

## AN EVALUATION OF THE FIRST DIPLOMA IN COUNSELING PROGRAMME AT THE UNIVERSITI KEBANGSAAN MALAYSIA

Abdul Halim Othman  
Wan Mohd. Rafaei Abdul Rahman  
Aminuddin Mohd. Yusof

### Sinopsis

*Kertas ini melaporkan satu usaha untuk menilai diperingkat reaksi satu program Diploma Kaunseling di Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. Penilaian ini dijalankan dalam tiga tahap sepanjang setahun: apabila mula masuk kursus, setelah menyelesaikan kerja kursus, dan setelah tamat praktikum. Walaupun borang penilaian mula-mulanya diberi kepada semua 39 peserta yang terdiri daripada guru-guru berpengalaman, hanya 22 borang yang didapati lengkap dan dianalisa untuk laporan ini. Borang penilaian mengandungi dua bahagian, pertamanya, satu soalselidik yang meninjau sebab-sebab peserta menghadiri kursus, tingkat pengetahuan mereka, dan perasaan mereka tentang kursus; dan keduanya, soalselidik bentuk 'repertory grid'.*

*Dengan menggunakan ujian t, keputusan-keputusan menunjukkan perubahan positif yang bererti tentang pemeringkatan subjek terhadap pengetahuan dalam kursus-kursus seperti falsafah bimbingan dan kaunseling; isu-isu etika dalam kaunseling, dan isu-isu etnik dalam kaunseling. Tiada perubahan bererti yang diperhatiakn pada kursus-kursus lain. Analisis 'principal component' keatas grid pra-penilaian menunjukkan bahawa peserta-peserta mempersepsi kursus-kursus yang ditawarkan dalam program Diploma itu dalam dua dimensi, iaitu organisasi yang lemah lawan organisasi yang baik, dan sukar lawan senang, maka dengan demikian membahagikan kursus dalam empat kategori: organisasi yang lemah — sukar, organisasi yang lemah — senang, organisasi yang baik — sukar, dan organisasi yang baik — senang. Dimensi-dimensi ini berubah diakhir program. Kursus-kursus itu dipersepsikan sebagai tidak berguna — biasa, tidak berguna — tidak biasa, berguna — biasa, dan berguna — tidak biasa.*

*Maka dapat diambil kesimpulan bahawa pendedahkan kepada kursus-kursus didalam program itu telah mengubah persepsi subjek-subjek terhadap persepsi-persepsi mengenai kursus. Kertas ini juga mencadangkan bahawa ujian Repertory Grid akan menjadi satu cara menilai program latihan, sekurang-kurangnya diperingkat reaksi atau semerta, sebagaimana ditunjukkan dalam kajian ini.*

### Synopsis

*This paper reports an effort to evaluate at the reaction level the first Diploma in Counselling programme at the National University of Malaysia. The evaluation*

was carried out in three stages over a period of one year: upon joining the course, after completing the course-work, and after completing the practicum. Although the evaluation form was administered originally to all 39 participants, who were all experienced teachers, only 22 completed forms were analyzed and provided data for this report. The evaluation form consisted of two parts, firstly, a questionnaire surveying reasons for joining the course, their current state of knowledge, and their feelings about the course; and secondly, a repertory grid.

Using *t* tests, the results showed a significant positive change in the subjects mean ratings of knowledge in courses such as philosophies of guidance and counselling, ethical issues in counselling, and ethnic issues in counselling. No significant changes were observed in other courses. The principal components analysis of the pre-evaluation grid reveals that the participants perceived courses offered in the Diploma programme in the two dimensions namely poorly-organized versus well — organized, and difficult versus easy, thus dividing the course into four categories; poorly-organized — difficult, poorly-organized — easy, well-organized — difficult and well-organized — easy. The dimensions have changed at the end of the programme. Hence the courses were then seen as not useful — familiar, not useful — unfamiliar, useful — familiar, useful — unfamiliar.

It was therefore, concluded that exposition to the courses offered in the programme has somewhat changed the subjects' perceptions about the courses. The paper suggests that Repertory Grid test might become a useful device for evaluating the training programme at least, as indicated in the study at a reaction or immediate level.

### Introduction

Originally the Department of Psychology<sup>1</sup> focussed its teaching activities at undergraduate level, but since 1980 the department has been involved in the training of counsellors at the Diploma level. Basically the training model is based on the assumption that the counselling profession is to be based on a strong foundation of knowledge in psychology and other related fields. An integrative competency-based model (Bernstein, 1975) was chosen, and is guided by an assumption that counselling, as an applied area of psychology, requires a systematic, comprehensive and integrated preparation. It

---

<sup>1</sup>The Psychology Department has four major objectives. They are as follows: (a) to equip students with the knowledge of psychology and related fields, (b) to study psychological processes related to society and culture, in particular the local society and cultures, (c) to advance psychological knowledge through teaching and research, and (d) to prepare the basic training for professionals who will be applying the basic training for professionals who will be applying the knowledge of psychology and related disciplines to their careers.

was hoped that the programme will produce committed and competent counselors. Four elements have been incorporated in the training:

- i. measurable knowledge of issues, assumptions and information on counselling and human behaviour, in addition to an understanding of different theoretical approaches.
- ii. training in specific measurable skills which are often practised by professional counselors.
- iii. group and individual activities which would hopefully lead to personal growth.
- iv. a combination of practical work relevant to supervised activities in the form of integration of theories, skills and experience which is action-oriented.

The course structure incorporates the following major elements: philosophical, theoretical, empirical, and methodological. The programme requires more than a year's preparation, which included 2 semesters of course work comprising of 29 units and at least 6 months of practicum comprising of 6 units of counselling practice and a research project. An evaluation study was carried out in the 1980/81 session.

Two major reasons for carrying out this evaluation study were: first, it was an attempt to apply an evaluation instrument, the Repertory Gird test, in a cross-cultural situation. Second, as this is the first Diploma course in Counselling offered to teachers in Malaysia it is therefore important that a continuous evaluation be carried out to find out if the course helped fulfill their objectives in pursuing the course and if changes needed to be made to improve the course curriculum and presentation.

### **Method**

An evaluation form devised by the researchers was administered to the Diploma students on three occasions: upon joining the course, after completing the course work and after completing the practicum. Only the results for the first and the last administration will be reported in this paper.

The evaluation form was administered to all 39 subjects in the classroom situation. Only 22 subjects (56.4%) had provided complete data for this study. Age of subjects ranged from 3¼ to 4¼ years.

The evaluation form consisted of two parts. The first part deals with questions regarding reasons for joining the course, their current state of knowledge of the courses to be offered and subjects feelings or apprehension about the course.

The second part was of the repertory grid format. The repertory grid is a technique of investigating an individual's system of personal constructs (Kelly, 1955). In essence, Kelly proposed that individuals behave like scientists constructing and testing 'mental models' of their environment. The 'model' consists of the elements (i.e. the objects of thought) and the constructs (i.e. characteristics the objects they possess).

The courses given in the Diploma in Counselling programme were taken as elements whereas the qualities of the course are taken as the constructs such as whether the course was useful, the content was adequate etc.

Each subject was asked to rate each element on each construct on an 11 point scale (0 — 10).

### Results and Discussion

#### Objectives and Current Knowledge of Course

In order to see if the subjects' objectives for joining the course have been stable prior to and after the course, we correlated the subjects' pre and post ratings of their rated objectives (9 point Likert Scale).

Table 1 shows the results of Pearson's product Moment Correlation on pre-post ratings on objectives for enrolling in the course. All but one correlations are in the low negative direction. Knowledge of research on children and adolescents has a moderate correlation, significant at .05 level. The results suggest that the subjects' assessment of their objectives for enrolling in the course has probably changed from the time they enrolled in the course to the time when they completed the course.

**Table 1**  
Pearsons Product Moment Correlations of Pre and Post Ratings on Objectives for Enrolling in the Diploma Course

Course Objectives	Pearsons' $r$
Acquiring Basic Knowledge of Psychology	.20
Knowledge of Applications of Psychology in Society	-.02
Introduction to Guidance and Counselling	-.12
Knowledge of Research on Children and Adolescents	-.39*
Increased Skill in School Guidance and Counselling	-.13
Meeting Teaching Colleagues	-.30
Would Like to be Considered for Promotion	-.27
Rest from School Work	-.30

Note: N = 22

\* $p < .05$

We were also interested to see if subjects' ratings of their current knowledge in each of the components of the Diploma course have changed, particularly if the direction of change was positive.

Table 2 shows the subjects' mean ratings of their knowledge prior to and after completing the courses. Significant positive change was observed in their mean ratings of knowledge of the *philosophies of guidance and counselling* (3.86 vs 4.36,  $t(21) = 2.05$ ,  $p < .05$ ), *ethical issues in counselling* (2.82 vs 3.22,  $t(21) = 2.04$ ,  $p < 0.5$ ) and *ethnic issues in counselling* (2.59 vs 3.41,  $t(21) = 2.03$ ,  $p < 0.5$ ). Mean pre-test and post-test ratings of other components did not improve significantly; in fact for some components the change was in the negative direction.

### The Repertory Grid Test

This section describes the results obtained from the Repertory Grid Test. Grids filled in by 22 subjects were transformed into a consensus grid by computing the mean ratings for each cell. The final product is a typical grid for the average member of the group studied. The consensus grid was then subjected to analysis by the INGRID programme developed by Slater (1972). The programme performs

**Table 2**  
Pre-Post Means and Standard Deviations of Subjects' Ratings of  
Their Current Knowledge

Knowledge	Pre		Post	
	X	SD	X	SD
Human Development	3.32	0.65	3.27	0.77
Learning Processes	3.45	0.74	3.41	1.01
Motivation	3.41	0.73	3.00	1.02
Tests and Measurement	2.41	0.79	2.09	0.87
Personality and Adjustment	3.41	0.73	3.18	0.91
Basic Concepts in Research	2.64	0.73	2.50	1.01
Applications of Psychology	3.95	0.79	3.36	1.09
Philosophies of Guidance and Counselling	3.86	0.77	4.36*	1.14
History of Guidance and Counselling	3.59	0.96	3.54	0.67
Guidance in Islam	2.82	0.85	2.59	0.96
Organization of Guidance and Counselling	3.73	0.63	3.50	0.86
Ethical Issues in Counselling	2.82	1.00	3.22*	1.01
Ethnic Issues in Counselling	2.59	1.00	3.41*	1.01

Note:

N = 22

\* $p < .05$

Scores based on a 5-point interval scale.

three basic analyses, firstly variation due to each construct and element, secondly interrelationships between constructs, between elements and element-constructs interrelationships, and finally the principal components analysis. Only the final results are reported here.

### The Pre Evaluation

For the pre-evaluation test, the principal components analysis reveals that four components were found to be significant by the Bartlett Test made available by the INGRID programme. However, as the first two components alone already accounted for 6¼.4 percent of the variance, it is appropriate to discuss only these two components. Table 3 lists out constructs and elements highly loaded on the first component. It may be seen that this component is highly loaded by constructs 8 (*meeting the course objectives*), constructs 10 (*the communicator is willing to accept views*), construct 12 (*time is appropriate*), construct 4 (*proper use of audio-visual aids*) and construct 1 (*clear presentation*). These, in turn, are associated with element 11 (*organization of guidance and counselling*) and element 8 (*philosophy of guidance and counselling*) and contrasted with element 4 (*Tests and measurement*).

**Table 3**  
Pre-Evaluation: Elements and Constructs Highly Loaded in Component 1

No.	Elements	Loading
11	Organization of guidance and counselling	1.5643
8	Philosophy of guidance and counselling	1.1268
4	Tests and measurement	- 1.1118
Constructs		
8	Meeting the course objectives	0.8612
10	The communicator is willing to accept views	0.8573
12	Time is appropriate	0.7887
4	Proper use of audio-visual aids	0.7752
1	Clear presentation	0.7684

The significance of the constructs forming this component lies in the fact that they have one thing in common, i.e. all of them are related to the subjects' expectation of how the courses would be conducted; the objectives of the programme, the openness of the lecturers concerned, scheduling, the use of audio-visual aids and the clarity of explanations in lectures. These are the subjects' expectation about the organization of the programme. It may therefore be appropriate to label this dimension as 'well organized' as opposed to 'poorly organized'.

The second component (see Table 4) is highly loaded with construct 2 (*needs more explanation*), construct 14 (*the content is too high*), construct 7 (*increase skills*), and construct 11 (*adequate time*). These are related to element 4 (*tests and measurement*), and element 6 (*basic concepts in research*) which are both contrasted with element 9 (*history of guidance and counselling*) and element 1 (*human development*). The constructs forming this dimension seem to be related to the content of

**Table 4**  
Pre-Evaluation: Element and Constructs Highly Loaded in Component 2

No.	Elements	Loading
4	Tests and measurement	0.8756
9	History of guidance and counselling	-0.8040
1	Human development	-0.6293
6	Basic concepts in research	0.5776
Constructs		
2	Needs more explanation	0.7886
14	The content is too high	0.6729
11	Adequate time	-0.6324
7	Increase skills	0.6127

the courses in the programme. Subjects were concerned with whether or not any particular course, as revealed in the syllabus, was too high for the Diploma level programme. For these subjects the higher the level of the course the more explanations were needed, and accordingly, more time was required. It is therefore logical that the constructs are interrelated to each other. The component may therefore be labelled 'difficult' as opposed to 'easy'.

### The Post-Evaluation Grid

Table 5 lists the elements and constructs forming the first dimension of the post-evaluation grid. It may be seen that construct 8 (*meeting the course objectives*) is associated with construct 3 (*the content is easy to understand*), construct 7 (*increases skills*) and construct 13 (*stimulates interest*). The elements described by these constructs do not differ considerably from those appeared in the first dimension of the pre-evaluation grid. These are element 8 (*philosophy of guidance and counselling*), element 11 (*organization of guidance and counselling*) and element 9 (*history of guidance and counselling*) which are all contrasted with element 4 (*tests and measurement*). Although the first construct forming this component is still the same as the construct most highly loaded in the first component of the pre-evaluation grid, but the others

are all completely different set of construct which accordingly rules out the possibility of naming this component with the same label given to the first component in the pre-evaluation grid. It is not the way the counselling programme is organized that matters now. The subjects seem to be more concerned with what they will get from the courses. It is something related to the content of the courses but not in terms of their easy or difficulty as it was the case in the second component of the pre-evaluation grid. Rather, the subject seem to be thinking about the usefulness of these courses to them. Any course which is useful must fulfill its objectives, improves skills and stimulates interest. The only construct accordingly rules out the possibility of naming this component with the same label given to the first component is the pre-evaluation grid.

The only construct which appears to be unrelated to the rest is the second one, i.e. the content is easy to understand. A useful course may be easy or difficult to grasp. But to these subjects it must always be easy. Even this has a logic behind it. A course which was beyond their ability to understand might still be useful but the usefulness ceases to exist when it was not understood properly because without understanding there was no learning. It is therefore appropriate to label this dimension 'useful' as opposed to 'not useful'.

**Table 5**  
Post-Evaluation: Elements and Constructs Highly Loaded in Component 1

No.	Elements	Loading
8	Philosophy of guidance and counselling	1.3582
4	Tests and measurement	- 1.2582
11	Organization of guidance and counselling	1.1416
9	History of guidance and counselling	0.9336
Constructs		
8	Meeting the course objectives	0.9593
3	Its content is easy to understand	0.9443
7	Increase skills	0.9411
13	Stimulates interest	0.9276

The second component of the post-evaluation grid is highly loaded (Table 6) with construct 2 (*needs more explanation*) and construct 6 (*increases skills*). The elements related to these constructs are element 4 (*philosophy of guidance and counselling*) and element 6 (*basic concepts in research*). These are contrasted in turn with construct 5 (*has been learned*) and construct 11 (*adequate time*) and element 7 (*application*)



of psychology). At first sight, it would be appropriate to label this dimension 'difficult — easy' as the name given to the second dimension of the pre-evaluation grid. But a closer examination would reveal that the focus of perception now is not on the 'difficult — easy' dimension anymore. Combination of 'needs more explanation' and 'increases skills' which are contrasted with 'has been learned' and 'adequate time' seem to describe the degree of familiarity of the courses to the subjects. A course which has been exposed (learned) before and therefore familiar to the subjects does not need much time to understand. In contrast an unfamiliar course would definitely need further explanation. Otherwise the students would not benefit from it in terms of skills required. The component is thus labelled 'familiar' vs 'unfamiliar'.

**Table 6**  
Post-Evaluation: Elements and Constructs Highly Loaded in Component 2

No.	Elements	Loadings
4	Philosophy of guidance and counselling	-0.8237
7	Application of psychology	0.7054
6	Basic concepts in research	-0.5888
Constructs		
2	Needs more explanation	-0.8237
5	Has been learned	0.7524
11	Adequate time	0.5445
6	Increase skills	-0.4607

### Pre and Post Comparisons

The subjects' perception of the courses offered in the Diploma programme both before and after the courses were carried out can be represented in a two dimensional cognitive map respectively, using loadings of the elements as appeared in each component. Figures 1 and 2 represent both the pre and post-evaluation respectively. A comparison between the two maps would reveal the changes in perception that have taken place due to and/or during the exposure to the courses in the ten month period. Ideally the changes could be better represented using the DELTA programme developed by Slater as part of GPA. However, as the programme is not currently available in Malaysia, the comparison will only be made descriptively.

Figure 1 demonstrates how the subjects perceived the courses offered to them before the courses began. It may be seen that the courses can be divided into four types namely — 'well-organized —

*difficult*’ courses, *‘well-organized — easy*’ courses, *‘poorly organized — difficult*’ courses, and *‘poorly organized — easy*’ courses. Courses regarded as *‘poorly — organized — difficult*’ include *tests and measurement, basic concepts in research, motivation and ethnic issues in counselling*. Only two courses were perceived as *‘poorly organized — easy*’ i.e. *personality and adjustment and human development*. Three courses were regarded as *‘well-organized — difficult*’ namely the *philosophy of guidance and counselling, the organization of guidance and counselling and the application of psychology*. The *history of guidance and counseling and Guidance in Islam* are both perceived as *‘well-organized — easy*’ courses.

**Figure 1**  
Pre-Evaluation: The Cognitive Map

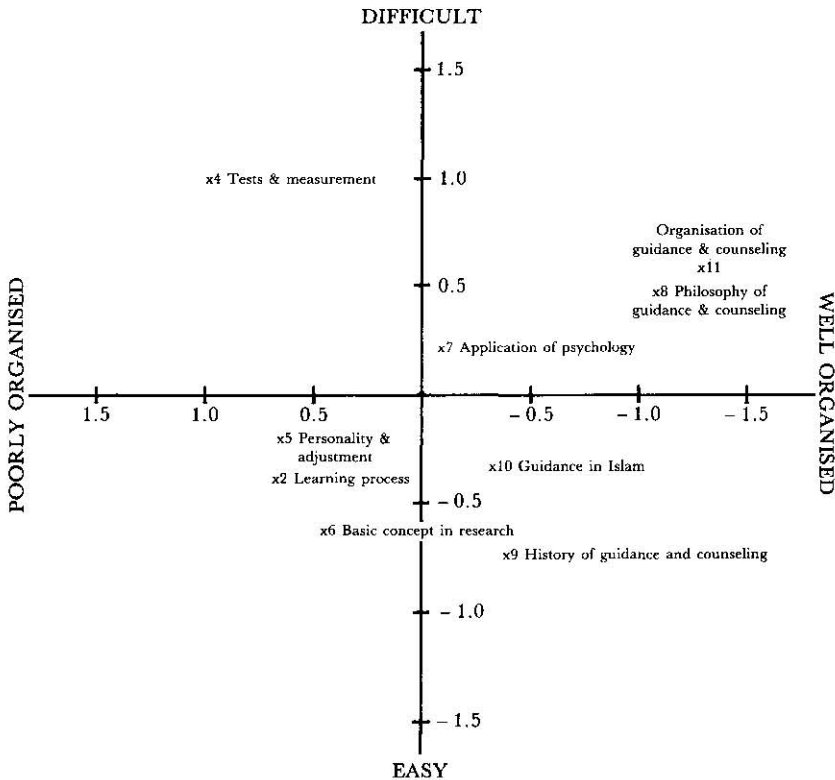
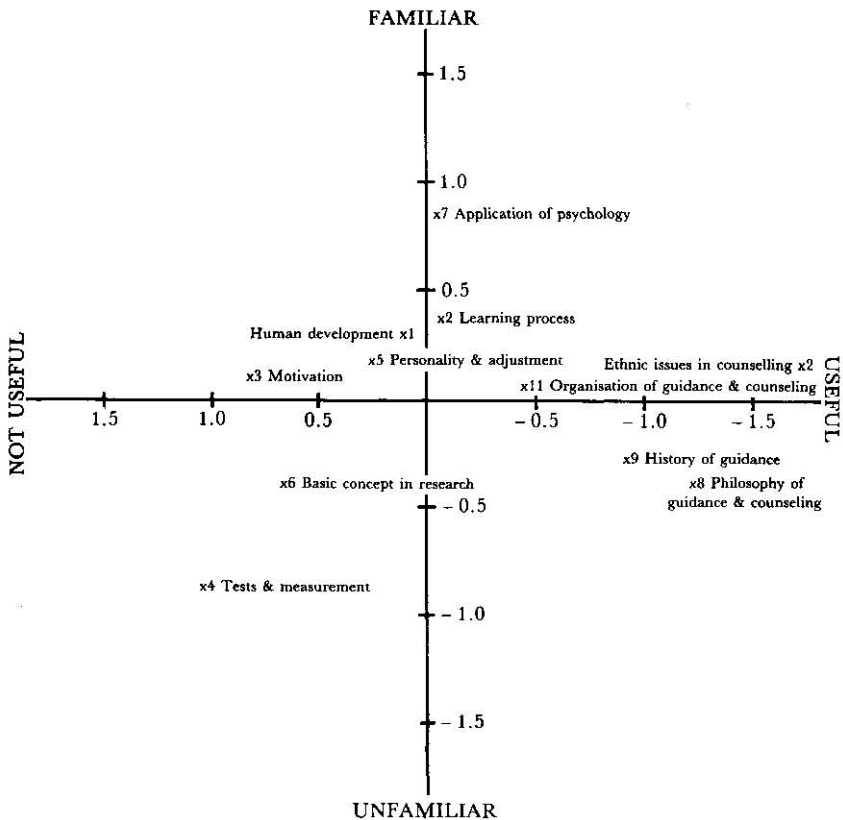


Figure 2 displays the cognitive map of the subjects after the completion of the Diploma programme. It may be seen that their perception of the courses have slightly changed not only in the dimensions but also in the position of the courses on those dimensions. On

the basis of the constructs forming it, we suggest that the first dimension may now be labelled 'useful' vs 'not useful', whilst the second dimension may be labelled 'familiar' vs 'unfamiliar'. Courses regarded as 'not useful — familiar' are *motivation, human development, personality and adjustment* and *learning process*. The familiarity of these courses to the subjects is expected because all subjects were teachers who have been exposed to the same courses in their programme for the Diploma/Certificate in Education. *Tests and measurement* and *basic concepts in research* are both regarded as 'not useful — unfamiliar'. Of course the usefulness here is a relative term. What the subjects may be saying is that the courses are not very useful to them in their present job as compared to other courses which may meet their immediate needs.

**Figure 2**  
Post-Evaluation: The Cognitive Map



Courses on the *organization of guidance and counselling* as well as *guidance in Islam* are both perceived as 'familiar and useful' while the *philosophy of guidance and counselling*, the *history of guidance and counselling* and *ethnic issues in counselling* are all regarded as 'useful — unfamiliar'.

A comparison between the two cognitive maps reveal that after being exposed to the courses offered in the Diploma programme for a full year the subjects' perception of the courses has changed, in the first dimension, from the way courses were organized to the usefulness of the courses, and in the second dimension, from the relative easiness of the courses to their familiarity.

### Conclusion

Results of the study indicate that the Repertory grid test is a useful device for assessing the changes in subjects' perception of the various aspects of the Diploma course. The reliability of the instrument for cross-cultural testing has been demonstrated by Wan Rafaei (1980), Aminuddin (1979), Wan Rafaei, Abdul Halim and Aminuddin (1980), and others. As a first Diploma in Counselling course introduced in the country, much of the content and approaches in the course were experimental in nature. Indeed the nature of this first course assumed that participants had a little understanding of psychology, hence the over-emphasis on basic psychological knowledge. On the other hand the participants were too eager to acquire knowledge for immediate application. It would appear that a course geared for teachers who have received background training in professional knowledge and skills of teaching, would require greater exposure to the contents related to skill development in counselling, research and ethical issues, as opposed to an emphasis on courses in child development, personality, etc.

While the Department of Psychology has the responsibility to perpetuate the necessary knowledge to the potential users of psychology, a careful selection of the relevant knowledge would be necessary. In order that this is possible, continuous evaluation of a programme such as the Diploma course in counselling need to be carried out to provide feedback in programme development. The use of instruments continually tested for its validity and reliability such as the repertory grid is essential for any meaningful interpretation of the data.

### References

- Aminuddin M. Yusof (1979). *Perceptions of Malay University students with regard to the teaching profession*. Unpublished MSc dissertation, University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology.

- Kelley, G.A. (1955). *The Psychology of Personal Construct*. Norton, New York.
- Parsons, T. (1959). Some Problems confronting sociology as a profession. In *American Sociological Reviews*, 24, pp 547 — 556.
- Slater, P. (1972). *Notes on Ingrid 72*. University of London.
- Wagner, N.N. and Tan E.S. (1971). *Psychological Problems and Treatment in Malaysia*. Pustaka Akal, Kuala Lumpur.
- Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman and Abdul Halim Othman (1974). Peranan dan orientasi psikologi dan ahli-ahli psikologi di Malaysia. In *Peranan dan Orientasi Sains Sosial dan Ahli-Ahli Sains Sosial di Malaysia*. Jabatan Antropologi dan Sosiologi, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.
- Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman (1980). Peranan motivasi pencapaian dalam pembentukan usahawan: satu kajian di kalangan murid-murid Malaysia dan United Kingdom. Unpublished paper presented at *Seminar Psikologi dan Masyarakat*, National University of Malaysia, 10 February.
- Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman, Abdul Halim Othman and Aminuddin M. Yusof (1980). Perception of a community: a proposal for a technique of measurement. Unpublished paper presented at *The Workshop on Social Indicators in Land Development*, Kuala Lumpur, 10 — 15 March.

