

Question: Would you consider teaching physiotherapy?

By Abigail Grover Snook – Ph.D, M.Ed., M.Sc., PT, adjunct with Department of Physiotherapy, University of Iceland

Background/Aim: As many of you are aware, the physiotherapy department at the University of Iceland often seems to be looking for sessional teachers (stundakennarar). As of 2020-2021, there were over 220 listed sessional teachers for the department. Yet, the recruitment of teachers both in the classroom and in the clinical setting has not always been an easy task.

Admittedly, there are many issues (low salary, no protected time, stress, etc.) that make it difficult for physiotherapists (PTs) to either teach in the classroom or take on a student in the clinical setting. In reality, these same issues seem to be universal, at least as far as the clinical setting, as seen by reports in the literature. Authors of a large qualitative Canadian study reported that workplace productivity, the student evaluation instrument, student preparation, and PTs' professional roles and responsibilities affected the decision of a PT to take on a student, although added stress affected the decision most.¹ Authors of an Australian study found that a sense of duty or responsibility was the highest motivating factor behind PTs' delivering clinical education.² Research specific as to why PTs choose to teach in the classroom is less available, although you might assume it is for the same reasons that other classroom teachers teach (interest/expertise in lesson content, interest in teaching/students, etc.).³

As part of my doctoral research, I looked at some of the reasons Icelandic health science educators teach and, within my sample, we had input from 52 PTs who are sessional teachers for the physiotherapy department. I thought it might be interesting to take a look at some of their reasons as to why they teach and some of their suggestions for making it easier to recruit teachers. My hope is that, in looking at their answers, it might encourage you to consider teaching physiotherapist students in the classroom and/or clinic.

Methods: Invitations to participate in the survey were emailed to 115 PTs who worked for the university as classroom or clinical instructors in 2016-2017. The sample of PTs (N = 52) evaluated four statements that are actually part of a validated scale for intrinsic motivation to teach based on self-determination theory.⁴ They also evaluated five "I teach because" statements that were commonly found in the literature about motivation to teach in the health sciences.^{4,5} I also looked at open-ended answers to a "I teach because..." prompt (n = 12) and considered comments made during focus groups with PTs.



DR. ABIGAIL GROVER SNOOK
PH.D, M.ED, M.SC., PT

Results: First, you can see in Table 1 how the participants rated these statements on a 6-point agreement Likert scale. As can be seen, the statement about teaching being fun was the highest rated statement among the intrinsic motivation statements (with 76% strongly agreeing or agreeing). When considering "strongly agree", "agree", and "somewhat agree" responses, all four intrinsic motivation statements were rated above 82% and it was especially positive to see that teachers saw the benefit of teaching to their own work (96%) and that it was fun (94%). Looking at the bottom half of Table 1, you can see that the strongest motivations to teach by our teachers are duty to pass

on what they know, contributing to student PTs becoming good health care practitioners, and believing that the lesson content that they teach is important for students to know (96%, 94%, and 88% strongly agreeing or agreeing, respectively). When considering "strongly agree", "agree", and "somewhat agree" responses, it was especially positive to see that teachers recognized that they actually learned and stayed current with knowledge because they taught (96%).

Table 1 – Responses to statements using Likert scale

	MS/S	MS/S/NS
Þegar ég er að kenna er ég í essinu mínu.	60%	84%
Ég hlakka yfirleitt til kennslunnar.	51%	82%
Ég hef yfirleitt gaman að því að kenna.	76%	92%
Kennslan auðgar starf mitt.	67%	96%
Ég kenni vegna þess að það gefur mér færi á að endurmeta skoðanir mínar og halda áfram að læra.	64%	96%
Ég kenni vegna þess að mér finnst innihald kennslu minnar mikilvægt.	88%	98%
Ég kenni vegna þess að ég er samfærð um það, að sérfræðingum í heilbrigðisvísindum beri skylda til að miðla þekkingu sinni.	94%	100%
Ég kenni vegna þess að mér finnst mikilvægt að leggja mitt af mörkum til nemenda sem munu starfa í heilbrigðisvísindum í framtíðinni.	92%	100%
Ég kenni vegna þess að frábær kennari veitti mér innblástur þegar ég var nemandi í heilbrigðisvísindum.	55%	69%

MS = mjög sammála; S = sammála; NS = nokkuð sammála

Table 2 – Open-ended responses to "I teach because" statement

	Ég hef verið beðin um það og fundist það uppbyggilegt að gera það meðfram starfi
Teach in classroom only	m.a. að ég græði faglega á því ég bý yfir sérfræðþekkingu sem fái á landinu búa yfir en allir heilbrigðisnemar þurfa að kunna grunnatriði í.
Teach in both classroom and clinic	Vegna þess að það gefur mér mikla ánægju að kenna og eykur starfsánægju mín. Ég vil miðla og hef gaman af því Ég var beðin um það
Teach in clinic only	pressa að taka nema frá námsbraut. ég kann að meta að sjá nemendur fá áhuga á því sem fram fer í klínisku námi, enn frekar ef það kom inn með fyrirfram mótaðar skoðanir sem reyndust ekki réttar. Ég kann auk þess að meta að sjá nemendurna styrkjast í sínu námi og fá aukna trú á elgin getu. ég hef ánægju af kennslu Eldri stafs menn eru hættir að nenna að sinna kennslu og því verð ég að taka það að mér
Unknown	ég hef gaman af því að hjálpa við að gera framtíðarsjúkraþjálfara betri

“The art of teaching is the art of assisting discovery”

Mark Van Doren

In addition, the answers to the open-ended questions are listed and grouped according to where they teach in Table 2. You can see that two of the three purely classroom teachers spoke of teaching benefitting them personally. You can also see that some of the clinical teachers felt pressured to teach because of the need for teachers.

Finally, I looked at some of the responses from the focus groups with sessional teachers. We had good representation of PTs there as 11 of the 15 participants were PTs. Many issues were introduced in this published paper about how sessional teachers could be supported better.⁶ These included, among other things, better pay, communication and feedback from department, orientations, better support as educators from their clinical facility, and convenient access to teaching about teaching (pedagogy). Interesting, one suggestion for recruiting PTs to teach for the department was a pedagogy course as a way to support sessionals and “de-mystify” the art of teaching.

Discussion: I admit that there are many challenges to being a sessional teacher for the PT department. I am currently working on a grant to improve the support of PT sessional teachers and it includes addressing some of the issues mentioned above. As part of that grant, I am currently developing a special website for department sessional teachers. On it, I hope to have useful information as well as special courses for sessionals that address their need for pedagogy. Although the sample sizes for both the open-ended “I teach because” statements and the focus groups were small and, therefore, only limited conclusions can be drawn, I am considering developing a general course on pedagogy, both in the classroom and in the clinic, for any PTs interested in possibly teaching for the department. Perhaps with more teachers, the pressure to teach could be alleviated somewhat. I also think there should be ongoing discussions about how to protect clinical educators’ time and minimize stress as they are often conflicted between educating students and patient care, another issue reported as common in the literature.⁷

In addition to these challenges, there are some good things to consider. According to the PT sessional sample, the majority of teachers who teach with the department do enjoy it and see teaching as a way to better themselves. Enjoyment of teaching is mentioned often in the literature as a motivating factor for teaching.^{5,8,9} It is well-established in research that having to teach others about a topic deepens your own understanding and learning.^{3,10} Working with students can solidify or challenge long-held beliefs as new

„Vegna þess að það gefur mér mikla ánægju að kenna og eykur starfsánægju mína.“

„Ég kann að meta að sjá nemendur fá áhuga á því sem fram fer í klínísku námi, enn frekar ef það kom inn með fyrirfram mótaðar skoðanir sem reyndust ekki réttar. Ég kann auk þess að meta að sjá nemendurna styrkjast í sínu námi og fá aukna trú á eigin getu.“

evidence becomes available.³ It is also evident that duty was a strong motivating factor, similar to what was seen in the Australian study,² and seemed very related to the motivating factor of helping students to be good PTs in the future. This was also highly reported in the Canadian survey.¹ The high percentage of PTs that rated their lesson content as important is a good sign as, without that belief, teachers’ motivation to teach the material could be negatively affected. We all need to feel and know that our teaching is important to the students’ journeys towards becoming a PT, as do our students.

In an article by Buskist describing “what’s in it for me? (as a teacher), he lists the following: 1) enjoying the intellectual challenge of the content; 2) being creative in designing the optimum learning environment; 3) acquiring and refining communication skills; 4) sharing your passion; 5) making a difference in students’ lives; 6) recruiting the next generation (of PTs); 7) delighting in self-discovery; 8) enjoying the fun that teaching is (students and other teachers); and 9) just enjoying being a good teacher.³ It sounds like many of the sessional teachers for the department realize these benefits.

I am hoping that some of the reasons listed here, especially the ones that speak to enjoyment and the benefit to you, resonate with you and maybe increase your interest in possibly teaching for the department.

- Hall M, Poth C, Manns P, Beaupre L. An exploration of Canadian physiotherapists’ decisions about whether to supervise Physiotherapy students: Results from a national survey. *Physiother Can.* 2016;68(2):141-8.
- Sevenhysen SL, Haines T. The slave of duty: Why clinical educators across the continuum of care provide clinical education in physiotherapy. *Hong Kong Physiotherapy Journal.* 2011;29(2):64-70.
- Buskist W. Teaching: What’s in it for me? Essays from E-xcellence in Teaching [Internet]. 2008 Sept 22, 2020; 8(9):[35-9 pp.]. Available from: <http://teachpsych.org/resources/e-books/eit2008/eit2008.php>.
- Dybowski C, Harendza S. Validation of the Physician Teaching Motivation Questionnaire (PTMQ). *BMC Med Educ.* 2015;15(166).
- Steinert Y, Macdonald ME. Why physicians teach: giving back by paying it forward. *Med Educ.* 2015;49(8):773-82.
- Snook AG, Schram AB, Amadottir SA. “We have different needs”: Specifying support for classroom and clinical sessional faculty. *Med Educ.* 2020.
- Elmberger A, Bjorck E, Liljedahl M, Nieminen J, Bolander Laksov K. Contradictions in clinical teachers’ engagement in educational development: an activity theory analysis. *Advances in health sciences education : theory and practice.* 2019;24(1):125-40.
- Weimer M. *Essential teaching principles: A resource collection for adjunct faculty.* Madison, WI: Magna Publications; 2016.
- O’Sullivan PS, Irby DM. What motivates occasional faculty developers to lead faculty development workshops? A qualitative study. *Acad Med.* 2015;90(11):1536-40.
- Perkins D. *Making Learning Whole.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass; 2009.