The relationship between knowledge of and attitudes towards children with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)

Introduction
- Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity that interferes with the individuals' family and peer relationships, and with their social and academic functioning (DSM-IV, APA, 2000).
- Due to the number of children affected (estimates range from 3-7%: APA, 2000; Tannock, 1998) and current educational policies around inclusion (DfES, 2004), mainstream teachers are increasingly likely to work with pupils with an ADHD diagnosis.
- According to Ajzen's (2005) Theory of Planned Behaviour, attitudes can be used to predict behaviour. This implies that teachers’ perceptions of ADHD could impact on their teaching practice and behaviour towards pupils. However, little is known about teachers’ knowledge and attitudes towards ADHD and how their perceptions relate to those of trainee teachers or the general public.

Method
- A Quasi-experimental design was used to investigate the perceptions held by In-Service teachers (n=33), Pre-Service trainee teachers (n=71) and the General Public (n=72).
- Knowledge of ADHD was measured using an adapted version of the ‘Knowledge about Attention Deficit Disorder Questionnaire’ (KADD-Q) (West et al. 2005). Higher scores indicate more knowledge (maximum possible knowledge score = 30, minimum = 0)
- Attitudes towards children with a diagnosis of ADHD were measured using likert-style responses to 22 attitude statements (cronbach’s alpha = 0.88). Higher scores indicated more positive attitudes (maximum possible attitude score = 110, minimum = 22)

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for questionnaire responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Knowledge of ADHD</th>
<th>Attitude to ADHD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-service Teachers</td>
<td>M = 14.70, sd = 5.77</td>
<td>M = 81.27, sd = 12.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-service trainee teachers</td>
<td>M = 10.41, sd = 4.28</td>
<td>M = 80.44, sd = 6.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General public</td>
<td>M = 10.32, sd = 6.49</td>
<td>M = 68.79, sd = 16.98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Findings
- In-Service teachers had more knowledge about ADHD compared to Pre-Service and General Public groups (Table 1). In-service teachers had more knowledge than trainee teachers (U = 650.00, n = 104, p <0.001), and trainee teachers’ knowledge was not different to the general public (U = 2499.00, n = 143, p = 0.818). This suggests that pre-service trainee teachers would benefit from more instruction on ADHD through their training.
- The In-Service teachers had the most positive attitudes towards children with ADHD, and the General Public the least (Table 1). The attitudes scores of Pre-Service trainees were not significantly different to In-Service teachers (U = 1150.00, n = 104, p = 0.88). Over half of the participants in both groups reported previous or current experience with children with ADHD indicating that personal contact relates to more positive attitudes (Hasting & Graham, 1995).
- A significant relationship was found between knowledge and attitude scores for all groups (rho = 0.42, n = 175, p = < .001). The higher the knowledge scores, the more positive the attitudes.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for questionnaire responses

Transforming lives, inspiring change

References