Assessing Teacher Concerns Regarding Response to Instruction and Intervention

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All individuals go through a process of change when implementing a new innovation. This descriptive study determines there is a difference in the stages of concern regarding Response to Instruction and Intervention (RTI^2), Tennessee's design model for Response to Intervention, (RTI) for 87 teachers from 8 different schools in a county in Middle Tennessee. The Concerns Based Adoption Model (CBAM) and the Stages of Concern Questionnaire (SoCQ) were used to gather results for this study. These differences in the stages of concern are described between faculty position sub-groups, teachers receiving Teacher Effect Data and those teachers not receiving Teacher Effect Data from the Tennessee Department of Education, and between teacher effectiveness levels, levels 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 as reported by the Tennessee Value Added Assessment System.

Introduction

Early identification and early intervention for academically at-risk students and the special education process that regulated the procedures used to identify students with specific learning disabilities has failed students. The President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education (2002) painted a clear picture of the need for educational reform, supporting early identification and intervention for at-risk students. While these concerns were prompting change within the special education program, Response to Intervention (RTI) was being conceived through the collective efforts of educators, researchers, professional organizations, and student advocate teams (Bradley, Danielson, & Doolittle, 2007). RTI was embraced as the new avenue for identifying students with specific learning disabilities and a program design for delivering early intervention to any student at risk (Johnson, Mellard, Fuchs, & McKnight, 2006; Gresham & Vellutino, 2010; Restori, Gresham, & Cook, 2008).

Literature Review

RTI is designed to address specific skills needed by a student and allows for exiting the intervention if adequate response to a given intervention is measured (Buffman, Mattos, & Weber, 2009; DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). The benefits of RTI are numerous. RTI is intervention-focused, supporting struggling students before they fail. Once students demonstrate that they are struggling or falling behind their peers, an intervention is designed to support them academically, whether it is a grade level standards based skill intervention or a deficit skill intervention.

RTI interventions use high quality research-based programs, delivered by highly trained staff and teachers. Progress monitoring of student performance takes place systematically. To determine whether interventions are successful or if more intense interventions are needed, teams of professionals collaborate and review progress monitoring and universal screening data to ensure that students receive the most appropriate instruction and interventions. When a student fails to make progress with intense interventions, the student may be referred for specific learning disabilities evaluation. This practice has replaced the traditional model of waiting for a student to fail before referral for specific learning disabilities evaluation can be made (Buffman, Mattos, & Weber, 2009; DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008).

The state of Tennessee's response to the call for educational reform was the creation of Response to Intervention and Instruction (RTI²). RTI² provides early identification of students at risk coupled with academic intervention and instruction on student-specific deficient skills and enrichment for on level students. Students who receive the most intense intervention with RTI² score one-and-a-half to two grade levels behind their peers. Interventions address deficit skills in math, reading, or both subjects with research-based curricula. When at-risk students do not respond to the interventions provided through RTI², they may go through an evaluation of specific learning disabilities using data collected through the RTI² process. Besides providing early identification and intervention for at risk students, the RTI² program targets closing the achievement gap among student groups as intended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB).

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the study was to determine whether differences exist in the stages of concern among teachers regarding Tennessee's Response to Instruction and Intervention. RTI^2 is designed to enhance the quality of instruction provided for all students, with a focus on students with specific learning disabilities or at risk of failing school-wide. Determining RTI^2's effects on teachers may clarify some important aspects of the level of RTI^2 implementation. To the interest of the researcher, the following research questions were raised to pursue understanding about how teachers transition to the implementation of a new innovation RTI^2.

1. Does the stage of concern regarding RTI^2 differ among educators depending on their faculty position at the school?

2. Does the stage of concern regarding RTI^2 differ among educators depending on whether or not they are held directly accountable for student learning by the Tennessee Value Added Assessment System?

3. Does the stage of concern regarding RTI^2 differ among third through fifth grade teachers, those held directly accountable for student learning growth, depending on the teacher effectiveness rank of level 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 as reported by the Tennessee Value Added Assessment System?

Significance of the Study

This study is of importance because RTI^2 is a recent mandate initiated by federal guidelines and implemented at the local level throughout the state of Tennessee. RTI^2 is an intervention rooted in research-based best practices involving direct instruction, curriculum based measurement, and precision teaching at the school level that results in learning for all students (Tilly, n.d.). A team of educators implements RTI through a systematic problem solving method that involves universal screening, progress monitoring, and tiered service delivery models.

With the framework of RTI^2 addressing the deficit skills of approximately 15% to 20% of the student population and the other 80% to 85% of the student population receiving instruction or enrichment on grade level standards, educational leaders and policy makers should become aware of the stages of concern of teachers implementing RTI^2. With this knowledge school

leaders can offer professional developments, which support teachers along their pathway of change in a professional manner.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework directing this study was Hall & Hord's (2001) Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) and was modeled from LaRocco & Murdica (2009). CBAM describes, explains, and predicts behaviors of individuals and groups of individuals going through the change process while implementing a new innovation (George, Hall, & Stiegelbauer, 2013).

CBAM operates on the premise that embracing a new innovation begins with individuals' varied and unique responses to change, yet suggests that individuals experiencing a new innovation follow a predictable path of concerns coupled with questions (Hall & Hord, 2001). Hord (1987) states that change is a predictable process and not a one-time event. Because an innovation is something new to an individual, the process will involve a diverse set of beliefs, understandings, behaviors, and feelings of preoccupation and consideration. According to Hall and Hord (2001) the concerns in the CBAM model are not necessarily based on fears, anxiety, or worries.

CBAM uses several models to describe the dynamics of the change process in individuals and groups. The Stages of Concern Questionnaire (SoCQ) was the model used in this study. SoCQ describes the stages of concern for individuals in three broad categories: self, task, and impact. It describes concerns for individuals just prior to the onset of a new innovation as focusing on self. These concerns target personal feelings associated with a new innovation. Most likely at this stage the individual is not concerned with issues related to implementing the innovation but rather focused on feelings of inadequacy or self-doubt. During the next stage of concern individuals or groups are task focused. These individuals are usually at the beginning stages of the implementation of a new innovation. Their concerns often focus on areas such as logistics, preparations, and scheduling. The last stage of concern generally describes the concerns of an individual or group experienced in the implementation of the innovation. The concerns are labeled as impact and are focused on the intended impact produced by the innovation (Hall & Hord, 2001; George et al., 2013).

CBAM's SoCQ is a diagnostic tool used by the school leaders to identify the concerns of individuals or groups implementing the innovation. CBAM suggests that change school leaders evaluate data from the questionnaire to provide professional developments to support individuals and groups throughout the change process (Hall & Hord, 2001).

Methodology

Purpose and participants

This study was to determine differences in educators' stages of concerns regarding the implementation of Response to Instruction and Intervention (RTI[2]). The independent variable in this descriptive study were the teacher's faculty position and whether the teacher is held directly accountable for student learning growth by the Tennessee Department of Education with Tennessee Value Added Assessment System (TVAAS) data and level Teacher Effect Data. The target population was approximately 950 educators from 25 elementary schools in a suburban Middle Tennessee school district. Approximately 331 teachers were invited to participate in taking the questionaire. Of the 25 elementary schools targeted only eight volunteered to take part in the study and a total of 87 teachers completed the questionnaire. The participants were given a 30-day window to take the questionnaire online; once completed, results were automatically analyzed by Southwest Educational Development Laboratories (SEDL) and used to develop profiles for teacher groups.

The faculty positions included grades K-5, related arts teachers (gym, music, computer, library and art) and support teachers (special education teachers, interventionists, and academic coaches). TVAAS holds teachers in grades 3 through 5 directly accountable because they received Teacher Effect Data from state assessment (Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program). Teacher Effect Data ranking range from levels 1 through 5. Levels 1 and 2 are considered ineffective and below average, with level 1 the most ineffective. Teachers classified as level 3 are considered average teachers. Teachers classified as level 4 or 5 are considered effective and above average teachers, with level 5 teachers being the most effective. Teacher Effect Data determined by TVAAS was self-reported on the questionnaire.

Instrument

Descriptive data was collected and analyzed through the Stages of Concern Questionnaire (SoCQ) from the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM). The SoCQ uses a Likert scale to measure the 35-item questionnaire results, using percentile scores to reveal the relative intensity of each stage of concern for each participant and subgroup. When the percentile score is higher in one stage, it indicates a greater concern in that particular stage for that particular individual or subgroup compared to stages of concern with lower percentile scores. Likewise when a percentile score is lower in one stage compared to other stages, less concern exists in that stage compared to the other stages. George et al. (2013) state, "The percentile score indicates the relative intensity of concern at each stage. The higher the score, the more intense the concerns are at that stage. The lower the score, the less intense the concerns are at that stage" (George et al., 2013).

The stages of concern were labeled 0-6. Stages 0-2 are related to concerns impacting the individual. Stage 0 indicates no concern about the innovation. Stage 1 is informational and reveals that the individual is gathering information about the innovation. Stage 2 is personal and reveals that the individual has some form of personal conflict with the innovation. Stage 3 is management and indicates concerns related to the task of the innovation. Stages 4-6 are considered impacting stages; they show the individual or subgroup's concerns are centered on how the innovation can positively impact students and others. Stage 4 is consequences and reveals concern for how the innovation impacts students. Stage 5 is collaboration and demonstrates concern with collaborative conversations about the innovation. Stage 6 is refocusing and indicates realization of the benefits of the innovation as well as concern for how the innovation can be improved (see Table 1).

Southwest Educational Development Laboratories (SEDL) developed the Stages of Concern Questionnaire (SoCQ) through extensive research to ensure its validity and reliability (George et al., 2013). The test is designed to allow researchers to customize the questionnaire by adding the innovation of interest. In this study, the customized innovation of interest was RTI[2]. The researcher inserted additional questions to identify faculty position and Teacher Effect level subgroups.

Table 1. The Stages of Concern about an Innovation

Stage of Concern		Expression of Concern
Impact	Refocusing	Individuals at this stage are beginning to understand the universal benefits of the change. They now understand that the change was needed and why it was needed. Individuals at this level may begin to make changes to the innovation to achieve better outcomes.
Impact	Collaboration	Individuals at this stage have begun to work with others and discuss their opinions of the innovation. They are beginning to wonder how their colleagues are implementing the innovation and begin to seek this information.
Impact	Consequences	Individuals at this stage have their attention focused on the impact that the innovation will have on their students.
Task	Management	Individuals at this stage are focusing on the process and the tasks involved for the innovation. They are also trying to understand the best way to use the resources and information to implement the innovation.
Self	Personal	Individuals at this stage are aware of the change initiative but are unaware of their role in the process. They may be considering personal conflicts (values, morals, beliefs) or may feel as though they are lacking the ability to implement the change initiative.
Self	Informational	Individuals who are in this stage are aware of the change initiative and are beginning to seek information about the change.
Self	Unconcerned	Individuals are not concerned about the change initiative because they have other things on their mind.
Note: *From Measuring Implementation in Schools: The Stages of Concern Questionnaire* by Archie A. George, Gene E. Hall, and Suzanne M. Stiegelbauer, 2013, p. 8. Copyright 2013 by the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.		

Results

Eighty-seven teachers completed the questionnaire: 10 kindergarten teachers, 10 first grade teachers, six second grade teachers, 16 third grade teachers, eight fourth grade teachers, seven fifth grade teachers, three related arts teachers, and 27 special education teachers, academic coaches, and interventionists. Thirty-one of the 87 teachers were held directly accountable for student learning as reported by TVAAS, while 56 were not. TVAAS measures teacher accountability among grades 3 through 5. In addition to TCAP scores teachers in grades 3 through 5 were further classified by Teacher Effect Data rankings of levels 1 through 5.

Data were collected using the SoCQ to measure the relative intensity of each stage of concern regarding RTI^2 for each participant and each faculty subgroup as reported by SEDL. Three major research questions were addressed in this study.

Question 1: Does the stage of concern regarding RTI^2 differ among educators depending on their faculty position in the school?

Analysis revealed that the kindergarten teachers scored highest in stage 2 (personal) and in stage 4 (consequences). First and third grade teachers scored highest in stage 3 (management) and lowest in stage 4 (consequences). Second grade teachers scored highest in stage 0 (unconcerned) and lowest in stage 4 (consequences). Fourth grade teachers scored highest in stage 3 (consequences) and lowest in stage 5 (collaboration). Fifth grade teachers scored highest in stage 3 (personal) and lowest in stage 4 (consequences). Related arts teachers scored highest in stage 0 (unconcerned) and lowest in stage 4 (consequences). Special education teachers, academic coaches, and interventionists scored highest in stage 5 (collaborative) and lowest in stage 4 (consequences).

Question 2: Does the stage of concern regarding RTI^2 differ among educators depending on whether they are held directly accountable for student learning by the Tennessee Value Added Assessment System?

Analysis of data reveals a difference in the stages of concern regarding RTI^2 among the 31 TVAAS educators in grades 3 through 5 with Teacher Effect Data and the 56 Non-TVAAS educators in grades K through 2, related arts teachers, and special education teachers, academic coaches, and interventionist without Teacher Effect Data.

Among teachers with Teacher Effect Data (Grades 3-5), most (38.7%) showed their highest intensity of concern in stage 0 (unconcerned). The fewest teachers (0.0%) showed their lowest intensity of concern at stage 4 (consequences). Among teachers without Teacher Effect Data (Grades K-2), most (42.8%) showed the highest intensity of concern at two stages: stage 0 (unconcerned) and stage 3 (management). The fewest teachers (1.8%) showed their lowest intensity of concern at stage 4 (consequences).

Question 3: Does the stage of concern regarding RTI[2] differ among third through fifth grade teachers, those held directly accountable for student learning growth, depending on the teacher's effectiveness rank of level 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 as reported by the Tennessee Value Added Assessment System?

Twenty-nine third through fifth grade teachers self-reported TVAAS Teacher Effectiveness Data. One teacher self-reported as being a level 1 teacher. This teacher scored highest in stage 0 (unconcerned) and stage 1 (informational), indicating these as the highest stages of concern. Six teachers self-reported as being level 3 teachers. Three of the level 3 teachers scored highest in stage 0 (unconcerned), two scored highest in stage 2 (personal), and one scored highest in stage 6 (refocusing), indicating these as their highest stages of concern. Nine teachers self-reported as being level 4 teachers. Four of the level 4 teachers scored highest in stage 0 (unconcerned), one scored highest in stage 1 (informational), two scored highest in stage 2 (personal), and two scored highest in stage 3 (consequences), indicating these as their highest stages of concern. Thirteen teachers self-reported as being level 5 teachers. Two-and-a-half teachers scored highest in stage 0 (unconcerned), four scored highest in stage 2 (personal), two-and-a-half scored highest in stage 3 (consequences), two scored highest in stage 5 (collaboration), and two scored highest in stage 6 (refocusing), indicating these as their highest stages of concern.

Discussion and Summary

The data indicate that among educators the stages of concern regarding RTI[2] differ depending on faculty position, teacher effect data, and teacher effectiveness rank. George et al. (2013) support these findings, identifying a concern as something that is highly thought about and evokes feelings that affect one's perception of an innovation. These concerns vary in level of intensity regarding an innovation depending on how one is personally involved or affected by the innovation, and on the knowledge and experience one has with the innovation. The stages of concern are pathways that one encounters with a new innovation. Everyone encountering a new innovation will progress along a pathway of concern regarding an innovation. But not everyone takes the same pathway, nor do they have the same intensity in the stages of concern. As the change process for a new innovation takes place, the pathway should progress through the stages with the first category of stages focused on self, the second category of stages focused on task,

and the last category of stages focused on impact (George et al., 2013). Hall et al. (2001) indicate that the change process varies among individuals, even when a new innovation is introduced to multiple people at the same time. This is because individuals have varying levels of competency in understanding of the new innovation as well as experience with the innovation. Additionally, some individuals need more time to embrace a new innovation, which also affect one's pathway and the relative intensity of stages of concern regarding a new innovation (Hall et al., 2001).

The study findings were not what the researcher anticipated. The researcher had assumed that effective teachers, who were passionate about student learning, would not have ranked so low, stage 4 (consequences), in the stages of concern. Additionally, the researcher was surprised and concerned that 38% of teachers with teacher effect data indicated stage 0 (unconcerned), as the highest stage of concern. The researcher thought that teachers who were directly accountable for student learning (to the extent that their TVAAS teacher effect data could determine whether or not they had a job) would have demonstrated their highest intensity stage in the categories focused on task and impact (stages 3-6). Another finding that the researcher did not expect was that 81% of the teachers who reported as being level 4 or 5 teachers scored in the self and task stages of concern (stages 0-3). The researcher believed that teachers with a high teacher effectiveness rank of level 4 or 5 would have had more intensity of concerns, ranking in the impact stages of concern (stages 4-6).

Response to instruction and intervention is a new innovation in Tennessee designed to enhance the quality of instruction provided for all students, with a focus on students with specific learning disabilities (SLD) or at risk of failing. The targeted district implemented a pilot study of RTI^2 with Title I elementary schools during the 2013-2014 school year. The RTI^2 program was then implemented in all 25 elementary schools in the targeted district during the 2014-2015 school year. Determining RTI^2's effects on educators during the change process may clarify some important issues regarding the level of implementation of RTI

Even though the findings do not support the researcher's initial hypothesis, they do demonstrate that an individual progresses at their own pace during the change process depending on their personal experiences and their own understanding of a newly implemented innovation (George et al., 2013; Hall et al., 2001).

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