



PREPSEC proceedings vol. 1, no 1, March 2015 pp 57-65

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Implementing “Aggressions ErstatningsTræning”(A.R.T.) in one Danish context:

by Niels Veirup(A), Jette Groenne(B) and Bettina Christensen(C)

(A) Niels Veirup: The Hedebo Center, Herning, Denmark

(B) Jette Groenne: The Hedebo Center, Herning, Denmark

(C) Bettina Christensen: The Hedebo Center, Herning, Denmark; Treasurer,
PREPSEC International

Contact A): hbcnv@herning.dk

B): hbcjg@herning.dk

C): hcbh@herning.dk

The following is based on a presentation made at the PREPSEC International Symposium August 24, 2014 and greatly influenced by the discourse of Dean Fixsen et al.

Hedebocentret is a Danish residential care institution based in Herning, Denmark, having extensive outreach services for teenagers and young adults. A.R.T. was ‘discovered’ during a study tour to Norway nearly 6 years ago. Following an introduction by Knut Gundersen, it has been a full go-ahead since. With the assistance of Knut Gundersen, Johannes Finne, Tutte Mitchell Olsen, Eskil Domben, Kimberlee Parker and Robert Calame A.R.T. is today widely used across the sections of the institution.

Historically, in Denmark, there is neither tradition nor experience in carrying out research in social work, however, a new perspective is emerging. As a result, decisions on methods were more often based on feasibility where transfer and 'attraction' played a major role and less focus was placed on the (scientific) results and/or outcomes. HedeboCentret started its process by making an implementation plan taking into consideration the elements suggested and raised by Dean Fixsen et al. (Wallace, Blase, Fixsen & Annom, 2008). The principal elements and their ensuing questions, are as follows:

1. Clarification through research findings

Search for dissemination of solid documentation on out-come, information on program evaluation, or available formal research on implementation: If out-comes are positive and attracting, then how can education and organizational set-up be achieved?

2. Adaptation or adoption

The important question is: How will the method/program work in our organization? Should we accept to implement it as directed by more experienced concept holders or should we develop a model which is more realistic for our organization and yet in compliance with the model?

3. Planning – important and time consuming

Trying to find a balance between the need for speed of implementation and the care you must take to follow requirements of the new program with fidelity. It is a challenge to get to know what you're about to embark upon while considering the wish to have (future) participants start as soon as possible.

4. Practice

At this stage you still need to focus on both developing performance skills and creating an 'environment' around the use of the new program so others become involved. How to best ensure generalization must be thoroughly considered within the implementation planning.

5. Build experience

While the use of the new method or program develops, issues arise around:

- a. who should be trained and build experience
- b. rotating mechanisms for developing experience evenly throughout the agency while, at the same time, ensuring that there is a refinement or accumulation of experience for all those who have been trained.

6. Consider need for organizational changes

When experience from the new method or programs has reached an acceptable level over time, (Fixsen and his colleagues suggest a reasonable time frame to be 3 years) one might begin to consider changes within the organization. Should a scheme of program supervisors be developed? Or how can newcomers share experience and how can experienced staff, director or supervisors, maintain and further develop their competence?

7. Supervision – guidance

If structural provisions, as explained above are put in place, further arrangements around this should be developed: further training, new knowledge dissemination and other

elements from the development of a shared strategy. This works towards a goal of improving the use of the method and program.

8. Full integration

As the program/method has become fully integrated after a number of years of use, it is important to consider how the use is continued – with a view towards the delivery of best practice, continuing evaluation and development both of method/program but also of the staff working with the method/program.

9. Innovation

Fixsen and his colleagues suggest that you must allow sufficient time to develop experience before a platform for changing or developing the program and method can be said to be established. While innovation is a positive element in the development, it is important to gain sufficient experience to know what to change. Too many research projects have shown too many fast changes and often result in the closure of the programs or methods or in a negative decline due to such program drift.

Having had no knowledge or experience with A.R.T. or similar programs – but wide experience with other evidence based programs (Multi Systemic Therapy, Multi Dimensional Foster Care and Functional Family Therapy)– we started by **clarifying** what the ART model was all about and examining some **research findings**. Next we began **adopting** A.R.T. but later realized that, to a certain extent, we perhaps had **adapted** what we were already working with, as some of the cognitive elements were already in use in our institution.

Planning was soon realized to be of great importance. Plans were made for training of trainers/animators. Simultaneously, a plan was developed for educating the rest of the staff in order to obtain their support for the participants in the A.R.T. groups. Furthermore, we had to make a plan for disseminating information to case workers and other involved professionals along with relatives of the participating youth. Three members of the Hedebocentret staff were sent on a post-graduate course in Sandnes, Norway, focusing primarily on A.R.T. and its expansions. There, they received supervision and qualification to plan, implement and develop a conceptual framework for its use in the institution.

This was a very challenging process. At issue was, the time it took for staff to become trainers/animators, and an element of envy, within the institution, was seen. As well, the intention of having a group (the 3 staff members on the course in Norway) separated from, and not entirely connected to, other management persons was good in theory but very, very difficult to keep up. The hierarchy of the institution did not allow this in the long run.

However, **training** was carefully planned – using staff from the then A.R.T. Center in Norway and later using the local masters from the course in Norway – and over the years we have ended up with 30+ trainers/animators.

Just as important was the planning and execution of the education of the staff who were not becoming A.R.T. trainers/animators but who played an important role in supporting the youth participating in A.R.T. A model for this was developed and together with regular information updates this has been a success.

Practice was seen as a very important element to build confidence in the concepts and tools of A.R.T. thus forming the basis for the present situation where A.R.T. groups continually take place.

Supervision and guidance by more experienced trainers/educators were secured by a co-operative agreement with the then Norwegian A.R.T. Center – this has provided inspiration, motivation and a boost to the trainers/animators, securing our present position.

Innovation as part of the implementation phase: Full integration has come by developing and integrating new concepts:

- Social Perception Training
- Junior A.R.T. trainers/animators
- Family TIES.

Lately development of new target groups – young unemployed people as an example – is being discussed.

Other developmental issues are 1) development of motivation for the participants and the trainers/animators/other staff and 2) the realization that quality assurance principles must be implemented. The Hedebo-centret Institution is certified in accordance with the ISO 9000 standard so this should not be too difficult orwill it??.....

References

Wallace Frances, Blase Karan, Fixsen Dean & Annom Sandra 2008,.: *Implementing Findings of Research: Bridging the gap between knowledge and practice* . Educational Research Service.)