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ABSTRACT

As part of a process of restructuring a city-wide testing program in Madison, Wisconsin, members of the school staff were surveyed concerning their perception of priorities for a testing program. The survey list, presented in Table I, was developed from a pool of items contributed by representative members of the staff. As a result of the survey, it was possible to analyze their evaluation concerns. The data indicate a combination of traditional concerns with the achievement/capacity dimension and disfunctional behavior along with growing concern for learning styles of pupils. The data also suggest that evaluative concerns can be analyzed in terms of professional grouping. Table II presents Mean Ratings of Priorities Assigned by Various Professional Categories to Evaluation Items, and Table II provides Number of High and Low Rated Priority Items Selected by Various Members of the School Staff. (Author/DB)

EVALUATION CONCERNS OF VARIOUS MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL STAFF

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As part of a process of restructuring a city-wide testing program, members of the school staff were surveyed concerning their perception of priorities for a testing program. The survey list (Table I) was developed from a pool of items contributed by representative members of the staff. The final sample consisted of a random group of teachers and total sampling of principals, counselors, psychologists, social workers, and speech therapists.

The list proved to be useful in ordering priorities. In addition, the data was further analyzed in such a way as to project test bias profiles for the several categories of school staff. This was developed from a grid, matching degree of interest in a particular type of test information with professional category. The results were then subjected to these types of analysis:

1. Total group analysis in order to gain consensus.
2. High and low interest scores by professional category.
3. Development of a standardized test interest quotient (STIQ) derived by taking the ratio of number of high interest scores to number of low interest scores per professional category and multiplying by 100.

Results

1. Table II reveals the data with respect to consensus over priorities. One cluster of high ranking priorities is related to what appears to be an intervening variable concept. Thus there is concern with the relationship between function and emotion, motivation and thinking patterns. The second and third items reflect a more sophisticated concern with general principles of learning. This position is reinforced by examination of those priorities ranked 7 through 10. Concern with measurement of reading as a skill also ranked very high. It is noteworthy that this was the only skill area awarded this distinction. The other two high ranked items, capacity and its relationship to achievement, reflect the classical unidimensional preoccupation with a correlational concept that is both poorly understood and widely utilized in categorical models of evaluation in the schools.

Items rating low priority include three clusters. One is a group of items reflecting lack of interest in normative data (despite the high ranking given to concern with capacity and its relationship to achievement). The second is a group of items related to measurement in specific content or skill areas. The third is an item standing by itself--child attitude toward tests.

2. When the data is analyzed by professional category (Table III), the following results emerge:
 - A. Teachers at kindergarten-third grade level and speech therapists rank high in number of high interest items a low interest items. Counselors and principals rank high in number of high interest items. High school teachers rate only one item of high importance. Psychologists ranked next, rating only five items of high importance.
 - B. K-3 teachers, speech therapists, elementary and secondary principals are most consistent with each other, in terms of high interest item agreement. Counselors and secondary principals also show a relatively high level of high interest item agreement. High school teachers appear not to agree with anyone except for one item. Social workers also show a very low level of high interest item agreement.

- C. In terms of variability of interest, psychologists, social workers, and high school teachers demonstrate more of a central tendency in their ratings while ratings of the other groups tend to spread out more.
3. A bi-modal distribution tends to result when test interest is expressed in terms of ratio of high to low interest scores by professional category (STIQ, Table III). Principals, counselors, and K-3 teachers demonstrate a heavy preponderance of high interest items. All others reveal a higher number of low interest items. High school teachers have the lowest ratio.

Discussion

Several implications emerge from the current findings. The first is the continuing importance attributable to the achievement/capacity dimension. This has negative import in terms of the continuing public outcry against testing, research such as that by Rosenthal concerning the self-fulfilling prophecy problem and the anti-labelling, anti-categorical movement within special education. From each of these points of view comes substantial documentation which serves to raise questions concerning the usefulness of the concept.

In addition, the high weight given to the capacity/achievement dimension when contrasted with low weight given to comparative types of data serves to highlight the weak understanding of standardized tests as normative instruments. Another assumption is that the six items reflecting this information constitute a "lie" scale unintentionally embedded in the survey instrument.

The second implication derives from the degree of concordance or discordance among school staff reflected in agreement overlap with respect to priorities attributed to evaluation items. The most startling data relates to the difference in attitude between high school teachers on the one hand and principals and counselors on the other. This is suggestive of one of three possibilities:

1. The items were not inclusive enough.
2. The teachers may feel they are evaluating various of the areas with their own devices.
3. A credibility gap exists between the teachers and the other two groups. It may be, for example, that when a counselor sits down to discuss evaluation data with a high school teacher, they are talking from completely different perspectives.

A third implication relates to what would appear to be a growing appreciation of principles of learning. This is reflected in the concern with motivational styles and thinking patterns and suggests growing readiness for individualized approaches to pupils in the classroom.

The fourth implication stems from the number 1 ranking accorded to emotional underpinning of functioning. This serves to suggest a preoccupation with the dysfunctional child who, in the system surveyed, probably constitutes about 10% of the population. In effect, this may be a red flag item indicating that dysfunctional behaviors undermine school staff morale and assume an importance beyond anything that would be derived from sheer quantitative analysis of classroom behaviors. This also counterbalances the implication suggested in the previous paragraph.

Summary

As a result of a survey of school staff members, it became possible to analyze their evaluation concerns. The data indicates a combination of traditional concerns with the achievement/capacity dimension and dysfunctional behavior along with growing concern for learning styles of pupils. The data also suggests that evaluative concerns can be analyzed in terms of professional grouping. This type of analysis yields implications with respect to concordant and discordant attitudes within the total staff.

March 17, 1972

TABLE I

LIST OF EVALUATIVE ITEMS RATED FOR PRIORITY BY SCHOOL STAFF MEMBERS

1. What is the child's capacity for learning?
2. Is the child achieving at the level of his ability?
3. What is the child's attitude toward specific subject matter?
4. What is the child's attitude toward learning?
5. What are the child's attitudes toward peers?

6. What are the child's attitudes toward teachers?
7. What is the child's attitude toward tests?
8. What is the child's self-concept?
9. How does the child function under pressure?
10. How is the child accepted by his peers?

11. Does the child have emotional problems that interfere with his learning?
12. Does the child have any physical handicaps?
13. What is the child's capability for self-discipline and independent study?
14. How accurate is the child's own assessment of his strengths and weaknesses?
15. What thinking patterns or processes does the child utilize? (Can he solve problems, apply skills, analyze, synthesize, evaluate?)

16. Does the child show characteristics of creativity?
17. What is the child's best "learning style" (oral, reading, audio-visual, kinesthetic)?
18. What is the child's best "learning environment" (individual, small group, large group)?
19. To what kinds of teacher behavior does the child respond best?
20. What general achievement level does the child have in mathematics?

21. What general achievement level does the child have in reading?
22. What are the child's specific strengths and weaknesses in:
 23. Mathematics
 24. Science
 25. Social Studies
 26. Reading
 27. Language skills
 28. Listening
 29. Work habits
 30. Psychomotor skills
 31. Music
 32. Mechanical - clerical areas
 33. Fine Arts
33. What motivates the child?
34. What are the child's current interests?
35. How does the child's academic achievement compare with that of other children in the system?

36. How does the child's ability compare with that of other children in the nation?
37. How does the child's academic achievement compare with that of other children in the nation?

TABLE II

MEAN RATINGS OF PRIORITIES ASSIGNED BY VARIOUS PROFESSIONAL CATEGORIES TO EVALUATION ITEMS

(1 = Not Very Important, 5 = Extremely Important)

Item No.	Teacher K-3 N=26	Teacher 4-6 N=18	Teacher 7-9 N=19	Teacher 10-12 N=12	Princip. Elem. N=23	Princip. Second. N=13	Coun- selors N=31	Psychol- ogists N=12	Speech Ther. N=14	Social Workers N=10
1.	4.4	4.0	3.8	3.4	4.4	4.5	4.5	4.0	4.8	3.7
2.	4.2	4.0	3.9	3.7	4.4	4.4	4.5	3.8	4.4	3.7
3.	3.4	3.4	3.6	2.8	3.2	3.6	3.5	3.2	2.4	2.2
4.	3.8	3.7	4.3	3.3	4.0	4.2	4.2	4.0	3.5	3.8
5.	3.8	3.4	3.9	2.7	3.9	3.2	3.7	3.6	3.2	4.1
6.	2.6	3.0	3.8	2.7	4.0	3.5	3.7	3.4	2.8	3.8
7.	2.7	2.6	2.9	2.3	3.0	2.7	3.5	2.5	2.0	2.1
8.	4.6	4.7	4.5	3.2	4.9	4.5	4.7	3.7	3.5	4.8
9.	3.0	3.2	3.4	2.8	3.2	3.5	3.8	3.7	3.8	3.7
10.	3.8	3.3	3.4	3.0	3.9	4.3	4.0	3.3	2.7	4.6
11.	4.8	4.7	4.3	4.3	4.4	4.3	4.6	3.5	4.2	4.7
12.	4.2	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.8	4.1	3.1	4.3	3.8
13.	3.7	4.0	3.8	2.9	3.8	3.7	4.0	3.5	3.2	3.0
14.	3.4	3.6	3.6	2.9	3.7	3.8	4.2	3.6	3.1	3.4
15.	4.0	4.0	4.2	2.9	4.1	4.2	3.8	3.9	4.1	3.5
16.	3.3	3.6	3.7	2.7	3.2	3.7	3.2	2.8	2.6	2.5
17.	4.1	3.9	3.6	3.8	3.9	4.0	3.5	4.4	4.5	3.3
18.	4.0	3.8	3.4	3.8	3.7	3.9	3.5	3.6	3.6	4.0
19.	4.0	3.7	4.0	3.5	3.8	4.0	3.8	3.8	3.3	4.1
20.	3.0	3.1	2.6	2.6	3.1	3.3	3.7	2.6	2.9	2.4
21.	3.5	3.9	4.5	3.8	3.8	3.6	4.2	3.3	4.3	3.1
22.	3.4	3.4	2.7	2.7	3.7	3.5	3.3	3.3	3.3	2.1
23.	2.8	2.8	2.6	2.6	3.3	3.3	2.9	2.6	1.8	1.5
24.	2.7	2.6	3.2	2.2	3.3	3.3	3.0	2.8	2.0	1.6
25.	4.2	4.4	4.6	3.9	4.6	4.5	4.0	4.3	4.7	2.9
26.	3.8	3.5	3.9	3.5	4.3	3.8	3.4	3.7	4.3	2.9
27.	4.3	3.8	4.3	3.7	4.0	3.8	3.9	3.9	4.4	3.7
28.	4.3	4.1	3.9	3.5	4.0	4.0	3.9	3.6	3.5	3.5
29.	3.6	3.4	3.0	3.3	3.4	3.3	3.2	3.0	4.0	3.1
30.	2.0	2.3	2.0	2.0	2.5	2.8	2.5	2.0	2.1	1.5
31.	1.8	2.3	2.1	2.4	2.6	2.8	2.7	2.4	1.9	1.6
32.	2.0	2.4	2.0	2.2	2.7	2.8	2.7	2.5	1.8	1.5
33.	4.5	4.0	4.6	3.7	4.3	4.3	4.5	4.2	3.7	4.5
34.	4.0	3.8	3.9	3.3	3.7	3.5	3.9	3.3	3.4	3.9
35.	2.3	2.6	2.9	2.8	2.3	2.7	3.1	2.6	3.0	2.2
36.	1.8	2.0	2.6	2.2	1.9	2.3	2.7	1.8	2.2	1.5
37.	1.8	2.0	2.6	2.0	2.1	2.4	2.7	1.8	2.3	1.3

TABLE III

NUMBER OF HIGH AND LOW RATED PRIORITY ITEMS SELECTED BY VARIOUS MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL STAFF

	Teacher K-3 N=26	Teacher 4-6 N=18	Teacher 7-9 N=19	Teacher 10-12 N=12	Princip. Elem. N=23	Princip. Second. N=13	Coun- selors N=31	Psychol- ogists N=12	Speech Ther. N=13	Social Workers N=10
Higs	13	8	7	1	12	12	10	5	10	6
Lows	10	9	10	17	6	6	6	10	12	12
STIQ	130	89	70	06	200	200	167	50	83	50