

# OFFICER QUALITY RATING SCALE

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## ABSTRACT

Officer qualities were assessed on 'ad hoc' subjective criteria formulated by members of Selection Boards. Eventually, rationalised scale of assessment, based on statistical evaluations came to be adopted. This has made it possible for Selection Boards to state the findings on the basis of a uniform and standardised method of assessment.

To begin with, three types of Officer Quality rating Scales were devised on the basis of pen pictures of the average service officer written by 205 senior and experienced officers. These scales were of 29, 24 and 21 officer qualities, for the age groups of 21 years and above,  $17\frac{1}{2}$  to 21 years, and 15 to  $17\frac{1}{2}$  years respectively. These Scales were used on an experimental basis but with further experience, they were modified so as to combine items which were highly correlated and overlapping or to eliminate those which were vague and difficult to assess.

More rationalized method of assessment was achieved when factorial analysis indicated four primary factors under which the different officer qualities could be sub-summed. In this way, qualities having high loadings of a particular factor were grouped under that factor.

Statistical analysis also brought out important points regarding the reliability of ticking by assessors, and an opinion survey revealed that certain qualities could not be assessed with the same degree of definiteness as others. In the light of these findings, the officer quality scale was condensed to 15 qualities.

As a further aid to the reliable assessment of officer qualities each of the combined qualities was defined. The revised rating scale consisting of 15 qualities based on four factors was adopted for use in August 1956. Further research in order to discover possible improvements to this new rating scale is being initiated.

## Introduction

The system of officer selection for the Defence Services which was evolved in 1941 by the War Office in the U.K. was adopted by General Headquarters,

India, in 1943. The cardinal feature of that system was the assessment of leadership qualities of candidates, although the concept of military leadership could not at that time be adequately defined. Partly because of the fact that the pattern of World War II, turned out to be very different from that of any previous war, and largely because psychological research on leadership had made little headway, it turned out that members of Selection Boards had to go on the basis of their individual concepts of military leadership. This resulted in an unsatisfactory state of affairs. Complaints were made that the standard of selection was not uniform, and that assessments of officer qualities were of an 'ad hoc' subjective nature. The general feeling was that, whatever the underlying reasons, the procedure for selection tended to exclude many deserving candidates who are unquestionably suited for military courses. In 1949, the Ministry of Defence appointed an Expert Committee to examine the system of officer selection. This Committee found that the method of recording assessments of officer qualities was unsatisfactory. They recommended that members of Selection Boards should be required to answer specific questions in respect of each candidate. The Committee observed, "It would certainly be an improvement if the members set themselves to answer specific questions because, in that case, they would look for these qualities and grade the candidates much more rationally and logically than they are perhaps required to do at present. In other words, the members should be given a list of qualities on which they should record their opinion of the candidates. This method will make observations more standardised".

#### **The Preparation of the Preliminary Officer Qualities Rating Scale**

To implement the recommendation of the Expert Committee, the work regarding the preparation of the Officer Quality Rating Scale was taken in hand in 1949. Senior officers of the Army and members of the Selection Boards were asked to submit "a pen-picture of an average officer." As many as 205 were received and analysed in terms of officer qualities and the frequency with which they were mentioned. As many as 77 qualities emerged from these descriptions out of which a list of 29 qualities was developed for use by Selection Boards, on the following considerations—

- (a) While most of the categories were desirable in officer roles, quite a few of them were not considered essential.
- (b) Some of them which were of a moral and ethical nature were difficult of assessment and were rather nebulous in concept.
- (c) Several of the categories were strongly overlapping in that they were more or less synonymous.
- (d) A few of them could not be expected to be assessed by the gamut of tests at the disposal of Selection Boards.

Since it was felt that some of these qualities are either not sufficiently developed or not easily assessable in younger boys, it was agreed that separate Rating Scales be prepared for different age groups. As an experimental measure, therefore, three Rating Scales were devised—

- (a) of 21 qualities for the age range 15—17½ years.
- (b) of 24 qualities for the age range 17½—21 years.
- (c) of 29 qualities for the age range 21 years and above.

Further investigation revealed that the different qualities of the three Rating Scales were capable of being grouped under five heads—

Intellectual, Social Aspects, Dynamic factors, Specific factors of Leadership and General.

It was noticed also that the quality list inclined more towards the ideal officer than the average officer. A person having all the qualities listed would be virtually impossible to find. Further, an average officer may show a high degree of some qualities; a moderate degree of others, the absence of still others and even the opposite of some qualities. It was thus found necessary to design a 5-point linear scale showing gradations of each quality in descending order from left to right so that the average grading of each quality would fall in middle of the scale. Each of these five gradings was represented by verbal descriptions.

In order to enable the members of the Selection Board to get a clear notion of what they were supposed to be looking for, and also to ensure uniformity of interpretation and assessment, suitable definitions of qualities and sub-qualities were provided in a glossary of definitions.

With these specifications, the Rating Scales were introduced in the Selection Boards in 1959. It was, however, visualised that these would need further refinement in the light of studies on their workability. Four such studies were undertaken—

- (a) Two studies dealt with the factorial structure of the Rating Scale qualities. Each one is a scientific statistical study of the various qualities of 1st and 2nd Officer Quality Rating Scales. The aim of these studies was—
  - (i) to group various qualities together which are highly correlated with each other. This was considered necessary because the raters at the Services Selection Boards felt the Officer Quality Rating Scale to be cumbersome because some of the qualities were identical with others and could be eliminated, and
  - (ii) to proceed to delineate new independent underlying factors which may be responsible for this grouping.

In the first study of 21 officer qualities for the age range 15—17½ years three Primary factors were isolated *i.e.*, Intellectual, Social and Dynamic—and the various qualities on this scale were grouped under each factor. The sample consisted of 418 candidates. In the second study of 24 qualities for age range 17½—21 years, there were three additional qualities to the previous one and it was subjected to the same statistical treatment to find out how far the original findings of factor analysis were confirmed and what effect the additional three qualities would have—Sample 254 candidates.

It was revealed that there were four factors which could satisfactorily explain the 24 qualities. Social factor was identical with the one in first study. Dynamic and Intellectual factors reappeared in modified form. Former has been retained as such. In place of the latter two new factors emerged *i.e.*, Factor Organisation and Factor Influencing.

The four factors thus found revolve round—

- (i) A good organiser
- (ii) A tough courageous worker
- (iii) A good leader
- (iv) A good cooperative worker.

The factor analysis of 29 qualities was not done as the sample in this range was too small.

Although the above two studies were quite sufficient in suggesting modifications of the Officer Quality Rating Scale, it was however considered to carry out two more studies.

- (b) This Third study related to the opinions of Board Members on the assessment of these qualities. The members of the Selection Boards were asked to say which of the qualities were not assessable or difficult of assessment. The opinions thus collected were again statistically treated. It was found that certain qualities were not assessable. These were later removed without adversely affecting the Officer Quality Rating Scale.
- (c) The Fourth study was concerned with the reliability of assessment. An experiment was conducted to find out how far the tickings of scales by the various members of the Boards were reliable. All the S.S.Bs. collected in one place—Dehra Dun—and they conducted an experiment wherein each candidate was tested and ticked on the scale by one G.T.O., one Psychologist and one Interviewing Officer from each Board *i.e.*, four G.T.Os. saw him in outdoor tests at the same time, four Psychologists wrote personality pointers and four Interviewing Officers interviewed him, two at a time. The data thus collected was again statistically treated.

The four studies thus carried out provided the basis to—

- (a) combine the officer qualities which are highly correlated,
- (b) place the various officer qualities under the appropriate factors,
- (c) eliminate others which cannot be assessed easily.

### Conclusion

From the findings of four studies fifteen officer qualities have been derived. These have been placed under appropriate primary factors. The revised Rating Scale thus consists of 15 qualities under four heads—primary factors. Each quality has been defined and a glossary of definitions prepared. This revised scale is used for all the age groups since all the qualities except those which are not assessable in the previous rating scales are covered by this. The new Rating Scale was introduced in August 1956.