

TRAINING TO CHANGE PRACTICE

BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE TO DEVELOP
EFFECTIVE HEALTH PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

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Behavioural Science to Develop
Effective Health Professional
Education

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Foreword

This first edition of *Training to Change Practice* is a jewel for educators, psychologists and scientists. The four co-authors – the JEWEL of Jo, Eleanor, Wendy and Lucie – have drawn upon their domestic and international experiences to identify and propose practical solutions to one of the most salient issues in health and care systems worldwide: the market failures in the conceptualization, development, delivery and impact of education and training for health and care workers.

The authors rightly open chapter 1, and inform the book throughout, with an appreciation of health professional’s education and training as an economic sector, an industry, a market: with its inherent strengths and weaknesses and highly susceptible to internal and external factors. Their evidence from Canada and the United Kingdom strongly resonates with reviews and commissioned studies from the World Health Organization that conservatively estimate global expenditure in lifelong learning in the health and care economy in the range of US\$12-15 billion per annum. A market that – when subject to scrutiny, evaluation and scientific review – demonstrates limited effect on practice and patient outcomes, irrespective of whether training is delivered in low-, middle- or high-income settings.

This global market within health and care systems has grown decade by decade: heavily influenced by two factors. A belief among many that “in-service training” was the primary solution to address quality of health services through improving the skills and knowledge of the health and care workforce, and secondly the expansion of official development assistance to health in the period from 2000.

Fortunately, the increased spending on in-service training has also generated additional analysis and scrutiny. In particular, multi-disciplinary teams of behavioural, education and health systems’ specialists are increasingly combining their respective sciences to reveal the conceptual flaws in the theory of change and bring new thinking to the fore. This contemporary logic includes moving beyond the transfer of knowledge, the assessment of time allocated to study, or the measurement of learners’ satisfaction with the training experience to one of how adults learn, their behaviour in teams and

institutions, and how to develop competencies that will be routinely applied in practice. Assessment and learning transfer evaluation models likewise focus on the demonstrable application of learning.

Similar concepts are very much evident in this book, where the authors' collective wisdom – channelled convincingly through “we believe”, “we find”, “we argue” and “we propose” statements – focuses on practical techniques, measures and theories of behavioural science to impact change in the workplace.

The book opens with a short overview of applicable concepts and theories, and the simple COM-B framework (*capability, opportunity, motivation -> behaviour*) that underpins subsequent chapters, before introducing seven key principles to develop and inform effective training. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 then guide the reader through a step-by-step approach to how to apply behavioural science techniques before Chapter 5 sets out a pragmatic approach to assessing and evaluating change, drawing upon process and outcome measurement. Many readers will particularly enjoy the topic guides, tips and examples and sample training plans across the book.

Beyond presenting the complexity of the field in an informative and instructional format, the co-authors challenge and nudge the reader to learn, think and act differently in their practice. Whilst drawing upon a rich, collective experience of the United Kingdom's National Health Service with some examples from less resourced settings it is a public good for international application.

The book is particularly timely given the global health challenges arising from three years of the COVID19 pandemic. Many health and care systems are facing reductions in government health expenditure in real terms, new demands to recover, ‘build back better’ and expand preparedness in health security, and increasing political and financial pressure on health providers to optimize existing resources in pursuit of effective, quality services. Inevitably these demands will be transferred to the millions of health and care teams around the world to solve; requiring concerted efforts to invest in competency-based, behaviourally informed training that targets changes in practice.

All parties involved in the commissioning, subsidy, development and delivery of lifelong learning targeted to health and care professionals' can learn much from this book. The application of the principles, tools and approach would do much to accelerate the use of behavioural science in the training of the world's health and care workforce, address existing market failures and impact learning, practice and patient outcomes.

Jim Campbell
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