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Practitioners' Perceptions on the Value of Cognitive Assessment Measures within the South African Context

By

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Supervisor:
Adri Vorster

DECLARATION

I, Nomsa Palesa Radebe, declare that this research report entitled “Practitioners’ Perceptions on the Value of Cognitive Assessment Measures within the South African Context” is my own, unaided work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated by means of complete references.

Signed the ____ day of _____ 2017

Signature: _____

Student Number: _____

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND DEDICATION

During the course of collecting data and writing up of this report, my family and I went through some trying times with my father suffering a stroke as well as the death of my paternal grandfather and maternal cousin within a month of each other. While emotionally taxing, and at times overwhelming, I managed to undertake in data collection, analysis and completion of this study in due time. In so doing, I would like to acknowledge my mother and brother by thanking them for their unwavering support throughout the duration of the year. Thank you for having given me the time to attend to my academic responsibilities while you both attended to the responsibilities at home.

To my supervisor, Adri Vorster, thank you for pulling through with me. In between us sending the paper back and forth, you never gave up or lost patience with my limited research abilities. Your assistance is highly appreciated. Baie dankie, Mevrou. Jy is die beste!

This is dedicated to my day 1s: Papa Simon Radebe, Jemina Moleboheng Radebe and Thato Radebe, this one is for you guys. Thank you.

ABSTRACT

Intelligence testing is defined as a measure of evaluating an individual's cognitive functioning through the use of both standardized and ecological tools (Ortiz, Lella, & Canter, 2010), and as explained by Cockcroft (2013), is used to understand the "developed academic potential" (pp. 48) of a child. Through this explanation one is able to infer the purpose of such testing as being rooted at "gauging" the potential of any given individual insofar as cognitive abilities and processing are concerned. A report compiled by Foxcroft, Paterson, Le Roux and Herbst (2004), looked at the various psychological assessments utilised in South Africa for the measuring of cognitive ability in children and adolescences. This report indicated that, at the time of publication, the various assessments available and in high rotation within the Republic for purposes of intellectually based testing (both internally and externally normed), a large number of those used were not normed for the South African population. An interesting, and controversial result as this brings into question the suitability of outcomes for a multicultural context such as South Africa. Furthermore, the degree to which such assessments can be utilised as valid measures of the potential of the South African learner over outcomes obtained on South African assessments such as the JSAIS and SSAIS? Given the high rotation of non-normed assessment measures, this research looked to investigate the perceptions of psychological practitioners regarding not only the value of psychological assessments within the South Africa context, but to gain insight into the factors that influence preference of some measures over others. Where beliefs, attitudes and perceptions often inform one's overt behaviour (Argyle, 1994; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010), future behaviour becomes predictable through locating the rationale behind its expression. In understanding the perceptions, thus behaviour of practitioners, elements within learning and development that require revision may be identified so as to progress psychological practice in the Republic towards a more global comparative standing.

Key words: context, cognition, cognitive assessments, intelligence, practitioner perception.

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