
EDITORIAL

AVOIDING THE "ANY MODELS TRAP"

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The Board of the International Association of Psychosocial Rehabilitation Services (IAPSRS) has taken the position that a state should not designate one program model as the only program that will be funded in the state's plan of services. IAPSRS characterized a state's designation of one single fundable program model as the "single model trap." However, there is another danger with respect to model replication, and that is the problem of striving for the perfect replication of any of the program models. We call this the "any models trap."

Psychosocial rehabilitation can be described as a movement. All movements, whether they are technological, literary, academic or social, move through a life cycle. They evolve from creative ideas to innovative and controversial breakthroughs. Eventually the movement achieves recognition and commercial acceptance. Ultimately, some movements fall out of favor and disappear.

What distinguishes healthy, sustainable movements from others is the capacity to dynamically and continuously incorporate new ideas that are consistent and complementary with the movements' original intent. By contrast, movements on a path toward extinction are best described by a dogged determination to create a very predictable pattern of behavior. They are on an unintended mission to factor out variance.

Ironically, the most important requirement for today's providers is managing variance. When we generate new responses to constantly changing conditions we stimulate new ideas. We create variance. We create breakthroughs.

Most movements (such as psychosocial rehabilitation) are created because of generative ideas that are often out of compliance with existing protocols. The creators' beliefs and practices are rejected by standard bearers whose mission is to prevent variance in the first place. New movements tend to have a penchant for "factoring in" innovation. They reinforce a culture of changeability, empowerment, and possibilities. Movements that are on the road to oblivion have a penchant for "factoring out" variability. They are occupied with issues of replication, predictability, and control.

IAPSRS, as an international association representing the psychosocial rehabilitation movement, began more than 20 years ago by "factoring in" breakthrough ideas for the treatment and rehabilitation of people with psychiatric disabilities. IAPSRS is now faced with a myriad of issues related to positioning rehabilitation in healthcare policy, aligning organizations, advocating core competencies, managing data, and promoting standards for best practice. Can IAPSRS address all these challenges and contin-

ue to promulgate a culture of inclusion, innovation, and best ideas? And how does reliance on the perfect replication of program models help or hinder the process?

Much of what many business leaders believe about best practices and program models has relevance to program models in our field. Business leaders tell us that people who implement successful business models often overestimate their understanding of why their models are successful. Therefore, they sometimes unintentionally provide misinformation to others who are trying to replicate it.

Research certainly helps us to understand the factors within a particular program model that contribute to the kinds of outcomes we hope to achieve.

However, prior to widespread replication, research seldom identifies the significance and range of all the factors contributing to outcome. Therefore, when practitioners attempt to “use a model” they run the risk of focusing almost exclusively on replicating the described elements, rather than on analyzing and understanding the practitioner, the consumer, or the multiple factors that may influence consumer success, such as geography, culture, economics, education, consumer preference, available resources, politics, and community dynamics. Instead, it is the degree of replication of the model that is the primary focal point.

The key factor ultimately is how we use the information derived from models and best practices. Here is some more sage advice from the business literature. First, don’t look to experts or documentation for a complete understanding of any complex activity. We’re not saying that you shouldn’t consult experts—you should. But don’t be fooled into thinking that they hold the silver bullet for what currently ails your program. Second, it is better to adopt “templates”

from these best practices and then adapt them to the conditions and factors that best represent your consumers’ needs.

Third, when you look at best practice activities don’t assume that anyone fully understands what makes it work.

Fourth, remember to always leave room for supplementing best practices with your own best ideas. Fifth, remind yourself that doing things right does not always mean that you are doing the right thing.

If you’ve been sorting through various models and best practices searching for implications and applications, remember that, at the end of the day, consumer success is the only metric that matters. How well you did or didn’t implement a best practice will always be subordinate to that measure.