

QUALITIES OF GOOD TEST

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INTRODUCTION

Whenever we would like to use a test or other measurement procedure to provide information to help in some decision, we face the problem of which test or procedure to use or whether there is any instrument that will really help in the decision. There are usually several tests that have been designed to help or that seem at least to have the possibility of helping with the decision. We would like to know whether any test will indeed provide useful information. And if any will, which is the best one to use?

Tests and other evaluation instruments serve a variety of uses in the school. For example, tests of achievement might be used for selection, placement, diagnosis, or certification of mastery; aptitude tests might be used for predicting success in future learning activities or occupations; and appraisals of personal-social development might be used to understand better pupil's learning problems or to evaluate the effects of a particular school programme.

When a person is faced with the responsibility of choosing among two or three tests, all of which are available from reputable sources, how does he proceed to select one of them for use? For the sake of this discussion we shall assume that the tests under consideration appear to be equally suited to local conditions and that the strengths and weaknesses of the tests are fairly well balanced as far as the obvious and non-technical features are concerned. What, then, are the basic criteria of a more technical nature that may be used as guides in the selection of a test or other measuring device?

All good measuring instruments have certain primary qualities which differentiate good tests from inferior ones whether they

be for use of the educator, the psychologist, the medical technician, the physicist, or people in other fields.

A test which lacks known and substantial degree of these primary qualities is not a measuring instrument in any true sense, and little or no dependence can be placed upon results obtained by its use. The two universals generally upon are **reliability and validity**.

Besides these two universal requirements for a good test, whatever the field, there are certain secondary characteristics which are desirable in all good educational and psychological tests: **adequacy, objectivity and usability**. These are less crucial than reliability and validity, since a test may function efficiently without the presence of the secondary characteristics as long as is valid and reliable. However, the secondary qualities to some extent affect validity and reliability and in any event make the use of a test much simpler.

Reliability refers to the accuracy and precision of a measurement procedure. Indices of reliability give an indicator of the extent to which the scores produced by a particular measurement procedure are consistent and reproducible. **Validity** has to do with the degree to which the test scores provide information that is relevant to the inferences that are to be made from them. Thus, a judgment of validity is always in relation to a specific decision or use, and evidence that test scores are appropriate for one purpose does not necessarily mean that the scores are appropriate for another.

Reliability and validity are both required of any test that we would choose, regardless of how practical it is to use. Validity of test scores for their intended use is the absolutely essential quality for a test to have, but in a sense, reliability is a necessary precon-