

# The Assessment Centre Construct Validity Debate: Implications for Assessment Centre Design

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The current debate is NOT:  
“Assessment centres do not  
have construct validity”

That has been settled!

Assessment centres have  
construct validity to measure  
management dimensions.



The current debates are over:

“What types of evidence support what types of models (approaches) of the AC method for what purposes and applications?”



Resolved:

“Different amounts and types of evidence support the construct validity of different models of the AC method for different purposes in different forms of talent management.”



Conclusions:

There is no "one best way"!

There are "several sets of worst ways"!!



Parse out the resolution:

- Forms of **Talent management**
- Approaches to the **AC method**
- Types of **Empirical evidence of construct validity**



# Talent Management as Personnel/Human Resource Management

- Traditional
- Formal
- Standardized
- Equal employment opportunity
- Common in government orgs



## Talent Management as Strategic HR Management

- Build explicitly to meet the organization's long range goals
- Complex integration of HR to build pools and maintain pipelines
- Inclusive of most employees





## Talent Management as Targeted Talent Management

- Exclusive
- Concentration on key positions and high performing and high potential select staff
- Recognizes that relationships of employees and organizations are increasingly fluid



## Implications for AC Design

- Personnel/Human Resource Management
- Strategic HR Management
- Targeted Talent Management



## Three “models” of the AC method:

- Dimension-based
- Task-based
- Mixed-model



## Similarities:

- Start with analysis of work
- Use simulation exercises
- Require participants to display overt behavior
- Multiple, trained assessors
- Systematic evaluation of performance by multiple sources



Differences	Dimension based AC	Task based AC	Mixed Model AC
Analysis of work	Job analysis of KSAs	Analysis of tasks	Both tasks & attributes
Focal Constructs	Dimensions, competencies	Tasks, roles, responsibilities	Both tasks & dimensions
Simulation Exercises	Moderate level of fidelity	High level of fidelity, work samples	Moderate level of fidelity
Ratings	Ratings of dimensions	Ratings of behavior	Ratings of dimensions
Integration	Across assessors, exercises	Across assessors and behaviors in exercises	Across assessors for dimensions in exercises



## Dimension Based ACs

- Guided by the dimensions (KSAs) & competencies to be assessed
- Assessors rate dimensions
- Ratings aggregated to yield overall dimension ratings
- Feedback on dimensions



## Task Based ACs

- Guided by job tasks
- Exercises are work samples
- Assessors rate checklists of behaviors
- Ratings aggregated to exercise ratings
- Feedback on performance in exercises



## Mixed Model ACs

- Designed like dimension ACs
- Scores on dimensions AND exercises, plus....
- Takes into account differences in behavior across exercises





## Mixed Model ACs - continued

- Emphasizes the effects of the situation on dimension performance
  - split ratings
  - measures of variability
  - dimension rating for each exercise (like 360 profile of different sources)



**Implications** - Adherence to the different models leads to different:

- focal constructs
- level of fidelity in exercises
- ratings by assessors
- methods of integration
- feedback

See Table for details



## Evidence of Validity:

- Content representativeness
- Correlations among components
- Relationships with other measures and with criteria
- Social validity, perceived relevance
- Fairness



Recent focus on two forms of construct validity:

**Internal analyses** of post-exercise dimension ratings (PEDRs)

**External analyses** of network of relationships with other methods of assessment



## Internal analyses of PEDRs

25 years of misguided studies led some to say ACs do not measure dimensions

Critics have revised their position: Lance in Monahan et al (2013), Kuncel & Sackett (2013)



## Proper Internal analyses of PEDRs

- Dimension variance predominates over exercise variance with 3 exercises (Kuncel & Scakett)
- When confirmatory factor analysis uses adequate indicator-factor ratio, clear evidence of dimension effects (Monahan, Hoffman, Lance, et al, 2013)



# External Analyses/Nomological Net

Correlations with general mental ability, personality, and criteria (performance and progress)



Talent Management	Dimension-Based AC	Task-Based AC	Mixed-model AC
War for talent Recruitment	+		
On-boarding: Selection	++		
Fast-tracking: EIMP	+++		
Succession planning	+		
Promotion	+++	+	+
Development planning: diagnosis	++	++	+
Training	+	+	





## Dimension Based AC Validity

- Extensive studies for many applications

## Task Based AC Validity

- Two studies for diagnosis

## Mixed Model AC Validity

- Studies for diagnosis



I am saying:

There is **not** evidence to support certain applications.

I am **NOT** saying:

Evidence says that any approach to ACs is **NOT** valid.



## Implications

1. Articulate espoused form of Talent Management
2. Design elements in different ways for the 3 models
3. Present feedback in different ways
4. Seek existing evidence and/or generate evidence



## Implications - continued

5. If new AC conforms to past DBACs, be assured there is construct validity
6. Do NOT assume a given AC is valid for all purposes
7. Ask for evidence!



Questions/Comments?

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