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ABSTRACT

Azerbaijan is updating its civil service recruitment by transitioning to a competency based HRM model to better align with the rapid changes in the labour market. This shift fosters a more flexible, transparent, and validated system, emphasising individual skills and organisational goals. The State Examination Centre (SEC) is instrumental in this transformation, integrating broader HRM strategies for career mobility and talent management. The new model includes significant updates in assessment methods, focusing on cognitive abilities, competencies, and reducing organisational burdens, aimed at enhancing efficiency and inclusiveness in civil service practices. Incorporating Situational Judgment Tests (SJT), general mental abilities (GMA) assessments, structured interviews, and assessment centre (AC), the new approach seeks to provide a more nuanced evaluation of candidates, ensuring a fit that supports both individual career development and national talent management strategies, marking a significant evolution from traditional methods to a comprehensive, competency-driven recruitment process.

Keywords: *Competency-based recruitment, competency-based HRM, generic competencies, technical competencies, situational judgement test (SJT), general mental abilities (GMA)*

INTRODUCTION

Azerbaijan is revolutionising its civil service recruitment by transitioning from knowledge-based to competency-based assessments, addressing the rapid changes in technology and the labour market. The updated system emphasises measurable behavioural indicators for essential human behaviours such as leadership, teamwork, and communication, within a people-centred framework, while also considering critical mental abilities. This approach advocates for a holistic assessment system that not only evaluates critical traits and skills crucial for organisational success but also champions a flexible, transparent, and valid framework, bolstering organisational and individual decision-making as well as enhancing career mobility. The shift towards a development-centred, flexible methodology marks a significant departure from traditional, law-centred approaches, highlighting the growing influence of social sciences and organisational psychology in human resources management (HRM). Furthermore, Azerbaijan's efforts include significant international collaboration and a focus on integrating recruitment with broader HRM strategies, including performance management and employee development, to create a cohesive and innovative national talent management framework. This initiative not only fosters inclusiveness and efficiency but also aligns with global standards, benefiting from European support and cooperation with the Organisation of Turkic States, underlining the importance of shared knowledge and development in enhancing civil service practices.

As a key implementer of Azerbaijan's national civil service strategy, the State Examination Centre (SEC) aims to enhance its assessment tools for both broad and individualised evaluations while maintaining the core benefits of a centralised system, such as transparency and a scientific approach. This initiative marks the SEC's evolution towards a more flexible organisation, focusing on fostering inclusive relationships with government agencies, the academic community, and citizens, to better address specific employer needs and develop universal civil service standards and procedures.

THE STATE EXAMINATION CENTRE IN BRIEF

The State Examination Centre (SEC) is a public legal entity established by presidential decree on April 11, 2016. The SEC oversees a comprehensive array of examinations, including the final

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assessments for secondary school students, centralised entrance examinations for both undergraduate and graduate university programmes, medical residency programmes, and the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences. Additionally, the SEC conducts competitive examinations for admissions to Vocational Education and Training (VET) institutions. A critical aspect of the State Examination Commission's (SEC) operations also includes conducting examinations and interviews for state agencies and legal entities. These activities are carried out under current legislation and contractual agreements, aiming to facilitate the recruitment of civil service personnel. Furthermore, the SEC plays a pivotal role in shaping state policy regarding civil service and in the development of various instruments for predictive and performance evaluation. The governance of the Centre is entrusted to a Board of Directors, which includes a chairperson, appointed, and dismissed at the discretion of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, alongside two deputies and four board members.

CURRENT CIVIL SERVICE RECRUITMENT PRACTICES AND INITIATIVES FOR CHANGE

Currently the SEC administers two phase standardised assessment procedures for recruitment of civil servants. A Test Examination is held to develop a pool of certified candidates to civil service. This examination includes legislation, native language, computer knowledge and cognitive abilities tests. Only those who pass this examination can apply to civil service positions. In the second phase candidates are interviewed by a commission including three members – representatives of the SEC and of the relevant public agency, as well as one independent expert generally with an academic background. The agenda of the interview is published in advance to enable candidates to prepare. Although besides the assessment of general and specific legislation knowledge, the interview commission is also supposed to assess general awareness and personal traits, it seems that knowledge of legislation is considered a key criterion of assessment and influences the decisions on other criteria as well. All candidates scoring at least 80% in the interview conducted by the SEC are deemed qualified for the position. Often, multiple candidates achieve this passing score. In these instances, the employer makes the final decision, considering the interview scores. A candidate considered the best by the prospective employer is appointed to the vacancy, while the remaining candidates are placed in the reserve pool of civil servants. All information regarding civil servants, such as examination results, performance evaluations, and both their upward and lateral career progressions, is maintained in the Civil Servants' Registry.

The SEC is one of the key stakeholders of and contributes to - with its expertise and infrastructure - the competition *Yüksəliş* (The Rise) aimed at the development of a pool of talented managers in the country. Specifically, the SEC provides a range of tools for mass assessment of candidates including general cognitive ability (GMA) tests, situational judgement tests (SJT) and personality tests.

The SEC dedicates significant time and resources to acquiring knowledge on the most recent advancements in its field and in initiating projects aimed at embracing international standards. In this pursuit, the SEC collaborates with several European institutions, alongside the Astana Civil Service Hub. Furthermore, collaboration with Turkish public institutions are anticipated to constitute a primary focus in the forthcoming period. Notably, over the past year, substantial efforts have been devoted to formulating a customised competency model and corresponding toolset tailored for the recruitment and performance evaluation of civil servants.

Through an exhaustive study involving extensive interviews with a representative sample of civil servants from five distinct public agencies, a catalogue of pertinent behavioural indicators has been delineated. These indicators were subsequently synthesised into a comprehensive theoretical framework of generic competencies.³

³ Generic competencies are typically linked to various categories of functions, known as families of functions, prevalent across public administration entities, irrespective of the particular sector. These may include leadership, teamwork, communication, as well as the general ability of making decisions and getting results. The foundational

Another initiative directed towards compiling an inventory of technical proficiencies is presently underway. The undertaking, slated for completion in the early part of 2024, entails an exhaustive examination of various documents and data sources, encompassing job descriptions, with the objective of delineating business domains, operational functions, and ultimately elucidating the spectrum of technical competencies requisite for effective utilisation in the civil service context.

Technical competencies, within the purview of this study, denote the capacity to apply the necessary and sufficient knowledge for the proficient conduct of a given discipline or profession. Such competencies may encompass several facets:

- Foundational, cross-disciplinary proficiencies, as delineated in job descriptions, which may include linguistic fluency and proficiency with software tools. It is pertinent to note that beyond language and software proficiencies, other cross-disciplinary skills such as effective communication techniques or utilisation of various project methodologies warrant consideration.
- Declarative knowledge, encompassing familiarity with factual information, rules, and procedural guidelines, inclusive of pertinent regulations and legislation governing the field.
- Specialised technical proficiencies specific to particular sectors and vocations, reflecting the capability to apply specialised knowledge within designated domains, such as tax auditing, HR selection processes, or IT network deployment and optimisation.
- Internal methodologies and procedural frameworks, encapsulating theoretical and procedural knowledge, including operational protocols and adherence to established methodologies. This domain also encompasses familiarity with quality systems, whether certified or not, and the requisite procedural knowledge therein.

COMPETENCY-BASED HRM

Competency-based Human Resource Management (HRM) represents a contemporary approach aimed at harmonising personnel strategies with organisational objectives. In the absence of such alignment, enterprises may struggle to secure the talent essential for success or cultivate a corporate culture reflective of their core values. This methodology serves as a mechanism for effectively managing personnel within an organisation, where individual proficiencies and capabilities assume paramount importance in pursuit of organisational goals. Its overarching goal is to sustain both local and global competitiveness while propelling organisational development and expansion.

When competencies are clearly defined, aligned with business imperatives, and tailored to the specific roles of individuals within the organisation, they can function as a metric for impartially selecting, developing, and appraising personnel across all levels of the organisation. Moreover, competencies play a pivotal role in translating an organisation's values into tangible employee behaviours.

When integrated with technical knowledge, experience, and attitudes, competencies contribute to the delineation of a comprehensive 'success profile' for each job role. It is assumed that employees possessing all the requisite qualifications outlined in the success profile will be proficient in fulfilling the standardised functions inherent to their job category and field of expertise. Job profiles, thus constructed, facilitate improved allocation and utilisation of human resources within an organisation, fostering a cohesive, interconnected, and transparent HRM framework.

framework of core generic competencies, devised in collaboration with international partners encompasses competencies tailored to address the functional skill requirements across diverse roles.

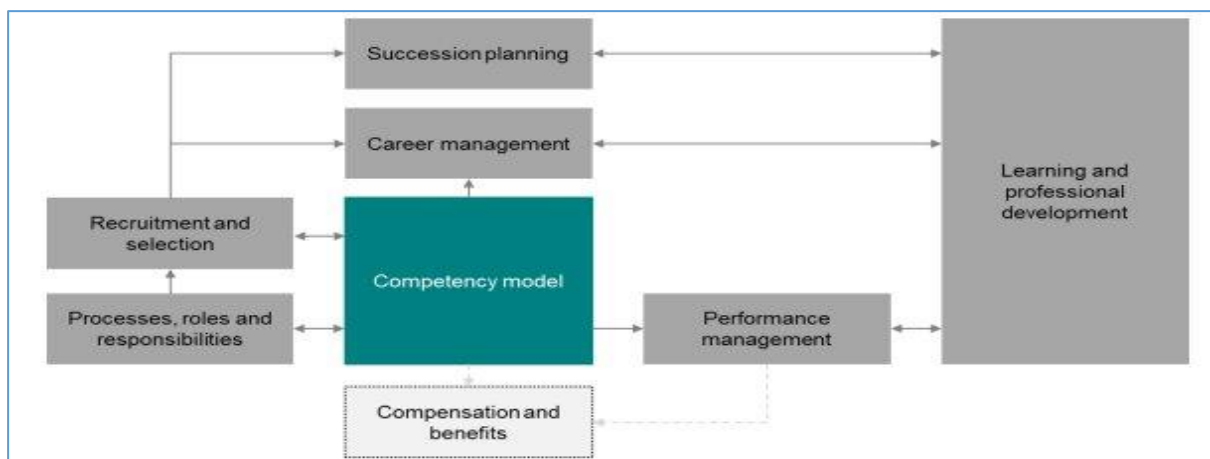
A well-constructed Job Profile encompasses detailed specifications regarding:

- Knowledge: Technical and/or professional expertise requisite for successful job performance.
- Experience: Educational and professional achievements necessary for effective job execution.
- Competencies: A compilation of behaviours demonstrated in the performance of job duties.
- Attitudes: Values, behavioural principles, and motivational factors pertinent to job satisfaction and performance outcomes.

A competency framework delineates the standards of performance excellence within an organisation. In practice, this framework comprises various elements tailored to numerous job roles within the organisational structure. Each component of the framework establishes criteria for exemplary work behaviour and serves as a yardstick against which employee performance is evaluated and/or predicted.

In addition to the foundational values of the organisation, which encompass guiding principles and ethical standards that influence the actions, interactions, and decisions of employees, the competency framework includes generic competencies and technical competencies which are key for both recruitment and performance assessment as well as planning development of human resources.

Figure 1: Competency-based HRM system



THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE GENERIC COMPETENCIES MODEL

The Competency Model is a cornerstone of Azerbaijan's Civil Service Development Strategy, enhancing recruitment, performance reviews, and professional growth. It integrates Civil Service Values at its core, ensuring relevance across diverse roles nationwide. This model provides a unified framework for managing personnel, establishing clear communication and performance standards. Aimed at aiding Azerbaijani civil servants in grasping and evaluating competency needs for their current and aspirational roles, it promotes continuous skill enhancement and underpins the HRM system, dictating desired professional conduct. Initially proposing 28 generic competencies, the refined model concentrates on 12 essential competencies, organised into four clusters, facilitating a structured approach to skill development and application:

- LEADERSHIP – group of competencies related to assuming accountability, modelling, and leading others:
 - o Leading people
 - o Strategic thinking
 - o Developing others.
- DELIVERING RESULTS – group of delivery-related and achieving results competencies:

- Decision-making
- Getting results
- Openness to change
- Professional self-development.
- WORKING WITH OTHERS – group of interpersonal competencies:
 - Teamwork
 - Communication
 - Emotional intelligence.
- SERVING PEOPLE – group of competencies related to Civil Service and organisation specifics:
 - Integrity and trust
 - Creating value for society.

Behavioural indicators serve as the foundational elements that define competencies. Each competency is accompanied by a practical description and indicators for effective behaviour across four levels of proficiency. These levels are consistent across all competencies in the Model, detailing the proficiency expected for specific roles. This structure ensures a clear, actionable framework for evaluating and developing the necessary skills within the civil service framework, making it both comprehensive and adaptable to various job functions.

- FOUNDATIONAL – Basic understanding and abilities;
- INTERMEDIATE – Moderate understanding and abilities;
- ADVANCED – Strong understanding and abilities;
- PROFICIENT – Extensive understanding and abilities.

Behavioural indicators, foundational to defining competencies, are structured to be distinct and build upon each other across four proficiency levels, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of competency demonstration at each stage. These indicators guide recruitment, performance evaluations, and developmental discussions, avoiding a rigid 'checklist' approach to underscore the dynamic range of expected behaviours within the Civil Service. Competency levels feature four to seven key behavioural indicators, delineating the expected contributions and essential for performance differentiation. Job profiles, each unique, require tailored competencies and proficiency levels, systematically organised through a leadership pipeline concept to align with career development processes. This systematic approach facilitates a clear mapping of competencies across different roles and hierarchies, supporting a strategic and coherent development and assessment framework within Civil Service.

- IA GROUP | Individual contributor | Groups junior specialist positions responsible for managing self;
- IB GROUP | Individual contributor | Groups senior specialist positions responsible for managing self;
- II GROUP | Managing others | Groups first level managerial positions responsible for managing others (on specialist positions);
- III GROUP | Managing managers | Groups middle level managerial positions responsible for managing managers (first level managers) and positions leading on function;
- IV GROUP | Managing group of managers | Groups deputy to top managerial positions responsible for managing group of managers (middle level managers) and positions leading on function;
- V GROUP | Managing organisations | Groups positions responsible for leading an organisation as a whole, and top managerial positions responsible for leading a group of functions.

COMPETENCY-BASED RECRUITMENT

The proposed model designed for the recruitment of civil servants aims to introduce greater flexibility by incorporating optional assessments in addition to mandatory ones, representing a significant departure from the current framework. Another notable distinction lies in the content of examinations and interview-based evaluations. The comprehensive assessment stages within the recruitment cycle are structured to evaluate constructs critical to job performance, encompassing:

- General mental abilities,
- Generic competencies, and
- Technical competencies.

Moreover, the development of additional assessment tools is planned to facilitate the evaluation of personality factors, professional interests, and values. These HRM tools, to be provided by the State Examination Centre, are intended for in-agency use as part of a broader talent management strategy.

The general examination, intended to establish a pool of candidates, will incorporate a range of assessments, including general mental abilities (GMA) tests and situational judgment tests (SJT), each requiring a minimum pass score. The assessment of general mental abilities, commonly known as an intelligence quotient (IQ) test, will include a range of subtests designed to measure verbal reasoning, numerical reasoning, spatial reasoning, verbal analytical skills, and numerical analytical skills. Concurrently, the SJT will comprise items associated with behavioural indicators of generic competencies as outlined in the competency framework. Candidates who successfully navigate this examination are granted certification to apply for civil service positions over the subsequent two-year period. The initial filtering of suitable candidates can be implemented through specific prerequisites such as specific certificates, university majors and work experience in the particular field, as indicated in the job vacancy publication. In instances where no supplementary assessment phase is mandated, the top five performers based on the results of the general examination proceed to the interview stage. This procedural adjustment underscores the model's emphasis on meritocracy and ensures that candidates with demonstrated aptitude are afforded opportunities for further evaluation and consideration.

Our analysis of job descriptions indicates that the majority of civil service positions, especially at the junior level, do not require the evaluation of specific technical or advanced generic competencies during the initial filtering phase. Instead, attaining an optimal level of general cognitive abilities and generic competencies often proves adequate as a foundational starting point for subsequent professional development.

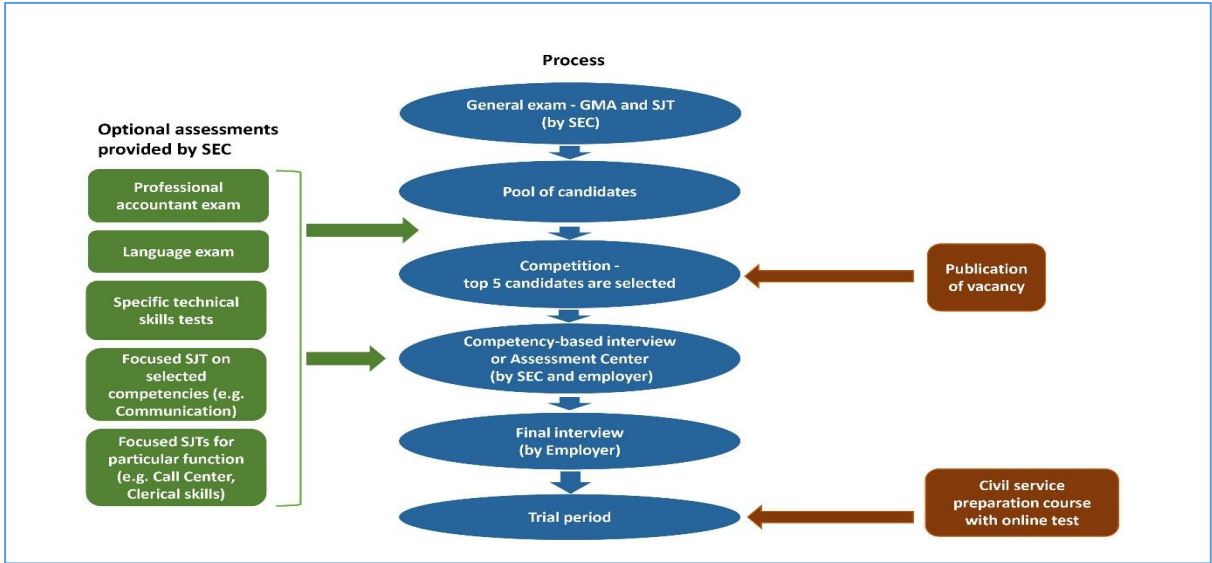
However, certain positions do necessitate filtering based on specific mental abilities relevant to particular business fields. In such instances, addressing these challenges may be achieved without the need for supplementary assessments by implementing minimum pass scores for specific subtests, tailored to the particular business domain of the position in question. For instance, if a job description, such as that of a finance officer, mandates functions necessitating analytical thinking, in addition to a general pass score, the minimum or elevated pass scores for both numerical and numerical analytical reasoning skills may be imposed.

Nevertheless, in scenarios where even such an approach proves insufficient for effective candidate selection, particularly in roles with advanced and/or specialised functions, the introduction of an additional assessment phase may be warranted. Decisions regarding the necessity of this supplementary phase are typically informed by comprehensive job analysis and involve deliberation among representatives from the prospective employer and the SEC. Such considerations guarantee that the recruitment process is customised to meet the unique requirements and challenges of each role in the civil service. For higher-level jobs with advanced competency requirements, particularly managerial positions, more complex assessment stages are anticipated.

Following the filtering process, up to five top candidates proceed to the job interview stage, where a commission comprising a minimum of three experts is tasked with assessing face-to-face both generic competencies prioritised for the role and specific skills, knowledge, and/or technical competencies previously outlined. The STAR(R) method is intended for targeted evaluation of generic competencies, while job-specific technical competencies are evaluated through a series of written and/or oral tasks. To maintain consistency and mitigate the presence of statistical noise or bias, all candidates are interviewed by the same commission, with questions finalised just before the interview.

Upon request, an assessment centre (AC) will be instituted for managerial position applicants. The AC may encompass a variety of methodologies, including role-playing games, group exercises, written assignments, e-tray tests, and interviews, among other, tailored to the specific requirements of the position.

Figure 2: Competency-based recruitment process



KEY ADVANTAGES OF THE FORTHCOMING RECRUITMENT MODEL

Despite the utility of the current recruitment model, several significant shortcomings have been identified, prompting the development of an updated model aimed at addressing these deficiencies. Firstly, there will be substantial changes to the examination content. The existing test encompasses the GMA assessment, evaluation of native language proficiency, computer skills, and knowledge of legislation. In the revised model, the GMA assessment will be expanded and diversified, while the mandatory examination will no longer include assessments of native language proficiency and computer skills. The removal of grammar questions will be accompanied by the replacement of reading comprehension assessments with a verbal analytical test, deemed more suitable for evaluating language proficiency. However, for positions requiring advanced language skills (native or foreign), specialised tests may be introduced as additional filtering criteria and/or assessed during interviews.

Furthermore, the efficacy of multiple-choice test items for evaluating computer skills has diminished over time. Hence, proficiency in this area will be verified through the presentation of appropriate certificates, which may be listed as prerequisites in vacancy announcements and/or evaluated during interviews.

Similarly, while certain legislative knowledge is essential for all civil servants, its assessment via traditional knowledge-based items has proven inefficient for candidate selection. Instead, a mandatory online civil service preparation course will be introduced, to be completed by the end of the probationary period of newly recruited civil servants. This course will cover necessary legislative acts and key competencies through a variety of textual and visual materials.

Participants will undergo periodic tests at the end of each module and a final examination under the supervision of a human resources officer. Participants will have the flexibility to study the necessary modules at their convenience and will be given multiple opportunities to pass tests, ensuring comprehensive understanding of legislation and competencies among civil service newcomers.

In addition to content-related concerns, the new model aims to alleviate the organisational burdens stemming from the current system. Under current regulations, candidates holding the necessary certifications for civil service positions are entitled to proceed directly to the interview stage, as there is no interim assessment stage in place. This arrangement allows numerous individuals with basic certificates to apply for multiple positions without undergoing additional evaluations between stages. This practice has resulted in situations where dozens of interviews are conducted for a single position, with the number sometimes surpassing one hundred. Consequently, the SEC is compelled to orchestrate extensive interview campaigns for certain junior roles, a process that can span several weeks and necessitate the engagement of numerous expert commissions — a clear inefficiency in resource allocation.

Furthermore, interviewing dozens of candidates for a single position, with different commissions, heightens the likelihood of erratic decision-making. The revised model seeks to mitigate these challenges by limiting the number of candidates progressing to the interview stage to a maximum of five, following meticulously crafted filtering stages. Additionally, all interviews for a given position must be conducted on the same day by the same commission to minimise the potential for inconsistent decisions.

Moreover, the SEC plans to establish a pool of well-trained professional interviewers possessing backgrounds in psychology, HRM, social sciences, and management. This initiative also aims to develop a repository of standardised interview questions and implement a structured or semi-structured interview format with transparent assessment scales and predefined tasks, thus reducing the likelihood of decision bias.

AN OVERVIEW OF GLOBAL EXPERIENCE AND ACADEMIC FINDINGS

The integration of competency-based human resource management (HRM) systems is increasingly prevalent across both private and public sectors, with the competency framework forming the cornerstone of this model. This framework underpins recruitment, performance evaluation, and employee development initiatives. Generic competencies are pivotal to both individual and organisational growth, serving as a universal foundation that enhances specific field-related skills and declarative knowledge, particularly emphasising essential social skills. The significance of these competencies for professional efficacy is well-recognised and undisputed across both private and public sectors in developed countries.

In one of the most recent and comprehensive studies conducted in the Netherlands, Kruyen and Van Genugten (2020) delineate the core competencies vital for civil servants, identifying analytical skills, integrity, creativity, execution capability ('getting things done'), communication and persuasion, leadership, and self-development as indispensable. The study found that analytical skills and creativity were prioritised by about 44% of participants, execution capability by nearly half, communication skills by a third, leadership by a quarter, and self-development by approximately 18%, highlighting a diverse and essential skill set required in the public service domain.

As previously mentioned, the SEC conducted a comprehensive field study using critical incident and visionary interviews to identify essential core competencies for the civil service. In developing the competency framework and corresponding recruitment procedures, it focused on two main priorities: (1) considering local cultural specificities and workplace habits; and (2) incorporating best international practices. The analysis, juxtaposed with international counterparts, disclosed pronounced congruence with the majority of international models, notwithstanding initial apparent discrepancies in the quantity and nomenclature of competencies. For example, while the European Personnel Selection Office's framework

includes eight competencies (European Personnel Selection Office, 2022), the UK Government's Civil Service Competency Framework features ten competencies organised into three clusters (Civil service human resources, 2012), and Azerbaijan's approach presents twelve competencies across four clusters. A closer analysis of the behavioural indicators, which are the core elements of these models, reveals a significant alignment among them. Additionally, the UK's success profile for civil servants (HM Government, 2019), encompassing behaviours, strengths, abilities, experience, and technical skills, mirrors the holistic profile envisioned for Azerbaijani civil servants through various assessment phases during recruitment and performance evaluations.

Focusing specifically on the recruitment model, research underscores the enduring importance of general mental abilities across a spectrum of assessment models, positioning it as a critical element in the cultivation of candidate pools. This is supported by meta-analyses conducted by Schmidt and Hunter (1998, 2004), which identify general mental abilities as a robust predictor of job performance, particularly when integrated with a variety of assessment instruments.

Alternative perspectives caution against overvaluing GMA's influence on job success, advocating for the use of complementary assessment tools. Recent research identifies cognitive abilities, personality traits, and vocational interests as significant predictors of career success and job satisfaction. Diedrich and Neubauer (2018) highlight the importance of intelligence and conscientiousness in professional achievement, with vocational interests more closely tied to job satisfaction, suggesting a more nuanced approach to person-job fit is necessary. Byington and Felps (2010) note that IQ-reflective tests may disproportionately benefit high-IQ individuals by providing greater access to developmental resources, thus indirectly enhancing job performance.⁴ Sternberg, Grigorenko, and Bundy (2001) further argue for a careful interpretation of IQ tests, considering cultural and other influencing factors, underscoring the complexity of the relationship between IQ and career outcomes. In addition to the findings above, Koczwara et al. (2012) also established that cognitive ability tests exhibit significant predictive and incremental validity, especially when utilised alongside situational judgement tests and professional problem-solving tests.

Well-crafted situational judgment tests (SJT), serving as a supplement to general mental abilities assessments, are deemed effective for the initial phase of candidate pool formation. These tests provide work-related scenarios, requiring candidates to choose the most suitable response from multiple options. By doing so, SJTs aim to evaluate elements of social cognition, which are typically overlooked in conventional selection processes. The above study which were conducted by Koczwara et al. (2012) in a clinical environment, assessing the efficacy of professional problem-solving tests, situational judgement tests, and cognitive ability tests, identified SJTs as the superior single predictor of job simulation outcomes during selection centre evaluations, attributing this to their capacity to assess procedural knowledge alongside declarative knowledge and fluid abilities.

Well-designed SJTs are posited to correlate with personality traits, offering a promising addition to selection criteria. Husbands et al. (2015) found significant relationships between an integrity-based SJT, integrity, other desirable personality traits, and the multiple mini-interview (MMI), with little to no overlap with cognitive abilities. Patterson et al. (2016) concluded that both SJTs and multiple-mini-interviews are significant, complementary predictors of end-of-training assessment scores in postgraduate General Practice training, thereby supporting their predictive validity and combined effectiveness in selection processes. These findings suggest that SJTs, when meticulously constructed, could complement the more resource-intensive interviews, enhancing the selection process without redundancy.

In our selection processes, we intend to implement construct driven SJTs for the general recruitment phase, whereas traditional SJTs can be utilised as an optional tool for narrow assessments tailored to specific jobs. This approach is supported by some findings indicating

⁴ This sociological viewpoint suggests that advantages conferred by IQ are context-dependent, challenging the direct correlation between IQ and job performance.

that construct driven SJTs, due to their strong theoretical foundation and similarity to personality tests, are suitable for early selection stages because of their predictive validity, whereas traditional SJTs are preferred for more specialised recruitment stages (Tiffin, Paton, O'Mara, Maccann, Lang and Lievens, 2019). Moreover, there is research evidence that construct driven SJTs can be effectively designed to provide dimension-level targeted feedback, for example in leadership development, extending their utility beyond traditional personnel selection (Guenole et al., 2015).

The SEC plans to employ SJTs as competency-based screening tools for subsequent stages, focusing on their predictive accuracy for interviews and assessment centre (AC) phases. Goerke and Maier (2022) determined that construct based SJTs for teamwork significantly predict AC outcomes and serve as effective pre-selection tools in multistage selection processes, highlighting their utility in assessing behavioural constructs and complementing selection procedures. Finally, Lievens, F., & De Soete, B. (2015) summarise the growing appeal of SJTs in personnel selection, attributing it to their versatility in assessing a broad range of constructs for various purposes. Furthermore, SJTs not only predict a multitude of job-related and academic outcomes, but also facilitate the selection process to enhance diversity.

CONCLUSION

Despite its obvious advantages like agility and inclusivity, transitioning to a competency based HRM model is a pivotal yet complex endeavour, necessitating attention to several crucial facets. It demands a fundamental shift in mindset, requiring the civil service community to be thoroughly educated on the new model's significance and benefits. Addressing the resistance from conservative segments within society, comprehensive training programmes and carefully crafted legislative updates are essential to mitigate risks that could undermine the model's credibility. Moreover, the design of mass assessment tools must reflect the strategy's core objectives and respect local cultural nuances. Ensuring the integrity of assessments calls for robust security measures against content leakage and cheating, alongside a diverse and quality-assured item bank for SJTs, interview questions and AC tasks.

Adopting a modular approach and multistage assessment is crucial for effective recruitment, providing initial valid data for both individuals and organisations. However, this should be augmented with continuous performance evaluations and psychometric analysis to enhance HRM processes. Such efforts must be supported by targeted training and development initiatives within a robust legislative and administrative structure. Additionally, leveraging a Big Data and AI-powered database will create an optimal environment for career development, facilitating both horizontal and vertical mobility, and significantly contributing to the national talent management strategy.

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