

# Three Distinctive Models of Municipal Educational Psychology Services: Perceptions of Innovation and Best Practice

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# Abstract

## Background

The Psychological and Counseling Services (PCS) is a senior division of the Pedagogic Administration of the Ministry of Education. It is responsible for the work of psychologists in the Educational Psychology Services (EPS) of local authorities. In recent years, the PCS introduced a strategic measure to upgrade the efficiency of EPS work, and to address the shortage of human resources and the fact that the available positions for psychologists in the service are only partially filled; the aim was to ensure the provision of an optimal, quality response in the entire gamut of areas with which the EPSs are charged. In the wake of this, the division requested that the Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute (MJB) examine three EPSs that have implemented distinctive models in their work.

## Study Goals

The goal of the study was to learn in depth of the operations of the three EPSs implementing distinctive models in their work, and to examine the professionals' perceptions of both the innovation of the models and the best-practice principles employed.

## Methodology

The EPSs selected for the study were those defined by the PCS as employing distinctive, innovative work modes. The study consisted of 15 semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 20 professionals in office: EPS directors, educational psychologists, EPS office-holders, school principals, educational counselors, and directors of the education administration of local authorities. We also interviewed officials at the national and district HQs of the PCS division. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, analyzed, and processed by the MJB research team by means of qualitative thematic analysis.

## Findings

The study describes seven aspects of innovative work modes of the EPSs examined. These, in the perception of the interviewees, are best-practice principles: The emphasis on systemic work, modification of the method of assignment of educational psychologists to educational frameworks, limitation of the psychologists' terms of service in these frameworks, investment in the cultivation of

ties between psychologists and their corresponding office-holders in the local authority, the positioning of the EPS at the level of the local authority, the integration of educational psychologists in the local authority's educational programs, and the prioritization of specialization processes and ongoing training.

## **Conclusion**

We recommend that ESP professionals learn from the conceptions of innovation that emerged in the study and, in that spirit, take steps to promote work modes based on the principles of best practice. This should be done through the reinforcement of ESP directors who have made an important contribution to particular aspects of ESP work, the promotion of the policy and praxis of systemic work, the establishment of quality contacts between the professionals and their counterparts in office in the local authority, and the advancement of ongoing specialization and training processes to address the shortage of psychologists in the ESP's workforce.