

## **Assessment Centres in Czech Agrarian Business**

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*There are several scientific and public researches in problematic of personnel management in sector of commercial business. There are no (or a few) such research interests in the Czech agrarian business though it is an important part of economy of every country which also employes many inhabitants. Paper is focused on problematic of using services of Assessment Centres in the Czech agrarian business.*

Field of Research: Assessment centres, competency, scientific research, agrarian business

### **1.0 Introduction**

The field of the Czech agrarian business is one part of Czech economy which does not belong to the main concern of humanities scientists. This sector of economy is not perceived by the Czech public as well as other business sectors which may be an effect of labour severity and its benefits and, of course, the financial position of this sector. Therefore this research is focused on assessment centre services discovering in the fore mentioned business.

### **2.0 Literature Review**

Assessment Centre is name for group of special diagnostic methods which can be used in field of (entrance) job interview. This method is being used since 1980' and the main advantage is in presence of more evaluators (managers, personnel professionals, psychologists etc.) during job-candidate interview (Vodák etc., 2007). It can be used to discover knowledge and competency of candidates who apply for job positions in top or middle company management or the positions are closely specialized and strategic. Recommended number of candidates for one job position is between 5 and 12 – due to financial costs and efficiency of this method. Assessments Centre can be organized by specialized personnel company as well as by own specialists. Average costs of one-day lasting Assessment Centre is about 3 000 € (Kyrianová, 2003). The method mentioned above is not used only in situations of new workers recruitment but it can take part in decisions of evaluating current employees or it can be used as support tool in employees-firing (Plamínek and Fišer, 2005).

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### 3.0 Methodology and Research Design

The main goal of this paper is to present results of public inquiry which was concerned in using services of Assessment Centres in the Czech agrarian business. The mentioned public inquire took place in companies of Czech agrarian business and the results and factors founded in this inquiry have been discussed and commented with representatives of personnel agencies and head-hunters companies. First of all is interpreted the problematic and principle of Assessment Centre which is based on information published in attached literature references. Then are described findings of mentioned research and discussion, of course.

### 4.0 Discussion of Findings

The 1685 companies of the Czech agrarian business have been asked if they use services of Assessment Centre or not (in May and June 2009). 75 returned responses (31 women, 40 men and 4 with no-gender-filled) could be widely interpreted. The companies in this research represented all kinds of companies which take part in sector of the Czech agrarian business – small, middle and big ones according to the number of employees or amount of company capital. Also institutions concerned with agrarian sector of the Czech government have been asked to take part in this research, too (For ex.: Departments of Ministry of Agriculture, some consultant agencies etc.). Table no.1 presents results of comparison questions about using Assessment Centre services and problematic of competency. Respondents were asked if they prepare competency models or not because competency and services of Assessment services are very close problematic.

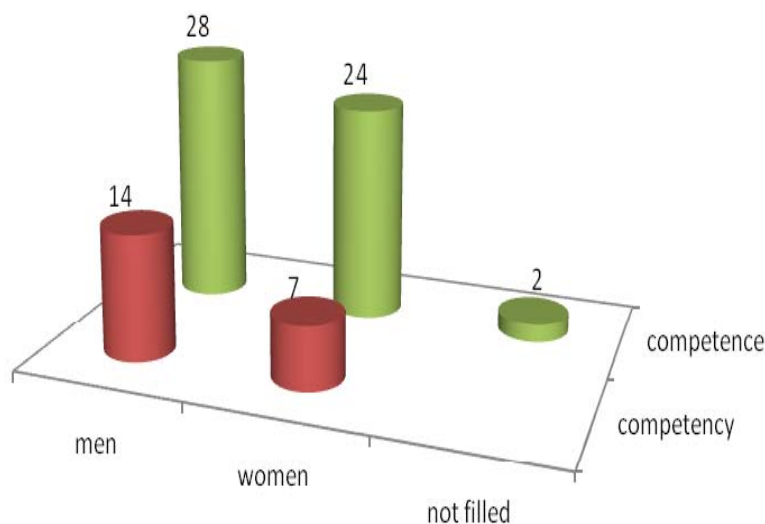
Table no. 1: Assessment Centre services and competency models comparison

		Competency models	
		yes	no
AC services	yes	-	-
	no	12	63

Nobody from 75 respondents has answered that his/her employer uses services of Assessment Centre. Competency models are prepared in 12 companies. This situation may be partly caused by Czech interpretation of word “competency” which meaning is very often changed for meaning of “competence”. Graph no. 1 shows how do respondents understand and interpret the word “competency”. 54 respondents explained word “competency” as “competence”, only 21 marked the right meaning. The Czech idea of meaning of “competency” can be divided into two ways: a) the

German (“competence”) and b) the Anglo-Saxon (“competency”). In branch of personnel management is preferred the meaning of Anglo-Saxon conception and in field of organizational management is mostly preferred the French-German explanation.

Graph no. 1: Understanding “competency”



Presented results refer to a little interest in mentioned services. But it can be also caused by asked respondents' unwillingness to answer this public inquiry. Therefore agencies specialized in field of personnel management and suppliers of assessment centre methods were asked to give us information about number of projects they made for Czech agrarian companies in field of assessment centre services. Five major agencies answered that supplying these methods in companies of the Czech agrarian sector is very marginal part of their product portfolio. Only less than 2 or 3 percent (from c. 300) of made projects were consultations or solutions for companies in agricultural sector. And only in situations of top-management employees positions selection for bigger companies.

## 5.0 Conclusion

Mentioned research which was focused on using of Assessment Centre services in the Czech agrarian business does not result in discovering that this sector of Czech economy is different in comparison with others. It is no public secret, but this research showed that there is a great difference between agrarian and non-agrarian business in field of personnel management. Using of Assessment Centre services is very common in commercial business, but nobody uses these services in agrarian sector (according to the results).

This fact may be result of several factors (Kasper and Mayrhofer, 2005): financial costs of mentioned services, minimal worker-float to/from agrarian companies, job aspects or different financial stability between agrarian and non-agrarian companies as well. Therefore services of Assessment Centre are very commonly used in other companies – operating in non-agricultural

business and most in international or multi-national companies. Presented results are one first part of mentioned research – several next steps are necessary to be planned. For example this public inquiry should be repeated in companies in other sectors of the Czech economy to get the possibility of comparison between them. And, of course, the similar research should be taken in agrarian companies in the EU to compare the Czech and EU attitude to personnel management in this sector of economy.

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