

## GENERIC TRAINING IN PSYCHOLOGICAL MANAGEMENT HOW WAS THE COURSE USED?

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In a previous paper (Jeffrey et al 1979) a training course in the psychological management of children and adolescents was described. One of the characteristics of this course was that it is a generic course, suitable for teachers, nurses and occupational therapists. A generic course is one that is open to several professional groups who have overlapping or complementary roles and functions. The present course was open to those disciplines who have day to day continuity of contact with troubled children.

The teacher component consisted of a day per week release course stretched over a full year, from April to April. It was felt that a full year, as opposed to the usual academic year, would give students more adequate time to absorb and digest the quantity and depth of the material covered in the course.

The broad goals of the course were to train workers, to a reasonable level of competence in their own setting, in the management of troubled and troublesome behaviour in children. The more specific objectives were—first, to enable workers to *describe* and *type* troubled and troublesome behaviour; second, for them to show competence in the unravelling of the social and psychological origins of such behaviour; third, to enable such workers to acquire skills in therapy and management; fourth, to have competence in seeking relevant help, whenever necessary, from the other professionals in the field. The main methods of interaction for achieving these objectives were lectures, seminars and tutorials, but this was supplemented by some practical experience. The teacher was responsible for various pieces of written work; a book review, a child study and a therapeutic experiment. The therapeutic experiment is an account of the therapeutic application of one of the techniques learned on the course, e.g. behaviour modification; counselling; life space interviewing or use of remedial teaching to elevate self esteem. The whole emphasis of the course was practical with enough theoretical back up, however, to make up a coherent whole. At every opportunity, the students were encouraged to bring problems that they were currently having in their schools.

The present paper is a feedback report on the course.

### *Method*

A 1-2 year follow up by interview was carried out on the 25 teachers in ordinary secondary non-selective schools who attended the course in its first 5 years of operation. The interview consisted of a first part, in which the teacher was invited to give a spontaneous account of the usefulness of the course to them and a second part, in which they were asked systematically about their work patterns, the number of children they saw in a pastoral or quasi-pastoral role, consultations with other teachers, their position and links in the school hierarchy, links with outside agencies, their views on teaching practice and some details of the characteristics of the schools where they worked.

### *General Characteristics of the Teachers*

The teachers who had attended our course were a mature group of professionals. Two-thirds had had between 10 and 25 years of teaching experience.

Eleven of the teachers had had some in-service training in various aspects of special education prior to our generic course. The most prolonged previous exposure was a 3 year counselling course by one of the teachers, others included a 1 year secondment for slow learners and a 1 year in-service training on infant/reception.

The members of the course held a variety of positions in their schools of origin. There were 5 deputy heads; 3 senior mistresses or tutors; 8 department heads or deputies (7 of these were of remedial departments or included responsibility for children with special educational needs; 5 year-heads or tutors and 4 who held scale posts. All but two teachers had held their present posts for over 10 months, the maximum being sixteen years.

### *Resources Available to Teachers*

What opportunities did the teachers have to apply the principles they had learned in their schools? The first need was for time and in this there was a wide variation between one teacher, who had no time allocation at all, to six who had more than seven free periods per week, and half, seven or less. There was, not surprisingly, a tendency for more senior staff to have more free periods.

Fifteen of the staff had a room where they could see children privately, many of them also had a telephone and special secretarial time. These extra resources were most important if the teachers were to be able to see children in private.

Another way of viewing this issue is to look at whether the teachers had responsibility for their own class in addition to their pastoral role. This was the case with twelve of the teachers. Table 1 indicates the relationship between responsibility for own class and seeing children. It can be seen that there is an important tendency for the teachers who do not have responsibility for a class to be more involved in interviewing children, however this was not the case with consultation with colleagues. In fact, some of the highest consultation rates involved teachers who had responsibility for their own classes.

TABLE 1  
*Responsibility for Class vs Seeing Children  
with Emotional Problems*

	No responsibility for own class	Responsibility for own class
Less than 10 children seen in last month	4	9
More than 10 children seen in last month	9	3
Total	13	12

$$X^2 = 4.89 \text{ D.F.} = 1$$
$$p. < .05$$

*General Characteristics of the Schools.*

All but one of the schools were comprehensive, the one being a secondary modern in process of closing. All served poor communities and many, especially those in large conurbations, had tenuous relationships with their surrounding communities although only one school had a bussing policy. In all, nine teachers felt they had close relationships with the parents and four of these were in new towns or smaller mining communities. Five of the teachers, one of whom worked in a new community school, judged that they had a lot, as opposed to a little, community support.

*Children Seen Directly*

TABLE 2a

*Number of Children Seen by Staff of Various Levels of Seniority*

No. children seen in previous month	Senior Dept. Head or Senior Mistress	Department Head or Tutor	Scale Post
None	0	3	4
1-9	1	5	0
10-24	3	2	0
25+	4	3	0
Total	8	13	4

$X^2 = 9.17$  d.f. = 2 (contrasting rows none and 1-9 vs 10 and more).  $p < .01$

TABLE 2b

*Number of Consultations by Staff at Various Levels of Seniority*

No. children seen in previous month	Senior Dept. Head or Senior Mistress	Department Head or Tutor	Scale Post
10 or more	8	9	1
Less than 10	0	4	3
Total	8	13	4

$X^2 = 7.54$  d.f. = 2  $p < .05$

Table 2a gives an analysis of the number of children seen. This varies enormously between different teachers. Seeing children in this way was almost entirely restricted to senior teachers. The ways in which the children were seen fell into two groups:

1. The majority of referrals came through the normal referral routes of the school, as such they had a disciplinary or quasi-disciplinary side to them. This created tensions for some of the staff who found themselves at cross purposes with colleagues who sent children to be punished only to find that attempts were being made to understand their problems. Different teachers dealt with this problem in various ways. Some felt constrained to administer punishment, although they disagreed with it. Others found other solutions. For example, one teacher saw great value in forming an individual relationship with the difficult children in the group which allowed him to intervene in subsequent situations and control behaviour non-punatively.
2. A second group were the self referred children. To a large extent, self referral was a characteristic of the teacher concerned. An interested and concerned teacher who took active steps to build relationships with the children and had the time to do so was likely to attract self referral by the children.

In some cases the children came with physical complaints which often reflected underlying anxiety about school. Children very often approached the teachers in an oblique way, such as coming to ask if any jobs needed doing or with a request to work in the teacher's room if the stress of normal lessons became too great. Less commonly children would make a more direct appeal for help, coming to discuss difficulties at home. One teacher reported this as having happened on half a dozen occasions. Another teacher reported that she was sometimes asked to mediate in disputes between children, acting as it were, as a "court of appeal" between rival factions. In other instances, children came to ask about problems of peer relationships and even to try to get the teacher to act as 'go-between' in approaches to the opposite sex. These types of problems must exist in every school and the approach would seem to offer a rich opportunity for teaching social skills.

#### *Teacher Colleagues in the School*

A most important facet of the teacher's capacity to be effective seemed to be their capacity to win the "hearts and minds" of colleagues who may have very different educational philosophies. A relaxed and good humoured and tolerant approach together with a degree of personal assertiveness seemed to be most helpful in breaking down potentially hostile attitudes. It remains true however that many of the teachers who attended the course experienced great difficulty in this area. One head of house talked of the contrast between those teachers who "worked for the authority" and those who "worked for the school and the children".

#### *Consultation with other staff*

Surprisingly perhaps the relationship between consultations by other staff and the rank of the guidance teacher was less close than is the case with seeing the children themselves (see Table 2b). Some of the

consultations however, may not be strictly related to behaviour problems e.g. remedial teachers consulted about remedial problems. Some of the teachers recorded extremely high consultation rates.

#### *Parent Contact*

Contact with the parents has to be seen against the background of the school-parent links as a whole. In just half of the schools, the relationship with the parents was described as close with a functioning p.t.a., parents involved with school activities, free visiting and participation in problems. It is also true however, that in six schools, the parent school relationships were described as non-existent. Contact with parents with a problem seemed to follow a similar pattern. Eleven of the teachers had contacted the majority of the parents of the children who were in difficulties whereas six had no contact at all with the parents.

While parent teacher contact as a general school policy is recognised as desirable, it is far less certain that teachers should in any way take over the role of "social worker". In some of our other work we have explored the usefulness of a social worker attached to a school (Harvey et al 1977; Kolvin et al 1981b). In some of the schools in this study, the Educational Welfare Officer had close links with the schools and in some senses was able to provide a home-school liaison function.

#### *Involvement with Outside Agencies.*

The involvement with outside agencies (School Psychology, Medical and Social Services) did not seem to be an 'either/or' phenomenon. Some of the teachers had involvement with many agencies (four with three agencies each) and five of the teachers had no involvement at all with outside agencies. There was a *slight* tendency for the teachers with most outside involvement to be the most active in seeing children and in consulting with colleagues. Contact with outside professionals was more common among more senior ranking teachers and rank was probably the main determinant of such contact. Having said that, it was clear that some teachers were more willing to use outside help with problems than were others.

#### *General Comments about the Course*

Recruits for the course were put forward by the L.E.A.'s to which the candidates applied voluntarily. They were thus a self selected population and we were to some extent "preaching to the converted". This was reflected in some of the comments made in the follow up interview.

The teachers did not, on the whole, feel that they had been introduced to a totally new area of knowledge; rather, they often felt that the course had given them a theoretical framework and a set of principles to continue doing what they had previously done instinctively. They welcomed the opportunity and impetus to do more reading and thinking and felt that the course gave them confidence. Two teachers, notable for their general enthusiasm both before, during and after the course, seemed to feel that the course had brought about a profound change in their perception of their work. Another comment was that the course had helped teachers to be aware that quiet children who tend to sink into the background may also have problems. In these cases a conscious effort has to be made to reach out to the children.

There were comments also that some of the material taught on the course was difficult to apply given the pressures of the normal school. For example, elaborate behaviour modification programmes could be applied within remedial departments but offered little to year tutors or senior staff. Some teachers thought that the work on various forms of testing was valuable and would have liked to have more on what could and could not be achieved by psychological tests. However the application of psychological tests is a highly technical matter needing the ongoing guidance of a trained psychologist if results are to be properly interpreted.

#### *The Teachers' Classroom Techniques*

As part of the interview, the teachers were asked about their classroom control techniques. The scale used is reported by Mullin (1979) who used the scale in a variety of schools including teachers in 15 comprehensive schools and in 15 special schools—both E.S.N. and schools for the maladjusted. Briefly, the teacher was asked systematically about the various possible reward and sanction techniques that can be used in the classroom. The aim was to find, by self report, which techniques the teachers favoured. The techniques fell into four general areas: material rewards, social rewards, physical-verbal sanctions and deprivation of privileges. Reliability by test-retest proved to be acceptable for each of these four areas.

TABLE 3

*Favoured classroom techniques of teachers compared with samples of teachers in (a) mainstream comprehensive, (b) Special schools*

	Course teachers (n = 25)	Comprehensive teachers (n = 15)	Special school (Maladjusted and ESN) (n = 15)
Material Rewards	14.08 (3.05)	13.55 (1.82)	16.15* (2.56)
Social Rewards	14.04 (3.28)	7.76*** (2.53)	6.89*** (2.34)
Physical Sanctions	15.64 (3.38)	16.66 (2.65)	13.31 (2.36)
Deprivation Sanctions	15.88 (2.86)	17.77 (3.76)	12.92** (3.17)

\*  $p < .05$     \*\*  $p < .01$     \*\*\*  $p < .0001$

It can be seen that, by and large, the teachers' techniques seem closer to those of their comprehensive school colleagues. The one remarkable exception is in the area of social rewards where the course teachers score approximately twice as high, on average than either of the other two groups. While the course teachers were a self selected group and this may account for this remarkable difference, it seems probable that the course itself was a contributing factor.

### *Assessment of Teacher's Work*

During their course, the teacher's progress was assessed in several ways. First, the students work was assessed continuously throughout the year, the tutors taking into consideration his or her contribution and progress in discussions, seminars and written work. Second, specific marks were given for three pieces of work: a book review, a child study and an account and evaluation of a therapeutic experiment. Third, the teachers each underwent a short viva voce test at the end of the course on the content of the lectures and seminars.

The follow up allowed an opportunity to check whether these various assessments have any relationship to the way in which the teachers used the course. At follow up interview, the use of the course was checked in three ways. Firstly at the end of the interview, the interviewer made an overall rating on a three point scale of how much the teacher seemed to be putting into practice what they had learned on the course, how much it had influenced them to change their practice in pastoral care and their general enthusiasm. The second check was by the number of children the teachers were seeing, and the third was the number of consultations they were having about problem children with staff members.

While there was a general tendency for those who had achieved higher course marks to be functioning better at follow up, there was one exercise that seemed to predict good use of the course better than all the others. That was good performance in the therapeutic experiment.

### *Discussion*

Although our trainees were to some extent a self selected group it would seem reasonable to make generalisations on the basis of this sample because psychological management of difficult children should probably only involve those who have a special interest and aptitude for this type of work.

That the majority of the teachers in our sample were of middle or senior rank was quite deliberate, being based on the need to infuse psychological skills into the "middle management" strata of the school rather than waiting until more junior and recently trained personnel could be promoted.

This follow up suggests that the more senior teachers, who have less classroom responsibility and direct contact with children, see more children with problems. In some ways it would seem appropriate that senior staff should see the most serious problems. On the other hand there are obvious dangers in divesting the class teacher who is in daily contact with the children of knowledge about them and responsibility for them. The need is to set up a support service for junior staff rather than, as general policy, depriving them of the opportunity to make relationships with the children in their care. It is encouraging to see that the course "graduates" were also involved in a lot of consultation with colleagues.

When formal measures of performance are compared with measures of effectiveness of use of the course at follow up it is very interesting that the only clear association is between the therapeutic experiment and number of children seen at follow up. It is possible that it is in this exercise that the creativity and enterprise of the teacher is put to the test. It is important to note that this exercise in particular relies on the part-time day release nature of the course.

The teacher's classroom techniques provide particularly interesting and encouraging results. Again, it could be said that the strong preference for the use of social rewards in the classroom are merely attitudes that this selected group of teachers brought with them on the course. On the other hand, one might expect teachers in special schools to have similar attitudes as they will, overall, have a similar educational philosophy. The fact that in other ways the course members resembled their ordinary school colleagues leads us to think that the attitude to social reward may be a result of the study. The good effects of positive social rewards in the classroom are well documented (e.g. Rutter et al 1979).

The data on relationships with outside agencies was not encouraging. Support for the teachers is so meagre that only those teachers who were getting moderate support from the school psychological service even seemed to see the potential for such outside support. The others had, it seemed, simply learned to get on on their own. The potential of the school medical service in helping with psychological problems seemed completely under-developed.

While the project was in progress the Warnock Report appeared (D.E.S. 1978). Chapter 12 of that report makes extensive comment on the implications for teacher training of attempts to help children with special educational needs in the ordinary school. Unfortunately this chapter seems to focus disproportionately on relatively unusual handicaps such as blindness or deafness to the virtual exclusion of behaviour disorders per se. which means that the recommendations are rather non specific. For those teachers who will have responsibility for children with special needs, the Report recommends a year's full-time course or equivalent leading to a post-graduate qualification which would attract a special salary supplement. Our work suggests that a rather different format would be preferable in that the day release allows the postgraduate student to use their work place as a resource while they benefit from the special input in the course. It also allows for the experimentation and discussion in supervision which seems to be so important. In the same way, the Warnock suggestion that the Open University could provide courses is an interesting one but needs to be applied with a full understanding of the value of tutorial work, feedback, experiment and supervision.

We conclude that the one day a week generic course is an economic, relevant and above all practical method of training which deserves wide consideration.

#### *Acknowledgements*

We would like to thank Mrs. Laura Mullin for allowing us to use some of her data and Miss Nancy Winch for help in typing this paper.

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