



GUJARAT STATE PRIMARY TEACHERS PREPARATION FOR SKILLS TEACHING AND THEIR TEACHING WORK EFFECT'S AND COUNSELLING

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ABSTRACT

Access to video equipment for students practice is also desirable, as it is an excellent teaching method. It provides an opportunity for the students to see themselves as others see them and to be able to study how non-verbal communication matches, or conflicts with, verbal communication and is the ideal tool for interpersonal process recall. However, it is expensive on materials, rooms and time, so you may have to compromise. Some courses use video workshops at weekends when some intensive training can be done. Audio equipment can be difficult to use if you have limited room space, but students need to have access to a tape recorder and get skilled at using it to enable them to record their work with clients.

INTRODUCTION

It is important to teach feedback skills at the beginning of skills training. I think the development of good skills depends mainly on good feedback and the development of feedback skills is an important part of counsellor training. Counsellors will need to use feedback with clients, with supervisors and, if they work in an organization, with employers and colleagues, and they will also need to use it with trainers if they are to take responsibility for their learning and for getting the education and training they need.

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Below are some ideas which need consideration in preparing the skills work of the course :

- List the skills and break down to micro-skills.
- Work out the timetable for the time available.
- Assemble your resources.
- Prepare students to be clients for each other.
- Teach feedback skills.

Listing the skills that are to be learnt :

I suggest in Chapter 3 that a checklist of all the tasks or competencies, perhaps taken from the list in Table 1.1, might be prepared, stating in which section of the curriculum they will be taught. These tasks or competencies will need to be broken down into specific skills (some, of course, will overlap with each other).

Table 4.1 gives an overall list of general counselling skills. You will need to add to these a list of the specific skills that are relevant to the model of counselling being taught. This will probably need to be a team task, or if it is delegated to the skills trainer, the team will need to endorse it. You may need to do quite a lot of trawling to gather all the skills that your particular model will need. If it is an integrative model you will need to be selective which skills are culled from the range of integrated theories.

Work Out the Timetable :

Work out how much time you will spend on each section approximately and plan a rough timetable for the whole programme – some courses spend so long on early skills the rest are not practised enough or at all. This assumes you have already decided with the team which skills may be included in other sections of the course, e.g. self-management skills, self-awareness skills.

Timetabling the skills training session :

It is not a good idea to put the skills session at the end of the teaching time. I have seen skills groups struggling at 8 p.m. after many of them have been working at work or home all the morning and learning from 1.30 p.m. – it is too difficult both for students and for tutors. Skills work

First – stage skills :

Helping the client explore his or her concerns and building a relationship by communicating empathic understanding, acceptance and genuineness by

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Attending
Observing
Listening

Active listening
Paraphrasing
Reflecting feelings
Summarizing

Negotiating
Giving information
Purpose stating
Preference stating

Focusing/moving forward
Questioning
Asking to be specific/concrete
Asking for contrasts
Offering choice points

Second – stage skills

Deepening understanding by
Communicating deeper empathic understanding – ‘hunches’, ‘intuition’
Building bridges/helping the client connect them
Self-disclosure
Confrontation
Immediacy
Using specific techniques from different theories

Moving on by
Exploring and setting goals

Third-stage skills

Moving into action by
Brainstorming
Problem solving and decision making
Planning and rehearsing action

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Teaching and practising skills with the client
Evaluating

It is probably the most demanding of energy and needs to be placed where energy is likely to be high. Some trainers start a session with an exercise to relax and energize and it is a good idea to follow a session by some relaxation, perhaps a coffee or meal break.

Assemble your Resources :

You need models to teach skills – students need to see the skills in action. You may demonstrate them yourself, so it is important that you can practise what you preach. This takes courage for some people; others enjoy it. It is probably important not to be too expert so that students feel they can never reach that standard, but good enough to show the skill explicitly. Some trainers are worried that they will turn out clones if they model the skills, and this may happen in the consciously competent stage, but as students get more confident that they can do it, they usually move to their own style. Providing a range of models can prevent cloning; for example, getting other staff to demonstrate live or on video, using video material of specific skills and of some of the masters performing – Rogers, Perls and Ellis are still available on video. Audio-tapes are also useful and audio equipment is often more available. The BAC provide a good audio-visual aid catalogue.

Prepare students to be clients for each other :

‘Fellow trainees may not constitute an appropriate source for clientele but they undoubtedly provide the best possible milieu for developing counselling skills’ (Dryden and Thorne, 1991), pp. 6-7. Students must have clients to practise skills. The choices are to client for each other or to role-play. There are pros and cons for both, and you may decide to use both at different times or stages of work.

Students as clients :

Advantages :

- ✚ It is more real for the counsellor.
- ✚ Counsellors can experience the reality of a range of ‘clients’ in different stages of their lives.
- ✚ Students can use sessions to work through aspects for themselves which affect them as counsellors, e.g. prejudices, interpersonal style.
- ✚ Students get to know each other in more depth and it helps to develop a climate of trust and sharing in the group.
- ✚ The counsellor needs to be more real and caring.

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- ✚ The student experiences what it feels like to sit in the client's chair.

Disadvantages :

- ✚ As students become better counsellors the client may go deeper, may reveal more than they intend, and because of limited time sessions, may be left in mid-air.
- ✚ Students need preparation beforehand in order to be able to share appropriate concerns at a suitable level of disclosure.
- ✚ It may conflict with work the students is doing with his or her own counsellor.

Role – Play :

Advantages :

- ✚ Role-plays can produce specific issues to bring out the skills being practised.
- ✚ If counselling is poor, the client is not hurt.
- ✚ It gives an opportunity for the counsellor to stop and discuss tactics, e.g. in stop-start counselling.
- ✚ It gives the students and opportunity to display emotions in a client role with less control, and this can be helpful.
- ✚ It can be a less threatening way of introducing video-students can play 'atrocious' clients which can be fun.

Disadvantages :

- ✚ It is harder for the counsellor to be real and to build a relationship with a role-played client.
- ✚ Students can use role-play to prevent themselves getting involved at a personal level.
- ✚ Students can get very involved in a role, often using parts of themselves, and need an opportunity to de-role and separate themselves after the session.

Using role-play :

If students are going to role-play clients, it is important to spend time helping them get into the role they are going to play and helping them get out of it.

There are three methods for choosing the role :

- ✚ Provide an outline of a role and problem which the students can build on. This is useful if you want to raise specific topics to work on.
- ✚ Ask the students to think of a specific client whom they would find useful to role-play, and ask them to prepare the role beforehand.
- ✚ Ask a group of three or four students to build a client role for one of them to play, perhaps building in problems or emotions which they find difficult to work with.

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To help develop the role :

- ✚ Remind the students the role is not a caricature but a 'rounded' person.
- ✚ Work briefly with the role-playing clients, asking each one questions to help them fix the role – age, family background, where they live, what they like doing, clothes, etc.
- ✚ Ask the role-players to sit quietly, close their eyes and imagine themselves in the role: sometimes confident, sometimes afraid, sometimes feeling OK, sometimes not, strong and weak.
- ✚ Ask a few more questions and then start.

De-roling is necessary at the end of the session, after the feedback :

- ✚ Give the 'clients' a few minutes to detach themselves from the role and to say out loud : 'I am not (name)'....., 'I am (name),..... a students on this course'; 'I am similar to the role in....', I am different from the role in....'.

Students preparation for being a client :

It is important to make this expectation explicit in the description of the course so that students are prepared. Ask students to prepare to talk about themselves at the appropriate level, not a gut-spilling exercise, nor forced confessions, but an opportunity to look at problems or characteristics of their interpersonal style, or attitudes, assumptions or expectations which may interfere with their effectiveness as a counsellor.

I asked some trainers how they dealt with this.

Meena,

I think this is a very important area of learning both for those being clients and for the trainee counsellors. I think it is important that from early on students learn to manage themselves, their feelings especially, to know when it is appropriate to stop accelerating into emotion, to be aware and be able to choose what to do with feelings. Being congruent is not letting it all hang out, it is being aware and choosing what is right for them at that moment – and being able to say so. Which doesn't mean there may not be deep feelings expressed in skills practice, but to be able to contain them at the end of the session. This is not always possible, and again there is learning in how to stay with a fellow students in an emotional state – and not to keep her in the role of client, but help her back to role of students. Being a client is only part of our lives !

I find the best way to teach the client role is to model it myself being authentic, using issues from my life and being able to give clear feedback to the counsellor how I perceived her, what helped and what did not. I use 'stop-start' counselling quite a lot in training so that the

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clients is counselled by several counsellors within a session; this means clients must be able to work with this – and give feedback how they experience the differences of the interaction with different counsellors. This is often quite subtle and leads to identifying shades of feelings.

Seema,

We use role play mainly but are introducing more work with each other. Students were very reluctant to use their own material at first. Some of them know each other outside as we work in quite a restricted area and they did not want to talk about their families. We have a very strong emphasis on confidentiality within the group, even to not telling any body outside that they worked with each other. I ask them to use material which is relevant to their development as a professional counsellor, using the counselling theory they are learning to apply to themselves, or to work on values, beliefs, prejudice or oppression – when they feel oppressed and when they are aware of oppressing others. They all have personal counselling outside where they can take issues they do not want to bring to the group. Several of them are with the same counsellor and this adds another dynamic to the group – and more learning – how to work in an incestuous environment without becoming incestuous.

Rohan,

We use students as clients in the first term when we are revising basic skills and moving on to challenging skills, when we also use the group process to develop the challenging skills. We then use both role-play and their own material; role-play is often better for producing situations for working on the specific Gestalt and T A skills which we teach as part of our integrated course – and for helping students learn how to integrate the different models. It is also better for trying out making contracts and introducing self and counselling to different types of clients.

I work as a client occasionally, especially in the beginning when I use a group empathy exercise to find out how competent they are in the basic skills. I use it as an opportunity for the students to see me as continuing with my professional growth and learning – and as a human being who is far from perfect ! (see the basic empathy exercise described as an example of ‘coaching circles’ in Appendix I).

I have said above it is important that students are made aware of the commitment to being a client on the course and it is also essential that opportunities to being a client on the course and it is also essential that opportunities are made at the beginning of skills training to discuss the issues. Some courses give a handout with suggestions on how to be a client and what topics might be used.

Teach Feedback skills :

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I am assuming that you are going to encourage students to give each other feedback as an important part of their learning. I have not come across a course recently where this is not done, though in the past I have found courses where the only feedback was given by the trainer, and it has only just occurred to me that my assumptions may be false. I hope not, but I have come across courses where feedback by students to each other is not well done and very unskilled. I have also met students who complain that they get very little feedback from trainers, and do not have enough confidence in the peer feedback as this is not observed by the trainer.

The BAC 'Code of Practice for Trainers in Counselling' (para. B1.7) says : 'Trainers should ensure the arrangement for initial, continuous and final assessment and feedback to trainees of their work and encourage self and peer assessment at regular intervals'.

Feedback helps us become more aware of what we do and how we do it. Receiving it gives us an opportunity to change and modify in order to become more effective communicators. To be helpful, feedback needs to be given in a concerned and supportive way and to include both positive and negative observations. It should focus on :

- ✚ The behaviour rather than the person
 - What he does rather than what we imagine he is
 - Use adverbs which relate to actions rather than adjectives which relate to qualities.
- ✚ Observations rather than inferences
 - What is said or done, not why (our assumptions)
- ✚ Description rather than judgement
- ✚ Being specific rather than generalizing
- ✚ Sharing ideas and information rather than giving advice
 - Personalized : 'I felt, I thought....'
- ✚ The amount of information the receiver can use rather than the amount we would like to give.
- ✚ Behaviour the receiver can do something about.

When possible, sandwich negative feedback between positive, and check that the receiver hears both positive and negative. Summarising the feedback received can be helpful, especially when it has been given by several people.

It is also necessary to explore the difficulties some students experience in talking directly to the counsellor as they give feedback – looking directly at the counsellor, and using 'you'. I think it is something in our culture which prefers to say 'she gave a good impression when she...'. Maybe it is about being assertive and speaking from a firm centre. It is also about

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‘speaking from your truth’. It is struggling to put into words what you feel and think and see as accurately as possible, without the fear of seeming foolish or unkind or wrong, and at the same time being tentative, - it is as you see it at this moment, filtered through your perception.

Feedback from observers depends on accurate observation, acute listening and hearing, and being able to remember the points observed at the end of the session and select appropriately – you cannot feedback all you notice. This complete attention takes energy and students need to be able to find this energy – a self – management skill. Some courses structure their practice in triads which means there is only one observer. Others work in fours with two observers; others, in fives or sixes. Multiple observers have distinct advantages: they pick up different things, depending on the focus of their senses, and give the counsellor a wider range of feedback. They learn how differently different people experience the same stimulus; they see and experience a wider range of counsellors and of clients. The ‘Gilmore’ structure which Robert talked about (Chapter 3) provides a structure for this, and is detailed in Appendix 1.

Feedback from the client to the counsellor depends on inner awareness, being able to work both as a client and as an observer noting reactions. Pauline, above, emphasized how much the counsellor can learn from feedback from an aware client. The trainee as client needs to learn to monitor her feelings in the interaction and feed back to the counsellor when she felt understood and accepted or not, and when she felt the counsellor was completely congruent – or not.

Feedback to self by the counsellor needs space. Some trainers suggest the counsellor does this before hearing feedback from the client and observers, by it, and I think it is useful for the counsellor to hear all the other feedback and save any reaction to the end. It is a very useful discipline for the counsellor to summarize all the feedback he or she hears – with reminders from the group; usually the positive is forgotten. It can also be helpful for the counsellor to get into the habit of writing it down afterwards.

Performance-specific, positive feedback with specific information concerning future improvement works better than consistently negative feedback which can be destructive and demoralizing. Consistently positive feedback can have a flavour of insincerity which may make the counsellor doubt the usefulness. Neutral feedback is not helpful – the counsellor needs to know how he or she is doing in terms of areas of competence and areas that need work.

Most difficulties that occur in the final assessment of skills are because the student has not had sufficient specific feedback during the course. Written feedback is useful at intervals to



crystallize what has been learnt and what is still to be learnt (there is a form for written feedback in Appendix 2).

This preparation sounds like a lot of hard work but good preparation can help skills work to run smoothly, at least for a time. Life is often hard for the counsellor trainer ! In Chapter 5 we look at building a learning group which provides the safety, support and challenge for skills learning to take place.

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