Highlights of Recent Work

How can we help novice child protection social workers to see situations like experienced practitioners? A randomised controlled trial evaluation of the ShadowBox™ method using pre-recorded video feedback

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1. TWO SENTENCE TEASER THAT SUCCINCTLY COMMUNICATES WHY SOMEONE SHOULD PARTICIPATE AND USE YOUR WORK

- Many organisations, such as child protective services, need experienced practitioners but face real challenges in staff retention.
- The ShadowBox™ method enables the large-scale online training of novices using pre-recorded video feedback and this paper outlines the promising results of an RCT evaluation.

2. SUMMARIZE NEW RESULTS

Background

Protecting children for abuse and neglect is a complex area of decision-making but frequent staff turnover has meant that many frontline child protection social workers are often relatively inexperienced. The ShadoxBox™ method is an educational intervention that enables novice practitioners to gain decision-making skills quickly.

Aim:

This study was an RCT evaluation of an educational intervention for novice social workers that used the ShadoxBox™ method adapted to include pre-recorded video feedback from an expert panel to test whether novice decision making would become more similar to experienced practitioners.

Methods:

The study was an RCT in which participants completed complex scenarios in a computer lab in control and intervention groups. The training method involved participants receiving feedback from highly experienced practitioners at each decision point within the scenarios. The intervention group received pre-recorded video feedback from a panel of highly experienced practitioners while the control group received no feedback.

Participants and Setting

Participants (n=83) were trainee social workers from a London university randomly allocated to control and intervention groups. Data was collected on computer stations using Qualtrics.

Results

Undertaking the scenarios improved both groups but greater improvement was seen in participants who had received video feedback from a panel of experienced practitioners. The results were promising, with participant accuracy increasing by 44% (from 31% to 75%) in the intervention group compared to an increase of 31% (from 32% to 63%) in the control group.

Considerable improvements were noted in both intervention and control groups, which suggest that scenario-based interventions can be a promising educational method as learning is rooted in real life scenarios and participants have the opportunity to reflect upon their decisions.

The qualitative findings are that novice participants make predictable errors, including:

- Making shallow assumptions
- Focusing exclusively on the parents rather than the child.
- Jumping to early conclusions with insufficient information.

Conclusions

- ShadoxBox™ training appears to be a promising intervention for improving decision making.
- Novices benefitted from having concentrated exposure to complex scenarios focused on assessing risk and making professional judgements.
- When this was augmented by direct feedback from a panel of highly experienced practitioners, these benefits were increased considerably.
- The complexity of the scenarios also exposed the novices to real life pressures rather than the simplified versions used in decision research.

3. WHO WOULD BENEFIT FROM KNOWING ABOUT YOUR WORK?

- NDM researchers.
- Manager of organisations that want novice staff to gain the understanding of experienced staff in a time and resource-effective way.
- Designers of online training.

4. THE IMPACTS OR IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESULTS OR HOW THEY CAN BE UTILIZED

- The study is a development of the ShadoxBox™ model to incorporate video feedback.

5. THE WIDER SCOPE OR RELEVANCE OF THE WORK

- The findings support the value of scenario-based training as improvements were found in both groups.
- Greater improvement was seen in participants who had received expert video feedback, which supports the value of the ShadoxBox™ method.

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