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THE USE OF ROLE PLAYING IN INTERPERSONAL SKILL TRAINING

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Introduction

In many outlines of interpersonal skill training programs, role playing is used as an instructional method. From the field of interpersonal skill training is not much known of the use of role playing. Many authors (Shaftel & Shaftel, 1967, 1982; Joyce & Weil, 1980, Tistaert, 1987; Nijkerk, 1988) only give (global) description of this instructional method in an optimistic and positive way without empirically confirmation. Further, the description of role playing concerns in most cases regular education. Not much is known over the use of role playing in corporate training. The main purpose of this study is to draw together information on the use of role playing in corporate training, in particular interpersonal skill training.

Method

Subjects

The population of the study would be corporate trainers.Variables controlled by exclusion are (1) the trainer must have experience with role playing in interpersonal skill training, and (2) the trainer must have held position for a minimum of one year.

Corporate trainers (N=200) are randomly selected from the registers of the Dutch Association of Corporate Trainers (Nederlandse Vereniging van Opleidingsfunctionarissen) and from the registers of the VETRON (Vereniging van Trainings- en Opleidingsinstituten in Nederland).

Materials

A written questionnaire consisting of about 60 items will be used to measure facts and attitudes toward the use of role playing in corporate training. The questions and statements refer to (1) the use of role playing and (2) disadvantages of and problems with role playing. Based on literature review, the use of role playing will be specified into the four training stages of role playing: (a) the introduction (objectives, method and procedure, context, props or additional material & warming up), (b) instruction (choice and instruction of players, instruction of observers), (c) run session (start the actual role-play, interruption, provide information, control time and stop) and (d) debrief (clear up role play, draw conclusion and draw general conclusions). A specification of disadvantages and problems with role playing will be enumerated by Van Ments (1989) and Georges

(1990). Two different structured response mode will be used: Checklist response and a scaled response (Tuckman, 1988).

Procedure

A review of literature in the area of role playing is undertaken to identify the variables to be measured. These variables serve as starting point for the construction of the questionnaire. In a pilot study, the questionnaire will be tested for formulation and styling of the questions and statements. Revision will take place on the results of the pilot study.

The initial mailing of questionnaire to a sample of respondents includes a cover letter, the questionnaire itself and a stamped, return-addressed envelope. After a period of about two weeks to a month has elapsed, a second mailing will start to correspond with the nonrespondents. The second mailing will include another letter soliciting cooperation, another questionnaire and another stamped return-addressed envelope in case the respondent can not find the original ones. If the second mailing fails, additional mailings and telephone calls will be employed to elevate the return. This study will be striving for a return of more than 75%.

Results, Conclusion & Discussion

At the beginning of 1992, the data will be collected. The checklist responses and rating scales will be precoded. Each response can be directly converted into a score. The scaled responses can be considered to be interval data. The data lend themselves to frequency and chi-square analysis. A reliability check for internal consistency (i.e. the Spearman-Brown Prophesy Formula, Nunnally, 1978) will be made.

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