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INTEGRATION OF OCCUPATIONAL TESTING, CAREER GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING INTO EDUCATIONAL TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

(Executive Summary)
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I. Introduction

Professional guidance and counseling and the related occupational/psychological tests are still little known to the general public of Third World countries although a number of institutions and government ministries in African countries in particular have taken recourse to their applications in education, employment services, social/community development services.

Functionally, guidance is a term used to denote the process of helping individual to gain self-understanding and self-direction so that he can adjust maximally to his/her home, school, work and community environment. While occupational/psychological tests are systematic procedures which attempt to assess, determine and bring to light relevant differences among individuals.

The importance of the decisions to which psychological assessment contribute in a given country cannot be over-emphasized. In the clinical field for example, psychological tests are used in deciding which individuals need psychiatric care and what kind of treatment they are to receive.

In the educational and industrial spheres on the other hand, measurements of achievement and aptitude tests are the principal criteria determining entry to higher education, vocational decisions, selection and placement of personnel in a wide range of business, industrial and governmental posts throughout a given country.

The purpose of this paper is to provide information and strategies for the integration of occupational testing, career guidance and counseling into educational training and employment programmes.

II. The need to integrate guidance and counseling, occupational/psychological testing into education, training and employment programmes

In the light of the above, it is reasonable to say that there is need to integrate guidance and counseling, occupational testing services into the education system, training and employment services. Aside from what has been mentioned above several factors dictate the need to place high priority on guidance and occupational testing services and their integration into education, training and employment services. Notably among them are:

(i) the growing complexity in the occupational and organizational structure of society which has made it difficult for a person to assimilate and organize the data necessary to take a decision on the choice of education, career, employment, etc.;
(ii) there has been a gradual shift from ascription criteria to achievement criteria concerning the allocation of positions, roles, functions, rights, duties, etc.; in society. This achievement orientation is related to the increase in mobility as many more options are open to the individual;

(iii) there has been an increasing national concern with the need to develop all human talent. This has necessitated countries to provide a variety of educational and training development programmes to suit a student's interest, abilities and aptitudes;

(iv) with the introduction of new technology, the whole concept of learning and the working life span of the future may be different and the effect of technological changes upon each individual in the society may become dramatic. The point is that advanced technology carries with it implications for education and training, the development of human resources, changes in social structure and, therefore the need for systems of guidance and counseling services and individual appraisal (through testing) to assist persons understand and plan in accordance with the transformation taking place in their nations.

III. The status and development of occupational testing, guidance and counseling programmes among countries in Africa

Recent studies, conferences, national and subregional workshops on guidance and counseling, occupational testing and their organizational structures have revealed that guidance and counseling services have not yet been formalized in most countries and the use of psychological and occupational tests is unknown in schools and within the employment service programmes with the exception of a few countries such as Zambia and Nigeria where some psychological tests have been developed and are in use.

Albeit most African countries have accepted and recognized the need for instituting guidance and counseling services at all levels of the education system and within the employment services, several constraints in the implementation of the guidance services prevail. Among these problems are: (i) the general fluctuation in funding of guidance and counseling programmes; (ii) a serious lack of and inadequate trained personnel to effectively deliver the services; (iii) inadequate communication links hampering the dissemination of information concerning training facilities and employment requirements to youth advisors, careers guidance teachers, etc.; (iv) few (some countries none) resource materials such as libraries, psychological tests, career pamphlets, guidance and counseling instructional materials are available; (v) lack of developed indigenous psychological tests for individual appraisal and assessment; (iv) lack of policies and effective co-ordination of programmes at national level; and (vii) the limited resource base from which they have to operate have affected the development and implementation of efficiently conceived programmes.
Despite the above mentioned constraints and many other factors, the spirit to plan and use guidance and counseling and occupational testing services in effective planning, development and utilization of their respective human resources in most countries in Africa is evidently very strong.

IV. Integrating occupational testing, guidance and counseling services into education and training programmes

Psychological tests have a role to play in supporting guidance and counseling services in schools as well as in assessing various aspects of individual's growth and development which are significant in the learning process. Major categories of psychological tests which could be integrated in the school system as part of the contribution to the learning process include:

(i) **Aptitude tests** - which measure the individual's potential in specific areas.

(ii) **Intelligence tests** - these measure general learning ability, the ability to understand instructions and underlying principles.

(iii) **Interest tests** - measuring the individual's tendency to prefer or engage in a particular type of activity, occupation or class of occupations.

(iv) **Personality tests** - these measure the individual's intra-psychic modes of feelings or perceiving reality emotionally and of acting.

The above categories of tests if integrated within the school system could facilitate the learning process. Secondly information derived from psychological/occupational tests should enable the school counsellor to discover his/her clients (pupils/students) abilities, weakness interests etc. and hence better placed to guide his clients towards self-understanding, improvement in their learning process etc. The test programme in schools should be well organized and must have relation to use, integration and continuity if tests are to facilitate the learning process.

Integration of guidance and counseling services in school should involve and focus on the following: (i) providing information which may be made available to students in various ways such as: in reference books, libraries, careers bulletins, through arranged occupational visits, careers exhibitions and convention; (ii) decision making guidance and counseling services in assisting students to acquire skills in decision making; (iii) counseling services as given to students experiencing emotional problems, social and personal adjustment problems, problems resulting from drinking, drug taking, unwanted pregnancies etc. Counseling services are preventive, that is preventing individuals from problems which may call for psychotherapy at the remedial level.
In order to integrate guidance and counseling services in a school setting, programme of activities must be planned and organized to fit into the school syllabus and the time-table.

V. Integrating occupational testing, guidance and counseling into employment programmes

Occupational/psychological tests are generally employed in occupational decisions, including both individual counseling decisions and institutional decisions concerning the selection, placement and classification of personnel. Institutional decisions such as choice of a psychologist to be employed by a mining industry may be distinguished from individual decisions by a refugee such as choice of a university or training course to be followed by the refugee scholar.

The above argument underscores the point that psychological/occupational tests, if effectively employed, can play a significant role in decision making selection and placement identification of potentials and talents be it in education or employment or for social development.

In view of the important role psychological tests can play in the employment, services and education system thought must therefore be given to: (i) the development, adaptation and application of psychological tests in employment and school system; (ii) research and training of competent and skilled psychometricians to construct local tests, administer and interpret tests rightly; and (iii) development of psychological laboratories where experiments on human behaviours can be conducted.

Guidance and counseling services must be equally integrated into employment aiming at helping individuals to get proper preparation for adult working life, and the best utilization possible of young people seeking and entering into the job market. Strategies for the integration of guidance and counseling services into employment programmes may involve: (i) a programme of action which should include: orientation and counseling sessions to the new employees, activities that promote health interpersonal relationship, mechanism for performance appraisal, evaluation and feedback system, (ii) occupational information mechanism such as job descriptions, schemes of service, career development programmes etc.; and (iii) use of assessment techniques such as the occupational/psychological tests to identify individuals attitudes, interests, personality traits etc.

In view of the continued problems experienced by individual employees, the unemployed, the job seekers and other groups, guidance and counseling services should be expanded and integrated in the employment establishment. The services should help to minimize low performance, lack of motivation in the job, job dissatisfaction, wastage of human potential and misappropriation.
VI. Conclusion and Recommendations

The development and effective utilization of human resources is central to national development. This requires, on the one hand, the production of sufficient numbers of people with knowledge and skills which can be utilized in the realization of national goals and, on the other, the appropriate placement of these people. To facilitate the productive capacity of organizations, and hence advance the process of national development, it is essential that the available resources, skills and abilities are correctly identified and allocated where they can be optimally utilized. The acquisition of requisite skills depends upon effective dissemination of careers information and a systematic career guidance and counseling regime operating alongside the education system, training and employment programmes.

In the employment services for example, appropriate placement begins with proper selection of personnel. Personnel selection entails identifying from a large number of applicants for a particular job or training for a job and this selection requires the use of occupational tests. While in the school system, early identification of the talent of an individual is very essential for the proper planning of programmes for the manpower needs of the country.

In view of the above, the following recommendations are proposed with a view to improving the quality of service rendered and the integration of the service into education, training and employment:

(i) Organizational Base: The organizational structure in some countries of Africa is not adequate, and nothing exist in some other countries. An organizational structure is needed to strengthen the disintegrated service of guidance and counseling at the national level. The organizational structure should not only serve as a co-ordinating agency, but can be expanded and organized along the following areas of activity: (a) evaluation section; research section; test development and application section; and an information/publication section.

(ii) Policy: Although, existing guidance units within the ministries of labour, Employment and Education have been set up by governments, in most cases, there are no clearly defined policies. Policy issues including allocation of resources, training, integration of guidance into the education system etc. should be formulated to provide effective delivery of the services.

(iii) Employment Services Bureau: An employment Services Bureau should be established where it does not exist at the national level with the function to liaise with employing agencies and institutions in order to collate and constantly up-date information on job and career opportunities. This information would then be made available to the Psychological Service for use in guidance and counseling.
(iv) Training: Since the question of staffing in the service is critical and crucial, member States should give high priority to the training of guidance and counseling personnel including test experts.