

Measuring

We need some way to assess:

- how well a person meets our expectations,
- how well some course works,
- and gauge how a particular 'score' matches with our real world experience.

If the 12Rs are to be taught then there needs to be some measure for how well people are progressing and when they 'make the grade'. Any tests need to be fair because their ability to get a job and further education may depend on them.

This is a very tough challenge because:

- We don't, and never will have, precise definitions for the Rs.
- It's difficult to find universally acceptable examples and styles of presentation that are 'fair'.
- We may have to listen to what people say rather than what they do and hope there is a reasonable correlation.
- Subjects with wide scope are difficult to measure with quickly asked and answered questions.
- We would like to make *some* judgement in our everyday dealings perhaps by casual observation...
- ...But also use the 12Rs as part of employee or volunteer selection.

This article discusses the challenges ahead and hints at possible ways to approach the problem.

For example how shall we measure 'Responsibility'? Some sort of track record may be appropriate for an employer to seek, but what about a ten year-old asking to be allowed out to play down the road? How do we get confidence in candidates for public office? (We could even ask what, if anything, is appropriate in this respect if somebody wants to be a school governor?)

We mustn't get hung-up about measuring and mustn't arrive at a situation where people are taught to pass tests, especially if those tests are not the real thing (such as a multiple choice what would you do in this situation... the answer they're looking for is...) but we do need a battery of at the very least some investigative tools (such as for example questions to ask at job interviews.)

Wouldn't it be useful to set some 'general standard' that we hope everyone can achieve as a minimum result of basic education. One of the issues here is how can this be tied to real-world requirements. "I expect all my employees to do 'sums' but not trigonometry", or "All the managers must be highly responsible"¹.

One of the fairly obvious characteristics of the Rs is that for convenience of testing and in real life there is often a mingling of Rs. This can be a benefit and a hindrance. It is easy to see how practical tests might well cover a number of Rs in one go, for example

¹ How would the 'highly responsible' for managers be different from 'highly responsible' for nurses?

"Read the following passage then *write* a summary *report*. Now *review* the issues raised and especially 'do the *sums* add up? ". But for a number of reasons we also need some tests that are as specific as possible so that for example we can divorce reporting ability from writing. If we're interested in the overall coverage of Rs then success or failure is fine and quick 'everyday tasks' can be used. On the other hand if we wish to use a test for diagnostic purposes then we have to be a lot cleverer and use detailed follow-up questioning to isolate problem issues or spot well over-average performance.

There are many situations where we'd normally use informal methods and end with a rough idea... ..but some of these situations do need at least (1) an assessment framework and (2) possibly some measurement. For example Doris is 82 and beginning to find it a bit difficult to cope with people asking for money, salesmen taking advantage, small print and cleverly worded adverts not to mention telephone scams. We can get a rough picture but is this getting to the stage when somebody else should be managing her affairs? ² If we ask a good neighbour they will take the time-consuming, muddle-through, support and persuade approach of trust. On the other hand we might have given the task to someone from social services who is more concerned with administering services. They need a list of boxes to tick. This is where some framework (the list of assessments and their evaluation) and the assessments themselves need to be properly specified. This isn't an easy task and is entangled with the *consequences* as well as underlying causes. Furthermore the time and effort spent on measuring Doris's Remembering would probably be better allocated to a combination of anecdotal observation and practical solutions along the lines of "Can you remember if you've had your pills today?" and if there's a vague answer produce one of those compartmented pill boxes and move on to the next thing. Finally in the old-age context, simple vision plays a much more important part in Reading. "Would you like some large numbers on your cooker controls Doris?" I was involved in a scheme to streamline the provision of visual aids in Essex. This involved all sorts of visits, forms, specialists and agreements - just to give somebody a magnifying glass with a light.³

In my mind there is no doubt that assessment of the 12Rs is something that needs to be taken up by practitioners in specific fields as a framework for the development of tools for specific purposes. I'm definitely not expecting or suggesting a tick-list based on the Rs themselves but rather rational methods created with the insight of the framework. One approach is to look at aptitude testing, for example a bus driver needs to be good at Remembering routes, and if you want to become a bus driver then you might want to find a way of improving your remembering. Obviously that word "improving" implies being better afterwards - but how can we measure that.

Teachers in school can easily spot the extremes of ability (where a specific ability, ie. an

² 'Managing affairs' as one possible solution. Presented here for concreteness rather than best practice.

³ What went wrong were very simple, practical, things that didn't appear on forms and the idea of telephoning to see if the thing worked and was useful horrified everyone involved as it meant somebody had to take responsibility for an outcome rather than offer it and walk away. I mention this for two reasons: To show the dangers of developing a business based on measuring and to show that anyone who fancies getting stuck into the 12Rs in any established context will be shining a light into some very dark places inhabited by people who are very comfortable with the way things are.

R, is identified) but a lot more effort is required to say who is and isn't reaching a 'standard'. I suspect that we should be using tree-testing⁴ to do the minimum necessary amount of surveillance. The Rs give us a robust rationale for doing it.

But what of the abstract measurement of the Rs. Whilst a simple scale may be too simple there ought to be stages of competency, confidence and experience which we can use to categorise people's abilities.⁵ We know that people learn things in different ways - so identifying what works well for an individual is obviously going to be a major benefit to them throughout their life. Not only will it help them chose the type of learning that suits them but also they may spend time trying to improve or mitigate a particularly poor learning mode. Remembering would also cover age-related memory issues. It could be important to know that somebody age 40 is getting the level memory lapses expected of an average 60 year old.⁶ What should we be teaching in 'beginner', 'basic', 'intermediate', 'adult', 'advanced' and expert Relationships? It's not something that can be measured in words per minute.

The issues raised here need to be broken down into parts and related to stages of development. This is the purpose of the development framework.

⁴ Tree testing is a method of doing general tests then becoming more specific if greater precision is required in certain areas. For example a small set of arithmetic problems might give a 'go no-go' on basic sums. A 'no-go' then results in a more detailed test to see which aspects of arithmetic are faulty while a 'go' is 'OK carry on to the next thing'. This is what computerised testing should be doing. - Looks like I'll have to write a program doesn't it!

⁵ The accuracy of measurement is another issue - here we're trying to establish abstract levels of skill in an ideal world.

⁶ If we had complete and reliable statistics - which is something that we don't. We do have a lot of anecdotal experience which is a guide... ...this is why 'measurement' is so tricky when compared to 'recognising the out of ordinary'.