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Consultation Barriers Between Teachers and External Consultants: A Grounded Theory of Change Resistance in School Consultation

Robert Thornberg
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The aim of this study, conducted in Sweden, was to investigate the cultural barriers between school personnel (teachers and principals) and nonschool personnel (a resource team), who were external to the school system, regarding consultation about challenging or difficult-to-teach students. Focus groups with teachers, principals, and the resource team as well as interviews with students and parents were conducted. The qualitative analysis resulted in a grounded theory of change resistance in the context of school consultation. Differences in professional assumptions led to conflicting professional main concerns. An intergroup conflict was inevitable in many cases and the professional cultural barriers that remained produced and reinforced professional ethnocentricity. This contributed to a lack of integration between external consultants and school personnel. Lack of integration contributed to the legitimacy loss and the maintenance of professional ethnocentricity. The basic social process of change resistance was centered in the interaction between professional ethnocentricity and lack of integration.

In a school consultation “a professional with a specialized expertise (i.e., consultant) and a staff member (i.e., consultee) work together to optimize the functioning of a client in the staff member’s setting” (Erchul & Sheridan, 2008, p. 3). However, challenges related to the school culture and problems in multiprofessional communication between teachers and nonteachers may make effective consultation processes difficult to implement (e.g., Klingner & Harry, 2006; Knotek, 2003; Rubinson, 2002; Slonski-Fowler & Truscott, 2004; Spratt, Shucksmith, Philip, & Watson, 2006). One recurring problem is that professional boundaries, or the barriers and rivalries between professional groups, often accompany consultation between school teachers (consultees) and other professionals working as consultants (e.g., Rubinson, 2002; Spratt et al., 2006). Teachers tend not to seek advice outside their own profession and may prefer to discuss problems among themselves (Rubinson, 2002; Spratt et al., 2006). They may also question the validity of receiving training or advice from individuals who have no direct classroom experience (Spratt et al., 2006), and some may feel somewhat threatened when encouraged to question their own teaching methods and practices (Farrell, Howes, Jimerson, & Davies, 2009).

Furthermore, nonteaching professionals and teachers may have difficulty collaborating because their respective professions have different perspectives and approaches (Rubinson, 2002; Slonski-Fowler & Truscott, 2004; Spratt et

al., 2006), which in turn reinforces professional boundaries. Rubinson (2002) and Slonski-Fowler and Truscott (2004) found that professional boundaries resulted in multiple problems in consultation. In Rubinson's study of urban problem-solving teams, many school psychologists, counselors, and social workers were not comfortable addressing issues concerning classroom practices, whereas Slonski-Fowler and Truscott found that teachers often became disengaged from the prereferral intervention team (PIT) process because they perceived that their expertise and credibility were devalued by the specialist members of the PITs, who focused primarily on test scores and other nonclassroom information. Such professional boundaries may result in mistrust between the participants. Such mistrust has been identified as an obstacle in consultation (Rubinson, 2002; Spratt et al., 2006).

Overall, a "holistic" approach to consultation in which "a professional with a specialized expertise (i.e., consultant) and a staff member (i.e., consultee) work together to optimize the functioning of a client in the staff member's setting" (Erchul & Sheridan, 2008, p. 3) cannot be brought about simply by importing specialists into the schools. There are multiple factors that impinge upon the process of consultation and collaboration between groups of professionals. Teachers may have difficulty changing their well-established practices (Spratt et al., 2006) and professionals may have difficulty crossing professional boundaries to assess and understand classroom variables and teaching situations that affect the consultation case (Rubinson, 2002; Slonski-Fowler & Truscott, 2004).

The aim of the present case study, which was conducted in Sweden, was to investigate the professional cultural barriers between school personnel (teachers and principals) and nonschool personnel (i.e., an outside resource team), who consulted about challenging or difficult-to-teach students. This study had a social psychological focus in order to investigate the "border work" between school personnel and nonschool personnel in a consultation context by listening to and analyzing the participants' meanings and narratives regarding each other's practices and their consultation situations.

METHOD

This qualitative study adopted the methods of qualitative interview, focus groups, and grounded theory. According to J. Meyers, Truscott, Meyers, Varjas, and Smith Collins (2008), qualitative research is appropriate for studying the process variables in the context of particular settings. It offers the opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of participants' perspectives.

The Consultation Context and the Resource Team Initiative

Consultation is common in Swedish schools and typically involves school psychologists, school counselors, or special educators from school-based multiprofessional "student-health teams" who act as consultants to teachers (i.e., consultees). Consultation usually involves one consultant who works with an individual teacher or small group of teachers to understand the presenting problem. The consultant then reports back to the multiprofessional student-health team. The teacher is usually not present during team discussions, but the

outcome of team discussions might be to offer to have a team member consult with the teacher over time. Unfortunately, student- health teams rarely discuss school, classroom, and peer ecology or teacher practices as the causes or factors of the problem, and they mostly focus on the target students' biological and psychological deficiencies (Hjörne & Säljö, 2008). This limits the consultation possibilities with teachers and is the same problem that has been found in qualitative studies investigating American prereferral team processes (e.g., Klingner & Harry, 2006; Knotek, 2003). However, this is not always the case. In one Swedish study on preschool consultation, the psychologists were more prone to focus upon the teachers' practices (Hylander, 2003).

The resource team initiative in the current study was a pilot project funded and organized by the local government and took place in a medium-size Swedish town. The project aimed to counteract the prevailing "within-child" explanations of difficult-to-teach students and instead initiate a more social-ecological model (e.g., Gutkin, 2012; A. B. Meyers, Meyers, Graybill, Proctor, & Huddleston, 2012). Two districts comprising six elementary schools participated in the project (Swedish elementary schools serve students from kindergarten to ninth grade). Five of the six schools became involved in the resource team initiative. Three of them were located in a socioeconomically disadvantaged area and two were located in a socioeconomically mixed area. On average, there were about 250 students in each school (the size ranged from about 170 to 345 students), with 23–27 students in each class.

The resource team project was designed to (a) provide immediate assistance to challenging students with psychosocial problems and their parents, (b) make use of problem-solving and collaborative consultation techniques with teachers, (c) develop interventions and changes at school that addressed the needs of the students and their teachers, and thus (d) help keep at-risk students in the regular classroom and curriculum. During the spring of 2007, the team started to work with specific student cases. The resource team consisted of four members—two trained social workers and two special educators. Besides their 3-year training in social work and special education, respectively, they were trained in positive psychology, counseling, and cognitive-behavioral therapy-based methods by attending university courses and shorter workshops. All in all, their training included cognitive-behavioral, constructivist, and social-ecological frameworks.

Each school could apply for resource team assistance with individual student cases. A special committee, organized by the local government and consisting of administrative personnel from the local government, decided which applications the team would accept. The resource team handled 6–10 students at any given time. The team offered intensive support for a limited time period (normally 6 months but in some cases 12 months). At the time of this study, the team had been involved in 22 cases (10 students between the ages of 13 and 16 years from upper elementary schools and 12 students between the ages of 10 and 12 years from middle elementary schools; 20 boys and 2 girls). Generally, the student cases involved both academic and behavioral problems. The team members began their work on individual cases by acquiring information

through classroom observations and conversations with teachers, the student, the parents, and other relevant individuals conducted over the first 3 weeks. They also initiated relationship building with the key teacher, the identified student, and the parents. The key teacher was the classroom teacher or the mentor of the student and functioned as the main contact between the resource team and the school.

The resource team provided both direct educational interventions and psychological counseling for students and families and indirect service through educational and psychological consultation with teachers. One or two team members (i.e., consultants) consulted with one or more teachers (i.e., the consultees) to help them work more effectively with the individual student. The consultation offered by the team was consistent with the problem-solving consultation model (Frank & Kratochwill, 2008), which included relationship building, problem identification, problem analysis, intervention implementation, and program evaluation procedures. The model emphasized the need for collaboration with professionals and parents and for delivering evidence-based interventions. Some examples of interventions recommended to teachers by the team were changes in classroom teaching methods, reorganizing the classroom setting, breaking negative interaction patterns with students and initiating positive relations instead, changing the classroom climate, using positive reinforcement, implementing token economies (instead of just repeatedly punishing the target student), and changing their communication style vis-à-vis parents.

Table 1: Overview of the participants

Participants	Males	Females	Total
Resource team members	2	2	4
Teachers	3	5	8
Principals	2	5	7
Parents	4	3	7
Students	3	1	4
Total	14	16	30

Participants

Altogether 30 individuals participated in the study (see Table 1). Each participant was or had been involved in the resource team project in different ways. All 4 members of the resource team and all the 7 principals from the five schools were included (schools in Sweden may have more than one principal). A voluntary sampling procedure was conducted to recruit teachers, parents, and students, which resulted in 8 teachers (4 middle elementary teachers and 4 upper elementary teachers), 4 students (15–16 years old, in eighth and ninth grades), and 7 parents (4 fathers and 3 mothers) representing 6 of the 22 cases in the resource team project. Because this study was focused on multiprofessional consultation, this analysis is primarily based on data derived from the professionals (teachers, team members, and principals). Data from students and

parents have been used as background sources and complementary material.

Data Collection

Four focus groups, which are group interviews in which “a moderator guides the interview while a small group discusses the topics that the interviewer raises” (Morgan, 1998, p. 1), were conducted: (a) a focus group with 7 principals (53 min), (b) a focus group with 5 teachers (1 hr 24 min), (c) a focus group with 3 teachers (38 min), and (d) a focus group with the resource team (1 hr 31 min). The difference in duration between the two teacher focus groups was due to the fact that the first focus group consisted of a larger number of teachers, who were more talkative and prone to elaborate on their narratives than the other focus group. Based on ethical considerations, the students and parents were interviewed individually. Student interviews ranged in duration from 13 to 21 min ($M = 16$ min). Five parent interviews were held individually (3 fathers and 2 mothers). The sixth parent interview included a parent couple. The parent interviews ranged in duration from 16 to 44 min ($M = 33$ min). All the focus groups and interviews were recorded with a mini-disc recorder and then transformed into MP3 files.

Data Analysis

Coding and analysis were conducted directly on the audio data (MP3 files) by using the software NVivo 8 (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013; QSR International, 2013). Data were therefore not transcribed verbatim. Grounded theory methods, that is, coding, constant comparison, memo writing, and memo sorting, were used to analyze data (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 1998; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The following main steps were taken: (a) *Initial coding*: Codes were constructed by comparing data segments and using analytical questions such as “What are these data a study of? What do the data suggest? What happens in the data? From whose point of view? What category does this specific datum indicate?” Initial coding involved labeling words, lines, and segments of data. All sentences and accounts with relevance for understanding consultation situations and social conditions for consultation were coded. By comparing codes for similarities and differences, codes were gradually sorted and clustered into fewer but more complex codes. (b) *Focused coding*: The most significant and frequent codes constructed by initial coding shaped the focus and guided the further analysis. Categories or concepts with clear definitions were developed. A concept refers to a social psychological pattern grounded in the data and constructed by comparing many initial codes, which indicate the pattern and its sub patterns. (c) *Theoretical coding*: The previously developed concepts were integrated into an analytical story that had coherence. For quotes used in this article, I reviewed the audio, transcribed the participants’ words verbatim in Swedish, and translated them to English. The translation was focused on maintaining the meaning of each participant’s words.

In line with a constructivist grounded theory approach, I used and constructed theoretical concepts as interpretive frames that “offer an abstract understanding of relationships” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 140). Instead of analyzing without preconceptions (i.e., being a *tabula rasa* researcher; cf. Kelle, 2007), I

adopted a theoretical agnostic and pluralistic approach to preexisting theories, concepts, and research and thus used them as flexible, modifiable, sensitizing concepts and a source of seeing, imagining, and inspiration. I compared them rigorously with data and judged them in terms of relevance, fit, and utility (see Thornberg, 2012b). During the analysis, the broad concept of social representation (see, e.g., Moscovici, 2001) was used as a heuristic concept, that is, employing it as a sensitive analytic tool or “conceptual frame which helps to understand empirical phenomena found in the research field” (Kelle, 2007, p. 208). The analysis resulted in a grounded theory of professional and organizational cultural barriers of consultation between teachers and nonschool professionals (for further analysis of the data from the current study but with a focus on collaboration between school staff, team members, parents, and the students themselves to promote students’ positive development, see Thornberg, 2012a). According to a constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006), the generated grounded theory is an interpretative portrayal built upon the researcher’s interpretations of the participants’ meanings, narratives, and actions. This in turn explains the interpretative tone in the presentation of findings in the current study.

The Role of the Researcher and the Trustworthiness of the Study

My own background training has been in education, psychology, and sociology. My training and specialized expertise as a researcher in the social psychology of education informed the focus and theoretical framework of this study. I was independent and not at all involved in the resource team or the schools.

To enhance the trustworthiness of the study, I followed established guidelines for qualitative interviews (e.g., Kvale, 1994) and focus groups (e.g., Morgan, 1998) as well as for the constructivist grounded theory (GT) methods (Charmaz, 2006) in combination with classic GT methods (Glaser, 1998; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and informed GT methods (Thornberg, 2012b). I coded and directly analyzed the audio data to be sensitive to the full range of the participants’ speech (e.g., voice, tone, and embedded emotions). Moreover, I checked my interpretations and “emerging” grounded theory by constantly comparing them with data, checking for fit, relevance, and workability (Glaser, 1998) during the analysis. I checked my interpretations with the salient participants by presenting the information to the resource team, the principals, and a sample of teachers who had experience with the resource team initiative. They confirmed that they could identify themselves and their practices in my findings and that these helped them to increase their awareness of problematic interaction patterns and assumptions taken for granted among themselves.

RESULTS

The participants’ narratives revealed a basic social psychological process of maintaining professional and organizational cultural barriers as a result of professional collision, which in turn led to consultation disengagement and consultation loss.

Professional Collision

The resource team initiative was confronted with a pervasive professional collision due to different perspectives and approaches between team members and teachers.

Inclusion versus exclusion. Whereas the team members endeavored to promote inclusive education on behalf of the students with whom they worked, teachers often wanted team members to act as “student assistants” (in Swedish schools, some students with severe disabilities or behavioral problems have a “student assistant”—usually an untrained person who is with the student throughout the school day, helping the student during seat work and supervising the student’s behavior) and in more severe cases, to remove the target student from the classroom as much as possible.

Many teachers are disappointed because they think you should work like an assistant and be at school the whole time. And they often want us to remove them [the target students] from the classroom. However, our main goal is inclusion. But they want us to remove the problem, to move them into a “small group” [a special educational school class] or they want us to sit with the student in a small group room and so on. (Team member 3)

However, the teachers’ attitudes varied considerably. Some teachers were more focused on trying to help keep the student in the regular classroom whereas others were more focused on removing the student from the classroom. When the team members met teachers who wanted the student removed, which team members said was most often the case, they reported that effective consultation was much more difficult. Although providing direct interventions to students and parents in these cases was possible, consultation with these teachers did not work or did not happen at all. In many cases, the teachers argued that removing the student would be the best solution. The teachers, however, also recognized that their view collided with the team members’ intentions of inclusion and created a barrier of “us and them” between them.

It often happens that we kind of talk about “us” and “them.” They [the resource team] stand for one idea and we [the teachers] stand for another idea about how we want things to be. We want to have good discipline in the classroom. We want a classroom situation that works. And I’m sure it will work if this student is not there. (Teacher 6)

In many cases the teachers wanted some relief and the removal of the student in question rather than active consultation focused on changing the classroom practices and teacher–student interaction patterns to keep the student in the classroom. Hence, in these cases the teachers wanted exclusion—not inclusion, which implies that team members and many teachers were trying to achieve separate and conflicting goals: inclusion versus exclusion.

Teachers gave a number of reasons they did not accept the goal of inclusion in the cases of specific students. First, as teachers they were not involved in the initial decision about inclusion. Consequently they felt that their principal

and the team members ignored their professional judgment.

“I think that in some way you actually have to listen to the teachers ... and trust that we actually have some knowledge in this case” (Teacher 1). Thus, teachers’ nonparticipation in the initial decision making and setting of goals was problematic. Second, the teachers were often opposed to the inclusion of the target student because they thought that the student was too difficult to cope with in the regular classroom, especially when the resource team intervention work was limited to 6 months. Hence, in the case of many students, teachers argued that the goal of inclusion was unrealistic and therefore wrong. Third, many teachers argued that as long as the student remained in the regular classroom, he was harmful or spoiled things for other students. “There are so many students who have actually suffered because we have had one student who doesn’t fit in the classroom” (Teacher 5). Some teachers then interpreted keeping the target student in the regular classroom as ethically wrong because it had led to a lot of other students suffering.

We had a discussion about this boy. He comes out with a lot of “put-down” comments, that means insulting comments, and we have discussed it, and Kim [the team member] said that you [the other students] just have to take some of it, and that it’s difficult for him, and the problem with impulse control. And I understand that, but then I said that at the same time I have another little girl that we [the teachers] are trying to motivate so that she gets up the courage to stand up in front of the class and say something. For her, it’s a disaster to have to put up with this kind of thing. So, we have these kinds of social goals for other children too, children that we have to protect, and I understand it’s impulse-directed and is difficult and all that, but these things make our role so much more complicated. (Teacher 3)

The teacher in the excerpt pointed out that the presence of difficult-to-teach students often harmed other students and created a complicated ethical dilemma, which could not be ignored.

Fourth, some teachers opposed inclusion because they thought it resulted in negative social learning for other students. “As it is now, the whole class is learning bad behavior” (Teacher 8). “Negative behavior is becoming the norm” (Teacher 2). Nevertheless, the teachers were not against inclusion per se but were critical of it because social inclusion seemed to be a “holy cow,” which was not open for discussion and evaluation.

Of course you just don’t kick him out as soon as he is noisy, and then the problem is solved. I don’t think anyone here thinks that. I want to make that clear, because it feels a bit like it might sound like that by the discussion. However, what I think teachers react to is that it has been a holy cow which is not even open for discussion. After all, we have to sit down: “But what does it look in this situation? Is this idea really the best?” (Teacher 1)

Hence, teachers and team members appeared to have different main concerns regarding the consultation situation. The team members’ main concern was to

come in and change the school culture in order to promote the maintenance of a target student in the regular classroom by applying a social-ecological perspective, inclusive education, and positive psychology. The teachers' main concerns were to defend and maintain their school culture, as it was, and to promote an environment conducive to learning in the classroom and the welfare and academic achievement of the majority of the students.

Strict versus sensitive discipline. The team members and the teachers also differed in their views on how to interact and deal with discipline for challenging students in appropriate ways. Whereas the resource team tried to avoid punitive approaches and instead focused on students' appropriate positive behaviors and achievements (an application of positive psychology), some of the teachers argued that

bad behavior has consequences. Because we [teachers] sense that it results in no consequences at all [i.e., they perceived that team members did not set any limits by using punishment]. If you say a lot of mean things to a person, to anybody, and if you threaten adults, and if you start a fight or destroy something, then you should be suspended. I think there should be a proper punishment when you do something wrong. (Teacher 8)

Some of the teachers thought that the team members were too permissive and promoted the continuation of inappropriate behavior. Moreover, according to these teachers, if you were too permissive and if students who behaved inappropriately did not experience clear negative consequences, then other students learned that it was all right to misbehave.

The children in this classroom mustn't see that this kind of—that he's able to argue with a grown-up in that way, because if it happens, then "Yeah, that's okay." But you can't behave like that in our classroom! That's it! Those are the rules, which should be enforced! Because all the others nearby pick up on this. In other words, he becomes a negative role model. (Teacher 2)

In contrast, the team members perceived that the general culture in schools was too authoritarian and punishment oriented, which team members believed demotivated and alienated difficult-to-teach and marginalized students. A traditional authoritarian school approach did not work with these groups of students, they argued.

When you are marginalized, then you are "prickly." You see more enemies than friends around you then. And if the grown-ups in the school, if they express themselves a little bit clumsily ... as a result of frustration, then ... "I will never get on with her" [the student thinks] ... So, understanding is important, and to be a bit personal. (Team member 1)

In contrast to their social representation of the "typical" teachers' general discipline style, the team members said that they tried to establish positive and supportive relationships with the target students based on mutual respect and

trust. “What has to change in order to create motivation? As a grown-up I have to earn respect. How do I earn respect? I earn respect by creating a good relationship, helping the person” (Team member 2). They tried to build what they called “relational capital.” Interviews with students as well as parents confirmed the representation of the resource team’s positive and supportive relationships with them.

Student: I quickly felt I could trust John [Team person].
Researcher: How did that come about?
Student: I don’t know, I felt that he was a good person and that I could talk to him about a lot of stuff.
Researcher: How did you recognize that he was a good person?
Student: He helped me a lot, talked to me—I was able to talk seriously with him /- - -/ And he cares.
Researcher: And he cares? What do you mean by that, that he cares?
Student: Well, he supports me. He doesn’t give up so easily.
(Interview with Student 2)

Furthermore, the team members focused mainly on students’ positive behavior and strengths by using positive reinforcements, token economies, pep talks, motivational interviewing, solution-focused techniques, and helping them to increase their self-efficacy by letting them experience success and good achievement. They avoided drawing too much attention to students’ inappropriate behavior, deficiencies, and shortcomings.

Maybe we look more at things that work and build on that, and do not spend time nagging so much, as many teachers do—just discouraging them. They just think they are troublesome, “Oh, not again!”, and sigh and so on. I think about that quite a lot. But we focus on things that work. And then the students sense that they are boosted. (Team member 4)

The team members associated themselves and their situation in schools with the movie *Dead Poets Society* in which the actor Robin Williams played the progressive and student-oriented teacher John Keating. Like the movie, the team members described how their approach in schools was met with suspicion and criticism from many teachers. Their positive focus and way of interacting and establishing personal and supportive relationships with challenging students clashed with the traditional teacher approach in these schools.

Differences in problem explanations. Usually the teachers understood and explained the problems with challenging or difficult-to-teach students as shortcomings in these students (e.g., deficiencies in character, neuropsychiatric diagnoses, a troublemaker, lack of skills) or their family (e.g., poor parenting, troublemaker parents, social problems). In contrast, the team members reasoned that the school culture itself, with its teachers’ practices and approaches to students, tended to create or bring on some of the problems.

Team member 2: And because we have this holistic approach, we often see that it isn’t like the school thinks. They think the

problem is only in the family–

Team member 4: Or only in the child.

Team member 2: –or in the child, but you may actually see that–

Team member 1: That there are pedagogical shortcomings.

Team member 2: –there may be more shortcomings that you have to work with that are external to the student.

Team member 1: Changing working methods for example, and organization in the school.

(Focus group with the resource team)

The resource team's social representation of the causes of the problem collided with the teachers' social representation of the causes of the problem. Teachers' causal attributions could, at least in part, explain why they wanted team members to take over the student and act as assistants. "They [the teachers] tell us how to act [i.e., as assistants], instead of thinking that we may come in and figure out how you can change the whole situation" (Team member 3). Nevertheless, instead of acting as assistants who take orders from the teachers or take the challenging student out of the classroom, the team members tried to suggest changes in school, classroom, and teaching situations. However, the teachers' tendency to accept "within-child" and "within-family" explanations and their resistance to considering the school context, classroom ecology, and their own teaching styles as possible causes undermined the consultation designed to change structures, conditions, teaching methods, and interaction patterns in school and classroom.

Differences in social representations on fairness. Another clash between teachers and the resource team was their contrasting views on fairness concerning the work with students and regarding behavioral consequences. One aspect of applying positive psychology, according to the resource team, was to avoid punishing the student for inappropriate behavior. Instead the team wanted to focus on, draw attention to, and positively reinforce appropriate and good behavior. Therefore, team members consciously used token economies in their work with these students. The students received points for being present in class, having done their homework, or whatever "good" behavior was targeted. These points were tokens, which the students could use to "purchase" a range of rewards, such as going into the town and having a snack in a café. However, some teachers reacted negatively and claimed that this was unfair to the other students who had behaved well because they did not receive such rewards.

She [the team member] had her own rules, and it was very much about rubbing the kid up the right way. We really want–, "Well, but then they get to do fun stuff instead," but perhaps it was a strategy to get the kids to play along and so on. Well, but that creates a reaction among teachers and the other students, "Why is it like that?" (Teacher 5)

These teachers said that the team members' reward systems brought up critical questions and negative feelings of unfairness in teachers and the other students. Moreover, some teachers said that there was the risk that students actually

learned that misbehaving in school is rewarded because the misbehaving students got the chance to do a lot of fun activities.

Teacher 4: Like this thing where there are two kids who, what do you call them, two “resource students” who were not allowed to join the others on their trip to Stockholm. Oh, these poor kids! [sarcastic]. But the teachers thought that these kids had been rude to other students, and the teachers didn’t feel secure with them. But then, the resource team took a trip to—, they got a “yes” from the principal to take a trip to Söderköping and buy ice cream and drive go-karts, which in fact is more expensive than going to Stockholm and visiting a museum. And this creates—, well in a school you see—, people got mad, really mad.

Teacher 3: You get a bonus if you misbehave.
(Focus group with teachers)

The main problem, according to the teachers, was that the target students were part of a wider context in the school and when the team then focused on reinforcing one student, they ignored the class as a whole. Such reinforcement could easily be at the other students’ expense. Whereas they, as teachers, tried to consider and take responsibility for the whole class of students, the team members had a limited focus on the individual target student.

Teacher 5: They have their own rules, and maybe that’s fine, but well, it’s a problem that you have to talk about.

Teacher 1: A problem you have to consider.

Teacher 3: Yes, from their point of view it really may be right to get a reward for taking off your jacket and cap [there is a school rule against wearing coat and cap in the classroom, which some students dislike and tend to flout], well, wait a minute—, but what happens to the other children when they see all this?

(Focus group with teachers)

Teachers acknowledged that there were benefits with reward systems but that “you have to realize: How does it look to the whole group?” (Teacher 1). Teacher 1 also argued that it was “important that the group becomes aware that some children have difficulties, which they have to work with and then maybe they get a reward and so on,” but one complicating factor was that “because you don’t have a whole lot of well-behaved children and one disruptive child, but you have in fact many children who are like the disruptive one, and it’s hard for them to see that.” In other words, other more or less “disruptive” students had difficulties in understanding why they did not receive any of the rewards that the specific student targeted by the resource team received.

In contrast to the teachers, the team members said that the teachers were too attached to the idea of working with all the students in the same way and that they had trouble thinking along new lines. One of the team members reported how teachers sometimes argued about fairness applied to the whole school class and then challenged these teachers’ view:

“We have always acted in this way, I have 25 other children, I have to work in the same way with this student,” but maybe I won’t think this way, if he [the student] is going to make any progress. Then perhaps you have to work a bit differently, and then it’s hard for some of them [the teachers] to think in other ways. (Team member 2)

Instead of treating all the students the same way, the team members argued that teachers have to vary the pedagogical approach and methods by tailoring their teaching to the different needs and situations of the challenging students. Team members considered token economies, positive focus, relationship building, and avoiding criticism and punishment as deliberate strategies to improve “marginalized” students’ motivation and self-confidence. Furthermore, the team members argued that those teachers who thought that such an approach led to unfairness had a limited view of justice, that is, they only considered the principle of equality (everyone should be treated equally) but did not consider other principles of justice.

Team member 4: They have only one view on the concept of justice.

Researcher: What do you mean?

Team member 4: It’s just that everyone should get the same. Nevertheless, we sometimes need to think about the principle of needs too.

(Focus group with the resource team)

If we compare the teachers’ representation of fairness in this context with the resource team’s, we find a classic ethical conflict between opposite views of justice: the principle of equality versus the principle of need. The principle of equality is about receiving identical or comparable treatment, rewards, and responsibilities. According to the principle of need, resources, help, and treatment should be distributed in accordance with the scale of need so that those in most need receive the largest share. Even a parent in the study echoed the sentiments of the resource team. “Let’s not go down that road! Don’t just stand there and say it’s unfair. I mean some kids need more of a push. Some kids need an awful lot of help because socially it’s a mess at home. Don’t pay too much attention to it as something negative” (Parent 4). According to the team members and this particular parent, some students needed more encouragement than others to succeed in school.

Professional Ethnocentricity

The professional collision between the external consultants and the school personnel produced and reinforced self-serving social representations about in-group and out-group. Both teachers and external consultants expressed in their narratives in-group favoritism and out-group devaluation that protected their own in-group and social identity (cf. Hogg & McGarty, 1990; Tajfel, 1978; Turner & Oakes, 1989). These social representations can be seen as a form of self-serving bias in that the participants tended to see themselves as positive

by “selectively processing self-relevant information so that they attend to and evaluate information with favorable implications for self and avoid information with negative implications” (Moskowitz, 2005, p. 313). Social representations based on in-group favoritism and out-group devaluation created and reinforced a professional ethnocentricity (Blomqvist, 2004), that is, a tendency to view the professional theory and one’s own practice as superior compared with others. In the school context, these social processes and representations created in turn consultants’ legitimacy loss. “We don’t expect someone who knows everything but someone who actually has an enormous competence in this stuff ... It hasn’t felt that he was better than us in the level—in the level of competence” (Teacher 7). “They don’t offer us any valuable tips and ideas. I don’t see the meaning in having these meetings with them” (Teacher 5). The social representation of team members as incompetent and useless demotivated teachers to pay attention to them and stay engaged in the consultation.

According to some principals, it was not easy for people from outside to come into the school and try to change the culture there. They argued that school staff was a special group that was “hard to convince.” Teachers tended to be skeptical about “experts” from outside. Faced with this skeptical attitude, it was difficult for team members and others to gain any legitimacy from the teachers and initiate changes in school.

Principal 5: But I think that this isn’t a new problem here, this thing about people coming in from outside and trying to gain a kind of legitimacy in the school.

Principal 1: It’s not easy.

Principal 5: School people are a bit prickly to deal with. In some way however—

Researcher: What do you mean?

Principal 5: Well, about someone from outside coming in as an expert. That’s something, I think, that—

Principal 7: The teachers play a waiting game.

Principal 5: —you have had the attitude for a long time (in a skeptical tone): “Does this person really know anything about these things?” And maybe this is the same in all professions, for all I know. I only have experience from school. Nevertheless, you can say that because it’s difficult, it’s also an important aspect. You can’t just ignore it. If you don’t earn legitimacy, then it’s over.

(Focus group with principals)

Hence, the school culture appeared to have a strong tendency to categorize external professionals in terms of “them” and question their legitimacy when these professionals came to the school. Those principals who did not share their colleagues’ views about the unwillingness of the school culture to change were still prone to devalue team members by attributing lack of legitimacy to them. “I don’t think you should blame the school culture because actually there is a strong will to be consulted about a difficult student, I think, but if you don’t sense that this person can contribute anything worthwhile, then of

course the willingness ebbs away” (Principal 2).

Insufficient Tacit Knowledge of School Culture

Some teachers expressed displeasure with the resource team because they perceived that the team members lacked basic knowledge about teaching practices and how things worked in schools and classrooms. In their view, team members who arrived at their school had insufficient tacit knowledge about the school culture (as it was viewed, perceived, and lived by the teachers), which in turn disrupted and interfered with the school practices and counteracted positive consultation.

Some examples of team member behaviors that teachers identified as evidence of poor understanding of the school culture and that were disruptive included not coming to appointments on time, having their cell phones on during lessons, and leaving the classroom in the middle of a lesson time to receive a phone call or check e-mail. Furthermore, according to some of the teachers, the team members did not really understand teaching practices such as classroom organization, classroom management (e.g., a team member repeatedly disrupted the teacher when she or he talked to the whole class), pedagogical differences between different school subjects (e.g., formal learning outcomes in mathematics), and the academic demands of school.

That fact [is] that they aren't familiar with the teacher role or the stuff I work according to. Instead the following kind of discussion took place: “What's the minimum that you have to do to pass?” We have had a lot discussion about social studies. “Well, regarding Christianity, you have to pass in Christianity by doing these things.” “But what's the very least that you have to do?” “Well, you have to do this test and this work and show that you've met all the learning goals.” And somewhere in there, Sarah [team member] didn't really understand what it takes to get a pass, but instead she apparently thought, “What's the very least he [the student] has to do?” “There is no minimum. Everyone has to manage all these parts in order to pass.” Thus, she never really understood it at all. (Teacher 7)

The analysis of the data from the teacher focus groups shows that the perception of the team members' insufficient tacit knowledge of the school culture created negative attitudes resulting in teachers' disengagement from consultation. In addition, one teacher noted some differences between individual team members and reported that when a team member had “school experience,” the consultation appeared to work better.

Team members mentioned the problem of their insufficient tacit knowledge of school culture, too. According to team members, teachers used their shared tacit knowledge to interact, communicate, and work easily together. This shared tacit knowledge guided the teachers' actions and interactions more or less unconsciously and made everyday school life and social interactions between teachers more predictable for each other. Nevertheless, this tacit knowledge among teachers was indeed tacit and was not shared explicitly with team members. The team members said that teachers in general did not clearly inform them about routines, habits, and norms regarding day-to-day school

life and specific school arrangements (e.g., changes in schedules or particular norms for the school yard). This created “opacity” between the groups, which became an obstacle to efficient consultation.

Opacity, I think. They [the teachers] are very vague. They have worked for so many years so they do what they’ve always done. And then, they are very vague with us about how they usually do things, how they always work. (Team member 4).

Because of this opacity, the team members sometimes missed things, did or said “wrong” things, or had to put a lot of time and effort into figuring out things by themselves. It created a sense of uncertainty and hesitancy for the team members.

Lack of Integration Between Resource Team and School Personnel

According to the principals, the resource team did not spend enough time with the school personnel and were too poorly integrated with them, which undermined efficient consultation and maintained a barrier-constructing sense of “us and them.” This lack of integration led to the team’s loss of legitimacy with teachers and other school staff.

Principal 3: They [the resource team] should be more visible, or perhaps–, now they are based nearby Strawberry school. I think it’s difficult since there are so many schools where they should be working, well, at least be present in–

Principal 5: Yes, it’s probably right what somebody said about these things like in fact joining the staff in the staff room and things like that too, even if they don’t think they can do much work there, but again this is what I’m always talking about, the issue of legitimacy, that they have to be involved in teachers’ working teams.

(Focus group with principals)

Some teachers also complained about team members’ limited presence in the schools. Team members’ lack of presence decreased their opportunities to better understand the school culture from the teachers’ point of view. Moreover, both teachers and team members reported that teachers had little time for consultation, which also contributed to the lack of integration across the groups. Furthermore, the team members’ insufficient knowledge of school culture due to their limited presence in school and the opacity of each group’s purposes (i.e., teachers were not sure about the resource team’s purpose, and both teachers and team members complained about poor communication from the other side) also contributed to the lack of integration between the team and the teachers. The overall lack of integration between the team and the schools created uncertainty and facilitated negative stereotyping of the respective out-group, leading to change resistance in the school culture.

Change Resistance in the School Culture

Although some teachers were open to dialogue and change, others just wanted the team members to act as assistants and take the target student out of the classroom. At the same time, the team members reported that, in general, teachers were much harder to work with than parents and target students and that there was a general resistance to changes in the school culture and organization. The team members argued that teachers' punishment-oriented thinking, focus on students' negative behavior, and overall rejecting approach to marginalized or difficult-to-teach students were deeply rooted in school culture. The team members reported that teachers often wanted them to remove the problem by "taking them [the target students] out of the classroom ... to a small group or by sitting [with the target student] in a group room" (Team member 2) and by changing the target students to make them fit in better at school. The interplay between professional ethnocentricity and change resistance seemed to manifest what could be called consultation disengagement. Instead of true consultation, teachers were more engaged in avoidant and resistant behavior toward the external consultants and the external consultants became more engaged in a pattern of intrusion (trying to persuade teachers) and resignation as well as spending more time with direct intervention toward students and parents.

A Grounded Theory of Change Resistance in the Context of School Consultation

The analysis resulted in a grounded theory of change resistance in the context of school consultation illustrated in Figure 1. Differences in professional assumptions (student-in-context vs. within-student explanations; inclusive education [including challenging students by adapting classroom practices] vs. general education [excluding challenging students if they can not adapt to the classroom practices]; positive/sensitive vs. strict discipline; and conflicting approaches to fairness, especially in terms of equality vs. need) led to conflicting professional main concerns. Whereas the team members' main concern was to come in and change the school culture to promote the maintenance of the target students in the regular classroom by using a social-ecological perspective, inclusive education, and positive psychology, the teachers' main concern was to defend and maintain the school culture as it was to promote an environment conducive to learning in the classroom as well as the welfare and academic achievement of the rest of the students. Therefore, an intergroup conflict was inevitable in many cases, and the professional cultural barriers then remained to serve and protect each group by the production and reinforcement of self-serving social representations that generated professional ethnocentricity. The properties of professional ethnocentricity emphasized the professional and moral excellence of the in group and devalued the competence and practices of the other party, which in turn created loss of legitimacy between the parties and contributed to the lack of integration between the external consultants and school personnel.

Lack of integration consisted of (a) poor interaction and communication resulting in opacity that maintained insufficient knowledge about the culture, goals, and practices of the out-group profession; (b) team members disrupting

classroom practices that irritated teachers; (c) patterns of intrusion and resistance; and (d) teachers avoiding team members. All of these factors exacerbated the level of poor interaction and communication between the respective groups. Lack of integration led to each group's loss of legitimacy with the other and contributed to the maintenance of professional ethnocentricity. Thus, the basic social process of change resistance in the context of school consultation was the mutual interaction between professional ethnocentricity and lack of integration. Organizational barriers were teachers' lack of time due to schedule constraints and team members' limited presence in school and being external to school. These organizational barriers seemed to contribute to the lack of integration.

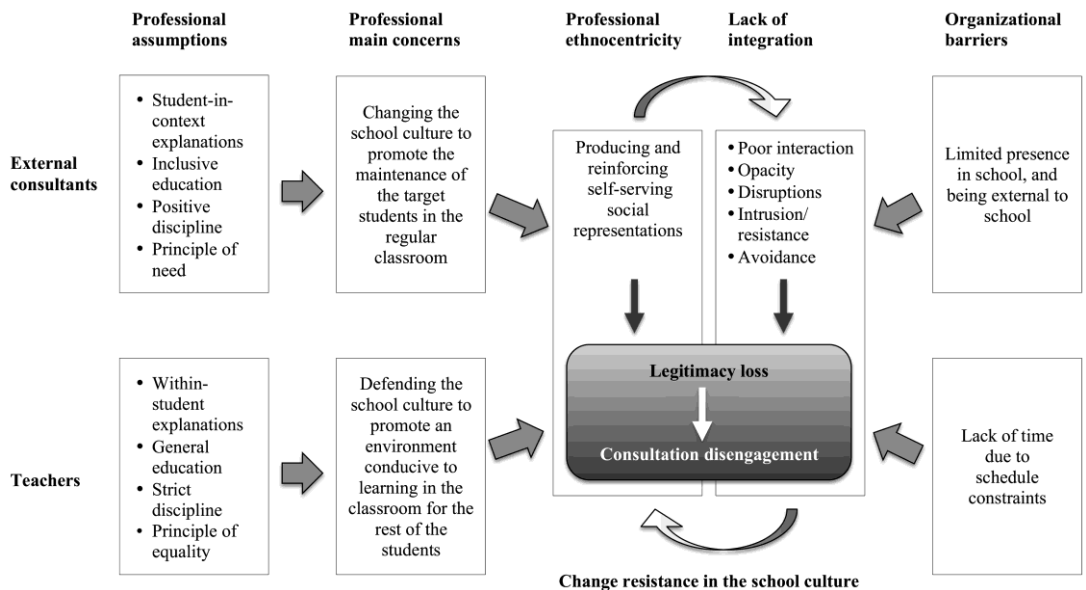


Figure 1. Grounded theory of change resistance in the context of school consultation.

DISCUSSION

The findings in the present study might, at least in part, be interpreted. The findings from this study of the perceptions of external resource team consultants, elementary school educators, parents, and difficult-to-teach students confirm reports from other studies, which indicate that consultation pitfalls between teachers and nonteachers often arise due to professional boundaries between consultees and consultants, differences between the professional and organizational cultures of schools and external organizations, and resistance to changing the well-established practices of teachers in schools (e.g., Farrell et al., 2009; Rubinson, 2002; Spratt et al., 2006). For example, teachers' mistrust and suspicion of "experts" who have little direct experience with teaching and classroom management have also been found in other studies (Rubinson, 2002; Spratt et al., 2006), and teachers' unwillingness to investigate how their own values, assumptions, and behavior might be part of the problem and

their one-sided attribution of the causes to deficiencies within the child or his/her family have been reported in many studies (e.g., Farrell et al., 2009; Klingner & Harry, 2006; Knotek, 2003). Furthermore, team members' tendency of not taking teachers' perspectives seriously have also been found in Slonski-Fowler and Truscott's (2004) study.

The findings in the present study might, at least in part, be interpreted and understood in terms of social categorization and identification found in the social identity perspective (Hogg & McGarty, 1990; Tajfel, 1978; Turner & Oakes, 1989). According to the social identity perspective, individuals categorize and define themselves and others as members of a range of social categories. Individuals form or learn the stereotypic norms of these categories and assign these norms to themselves as members of these categories. Hence their behavior becomes increasingly normative to their group as their category membership becomes more salient (Hogg & McGarty, 1990). By social identification (i.e., the member acceptance and internalization of the norms of a social category) individuals define themselves as members of a group and act on this basis (Turner & Oakes, 1989). In their narratives, the different participants in the current research largely operated as members of an in-group ("we"), defined the other professionals as members of an out-group ("them"), and attributed the "others" behavior in terms of group stereotypes. Within the social identity perspective, social identity is defined as "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel, 1978, p. 63). Because people have a need for positive self-esteem and positive identity, and the social identity concept is linked to these constructs, identity is "linked to the need for a positive and distinctive image of the ingroup" (Tajfel, 1978, p. 74). When there is a strong need for in-group members to differentiate their in-group from the out-group (e.g., in situations in which the boundaries between the groups are unclear, or the groups are in competition or conflict, or if the out-group in some way is perceived as threatening the values of the in-group), there is a very strong tendency toward in-group solidarity, in-group favoritism, and out-group devaluation produced by negative social stereotypes.

Hence, the mutual interaction between social identity processes and intergroup conflict could lead to an escalating spiral. One possible interpretation of the findings in this study is that the prevalent negative social representations of the out-group among the participants were, at least in part, generated by social identity processes (social categorization, in-group solidarity, in-group favoritism, and out-group devaluation based on negative stereotypes).

This study shows that the maintenance of barriers and intergroup conflicts might in part be linked to social representations within the different groups. Social representations (i.e., shared meanings among people) influence people's perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors in social situations (Moscovici, 2001) and are therefore relevant to investigate and analyze. In the analysis of the data, two social representations of each other regarding the issue of inclusion versus exclusion have emerged.

1. According to the team members, teachers are generally opposed to the inclusion of students who challenge the school.
2. According to the teachers, team members are too fixed on the idea of inclusion as the right and only approach regardless of the student's behavior.

Two further social representations of each other regarding discipline styles (authoritarian vs. permissive) have also been found.

1. According to team members, schools and teachers are in general too authoritarian and punishment oriented when students behave badly or wrongly.
2. According to teachers, team members are too permissive and do not set clear limits when students behave badly or wrongly.

These negative social representations of the out-group sustained the inter-group conflict and counteracted the consultation process. In addition, in the school context, the team members were representing not only an out-group but also a minority in relation to the teachers. Being both a minority and an out-group could in itself be challenging for consultants when they enter the school. Maass and Clark (1984) distinguished between single minorities, that is, individuals who only differ from the majority in terms of some attitudes, beliefs, or behavior, and double minorities, that is, individuals who also belong to a different social category (an out-group). Research has shown that minority out-groups (double minorities) often have very little influence (for a review, see Abrams & Hogg, 1990). This might be due to the combination of the power of majority influence and the fact that the targets of the minority influence might "perceive the influence situation as an intergroup relationship, where agreeing with minority views would entail recategorizing oneself as an outgroup member" (Abrams & Hogg, 1990, p. 203). Thus, an alternative or additional interpretation of the findings in the current study is that the double minority effect might contribute to consultation resistance among the teachers because the consultation was situated in the school context in which there was a majority of teachers who could easily view the resource team members as members from a double minority.

In this study, many teachers reported that the resource team members did not understand the school culture and their situation as teachers. Such perceptions among consultees counteract an effective consultation. According to Joshi (2004), a primary task for any consultant is to understand the needs of the consultee as well as possible:

School personnel are often under great pressure to balance the tasks of teaching children how to think, how to socialize, how to learn appropriate academic, vocational, and life skills, and how to continuously meet expectations in forms of academic standards. Hence, it is important for the consultant to be familiar with general characteristics of a school. (p. 887)

This was an obvious problem in the resource team initiative—a fact that was

also identified by the team members—and can be attributed in part to poor interaction and communication between the teachers and team members. The poor communication was associated with the failure to build alliances and establish a good relationship with mutual respect and understanding between members of the respective groups. Effective communication and strong alliances between participants are fundamental to effective consultation (e.g., Frank & Kratochwill, 2008; Joshi, 2004) yet were not present in the resource team project. Similarly, an advanced understanding of the school environment and its organizational factors is critical to establishing effective consultative relationships (Schultz, Reisweber & Cobb, 2007) and was not established in this project.

Furthermore, the very process by which the team was assigned (the decisions were made above the school level, by an external board, and teachers did not have any say) might very well have contributed to the problems of organizational and professional barriers. In the eyes of many teachers, the team members became intruders with an external and insensitive agenda instead of being consultee-centered consultants. The resource team members' dual role of providing consultation as well as direct services in some cases seemed to encourage more identification with clients and exacerbated divisions from consultees. Hence, a variety of factors seemed to contribute to the problem of professional barriers between the consultants and consultees. Some of the tensions between teachers and team members might also be associated with the "equality vs. ecology" paradox in school consultation (Schultz et al., 2007). "On the one hand, there is an emphasis on establishing collegial relationship with consultees, and on the other hand, there is an emphasis in addressing the consultee's potential role in student behavior problems" (p. 13 in Chapter 10), which in turn might result in a threatening consultative relationship (cf. Farrell et al., 2009) and thus lead to teacher resistance.

However, the change resistance of the school culture could also be interpreted in terms of societal norms. According to Erevelles (2006), the way that educational personnel approach students with disabilities or severe school problems is mediated by a societal perspective that labels those students as outside the norm. This normalizing practice of schooling occurs "because public education has used the concepts of difference, deviance, and disability synonymously to justify the exclusion of certain student populations" (p. 366). This collides with the very aim of inclusive education and ecological problem solving, which was fundamental to the resource team initiative. Consequently, the purposes of the resource team and schools as understood by the respective members were often in conflict.

Limitations of the Study

The findings of this study explicate some information about how team-based, external consultation may collide with schools and teachers. However, the study is not without limitations. The small and nonprobability sample limits the findings' transferability. That is, the findings are only generalizable to the extent that the situation is similar to another project. Furthermore, the voluntary sampling procedure that was used to recruit teachers, parents, and students

might result in a sample bias. For example, teachers who were more negative and critical toward the resource team initiative might have volunteered. There might have been teachers who were more positive toward the resource team but were less motivated to participate in the study. Nevertheless, in line with a constructivist position of grounded theory (e.g., Charmaz, 2006), I do not claim to offer an exact picture but rather an interpretive portrayal of the phenomenon in the schools studied. Hence, the grounded theory of change resistance in the context of school consultation presented in this article should be seen as open for revision and development if new studies are conducted. Furthermore, practitioners should actively and critically evaluate the current findings by comparing them with their own practice in terms of fit, relevance, and workability (Glaser, 1998) or usefulness, as Charmaz (2006) put it. Does the theory work to explain or better understand relevant behaviors and interactions? Do the analyses offer interpretations that practitioners can use in their everyday practice?

Another limitation is that the study is only based on focus group data (and to some extent on interview data). In order to strengthen the ecological validity, ethnographic observations of consultation are suggested as further steps. In addition, to test the grounded theory in this study and develop a more generalizable stock of knowledge, more research on organizational and professional cultural barriers as well as change resistance in the context of school consultation should be conducted. Such studies could include different non-teaching professionals, types of cases, schools and educational levels, and types of consultation (e.g., behavioral or consultee-centered consultation, etc.). Furthermore, it is possible that the severity of the case and the type of presenting problems might have something to do with how willing teachers are to keep students in their classes.

Implications for Practitioners

The results of this study highlight the challenges of professional and organizational cultural barriers in school-based consultation. Such barriers may severely impede the work of external consultants and nonteacher professionals within the school manifested as conflicting professional assumptions and main concerns, professional ethnocentricity, and lack of integration. The findings suggest the importance of considering and exploring the school culture and the different social representations in the consultee groups as well as in the group with which the consultant identifies. These factors may act as barriers to effective consultation practice. To overcome barriers to effective consultation, consultants have to understand the school culture and the complex activity of teaching (for an excellent review of the key factors of teachers' practices, see Erchul & Martens, 2010, Chapter 9). Participant observations, informal conversations with teachers, and systematic data collection in the school and the classroom could be significant means of developing a sensitive understanding of the particular school, classroom, teacher's main concerns and practices, and the problem under consideration. Practitioners should also develop self-awareness of their own group's guiding norms and beliefs and how these professional norms may impinge on efforts to consult with teachers.

This study indicates that proposals and interventions from other professionals may create problematic pedagogical, social, and ethical dilemmas for teachers in their day-to-day classroom practice and that these perceived dilemmas have to be addressed. Again, consultants have to understand and consider the complexity of teaching and its embedded conflicts of values, aims, and preferences and how interventions and efforts to bring about inclusive education might create or reinforce tensions, conflicts, or paradoxes within the teaching practice. Establishing good relationships with mutual respect and understanding for each other—in which the parties openly communicate and share their perspectives with each other—is an essential prerequisite for the external consultants to prevent or overcome troublesome barriers. As school staff and prereferral teams should be cautious when using within-child explanations in every case of difficult-to-teach students, school consultants should be cautious when using “within-teacher” explanations in every case of “difficult-to-consult-with” teachers (e.g., “he is just a hopeless person” or “she is so uncooperative”). It is likely more productive to adopt a “teacher-in-context” approach by being sensitive to the consultees’ professional expertise and concerns and investigating and learning the school culture and context in which both the teacher and the target student operate. Otherwise, there is an obvious risk of hostile relations (cf. Rubinson, 2002; Spratt et al., 2006), teacher disengagement (cf. Slonski-Fowler & Truscott, 2004), and thus consultation loss.

Social psychological research (see Hogg & Vaughan, 2008) has shown that intergroup relationships (which consultation always centers on because the consultant and the consultee are members of different groups) could be improved by (a) prolonged cooperative activity (extended contact effect); (b) superordinate goals that are realistic, shared, and achievable (which the target problem may actually offer); (c) seeing and valuing the benefits and power of pluralism (instead of professional ethnocentricity); and (d) direct and efficient communication. It appears to be quite urgent to create a consultation climate in which differences in professional values, perspectives, methods, strategies, and terminologies can be verbalized, investigated, and discussed. The grounded theory and its concepts constructed in this study might be used by consultants and consultees as tools for self-reflection and shared reflections upon their school consultation situations. Such reflection could make it possible to identify, discuss, and cope with organizational and professional barriers that might form during the process and hence to prevent unnecessary change resistance in the context of school consultation. The main contribution of the generated grounded theory in this study is to highlight possible social representations, cultural barriers, and social interaction pitfalls and hence to help practitioners to be more aware of them.

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