*CHAPTER 7*

*Aligning Selection Strategies*

# Chapter objectives (C.O.)

This chapter will help you respond to the following learning objectives:

C.O.1: Apply the triangulation principle in picking selection tools to reliably and validly make selection decisions.

C.O.2: Assess the usefulness of different selection tests and inventories.

C.O.3: Design and administer an interview guide using behavioural description and situational questions for assessing competencies important to strategic objectives.

**C.O.1: Linking to strategic themes.** The selection process begins with an understanding of an organization's strategic theme such as selecting people who fit in public service organization. Some selection tools are more reliable and valid than others. An updated understanding of the job – and the KSAOs – focuses the design of selection tools that are shown to be reliable and valid based on the needs of the job and job analysis information.

The goal of any selection process is to identify the best applicants on the basis of the competencies identified as being important to job or organizational performance. However, risks exist of making mistakes in selecting a candidate who should have been rejected (acceptance error) or rejecting someone who should have been accepted (erroneous rejection).

All selection tools are biased to some degree. A person's résumé and reference letters provide only a positive statement of the candidate, and interviews often favour those people who are better able to answer questions. For example, interviews favour those who are more socially adept and conversational, characteristics that might only be a partial perspective on the job’s requirements.

The use of multiple selection tools illustrates a principle of ***triangulation*,** or gaining data and information from a variety of perspectives and viewpoints. Triangulation in social science research involves using a combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomena and is analogous to the navigation and military practises where multiple reference points are used to pinpoint a ship's location.[[1]](#endnote-1)

C.O.2: Tests and inventories in selection. Certain tests – describing personality characteristics, cognitive abilities, and integrity and social behaviours – provide useful information in selecting applicants who are more likely to perform better on the job. Even though some tests have a high degree of reliability, people are sceptical of their value and it is prudent to use other information to verify their results.

**C.O.3: Selection interviewing.** Structured interviews that include behavioural description and situational questions tend to produce the best results. Examples of behavioural questions include: ‘Tell me about a time you were very successful in dealing with a difficult problem’ or ‘Give me an example of a time when you got something accomplished with a person who was difficult to get along with and tell me about some of the things that you did to make it work.’ There is only one correct answer to this question and that is what really happened – remember that a referee could be asked to substantiate your answer. The best preparation is to consider answers for behavioural description questions that are likely to arise. Examples of situational questions are: ‘Imagine your spouse is away on a business trip and you are preparing to be at work for 7:00 a.m. in preparation for a 9:00 a.m. presentation to a team of managers. Whoops! Your ailing parent from across town phones and tells you they really feel ill. What do you do? Behavioural questions are more valid as they tap into what people actually did in the past, rather than what they think they will do. Situational questions provide another perspective on what people might do if they were faced with that particular situation.

1. Cunningham, J.B. (1993) Action research and organizational development. Westport, Conn.: Praeger; Jick, T.D. (1979) Mixing qualitative and quantitative methods: Triangulation in action. *Administrative Science Quarterly,* 24: 602-611. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)