

# Psychological Tests in Guidance and Counseling: A Panacea for Educational Reform and Sustainability in Himachal Pradesh

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**Abstract:** *The study clarified the nature of psychological tests and portrays these tests as a stimulus presented to an individual so as to elicit a response on the basis of which a judgment is made on certain attributes and abilities possessed by that individual. The response which constitutes the basis of such a judgment is essentially a sample of the individual background behaviour from which inferences are made about the entire universe of abilities and attributes possessed by that individual. Three major categories of human attributes were highlighted and classification of psychological tests was similarly identified. The differences existing between standardized and non-standardized test were clarified, significance and functions of psychological test were spelt out to familiarize the ‘testers and proctors’ with the relevance of psychological test and the work that lie ahead of them. A number of basic principles that can guide the selection of psychological tests within the school and non-school settings were itemized as a proof for understanding the administration, scoring and interpretation of test. Besides it shows the benefits of using psychological tests, how it makes counseling more scientific and enhances the effectiveness of counseling programmes in making the individual more useful to self and the environment.*

**Keywords:** Educational Reform and Sustainability, Psychological test, Guidance and Counseling.

## I. INTRODUCTION

A psychological test can be observed as a stimulus presented to an individual so as to elicit a response on the basis of which a judgment is made on certain attributes and abilities possessed by that individual. The response which constitutes the basis of such a judgment is essentially a sample of the individual behaviour from which inferences are made about the entire abilities and attributes possessed by that individual. This is why some psychologists define a test as an objective sample of some aspects of behaviour (Bakare, 1977; Carton, 2005). The presented stimulus could be of several types and they gave rise to particular types of tests. First, there could be a written stimulus such as the question, “what is your name” and if the answer is also in written form, this gives rise to paperpencil-test.

Second, there could be a performance stimulus in which the individual is required to execute some specified practical task as solving jig-saw puzzle or constructing blocks to match presented designs, such tasks give rise to performance test. Third, there could be situation – stimuli which consist of putting the individual in special situations such as: speaking before a strange audience so as to observe his reaction. This gives a view of situational stimuli and fourth, there could be an oral stimulus such as asking an oral question “What is the state of India Himachal Pradesh”. If an oral answer is required to this question, this gives rise to oral test. As it could be seen from the above, various types of test stimulus rise to different types of tests. The responses to these stimuli are used to assess three major categories of human attributes.

First, there is the Psychomotor Domain of human attributes which refer to the capacities involving motor abilities. Secondly, there is the Cognitive Domain which involves capacities dealing with knowledge and the acquisition and utilization of information and thirdly there is an Affective Domain which deals with feelings and values. It is from responses which individuals give to the test stimuli that psychologists infer how much of the various attributes in each domain that the individual possesses. Classification of Psychological Tests Depending on the particular criteria used,

psychological tests could be classified into several major categories. In fact the above classification into psychomotor, cognitive and affective tests is one of the commonly used classifications.

One more commonly accepted classification is that by Goddon (1970) which classified psychological tests thus: Achievement Tests: These types of test assess the mastery of a specified area after exposure to a course of instruction, for example, Chemistry Test, History Test, and so on.

They are Standard Achievement Test (SAT) and the West Africans School Certificate Examination or General Certificate Examination. Mental Ability Tests: are also known as intelligence tests which assess an individual's mental capacity. Examples are the Wechsler Intelligence Adult Scale (WAIS) and the Progressive Matrice Test (PMT).

## **II. APTITUDE TESTS**

Assess an individual's ability to benefit from training. These tests predict the capacity of "do well" after a period of training in an area. In layman's terms, it measures individuals "Flair" for an area of learning.

Examples of Aptitude Tests are the General Aptitude Test Battery, (GATB), TEDRO Aptitude Test in Himachal Pradesh and the newly constructed Federal Ministry of Education Test. Interest

## **III. INVENTORIES**

Assess the type of activities in which an individual would like to be engaged for his own sakes without necessarily seeking remuneration - such activities are believed to be linked to occupations which would give the individual considerable satisfaction.

Examples are "The Kinder Preference Scale, The Vocational Interest Blank and the Vocation Interest Inventory" in the state (Anne Anastasi, 1996). Personality and Attitude Tests: Personality tests assess an individual's more stable and enduring characteristics. Examples are "The Cattell's 16 P. F.;

## **IV. GORDON'S PERSONALITY SCALE**

The Student Problem Inventory and The Study Habits Inventory". Attitude Tests measure an individual pre-disposition to respond positively or negatively to people, objects, or people's ideas in one's environment. In layman's terms, attitude tests measure one's likes or dislikes in one's social environment.

Attitude Tests are important because they predict one's behaviour and they are often used to predict one's future response to objects, places and people with whom one interacts.

## **V. STANDARDIZED VS NON-STANDARDIZED TESTS:**

Most of the psychological tests in general use are standardized tests. The term "standardized" refers to uniform test items, uniform scoring methods (most of which are objective), uniform administration conditions, uniform interpretation modes and the availability of a norm against which testees could be compared. It can be readily seen that such standard conditions of use are an indispensable prerequisite of tests which would be in use for widespread comparison purposes. Non-standardized tests such as teacher made tests do not have the characteristics mentioned above. They are often used for limited assessment purposes which do not involve major decisions (Agbakwunu, 2008).

## **VI. SIGNIFICANCE AND FUNCTIONS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTS**

Psychological tests are of a great significance especially in Guidance and Counseling. They represent the more scientific aspects of counseling without which the process becomes largely based on guesswork and intuition. Psychological tests constitute a systematic method of obtaining information on which to base important decisions. Many counseling psychologists who do not use psychological tests in their practice are hardly better and could not be expected to be more effective than peers or elders who give advice to their clients. There is considerable evidence that psychological tests would become more and more central in the counseling process. A look at the major stages of the counseling process, that is, Referral, Diagnosis Therapy Termination and follow-up, it becomes clear that at every stage, psychological tests have a major part to play. Similarly a look at the major forms of counseling that is "Educational, Vocational, Personal, Psychological, Pastoral and Rehabilitation Counseling," one observes the major role that

psychological tests could play in making every stage of the counseling process more effective. In general it could be seen that psychological tests could be used for “selection, Placement, Prediction, Classification, Counseling and Evaluation”. It seems clear that in Nigerian Secondary School setting, psychological tests have all these roles to play, especially within the 6-3-3-4 and the New National Policy on Education 2020. It is generally accepted that well-developed systems of Guidance and Counseling is an indispensable condition for the success of the new policy. The effectiveness of Guidance and Counseling within the Indian Educational system in turn depends on the establishment of a sound psychological testing programme. Psychological Testing would be required for major processes within the present school system. These are: Routine Counseling Programme: In this programme, students’ vocational interest, vocational preferences as well as study habits problems, mental ability and parental problems are tested yearly. Such testing programme not only provides a picture of the student’s development as he progresses through the school, but it would also enable the counseling psychologists to identify vocational, academic and personal problems as they arise in the student and assist in their solution.

Psychological tests are now available; examples are the vocational interest inventory; Motivation for Occupational Preference Scale; Progressive Matrices; Students Habits Inventory; Student Problem Inventory and Adolescent Personality Data Inventory. “Results from such routine administration of such tests should be recorded in the students’ cumulative recorded folders for use in taking future decisions on the students” (Adams & Baker, 2004). Programme of Classification at the End of the Junior Secondary Schools: A crucial factor in the new educational policy in Nigeria is classification of students at the end of the Junior Secondary School. At present the only results of the continuous assessment are utilized in most schools for such classification.

The evaluation sometimes used is a central achievement oriented examination. It is necessary to add aptitude tests; mental tests and interest and interviews to enhance the validity of crucial decisions that are being made at the end of the Junior Secondary School. Tests which are available in this regard include “The Vocational Interest Inventory; The Motivation for Occupational Preference; Progressive Matrices and The various Aptitude Tests developed by the TEDRO and the Federal Ministry of Education. Again, results obtained from these tests should be recorded in “The Student’s Cumulative Record” for the purpose of reference” The Programme of Counseling in Senior Secondary Schools and in the Vocational/Technical Schools: Tests are also useful in the counseling programme which is provided for the senior secondary schools or in vocational schools.

Tests which could be used in such counseling programme include the Student Habits Inventory (SHI) for Routine Academic Counseling. The Vocational Interest Inventory (VII) and the Motivations for Occupational Preference (MOPS) for Routine Vocational Counseling and the Student Problem Inventory (SPI) for Personal Psychological Counseling. Programme of Counseling at the End of the Secondary School period including Counseling for Self-Employment: Again at the end of secondary school period important vocational decisions are made. Student could also be put in various apprenticeship training schemes. Psychological tests such as the MOPS and the VII could be very useful in assisting counseling and students in making these important decisions. Even if these students are to be self-employed these could indicate in which vocational areas are most likely to be effective and satisfied, (Adams & Baker, 2004).

Selection, Administration, Scoring and Interpretation of Psychological Tests Principles of Selecting Psychological Tests: A number of basic principles should guide the selection of psychological tests within the school setting.

First the particular type of problem being investigated should determine the test to be selected in investigating the problem. Thus if the problem is a vocational problem, the vocational tests should be selected, if it is a psychological problem, then personal psychological tests should be selected and if it is an educational problem then achievement, aptitude and mental ability tests should be selected. Second, the age and educational level of the students should determine the particular tests to be selected. Third, the administrative suitability of the test, its cost, the time available for its administration and scoring are factors which should be taken into accounts when selecting a test for use in a school testing programme. Administration and Scoring of Psychological Tests: Before administering psychological test, the Test Manual should be carefully read by the Tester. Two thirty testees if large numbers of students are to be tested. After making such adequate preparations testees are brought into the testing room, seated and are made comfortable by establishing rapport with them before they are started off with the appropriate and specified testing instructions. Depending on whether the tests is timed or not, testees are allowed the specified time and they then stopped as specified.

The completed tests protocols are then collected for scoring. "Scoring of test protocols are done as directed in the test manual. It should be remembered that scoring of tests could be done manually or by computers" (Wrenn, 1973). Interpretation of Psychological Tests: Again the interpretation of psychological tests should be done as indicated in the Test Manual. First, what the test measures and the meaning of the test scores should have been indicated in the test manual, for instance, in some tests the higher the scores, the more the attribute being measured by the test is possessed by the individual the more desirable the situation is.

This is the case in such tests as the VII and the SPI. However, in other tests, the higher the scores, the less desirable the situations. An example of this is in SHI where higher scores mean more personal problems. The first step in test interpretation therefore is to know what the test measures and the meaning of the test scores. Second, test interpretation could adopt the psative Approach where intra-individual comparisons are made and seeking to obtain the individual's strengths and weaknesses in relation to the attribute being measured.

Interpretation could also adopt the Normative Approach in which the individual is compared with others. "In making any of these two comparisons, the various techniques of profile analysis could be adopted and descriptive as well as inferential statistics could be used to describe as well as find significant difference among groups" (Terman, 1916). Third, it should be noted that it is during interpretation that the implications of the test scores, for the major decisions facing the individual are drawn out. Such decisions could be educational, vocational, adjustment or marital ones and test scores and their subsequent analysis are used as basis for making these decisions. Some Available Psychological Tests: These available tests would just be mentioned in passing in this article since their test manuals give full descriptions and details of use and since subsequent practicum sessions would teach how to administer score and interpret them. Vocational Interest Inventory: This consists of activities which the tests is rated according to the degree of liking them. These activities are grouped into major interest areas. "Scores obtained for each interest area are transferred into an interest profile which provides a graphic illustration of the client's interests, then preferred interests are explored for their implored occupational patterns".

Instructions for administration contained in the manual should then be followed to the letter. First, adequate preparations should be made for the testing session. This includes obtaining adequate number of the selected test for the testees, obtaining a well-lighted and well-narrated testing room in which seats are well spaced to avoid, spying and offering of mutual assistance by testees. Also testing assistants known as proctors should be obtained at the ratio of about one proctor Motivation for Occupational Preference Scale (MOPS): This scale identifies an individual's preferred occupation and the reasons for such preferences. These reasons provide an insight into the individual's occupational values and such values could form the basis of providing occupational or vocational counseling to individuals and groups. Study Habits Inventory (SHI): This inventory assesses the study habits which could hamper the individual educational progress. Results obtained from this inventory could also form the basis of educational counseling directed at improving the educational achievement of the individual.

Student Problem Inventory (SPI): The scale identifies the nature of the personal problems facing an individual. The assumption here is that such problems exact a toll on the individuals' level of effectiveness and personal satisfaction. As in other scales, results of the inventory could form the basis of counseling to assist the individual to cope better with such problems (Bakare, 1977). Progressive Matrices: These matrices represent the most generally used measure of overall mental ability in Nigeria at present. It can be used from about the age of five (5) years throughout the life span. One major advantage of this test is that being a non-verbal test, it is relatively independent of language proficiency.

This makes it ideal for subjects whose mother tongue is not English. Furthermore, it is reputed to be relatively culture free and to be tightly loaded, the central factor in general mental ability performances on this is that it is also known as to be tightly correlated with performances on technological subjects. It would therefore be useful for making decisions at the end of the "Junior Secondary School Programme" (Johnson, 2002). Adolescent Personality Data Inventory (APDI): The APDI is essentially a research instrument with regards to the aspects dealing with the physical attributes of adolescents.

However, the sections dealing with such personal factors as self - concept would be useful for psychological counseling. In particular, personal psychological as well as academic counseling in schools would find some aspects of APDI very useful.

## **VII. CONCLUSION**

These tests form an indispensable aspect of a school counseling programme and attempts should be made to incorporate them into such programmes. Such a step would make counseling more scientific and would enhance the effectiveness of counseling programme in making the individual more useful to him and to the Nigerian society at large. However, their uses require adequate training so as to avoid the well-known pitfalls attendant upon the use of psychological tests.

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