

Using a Participatory Approach to Organizational Behavioral Consultation in Schools

Research Problem

There is a need and a desire for an increased use of Functional Behavioral Assessments (FBA) in schools (Pindiprolu, Petersom, & Berglof, 2007; Scott et al., 2004), yet the current training and consultation models are not proving to be effective at increasing schools' capacity to use FBAs to address challenging student behavior (Crone et al., 2007). While the research on school-based professional development and consultation related to FBAs in schools often concludes by suggesting that consultants should allow staff members to adapt the FBA process to meet each individual schools' needs (Crone et al., 2007; Sugai & Horner, 1999), we are not aware of any study that systematically employs a culture-specific model to the training and consultation process. The current study aims to train and consult with staff in therapeutic day schools on the use of functional behavioral assessments (FBAs) using the Participatory Culture-Specific Consultation (PCSC) model (Nastasi, Varjas, Bernstein, & Jayasena, 2000). The PCSC "combines ethnographic research methods and an action research process with participatory or collaborative approach to consultation to address the concerns of clients, consultees, and systems in a manner that reflects their cultural experiences" (pg. 403, Nastasi et al., 2000). The PCSC model pulls from models of ecobehavioral consultation (Gutkin & Curtis, 1999), mental health consultation (Caplan & Caplan, 1993), and organizational consultation (Curtis & Stollar, 1996) among others. It is a phase model with nine phases that are recursive and iterative (Nastasi et al., 2000). While the phases are outlined a priori, all decisions about the consultation process are in collaboration with school-based stakeholders.

Purpose

Through the use of the PCSC, the proposed study aims to answer the following question:

1. Does a culture-specific model of training and consultation result in an increase in knowledge related to FBAs in schools?
2. Does a culture-specific model of training and consultation result in an increase in skills related to FBA data collection and analysis in schools?
3. Does a culture-specific model of training and consultation result in an increase in acceptability of the FBA process?
4. Does a culture-specific model of training and consultation result in the sustainability of the FBA process in schools?

Method

The current study is in progress and is utilizing a concurrent mixed methods design (Creswell & Zhang, 2009). Quantitative data will be analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical analyses. The qualitative data will be analyzed using principles of grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Then the two data sets will be merged using side-by-side comparison to determine if the quantitative and qualitative data "converge, diverge, or present contradictory evidence" (Creswell & Zhang, 2009, p. 615).

Implications

The Participatory Culture-Specific Consultation (PCSC) model (Nastasi et al., 2000) has received little attention in the literature, despite many calls to consider organizational culture and stakeholder involvement during the consultation process. This project provides the unique opportunity to learn more about PCSC as it is applied to behavioral training and consultation in schools. Preliminary results suggest that the needs of educators vary considerably across settings and that targeting training content to the culture-specific needs of settings increases training acceptability and effectiveness. School-based trainers and coaches will learn methods for collaborating with educators and schools during the training and consultation process to ensure that time spent training and coaching is time well spent.