

THE ROLE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTS IN SCHOOL GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The paper critically examines appraisal services which are the scientific processes for the objective understanding of the wholesome characteristics of individuals or groups of students or learners. It dwells much on need for appraisal services which forms the basic pre-requisite for assessment for placement, referral, career guidance etc for learners at the early stages of their academic pursuit and to a large extent a veritable instrument for government policies and innovations, especially in third world countries like Nigeria. Appraisal is the collection, organization and interpretation of data. The principle guiding appraisal services is that people are similar in some ways and dissimilar in other aspects. Kluckholm (1964) stated that every man is in certain respect like all other men, like some other men, like no other man. Appraisal assist individuals to help themselves. Variety of records, such as class, health, cummulative records amongst others are used to obtain information for appraising individuals. Psychological tests are essentially an objective and standardized measure of sample behaviour. Psychological test assist people in the selection, prediction, classification and evaluation of learners.

KEY WORDS Appraisal, Counseling, Guidance, Psychological Tests.

Introduction

Appraisal is frequently conceived of in a very limited sense, i.e telling what a learner is like with respect to the test scores obtained. According to Shertzer and Linden (1979), appraisal is better viewed as a process of arriving at a systematic understanding of individuals' characteristics and situation within the context of their life patterns.

Appraisal encompasses the collection, organization and the interpretation of data. These are basic skills required in counseling. It requires adequate interpretation of information obtained accurately. Appraisal and evaluation are homogenous terms which are often used by people interchangeably. Appraising therefore, goes beyond the practice of measuring the presence and extent of human attributes or characteristics. It involves the judgment of appraised persons' potentials strength, and weakness (Shertzer and Linden, 1979).

Functional Premise of Individual Inventory (Appraisal Services)

The basic principles undergirding appraisal services is that people are similar (alike) in some ways and dissimilar (different) in others. This fact is supported by (Kluckholm 1964) stated, that every man is, in certain respect, like all other men, like some other men, like no other man. In recognition of this basic principle of appraisal service, according to Shertzer and Linden (1979), appraisal is necessary because:-

"Each person is like all others because all people belong to the same species. They have, therefore, similar biological endowments. Each person is similar to some other people because he/she is a member of an organized and intergenerational group, society, and so shares behaviour with others in it. Each individual is like no other person because each person is unique. If each person were only like all other people there would be no need for appraisal; if like no other person, appraisal would be impossible. The fact, however, that every individual is like some other people suggests why appraisal is necessary and useful" (P.1.).

judgment, interest, likes and dislikes amongst others. This disparities resulting from uniqueness of individual calls for appraisal. Shertzer & Stone (1976) opined that appraisal procedures are mostly concerned with providing data that express the individuality of each learner. Appraisal, therefore, seeks to establish a distinctive picture of individuals by comparing them with others in terms of quantities of general human characteristics.

Purpose of Appraisal

There are two major primary purposes for which appraisal is undertaken for individual:

- * Collate information that will aid the counsellor, teacher, parents, administrators etc to gain an understanding of an individual in order to provide assistance, help, of the individual.
- * To assist the individual to gain a clear picture of himself or herself thus planning his life realistically and feel more competent to solve his/her problems and to make wise decisions.

Sources of Information for Appraising the Learners

Both teachers and counsellors require a variety of information to enable them appraise the individual learner effectively. Different kinds of information can be obtained from the following sources:-

- information about the learner's special aptitudes,
- the Home and Family Background of the learner,
- information from individual educational and vocational interests,
- the cumulative Record,
- the class record,
- health Record ,
- information about one's personality,
- information about Learner's plans for the future,
- administered psychological and sociometric results.

The Need for Testing in Guidance

For an adequate study of the individual learner, and to help him understand himself better, the counsellors must be familiar with the meaning, interpretation and use of test results. The bedrock of appraisal of learners lies on collecting, analyzing, and using a variety of subjective and objective personal, psychological and social data about each learner for the purpose of better understanding of the learner as well as assisting him to understand himself. Some subjective techniques (non-test techniques) are as follows: observation, interviews, questionnaires, rating scales, case studies, cumulative record, autobiographies, pedigree record etc.

The need for objective appraisal of students in our schools is recognized by Bratt and Essen (1976) when they stated that:

Ordinary observation or some informal probe into the ordinary background might yield some clues in a few cases.

In most cases, however, scientific guidance is impossible without precise knowledge of the individual obtained through the use of a well designed and tested instruments. No one can ascertain the aptitude, vocational interests, attitudes, achievement levels or operative personality factors by merely looking at the individual.

The Nature of psychological test

A psychological test is essentially an objective and standardized measure of sample behaviour (Anastasi, 1976) summarized as follows:- However a brief out look will be given as follows:

Psychological tests are like tests in any other science, insofar as observations are made on a small but carefully chosen sample of an individual's behaviour. A diagnostic or predictive value of a psychological test depends on the degree to which it serves as an indicator of a relatively broad and significant area of behaviour. A psychological test measures the individual's "capacity" or "potentiality" for learning. A psychological test is a standardized measure and this refers to uniformity of procedures in administration and scoring. A psychological test is an objective sample of some aspects of behaviour. It has been pointed out already that a psychological test must be valid and reliable. Validity refers to the degree to which a test measures what it purports to measure. Reliability refers to the measure of consistency of results or scores obtained by the same instrument when re-administered at intervals.

Role of Psychological Tests

The rationale behind the use of psychological tests have been described by Anastasi (1976), Cronbach (1970) and Shertzer and Linden (1997) as follows:

Prediction:- Test scores serve to measure ability, achievement and/or other characteristics that provide a solid basis on which predictions can be made as to what individuals will do at a later time.

Selection:- Tests are used as a veritable instrument by institutions, organizations, employers etc in accepting some individuals and rejecting others.

Classification:- This is defined as an arrangement according to a systematic division into categories or groups. It involves deciding which treatment to use or to which group a person should be assigned.

Evaluation:- Tests are used to assess and to evaluate programmes, methods, treatments and so forth.

THE ROLE OF APPRAISAL DATA

Test and non-test data make up what is referred to as appraisal data. Appraisal data are of immense value to all fields of human endeavours. A brief look at the purposes of appraisal data to the following categories of people will be stressed such as: teachers, principals, and the school guidance counsellor.

For the Teachers:

- Gaining an understanding of learners,
- Test and non-test data determine the relationships among ability, educational practices and changes in learner behaviour to better predict and control teaching and learning (Shertzer and Linden, 1979).
- Test data are used to judge individual's capacity to learn, to guide teaching, to check learning progress, discover learning difficulties, to improve teaching techniques and to assess teaching effectiveness (Chauncy and Dobbin, 1963).
- Help teachers to determine the extent to which educational objectives have been achieved,
- Help teachers to know their students individually.

For School Principals:

It is the onus of the principal to provide a conducive atmosphere under which learning will be meaningful. The test and non-test data help him to:

- Make decision about the overall educational planning
- Determine the strengths and weaknesses of an instructional programme,
- Make valued decisions about placing or grouping students for instructional purposes,
- Identify areas in which supervision is most needed
- Determine how well his/her school achieves its stated objectives.

For the Counsellors:

- Helps the counsellor to assist the students to gain self-understanding,
- Helps the counsellor to predict future performance of the learner at college, at work and other places
- Helps the counsellor to assist students in educational and vocational choice (i.e. career guidance).
- Helps the counsellor to diagnose students' problems,
- Helps the counsellor to evaluate the outcome of guidance and counselling programme.

This view has been supported by Durojaiye (1976) when he summarised the purposes and use of tests in guidance and counselling as follows:-

- Identifying those who may need special educational assistance e.g remedial work in reading, writing or arithmetic.
- Identifying the areas of learning that need improvement, strengthening or revision.
- Identifying exceptional and challenged students; i.e. gifted and the handicapped.
- Providing evaluation of the total learning situation; curriculum and education policies.
- Clarifying the alternative towards which an individual's thinking about choices should be directed; and
- Identifying profitable activities for individual clients.

Types of Tests Used in Counselling and Guidance

The types of tests used in counseling and guidance in Nigeria came to lime-light since 1970. Some well known test instruments developed by Nigerians include:

* Tunde Bakare's Instruments which are as follows:

- "Student Problem Inventory" (SPI), Study Habit Inventory
- Bakare's "Study Habit Inventory" (SHI)
- Bakare's "Vocational Interest Inventory" (VII)
- Bakare's "Motivation for Occupational Preference Scale" (MOPS)

* Indigenous psychological tests includes:

- Okon's "Youth Problems Inventory" (YPI).
- Ipaye's Occupational Perception Questionnaire (OPQ) among others etc.

These tests inventories can be effectively and conveniently used in Nigerian secondary schools to survey the concerns and problems facing young people. Another Okon's inventory is the "Personal Orientation Inventory"- In which a teacher can easily find out the guidance needs of the students at any time of the year.

Other foreign tests used in Nigeria include:

- Differential Aptitude Test Battery (D.A.T)

- Nurses Selection Test (N.S.T)
- Public Service Commission Examination (P.S.C.E)
- Science Aptitude Test (S.A.T.)
- Test of English as a foreign Language (T.O.E.F.L)
- Scholastic Aptitude Test (S.A.T) etc

Conclusion

Guidance and counselling are inseparable terms that go together, in literature despite their differences. In Nigeria they are recognized as essential services in the total process of education. These have been introduced in Nigerian schools to assist learners meet their developmental needs, aspirations and interests. The testing programme will assist in identifying and diagnosing students experiencing learning difficulties. Test data and other information should serve to provide direction for establishing remedial programmes for at risk students and potential non-achievers

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