



Courses on teaching

Give a man a sack of rice and you feed him for a month. Teach him to grow rice, and you feed him for life.

That aphorism is well known, and the principle applies to a band's ability to teach ringers just as much as it does to a peasant farmer's ability to grow rice.

In September, the CC Education Committee is relaunching its its major course for teachers of ringing, see advertisement on page xxx.

A bit of history

Teaching the teachers has always been an important part of the Committee's work, through both publications and courses. There was a module for tower captains in the ringing courses it ran for many years up to the mid 1990s, when it moved the focus more strongly onto teaching, with a new course, titled Management, Teaching and Maintenance (MTM). It was an intensive course, with a high tutor-student ratio, which first ran in Spring 1996, at Cirencester in Gloucestershire. It was followed by three more over the next 18 months (at Whirlow in Yorkshire, Cirencester again, and at Swanwick in Derbyshire).

Since then, over thirty courses have been run on behalf of local ringing societies. Unlike the earlier open courses, none were advertised outside the home territory of the host association, so they represent a hidden success.

This collaborative arrangement worked well. The local societies found it easier to organise venues, helpers and local facilities, since they knew their own patch. They also knew their own ringers, and some societies were quite good at persuading people to come along, who might not have volunteered, but who would definitely benefit. The Committee provided a well tried course, delivered by experienced tutors, with the help of local assistant tutors, who in some cases went on to organise similar training events later.

These local courses were non-residential, which reduced costs, though the timetable had to be re-jigged to fit round local ringing commitments on the Sunday morning. No two courses were ever quite the same, because apart from the tower management module which everyone did, individuals chose which other two modules to do, so how many people wanted each one varied quite a bit. For some societies, the format was adapted, for example as a cut-down, one day course, though that lost some benefits of a weekend course.

Evolution ...

The course evolved during ten years. An extra module on teaching raising and lowering was added to the original modules (teaching bell handling, teaching at the rounds/call changes stage, teaching method ringing, maintenance). A module on conducting was also added, but that has mainly been run as a separate course.

The maintenance module (usually run by a member of the Towers & Belfries Committee, who also run their own courses) was originally included as one of the essential skills needed for a healthy tower, but demand for it dropped, probably because it fitted less well with the teaching modules.

Unlike most courses, where the customers are the students, the Education Committee's customers were local ringing societies, who acted as 'retailers' with the Committee as a 'wholesaler'. So courses could not be run to a neat timetable, but were delivered on demand. In the peak year, 1998, the committee ran nine courses, including three in March, and two on the same weekend in June! Demand has been less in recent years, with often only one course.



Tutor observing student teacher & guinea pig



Two teaching sessions in progress



Demonstrating a point of detail

... and Review

So why had the demand reduced? The students are always satisfied, with comments like: 'first class weekend', 'an opportunity to practise teaching in a "safe" situation with experienced tutors', 'real insight into the complexities involved' and 'greatly enjoyed it'. Has the need for new ringing teachers gone away? Surely not. Do societies run their own courses? A few do, but by no means all. Could it have been better publicised? It has been promoted in many places, including leaflets to societies, the website, RoadShows, and periodic plugs in *The Ringing World*, but one can never have too much publicity.

Some blame the name. When the course began, MTM was a snappy acronym for Management, Teaching and Maintenance (what it said on the tin), but of course nobody bothers to use the full title, so if you don't already know what MTM means, you are none the wiser.



No course is complete without food!



A little light evening entertainment

The re-launched course

So after a decade, and about three dozen courses, the course has been revised to focus on teaching, rather than trying to include maintenance as well. It still includes the module on tower management, which in most towers is inseparable from the management of teaching.

The other modules remain, though some of the material is being updated. The broad format, and high ratio of tutors to students, are also retained, since they have worked well.

And the course title? It had to change, with maintenance no longer in the mix, but to what? Everyone agreed that the word 'teaching' should be prominent, with 'Teaching the Teachers' being a favourite. But when people began talking about the TtT course, alarm bells rang at the thought of another impenetrable acronym taking over. So when we want to be brief, we will probably just talk about our teaching course. After all, teaching is what people go on the course to learn how to do.

Another open course

Working with local societies to deliver the courses has one disadvantage – anyone outside the society doesn't have the option of attending, whereas anyone wanting ordinary ringing tuition can sign up to one of several courses. Over the years, the committee has received a number of requests from people wanting to know 'when is your next teaching course being run?'. So to meet this potential demand, the Committee is running an extra course, open to anyone interested in learning more about how to teach ringing. The course will be on the weekend of 14-16 September 2007, and will be held at the Hayes Conference Centre in Swanwick, which coincidentally was the venue of the last open course. For more information, see the advertisement on page 482 or visit the Committee's website: <http://www.cccbr.org.uk/edc/courses/cands.php>

John Harrison, Chairman