

'Teaching the teachers' – a survey of trainees' teaching experience

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With a view to stimulating discussion on the subject of trainee's attitudes towards, and experience of teaching, at an informal meeting of members of the Association of University Teachers of Psychiatry held in Leicester last year, a survey of Trent Region Psychiatric Senior Registrars, as well as delegates to the first College Trainees' Conference (held at Warwick University), was undertaken.

The study

The survey employed an eight-part questionnaire which provided space for comments. It attempted to ascertain the following points.

- How many trainees had received any training in teaching methods and, if so, the degree of satisfaction with this.
- What (if any) type of teaching the trainees had already undertaken.
- Their confidence in their teaching abilities.
- What types of training (if any) would they like to help them develop their teaching skills.
- How important training in teaching methods was perceived as part of overall training.
- Approximately how much time the trainees spent 'teaching' during their work time.

Visual analogue scales as well as multiple choice lists were employed to elicit this information. The results were analysed statistically.

Findings

Of the 70 questionnaires distributed, 32 were returned (45.7%). Of these, two were rejected from the analysis because they had not been fully completed leaving 30 (42.8%). Of those who identified their speciality, the majority comprised 'child and adolescence' trainees. Of the respondents, 30% (9/30) indicated that they had actually received specific training in teaching. However, their overall satisfaction with this aspect of training was only 40.4% (range: 10–90%; s.d. 26.23) measured on a visual analogue scale. There was no correlation between degree of satisfaction and duration of training.

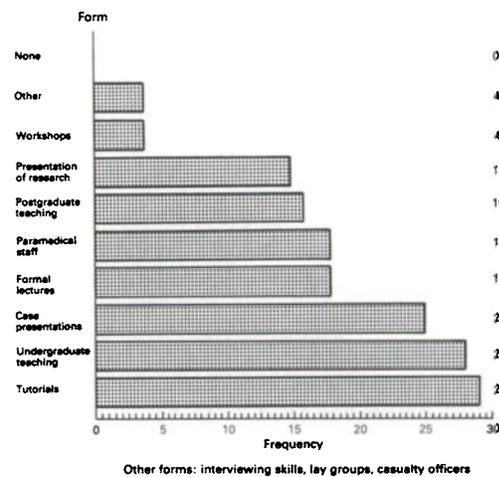


FIG. 1. Previous teaching experience

All respondents had taught in a variety of settings to a range of audiences. The group results are summarised in Fig. 1.

The mean percentage satisfaction with teaching style was 52.5% (range: 10–86%; s.d. 18%). Teaching instruction was regarded as an important part of SR training; the mean score for its importance in training was 77.4% (range: 20–100%; s.d. 16.7%). The preferred forms of teaching training are summarised in Fig. 2.

There was an 83.0% mean score (range: 48–100%; s.d. 17.7%) rating the importance of an ability to teach as a clinical skill.

Of the trainees' professional time 13.8% (range: 5–50%; s.d. 11.34%), was perceived as being spent 'teaching'. Those trainees who had received specific training in teaching skills perceived themselves as spending less time teaching than those who had received no such instruction (9.72% compared with 17.02% of their professional time, respectively). The difference between these responses were significant at the $P=0.0093$ level.

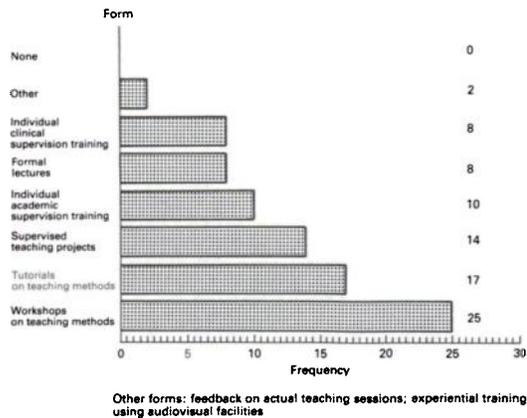


FIG. 2. Preferred forms of teaching training

Comment

The results indicate that there is a discernible need on the part of these trainees for more specific training in teaching skills. Only a minority had received training in this regard, despite all the respondents indicating that they had taught a variety of professional and lay groups in a range of settings. Those that had received training expressed general dissatisfaction with the quality of instruction. There were a few exceptions to this, including one trainee who was also a lecturer, who received reportedly good training from his university staff development programme.

There was only one significant difference between the responses to the questionnaire given by those who had, and those who had not, received specific training in teaching. This was in respect of how much time they considered themselves actually teaching during their clinical practice (the former group possibly being more specific in their definition of what constituted 'teaching'). Notwithstanding this, both groups seemed to spend a small but significant proportion of their professional time teaching (loosely stated).

Both groups rated an ability to teach as a highly important aspect of clinical competence and that specific training in teaching methods should be an important aspect of SR general training in psy-

chiatry. The comments expressed enthusiasm for the profession to develop such training, particularly through workshops and small tutorials (although not necessarily run by clinicians); by supervised teaching assignments including the use of audiovisual facilities and "on the job" constructive criticism. Experiential rather than didactic techniques were more generally favoured.

Conclusion

I believe this is the first British survey to address this aspect of training specifically. Surveys of trainees' attitudes to training matters employing questionnaires have already provided useful information for planning purposes (Garralda *et al*, 1980 and 1983; Bools & Cottrell, 1990). This type of approach has the benefit of being easy to organise and is well supported judging by the response to this study.

Allowing for the obvious limitation of being a small survey, it shows that training in psychiatric teaching and its applications is a neglected but important area of training and research and it is now appropriate to raise its profile among the other competing aspects of training. This would be in keeping with the recommendations of the Joint Committee for Higher Psychiatry Training (JCHPT) in its reports since 1975.

Interested readers may find Newble & Cannon's *Handbook for Clinical Teachers* a useful reference.

References

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