



BENCHMARK FOR ASSESSMENT CENTER DIAGNOSTICS (BACDI) A CROSS CULTURAL COMPARISON BETWEEN THE USA AND THE GERMAN SPEAKING REGION

HILMAR BAIROV¹

Dr. JENS NACHTWEI²

CHARLOTTE VON BERNSTORFF³

SEBASTIAN UEDELHOVEN⁴

Dr. CARSTEN C. SCHERMULY⁵

¹Humboldt University Berlin, Department of Psychology, Rudower Chaussee 18, 12489 Berlin (Germany)

²Prof. Dr. Jens Nachtwei (Professor Business Psychology), Humboldt University Berlin, Department of Psychology, Rudower Chaussee 18, 12489 Berlin (Germany)

³Charlotte von Bernstorff (PhD Student Psychology), Humboldt University Berlin, Department of Psychology, Rudower Chaussee 18, 12489 Berlin (Germany)

⁴Sebastian Uedelhoven (PhD Student Psychology), Humboldt University Berlin, Department of Psychology, Rudower Chaussee 18, 12489 Berlin (Germany)

⁵Prof. Dr. Carsten C. Schermuly (Professor Business Psychology), SRH University, Ernst-Reuter-Platz 10, 10587 Berlin (Germany)

ABSTRACT

Contemporary personnel selection is regularly accompanied by the use of Assessment Centers (ACs). However, the accuracies of ACs with regard to predicting later job performance vary to a great extent in the available literature. In pursue of developing a standardized and detailed instrument which includes quality criteria to evaluate and improve methodological AC quality, the project "Benchmark for Assessment Center Diagnostics" (BACDi) launched in 2008. During the course of the project an instrument has been developed, containing 67 quality criteria for systematically evaluating ACs. This instrument has been applied to 41 large German organizations.

This article aims at introducing the application of the BACDi instrument in North American companies which forms the basis of a cultural comparison between AC quality in German speaking countries and North America.

Key words: assessment center, benchmark, cross cultural

1. STAFFING THE ORGANIZATION

The Human Resource (HR) departments of many companies are repeatedly faced with difficult and crucial decisions when it comes to staffing the organization. Selecting and hiring personnel can be a time consuming and expensive task (Cascio, 1979). The ultimate objective of the selection process is to establish an appropriate fit between person and organization (Morley, 2007). In most cases, the organization's designated department conducts a job analysis previous to the selection procedure in order to establish which competences are needed for the free positions (Cascio, 2009). The job in question must



be specified in terms of employee characteristics and parameter values of these characteristics that are necessary to perform the tasks which the free position requires.

After the organization has developed a job description and person specification, applicants apply for the job and the actual selection procedure starts. To determine the right person for the position, recruiters can choose between different selection instruments. The most popular modern personnel selection methods include tests of general mental ability, work samples, structured and unstructured interviews, and assessment centers (ACs) (Anderson, Sadalgo, Schinkel, & Cunningham-Snell, 2008).

From an organization's and employee's perspective it is of utmost importance that the selection decisions reached through these instruments are as accurate as possible. In this context selection accuracy means that the candidates chosen subsequently turn out to be effective job performers (Anderson & Shakelton, 1990). Inaccurate employee selection can result in dramatic consequences. First, for an organization there is the possibility that the strategic goals cannot be met if the wrong person is in a responsible position. Second, there are tremendous costs that emerge on the one hand for the defective selection procedure and on the other for the payment for unsatisfactory work resulting from incompetence or inappropriate work attitudes of the selected employee. Third, the reputation of the organization might suffer from inaccurate selection procedures (Turban, Hendrickson & Forret, 1998). For an employee, being selected for the wrong position can result in unnecessary work stress on the one hand and have a negative impact on career development on the other.

The above-mentioned consequences can be avoided by using selection instruments that yield high accuracies when predicting later job performance (Highhouse, 2008). Choosing an adequate fit for a given position does not only eliminate the costs of a wrong selection, but gains the organization a competitive advantage.

A commonly used instrument in employee selection is the Assessment Center (AC) (Krause & Thronton, 2009). Since its first conceptualization for non-military organizational use during the 1950's in the USA, the AC became a deep-seated, globally accepted selection tool. The following section elaborates on general features of ACs, and on current developments in AC practice and research.

2. ASSESSMENT CENTER

2.1 Current Developments In Research And Practice

Paschen, Weidemann, Truck and Stöwe (2005) define an AC as selection method in which candidates participate in several behavior-oriented simulation exercises (e.g. group discussions, role play) where performance is observed and afterwards rated by trained assessors according to previously determined dimensions. The worldwide use of ACs for employee selection has gained in popularity over the last decade. This is especially the case for non managerial jobs like for instance air force pilots (Caretta, 2000), police entry candidates or lawyers (reviewed in Lievens & Thornton, 2005). However, results of studies estimating the use of ACs in an organizational environment vary to some extent. A survey by Krause & Thronton (2009) indicates that 34% of the organizations in Western Europe and 20% of the organisations in North America use an AC for personnel selection of external applicants. Slightly different numbers were obtained in a study conducted by Nachtwei and Schermuly (2009). They report that 14% of medium-sized and 21% of large companies in German speaking countries use ACs for employee selection.



A third study by Ryan and colleagues (1999) claims that the use of ACs is generally unusual. However, the authors state that ACs are used more often in the UK, Germany and the Netherlands than in France and Belgium.

Nowadays, ACs are more frequently applied for employee development and promotion (20-60%) (Krause & Thornton, 2008) than ten years ago (30-40%) (Spsychalski, Quinones, Gaugler and Pohley, 1997), however, the above numbers on organizational use of ACs in employee selection suggest that they remain attractive instruments for this purpose. This is unsurprising because they yield several positive features; a meta-analysis conducted by Arthur, Day, McNelly & Edens (2003) showed that ACs display, depending on the dimension measured, a criterion-related validity with coefficients ranging from .25 to .39. There are numerous other studies that report the ability of ACs to predict job performance (Schmidt & Hunter, 1986; Klimoski & Brickner, 1987; Hermelin, Lievens & Robertson, 2007). Moreover, the inter-rater reliabilities of ACs range from .60 to .90 depending on the level of assessor experience (Thronton & Rupp, 2005). Last not least, applicants favor this selection method over other prominent methods like for instance cognitive ability tests (Macan, Avedon, Paese & Smith, 1994; Hausknecht, Day & Thomas, 2004).

However, ACs possess several negative features. First of all ACs are not as easy to conduct as interviews or general mental ability tests. Offering locations and staff to carry out an AC is time consuming and expensive. A study by Schermuly & Nachtwei (2010) indicated that German organizations invest 400 – 2000€ in every AC-participant. A more empirical result is obtained by Schölmerich, Nachtwei and Schermuly (2011) who reported that organizations invest on average 1400€ and 4 working days into every AC-participant. Second, there is no uniform way of developing, conducting and evaluating ACs. This is not necessarily a negative feature because one of the strengths of ACs is that they can be administered flexibly to a variety of recruitment needs. However the lack of a scientifically based framework consisting of quality criteria and guidelines for developing, conducting and evaluating ACs constitutes a drawback in current AC practice. This is one of the reasons for the variability of the criterion-related validity coefficient. Another reason is that there are differences in the reliability of the criterion measure job performance. Job performance is often established by supervisory performance ratings, which tend to be rather subjective indicators than objective estimates of the criterion (Hermelin, Lievens, & Robertson, 2007). As a consequence, statements about the predictive validity of a selection method cannot be taken seriously when the criterion measure is unreliable. To reduce the disparity of ACs, a number of guidelines exist which offer quality criteria for development and general recommendations for use of ACs. Nonetheless, these should be viewed only as orientation, since they are not completely based on scientific research (Schuler, 2007).

These methodological issues considered demand for a general accepted instrument that rates AC quality according to established criteria in order to improve its conception, conduction and evaluation.

2.2 BACDi – Project

In pursue of developing a standardized and detailed instrument which includes quality criteria to evaluate and improve methodological AC quality, the project “Benchmark for Assessment Center Diagnostics” (BACDi) was launched in 2008 at the Humboldt University in Berlin by the psychologists Jens Nachtwei and Carsten C. Schermuly. There are several objectives pursued within the BACDi project (Schölmerich, Nachtwei and Schermuly, 2011):

1. Selecting quality criteria based on scientific evidence or recommendations by researchers that demonstrate an influence on the predictive validity of ACs used within employee selection. In order to ensure transparency, all sources of criteria are available.
2. Encouraging the dialogue between professionals from research and organizational practice by



considering their knowledge and experience while composing the quality criteria included in the BACDi-instrument.

3. Considering psychometric standards during the development of the BACDi instrument, and revising it in regular intervals in order to ensure diagnostic quality.
4. Standardizing the BACDi-results by comparing AC quality not only to scientific standards but also to a norm including other organizations, thus creating a benchmark of AC quality. Moreover, ratings of appropriateness and practicability by scientists and practitioners are presented to complete the benchmark.
5. Focusing on specific rather than global quality criteria that allow for a detailed feedback to facilitate the improvement of AC quality.
6. Implementing these quality criteria in organizational practice to enhance the quality of developing, conducting and evaluating ACs.

Until now the BACDi instrument, consisting of 67 quality criteria concerning concept, implementation and evaluation of an AC, has been applied to 45 large organizations and 15 small consulting firms in the German-speaking region (Germany, Switzerland, Austria).

In the current stage of the project, the BACDi instrument will be applied to organizations in North America. Differences in AC practice and quality between German-speaking countries and the US might be expected since extensive variations in (national) culture shape human resource management differently in the two regions.

The next section is concerned with hypotheses regarding general methodological AC quality in US organizations.

2.3 Methodological Assessment Center Quality In US Organizations

Based on the results of Schölmerich, Nachtwei and Schermuly (2011), it has been hypothesized that general methodological AC quality in North American companies measured by the BACDi instrument is positively related to the size of the organization, the amount of money, personnel resources and the amount of time the HR department of an organization invests into AC conception, AC implementation, and AC evaluation (for a detailed review please consult the study of Schölmerich, Nachtwei and Schermuly (2011)).

Since the primary interest of the upcoming study is to implement a comparative analysis of methodological AC quality in the US and the German speaking region, both cultures need to be investigated. The central question is whether there are differences in US and German speaking culture that can account for a possible difference in methodological AC quality. The following section deals with these cultural differences which emerge for instance in human resource management between the US and the German speaking countries Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. Examination of contrasting elements in HRM and general cultural differences might be helpful to generate hypotheses concerning possible differences in AC practice.

2.4 Cultural Differences in HRM between the US and German- speaking Countries (Germany, Switzerland, Austria)

The main difference between HRM in German speaking countries and the US is the extent to which it is governed by state regulations. Companies in the US have substantially more latitude when it comes to employment decisions and personnel management. There are three aspects which arise in this context: First, the extent of employment protection. There is less employee protection in the US. This is evident



through the legal processes involved in laying workers off, the length of the notice period given to workers, and the amount of severance pay. Second, the legislative on pay and hours of work differs in the German region and the US. Whereas in the German speaking countries the average weekly working hours have steadily decreased over the past years, the average working hours in the US have increased. In contrast to the US there are strict rules with regard to weekly working hours in the German speaking countries. Third, there are differences in the legislation on forms of employment contract. The employment contracts in the German region are specified in more detail than in the US. The restrictions given by legislation are numerous in German speaking countries and go beyond anything found in the US. Specifications include the amount of salary workers have to be paid, insurances, how many holidays they must have, how much they must be informed and consulted by management (Brewster, 2004; Stock-Homburg, 1985).

A second major difference between HRM in the German region and the US concerns unions. In the German speaking countries organizations are legally required to work with unions when setting terms and conditions for their employees. The US differs in this respect from the German region. Here virtually no union recognition exists (Brewster, 2004). A closely connected issue is employee involvement. In Germany for instance, large companies are legally bound to have a two-tier management board, where employees have the right to be represented by committees. These representatives give legal power to employees (Kaplan, 1994).

HRM in the German speaking countries is accompanied by a prevailing so called “stakeholder economy” in which government, organizations and trade unions consult each other in order to accomplish collective harmony of interests. In the US, HRM is influenced by a “shareholder economy” in which private enterprise is concerned with maximizing short-term profits for investors rather than any broader harmony of interest (Hillman & Keim, 2001; Brewster, 2004; Jackson and Moerke, 2005).

Which influences might these differences have on AC-quality and practice in the US and German-speaking countries? With regard to the legal differences between the German region and the US, one might expect that US-companies do not construct their ACs as careful as companies in the German-speaking region, because employers in the US are legally not as strongly tied to their employees. The legal relationship between employers and employees in the US might justify the use of selection methods which are not very expensive. In the US a “hire & fire” culture might be prevailing and contrasted to the German region where employment decisions have extensive consequences. Therefore AC quality could be positively related to the amount of legal restrictions a nation specifies with regard to latitude of employment decisions.

The shareholder and stakeholder perspectives on the US and German speaking economies might be reflected in their AC practices. ACs in the US might be constructed to support the maximization of short-term profits, whereas ACs in the German region might be created to assist long-term perspectives and broader harmony of interests.

There are several explanations for the differences in HRM between German speaking and American organizations. The two most widely accepted approaches are the cultural perspective and the institutional perspective. The cultural perspective, put forward by Weber (2000), states that the differences in HRM are sustained because people find it unattractive to do otherwise. Their culture has programmed them to act as they do. According to this view, culture can be seen as specific component of reality that functions to give meaning to observations and behaviors. Here it is important to distinguish culture from nation. A culture can be multinational and a nation can be multi-cultural.

The institutional perspective states that the structure of countries organizations is rooted in the countries institutional arrangement. This argument is also known as the “societal effect” (Muller, 1994; Sorge



1991). A precise formulation of societal effect arguments is provided by Sorge's (1991) neo-contingency framework (NCF). The NCF claims that "there is a correspondence between the institutional structure of a society on the one hand, organizational forms and human resource practices on the other hand (...) Organizational forms and human resource practices in turn correspond to the product market strategies and product market segments in which a country shows particular strength" (Müller, 1994. p. 412).

A further unique feature of the US culture is that it is more individualistic and achievement oriented than German-speaking countries (Lee & Peterson, 2000). The US scores significantly higher on Hofstede's (1984) individualism dimension, which describes the degree of emphasis a culture places on individual accomplishment. In addition, according to Hofstede, the US culture displays weak uncertainty avoidance. Uncertainty avoidance describes the degree of a culture's acceptance for uncertainty and risk. A general acceptance for uncertainty and risk can also be observed in the German-speaking countries but to a smaller degree than in the US.

What implications does this have for differences in the HRM-, or more specifically, differences in the AC quality in the US versus the German speaking countries? The fact that the US culture emphasizes individual accomplishment and risk taking might not only be reflected in general features of the US economy, where, for instance, the majority of annual job augmentation can be traced back to the entrepreneurial sector (McKay & Chung, 2005), but also in the way that US companies select employees. The US cultures' weak uncertainty avoidance might influence the quality of their methods for employee selection. ACs in the US might be of lower quality than ACs in the German-speaking region, because they might be constructed to a lesser extent with regard for rules and regulations. German culture has, by contrast, a greater propensity for professional bureaucracy, where individual activities are regulated by rigid guidelines and an employee's status is determined by formal aspects like examinations (Lagrosen, 2002). Consequently, ACs in the German-speaking region might have higher quality due to the cultures' affinity for guidelines. In the US, selection decisions in general might be made with a focus on superficial individual accomplishment, rather than a comparative analysis of applicants.

Given that the BACDi-tool is an instrument to inspect the quality of ACs, and the aim of this research is to conduct a comparative investigation of ACs in the US versus German speaking countries, it might be useful to look at differences in the general understanding of quality and differences in quality practices in organizations between the two cultures. Taylor & Pearson (1994) define quality in an organizational context as the effective achievement of the agreed goal between customer and supplier. According to them, quality is a relative measure of performance rather than an absolute declaration of achievement. An organization's coordinated commitment to achieve quality at each production step of a commodity or service is termed total quality (TQ). Quality management (QM) can be defined as systematic planning of tasks to achieve quality. Together, total quality and quality management form total quality management (TQM), which is a managed system to achieve total quality (Taylor & Pearson, 1994). Although originally conceptualized in the US during the 1940s, TQM was first implemented by Japanese organizations during the 1950s. In the late seventies and early eighties the Japanese management philosophy reached the US again, and was eventually applied in the German speaking countries from the late eighties onwards. The adapted TQM programs consist of three different levels: on the first, most superficial level, there are practical tools for quality improvement; the second level consists of techniques and models for quality improvement; and the third entails values which form the basis for the other two levels. Some of the most important values are customer orientation, leadership commitment, participation of all employees, continuous improvement, business process focus, and management by data. The influence of the Japanese philosophy can be especially seen in the values continuous improvement and participation of all employees (Lagrosen, 2002). Organizations in the German speaking region are in general better positioned for an implementation of TQM programs than organizations in the US. This is due to the greater



compatibility of German culture with total quality. Europeans in general “have a sense for the long term, embrace the deductive approach (from general to particular), accept the intangible and collective, while accepting the premise that reflection precedes action” (cited Hermel, 1997, p.140). In the US, by contrast, TQM seems to be in conflict with the traditional foundations of management. US companies work under the principle of individual punishment and reward when directing the behaviors of their employees, and management is based on a clear pyramidal hierarchy. Total quality on the other side is basically a decentralized movement that puts forward the existence of a common purpose with activity coordination (Hermel, 1997).

Further aspects that stand in conflict with traditional American management and make an implementation of total quality in the US difficult are for instance that TQM must be process rather than result oriented, and that the guidance of TQM must include all employees. The incompatibilities of US culture and TQM led to a different approach of total quality in the US: business process re-engineering (BPR). This “American way” of TQM has several values in common with the original concept; however, there are also differences between the two approaches. Similar features are for instance the focus on the principle of process, the use of benchmarking, orientation on customer needs, the recognition of process measurement, and the objective of improving business performance. The central difference is that in BPR total quality is achieved by radical change and immediate action, whereas in TQM quality is primarily obtained by means of continuous improvement and the need for preparation (Hermel, 1997).

What do these differences in quality management between the US and German-speaking region imply for the quality of ACs in the two cultures? The quality practices in the US promote short term goals, which is in accordance with the US shareholder economy, whereas the quality practices in the German-speaking region support long-term perspectives of a stakeholder economy. These aspects might influence the quality of ACs in the respective regions. ACs in the US might be created, conducted and evaluated with weights on different quality aspects than ACs in the German-speaking region because North American ACs target different needs (short term) than ACs in the German-speaking region. It might be expected that ACs in the US are of higher methodological quality because successful maximization of short-term profits requires the selection of a competent workforce by means of a valid selection method. Contrary, it might be expected that ACs in the German speaking region are of higher methodological quality because pursuing long term goals and achieving collective harmony of interest demands a competent workforce selected by a valid selection method as well.

Finally, the simplest presumption for a difference in AC quality between the German-speaking region and the US is rooted in the fact that non-military ACs were originally conceptualized in the US (although the first application goes back to German military). North American ACs might be of higher quality because they are created, conducted, and evaluated with a kind of expertise that is due to the nation’s extensive experience with the use of ACs as employee selection method. The aim of this article is to introduce an upcoming study in which the AC quality of North American companies is evaluated with the aid of the BACDi instrument. The BACDi results of the US companies will be compared to the BACDi results of companies in the German-speaking region in order to explore possible upcoming differences.

A prerequisite for testing these hypotheses empirically is the participation of US organizations willing to apply the BACDi instrument to their ACs. In the German speaking region, the recruitment of 40 participating organizations required a tremendous amount of 2500 inquiries. This is a surprising issue since participation yields a big benefit for organizations.



3. BENEFITS FOR PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

In 1965, Brogden, Gleser and Cronbach developed a formula which offers the possibility to calculate the increase in financial utility when a given selection method is used instead of random selection of employees.

$$\Delta U = N_E * T * SD_y * r_{xy} * Z_x - C * N_B$$

ΔU : describes the expected net utility in € (resulting from the use of certain selection method)

N_E : number of selected applicants

T : time period the selected applicants are employed by the organization

SD_y : scaling factor, (€ value of one standard deviation in the criterion level)

r_{xy} : incremental predictive validity of the selection instrument

Z_x : standardized mean-predictor score of the selected applicants

C : cost per applicant

N_B : total number of applicants

One variable within the formula is the predictive validity of the selection instrument. Given that all the remaining factors in the equation remain constant, an increase in predictive validity of the selection instrument will result in an increase in overall expected utility (ΔU). Such a situation can be illustrated by the following example:

A given selection instrument with a predictive validity (r_{xy}) of .25 is deployed to select 2 applicants (N_E) from a sample (N_B) of 20, for a time period (T) of five years. The scaling factor (SD_y) is 20.000€, the standardized mean-predictor score of the selected applicants (Z_x) is 1.96, and the cost (C) per applicant is 1400€. The expected utility (ΔU) resulting from the use of this selection method is: 70.000€ (given prior selection was conducted per chance without any validity, which is quite unrealistic so the second example below should be consulted).

Now, consider the same situation with a selection instrument that displays a predictive validity of .30 compared to .25 after a methodological improvement. The expected utility (ΔU) resulting from the use of this selection method is: 89.600€. This hypothetical example shows that a .05 increase in the predictive validity of a selection instrument results in an increase in expected utility of approximately 20.000€.

These numbers clarify the benefits for organizations participating in the BACDi-project. The individual feedback an organization receives about the methodological quality of their AC includes areas for improvement (Figure 1). If an organization realizes suggestions which lead to an increase of methodological AC quality, then there is a great chance that the predictive validity of the selection



instrument increases, which in turn has a positive effect on the overall expected utility of the selection outcome.

Fig. 1:

Criterion	Fulfillment	Benchmark	Appropriateness ₁
Practicability₂			
Conception			
1. A diagnostic expert with experience in the construction of ACs was involved in the construction of the AC	○ ■■■	■■■	■■■
2. Job-specifications were established prior to AC construction	○ ■■■	■■■	■■■
3. At least 2 different methods have been used during job-analysis	● ■■□	■■■□	■□□
4. The desired parameter-values of the job-characteristics were established with regard to the requirements of the job	○ ■■□	■■■	■■■
5. The job-specification contains guidelines for desired parameter-values of every job-characteristic	○ ■■□	■■■□	■■■□

₁ The criterion is capable of supporting employee selection. It contributes to the applicants' AC result by being highly predictive for their job success at a later date

₂The application of the criterion in the practitioner's company's AC is justifiable regarding effort, funds and general conditions

Extract from the BACDi feedback form



4. INSTRUMENTS

4.1 Recruitment

HR departments of US companies will be contacted via several internet platforms, private networks and email.

4.2 The BACDi –Instrument

AC quality will be assessed by means of the BACDi instrument. The BACDi-instrument is a tool that allows the evaluation of ACs via the Internet. After its first evaluation and application in the German-speaking region, the BACDi instrument demonstrates a high overall inter-rater reliability (.84) and first indications of validity (Schölmerich, 2011). To evaluate AC conception, implementation and post-processing different formats of questions are presented. Specific answering options were assigned to each question so as to strengthen the instruments objectivity and facilitate the interpretation of the results. After the instrument is completed, participants are presented with all items at once and asked to rate how uncertain they are about their answers. This analysis of uncertainty allows for an approximation of the answers quality, influencing the items reliability. Further, a specific rule is applied to each answering option, determining the amount of credits the participant receives for giving a particular answer. The maximum score a specific answering option yields is one credit point. To establish a standardized index of AC quality, the overall BACDi score an organization receives is transferred to a percentage scale. Standardization allows for a comparison of the BACDi results to a scientific standard and to a norm including other organizations, thereby benchmarking AC quality through an additional percentile score. Ensuring anonymity, information about the participating organizations is cryptographically secured and organizations are required to generate their individual pseudonym. Thereby, the resulting feedback can be communicated afterwards by means of a detailed evaluation-form.

The BACDi - instrument was developed within five stages. During the initial stage, a vast amount of literature dealing with ACs was studied, in order to identify quality criteria (more than 100 at the beginning). After several meetings of the BACDi-project-team, 70 quality criteria were identified, which were assigned to the AC-phases development, conduction and post-processing (for a detailed review on the quality criteria see: Meissner, 2010).

During the second stage a preliminary study has been conducted which showed that fulfillment of the BACDi criteria contributes to the predictive validity of the respective AC.

In the next stage Study 1 was conducted in which the complete set of 70 quality criteria were analyzed by 185 practitioners and 41 academics according to their appropriateness, practicability and consistency. The average rating results indicated that the majority of the criteria were accepted by practitioners and academics (M: 5.79; SD: 0.73; on a scale from 1 to 7).

In the fourth stage the BACDi criteria were revised considering the feedback of AC experts. After this revision, the BACDi software was created and tested according to its usability and data-output. The development of the BACDi instrument is completed by the final version of the BACDi software.

After completion the instrument contains 67 quality criteria. 35 criteria were assigned to the AC phase of development, 14 criteria to the AC phase of conduction, and 18 quality criteria were applied to the post-processing phase. Participants are expected to need approximately 60 minutes to dispatch the instrument.



5. DISCUSSION AND PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 General Discussion

This article proposes an upcoming study in which the methodological assessment center (AC) quality of several North American companies is investigated by means of the BACDi-instrument. The obtained results will be compared to those of a study including 45 large German speaking organizations. The primary interests of this research are firstly to establish an objective indicator of AC quality in North American companies, and secondly to compare general methodological AC quality as well as specific strengths and weaknesses of the ACs in the respective region in the context of their cultural background.

However, in the case of the cultural comparison it remains in question whether all mentioned factors have impact on the methodological quality of an organizations AC or not. First, Hofstede's cultural dimensions. In this context one hypothesis has been developed based on a difference in risk propensity and affinity for rules and regulations. Germany, Austria and Switzerland possess high affinity for rules and regulations whereas the US possesses high risk propensity. These varying, work related attitudes might be reflected in the quality of the respective nations' selection procedures and selection instruments. The impact of these regional variations in scores on Hofstede's dimensions can be called into question when the inhomogeneous nature of a nation's organizational landscape is considered. Not all organizations within a nation share the same work-related values. This fact becomes more apparent realizing that since the first publication of Hofstede's cultural dimensions almost 30 years ago, globalization progressed to a stage in which national borders are often hardly recognizable. Large multinational corporations with headquarters all over the globe might implement a uniform work codex which supersedes or superimposes cultural influences.

On another note, the impact of a nations experience with the use of ACs on methodological AC quality might be overestimated. The fact that organizations in the US have more experience with the use of ACs for employee selection leads to the assumption that US organizations possess greater expertise, which might in turn elevate the methodological quality of their ACs for employee selection. In general, experience would be expected to have strong impact on the methodological quality of US ACs. In this case however, the difference in AC experience refers to 60 years in the US versus 40 years in the German speaking region. Since expertise is said to emerge approximately after 10 years of experience, it is questionable in how far these differences can account for differences in methodological AC quality.

The next and final section of this paper deals with theoretical limitations and practical recommendations for the implementation of the proposed study.

5.2 Theoretical Limitations And Practical Recommendations

There are two major aspects which might complicate the implementation of the proposed study. The first is theoretical in nature and concerns the translated BACDi instrument. Although the BACDi instrument has been reviewed and checked for orthographical mistakes by a native speaker, crucial key terms and items might be unequally comprehended by HR employees in the US and HR employees in the German speaking region. Therefore, the comprehensiveness of the translated BACDi-instrument needs to be evaluated and discussed ideally with the aid of HR professional from the US before implementation.

The second factor that might complicate the implementation of the current study, regards the acquisition of the sample. The recruitment of HR professionals form the US should not be underestimated. Gaining access to perspectives from high profile US HR experts can be a difficult task when the whole project is managed from another continent and the associated project management has minimal experience with the US work environment. The first attempt to organize a sample for this study failed probably due to minimal



experience given that 800 US HR managers were contacted. Calling in several business platforms to raise interest for the study might not be sufficient. Therefore, it is advised to cooperate with institutions or companies in the US; to have a contact "on site" who can directly communicate with HR professionals, thereby facilitating the recruitment process.

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