Systems Integration: Pursuing the “Holy Grail” of Public Policy

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Discussion Topics

• Background Information
  – A brief review of our work on service integration
  – A few key observations

• Service Integration 101
  – What are we talking about?

• Challenges
  – An overview of selected core challenges
  – A set of ideas for overcoming these challenges
Background Information
Selected Project Highlights

• Welfare Peer Assistance Network (WELPAN)
• Intensive on-site work in Midwest states
• NGA Policy Academy on Cross-Systems Innovation
• Intensive work in Wisconsin
• National “lighthouse” site visits and meetings
• Brainstorming meetings with policy analysts, evaluation researchers, and state and local practitioners
• Collaborative work with others at the local, state, national, and international levels
A Few Key Observations

• Overall belief that service (or systems) integration has the potential for improving outcomes for target populations.
• Bottom-up, locally-driven strategies are germinating all over the country.
• Future innovation will benefit from technical assistance and information about “lessons learned” from other sites.
• Those actually doing the work are often the real experts.
• The core elements (and challenges) of doing integration are generic across purposes and populations.
• More evidence is needed to test the hypothesis that systems integration leads to improved participant outcomes.
• Systems integration is easier said than done.
It is easier said than done.

• Service integration is:
  – not extensive. Even in “successful projects,” none had fully developed intended service linkages.
  – an evolutionary process. It takes time to organize and implement, to attain legitimacy in the eyes of service providers, and to develop working relationships among participating agencies.
  – facilitated and inhibited by numerous factors, but no single factor is instrumental in benefiting or impeding a majority of projects.

• There is no one best services integration method for providing client services.
Who said that?

• From “An Evaluation of Services Integration Projects” completed for...
• U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Social and Rehabilitation Services in...
• 1972.
Systems Integration 101
What is systems integration?

- Labels vary and can include “service integration” and “cross-systems innovation.”
- Common goal: to simplify and streamline access to and coordination of a broad, often complex array of services in order to improve outcomes for a specific population (e.g., children and families, children aging out of foster care, ex-offenders).
- Requires a shift in program management focus from delivering discrete services to a more holistic approach.
“Typical” Shortcomings of Service Delivery Systems

• The system is too fragmented, leaving those clients with multiple issues vulnerable.
• The goals of individual programs are too limited.
• The services are often provided “in an inefficient, duplicative, and bureaucratically confusing manner to those who have the need.”
• The services tend to be lacking in accountability and to be self-perpetuating regardless of effectiveness.
• The service system is not sufficiently attentive to the long-term needs of clients.
Positive Attributes of Interest

• Families have:
  – Access to a broad range of services and supports.
  – Ability to engage the system at different levels of intensity.

• Families have access to individualized service plans that:
  – Accommodate multiple issues simultaneously.
  – Respond to changing circumstances.
Positive Attributes of Interest (continued)

• The focus is on achieving overall (holistic) goals for individuals and families rather than those of a particular program.

• Public programs are viewed as one part of an overall system designed to support achievement of individual, family, and community goals.
Current interest is driven by opportunity...

- Natural progression in the reform dialogue from the mid 1990s into the 21\textsuperscript{st} century.
- There has been a fundamental shift in how policy challenges are framed at the state and local level.
- This shift is reflected in evolving program purposes and emerging themes.
Emerging Themes

• Prevention over remediation.
• Holistic program purposes.
• Inputs to outcomes.
• From silos to systems.
• Evolving institutional cultures.
Prevention over Remediation

• Heckman Equation: return on investments (ROI)
• Rank
  - Prenatal = Highest ROI
    - 0-3 years
      - Pre-school
    - Schooling
    - Job training = Lowest ROI
Evolving Program Purposes: A Example from Welfare Reform

Limited Objective: Income Support
Broader Objective: Job Placement
Longitudinal Goal: Work Support
Expanded Target Populations: Family Support
Multidimensional Perspectives & Expanded Target Populations: Community Support
Cross-System Integration: Prevention
## Emerging Institutional Cultures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional Attributes</th>
<th>Emerging Attributes</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus on benefits</td>
<td>Focus on behavior</td>
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<tr>
<td>Limited purpose</td>
<td>Multiple goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Autonomous agency</td>
<td>Collaborative agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomous staff</td>
<td>Teams/collaborative staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rule oriented</td>
<td>Flexible</td>
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<tr>
<td>Limited target populations</td>
<td>Broader target populations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short-term focus</td>
<td>Long-term focus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Process oriented</td>
<td>Outcome oriented</td>
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<tr>
<td>Static operations</td>
<td>Dynamic operations</td>
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Challenges
A Few Minor Challenges!

1) Not starting in the “right place.”
2) Confusing the means with the end.
3) Not having a alternative framework for thinking about integration.
4) Failing to appreciate the institutional implications of proposed changes.
5) Thinking about service integration as an event and not a process.
1) Not Starting in the Right Place

• Focusing on implementation of tactics rather than on more strategic thinking, e.g.,:
  – A specific population
  – A set of goals related to that population tied to measurable outcomes
  – The process for conceptualizing how you will get where you need to be going
A Conceptual Framework for Service Integration

- Improved Outcomes for Target Populations
- Coordinated Intake
- Integrated IT Systems
- Common Outcome Measures
- Cross-Program Planning & Management
- Blended/Braided Funding
- Service Co-location
- Realigned Governance Structure
- Administration
- Policy

- Services Provided in the Community
- Build on Natural Supports
- Focus on Family as Client
- Realigned Job Functions
- Integrated Case Management
2) Confusing the Means with the End

- “Importing a solution” by picking from a list of tactics such as:
  - Co-location
  - Realigning governance structures
  - Consolidating intake
  - Consolidating job functions
  - Blending or braiding funding
  - Hiring a service liaison or “broker”
3) Not Having a Framework for Thinking About Systems Integration

• Two basic conceptual dimensions:
  – Institutional Similarity
    • Not all proposed institutional marriages are alike...
  – Relationship Intensity
    • Not all proposed institutional interactions are alike...
Institutional Similarity Continuum

- Routinized – benefits-issuing, rule-driven, bureaucratic
- Mixed – contained elements of both routinized and non-routinized
- Nonroutinized – people changing, discretion-focused, professional models
### Institutional Similarity Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIRST CULTURAL TYPE</th>
<th>SECOND CULTURAL TYPE</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Routinized</td>
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<td>Routinized</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nonroutinized</td>
<td>C</td>
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Relationship Intensity Continuum

Communication
  ⊣
  Cooperation
  ⊣
  Coordination
  ⊣
  Collaboration
  ⊣
  Convergence
  ⊣
  Consolidation

Level 1

Level 2

Level 3
### Institutional Similarity-Relationship Intensity Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SIMILARITY INDEX</th>
<th>CULTURAL TYPES</th>
<th>RELATIONSHIP INTENSITY</th>
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<tr>
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<td>First</td>
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4) Failing to Appreciate Institutional Implications

- Concentrating efforts on modifications to practice protocols, administrative systems and policies.
- Neglecting differences in leadership style, organizational culture, and institutional systems.
Visualizing the Implementation Challenge

• Think of an iceberg.
• Above the waterline are things we can easily see: practice, administration, policy.
• However, there are other important factors below the waterline: leadership, organizational systems, and organizational culture.
• “Below the waterline” factors are often overlooked when designing and carrying out these innovations.
A Conceptual Framework for Systems Integration

- Effective Organizational Systems
- Effective Leadership
- Empowering Organizational Culture

Environmental Factors:
- Political Landscape & Priorities
- State & Local Fiscal Situation
- Federal Mandates & Priorities
- Demographic & Social Trends
- Partner Initiatives
A Conceptual Framework for Service Integration

Effective Leadership

- Necessary political support is aligned
- Community/stakeholder input is truly valued & used appropriately
- Power is effectively shared

Empowering Organizational Culture

- Staff are committed to a shared organizational vision
-Shared beliefs about the importance of the "right work are frequently discussed
- A set of beliefs/principles guide decision-making
- Staff know what is expected of them
- Staff understand their leadership role in producing outcomes
- Staff feel empowered, engaged & listened to
- Creativity is valued & risk-taking is supported
- Achievement is expected

Effective Organizational Systems

- Financial management is flexible & accountable
- Contracting system is efficient & incentives desired performance
- IT technical environment is conducive to innovation
- Human resource management is responsive & flexible
- Staff & managers display growing skill & competence
- Training is responsive, relevant & ongoing
- Performance management drives strategy
- Program planning & accountability are outcome-oriented

Organizational learning is valued
- Continuous improvement is expected

Improved Outcomes for Target Populations
- Achieved by policy, practice, administration, and integrated IT systems
- Integrated Case Management, Realigned Job Functions, Focus on Family as Client, and Build on Natural Supports
- Service Coordination, Service Delivery in the Community, and Realigned Governance Structure

Staff understand their leadership role in producing outcomes
- Staff know what is expected of them

Achievement is expected
- Creativity is valued & risk-taking is supported

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Creativity is valued & risk-taking is supported
- Achievement is expected

Continuous improvement is expected
5) Thinking About Service Integration as an Event/Project and Not a Process

• Limiting flexibility in the planning process.
• Failing to adjust to changing circumstances.
• Employing a “once and done” mind-set.
• Accepting the “project” perspective
Systems Integration Life Cycle

1) Assess Situation
2) Develop Vision
3) Do a Line-of-Sight Exercise
4) Develop a Plan
5) Implement the Plan
6) Manage to Outcomes
Responding to the Challenges

• What is to be accomplished and for whom?
• What tactics and strategies will lead you to the desired outcomes?
• Is there a good fit between the tactics and strategies chosen “above the water line” and the institutional milieu “below the water line”?
• What strategy is needed to bring these two into correspondence?
Critical Steps

1) Start with the ends rather than the means.
2) Replace tactical solutions with strategic thinking.
3) Determine feasibility (understand the systems you are blending together).
4) Assess and adjust as you go.
5) Develop and sustain leadership.
Institutional Ethnography

• There are not enough students and scholars who really understand how important institutions are to addressing poverty.

• We prepare some scholars-in-training to use ethnographic tools with individuals, families, and small groups, maybe even communities.

• We now need to prepare them to really understand how institutions work and how vital they are to program development.
Other issues in manuscript.

- The degree of difficulty concept.
- Facilitative overarching environments [the 7 Ms]
- Governance issues.
- Unfinished business...restarting the dialogue on human services reform.
- Marking progress, estimating impacts.
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