

SELECTION OF PERSONNEL

SORAN LAL Ph. D.

Chief Psychologist, Ministry of Defence.

Selection of personnel in the Indian Air Force can be divided into two branches, namely, selection of officers and selection of airmen. Candidates for a Commission in the Air Force, while being selected, are tested for qualities of personality and for aptitude for flying. In the selection of airmen, candidates are tested for intelligence and aptitude for a particular trade. The main difference between the selection of two categories of candidates is the emphasis on qualities of personality in the case of candidates for a Commission.

For the purpose of assessing the personality of officer candidates the Air Force Selection Board uses three techniques. These are, The Formal Interview, Situational Tests and Projection Tests. These three techniques are employed by the President/Deputy President, G. T. O. and the Psychologist respectively. The marks awarded by the three officers are added to get the total marks for the personality of a candidate.

Pilot Aptitude Tests predict, to a fair extent, the capacity of a candidate to absorb flying training. The performance of a candidate on these Tests is recorded in the shape of grades on a seven-point scale. Grade I shows the best performance and Grade VII the poorest. It has been decided that in future only those candidates will be accepted who score Grade III and above in Pilot Aptitude Test and get the minimum qualifying marks in personality tests.

Before coming to the Services Selection Boards the candidates have to take an examination conducted by the Union Public Service Commission. The marks obtained by a candidate in this examination are added to those scored by him at the Selection Board. The final list, showing the order of merit, is prepared on the basis of this aggregate. Candidates are accepted from the top of this list according to the number of vacancies available provided they are declared medically fit by the Medical Board.

The selection of airmen is done mainly on the basis of intelligence and aptitude. The assessment of personality is done in their case also but the procedure is not so thorough and elaborate as in the case of officer candidates. For the airmen the only technique applied for assessment of personality is that of formal Interview. If the candidates obtain the minimum qualifying marks on various tests of intelligence and aptitude and are not too poor in personality they are selected and allocated jobs for which they show special aptitude.

The wastage rates at the Air Force Academies and Ground Training Schools are steadily going down. How much of this reduction of wastage is due to improved selection and how much due to improved training methods is difficult to say.

There are two problems which are facing the selection procedure of the Air Force

at the moment. The first is the problem of language. It is well-known that the different States are progressively imparting education through the medium of the regional languages. Emphasis on English is gradually diminishing. The candidates who come up for selection are, therefore, progressively showing less and less knowledge of English. The training institutions of the Air Force, on the other hand, are still imparting instructions through the medium of English. It is necessary, therefore, that the candidates should know enough English to understand the lectures given to them. If in selection emphasis is put on English, a large number of candidates are likely to be rejected. If on the other hand candidates with poor knowledge of English are selected the danger is that they will fail to qualify at the training institutions. Till such time that the training institutions take upon themselves the responsibility of teaching English to the fresh entrants Selection Personnel will be faced with a very difficult problem.

The second problem is connected with the Pilot Aptitude Tests. It has been proved that those candidates who get Grade III and above on the Pilot Aptitude Tests have a greater chance of making a successful pilot than the others. This, however, is only a partial truth. Some of the candidates who do not get Grade III and above are also capable of making the grade. How to reclaim these candidates if Grade III and above is fixed as a minimum is a problem. A good deal of research work has been done with the existing Pilot Aptitude Tests to get an answer to this problem but, unfortunately, with not much success. The problem still awaits a solution.
