

The Profession of Speech Pathology and Audiology in Other Countries

THE PROFESSION of SPEECH PATHOLOGY AND THERAPY IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

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INTRODUCTION

In the United Kingdom, in little more than half a century, speech therapy has developed as a profession in its own right with its own techniques, body of knowledge and code of behaviour.

In order to appreciate the present position it is important to give a brief outline of the development of speech therapy in the United Kingdom since the beginning of the century. It consists of three closely interwoven strands. They are:-

1. The expansion of knowledge of the communication process and its disorders, and the realization that speech therapy could be helpful in a wide range of disorders.

The early knowledge was largely based on work and research of phoneticians, linguists and neurologists, then later, other medical specialists and psychologists. Although interested in speech disorders the 19th century and early 20th century physicians did not consider the treatment of such lay within their professional competence, so they enlisted the help of members of the education profession e.g. teachers of singing and drama and teachers of the deaf.

More organised therapy for speech disorders began in 1906 with provision of classes for stammering children and in 1911 the first clinic was set up in a teaching hospital (St. Bartholomews, London) for adults with a variety of communication disorders. An education act in 1944 created an expansion of speech therapy appointments in the school health service. This was followed by the National Health Service Act in 1948 which encouraged the establishment of more appointments in hospitals.

2. The evolution of the specialised training for this work.

Most of the early so called speech therapists were, teachers who trained themselves informally, drawing knowledge from colleagues in medicine, phonetics, linguistics and psychology then later gathering around them pupils or assistants. Then the need was felt for a more formalised system of training and by 1935 there were four established schools of speech therapy offering two year courses of training.

The emphasis of training in these four schools varied, two were predominantly medical in orientation, one was educational and one emphasized aspects of voice production and drama.

3. The birth and development of professional identity and independence.

By the 1930's speech therapists recognised the need for a professional organisation if the interests of the profession were to be adequately promoted.

In fact two organisations were founded, one for speech therapists principally with origins in education and the other for those more medically orientated.

By 1940 it was realised that there was no room, in so small a profession, for two organisations and in 1945 the College of Speech Therapists was founded. Its main aims at that time were to:-

- * encourage research
- * improve facilities and regulate the standard of training
(by this time there were seven establishments)
- * conduct examinations for those wishing to practice
- * and to maintain a high standard of professional skills and practices.

These three lines of development i.e. the growth of knowledge, the evolution of specialist training and the birth of professional identity and independence interacted upon, and influenced one another in a complex way, with growth in one area leading to an advance in another. This process continues today.

In 1969 a committee of enquiry was appointed by the Secretaries of State for Education and Science, for the Social Services for Scotland and for Wales. The terms of reference were, "to consider the need for, and the role of, Speech Therapy in the field of education and of medicine, the assessment and treatment of those suffering from speech and language disorders and the training appropriate for those specially concerned in this work and to make recommendations".

Following the acceptance, by the Government, of the report of this Committee (The Quirk Report) in 1972 there has been a considerable expansion and development of the service. The main developments being:-

- * a unified speech therapy profession working within the National Health Service (NHS) replacing the previously divided profession working in the NHS and Education
- * all courses leading to certification to practice at degree level within Universities or Institutions of Higher Education
- * creation of new courses and an increase in the work force of full-time speech therapists
- * provision of opportunities for continuing education
- * greater opportunities of research in this field

CURRENT POSITION

The current position of speech therapy in the United Kingdom is presented with reference to:-

A. Service and Employment

i.e. the provision and organisation of services in the United Kingdom for the communicatively handicapped population.

B. Education and Research

i.e. the provision of education to prepare personnel for that service and of opportunities for continuing education, advanced study and research.

C. Professional Organisation

i.e. the provision of an organisational body to carry responsibility for academic, clinical, professional and ethical standards of those people working in the areas of speech and language pathology and therapeutics.

A. SERVICE AND EMPLOYMENT (see Fig. 1)

At the present time there are approximately 2 1/2 - 3,000 speech therapists practising either on a fulltime or part time basis. 95% of them work within the National Health Service. 3% of them work for private or charitable institutes e.g. the Spastics Society. 2% work in private

practice (this aspect of work may well increase).

Speech therapy is offered to all ages of the communicatively handicapped population from infants a few weeks old up to the oldest geriatric patient.

There are a wide variety of settings for the delivery of this service e.g. hospitals, community health centres, schools, nurseries, private homes, etc.

The multifactor nature of the problems encountered require close liaison with medical, educational, psychological and social services personnel but it is important to stress that the profession works independently and not under the direction of any of these disciplines.

The service offered also includes an educational aspect to promote better understanding and recognition of communication disorders by other professionals and the lay public and the promotion of prophylactic measures.

B. EDUCATION AND RESEARCH (see Fig. 2)

There are now sixteen undergraduate courses which the College of Speech Therapists recognise as leading to qualification to practice (i.e. 15 in the U.K. and 1 in Eire).

The majority of courses are of four years duration although at the present time there are a few of three years.

They have different biases depending on the institutions in which they are located and the disposition, talents, and philosophies of the people who designed them. Thus there are varying amounts of emphasis on the contributions from the relevant areas of the biological, physical, behavioural and linguistic disciplines. However, in order to gain official recognition by the College of Speech Therapists for certification to practice, all must include teaching in Anatomy, Physiology, Phonetics, Linguistics, Psychology, Audiology, Child Development and Neurology (and other related medical subjects) as well as Speech Pathology and Therapeutics. In addition they must include a substantial amount of clinical practicum.

The academic training of speech therapists must be seen in the context of the British Education system. In Scotland and Northern Ireland there are some variations from that of England but as more of the courses offered are located in England it is that system that is to be described.

School begins at five years of age and is compulsory until sixteen. Candidates eligible for higher education at this age sit the General Certificate of Education (ordinary level). Students demonstrating proficiency across a range of subjects, which are graded, may then continue with on-going education for two more years. It is during this period that liberal arts studies are undertaken and at the end of this time, students take the Certificate of Education at Advanced level, normally in three or four subjects of their own choice. These are also graded on a five point scale A - E.

The minimal requirements for entry to Universities and other higher education establishments are five passes in the General Certificate of Education at ordinary level and two at advanced level. The requirements for entry to speech therapy courses are three passes at Advanced level with good grades (e.g. B.B.C.). Subjects are stipulated according to the individual courses. In addition qualities other than academic proficiency are looked for. It can thus be seen that students of speech

therapy are a highly selected body.

In the United Kingdom there are two degree awarding systems i.e. degrees are either awarded by individual Universities or awarded in other Higher Educational institutions (such as Polytechnics) by the Council for National Academic Awards. This body acts to ensure parity with University degrees.

Degrees are awarded at ordinary level or Honours level. The Honours degree is the highest undergraduate academic standard and is classified 1st, 2nd and 3rd class. Research students would be expected to come from the first upper and second classes of Honours degree. Both Honours and ordinary degree graduates are eligible to qualify as speech therapists. The majority of courses however are at Honours level.

Graduate Studies in Human Communication have also developed and there are now masters courses available in two Universities. In addition, graduates may undertake masters courses at a number of institutions in relevant subjects such as linguistics and psychology. Opportunities are also available to study at advanced level for M.Phil. and Ph.D. awards. These latter higher degrees are not based upon course work but on individual study and research under supervision.

Continuing Education is available with many interdisciplinary and/or vocation orientated courses offered in Universities or Higher Education institutions. Two establishments have departments offering such courses all the year round.

In-service training is also offered in local areas by the local health authorities and the College of Speech Therapists also, from time to time, offers study days on particular themes.

Research Opportunities in Universities, Higher Education Institutions and within the Health Service are increasing though, with the present economic climate, there are of course restraints.

C. PROFESSIONAL ORGANISATIONS (see Fig. 3)

The main professional organisation is the College of Speech Therapists. Through its various Boards and Committees it is responsible for the academic, clinical, professional and ethical standards of the profession.

In order to practice as a speech therapist in the National Health Service it is legally required to hold a certificate issued by the College of Speech Therapists certifying that one has attended a course of training, and passed an examination recognised by the College and approved by the Secretary of State for Health. Thus the College has as one of its major functions the responsibility of monitoring the various courses in Universities and Institutions of Higher Education around the country.

It also conducts examinations for qualified speech therapists from overseas wishing to gain certification to practice in the United Kingdom, and continues in its efforts to maintain and establish reciprocal recognition between countries where there is a parity of academic standard and professional practice.

In addition to its role as a certifying body the College also makes the following awards to its members:-

- * Fellowship of the College (F.C.S.T.) - awarded to members after submission of an approved dissertation or for distinguished academic achievement
- * Honorary Fellowship of the College (Hon. F.C.S.T.) - awarded to non-speech therapy colleagues for work of special value to the profession

* Honours of the College - awarded to members for giving long and valued service to the professional body in a special capacity.

CONCLUSION

It will be seen that the profession of speech therapy in the United Kingdom has come a long way in the last few decades. The expansion of services, mainly developed under the aegis of the National Health Service, has been considerable.

The education for personnel to deal with the problems of the communicatively handicapped population continues to develop within the appropriate institutions in which they are now placed.

With the growth of knowledge it is inevitable that specialization will increase. In the present economic climate there are of course restraints but it is important to increase this vital service, that knowledge must advance and that new ideas be generated.

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NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE

ENGLAND & WALES
REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITIES
DISTRICT HEALTH AUTHORITIES
SPECIAL HEALTH AUTHORITIES

SCOTLAND
AREA HEALTH BOARDS
SCOTTISH HEALTH BOARDS

NORTHERN IRELAND
HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES BOARDS
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

⌘ 95%

INDEPENDENT INSTITUTIONS OR CHARITIES

E.g. SPASTICS SOCIETY
ROYAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR THE DEAF
INVALID CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY
VOLUNTARY HOSPITALS

⌘ 3%

PRIVATE PRACTICE

⌘ 2%

NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE

DAY NURSERIES
SCHOOLS
DAY CENTRES
OLD PEOPLE'S HOMES
HEALTH CENTRES
TRAINING CENTRES
HOSPITALS
PRIVATE HOMES

INDEPENDENT INSTITUTIONS OR CHARITIES

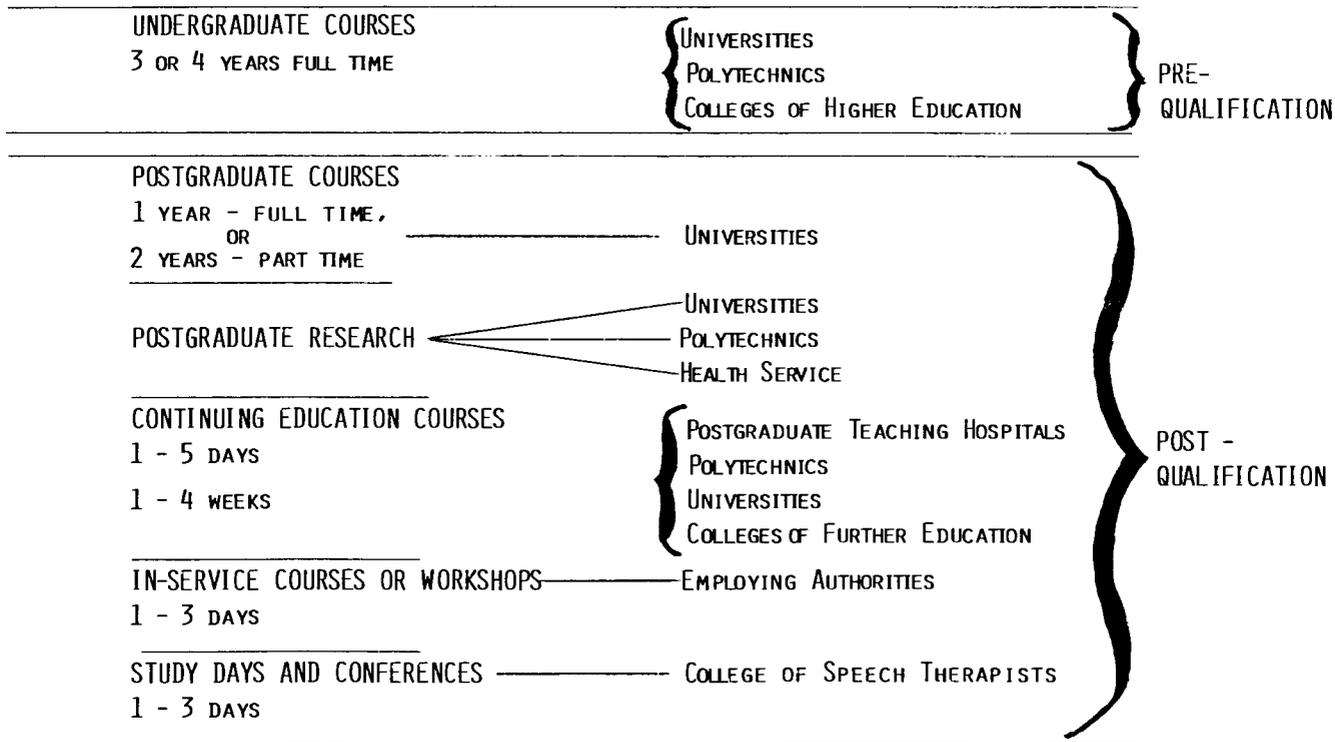
NURSERIES
SCHOOLS
INSTITUTIONS

PRIVATE PRACTICE

PRIVATE OFFICES
PRIVATE SCHOOLS
PRIVATE HOMES

EDUCATION & RESEARCH

FIGURE 2



PROFESSIONAL ORGANISATION
THE COLLEGE OF SPEECH THERAPISTS

