Considering Counsellor Education
in Aotearoa New Zealand
Part 2: How Might We Practise?

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Abstract

The registration environment offers particular challenges for the identity of counselling in 21st-century Aotearoa New Zealand. Counsellor education cannot hold itself apart from such challenges as it enters what the authors suggest is a third phase in its development (see Part 1, the companion to this article, earlier in this volume). Counselling in New Zealand has spent many years investigating and debating statutory regulation, and professional associations have implemented various internal regulatory practices that have had implications for counsellor education. Counselling and counsellor education in other parts of the world, and related professions in New Zealand, have engaged more actively with registration in a variety of forms. This article describes these various regulatory activities with the intention of making visible some possible directions for counsellor education in New Zealand. While we cannot predict with any accuracy what these possible directions would each offer to counselling, our review of various forms of registration leads us to make a case for pluralism and partnership. Advocating for pluralism in counselling, Cooper and McLeod (2010) suggest that it involves both sensibility and practice. The authors of the current article explore a pluralistic sensibility, emphasising its potential to produce a professional landscape in which practices of pluralism and partnership may emerge.

Keywords: counsellor education, counsellor registration, counsellor education and pluralism, counsellor education and partnership

The registration environment has provided a particular impetus to raise questions about counsellor education for the 21st century, especially in the familiar terms of standards, curriculum, and accountability. Mindful of Miller's (2001) exposition of the varying success of counsellor educators' past efforts to influence policy and practice,

we also note Dillon's (2011) comment following the registration of psychotherapy in 2007 under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (HPCA Act). Dillon noted that the New Zealand Association of Psychotherapy (NZAP) might not have secured the regulation and registration it wanted, despite having "wished for, discussed and actively sought" (p. 31) registration for more than 60 years. Whether or not HPCA Act registration becomes possible for counselling (see Part 1, the first of this pair of articles, earlier in this volume), there are serious challenges ahead for counsellor education. In offering this contribution to seeking inclusive ways to engage with such challenges, we hope that counsellor educators might consider together possibilities for proactively shaping counsellor education, acknowledging both the opportunities and the limitations of contemporary conditions. Our purpose for this article is to lay out further the contemporary landscape in order to inform and invite a wider discussion.

A first consideration, perhaps, is that this is a small country and there are small numbers of counsellor educators. Both cooperation and competition are likely to be experienced as professional, programmatic and, to some extent, personal, as questions are raised about future directions, and the matters of curriculum content and standards become relevant in a registration environment.

Building on the historical account offered by our earlier article in this volume, we now consider what might be learned from registration, both in counsellor education elsewhere and in other allied professions in New Zealand. We then put forward a case for a pluralistic perspective that builds on the work of Cooper and McLeod (2010) in counselling in the UK, and Tudor and others (2011b) in psychotherapy in New Zealand and elsewhere. We do not wish to enter the registration debate on "should we?" "shouldn't we?" terms, but rather to suggest that since counsellor education cannot sit outside the culture of registration, it is important to consider how we might position ourselves for the benefit of a range of stakeholders, including ourselves as counsellor educators.

Each stakeholder group offers counsellor education different responsibilities. For the individual student, professional education programmes offer entry points to a career, and also pathways for career advancement. For the counselling profession, they offer the transmission of knowledge from one generation to another, according to particular standards. Also, and perhaps more significantly, counsellor education programmes contribute to the generation of new knowledges—in response to changing sociopolitical conditions and new populations of students—that provide unfolding new pathways for the profession's growth and development. Further, for the community, counsellor education has a responsibility to produce graduates capable of

responding to community needs and generating innovative forms of practice. Government funding agencies value cost-efficient education for cost-efficient social service provision. The rhizomatic manner of counsellor education's development to this point (see Part 1, this volume) might warn us of the uncertainties inherent in the political nature of the questions we now face. Describing a perspective on politics that Deleuze and Guattari offered, May (2005) wrote:

> But there is no general prescription. *There are only analyses and experiments in a world that offers us no guarantees, because it is always other and more than we can imagine. We roll the dice; we do not know for sure what will fall back.* (p. 152)

By looking around at some international experiences of curriculum approval processes in counsellor education, and at the experiences of other professional groups in New Zealand, this article further situates significant questions that are before our profession, while acknowledging that we cannot know in advance how things will turn out.

Regulation in counsellor education in the United States

A major push toward the licensing of counsellors and credentialing for school counsellors began in the US in the 1970s. Such professionalisation has led to the standardisation of counsellor education curricula under sets of content standards prescribed by the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling Related Education Programs (CACREP) (see http://www.cacrep.org). CACREP has designated areas of study that must be addressed in counsellor education, such as human development, testing and appraisal, counselling theory, multicultural counselling, career development, and research and evaluation. Its standards are set out in a 63-page document. There is general consensus that to practise as a counsellor one must have a master's degree from a programme that is accredited by a state authority. Following graduation, there is a system of licensing, which is governed by statute that varies from state to state. Standardised exams codify counselling knowledge, and lists of specified textbooks that prepare people for these exams are promoted by private examining bodies. These bodies, along with textbook publishers, exert considerable influence on what students learn about counselling, and in the experience of one author (US-based John Winslade) are strongly positioned to place limits on possibilities for innovation. Attending an Association for Counsellor Education and Supervision Conference in the US recently, another author (Kathie Crocket) experienced a focus on how to meet CACREP criteria as a dominant theme among presentations, and heard recurring

comments about the huge resource of educators' time and attention CACREP accreditation consumes.

A further factor is the cost to institutions of programme accreditation. Accreditation fees include an application fee of US$2500, a site visit fee of US$2000 for each visitor (two to five), and annual maintenance fees of about US$2000–3000, along with incidental fees (see http://www.cacrep.org).

Programme accreditation in the United Kingdom

In 1988, the former British Association for Counselling established a standard for training courses that has been subject to ongoing revision. The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) offers processes of programme accreditation, having developed a core curriculum through the collaboration of a consortium of counsellor educators from universities, colleges, and the private sector, together with the BACP wider membership (see BACP, 2009a; 2009b). Accreditation of counsellor education courses costs the host institution for the programme UK£2475. BACP programme accreditation assures students that their training will lead directly to satisfying the requirement for membership of BACP, and that the training requirement for BACP counsellor or psychotherapist registration has been met (BACP, 2009a, p. 4).

Training standards in Australia

The Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (PACFA), involving 37 member associations, offers a set of training standards (see http://www.pacfa.org.au/aboutus/cid/12/parent/0/t/aboutus/l/layout), these minimum standards for individual membership being set by all member associations. A significant multi-party collaboration, similar to that used by BACP in developing a core curriculum, produced these standards:

> …*an equally important focus has been to respect and encourage the diversity of psychotherapy and counselling associations.*
>
> *This [training standards] document encourages maximum flexibility for the different schools of thought to pursue these standards in unique and different ways, and in no way wishes to reduce different traditions to a lowest common denominator.*

PACFA also provides a course (programme) accreditation process (see http://www.pacfa.org.au/aboutus/cid/15/parent/0/t/aboutus/l/layout), derived from CACREP standards, with a fee of A$2500.

Common among programme accreditation processes in the US, Australia, and the UK is that accreditation is carried out by either professional associations or organisations affiliated with the professional bodies. We turn now to the New Zealand experience and briefly consider statutory regulation as it relates to psychology, social work, and psychotherapy.

Registration and related professions in Aotearoa New Zealand

The Psychologists Board was appointed as an authority in respect of the practice of psychology under the HPCA Act 2003 (see http://psychologistsboard.org.nz/about-us), replacing an earlier statutory regulation process. In accordance with the Act, the board prescribes the qualifications required for the various scopes of practice within psychology and, through an Accreditation Committee, accredits and monitors universities and their qualifications. Six universities are accredited to teach clinical psychology and one to teach counselling psychology. Curriculum content prescriptions, emphasising evidence-based practice, contribute to a good deal of programme homogeneity in clinical psychology programmes. We are aware of the regret that some academic colleagues in psychology experience over the limitations on what they can teach.

Education for professional practice in psychology differs markedly from counselling in New Zealand, in that this occurs only at postgraduate level, following a prescribed undergraduate programme in psychology. The length, level, and curriculum consistency of education in psychology assists that discipline's efforts to be positioned alongside medicine as a health science, while also leading to the status distinctions drawn between psychology and counselling. Crago (2011), for example, wrote of counselling as a "lower-tier professional specialisation" (p. 73).

Social work in New Zealand was a more recent entrant into the registration environment, with the Social Workers Registration Act 2003. Social work and counselling share options for professional education at both graduate and undergraduate level and in universities and polytechnics. The Social Workers Registration Board (SWRB) Kāhui Whakamana Tauwhiro has set a minimum standard for qualifications: an undergraduate degree or a two-year full-time equivalent master's degree. A programme recognition process intends that "social work graduates enter the workforce with the expected entry level competencies as a result of completing Board-recognised Social Work Qualifications delivered to national standards supported by educators" (SWRB, 2011, p. 10).

The process of SWRB recognition, which costs NZ$15,000, involves both the

review of programme documentation and site visits. The description of the purpose of site visits (see http://www.swrb.govt.nz/) suggests a somewhat unilateral process: tertiary education providers are advised on board policy, assisted to "maintain adherence" to standards, and receive feedback. This emphasis perhaps alerts counsellor educators to the importance of influencing policy and process.

The registration of psychotherapy under the HPCA Act in 2007 has been of particular significance to counselling: indeed, NZAC loaned the Psychotherapists Registration Board a sum of money for establishment costs. But, as indicated in our introduction, the matter is not settled among psychotherapists in New Zealand. For some, the matter of cost is a central concern. We do not have information about programme certification processes and fees. Since the size of the registration fee is in inverse proportion to the size of the professional group, the cost of individual registration ($281.25) and an Annual Practising Certificate ($956.25) for a psychotherapist is the third highest of the 17 health professions registered under the HPCA Act (Tudor, 2011c). Beyond cost, there are much more substantial matters of philosophy and practice at stake, however. Tudor's (2011b) edited collection offers thoughtful commentary on the situations in which psychotherapists now find themselves as a consequence of registration.

Although not central to the critiques of registration, our emphasis here is not on whether the NZAP's decision now looks wise or unwise, but on the calls to *pluralism* adopted by those who are questioning the wisdom of registration for psychotherapy under the HPCA Act (Tudor, 2011a). Indeed, in a recent article in *Psychotherapy and Politics International* (IRPP, 2011) describing strategies to change the status quo with respect to psychotherapist registration, "pluralism" and "partnership" are paired. Further, pluralism and partnership are suggested as strategies for resistance and action to remove the stranglehold on psychotherapy, as a profession in New Zealand, that registration has produced. We are interested in what this pairing of partnership and pluralism might offer to counsellor education in resisting the influences of neoliberalism in counselling. Cornforth (2011) invokes a number of commentators on the effects of neoliberalism in suggesting that attention might be paid to opportunities for resistance as part of an ethical response.

Partnership: A core value

As we consider possible forms of regulation of counselling and consequent standard-setting and monitoring for counsellor education, pluralism and partnership are two concepts for which we would want to put a line in the sand. While we would want to pair

them, too, let us start with partnership, a Core Value in NZAC's *Code of Ethics* (2002). First, partnership invokes the Treaty partnership (Winslade, 2002), an aspirational practice about which there is much yet to be learned for counsellor education.

Second, partnership evokes professional partnerships, between educators, between educators and the profession, and between educators and others. Partnership does not remove us from power relations, but rather offers strategies for reflexively taking relational responsibility and working for non-colonising practices.

Reading the literature, and imagining possible futures for counsellor education, we believe the concept of pluralism offers a roll of the dice that is worth taking. The language of professionalisation, regulation, and evidence-based practice tantalises with promises of certainty and singularity: *if one does this, then that will ensue*. But we argue that counsellor educators are called into much more boldness than this. Counsellor education brings together two practices, teaching and therapy, that go beyond certainty and singularity, and towards previously unthought possibilities and pluralism.

A case for pluralism

> *Even pluralism itself—the doctrine that any substantial question admits of a variety of plausible but mutually conflicting responses—lies open to a plurality of versions and constructions.* (Rescher, 1993, p. 79)

Rescher further argues that, "At the most fundamental level, what links the human community together is not agreement but understanding" (p. 183). Following Rescher, a philosopher, Cooper and McLeod (2010) bring pluralism into counselling:

> *a pluralist holds that there can be many "right" answers to scientific, moral or psychological questions which are not reducible down to any one, single truth. Central to this standpoint is also the belief that there is no one, privileged perspective from which the "truth" can be known.* (p. 7)

Cooper and McLeod (2010) distinguish between pluralistic "perspectives" and "sensibilities" and "pluralistic practice" (p. 7). In this article, our focus is pluralism as a viewpoint and sensibility. Our hope is that dialogue among counselling professionals and counsellor educators can lead to the kinds of pluralism that enable the representation of a breadth of interests (see Cooper & McLeod, 2010). "Pluralism is an attitude to conflict which tries to reconcile differences without imposing a false resolution on them or losing sight of the unique value of each position" (Samuels, 1997,

p. 135). A pluralistic sensibility will not impose consensus, but work intentionally to avoid the domination of process or outcome by particular, or narrow, interests.

And here is the challenge that Samuels (1997) declared, that pluralism inevitably holds in tension the interests of both individuals and groups, "the One and the Many" (p. 135). In the context of psychotherapy, he suggested that pluralism is different from eclecticism or synthesis: "…the trademark of pluralism is competition and its way of life is bargaining" (Samuels, 1997, p. 135). The significance of the effects of a move towards pluralism should not be underestimated, we believe, for, as Samuels described it, pluralism would take counselling beyond the familiar terms of integration. Rather, we suggest, it would offer counselling a more dis-integrative orientation, that could perhaps be likened to moves from assimilation to biculturalism, moves that offer and require different forms of partnership. Such a direction offers an acknowledgement of the coexistence of both competition and coherence (see Crocket, Kotzé, Snowdon, & McKenna, 2009, for a discussion of dis-integrative feminist practice), and takes counselling into the ethics of discomfort (Foucault, 1994), where relationship is maintained in the experience of anxiety or pain. In such a situation, Weingarten (2010) suggested, reasonable hope offers the potential that while the future may be uncertain and open, it is nonetheless "influenceable" (p. 8).

As we think of influencing the future of counsellor education, we are drawn to the hopes expressed by a group writing a New Zealand voice into pluralism in psychotherapy:

> We embrace a third alternative, a civil society founded on an ethics and economics of stewardship, kaitiakitanga, with regulation through association, through pluralism, diversity and relationship, and most particularly through a bi-cultural partnership guided by Te Tiriti o Waitangi. (IRPP, 2011, p. 250)

Our hope is that this kind of aspirational position can support the community of counsellor educators to imagine the creative potential of rhizomatic processes, at the same time as we acknowledge the limitations and uncertainties involved in the roll of the dice, along with incomplete efforts, thus far, to be guided by Te Tiriti.

Perhaps Cooper and McLeod's (2010) description of counsellor education on pluralistic terms offers some starting points for discussion:

> …four key principles…are likely to be associated with any kind of pluralistic training. First, students need to be offered a critical overview of the therapy field, drawing on historical, cultural and philosophical perspectives. Second, it needs to be explained to students that what they are being trained for is a process of life-

long learning *that supports a position of curiosity and inclusiveness. Third, pluralistic training places an emphasis on the identification and appreciation of personal and cultural* strengths and resources *in both therapists and clients. Finally, pluralistic working relies on a practical appreciation of the nature of* collaboration*, which is understood as a principled, ethical commitment to the valuing of human connectedness and community.* (pp. 145–146)

As counsellor educators ourselves, and as authors, we are not looking for particular answers or prescriptions or even guidelines at this point, but rather asking that counsellor educators might engage with a pluralistic sensibility, with the questions that are before us all. We suggest that the Core Values and Ethical Principles of counselling as expressed in the NZAC *Code of Ethics* (2002) might guide us in how to do this. In offering pluralism as a sensibility to guide the practice of these core values and ethical principles within counsellor education in Aotearoa New Zealand, we acknowledge and celebrate the richness of diversity, difference, and plurality afforded within this small professional community of counsellor educators.

Looking forward

Our purpose in this article is to raise questions about how counsellor educators together, and in our unique programmes, might prepare to participate in shaping a counsellor education-informed direction and policy within the counselling profession. Among the directions we find hopeful is the consortium approach of BACP developments in offering programme accreditation: consortiums would appear to offer more democracy than representation often does. We note, however, that this process comes at considerable financial cost. We are also drawn to the ethos of both partnership and pluralism that has been articulated in wider psychotherapy circles in New Zealand in response and resistance to psychotherapy having become a registered health profession. If counsellor education at this time were also to pair partnership and pluralism in responding to contemporary challenges, what possibilities might emerge?

> *Toiatewakamatauranga*
> *Ma wai e to? Maku e to, mau e to*
> *Ma tewhakarangaake e to*

> Haul forth the canoe of education
> Who should haul it? I should, you should
> All within calling distance should haul the canoe
> *(as cited in Macfarlane, 2007, p. 161)*

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