THE ROLE AND FUNCTION OF THE SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST IN THE 21st CENTURY: A LITERATURE REVIEW

By

Marlene L. Koch

A Research Paper

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the
Master of Education Degree
With a Major in

School Psychology

Approved: 2 Semester Credits

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Investigation Advisor

The Graduate College
University of Wisconsin-Stout
August, 2001

The Graduate School
University of Wisconsin-Stout
Menomonie, WI 54751

ABSTRACT

	Koch	Marlene	L.
(Writer)	(Last Name)	(First)	(Initial)

The Role and Function of the School Psychologist in the 21st Century:
(Title)

A Literature Review

School Psychology	Jacalyn Weissenburger	August, 2001	46
(Graduate Major)	(Research Adviser)	(Month/Year)	(No. Pages)

American Psychological Association (APA) Publication Manual (4th Edition)
(Name of Style Manual Used in this Study)

This study will look at the literature examining the past, present, and future role of the school psychologist. It also will investigate how the role is related to the ten domains identified by the National Association of School Psychologist's (NASP's) School Psychology: A Blueprint for Training and Practice (Blueprint II) (Ysseldyke et al., 1997).

In the past, the role of the school psychologist has been closely tied to assessing and diagnosing children with special needs. In Blueprint II, however, the authors argue that societal, political, and economical changes have created a need for a further examination of the role and function of current and future school psychologists. The purpose of this study is to review the literature to determine what practicing school psychologists and policy makers believe regarding the role and function of school psychologists. This study also will look at what these individuals believe about the traditional role and the need for

role expansion. A critical analysis will interpret the findings of the literature review and determine what further research would contribute to our knowledge about the future role of the school psychologist.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the following individuals for their contributions in the completion of this paper. First, and foremost, I would like to thank Jacalyn W. Weissenburger for her support and commitment to this literature review and critical analysis. I would also like to express gratitude to Dr. Amy L.Gillett for her initial assistance. Finally, to my husband, John, I thank you for all of your support and encouragement.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

School psychology continues to evolve as we enter the twenty-first century. As practitioners move into the new century, they are given an opportunity to examine the field of school psychology in terms of the past, the present; and, most importantly, the future (Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000). The National Association of School Psychologists, or NASP, published School Psychology: A Blueprint for Training and Practice II (i.e., Blueprint II) in an attempt to assist school psychologists and the individuals who train them with the developing practice of school psychology (Ysseldyke et al., 1997).

Blueprint II is a document that advocates for a proactive, preventative, and an expanded role for school psychologists with ten identified domains of leadership and competency. The purpose of Blueprint II is to define and describe the domains that are used in school psychology in order to create and improve the capacities of school psychologists as they serve agencies, institutions, families, and individuals in the twenty-first century (Ysseldyke et al., 1997).

Blueprint II identifies ten skill and competency domains related to the role and function of school psychologists. These domains are: 1) data based decision making and accountability; 2) interpersonal communication, collaboration, and consultation; 3) effective instruction and development of cognitive/academic skills; 4) socialization and development of life competencies; 5) student diversity in development and learning; 6) school structure, organization, and climate; 7) prevention, wellness promotion, and crisis intervention; 8) home/school/community collaboration; 9) research and program evaluation; and 10) legal, ethical practice, and professional development. The authors

claim that attaining a high level of expertise in all ten domains may be unrealistic, but they state that all school psychologists should have a high level of expertise in four domains: data-based decision making and accountability; interpersonal communication, collaboration, and consultation; effective instruction and development of cognitive/academic skills; and socialization and development of life competencies (Ysseldyke et al., 1997).

As stated in Blueprint II, every generation of students attends school overwhelmed with problems caused by political, economic, and social influences. For this reason, the role of educators, including school psychologists, is changing. According to Blueprint II, there is an increasing emphasis on collaboration and a decreasing need for psychometrics and labeling. Further, the authors assert that there is an increasing focus on success for all students, and an expanded involvement or broader role for school psychologists (Ysseldyke et al., 1997).

The role of the school psychologist has been identified primarily with assessing and diagnosing children with special needs ever since the passage of Public Law 94-142 (Education of All Handicapped Children Act, 1975) (Murray, 1996). According to Reschly (2000), school psychologists continue to spend approximately 50% to 55% of their time in psychoeducational assessment activities. The remainder of their time is devoted to direct intervention, problem-solving consultation, systems/organizational consultation, applied research and program evaluation (Reschly, 2000).

Many school psychologists and professionals within the field of education, however, indicate that providing primarily assessment related tasks results in a cycle of "reactive" responding. The result of "reactive" responding can cause school

psychologists to be utilized for problem identification rather than problem prevention (Bardon, 1994; Murray, 1996; Reschly & Wilson, 1995).

In Blueprint II (Ysseldyke et al., 1997), the authors encourage school psychologists to assume a proactive and preventive role within the schools. This publication states that delivery of school psychology services should be based upon a broad-based model verses an indirect service intervention model through traditional assessment (Ysseldyke et al., 1997).

The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) is aware of the controversy and apprehension related to modifying the more traditional role of the school psychologist. The task force members responsible for the development of Blueprint II encouraged professionals and trainers to discuss the issues related to both the traditional and broad-based role. Blueprint II's authors attempted to provide a direction in the field of school psychology by making a case for a variety of role functions in our nation's changing schools (Ysseldyke et al., 1997).

The possible need for expansion related to the role and function of the school psychologist is affected by differing expectations and trends at the state and national level (Gutkin, 1995). Neither school psychologists, nor clients, function in isolation. They are all influenced by multiple systems. Many trainers and policy-makers assert that school psychologists need to recognize that they are part of an ecology in which children, families, and schools function (Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000).

Many leaders and policy makers advocate for expanded health service roles for school psychologists, creating further controversy surrounding the role. Some school psychologists disagree with giving up the more assessment-oriented, traditional role.

Some school psychologists continue to argue that valuable information is gained from the administration of traditional norm-referenced tests (Reynolds & Kamphaus, 1990), and a few school psychologists express concern about decreasing the emphasis on the traditional assessment role because assessment and diagnosis have been the legislatively mandated reasons to employ school psychologists in many districts (Hyman & Kaplinski, 1994).

Many practitioners in the field of school psychology have recognized that they can be more effective in meeting students' needs and solving problems in the schools. In order to move beyond the "gate keeping" function (i.e., being primarily responsible for providing test scores in order to make decisions about special education placement), individual practitioners often become responsible for implementing new ideas. In addition to the efforts of individual psychologists, the university community also can be instrumental in affecting role change (Bradley-Johnson, Johnson, & Jacob-Timm, 1995; Conoley & Gutkin, 1995).

According to many, the challenge for the twenty-first century is for the field to make widespread efforts to change the role of the school psychologist to meet the ever-changing needs of the schools (Bradley-Johnson & Dean, 2000). As it enters the new millennium, school psychologists have an opportunity to reflect upon the past and identify unique and proactive roles. Establishing relevant and contemporary research directions, reexamining empirically supported school psychological service domains, and identifying optimal and essential practices to become situated strategically in core preventive health, mental health, and educational programs for children, youth, and families are other role functions under consideration (Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000). The

disciplinary roles, functions, and services of most professions must continually evolve to better meet the needs of the society (Woody & Davenport, 1998). School psychology is one profession that will profit from a reexamination of its role as it relates to the current educational needs of our nation's children.

Statement of the Problem

The role of the school psychologist has been traditionally tied to assessing and diagnosing children with special needs. In Blueprint II, however, the authors assert that societal, political, and economical changes have created a need for a further examination of the role and function of current and future school psychologists. The purpose of this literature review is to summarize the previous literature and reviews related to the history, tradition and expanding role of the school psychologist. The study also will investigate the empirically based research that has examined the role of the school psychologist and draw conclusions regarding the role and function of the school psychologist in the twenty-first century. Finally, recommendations will be made for future research.

CHAPTER II

Review of the Literature

The following review of literature will look at the historical and traditional role of the school psychologist. It will also examine the trend toward a more broad-based service provision model. In addition to the role of the school psychologist, related educational reform efforts and Blueprint II also will be reviewed.

The History Behind School Psychology

In order to gain a clearer understanding of the role and function of the school psychologist, it is important to understand the history of the field. Preceding the late 1800's, the care and treatment of handicapped children was deplorable to nonexistent (Bradley-Johnson, Johnson, & Jacob-Timm, 1995). There was no programmatic provision of services for children with special needs. In the 1870's, special classrooms began to remove "problem children" from regular classrooms. Educators, then, prepared children who were mentally retarded for future placement in institutions. In the early 1920's, the Council for Exceptional Children was established to advance educational opportunities for children with disabilities. Many activities were carried out as a result of the efforts of various groups to develop individualized educational programs within the public schools. From 1953 to 1963, student enrollment in special education classes increased. However, no data existed to demonstrate the effectiveness of special education (Bradley-Johnson, Johnson, & Jacob-Timm, 1995).

During the period of 1890 to 1930, school psychology and other applied psychology fields lacked specialized training, credentials, and organizational recognition. The title "clinical psychologist" was used to describe practitioners in many settings such as

schools. The acceptable role of early practitioners was testing, and schools wanted to use tests to assist in the classification of students. The predominant role of school psychologists developed during this period, and this restriction of the role to that of test administrator has continued to characterize school psychology to this day (Fagan, 1986).

During 1930 to 1950, there was an increase in professional organizations with the establishment of the American Association of Applied Psychologists (AAAP). Later, the Division of School Psychologists (Division 16) was established within the American Psychological Association (APA) in 1945. During this time, there also were developments in the training, certification, and growth in the number of school psychology practitioners (Fagan, 1986).

In 1975, Congress passed the Education of All Handicapped Children Act (now the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, IDEA, 1997), which allocated funds to the states so they could provide a free and appropriate public education to all children with disabilities. Along with this law, subsequent amendments and related civil rights legislation drove the growth of special education services and classes (Bradley-Johnson, Johnson, & Jacob-Timm, 1995).

In the 1970's and 1980's, economic factors became a concern. The increasing costs of special education programs drove people to question their effectiveness. In addition, research and federal policy statements in the 1980's called for changes in educational service delivery systems, with an emphasis on interventions in the general education classroom (Bradley-Johnson, Johnson, & Jacob-Timm, 1995).

Over the past 30 years, there has been growth and change in school psychology. The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), established in 1969, helped to

initiate the development and advancement of the field. Through the establishment of standards for training, standards for credentialing, and guidelines for professional conduct, school psychology has become more clearly defined (Curtis & Zins, 1989).

Until recently, there were few historical accounts of the field of school psychology. Some earlier sources claimed that major developments in school psychology occurred during the period of 1890-1970, or the "hybrid years" (Reynolds & Gutkin, 1999). There has been no in depth review of how school psychologists were trained in the twentieth century (Reynolds & Gutkin, 1999). Most trainers would assert that the current status of training in school psychology is substantially different from earlier times (Reynolds & Gutkin, 1999). For most of the period from 1890 to 1930, there were no state or national standards for training or practice. Further, there were no formed state associations of school psychologists, although there were a few local or regional groups in larger cities. In the early 1900's, practitioners begin using standardized, published tests of ability and achievement. The term "school psychologist" was introduced and used in practice by the middle of the period; however, the term was not used widely until the end (Reynolds & Gutkin, 1999).

The origins of school psychological services at the end of the nineteenth century were related to the circumstances and conditions at that time. These circumstances dealt with the changing status of children in America, a focus on developmental stages and child study, and the need for formal and compulsory schooling (Reynolds & Gutkin, 1999).

Lightner Witmer was considered the father of school psychology, and he was one of its earliest practitioners (Reynolds & Gutkin, 1999). Originally, in 1896, Witmer intended

the "psychological expert" to be a teacher who was specially trained to deal with school-related problems. He blended his training in experimental psychology with his introduction of clinical and school psychology, both of which examined introspection and individual differences. Many early school psychology practitioners had teacher training and/or experience, which led to the importance of exploration of that training (Reynolds & Gutkin, 1999). There was little formal training of special education teachers during this time. Today, many practitioners continue to receive training in school psychology, as well as teacher preparation. However, the nature of teacher training is different from earlier decades (Reynolds & Gutkin, 1999).

The Traditional Role

Practicing school psychologists are often used for problem identification (Bardon, 1994; Murray, 1996; Reschly & Wilson, 1995). The traditional assessment role continues to be emphasized because many school psychologists claim that valuable information can be derived from the administration of norm-referenced tests (Reynolds & Kamphaus, 1990). The traditional assessment role has relied on the medical model. This model has led professionals in the field to focus their attention on assessing, diagnosing, and treating the students who are referred for services (Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000).

In order to successfully function in any role, practitioners need to have a clear picture of the role's purpose (Thomas & Grimes, 1995). Deno (1995) states that the field of school psychology does not have a clear role, although many can easily identify their primarily activity as assessment. This "gate keeping" function of providing test scores to make decisions about placement has been the primary activity (Thomas & Grimes, 1995). In previous research that has been carried out, school psychologists tend to collect data

on the problem and monitor progress towards goals without using the data to modify the interventions that are unsuccessful. One of the solutions to this problem is to spend more time effectively using progress-monitoring data to solve problems. School psychologists should learn to effectively use data-based problem solving as "best practice" (Thomas & Grimes, 1995).

Many practitioners believe that standardized, criterion-based and informal measures are necessary to understand individual differences (Hyman & Kaplinski, 1994). Also, ecological data is needed to describe the individual within the setting, and psychodynamic theory helps define the existential aspects of the individual. Further, behavioral approaches suggest some of the best remediation techniques. These all are known to fit within the medical model which emphasizes identifying presenting problems, diagnosing the cause, remediating and/or treating both the causes and the symptoms (Hyman & Kaplinski, 1994).

Many school psychologists are occupied with determining a diagnostic label for a referred student. Traditionally, the role of the school psychologist has resulted in determining the special education placement of students with disabilities. The assumption has been that special education is an effective approach for children who are struggling educationally and/or behaviorally. However, some research has suggested that special education placement can be somewhat harmful (Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000). In other words, the medical model does not always lead to effective interventions or problem solving. Many believe that a label has little to do with effective treatments or placements for children (Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000).

With the increasing knowledge related to the diagnosis and treatment of psychopathology, many argue that we do not need to give up the medical model completely. Hyman and Kaplinski (1994) assert that practitioners need to learn how to promote and utilize the medical model more effectively by using their treatment, remediation, and consultation roles.

Reasons for Keeping the Traditional Role

Many school psychologists argue that the traditional assessment role often is utilized because of the special education qualification criteria used at the local, state, and federal levels. Traditional norm-referenced tests typically are required to identify students with learning, cognitive, and emotional disabilities (Hyman & Kaplinski, 1994). According to Wilson and Reschly (1996), there has been little change regarding the system of service delivery for children with learning disabilities and behavior problems. Most states define learning disabilities and mental retardation in ways that essentially mandate the use of individually administered norm-referenced tests of current intellectual functioning (Wilson & Reschly, 1996).

It is known that changes in assessment practices are occurring at a slow pace (Wilson & Reschly, 1996). Almost every practitioner is trained in the Wechsler scales, and most of those practitioners are administering them frequently (Wilson & Reschly, 1996). Some have said that the practice of school psychology has moved from the medical model of "test-diagnose-label-place" to a model of prevention and positive change for all children during the last decade (Dwyer, 2001). However, other professionals in the field disagree. For example, there are school systems that support the

traditional role for the school psychologist, and some see no role for the school psychologist when it comes to school reform (Dwyer, 2001).

There are other problems to look at regarding the traditional role. School psychologists cannot ignore the systematic forces that shape the profession. It is the legislative and policy mandates that can influence the kinds of services school psychologists provide to students. School psychologists often are mandated by policy or by law to use many of the standardized evaluation procedures that go along with the traditional role. According to many, school psychologists often do not create the structure of school psychology services. This can make it difficult for school psychologists to influence school administrators or state legislators to change policies (Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000).

The Expanding Role

Many believe school psychologists should assume a broader role than that of psychoeducational assessor. The data indicates that school psychologists continue to spend approximately 50% to 55% of their time in psychoeducational assessment activities (Reschly, 2000). The remainder of the time is spent providing roles of direct intervention (20%), problem-solving consultation (17%), systems/organizational consultation (6%), and applied research/program evaluation (2%). Research also suggests that many practitioners would like to change their role (Reschly, 2000). When using a more traditional role, school psychologists have limited impact beyond the assignment of diagnostic labels for special education (Gutkin & Conoley, 1990).

As mentioned before, Blueprint II (Ysseldyke et al., 1997) is a document that advocates for a proactive, preventative, and an expanded role for school psychologists. It

has been said that every generation of students attends schools with problems that are created by political, economic, and social forces according to the times. Now, in the new millennium, the authors of Blueprint II argue that school psychologists have the opportunity to help schools through the difficulties to affect positive change. According to Ysseldyke et al. (1997), new challenges include the changing population trends, a decline in local governmental support due to economic conditions, and geographic or economic disparities.

Even with all the challenges that school psychologists are facing in the schools, there are successes. As a nation, all children regardless of race, creed, national origin, or disability have the right to a free and appropriate education (Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), 1997; PL94-142, PL98-199, PL101-476; and the American with Disabilities Act (ADA)). Also, it has been said that test scores of students have been on a decline and our students rate poorly compared to those in other countries (Ysseldyke et al., 1997). Research now has shown that many students are doing better in school by getting higher test scores (Jehlen, 2001). According to Ysseldyke et al. (1997), there have been many improvements in the schools, more so than any other time in history.

In Blueprint II, Ysseldyke et al. (1997) claim that school psychologists are the "front-line workers" affected by school reform and change. Changes in the schools have lead to the change in the role of the school psychologist. Blueprint II's authors identify the role. These include increasing the collaboration with parents and community agencies, decreasing the use of simple psychometrics and labeling, and focusing on success for all students. In addition, according to the authors of Blueprint II, the role of the school psychologist needs to be changed to offer a more broad and expanded

involvement. With these changes, training and professional practice are affected (Ysseldyke et al., 1997).

According to Ysseldyke, et al. (1997), resources for training need to be increased in order to maintain quality training. They also argue that interdepartmental and intersystem collaboration is needed to maximize resources, provide a variety of training perspectives, and build inter-professional collaboration and problem solving (Ysseldyke et al, 1997).

Ysseldyke et al. (1997) make the case that as the nation becomes even more culturally diverse, the need for the recruitment and retention of multicultural and ethnically diverse school psychologists expands. Finally, instructional validity is important to provide feedback and supervised experiences to school psychologists in training. According to Blueprint II (Ysseldyke et al., 1997), practitioners in the field should acquire and become more proficient in new skills, understand their role, and demonstrate accountability in order to reassert itself as a necessary profession. Finally, according to Blueprint II, school psychologists in practice may need to serve in multiple service delivery systems and prevent work-related stress, which can lead to professional burnout (Ysseldyke et al., 1997).

As stated before, Blueprint II identifies ten skill and competency domains related to the role and function of the school psychologists (Ysseldyke et al., 1997). The first domain is the foundation for the training and practice of school psychology. This domain describes skills such as good problem solving ability and the ability to assess educational outcomes. Also, according to Blueprint II, school psychologists also must have the necessary positive interpersonal skills to effectively communicate with students, parents, and other school personnel. Other Blueprint II's domains identify the need to be aware of

diversity in the development of learning because students come from many different backgrounds. They also need the skills to promote learning and prevent problems in the school setting, as well as several other areas of skills and competencies (Ysseldyke et al., 1997) (See Appendix).

Reasons for Expanding the Role of the School Psychologist

During the 1970's and 1980's, major reform reports brought about public inquiry concerning the effectiveness of America's schools. One report was A Nation at Risk, written by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983). This document turned the public's attention to the poor status and condition of many of the nation's schools in the early 1980's. A series of major legislative efforts also served as a drive for change. For example, PL94-142, PL98-199, PL101-476, and the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) all have been passed since 1975. These laws have brought special education reforms that have impacted the role and function of all educators (Myers, Weissenburger, & Myers, 1998). In their study of Wisconsin school psychologists, Myers, Weissenburger, and Myers (1998) made the following statement:

> Alongside reports calling for strident change and the passage of landmark legislation, general shifts in thinking also have occurred. For example, language in the Regular Education Initiative (REI) proposed that special education and regular education should merge. The inclusion movement expanded this idea further, asserting that all children with disabilities be educated in the classroom they would regularly attend to the maximum extent possible. These changes and paradigm shifts, along with substantial societal changes, have had important effects on the roles of educators, including school psychologists (p.11).

As also stated in Blueprint II, in every generation there will be students who attend schools overwhelmed with problems created by political, economic, and social forces. The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP, 1997) reported grim statistics such as a child commits suicide every 90 minutes and 50 percent of adolescents are at moderate to high risk for mental health problems. Also, the Children's Defense Fund (2000) reported that 31 percent of America's fourth-graders are at or above basic reading proficiency, and 33 percent of children are behind one or more years in school. As we begin the new millennium, more than ever, school psychologists and other educators will need to be ready to help schools through these difficulties by using innovative, long-term solutions and by turning challenges into opportunities for positive change. School psychologists are currently acting as front-line workers as they are called upon to respond to these changes and challenging school situations (Children's Defense Fund, 2000; NASP, 1997; Ysseldyke et al., 1997).

Toward the end of the 1980s, educational reform efforts began calling for a restructuring of the entire educational system rather than repairing existing individual problems. Restructuring efforts have included major systematic changes related to the decentralization of the organization and governance of schools. Efforts have been made to empower those closest to students in the classroom, create new roles and responsibilities of educators and parents, and transform the teaching-learning process (Huebner, 1993).

Changes in special education also are rapidly gaining momentum. Among the reforms that have moved from proposal to policy to implementation in many districts, there has been an emphasis on the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general

education classrooms, the provision of special instruction and services without the use of labels, and an increasing emphasis on outcome-based education. Further, some pullout special education programs are being phased out in certain districts (Bradley-Johnson, Johnson, & Jacob-Timm, 1995).

A revolution in the nature and purpose of school psychological services is expected as a result of the special education reform movement. The movement is expected to influence the educational services that are provided to the mildly handicapped, or those groups of students with whom school psychologists spend the majority of their time. The major reasons for a reform of the current system involve questions about the reliability, validity, efficiency, and effectiveness of the current classification system and the educational programs for students classified as mildly handicapped. Each of these criticisms affects school psychology, directly or indirectly (Reschly, 1988).

For some time, school psychologists have recognized they can be more effective in meeting students' needs and solving problems in the schools (Bradley-Johnson & Dean, 2000). The traditional role of the school psychologist often leaves strategies and classroom interventions to teachers. There also are many needy children who do not qualify for formal services. These children can benefit from the expertise and direct-service interventions provided by school psychologists. In addition to these issues, the cost for a special education evaluation is high. Further, it has been said that effective interventions are not usually created from norm-referenced testing (Bradley-Johnson, Johnson & Jacob-Timm, 1995).

According to the previous literature, there appears to be a need for a broader role of the school psychologist. Much has been written from empirical research regarding the changing role and the opinions of school psychologists related to their roles.

In a study carried out by Smith (1984), the characteristics, activities, and populations served by practicing school psychologists were examined. In the study, a questionnaire (The National School Psychology Questionnaire) was sent to a nationwide, random sample of practicing school psychologists. Smith (1984) found that the overall ranking of professional activities from most time spent to least time spent was assessment, intervention, consultation; and, finally, research (Smith, 1984). Cheramie and Sutter (1993) found consistent results in a survey given to special education directors regarding the functions of the school psychologist. Here, school psychologists spent most of their time on assessment and consultation. They spend the least amount of time on research, program evaluation, and in-service presentations (Cheramie & Sutter, 1993).

Levinson (1990) found that assessment was the primary activity of school psychologists. He also investigated the relationship of job satisfaction and the actual and desired role of the school psychologist. The study found that school psychologists who were most dissatisfied in their job roles might be the school psychologists who have less control over their role function. According to Levinson (1990), this lack of control was usually due to school system policies and procedures.

Jerrell (1984) found that school psychologists generally engage in more functions when the work environment is diverse and the school psychologist exerts pressure on the schools. Usually the function of the school psychologist is left up to the school administrators. However, when school psychologists engaged in broader functions, there

was a higher level of job satisfaction and perceived influence within the school system (Jerrell, 1984).

Fisher, Jenkins, and Crumbley (1986) carried out a study that showed there was more congruence between the training and the practice of school psychology than in the past. One of findings showed that school psychologists would prefer to do more consultation, although these practitioners believed training in consultation was inadequate in their training program. This survey helped provide direction for the trainers of school psychologists, which is important to the role and function of practitioners (Fisher et al., 1986).

Reschly and Wilson (1995) found that role preferences were consistent among those who practice school psychology and those who train school psychologists. Both of the groups expressed the desire to reduce the time school psychologists spent on psychoeducational assessments. The results of focusing on changing roles are consistent with system reform. These include an emphasis on direct and indirect interventions with less emphasis on eligibility determination through the use of standardized tests (Reschly & Wilson, 1995).

Although traditional roles will continue to be well known, variations in the roles can be expected to emerge during the next decade as alternative roles are accepted. School psychologists likely will continue to spend more than one-half of their time with at-risk students or students with disabilities. However, according to many, what needs to be done is a change toward less standardized testing to more intervention-oriented assessment, a greater involvement with direct interventions, and more time spent in problem solving consultation (Reschly, 2000).

According to Cheramie and Sutter (1993), the role of the school psychologist is changing, although a majority of school psychologists' time continues to be spent on assessment and diagnostic evaluation. There is pressure to provide more counseling, crisis intervention, and teacher consultation. Overall, direct intervention activities are rising in importance. Huebner (1993) found that providing direct intervention also appears to increase job satisfaction for school psychologists. Many school psychologists report a desire to broaden their role beyond assessment services. Desired role activities include consultation, counseling, research, and designing early intervention programs (Levinson, 1990; Reschly & Wilson, 1995).

As school psychologists, Bardon (1994) states that it would be unnecessary to give up their assessment role, but they must define assessment in broader terms (Bardon, 1994). Until recently, there have been no consequences powerful enough to cause school psychologists to attempt to change their role, even with the suggestions from leaders in the field. However, the education environment is changing and producing new consequences for school psychologists. These circumstances may be strong enough to bring about change. If change does not occur, then the field of school psychology may be in danger. Education is clearly moving in the direction of inclusion and with effective assistance teams. Referrals are decreasing and reducing the need for the testing services that school psychologists provide (Bradley-Johnson, Johnson, & Jacob-Timm, 1995). School psychologists have an opportunity to change their role in order to help make certain the future of the profession. More importantly, the role needs to expand to improve services for all children (Bradley-Johnson, Johnson, & Jacob-Timm, 1995).

Sheridan and Gutkin (2000) proposed an "ecological" theory that looks at human behavior as a function of ongoing interactions between the characteristics of individuals and the multiple environments within which they function. These authors believe that this theory holds that greatest potential as an effective orientation in school psychology. Using this ecological model, school psychologists would be substantially less concerned with identifying what is wrong with a child, measuring problems, and delivering remedial services. They would be substantially more concerned with prevention and promoting wellness. In other words, practitioners would engage in and conduct research on services that allows students to succeed in life (Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000).

In a study by Reschly and Wilson (1995), 1,089 practitioners' self-reports were looked at to determine their current and preferred allocations of time to five roles. Their study found a significant difference between their current and desired roles. Most of the school psychologist's time was spent on psychoeducational assessment, then direct interventions, and then followed by problem-solving consultation. Many of the practitioners indicated that they would like to decrease the time they spend on assessment, and increase the time they spend on other activities (Reschly & Wilson, 1995).

Training Trends

It is important to note that school psychology in the twenty-first century will expand to meet the needs of students, parents, teachers, and administrators within employment settings such as schools, clinics, hospitals, and private practice. In order to meet these needs, the training programs in school psychology are put to the challenge of working with current and future trends in the field. Some of the factors influencing the training are credentialing issues and the professional organizations of NASP and the American

Psychological Association (APA). Some of the changes in the trends of school psychology programs are in the domains, or areas of competence, and levels of training. Program accreditation and approval will assure that training programs are current according to the Blueprint II domains of competency (Swerdlik & French, 2000).

The past, present, and future of school psychology has witnessed some changes in demographics of it's students, faculty, and practitioners. Along with these changes in demographics, there are patterns of change in the practice and role of the school psychologist. While some trends in school psychology have large changes, others do not. According to Reschly (2000), one of the clearest changes in school psychology is gender. More women are increasingly taking part in school psychology as students, practitioners, and faculty.

When it comes to race and ethnicity, individuals of color are underrepresented in the field of school psychology. Although there has been an increase in the diversity of school psychology graduate students, Caucasian individuals are still overwhelmingly prominent in the field (Reschly, 2000). Approximately 5.5% of practitioners report being in the non-Caucasian group, with 1% being African American and 1.7% as Hispanic (Curtis, Hunley, Walker, & Baker, 1999). Even with the slight increase in ethnic diversity, the school psychology population, like most professions, will not equal the ethnic diversity of the individuals they serve in the near future (Reschly, 2000).

The demographic make-up of the school psychologists has not been the only change in school psychology. Regional differences in the United States also have had an impact on the role of the school psychologist. Reschly (2000) states that the use of projective assessment procedures is higher in east coast states than in other areas. Also, other areas

tend to use behavioral assessment techniques more often than those in the eastern regions. However, individually administered standardized achievement and intelligence tests are used in all areas of the country (Reschly, 2000).

In the twenty-first century, a new paradigm for school psychology is emerging, influencing our field to progress. One important aspect to remember is that we are all influenced by multiple systems. School psychologists must be reflective, responsive, and proactive toward the multiple and changing systems within which we operate. School, family, societal, and legislative systems also need to be considered. In addition, we need to be mindful of the diverse populations we serve such as children, families, educators, and administrators (Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000).

CHAPTER III

Conclusions and Discussion

This chapter will discuss the findings of the previous literature review on the role of the school psychologist. The chapter will conclude with some considerations for future practice and recommendations for further research.

Conclusions

The development of school psychology as an independent field of practice is important to understand for a further examination of the profession itself (Reynolds, Gutkin, Elliot, & Witt, 1984). Part of the development contains critical turning points, which also have helped create the current role and function of school psychologists and their service delivery (Reynolds et al., 1984).

Although there were few historical accounts of the field of school psychology, the evolution of school psychology began with the beginning of the field of psychology. The origins of school psychological services at the end of the nineteenth century were related to the circumstances and conditions at that time, which dealt with the changing status of children in America, a focus on developmental stages and child study, and the need for formal and compulsory schooling (Reynolds & Gutkin, 1999).

In the late 19th century, the origins of school psychological services become known. Lightner Witmer was considered the father of school psychology, and he was one of its earliest practitioners. Originally, in 1896, Witmer intended the "psychological expert" to be a teacher who was specially trained to deal with school-related problems. Today, many practitioners continue to receive training in school psychology, as well as teacher preparation. However, the nature of teacher training is different from earlier in the century (Reynolds & Gutkin, 1999).

The acceptable role of early practitioners was testing, and schools wanted to use tests to assist in the classification of students. During this period, the predominant role of school psychologists developed. The restriction of the role to that of assessor has continued to characterize school psychology (Fagan, 1986).

When Congress passed the Education of All Handicapped Children Act (now the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, IDEA, 1990) in 1975, states could provide a free and appropriate public education to all children with disabilities. The demand for school psychologists increased as school districts worked to implement the new law. Subsequent amendments and civil rights legislation drove the growth of special education services and classes. In the 1980's research and federal policy statements called for changes in the service delivery, with an emphasis on interventions in the regular classroom (Bradley-Johnson, Johnson, & Jacob-Timm, 1995).

Over the past 30 years, there has been growth and change in school psychology. The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) helped to initiate the development and advancement of the field (Curtis & Zins, 1989). NASP was founded in 1969 with four purposes. They were to promote the interests of school psychology, to advance the standards of the profession, to help promote effective practice, and to serve the mental health and educational interests of all children (Reynolds et al., 1984). Through the establishment of standards for training, standards for credentialing, and guidelines for professional conduct, school psychology has become more clearly defined (Curtis & Zins, 1989).

The field of school psychology has been influenced by many factors. Some of the critical turning points in the development of the field have led to its current

characteristics such as the role of testing (Reynolds et al., 1984). School psychology is considered to be one of the most active disciplines in contemporary psychology. Over time, a high quality of standards and psychological services has been developed in order to improve the mental health and educational development of children. The history of school psychology shows how it was brought about through the science of psychology and education (Reynolds et al, 1984).

Currently, practicing school psychologists are often used for problem identification (Bardon, 1994; Murray, 1996; Reschly & Wilson, 1995). Assessment in the field of school psychology has been controversial. Some school psychologists stand by the fact that valuable information can be gained from the administration and interpretation of traditional norm-referenced tests. These practitioners look at individual differences and use psychometric standards that are highly developed for reliability and validity. However, other claim that assessment should focus on program planning and evaluating interventions (Wilson & Reschly, 1996).

Traditionally, the role of the school psychologist has resulted in determining the special education placement of students with disabilities. Although this has been common practice, some research has suggested that special education placement can be somewhat harmful, and a label may have little to do with effective treatments or placements for children (Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000).

In the twenty-first century, a new paradigm for school psychology is emerging. The role and function of the school psychologist is changing (Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000). According to many, school psychologists should assume a broader role than that of psychoeducational assessors. These proponents of a broader role argue that using a more

traditional role limits the provision of services to assigning diagnostic labels for special education (Gutkin & Conoley, 1990).

There have been numerous calls for school psychologists to move beyond the gate keeping function of assessing for special education eligibility. Ideas include a greater emphasis on indirect service, the application of the science of psychology to define problems and design programs, on preventing problems, using systematic evaluation, involving various stakeholders in the development and evaluation of services, and considering diversity from a broad perspective (Bradley-Johnson & Dean, 2000).

The National Association of School Psychologist (NASP) published School Psychology: A Blueprint for Training and Practice II (i.e., Blueprint II) in an attempt to assist school psychologists and the individuals who train them with the developing practice of school psychology (Ysseldyke et al., 1997). Ysseldyke (1997) claims that school psychologists are the front-line workers affected by school reform and change. Changes in the schools have led to the change in the role of the school psychologist. According to Blueprint II, the role needs to be changed to offer a more broad and expanded involvement (Ysseldyke et al., 1997).

School systems are experiencing a period of change. Children are said to be more at-risk for social, emotional, behavioral, and academic problems than ever before. Some of the problems affecting students in the schools include poverty, high school dropout rates, teen pregnancies, low teen birth rates, and increased school violence. School psychologists need to respond to these increasingly difficult issues. Societal and economic factors are pushing school psychologists toward expanding their role. Many

assert that school psychologists are needed to create a successful environment for all school children (Ysseldyke et al., 1997).

Education is currently changing, has always changed, and will continue to evolve over the years. Because of the changes, school psychology can adapt in positive ways. However, changes in education have not always led to desired changes for school psychologists. It has been stated that too often the more things change, the more they remain the same in education. If school psychology is to thrive and benefit those they serve, it is essential that school psychologists become more active at the local, state, and national levels in their reform efforts (Conoley & Gutkin, 1995).

Many argue that the role, function, and services of a profession must constantly evolve to better meet the needs of the society (Woody & Davenport, 1998). Societal and educational changes also provide motivation and opportunities to change the role of the school psychologist (Conoley & Gutkin, 1995). Regardless of the constraints imposed by state and federal regulation, many school psychologists support change related to their role in the schools (Levinson, 1990; Reschly & Wilson, 1995; Reschly, 2000).

Discussion

School psychology is continuing to evolve as we enter the twenty-first century. Blueprint II gives reason to emphasize a broader role, such as the increasing need for collaboration and a decreasing need for the traditional role of psychometrics and labeling. More political, economic, and social problems influence our schools and the students who attend them. These influences have shaped the evolution of the field. The results of the previous review of literature suggests that although traditional roles will continue to be well known, variations in the roles can be expected to emerge in the future.

From the literature that was examined, the traditional assessment role continues to be emphasized (Reynolds & Kamphaus, 1990). School psychologists have relied on the traditional assessment role or "medical model." Practitioners are generally known as the "gate keepers" who provide test scores to make decisions about special education placement (Thomas & Grimes, 1995). The traditional assessment role often is used because of the qualification criteria used at the local, state, and federal levels (Hyman & Kaplinski, 1994). It is important to note, however, that the medical model does not always lead to effective interventions or problem solving. Effective treatments or placements often have nothing to do with a label (Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000).

Blueprint II (Ysseldyke et al., 1997) has advocated for a proactive, preventative, and an expanded role for school psychologists. As schools face new difficulties, school psychologists are in a position to create positive change (Ysseldyke et al., 1997). Ysseldyke et al. (1997) claims that school psychologists are the "front-line workers" affected by school reform and change. Blueprint II identifies ten skill and competency domains related to the role and function of the school psychologists (Ysseldyke et al., 1997). These domains offer practitioners a broad-based role in the field of school psychology. This broad-based role appears to meet the current and future needs of our students.

Finally, the findings from the literature review show that school psychologist are recognizing the need to be more effective in meeting students' needs and solving problems in the schools (Bradley-Johnson & Dean, 2000). In 1990, Levinson found that assessment was the primary role of school psychologists, and those practitioners who were most dissatisfied with their job roles were the practitioners who had limited control

over their role (Levinson, 1990). Bardon (1994) also stated that it would be unnecessary to give up the assessment role, but assessment must be defined more broadly. In the past, there have been no consequences powerful enough to cause school psychologists to attempt to change their role. Currently, changes are occurring the in the field of education. School psychologists now have an opportunity to change their role for the future of the profession and the betterment of services provided to children (Bradley-Johnson, Johnson, & Jacob-Timm, 1995).

The literature review indicates that school psychologists continue to spend most of their time in assessment related activities. The review also showed that school psychologists would prefer to spend less time on assessment and more time on consultation, counseling, and research (Levinson, 1990; Reschly & Wilson, 1995; Smith, 1984). One of the reasons for dissatisfaction in the job is the restriction of the role. However, role expansion is not always possible due to those regulations that emphasize assessment of children with disabilities (Levinson, 1990). If a school psychologist cannot carry out their job role, there can be dissatisfaction in the job. This dissatisfaction can lead to poorer services for all children.

Implications for Further Practice

The purposes of this literature review and critical analysis were to review the role and function of the school psychology literature and provide recommendations for future research directions. However, implications for practice are apparent. First, a model for practice is important. In the past, the medical model has been utilized. This model focuses on assessing, diagnosing, and treating the students who are referred for services

(Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000). The medical model may not be the best model for the practice of school psychology.

Sheridan and Gutkin (2000) proposed the ecological model, a model that would be less concerned with identifying what is wrong with a child, measuring problems, and delivering remedial services. When using this model, more concern would be placed with prevention and promoting wellness. Practitioners would engage in and conduct research on services that allow students to succeed in life (Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000).

A second implication for practice would be to consider the trend of services provided because of state and federal mandated requirements related to special education (Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000). School psychologists do not function in isolation. Their job roles are influenced my many systems (Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000). Mandated policies and laws often make it difficult for school psychologists to influence school administrators to change policies (Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000).

Limitations of Literature Review

Any results gleaned from this literature review should be viewed with caution. Despite the numerous position papers related to the role of the school psychologist, there have been few studies utilizing empirical methods to derive information regarding the current role, the preferred role, and the actual activities of working school psychologists across the nation. Further, university trainers and policy makers appear to have generated most of the information regarding the role of the school psychologist. Little information has obtained from the school psychology practitioners, or those "frontline workers" referred to in Blueprint II (Ysseldyke et al., 1997). Therefore, future research should be conducted that solicits the views of practicing school psychologists throughout the nation.

Another limitation of this literature review is the potential bias of the author. The author's preconceived notions of school psychology, as well as the emphasis of the author's training program, may have influenced the author to select and emphasize particular points of view. As in the ecological model, we need to be mindful of the multiple influences that can affect particular outcomes, particularly when considering a literature review.

Recommendations for Further Research

Research in the area of the changing role and function of the school psychologist in the twenty-first century should continue, but contain more empirical data. It is the intent of this paper to propose a study to expand upon the previous research related to the role and function of the school psychologist. In order to alleviate the discrepancies found in past research, future research should be conducted that considers using quantitative methods with a national sample of both practicing and non-practicing school psychologists. This would enhance the results for possible generalization. A national study also should include a population of school psychologists that would be more representative of ethnic and regional differences.

Further, future research should differentiate the school psychologists views between the various regional areas of the United States related to the domains in Blueprint II. Finally, the research proposed should use instruments that were used in previous survey studies to provide participants with an opportunity to express their opinions related to the current and future role and function of the school psychologist.

The proposed study is significant in that currently there is a lack of information regarding school psychologists' perceptions of the changing role as we enter the twenty-

first century. Further, the information that is available is based on particular populations of school psychologists and policy makers. Most research has not included practicing school psychologists representing the entire United States. Conducting this future research would contribute new information for a better understanding of the changing role and function of the school psychologist as we enter the twenty-first century.

Summary

The previous literature review and critical analysis examined the past, present, and future role of the school psychologist. It also investigated how the role is related to the ten domains identified by the National Association of School Psychologist's (NASP's) School Psychology: A Blueprint for Training and Practice (Blueprint II) (Ysseldyke et al., 1997).

The purpose of this study was to review the literature to determine what practicing school psychologists and policy makers believe regarding the role and function of school psychologists. In the study, thoughts about the traditional role and the need for role expansion were examined. A critical analysis interpreted the findings of the literature review, and it identified what further research could contribute to our knowledge about the future role of the school psychologist.

It has been said that the role, function, and services of a profession must constantly evolve in order to better meet the needs of the society (Woody & Davenport, 1998). The opportunity for change in the role of the school psychologist is emerging (Conoley & Gutkin, 1995). In the twenty-first century, a new paradigm for school psychology is under formation, influencing our field to progress. Changing the role of the school

psychologist can create improved job satisfaction and enhance the service delivery for all of the children in our nation's schools as we enter the twenty-first century.

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Appendix

Domains of School Psychology Leadership and Function in the Schools

Domains	Competencies
Data Based Decision Making And Accountability	School psychologists must be able to define current problem areas, strengths, and needs (at the individual, group, and systems level) through assessment, and measure the effects of the decisions that result from the problem solving process.
Interpersonal Communication, Collaboration, and Consultation	School psychologists must have the ability to listen well, participate in discussions, and convey information and work together with others at an individual, group and systems level.
Effective Instruction and Development of Cognitive/Academic Skills	School psychologists must be able to develop challenging but achievable cognitive and academic goals for all students, provide information about ways in which students can achieve these goals, and monitor student progress towards these goals.
Socialization and Development Of Life Competencies	School psychologists must be able to develop challenging but achievable behavioral, affective, or adaptive goals for all students, provide information about ways in which students can achieve these goals, and monitor student progress towards these goals.

Appendix (continued)

Student Diversity in Development and Learning	School psychologists must be aware of, appreciate, and work with individuals and groups with a variety of strengths and needs from a variety of racial, cultural, ethnic, experiential, and linguistic backgrounds.
School Structure, Organization, And Climate	School psychologists must have the ability to understand the school as a system and work with individuals and groups to facilitate structure and policies and groups to facilitate structure and policies that create and maintain schools as safe, caring and inviting places for members of the school community.
Prevention, Wellness Promotion, and Crisis Intervention	School psychologists must have the knowledge of child development and psychopathology in order to develop and implement prevention and intervention programs for students with a wide range of needs and disorders.
Home/School/Community Collaboration	School psychologists must have the knowledge of family influences that affect students' wellness, learning, and achievement, and be able to from partnerships between parents, educators, and the community.

Appendix (continued)

Research and Program Evaluation	School psychologists must know current literature on various aspects of education and child development, be able to translate research into practice, and understand research design and statistics in sufficient depth to conduct investigations relevant to their own work.
Legal, Ethical Practice and Professional Development	School psychologists must take the responsibility for developing as professionals and practice in ways which meet all appropriate ethical, professional, and legal standards to enhance the quality of services, and protect the rights of all parties.

Note. From School Psychology: A Blueprint for Training and Practice II, (p. 15) Ysseldyke, J. et al., 1997, Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.