

Education and Training

By Keith Eric Grant, PhD, NCTMB

"There is a great difference between knowing and understanding: you can know a lot about something and not really understand it."

- Inventor Charles F. Kettering

I might as well admit it right up front: I'm averse to educational standards, at least as they are usually promoted.

In truth, I love teaching, I love furthering my own knowledge, and I encourage others to do likewise. My collection of reference books and videos continually strains my ability to store them. My aversion to such standards comes not from an antipathy toward learning, but from a feeling that they are more postural displays than genuine efforts to guide the content and timing of teaching and learning. In hearing statements about efforts to "professionalize" massage or about the massage profession "maturing," I understand promoting the requirement of more up-front hours of education as a sort of credentialing arms race with other professions.

What I find desperately lacking is discussion about matching training with the specific needs of application, and consideration of when, experience-wise, such training will be most effectively retained. What I also find lacking is a realization that learning is taking new forms in many technical domains, as the flux of newly generated information doubles every four to seven years. The implication of this knowledge explosion is that we must increasingly view learning as an ongoing, largely self-directed process whose measure is not what we know up front, but our skill at accessing resources and networks to learn what we need for immediate use. The challenge of practice lies not in amassing knowledge, but in winnowing the understanding we need from the total harvest of disciplinary knowledge.

In designing the length and content of massage programs, we need to differentiate between training and education. Ironically, perhaps the clearest differentiation of training and education in terms of goals, context, and methodology comes from the military venue:

Training is essentially a closed system. The trained individual is easily recognized as knowing the "right answers," doing things the "approved way," or arriving at the "school solution." Under these conditions, the products of each trainee in every situation can be expected to look the same. Education, in contrast, is an open system. Learning is continuous with no cap or ceiling on how well the graduate may be prepared to handle new responsibilities. Right answers and ways of doing things often do not exist in education--only better or worse ones.

This differentiation is further developed on a recent report on military training and education for the beginning of the 21st century:

Training is the process of teaching others specific skills to be performed under defined conditions. It focuses on the psychomotor domain of learning and on performing specified tasks in specified ways to a predetermined level or standard. ... Education, on the other hand, focuses on the intellectual or cognitive domain of learning. It is the process of preparing others to solve problems and deal with situations not yet known or defined. It is about learning how to learn and discovering what we do not know so that we may survive in the future.

If we want to create massage degree programs, we should not develop programs that are simply a prolongation of skill training. When we extend from massage training to massage education we should aim to produce graduates that not only can perform techniques, but who also can interface with other healthcare and social care needs. Graduates should have the vision and skills to develop and manage new programs, and the background to successfully write grants to fund their programs. In short, our program should address developing leaders for the social context of massage.

In contrast, I believe that massage training should be much more pragmatic and specific. We should approach training programs with the hard-eye to costs and benefits of a corporate training manager. Content of a training program should address skills applicable and demonstrably needed in the near future - a "just in time" approach to learning that reinforces training with immediate experience. Given the rate at which unused knowledge decays to oblivion in the human mind, training should be designed to be provided in a modular/incremental fashion. Hours of training should be defensible in terms of the hours required to

convey and practice well-defined content appropriate to the trainee's near-future practice. Continuing education workshops should supply the ability to draw on a greater pool of clinical experience. In practice, much of what is offered falls far short of this objective. Our goal, rather than convincing practitioners that their continued learning depends on being force fed, should be to teach them the skills for awareness, observation, and self-directed learning. Practitioners who can teach themselves will still be interested in attending workshops of value to them. The motivation comes from encouragement, sharing, and following Joseph Campbell's notable advice: "follow your bliss".

Beyond what we learn in formal situations, there are numerous opportunities for self-directed continual learning. There are also opportunities to marshal our personal knowledge and skills to become a resource center. By sharing our experience and vision, we can lead without a formal portfolio. In Japan, there is the concept of a person of wisdom being a national living treasure. We can all aspire to be living treasures for our personal communities of co-learners.

In closing, I'll return to Charles Kettering for a forward-looking 1941 statement on the necessity of interspersing experience between increments of theory:

If we taught music the way we try to teach engineering, in an unbroken four-year course, we could end up with all theory and no music. When we study music, we start to practice from the beginning, and we practice for the entire time, because there is no way to become a musician. Neither can we become engineers just by studying a textbook, because practical experience is needed to correlate the so-called theory with practice.

References

1. See www.kettering.edu/ketternu/kettbio.htm for a brief biography on Kettering
 2. Kline, John A., 1985: "Education and Training Today: Some Differences," *Air University Review*, 36(2) 94-95. (www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/airchronicles/aureview/1985/jan-feb/kline.html)
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