Experiences and Perceived Training Needs of Geoscience Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs)

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Research Questions

1) What challenges and supports did Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) experience in their roles?
2) What were the perceived training needs of GTAs in geoscience?
3) How did GTA experiences differ between classroom and field settings?

Participants & Data Collection

Qualitative case study at large research-intensive institution
Semi-structured interviews conducted with 18 geoscience GTAs
2 MS students and 16 PhD students
All GTAs had classroom teaching experience
12 GTAs had experience with field course or course with field component

Data Analysis

• Emergent coding of interview transcripts
• Classroom and field experiences coded separately, using separate codebooks
• Gender neutral pseudonyms assigned to all participants

Finding #1: Contradictions

• 78% of GTAs feel they are lacking training between subject and tools

Finding #2: Contradictions

• 61% of GTAs felt there were disparate expectations across courses or instructors
• 61% of GTAs desired more clearly defined expectations for their role in the classroom and 50% for their role in the field
• Five GTAs (26%) referenced norms they experienced teaching and studying in a research-intensive institution

Finding #3: Contradictions

• 56% of GTAs mentioned that dynamics with instructors posed a challenge to them
• 63% of GTAs felt they were lacking support in some way.
• 44% of GTAs desired further instructor support in the classroom and 42% in the field.

When asked to describe how dynamics with students differ in the field from the classroom, GTAs disagreed on the ability to get to know students better. Challenges were also identified as the smaller community spends more time together.

"The instructor I taught for prior...they would just give us the lab. They might go through it with us, but they would go through it with us likelier split and that was kind of just it. It would create confusion because it felt like not everybody was on the same page sometimes." - Blake

References


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