Difference between Skills and Competencies

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Abstract: Human Resource Management is one of the most complex functions of management. It is associated with human mind which is enigmatic in nature. The main functions of HRM are recruitment and selection, performance management, screening, employee relations, learning and development, career planning, performance appraisals and wellbeing. We often misprint skills and competencies. The hiring process requires lot of detailing. HR must be very aware of the strategic needs of the organization, at all levels and in all departments, and must have the patience to find and retain people that meet those needs.

KEYWORDS: Skills, Competencies, HRM, Strategies, Adeptness, Transferability, Detailing, Complexities, Leadership, Implementation.

Introduction: Competencies are value-based hence are difficult to measure. Competencies cannot be standardized. For example, decision making is a competency. It refers to the ability of making better decisions among various available choices. This process cannot be standardized. This process will differ from person to person. Some are fast decision makers and some keep postponing it. Decision making is deciding an action based on review of available information. Business awareness, problem solving, teamwork, self-confidence, intuition, and resilience are competencies.

I give here an example which will explain competency; in past fifteen years India saw rise of some surprising and budding young politicians. One of them is Smriti Irani. The former model - actress has literally broken

stereotypes, she has shut down cynics and proved her mettle. When she got appointed as HRD Minister, people criticized her educational qualifications, they side-lined her victory over Rahul Gandhi in Amethi. Bur few saw her prudence, her resilience, her leadership style. Leadership is closely related to emotional and social intelligence.

She is currently serving as the Union Minister for Women and Child Development and Minister for Minority Affairs. She is competently handling her portfolio. Smriti proves that leaders can work efficiently only when the leaders get fully engaged with their colleagues, whether they are at the same level or as juniors; leaders must acknowledge the context in which everyone works and to understand and attend the system. She also proved that emotional intelligence is a competency. Educational qualifications do not make a leader excel in their job. I appreciate Smriti Irani's confidence, passion and dedication towards her work and they are her competencies.

Successful organizations while hiring managers choose decision-making skills in employees so they can contribute more effectively to the company. Employees face many problems which require decisions and choices throughout the workday, so an employee needs to make effective decisions. Competencies have long been used as a framework by focusing on employees' behavioural competency which matters most to an organization. Behaviour provides a common way to harmonize, select and develop talent. The benefits are clear for employees and managers, and ultimately, the organization. Competencies offer a description of the standards of excellence for the roles and responsibilities of the employees. competencies often depend on values and culture of an individual, they may be difficult to assess and standardise for example integrity is a competency it cannot be taught, it comes naturally in an individual.

Competencies are value-based. They're specific to an organization or project. Since they're tied to values and culture, they aren't easily measured or standardized. For example, expectations for competency in analytical ability can differ heavily depending on context.

Sills are measurable. Skills can also be standardised positions wise; communication, language proficiency, computer skills, customer service, interpersonal skills are some common skills. For HR managers to choose employees; they provide resources to help them select and develop people. Hard skills known as technical skills which are learned through education or hands-on experience. These are concrete, measurable abilities that are often specific to a job. You can demonstrate your proficiency in hard skills through relevant certifications, portfolios, skill assessment tests, and work experience.

Soft skills are personal attributes that enable someone to interact effectively. These skills can include social graces, communication abilities, language skills, personal habits, cognitive skills, emotional empathy, time management, teamwork, and leadership traits etc.

Though competency and skill may seem similar, they have evident differences. HR managers must understand the difference between skills and competencies. Ratan Tata's leadership consists of competencies such as ethical decision making and professionalism. These two competencies have enriched his vision, humility, and decision-making prowess. He can inspire his employees through his actions. His leadership style has not only transformed the Tata Group into a global conglomerate but also set a benchmark for responsible leadership globally.

Adeptness: Skills are often agile; one can develop them with education and skill enhancement programmes. While competencies are developed over long period of time. A person may require months or even years to gain a specific competency. For example, a chef can be taught culinary skills in kitchen but after years of experience, he becomes competent to develop his signature dish. A signature dish is a recipe that identifies an individual chef or restaurant. Ideally it is unique and difficult to copy. A signature dish allows an informed gastronome to

name the chef in a blind tasting. It can be thought of as the culinary competency. Competency comes with adeptness.

Transferability: A set of skills help one to change organisations or roles, across jobs, projects, and tasks. Whereas competencies cannot be transferred across professions or collaborative projects. This is because characteristics, such as performance expectations, aptitude, attitude and behaviours, make up competencies, which may differ from organisation to organisation, depending on their priorities and goals and culture. For example, you may learn a programming language and add it to list of skills. These can be helpful when one changes jobs in a similar field or role. The competency required for the role can vary based on the organisation and the responsibilities involved. For example, Sachin Tendulkar's batting technique is clean and crisp, his movements as batsman are measured and precise. This is his competency. It has come to him with lot of detailing, regular practice, and observation. Sachin cannot transfer his batting technique.

Detailing: Competencies are more detailed than skills. A person's depth of knowledge, and his abilities determine his competencies. Skills can be adopted easily competencies cannot. Competencies help in connecting with right people, with the right role. Competencies help in preparing roadmap for personal and professional development. Empathy, integrity, loyalty, cannot be taught one needs to have them in their character. These are key components of customer service. Therefore, sincere, and good customer service employees are rare.

Some most important competencies are self-awareness (it helps us to remain happy, to be better version of ourselves), social consciousness (helps in becoming more empathetic for others mindful of how our actions impact others) good emotional quotient (helps to identify and regulate our own emotions and understand the emotions the others), managing responsibilities (helps in becoming more accountable and what to expect from others) and last but the least decision making (helps in planning and implementing strategies).

Conclusion: Skill is understanding what needs to be tackled, what needs to be solved. A specific skill gives an ability that can be applied in a specific setting to accomplish a predefined desired result. Whereas competency gives ability to solve a problem in a specific way, with combination of skills predefined outcome can be defined. Anticipating the exact outcome of a course of action is impossible in competency. An example of this is uncertainty is ethical decision making – it is difficulties to expect a predefined outcome.