are concurrently refining their *ability* to think systematically and analytically, and to make decisions that they can justify on the basis of values, beliefs and data.

We view the approach to employee selection taken in the project as systemic and comprehensive. It is systemic in the sense that the basis for selection is linked to the broader HR system of the company as encompassed in its framework of job competencies, desired skills and attitudes, career development and performance management systems. It is comprehensive in the sense that it causes students to select tools that will enable them to collect a broad range of information in their assessment of candidates to determine who has "the right stuff" for the job and the particular corporate environment.

It is interesting to note that when we first discussed this approach with some of our local faculty they responded that the local organizations do not approach selection in this manner. Specifically, they were referring to two aspects of the selection process:

- The use of work sample activities to complement the traditional resume screening , references, and interviews;
- The use of rubrics or assessment protocols to define the criteria for assessing interview and work sample responses.

We responded by pointing out that the learning objective of the project was not to reproduce local practice. It was to identify what we considered to be best practice in use by organizations globally and adapt it to the local context. It was a happy coincidence that the process in use by Starbucks (Thailand) mirrored in many respects our own understanding of best practice.

LEARNING RESOURCES

The learning resources for this project include:

- The videotape with the Starbucks Country Manager,
- Job Profile of the Shift Supervisor position at Starbucks (Thailand),
- Job competencies used by Starbucks (Thailand),
- Performance Evaluation Documents used by Starbucks (Thailand),
- Selection of required readings, optional readings and additional online and library resources relevant to the project.

Context-related Resources

The videotape and documents provided to us by Starbucks (Thailand) are essential to the success of this project. We refer back to a key feature of PBL noted in the first section of this volume: problem fidelity to the real work context. The use of Starbuck's job profile, job competencies and performance evaluation documents provides students with a better feel for how employee selection links to broader human resource systems of the company. Access to the videotape of the Country Manager places the two-dimensional documents in richer context.

Students access other relevant information for the project from Starbucks' stores and on-line searches. Without prompting from the instructors, student teams quite routinely choose to interview "partners" at Starbucks locations. Sometimes they even go to the store location referred to in the project problem! They observe operations and ask a variety of questions including ones concerning:

- Key features of the corporate culture from the perspective of the staff;
- The types of customer service problems they tend to encounter (e.g., in preparation for the work sample);
- The types of skills and attributes they value in their colleagues (e.g., in preparation for defining the relevant job competencies and designing interview questions);
- What they like and dislike about working at Starbucks (e.g., in preparation for "selling" the job to the prospective candidates).

While this level of access to the "real job context" is not always available, it is certainly desirable. For example, when we compare this version of the project to others we have designed using either fictitious, we can observe the higher degree of students engagement in this version. In addition we have noted that access to richer resources carries over to generate better interview questions and more meaningful work sample activities. It is also observable in the student evaluations and written feedback.

Another type of learning resource we should take note of are outside consultants. Although we have not organized this type of resource every term, we have experimented with bringing in HR professionals involved in selection during the 2nd or 3rd class session to answer questions generated by the student teams. In the future we are planning to bring in the HR manager of Starbucks to serve as a consultant. We also plan to produce a short videotape of the HR manager's responses to common questions.

Reading Resources

The learning resources encompassed in formal readings are included in the reference section at the end of this chapter. We would note several features of the reading list used in the project. First, it is eclectic. It includes concise practice-oriented readings, research oriented articles reporting on empirical findings concerned with selection issues, and skill-oriented readings concerned with selection tools development.

Second, it is extensive. In fact, the required and suggested list of readings is far more than any student could complete in the six weeks of this project. This forces the students to use a strategy and delegation and facilitated sharing of the content they gain from the readings. As shall be alluded to in the section on assessment, individual student accountability for the content of the readings is fostered by the students' knowledge that the final exam will include any concepts covered in the readings.

Third, the list is highly organized. We take the trouble to organize the list into topical headings and also to identify key selections. At times we even note the relevant pages to read within specified chapters. We suspect that some readers might prefer the students to engage in a more self-directed search for relevant resources. While we would concur with this point of view, in this project we measure this objective against the time constraints noted above. With this in mind, we accept the tradeoff of guiding our students in the desired direction.

STUDENT PRODUCTS AND ASSESSMENT

This project includes an extensive array of assessments. Indeed, as noted above, the assessment burden in this project is so extensive that it forces us to use large student teams in part to keep the quality of assessment and feedback high. As in other PBL projects the student products include a combination of individual and team-designed products, reviews and assessments. While most of the assessments in this project are instructor-designed and instructor evaluated, we do include an instructor-designed, student-evaluated assessment of team participation.

The student products included in this project are listed below in Table 3. We have designed assessment rubrics for each of these products. These can be viewed online at www.cmmu.net/cp/assessment.htm. The relationship of the work products and assessments in this project to the activity flow is further elaborated in Figure 1.

Table 3. *Products and Assessments*

1.	Project plan (ungraded)	0%
2.	Knowledge Review 1: Quiz (individual)	10%
3.	Selection tool development (group)	30%
4.	Work sample & interview VCD (group)	10%
5.	Group Presentation	5%
6.	Selection memos and candidate analysis (group)	10%
7.	Final Exam (individual)	30%
8.	Feedback to teams from candidates	0%
9.	Peer evaluation (individual)	5%

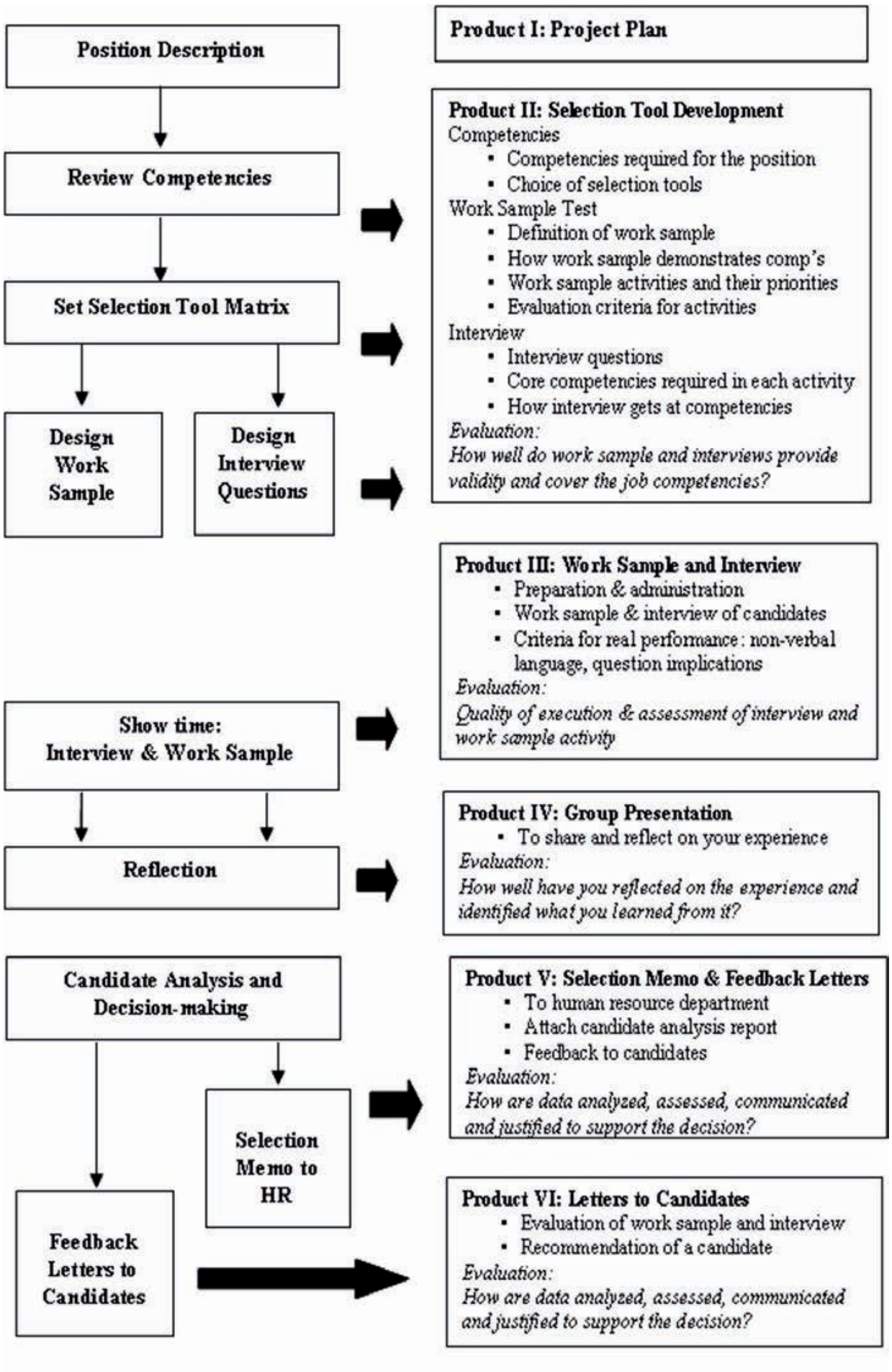

Figure 1: Assessment Products and Work Flow

Project Plan
As noted in Figure 1, students are asked to complete a Project Plan using MS Office for the 2nd week. We require this ungraded assignment in order to get students off the mark quickly as well as using it as an opportunity to practice and apply a previously learned skill. We review the project plans during the class session in the 2nd week to ensure that students have correctly understood the task requirements and provide corrective feedback as needed.

Knowledge Review
The Knowledge Review given in the 3rd week is designed to ensure that individual students are keeping up with the fast pace of the project and are not free riding. We have used both multiple choice and short essay. The knowledge review covers the content of the first three weeks (i.e., costs and benefits of employee selection, screening CV's, purposes of interviews and work samples in the selection process). The quiz takes 30 to 45 minutes of class time.

Selection Tool Design
The first significant product to be delivered by the teams is the design of their selection tools. This report provides a comprehensive picture of the overall design of their selection process as well as of the specific tools they will use. These tools consist of:

- A description of interview procedures that the team will follow;
- A set of some combination of behavioral and situational interview questions keyed to the selection competency matrix;
- A description of the Work Sample process they will use to assess selected desired competencies and/or KSAs.

The criteria used in the rubric that we use to assess this report include the following:

- Quality and comprehensiveness of the job analysis,
- Identification and prioritization of competencies and KSAs,
- Linkage of interview questions and work sample activity to the prioritized competencies and KSAs,
- Quality and clarity of interview questions and work sample procedures,
- Quality of plan for analyzing results of the interview responses and work sample activity.

The full rubric can be accessed on-line at www.cmmu.net/pbl.

Video CD of the Role Play with the Candidates
During the 4th class session each team is responsible for videotaping its sessions. The College IT staff provides equipment and assists students in converting their three 45 minute sessions into video CD.

This product represents the team "execution" of its plan. The assessment rubric we have designed to assess the team's performance includes:

- Execution of the Interview;
- Use of the Interview Information for Decision-making;
- Execution of the Work Sample Activity;
- Use of the Work Sample data for decision-making;
- Candidate feedback.

Selection Memo, Candidate Analysis, and Candidate Letters

The selection memo is written according to a standard memo format and style that the students were taught in their first term in the program. We assess the memo on several criteria:

- Format, organization, and style;
- Communicative ability;
- Clarity and justification for the decision.

This memo is supplemented by an attachment in which they provide a more detailed rationale for the decision so that the instructor can determine the linkage between the data and their decision. The teams are also asked to write brief rejection letters to the other two candidates.

Final Exam

The Final Exam asks students to individually reprise each of the major activities of the project. It focuses primarily on assessing students at the analysis, application, and synthesis levels of student understanding.

The exam asks the students to assume the role as a member of a hiring committee for a specific position in the College. We use the College since students would all have basic information about the College and its corporate culture. We then provide the students with a job profile and a set of three resumes.

The exam questions all refer to these documents. The questions ask the students to perform the following selection-related tasks:

- Write a *Qualification Identification* for the position using the main categories presented in the project.
- Use a supplied table to fill in criteria for screening the three candidates. Then assess the candidates CV's based on the criteria and rank order them with a justification for the rankings.
- Write two different types of interview questions (e.g., situation, behavioral) concerned with two relevant different job competencies.
- Provide brief specifications for a work sample activity that could be used to assess the candidates on a key competency for knowledge, skill, or attitude.

Peer Evaluation
As noted in Chapter Six, Student Assessment, we use a standard Team Participation rubric for assessing student participation in teams. Students use this rubric to assess their teammates on five criteria: responsibility and punctuality, work quality, cooperation, leadership, and overall assessment (how much would you like to work with this person again). The instructor collects these rubrics and factors the data into each student's overall course evaluation and grade.

Candidate Feedback
As noted earlier, we ask each candidate to provide feedback on the team's performance in their interview immediately following the session. We use the form shown below in Figure 2. The instructor collects these and provides a summary as part of the final feedback to the teams.

This provides useful feedback to the team's from the perspective of their candidate and is central to developing a keener awareness among the learners that they are involved not only in employee selection, but also recruitment! As we noted in an earlier volume, Bridges has had a case where the top ranked candidate turned down the job offer. This came as a shock to the team who had viewed themselves as the ones in the driver's seat in terms of decision-making. We have no doubts that experiences such as this that are based on "customer feedback" become valuable lessons that are not forgotten easily.

Employee Selection Interviewee Feedback		
Your Name:	Group Name:	
Please answer the questions concerning your experience as a candidate with the group		
How well did the overall interview allow you to share your strengths as a candidate for this job?		
☐ Not at all	☐ Somewhat	☐ Well
How well did the group manage their time for the activities that they asked you to complete?		
☐ Poorly	☐ Moderately Well	☐ Very Well
How would you rate the team's professionalism as company representatives?		
☐ Not Very Professional	☐ Professional	☐ Highly Professional
If you had applied for this job and were offered the job by this group, would you accept it?		
☐ No	☐ Yes	☐ Not Sure
Reason: …………………………………………………………………………		
What were some of your impressions about the group's professionalism?		
………………………………………………………………………………………………		
Please specify any ways in which this group could improve its performance.		
………………………………………………………………………………………………		

Figure 2. *Interviewee Feedback Form*

STUDENT RESPONSE

One of the most interesting developments we observed in the evolution of this particular project has been the response among students. Our initial attempts to adapt the project from Professor Bridges' *Teacher Selection* project met with a lukewarm response from students. During its initial two terms of use, the *Employee Selection* project was required for students in our *Human Resources* and *General Management* programs. While the HR students responded positively, the GM students felt it was not suitable for their purposes. They had the perspective that HR departments would do most of what we asked them to do for them.

This response persisted through a period of two terms during which we field-tested two different versions in six class sections. The response was quite consistently lukewarm and mixed. At least on the surface, these earlier versions were essentially the same as the current version in structure and process.

This surprised us since, *from the instructor team's standpoint*, the project was practical, action-oriented and addressed a common and important problem felt by managers in local organizations. Nonetheless, we had to accept the fact that students did not see the relevance of the project!

This perception became more pressing because we were in the process of changing to an open-market enrolment system in the PBL track. Under the new open enrolment policy, students no longer had required projects based upon their specialization (e.g., *Entrepreneurship*, *General Management*). They would not sign up for a project even because we thought it was "good for them."

Given the underwhelming student response, we gave the project a short rest. Then we redesigned the version presented in this chapter around employee selection at Starbucks (Thailand). In the redesign, we made several modifications:

- In the initial versions, students were encouraged to write up job competencies. This was eliminated and students were given a set of job competencies they could use in the design of their selection tools.
- We added several structured exercises (e.g., project plan, resume screening) designed to reduce the ambiguity and ensure that students were moving in the desired direction.
- We incorporated the use of a real local company and actual corporate documents.
- We produced a video in order to present students with a richer problem context for analysis.

Since launch of the redesigned project, enrolments have risen and stabilized. In particular, we seem to have overcome the perception that the project is only for HR students. As noted earlier, enrolment in the three terms since redesign has expanded to include significant numbers of *Entrepreneurship Management* students as well. This bears out our own belief that employee selection should be of concern to line managers, not only the HR Department.

Course evaluation data bear out the change in student perception of the project. Ratings for the project have improved from the 30th percentile to the 70th percentile on average from term to term. Open-ended feedback on the Talk-back sheets and

Evaluation forms confirms the changing perception as well. Examples drawn from class sections since the project redesign include the following:

- At first I thought it might be boring and not related to future work. Now I think completely the opposite. . . I think this project is useful no matter what your job title–manager or business owner.
- I can use this selection process at my job to improve our hiring.
- I thought it was a bit strange to learn ways of selecting an employee since I thought it was easy. Now I know what is involved in selecting wisely and admire HR people if they can work like this!
- I routinely interview people in my position at work. Now I see that part of the problem is that I treat it as routine rather than a chance to really get the right person for the job!
- At first I thought, well, 'you just use common sense for selecting people.' Now I understand ways of understanding what we really need for the position and then using tools to get the most valuable information about our candidates.
- Frankly speaking the project is great. We had a great time interviewing the candidates. It was a lot of work, but felt real.
- This will also help me the next time I have to interview for a job. I think I could prepare myself much better!

ADAPTATION FOR THE LOCAL CONTEXT

The key design considerations related to this project's adaptation for the local context have already been described in prior sections. In this section we summarize the key points and elaborate where appropriate.

At the outset of this chapter we mentioned that this PBL project on *Employee Selection* project was originally adapted from a PBL project on *Teacher Selection* written by Bridges. Our adaptation involved taking a project originally designed for the training of educational administrators and redesigning it for our business management curriculum. As noted in the prior section, our first two attempts were less than successful.

The success of the third attempt resulted in the Starbucks (Thailand) version which we have judged to be successful. Here we would reemphasize the key point that adaptation for our local context involved the use of a local company and its business context. We believe that is what made the difference for the students. They could *see and feel and understand* the business context that they were hiring for. This is what set the Starbucks version apart from our first two attempts to adapt the *Teacher Selection* project and from traditional cases "from far away" that students encounter in textbooks.

This is quite useful from a design point of view. It suggests that other instructors could take the structure and process from a PBL project such as this one and redesign it around a local company in their own local context. Thus, we can see how the global/local imperative discussed in Chapter One plays out in terms of student motivation and learning through our experience with this particular PBL project.

Based on this experience, we are in the process of designing an additional version of this project. One of our clients in corporate training, Berli Jucker Cellox asked us to design a training program for them in employee selection. We accepted the contract on the condition that we could design the project around their real situation, shoot a video case to use with them in the training, and then reuse the resulting PBL project in our curriculum. They concurred.

The result – still in progress – is based upon the same exact PBL design template presented in this chapter. However, the problem context, the job position, and the corporate documents differ. The reuse of the existing project template reduced the production time dramatically and enables us to refresh the product that we use with students.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has described the design and execution of a PBL project on *Employee Selection*. In conclusion we would like to highlight three notable dimensions that contribute to making this a successful PBL project:

- *Problem fidelity*: The project's incorporation of video problem representation, use of relevant high quality corporate documents, and location of the problem in an attractive well-known company with accessible outlets for observation create a high level of student interest and engagement.
- *Implementation focus:* Rather than only analyzing a selection problem or process, in this project learners are challenged to design and execute a selection process, much as they would at work. They use "real case artifacts" (i.e., job profile, competencies etc) in addressing the focal problem. This implementation focus, when combined with useful formative and summative feedback, motivates students and results in a useful blend of theory and practice.
- *Stimulus for affective development:* The strong implementation focus of this project really makes students feel that they are on the "hiring line." Despite the fact that 90% of our students are working professionals, they are just as anxious as the job candidates at the time of the role play. Reflective feedback from the students confirms that the combination of working in a team, operating under very tight time constraints, and having to implement their plan challenged their composure and their competence. As instructors we have observed the impact on learners when they are expected not only to design a strategy but also to execute it.

In addition to these characteristics of the project, we would also note three other interesting lessons that we can draw from our experience in the design and use of this project.

- *Listen to your customers*: Although we believed in the purpose of this project from the start, student interest did not align with this belief. By listening to the student response and working with their complaints and suggestions we were able to redesign a project that works both from their perspective and our own.
- *Use PBL as a means of searching for best practice, even if it is not local practice*. As noted above, some instructors held an implicit belief that they should be teaching predominant practices from local industry. By insisting on using an approach that modeled global industry practices more than local practices, we are contributing to the evolution of local practice.
- *Use PBL project development to link your curriculum to the world of industry and practice.* The redesign of this project has allowed us to develop some new relationships with local industry. Our effort to design the employee selection project around hiring at Starbucks (Thailand) and Berli Jucker Cellox has solidified relationships with these local corporations and their executives. In fact, in each of these instances it led top management at these companies to engage our College to provide corporate training for their own executives. These relationships will no doubt bear fruit in other unexpected ways in the future as well as enhancing the College's reputation in the corporate community.

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Additional Readings

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NOTES

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[2] Deloitte Research. (20054). *It's 2008: Do you know where your talent is?* Deloitte Development LLC. ISBN 1-892383-28-4.

[3] See Naisbitt, J. (1997). *Megatrends Asia.* London: Nicholas Brealey; Ohmae, K. (1995). *The end of the nation state: The rise of regional economies*. New York: Free Press; Rohwer, J. (1996). *Asia rising*. London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing.

[4] *Deloitte Research, op. cit*.

[5] See Kirkwood, W., & Ralton, S. (1999). Inviting meaningful applicant performances in employment interviews *Journal of Business Communication, 36*(1), 55-76; and Billsberry. J. (2002). *Finding and hiring the best people*. New York: Prentice Hall.

[6] Stevens, C., & Ash, R. (2001). Selecting employees for fit: personality type and preferred managerial style. *Journal of Managerial Issues, 13*(4), 500.

[7] See Bridges, E. & Hallinger, P. (1995). *Implementing problem-based learning in leadership development*. Eugene, OR: ERIC Clearinghouse.

[8] This is actually sooner than we would prefer. Previously, when our term was longer, the PBL modules ran in seven-week time blocks and we conducted the role plays in the 5th week. This timing is preferable from work flow and student work load perspectives. However, holding role plays in the 5th week would not allow sufficient time to give students feedback on their performance and work products in the current six-week format. For the purposes of our readers, this should provide a useful example of how there are no right and wrong ways to construct and execute PBL modules. It takes time, experimentation, feedback from students, and an open attitude towards the evolution of each module to arrive at the most suitable module design for your own circumstances.