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Moving from Teaching to Evaluation: Using Embedded Evaluation to Promote Learning and Provide Feedback

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EMBEDDED EVALUATION FAQs

1. What is Embedded Evaluation?

Embedded evaluation uses exercises that are built into the training day, both to promote learning and to provide evaluative feedback. Designs for embedded evaluations range on a continuum from the relatively simple to the more complex. For example, the trainer might observe performance of a role-play and record performance on one or two key objectives on a checklist, or it might be more complex, where an outside evaluator administers the interview task with a set script and a trained actor playing the part of the client. Less complex embedded evaluation is most useful for providing feedback for course improvement and giving trainers an idea of how the class in general is picking up on key points. More complex embedded evaluation is required when the goal is to document (or certify) that individuals have met a specified standard of competency.

2. What is Embedded Evaluation used for?

Embedded evaluation is most often used to evaluate skill-based competencies. Skill based competencies are competencies that define a desired behavior, activity or interaction; for example interviewing a child, assessing risk, identifying indicators of child maltreatment, writing a court report, writing a case plan, etc.

Embedded skills evaluation often involves the observation of a behavior in the training room. However, it could also involve the evaluation of written materials if the skill being taught is to produce a written product such as a court report or case plan. It might also involve making judgments based on slides and written scenario materials when a demonstrating a skill like assessment. For obvious ethical and practical reasons, real children and families can't be present in the classroom. However, reasonable substitutes for skill demonstration are available, and include assessing risk from a written scenario, simulated initial reports, interview transcripts, safety assessment forms, or using slides to identify injuries possibly due to physical abuse. What is important is that the evaluation task mirrors the on-the-job use of the skill as closely as possible.

3. What is an example of Embedded Evaluation?

Embedded performance tasks may be thought of as exercises that are a part of the training as well as being an evaluation method. For example, trainees might be assigned a case planning exercise based on a set of written scenario materials as part of their instruction. The evaluator would work with the curriculum developers and trainers to identify the key points that should be addressed in the plan and develop a scoring rubric that would be used to assess how well each trainee met the objectives for that exercise. Trainees' scores would then be analyzed and reported back to the evaluation's stakeholders, such as the training program administrator(s), curriculum developers, trainers, trainees and their supervisors, or others.

4. What are the roles of the Curriculum Developer, Training Administrator, Trainer and Evaluator?

A. The role of the trainer, curriculum developer, or subject matter expert is to:

- ⇨ Advise on the design of the task and administration logistics
- ⇨ Help identify the dimensions of competent performance (items)
- ⇨ Identify what competent performance on each dimension would look like (anchors)
- ⇨ Make recommendations about level of overall performance needed for competency (how many items should someone be expected to get right)
- ⇨ Help conduct the evaluation. The trainer is usually the person who sets up and runs the evaluation exercise in the classroom. Training administrators and others may provide assistance with logistics (e.g. arranging for a second trainer if needed to run the exercise, providing for assistance with classroom technology)
- ⇨ Help score the trainees' responses. The trainer would need to participate in scoring if his or her expertise is needed to judge the adequacy of an open-ended or behavioral response.

B. The role of the evaluator is to:

- ⇨ Structure the task with the trainer and curriculum developer so that the desired feedback can be obtained,
- ⇨ Develop the evaluation design and evaluation instruments,
- ⇨ Conduct the evaluation (usually with the help of the trainer(s)
- ⇨ Analyze the evaluation data
- ⇨ Write evaluation reports
- ⇨ Consult with and provide information to the curriculum developers, trainers, training administrators and other subject matter experts.

Collaboration between the training developer and evaluator is critical to the success of embedded evaluation. The training developer and evaluator jointly develop and agree upon the design of embedded evaluations.

5. What can Embedded Evaluation provide?

Embedded evaluation either builds on existing exercises or designs new tasks that can be used as both instructional and evaluation opportunities. This linkage enhances trainee learning and provides feedback to trainers for course improvement, while also providing important data on trainees'

acquisition of skills. Embedded skill evaluations in the classroom are promising for two additional reasons.

First, skill level evaluation tasks are time consuming and logistically difficult. Within the training day an evaluation task that wasn't integrated with instruction would take too much time away from an already tight schedule. Building on existing exercises or designing new tasks that can be used as both instructional and evaluation opportunities is efficient and provides the added value of integrating and enhancing both trainee learning and the evaluation data.

Second, using embedded evaluations during training provides a baseline for linking training performance with transfer activities. One necessary prerequisite to transfer of learning to the job is having learned the skill initially. Embedded evaluation can help to document to what extent that learning is taking place in the classroom and to what extent transfer could reasonably be expected to take place even under optimal conditions in the field.

6. What are the steps in designing an Embedded Evaluation?

Embedded evaluations usually follow the same general sequence of steps in design and implementation:

1. Consult with stakeholders regarding purpose and desired outcomes of the evaluation.
2. Identify an appropriate competency or competencies to be the focus of the evaluation.
3. Review curricula and observe a course session to determine whether the curriculum supports skill development sufficiently or if modifications are needed.
4. With the curriculum developers and trainers, select a skill development exercise to become the basis for the evaluation. Alternatively, an exercise may be developed jointly by the curriculum developer/trainer and evaluator to address a particular competency.
5. Design the evaluation making modifications to the exercise selected if needed.
6. Design the scoring rubrics, assessment instruments or surveys and procedures to be used to collect evaluation data.
7. Pilot test the evaluation for reliability and validity and make changes to the exercise, evaluation design and instruments if needed
8. Conduct the evaluation
9. Analyze data and report results to the training program, curriculum developers, trainers and other stakeholders.