

Integrating Reflective Pedagogy into Counsellor Education: Designing and Refining a 30-Hour Personal Development Programme

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Abstract

Counsellor education frequently emphasises theoretical and technical competence while overlooking the formative dimensions that sustain well-being and ethical maturity. This study introduces and evaluates a 30-hour, 20-module personal development programme designed to embed structured self-work within counsellor training. The intervention integrates five thematic clusters: self-awareness, meaning-making, self-compassion, reflective practice, and self-care, delivered through experiential and reflective learning methods such as role-plays, guided journaling, group sharing, and facilitated reflection. A pilot phase involving 14 postgraduate counselling psychology trainees examined changes across professional quality of life indicators (compassion satisfaction, burnout, secondary traumatic stress) and counselling self-efficacy. Quantitative analyses indicated enhanced self-compassion, reflective capacity, and resilience, with participants reporting reduced emotional exhaustion and greater professional confidence. Expert and participant feedback informed iterative refinements that clarified conceptual language, re-sequenced sessions for developmental flow, and strengthened alignment with competency-based outcomes. These revisions transformed the programme from a modular training series into a cohesive developmental journey that progresses from self-awareness to sustained self-care. The final version, currently undergoing controlled experimental evaluation, represents a replicable model for embedding personal development in counsellor education. By operationalising reflective pedagogy through measurable and culturally grounded methods, the programme demonstrates how structured self-exploration can enhance counsellor resilience and professional efficacy within higher-education contexts.

Keywords: counselling-self-efficacy; meaning-in-life; professional-quality-of-life; self-care; self-compassion