

Antecedents and outcomes of intervention program participation and task priority change among school psychology counselors: A latent variable growth framework[☆]

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Abstract

A three-year national intervention program introduced into the School Psychology Service (SPS) in Norway with the aim of increasing systemic level work among SP counselors was investigated. Latent variable growth models based on longitudinal data from 195 SP counselors gave no significant mean level change in systemic level work. This concurred with GLM analyses based on data from a sample of 20 schools. However, retrospective self-reported significant positive mean level change for systemic level work was detected among the SP counselors. Intervention program participation was associated with individual change in systemic level work. Self-efficacy beliefs about systemic level work, and school-related etiology beliefs predicted individual change to a certain degree. Comparison of two rival models gave no support for a hypothesized interaction among intervention program participation and beliefs in their effects on systemic level work. Open-ended questions indicated that individual level workload and the perceived expectations from the schools may have concern for a successful effect of the intervention program in addition to the

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hypothesized ones. Individual change in systemic level work was positively associated with individual change in job satisfaction.

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In school psychology the center of attention has moved towards prevention-oriented service-delivery (a systemic level approach) (Anthun, 1999; Birkemo, 1990; Braden, DiMarino-Linnen, & Good, 2001; Bradley-Johnson & Dean, 2000; Bradley-Johnson, Johnson, & Jacob-Timm, 1995; Conoley & Gutkin, 1995; Hatzichristou, 1998; Hoagwood & Johnson, 2003; Idsoe, 2003; Oakland & Cunningham, 1992; Pianta, 2003; Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000; Strein, Hoagwood, & Cohn, 2003; Ysseldyke et al., 2006; Ysseldyke et al., 1997). This change in the perception and views of the profession has probably been driven in part by the needs of children and their teachers (Pianta, 2003), but also by the increased emphasis in psychology generally on the use of ecological and systems frameworks to understand human development (Bandura, 1986; Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Ford & Lerner, 1992). An increasing amount of research supports the idea that a systemic level approach may be a more effective way to provide school psychology services (Felner et al., 2001; Gottfredson, 1990; Loeber, 1990). Support for role change in the USA is reflected in several initiatives at professional and policy levels (Sheridan & D'Amato, 2004). Major efforts have included articles in school psychology journals, professional conferences like the "Invitational Conference on the Future of School Psychology" (Indianapolis, 2002), the Blueprints I, II and III which are guidelines for training and practice (Ysseldyke et al., 2006; Ysseldyke et al., 1997; Ysseldyke, Reynolds, & Weinberg, 1984), as well as national initiatives such as the "Individuals with Disabilities Education Act" and the "No Child Left Behind Act". Despite the consensus that a role change is beneficial, it has been problematic to implement such change in practice (Sheridan & D'Amato, 2004; Ysseldyke et al., 2006). Even though data indicate some regional variation (Hosp & Reschly, 2002), there seems to have been national stability for several decades on how school psychologists spend their time (Ysseldyke et al., 2006), and traditional roles continue to dominate (Reschly, 2004). The question of how to make change happen is therefore obviously vital. We found no empirical evidence of interventions directed towards professional change within the field.

In our study we conducted a unique examination of predictors and outcomes of practitioners' change related to a three-year national intervention program in Norway. In this country, a systemic level approach has been prioritized by law (NOU, 1995:18), and national support for this approach has been given via a three-year intervention program (Roland, Fandrem, and Westergård, in progress). The first purpose of this study was to determine how this program affected systemic level work in the School Psychology Service (SPS) over a three-year period. Secondly, antecedents of intervention program participation and work behavior change were determined. Thirdly, the study sought to determine if changes in work tasks affected employees' job satisfaction. This was of interest both in terms of employees' well being in general, and because satisfaction related to systemic work may sustain employee motivation for this approach over time. Data was collected

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