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AUTHOR Trohanis, Pascal L.; And Others
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ABSTRACT

During the past 10 years, the Technical Assistance Development System's (TADS) staff and advisory board members along with 500 other people have provided consultation services to model demonstration programs and state education agencies that help young handicapped children and their families. Consultants are usually located through a sponsor or broker. The consultant role involves that of advocate, technical expert, and process facilitator. Successful consultants usually posess specific knowledge and expertise, communication skills, systematic procedures, and interpersonal skills. Central to success for a broker are effective procedures, an orientation of responsiveness, nondirectiveness, knowledge, and skills; while important client characteristics are knowledge, involvement, communication ability, realistic point of view, autonomy, and leadership. There are some practical considerations involved in matching prospective consultants to clients such as determining type of agency, previous experience, and compatibility of professional philosophy. Because of the nature of the work, the consultant with the TADS approach may be faced with problems in areas including identification of the client, confidentiality, and lack of feedback from the consultant/client interaction. The broker agency may face problems involving role conflicts, financial arrangements, selection of consultants, and accountability. The client can also have complaints regarding timeliness of consultation services, communication with consultants, and readiness for consultation. The TADS model for consultation contains the steps of needs assessment, the technical assistance agreement, technical assistance delivery, evaluation of assistance, and program planning. Flaws in the consultation model are seen to be inefficiency, arrogance of the consultants, and iatrogenesis (i.e. that consultation may produce more problems than it solves). The client-centered and nondirective philosophy of the TADS approach has resulted in generally positive consultation relationships. (SW)

1177

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

an Occasional Paper Series from TADS on topical issues involving technical assistance to educational programs

CONSULTATION AND THE TADS EXPERIENCE

Pascal L. Trohanis, Michael P. Woodard, and James O. Cox

1981 Series

TADS

Pascal Trohanis
Series Editor

PASCAL L. TROHANIS is Principal Investigator and Director of the Technical Assistance Development System.

MICHAEL P. WOODARD is a Coordinator of Technical Assistance to States for TADS.

JAMES O. COX is a Coordinator of Technical Assistance to Demonstration Projects for TADS.

Managing Editor: Kenn Goin
Typist: Brenda Hardee

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This Occasional Paper (number 1) was prepared for our colleagues and others interested in the diverse ideas and practices of technical assistance. This material reflects some of what TADS has learned through its ten years of providing support services to model demonstration projects and state education agency grantees of the Handicapped Children's Early Education Program (HCEEP). This program is administered by the Office of Special Education, OSERS, U.S. Department of Education.

TADS provides technical assistance to designated projects and states when it is requested and needed. TADS is a division of the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. It is located at 500 NCNB Plaza, Chapel Hill, NC 27514. Our phone number is (919) 962-2001.

....A hired consultant arrives for a two-day on-site visit at a university hospital's infant stimulation program. He helps the staff evaluate and select new assessment instruments.

....A technical assistance agency staff member convenes a two-day workshop for three project directors to teach them skills in cost analysis and keeping track of expenses.

....A well-known educational researcher, serving as a consultant, opens a state-wide conference to motivate, inspire, set the tone, and paint the big picture for a specific problem area.

....A consultant, who doesn't need to work face-to-face in reviewing the draft of a planning document with a client, consults via the mails, the telephone, and teleconferencing.

In each of these circumstances, consultation addresses needs. During the past decade, the Technical Assistance Development System's (TADS) staff and advisory board members along with 500 other people have provided consultation services such as these through TADS. These services went to model demonstration programs and state education agencies that help young handicapped children and their families. They included not only visits by consultants to the programs and agencies, but also workshops and information searches. According to our yearly evaluation reports, "on-site consultations" consistently receive the highest ratings from clients and represent 40 percent of all direct services (by TADS) to clients (Suarez and Vandiviere, 1978; 1979; and 1980).

In offering these services, we at TADS have learned many things about the process of arranging for consultants to assist clients. In this article, we share some of that knowledge, first by examining the process of consultation (what it is; the different kinds of consultation; the skills of the consultant, client, and broker or technical assistance agency). Second, we discuss the way consultation as a process seems to work best (how to choose a consultant; client and broker's role in the choice). And third, we examine the problems in the process for each of the participating groups. We hope this information will provide technical assistance practitioners with some new ideas for expanding or improving their consultative process.

WHY IS CONSULTATION GROWING?

It's time has come--especially in education and other human services. First, new teaching technology (e.g., microcomputers, telecommunications), laws, social politics, and new federal, state and local relationships are making education a more complex business: consultants are needed to help decision makers take all of these factors into account. Second, the number of firms, academicians, and other professionals anxious to market their skills is on the rise. Many of these people need to supplement their regular income because of present-day economics. Third, organizations that have lost personnel need quick access to temporary, competent assistance in such areas as legislation, planning, computer technology, and accountability (cost-benefit) studies. Fourth, the labor force in these fields is changing. Consultants are needed to help administrators deal with equal-opportunity employment laws, better benefit programs, and fairer performance-appraisal systems.

WHAT IS CONSULTATION?

Consultation is a process in which the most important activity is communication. The communication occurs between a consultant and a client. Consultants are people with special training, knowledge, or experience. They may communicate with clients for a variety of reasons: e.g., to develop plans, solve problems, change situations, offer alternatives when decisions are to be made, resolve conflicts, define goals, test assumptions, review and critique products, or reinforce courses of action. The ultimate goal of consultation, as Ekendahl (1979) suggests, is: to bring about change for the better.

WHO ARRANGES FOR CONSULTATION?

While consultation may be arranged by the client, it usually is handled by a third party--the sponsor or broker. This is the person or group who pays the consultant. The broker also often locates and solicits the services of the consultant.

The broker may be within the client organization: e.g., a planning group, the executive director, the board of directors. Or the sponsor may be outside the organization, which is the case with state-level regional consulting groups, technical assistance agencies, and resource centers.

ARE THERE DIFFERENT KINDS OF CONSULTATION?

Yes, but the most typical is the face-to-face interaction between a client and a consultant at the client's site. Other kinds of consultation include:

1. Mail and telephone interchanges
2. Client visits to consultants
3. Consultations at workshops and conferences

We can expect more consultations to occur "electronically" with the help of computers and new telecommunications equipment. These means of interaction require no travel and can cut the cost of transportation and per diem expenses.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE CONSULTANT?

That depends upon the broker's reasons for employing the consultant. Figure 1 shows the various ways a consultant may interact with a client. Any organization involved in consultation will probably find itself in all of these roles at some time or another. We stress organization, because an individual trying to play all the roles invites trouble. By trying to be all things to all people, a consultant can create an atmosphere of instability and apprehension. On the other hand, an organization composed of individuals, each strong in two or three of the consultant roles and flexible enough to stretch when necessary, is in a better position to respond appropriately to client needs.

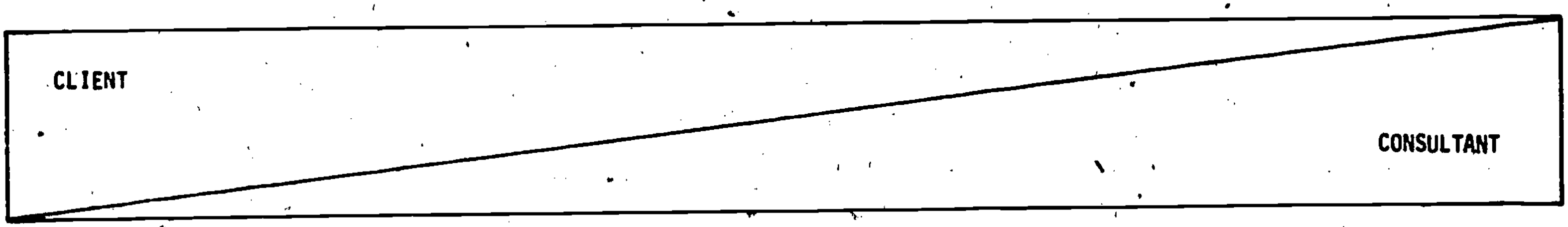
The role chosen by the consultant (fact finder, joint problem solver, trainer/educator, etc.) is invariably played according to the consultant's style: i.e., his personal preferences. Style may range from a "directive to a nondirective" method of interaction with the client. Figure 1 shows the way particular consultant roles correspond to nondirective and directive styles. For example, the process/counselor role is relatively nondirective, while the advocate role is very directive. Just as one consultant tends to have favorite roles, so too is he or she more comfortable with some styles

FIGURE 1

Description of the Consultant's Role on a Directive and Nondirective Continuum

MULTIPLE ROLES OF THE CONSULTANT

Objective Observer/ Reflecter	Process Counselor	Fact Finder	Alternative Identifier and Linker	Joint Problem Solver	Trainer Educator	Informational Expert	Advocate



LEVEL OF CONSULTANT ACTIVITY IN PROBLEM SOLVING

Nondirective ... Directive

Raises questions for reflection	Observes problem-solving process and raises issues mirroring feedback	Gathers data and stimulates thinking interpretives	Identifies alternatives and resources for client and helps assess consequences	Offers alternatives and participates in decisions	Trains client	Regards, links, and provides policy or practice decisions	Proposes guidelines, persuades, or directs in the problem-solving process

From Lippitt and Lippitt, <u>The Consulting Process in Action</u>. LaJolla, CA: University Associates, Inc., 1978, p. 31.

than others. It is important that consultants be assigned roles consistent with their styles.

Another way of describing the roles and styles of consulting is to define the way problems are approached. Some consultants prefer to solve problems for clients; others want to help clients learn to solve their own dilemmas. The first kind of consultant may be called a technical expert. His or her relationship with the client is usually objective, detached, and task-oriented. He or she often makes concrete recommendations--based upon research and experience--to solve specific problems. The second kind of consultant may be called a process facilitator. His or her relationship with the client is personal, "involved," and process-oriented. This relationship is necessary because the goal is to improve the client's problem-solving expertise so that he (or she), not the consultant, ultimately solves the problem.

WHAT SKILLS OR ATTRIBUTES MUST A CONSULTANT POSSESS?

According to Menzel (1975), Kiester (1969), Gurski (1977), and our own case studies at TADS (Behr, et al., 1981), consultants who are most successful have the following characteristics:

1. Specific knowledge and expertise. The consultant should be an authority in his or her field, know pertinent research, and have experience within the area of the consultation. These qualities make the consultant more credible.
2. Communication skills. The consultant must be able to listen well, write well, and speak well.
3. Systematic procedures. The consultant must prepare for the consultation and follow up the consultation with findings

and recommendations. The skills of planning, problem identification, and data analysis must be second nature.

4. Interpersonal skills. A positive attitude and enthusiasm for client and task are essential for a consultant. Honesty, sensitivity, trust, and openness should be the cornerstones upon which his or her personal style is based; flexibility should be the very foundation.

WHAT ARE IMPORTANT CHARACTERISTICS FOR A BROKER OF CONSULTANT SERVICES?

At TADS, we have found the following qualities central to success:

1. Procedures. These are needed to identify needs, negotiate assistance agreements, deliver services, and report results to client and consultant.
2. Philosophy. An orientation of responsiveness and "nondirectiveness" is necessary. For example, timeliness in responding to client requests is important.
3. Knowledge. The organization must know about client programs.
4. Skills. The staff needs to be adept in selecting consultants and using available resources.

WHAT ARE IMPORTANT CLIENT CHARACTERISTICS?

At TADS, we have found the following client traits support our efforts:

1. Knowledge. Staff members should understand the general mission of their program and the tasks on which the consultant will be working.
2. Involvement. The staff should be enthusiastic about the consultation and involved in preparing for it and taking part during it.

3. Communication ability. An open, sharing, trusting staff is best for the consultant. Management should be capable of articulating the staff's needs.
4. Point of view. A realistic view of what to expect from the consultant helps all parties work more successfully.
5. Autonomy. The client's management must have power to make decisions and direct other factors that are important for the consultation to work.
6. Leadership style. Since management at the client organization and the consultant will be working with the same staff, their styles should be complementary. If their styles are at odds, solving problems may be difficult.

WHAT PROCESSES CAN THE BROKER USE TO MAKE CONSULTATION WORK?

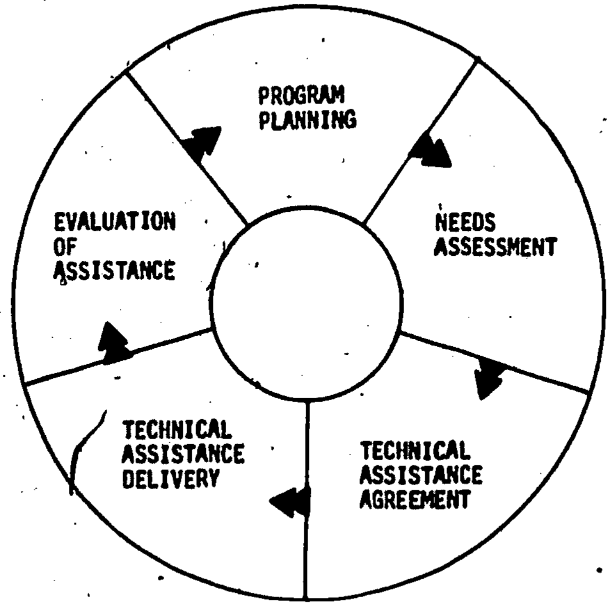
There are no guarantees that consultants in every case will be able to accomplish the goals for which they were hired. But there are ways that the broker agency -- the one that identifies the consultant -- can use to promote success.

The first of these ways involves the broker-client relationship. The broker must use a system for helping the client identify and remedy problems (needs). Lippitt and Lippitt (1968) identify six steps in such a system:

1. Make contact with clients.
2. Develop a contract and establish a helping relationship.
3. Identify problems.
4. Set goals and plan to achieve them.
5. Implement the plan and exchange impressions of its

FIGURE 2

TADS Technical Assistance Model



success or failure with the client.

6. Complete the contract.

TADS, as a broker, has used a similar system in offering technical assistance to clients (Figure 2). Its role has been that of a resource agency that provides comprehensive, continuous, nonevaluative support to early education projects. TADS offers clients assistance in managing programs, clarifying methods, and accomplishing goals and objectives.

One of the primary tools in providing this support has been consultation. Figure 3 shows how TADS has put Lippitt and Lippitt's six steps into action. Note that most of the Lippitts' steps are repeated a number of times in the TADS system. Also, note that the point in the TADS cycle where consultation occurs involves all of the Lippitts' steps.

FIGURE 3
A Comparison of TADS Technical Assistance Approach
and Lippitt and Lippitt's Phases of Consultation

TADS Technical Assistance Approach		
Five Stages of the TADS TA Model	TADS Activities with Client	Corresponding Lippitt and Lippitt Phase of Consultation
Program Planning	1. Contact all clients first of each year for status check of program plans.	Phase 1
	2. Hold orientation workshop for all new clients each year.	Phases 1 and 2
Needs Assessments	3. Conduct comprehensive program review.	Phase 3
	4. Identify technical assistance needs and objectives.	Phases 3 and 4
	5. Develop plans and procedures to address technical assistance needs and objectives.	Phase 4
Technical Assistance Agreement	6. Review needs assessment requests and budget allocations.	Phase 4
	7. Negotiate a final "Memorandum of Agreement" with client.	Phases 2 and 4
Technical Assistance Delivery	8. Solicit information on project needs and other recommendations from consultant; or ask client what characteristics they would like in a consultant.	Phases 3 and 4
	9. Select the consultant, confirm dates of work, and negotiate expenses and fees.	Phase 4
	10. Prepare activities for client and consultant.	Phase 4
	11. Await completion of consultation.	Phases 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6
	12. Receive consultant's summary and recommendations for follow-up activities.	Phases 5 and 6
	13. Negotiate additional consultation, if necessary.	Phase 6
Evaluation of Technical Assistance	14. Ask for an evaluation of the consultation by both the client and consultant.	Phase 5
	15. Send evaluation feedback to client and consultant.	Phase 5
	16. Have client evaluate technical assistance results at the end of the contract year.	Phase 5
	17. Send closure letter, for current year, to client.	Phase 6

HOW DO YOU SELECT A CONSULTANT?

You make sure he or she matches the client's needs and desires. To determine needs, TADS begins with a formal assessment of needs and a program review. Then, via the telephone with the client and the needs assessor, technical assistance (TA) coordinators (the people at TADS who arrange for consultations) help capture this information in precise statements of need and objectives for addressing the problems. Often, some form of consultation is indicated. The information developed by the coordinators and clients is critical to selecting the right consultant.

TADS maintains a "consultant bank" which contains information on consultants arranged by content areas. Vitae, evaluation data from previous TADS assignments, and a profile (Figure 4) are included for each entry. Personnel in the bank are drawn from the Handicapped Children's Early Education Program (HCEEP) network (TADS client group), individual and group consulting firms, universities and colleges, and state and local departments of special education.

The TA coordinators add to this data their experiences. When matching begins, the coordinators usually rely on their memories (since exceptional consultant performance tends to be remembered), as well as on the experiences of other TADS personnel, and the consultant bank. Usually two or three candidates are identified for each consultancy. If the coordinator can find none who are appropriate, he or she may call clients, professional organizations, or other information sources for recommendations.

ARE OTHER FACTORS INVOLVED IN MATCHING?

Yes. Often the prospective consultants identified for each client are more or less equal in terms of expertise and ability. So, practical considerations become important guides in making the match.

FIGURE 4

TADS STATES' CONSULTANT PROFILE

Name: ____________________

Title/Position: ____________________

Agency: ____________________

Address: ____________________

____

____

Telephone: ____________________

Social Security #: ____________________

Federal I.D. #: ____________________

Preferred address for contact:

____

____

____

Preferred Telephone: ____________________

Please rate your competence to consult in the following areas: 3=High 2=Moderate Competence 1=Not Applicable

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

___ state planning
___ service needs assessment
___ funding/financial management
___ organizational development
___ evaluation planning
___ technical assistance delivery
___ legislation development
___ standards/guidelines development

PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

___ teacher training, undergraduate
___ teacher training, graduate
___ staff development
___ parent education
___ training needs assessment
___ competency identification

INTERAGENCY

___ interagency planning
___ interagency facilitation
___ interagency agreement
___ interagency evaluation

COMMUNICATION/DISSEMINATION

___ public awareness
___ materials development
___ non-print media
___ information systems
___ resource directory development
___ editorial assistance
___ conference planning
___ dissemination/replication planning
___ network/consortia development

OTHER: Please Specify

____

____

Please indicate availability.

I am available to accept assignments:

WHEN

___ business days
___ weekends
___ school year
___ summer
___ any of the above

WHERE

___ in my own state
___ in Mid-Atlantic states
___ in New England states
___ in southern states
___ in midwestern states
___ all of the above

HOW OFTEN

___ less than 5 days/year
___ 6-10 days/year
___ more than 10 days/year

Please indicate fee requirements: $____________/day

Other contractual considerations (please specify)

Current resume on file at TADS' office: ___ yes ___ no. If no checked, please send us a copy of your resume along with this form.

I understand that this registration is for information only and does not obligate me to accept any assignment and does not constitute an obligation by TADS to offer assignments. Also, this profile will <u>not</u> be duplicated and shared.

____________________ Date

____________________ Signature

1. Geography. Have the consultant and client something in common geographically? Do they reside in the same state or region, or are they at least from areas that have geopolitical/cultural similarities? Often rural clients are better served by consultants from rural areas; the same situation holds true for urban clients. Proximity is a key concern these days, given escalating travel costs. Dollars originally slated for airfare may be converted into valuable TA time when the consultant lives nearby.

2. Type of agency. Do the candidate and client share agency experience? TADS clients are typically in public schools, universities, hospitals, state departments of special education, and community service agencies. Familiarity with the client's workaday language, politics, and technology is a prime consultant asset.

3. Previous experience. Perhaps the candidate has consulted successfully on a similar need in the past or generally experienced a need like the client's. For example, an experienced director of a preschool program is frequently the best source of help to a novice director.

4. Preselection. Sometimes clients know who they want to consult. After screening the candidate, their choice is most always honored.

5. Compatibility of professional philosophy. Behaviorists prefer to work with behaviorists, humanists with humanists, and so on. A consultant with a strong commitment to parent involvement may not fit with a client who is more professionally centered. These discrepancies are best considered during the consultant-selection

stage, not the consultation.

6. Consultant style. Are the consultant and client styles compatible? What do you get when you cross a process-oriented consultant with a task-oriented client? Frustration! Another potential mismatch is the high-powered, hard-driving consultant with a low-keyed, child-centered client. Also, face-offs of professional titans are best avoided.

7. Ethnicity/language sensitivity. Depending upon the need and/or the predominate language and ethnicity of the client's staff or target population, the TA coordinator and the client may agree that certain special sensitivities be considered. For example, a client that serves a predominately Mexican-American group may request a consultant who is fluent in the Spanish language and sensitive to the Chicano cultural heritage.

8. Interest. Is the candidate willing and able to give the client his or her best effort? Sometimes consultants find new interests and would rather not go over old ground. Also, skilled people often lead harried lives. The work could perhaps be forced into the consultant's busy schedule, but stress would likely result. Finally, government-rate consultant fees may fall short of the consultant's usual remuneration. In short, the best consultant sees the client's needs as equal to any on his or her professional agenda.

9. Availability. Big name or small name, sometimes appropriate dates cannot be found. The ups and downs of rescheduling may weary and disappoint all concerned. Therefore, selecting a consultant with ample time to schedule and conduct the consultation is desirable.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE CONSULTANT IS CHOSEN?

One of two things: the TA Coordinator recommends the consultant to the client project; or, if requested, a short list of candidates (with vitae) is sent to the client. If the second option is chosen, the client is encouraged to contact the candidate personally. Usually, TADS has advised all candidates that the client may call. The client's choice of the candidate is honored.

The consultant and client then develop an agenda for the consultation. The consultation takes place. Afterwards, the client and consultant complete separate evaluation forms for TADS; the consultant writes a report to the client and delivers any promised work. Follow-up consultations or other services (as necessary) are handled through TADS.

ARE THERE PROBLEMS FOR THE CONSULTANT WITH TADS APPROACH?

Yes. Because of the nature of the work, he or she may be faced with several difficulties.

1. <u>Identity</u>. The first and most critical question is, who is my client? The answer is rarely conclusive in the brokerage situation. On the surface, this question seems simple enough: the broker agency's client has a need and the consultant addresses that need; therefore, the agency's client is the consultant's client. The problem occurs when the consultant is retained and paid by the agency, which identifies, interprets, clarifies, and confirms the client's need. The agency is accountable to its funding source and therefore has its own set of priorities. Thus, the consultant serves (at least) two masters and must successfully balance the related, but separate, purposes of the client and the agency.

2. <u>Communication</u>. Clear communication between client, consultant, and broker agency may be problematic in the best of times. At worst, the consultant is caught between the agency and client, each of which may have a different understanding of what is needed and how to solve the need. There is no guarantee that the client ultimately will communicate the need clearly to the consultant. Sometimes, the broker agency has a better sense of the need and can communicate it better to the consultant. The consultant, in any event, must weigh both views and come to his or her own understanding of the need.

3. <u>Confidentiality</u>. A broker agency typically serves a network of client organizations which have similar missions and structures and interact frequently. After a time, the frequently used consultant becomes like a "small town minister." He or she knows everybody's business and style and vice versa. The opportunities for breaches of <u>confidentiality</u> are legion. The broker agency must be careful to maintain standards of confidentiality when introducing potential consultants and clients.

4. <u>Conflict of interest</u>. This happens when the consultant's need takes precedence over the client's need. For example, the consultant may be so wedded to his or her own ideas that the client's nature and needs are obscured. Or, the consultant and the client may have radically different professional orientations: e.g., behavioral versus psychoanalytic approaches to educating emotionally disturbed children. Client-consultant dissonance can also occur when one party is strongly task-oriented and the other is committed to the process approach. Also, personality conflicts can be a problem:

e.g., a hard-driving consultant is mismatched to a "laid-back" client. These differences can have a profound impact on the success of consultation.

5. No feedback. The actual consultation experience is planned and conducted by the consultant and the client. The broker agency rarely gets to see the consultant/client interaction. While periodic communication with all parties may alert the agency to major successes and problems in the consultation, detailed guidance often cannot be provided the consultant because the agency is too removed from the site. After the work is done, the consultant usually has little further contact with the client, and the actual outcomes of the consultation are usually not realized for a long time. Consequently, it is difficult for the broker agency to obtain or provide much productive feedback to the consultant.

WHAT PROBLEMS FACE TADS AS THE BROKER AGENCY?

Such an agency has the responsibility to act as the "go-between" or intermediary between the consultant and the client. In this capacity, the agency engages in many different activities, such as assisting the organization in identifying and describing its needs, selecting methods for addressing the need, and locating and obtaining human and information resources.

1. Role Conflicts. The agency which brokers and consults may experience some role conflicts. Some of the roles which may be in conflict include: the need identifier, the change facilitator or coordinator, the actual change agent, and the accountant or documenter of the changes made. The role conflict may be manifested in a confused relationship with the client. The client may have

difficulty perceiving switches in roles and the agency staff may have difficulty making the switches. The various roles played and the conflicts that result may cause the client to see the agency as incompetent or overextended.

2. Finance. When the broker agency pays for some or all (as TADS does) of the consultation service, unique problems concerning the financial arrangements may arise. The agency incurs substantial personnel costs associated with the consultation process. For example, staff time is required to identify and confirm the client's needs, develop mutually acceptable agreements for services, and select and confirm the consultant (see Figure 3 for other consultation activities which consume agency personnel time). When an agency serves clients in a wide geographic area who have a variety of fiscal agencies (e.g., local and state educational agencies, private nonprofit agencies, etc.) it is difficult, if not impossible, to get various client agencies to pool resources to support the broker agency.

   When the actual costs of the consultant's time and travel are also born by the broker agency, two other types of problems may arise. First, long-term, costly intervention are usually not possible (at least that has been TADS experience). This situation may lead the broker agency to select short-term (less costly) interventions for problems that demand more time. A second problem is: clients may devalue free services and thereby the change efforts.

3. Consultants. The agency must also decide whether to advise the client to use a consultant not sponsored by the agency to assist in addressing the same need. Some evidence, though spotty, indicates that "too many cooks spoil the broth." For two

consecutive years (1978 and 1979), but not in the third year (1980), analyses of TADS evaluation data indicate:

> clients who receive technical assistance [e.g., consultations] solely from TADS made significantly more progress towards meeting identified technical assistance needs than did those who received technical assistance from TADS and another source (Suarez and Vandiviere, 1979, p. 82).

4. Measurement. A final problem, for the agency, is accountability. Selecting and defining the performance measures are difficult. Ultimately, change in client organizations is sought. The measurement of this change can be intrusive. Deciding what portions of the changes are attributable to the consultant's actions, to the client's actions apart from the consultation, and to the brokering activites, is not easily accomplished.

ARE THERE PROBLEMS FOR THE CLIENT WITH TADS APPROACH?

Yes. Although evaluation data indicate very high client satisfaction with TADS consultations, sometimes things go awry. Complaints generally concern:

1. Timeliness. The groundwork for a consultation takes an enormous amount of time. With the number of our clients, needs assessments alone consume the first quarter of a contract year. By the time agreements are developed and all the consultants pinpointed and confirmed, the original need may have gone by the boards unaddressed. TADS tries to be flexible enough to address really urgent needs on demand and to change arrangements when the client's needs change.
2. Communication. Sometimes the essence of a need is misunderstood despite a personalized needs assessment and extensive follow-up. The consultant selected to meet the perceived need may be the wrong person to tackle the problem that finally emerges at the

client's office. In these cases, TADS usually tries again.

3. Single point of entry. Sometimes needs assessment and other activities occur between the TADS staff, the consultant, and a single client representative. In these situations, the consultant may arrive to find that either client line staff or higher administration have substantially different expectations for the consultation than those of the contact person. Often the consultant will be flexible enough to respond to the new perceptions and get on with the business at hand. If not, the TADS TA coordinator tries to unsnarl the knot.

4. Readiness. Sometimes, the client is not ready for a consultant at the time agreed upon with TADS during the needs assessment. But it is hard for anyone to admit to a miscalculation and even harder to turn down a consultant's help, though the timing is all wrong. TADS tries to be sensitive to the client's situation -- slowing down the consultation process and reassuring the client of the value of proceeding at one's own pace when it seems prudent to do so. The consultant is asked to drop back a stage or two in the process if this will help the client.

ARE THERE ANY MAJOR FLAWS IN THE CONSULTATION MODEL?

While we have found few serious problems at TADS, other voices argue that the consultation model itself is flawed. McKnight (1981), in speaking for clients, lists three major problems which he maintains are grounds for a client revolt against the "professional problem definers." He argues against (1) inefficiency, (2) arrogance, and (3) iatrogenesis.

The first argument is that even though there are more consultants today consuming more resources than ever, the total number of problems being addressed has not been reduced and in some cases has even grown worse. Consultation is not fulfilling one of its basic missions -- problem reduction. McKnight (1981) says it in this way: "In management terms, imputs are up and outputs are down. In investor idioms, there is no leverage. In taxpayer language, it's a bad 'proposition' (p. 39)."

The second argument, arrogance, is that consultants are "inherently elitist and dominant." They are arrogant because they have the power to define problems, design the remediation, and evaluate the efficacy of the solution. This is a classic example of a closed system.

The third argument, iatrogenesis, is that a consultation may produce more problems than it solves. In other words, the cure is worse than the illness.

ARE THE PROBLEMS SURMOUNTABLE?

While the above discussion indicates that consultations and the brokering of consultants can be problematic, TADS overall experiences in these areas have been positive. Thanks largely to a client-centered and nondirective philosophy of technical assistance, McKnight's worst scenarios have to date been avoided. Since consultation is a two-way communication process, there will always be problems. In its role as a broker, TADS both initiates and channels communication between the client and consultant. Careful attention to the communication process, the skills and traits needed by consultants, and the characteristics of the client and broker agencies, have contributed to the success of TADS-sponsored consultations. TADS systematic approach--the technical assistance model and associated consultation activities--assures continuity and successful program development for clients. This success is exemplified by the following statement from one client:

> TADS approach to organizational decision-making (development), i.e., carefully articulated goals, strategies and evaluation procedures, has over a three-year period affected our own style of administration. It has been this process rather than any single TA effort that has (had) the greatest positive impact. TADS is, in other words, a terrific role model (Suarez and Vandiviere, 1978, p. 36).

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