



STUDY GROUP ON THE TRAINING AND PREPARATION OF  
TEACHERS FOR SCHOOLS OF MEDICINE AND ALLIED HEALTH SCIENCES

INDEXED

EXPERIENCE IN TEACHER-TRAINING PROGRAMMES FOR  
HEALTH PERSONNEL IN LATIN AMERICA

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One of the main characteristics of our age is the great expansion of educational services occurring in practically all countries of the world. This includes an accelerated increase in opportunities for the training of professionals in the health field, despite which there still remains a vast unattended demand particularly in the developing countries. Among the many problems originated by the rapid expansion of educational services, the most pressing is the preparation of large numbers of well-qualified teachers. This problem has received considerable attention in Latin America, and was a topic for a round-table discussion in the Third Conference of the Panamerican Federation of Associations of Medical Schools, held in Buenos Aires, in November 1970.

The traditional way of preparing teachers for those health professions that require higher education, has been to select well-trained recent graduates and to give them an opportunity of working in the academic environment, usually as collaborators of more experienced teachers. After some time, the candidate is supposed to have increased his own experience in the specialized field taught in the particular department, and it is assumed that he has at the same time become capable of carrying teaching responsibilities alone. This is yet another example of the "apprenticeship" system which is so commonly used among the health professions.

Obviously, the first condition for a university teacher to be good in his job is to be well qualified and to have considerable experience in the special field he is teaching. This, however, is not sufficient. Traditionally there has been very little emphasis on the methodology of teaching at university level, whereas in primary and secondary education it is usually considered essential that the teacher be well prepared in pedagogy, and it is considered less important that he possess a profound knowledge of the subject he is teaching.

In Latin America and in other parts of the world in recent years, there has been a serious attempt to require from future university teachers that they receive formal instruction in the theory and practice of education. In Brazil this is now an obligatory item in the programmes of post-graduate education in medicine. It is generally expected that a large proportion of the post-graduate students will spend a significant part of their

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active professional life as teachers. This practice is leading to considerable improvement of educational methods used in medical schools, and is opening new avenues for educational research related to the training of personnel in the health field. In one instance, quoted here as an example, the programme of instruction includes lectures and seminars on topics such as:

- (a) Medical pedagogy. Concept and objectives.
- (b) The medical curriculum. Its relationships with the practice of medicine.
  - premedical studies
  - studies leading to the M.D. degree
  - postgraduate medical studies
  - continued medical education
- (c) Educational psychology. Topics of particular interest to medical education.
- (d) Methodology of teaching. New educational technology applied to medicine. Evaluation of learning.
- (e) The selection of medical students.
- (f) Medical education and the university.
- (g) Medical science and the practice of medicine.
- (h) Teaching and research in medicine.
- (i) The preparation of teachers for the health professions.

It is estimated that only the medical schools created in the past seven years in Brazil can utilize more than 3000 teachers. In addition to good teachers in specific subject-matters, a great demand also exists for good administrators of medical schools, including the educational aspects of administration, as well as for experts in linking teaching with the delivery of health care given in hospitals in other health units, as well as for personnel prepared to plan for the educational needs in the health field on a national or regional basis.

In many instances in developing countries, future teachers for the health professions go abroad whenever they wish to receive advanced training. Latin Americans usually go to the United States or to Western Europe. Fellowships are available for that purpose, from individual governments, from multigovernmental institutions (such as the Pan American Health Organization - WHO Regional Office for the Americas), and from private foundations. In recent years, many departments in Latin American universities have been developed so as to offer quite satisfactory opportunities for advanced training. Their post-graduate courses serve candidates not only from the same country, but also from other Latin-American countries. In Brazil there is a government agency, a branch of its Ministry of Education, which specializes in offering fellowships and in selecting candidates for teaching positions in higher education. This agency (Comissão de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal para o Ensino Superior, CAPES) has been in operation for about twenty years, and manages fellowships both within Brazil and abroad. Table I shows the number of fellowships offered by CAPES in the past six years to future teachers in the different health professions, and the corresponding expenditures in

cruzeiros. The total number of fellowships is 2641. Over 3.5 million dollars were spent for these fellowships.

In Peru and in Colombia there are agencies that lend money to those wishing to attend programmes of advanced training, including in the health field. The money, reimbursed after a certain period of time, constitutes a rotating fund from which other fellowships are supported.

The preparation of teachers in the health field should involve participation in research work. The Brazilian National Research Council offers a significant contribution to the preparation of teachers, by granting fellowships and by financing research projects in medical, veterinary, and other schools for the health professions. In the past three years, the National Research Council offered nearly 150 fellowships within Brazil, and 22 fellowships for Brazilian investigators to do research work abroad in the field of health.

It is expected that the figures quoted will serve to illustrate the great effort being made in Latin American countries in order to increase the numbers of teachers in the health area, and to improve their quality.

TABLE I

CAPES

Fellowships granted between 1966 and 1972

MEDICAL SCIENCES

	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	(*) 1972	Total
Biology	101	61	44	79	72	118	168	643
Nursing	64	46	19	6	1	10	12	158
Pharmacy	55	38	36	34	29	32	34	258
Medicine	176	155	131	151	187	163	148	1111
Dentistry	56	46	38	48	57	59	70	374
Veterinary Medicine	12	9	4	4	12	31	25	97
	464	355	272	322	358	413	457	2641

(\*) Until 20 June