

### Towards a Profile Definition of the Educator in Street-Based Sex Work Setting \*

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Introduction

Outreach is mostly associated with harm reduction among hard-to-reach populations. The advantages of outreach have been widely documented (Mikkonen et al., 2007; National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), 2002; Needle et al., 2005; Rhodes, 1996; UK Network of Sex Work Projects (NSWP), 2008), however little research has been done about educator's profile in sex work settings (exceptions are Marques et al., 2013; Mikkonen et al., 2007; TAMPEP, 2009; UK Network of Sex Work Projects (NSWP), 2008).

This study has two major purposes: 1) to identify the characteristics of the outreach worker; 2) to understand the role of training and continuous education in this context. We aim to understand the outreach staff opinions, regarding their personal professional experience: beginner (less than one year), intermediate (3 years), advanced (more than 10 years).

### Methods

- Research question: What are the social skills, theoretical and practical knowledge, attitudes and beliefs that the outreach worker should have?
- Descriptive and analytic qualitative methodology (embedded in an ongoing action research project)
- Participants: 6 outreach workers: beginner (n=2), intermediate (n=1), advanced (n=3)
- Data were collected from July to October 2013
- 6 semi-structured interviews
- Content analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 2007)

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### Results

- Respondents consider that their academic training is not enough to deal with their professionals' challenges (Table 1)

Table 1. Quality of academic training

Insufficient training	Experience level			Total
	Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced	
It does not address prostitution	2	1	2	5
It does not prepare for professional practice	2	1	2	5
Focuses on formal contexts	0	0	2	2

- Respondents identify three types of training needs: theoretical, practical and communication skills. The latter refers to personal development as a way to establish a relationship with sex workers (table 2)

Table 2. Training needs

Training needs	Experience level			Total
	Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced	
<b>Theoretical</b>				
Counseling	1	0	0	1
Prostitution	2	0	0	2
Mental Health	0	1	0	1
<b>Practical</b>				
Role-play	2	0	0	2
Learning by doing	2	0	1	3
Assessment of risk situations	1	0	1	2
<b>Communication Skills</b>	1	1	1	3

- Respondents identify the ideal profile as well as handicaps (table 3)

Table 3. The ideal profile and outreach worker handicaps

Profile of the outreach worker	Experience level			Total
	Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced	
<b>Skills</b>				
Social and personal	2	1	3	6
Theoretical and practical	2	1	3	6
<b>Handicaps</b>				
<b>Social and personal skills</b>				
Lack of profile	0	1	0	1
Fear	0	1	0	1
Professional insecurity	1	1	0	2
<b>Theoretical and practical skills</b>				
Lack of experience	1	0	0	1
Lack of theoretical background	0	1	0	1
"Superhero syndrome"	2	0	0	2

### Conclusion

- Respondents identify two types of skills that an outreach worker should have: 1) social and personal, including communication skills; 2) theoretical and practical knowledge.
- Outreach worker is a reflective educator (Schön, 1983).
- Outreach teams might be considered "communities of practitioners" (Lave & Wenger, 1999)
- The street is a place of learning and teaching, in a dynamic and reciprocal interaction, and the outreach worker is an interpersonal relationship professional.
- We suggest further research in order to improve the discussion about the need and possible modalities of teaching-learning programs, as well as to help the construction of professional identity of the outreach worker in sex work settings.

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