

Classification of Professionally Important Abilities and Skills of a Counseling Psychologist

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Abstract: *The article presents the results of theoretical and empirical research of professionally important abilities and skills of a counseling psychologist. Based on the analysis of scientific achievements and the results of anonymous questionnaires, the classification of professionally important abilities and skills of a counseling psychologist by certain groups was carried out. Professionally important abilities of a counseling psychologist are presented in four areas - volitional, gnostic, speech and perceptual; and professionally important skills are presented in seven areas - gnostic, communicative, perceptual, didactic, technological, organizational, control and evaluation. It is emphasized that professionally important abilities and skills should be classified separately. Since the abilities are due to the natural inclinations of the individual and mental phenomena, and skills are developed, formed and improved during the life of the person. Abilities and skills are interconnected and interdependent. Classification of professionally important abilities and skills of a counseling psychologist by certain groups provides opportunities: 1) to most systematically present the necessary professionally important characteristics of a counseling psychologist, 2) to review educational training programs for psychologists; 3) select the necessary methods and techniques for the diagnosis and verification of these professionally important characteristics of the candidate for the position of "counseling psychologist". According to the results of a scientific study on the expert assessment of the reference level of development of a counseling psychologist of professionally important abilities and skills, it was found that respondents believe that these abilities and skills should have a very high level of development.*

Keywords: *inclinations; reference abilities; reference skills; personality potential; opportunities; counseling psychologist; psychological counseling.*

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Introduction

At the present stage of development of psychological science there is a need for generalization, systematization and classification of scientific categories and phenomena. Studying the scientific achievements in the field of psychological counseling, we came to the conclusion that a clear systematic understanding of such scientific categories as "professionally important skills of a counseling psychologist" and "professionally important abilities of a counseling psychologist" does not exist today. There is no clear, scientifically sound classification of professionally important abilities and skills of a counseling psychologist by certain groups.

Scientists, in their scientific works, mainly described the professionally important abilities and skills of a counseling psychologist, revealing their substantive essence, Bachmanova N.F. & Stafurina N.L. (1985); Podlasy I.P. (2004); Bozadzhiev V.L. (2010); Tolstaya S. (2015); Tarasova O.V. & Cheremukhin A.D. (2017); Kristin M. Vespia (2006); Kristin M. Vespia & Eric M. Sauer (2006) and others, or classifying them into groups, Bozadzhiev V.L. (2010).

Some authors, describing the professionally important qualities of a counseling psychologist, included - "skills" Zyabreva A.A. (2018), "skills" Anderson T., Crowley M.J., Himawan L., Holmberg J. & Uhlin B. (2015), "faith" Schneider L.B. (2003). In our opinion, all scientific categories should be considered separately, determining their essence, structure and content. Thus, to present the main results of our study, it is first necessary to determine the categorical-conceptual apparatus. Different aspects of the problem under study are covered in the works of many scholars Palamarchuk, 2020; Nerubasska, 2020a; Nerubasska, 2020b; Melnyk, 2019; Sheremet, 2019; Gerasymova, 2019; Onishchuk, 2020; Maksymchuk, 2020a; Maksymchuk, 2020b.

The abilities of a counseling psychologist are of great importance for the high-quality implementation of professional functions. Because it depends on them the ability of a counseling psychologist to manage their actions, activities, their emotional processes and states; depends on the depth, strength, speed and ease of knowledge, skills and abilities.

It should be emphasized that "... abilities are not in knowledge, skills and abilities, but in the dynamics of their acquisition, that is, in how quickly, easily and firmly they are acquired by people, other things being equal. Abilities act only as some opportunity for acquiring knowledge and skills. Possibility turns into reality only in such activity, which cannot be carried

out without the presence of the necessary abilities ... ", Lukashevich V.V., Pronina E.N., (1999).

In our research, we consider abilities (general, special, professional) as a biologically determined characteristic of man, which is based on its natural potential, on its capabilities. Since this is an independent scientific category, we believe that when describing the psychological characteristics of a counseling psychologist - they must be separately classified and described.

It should also be noted that we fully agree that "... a skill is a way of performing an action mastered by a person, provided by a set of acquired knowledge and skills. It is formed through exercises and creates the ability to perform an action not only in familiar, but also in changed conditions. ... ", Burmistrova M.M., Vasilyeva L.L., Petrova L.Yu., Kashcheeva A.V., (2016). Therefore, in our study, classifying professionally important skills of a counseling psychologist by groups, we will adhere to the position that skills are a qualitative acquired characteristic of a person who develops, forms and improves through certain exercises.

The purpose of our research is to classify professionally important abilities and skills of a counseling psychologist in certain groups, as well as to establish their reference level of development.

To achieve this goal it is necessary to solve a number of such tasks:

- analyze scientific research and establish a list of professionally important skills and abilities of a counseling psychologist;
- to develop a questionnaire (based on selected professionally important skills and abilities of a counseling psychologist) and offer it to practicing counseling psychologists for expert assessment of their reference level of development;
- systematize, classify and group professionally important skills and abilities of a counseling psychologist;
- to establish a reference level of development of a psychologist-consultant of professionally important abilities and skills.

Classification of professionally important abilities of a counseling psychologist

Participants. A total of 53 practicing counseling psychologists took part in the research (Ukraine - Odessa, Kharkiv, Kyiv).

Research procedure. Based on the analysis of scientific works, we have selected professionally important abilities and skills of a counseling psychologist. Then we developed a questionnaire, which consisted of a list of professionally important skills that should be developed in a counseling psychologist, and a list of professionally important skills. Respondents were

asked to make an expert assessment (on a five-point scale) of the reference level of development of counseling psychologists offered professionally important abilities and skills. The survey was anonymous.

Research methods. In our research, the main methods were - analysis and synthesis; questionnaires, mathematical statistics, ranking, classification and grouping.

With the help of analysis and synthesis - we have identified a list of professionally important abilities and skills of a counseling psychologist. With the help of our questionnaire, we established professionally important abilities and skills of a counseling psychologist. Using the method of mathematical statistics - we statistically calculated the results, invented the average indicators for each ability and each skill.

With the help of the ranking method, we selected the reference abilities and skills of a counseling psychologist with a medium, high and very high degree of development. Using the method of classification - we systematized scientific ideas about the list of professionally important abilities and skills of a counseling psychologist, organized them on the basis of their similarity in certain essential substantive characteristics. Using the grouping method, we combined (on the basis of general orientation) into separate groups professionally important abilities and skills of a counseling psychologist.

Ethical approval. The study was anonymous, conducted in accordance with ethical principles and with the voluntary consent of counseling psychologists.

We believe that the professionally important abilities of a counseling psychologist should be classified into the following groups - volitional, gnostic, speech and perceptual.

Volitional professionally important abilities provide the ability of a person to consciously control his psyche, his actions, states, deeds, behavior, activities, and so on. The **willpower of the counseling psychologist** should include:

- ability to maintain self-control;
- the ability to withstand psycho-emotional stress without reducing productivity;
- ability to long-term stress of sensory systems in conditions of monogony, etc.

According to the results of an anonymous survey of 53 counseling psychologists, we found that mainly a counseling psychologist should have a very high degree of development of volitional abilities (Table 1).

Table 1. *Reference level of development of a counseling psychologist of volitional abilities*

Volitional abilities of a counseling psychologist	Reference level of development (percentages)				
	Very low n=53	Low n=53	Medium n=53	High n=53	Very high n=53
ability to maintain self-control	0	0	0	22,6	77,4
the ability to withstand psycho-emotional stress without reducing productivity	0	0	0	20,8	79,2
ability to long-term stress of sensory systems in conditions of monogony	0	0	0	30,2	60,8

Gnostic abilities are determined by human inclinations and are developed and improved by mastering the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary for professional activity. Gnostic abilities are based on the natural potential of mental cognitive processes. In our opinion, **the gnostic abilities of a counseling psychologist** should be included:

- ability to remember, store, reproduce, recognize, remember;
- the ability to analyze, synthesize, compare, classify, summarize, specify, abstract, i.e. the ability to understand the essence of phenomena and objects, their patterns of development and relationships, etc.;
- ability: a) to keep attention on some object; b) simultaneously cover several objects; c) deliberately shift attention from one object to another, from one activity to another; d) perform several activities in parallel or perform several different actions (listen to the client, analyze what is heard, record the main thing); e) simultaneously observe many characteristics of the object of observation, etc.;
- the ability to evoke appropriate images, creatively and constructively process them, to carry out reconstruction, etc.;
- the ability to reflect objects or phenomena, reproducing them from previous experience, but not perceiving them in real time, etc.

According to the results of scientific research, we found that all respondents are 100% convinced that a counseling psychologist should have a very high degree of development of epistemological abilities.

Speech abilities of a counseling psychologist are individual psychological features that ensure the success and effectiveness of the communicative process during psychological counseling. They are based on the personal speech potential of the psychologist, acquired and improved in

the process of his life. The **speech abilities of a counseling psychologist** should include:

- the ability to operate with language;
- the ability to clearly, simply, understandably and concretely express their thoughts and feelings;
- the ability to master the technique of contact and communication, etc.

According to the results of scientific research, we found that all respondents are one hundred percent convinced that a counseling psychologist should have a very high degree of development of speech skills.

Perceptual abilities are based on the sensory side of personality - sensory cognition and sensory interpretation. We believe that the **perceptual abilities of a counseling psychologist** should include:

- "... ability to enjoy verbal exchange...", Foster, F.D. and Viswanathan, S, (1996);
- the ability to enter the client's world without getting lost in it;
- the ability to listen, hear and hear;
- the ability to look, see and see, etc..

It is established that all respondents are 100% convinced that a counseling psychologist should have a very high degree of development of perceptual abilities.

Thus, volitional, gnostic, speech and perceptual groups of abilities are due to natural inclinations and mental phenomena. They are the basis for the development, formation and improvement of the necessary professionally important skills of a counseling psychologist. According to the results of an anonymous survey of 53 counseling psychologists, we found that respondents are convinced that the counseling psychologist benchmark professionally important abilities should generally have a very high and high degree of development.

Classification of professionally important skills of a counseling psychologist

The skills of a counseling psychologist are developed, formed and improved during training and during counseling. In our opinion, **professionally important skills of a counseling psychologist should be classified into the following groups** - gnostic, communicative, perceptual, didactic, technological, organizational, control and evaluation.

The **cognitive skills of a counseling psychologist** should include:

- ability to process, analyze, summarize, critically evaluate the received information;
- the ability to understand the communicative situation, to navigate it correctly and accordingly to form a certain strategy of behavior, to choose psychotechnics;
- ability to anticipate possible deviations, adverse events and consequences;
- ability to collect information, analyze and summarize it;
- ability to understand and interpret the internal state of the client according to the nuances of his behavior;
- the ability to dissociate, i.e. to be above the situation, not in the situation;
- ability to find the main problem, ways of its optimal solution, taking into account all the specific features and circumstances;
- ability to vary the ways to solve the problem;
- ability to identify in clients the features of mental states, processes and properties, socio-psychological attitudes and motives of behavior;
- ability to identify in the life of the client his positive and negative socio-psychological phenomena, etc..

According to the results of scientific research, we found that respondents are one hundred percent convinced that the above cognitive skills should have a counseling psychologist very high level of development.

The **communicative skills of a counseling psychologist** should include:

- ability to establish contact, maintain it, get out of it;
- ability to resist stereotypes of perception, barriers to communication;
- ability to start, support and end a conversation;
- ability to intercept and transmit initiative in communication;
- ability to persuade, inspire, support the client;
- ability to psychologically optimally build their language;
- be able to skillfully and intelligently use appropriate verbal and nonverbal means of influencing the client, Nelson-Jones R., (2001);
- the ability to choose and maintain the optimal psychological distance in communication with the client, Bertisch Meir, R., (2005);
- ability to ask questions, ask closed and open questions, formulate and test hypotheses, translate general words into specific facts, Kozlov N.I., (2013)

- ability to paraphrase the main points in the client's message, Kashapov M.M., (2018);
- the ability to check what is heard, asking the client clear and specific questions;
- be able to reformulate the client's problem, shifting the emphasis of his view on the problem from another angle, adding alternatives and a positive outlook, Kashapov MM, (2018);
- the ability to summarize what was heard to highlight the main thing and see the situation as a whole, Kashapov MM, (2018);
- the ability to identify and "... emphasize the contradictions in the story of the client", Kashapov MM, (2018), etc.

Respondents indicated that a counseling psychologist's communication skills should generally have a very high degree of development (Table 2).

Table 2. *The reference level of development of a counseling psychologist of communication skills*

Communicative skills of a counseling psychologist	Reference level of development (percentages)				
	Very low n=53	Low n=53	Medium n=53	High n=53	Very high n=53
ability to establish contact, maintain it, get out of it	0	0	0	18,9	81,1
ability to resist stereotypes of perception, barriers to communication	0	0	0	24,5	75,5
ability to start, maintain and end a conversation	0	0	0	13,2	86,8
ability to intercept and transmit initiative in communication	0	0	0	15,1	84,9
ability to persuade, inspire, support the client	0	0	0	11,3	88,7
ability to psychologically optimally build their language	0	0	0	5,7	94,3
be able to skillfully and intelligently use appropriate verbal and nonverbal means of influencing the client	0	0	0	9,4	90,6

ability to choose and maintain the optimal psychological distance in communication with the client	0	0	0	26,4	83,6
ability to ask questions, ask closed and open questions, formulate and test hypotheses, translate general words into concrete facts	0	0	0	20,8	79,2
ability to paraphrase the main points in the client's message	0	0	0	24,5	75,5
the ability to check what is heard by asking the client clear and specific questions	0	0	0	16,9	83,1
be able to reformulate the client's problem, shifting the emphasis of his view of the problem from another angle, adding alternatives and a positive outlook	0	0	0	15,1	84,9
the ability to summarize what is heard, to highlight the main thing and see the situation as a whole	0	0	0	22,6	77,4
the ability to identify and emphasize contradictions in the client's story	0	0	0	18,9	81,1

The **perceptual skills of a counseling psychologist** should include:

- ability to feel and understand the mental state of the client;
- ability to constructively perceive a traumatic situation, Kashapov M.M., (2018);
- ability to reflect the feelings of the client (ie to associate);
- the ability to "join a client or family to create a working alliance", Duncan, B. L., Miller, S. D., Wampold, B. E., & Hubble, M. A. (Eds.), (2010);

According to the results of scientific research, we found that respondents are one hundred percent convinced that the above perceptual skills should have a counseling psychologist very high level of development.

The **didactic skills of a counseling psychologist** should include:

- ability to choose adequate and appropriate forms, means, methods and techniques for consultative interaction;

- ability to use psychological techniques that will help the client to gather, gain a positive mood, Kozlov N.I., (2013)

- ability to adapt psychological technology to the client, etc..

Assessing didactic skills, respondents generally agreed that the degree of development of didactic skills in a counseling psychologist should have a high degree of development (Table 3).

Table 3. *Reference level of development of a counseling psychologist of didactic skills*

Didactic skills of a counseling psychologist	Reference level of development (percentages)				
	Very low n=53	Low n=53	Medium n=53	High n=53	Very high n=53
ability to choose adequate and appropriate forms, means, methods and techniques for consultative interaction	0	0	0	81,1	18,9
ability to use psychological techniques that will help the client to get together, to gain a positive mood	0	0	0	86,8	13,2
ability to adapt psychological technology to the client	0	0	0	83,1	16,9

The **technological skills of a counseling psychologist** should include:

- ability to maintain stable visual contact with the client;
- the ability to help the client feel that the psychologist can be trusted, Novotney, A., (2013);

- the ability to stimulate the client's positive motivation for change, transformation, problem solving;

- the ability to merge the client's goal-setting with his motivation;

- the ability to create such conditions for the client that he was able to independently choose the best course of action (or a way to solve a difficult situation);

- the ability to remove the client "... from the state of the Victim, to form the position of the Author", Kozlov N.I., (2013);

- ability to carry out "... reorientation of the client from search of the reasons to search of the decision, to translate language of states into

language of actions, to translate a problem into tasks завдання", Kozlov N.I., (2013);

– the ability "...not to deprive the client of experiences, but to direct them in a constructive direction", Bertisch Meir, R., (2005), etc.

According to the results of scientific research, it is established that the degree of development of technological skills in a counseling psychologist should have a very high degree of development (Table 4).

Table 4. Reference level of development of a counseling psychologist of technological skills

Technological skills of a counseling psychologist	Reference level of development (percentages)				
	Very low n=53	Low n=53	Medium n=53	High n=53	Very n=53
ability to maintain stable visual contact with the client	0	0	3,8	52,8	43,4
ability to help the client feel that the psychologist can be trusted	0	0	0	0	100
ability to stimulate the client's positive motivation for change, for transformation, for solving the problem	0	0	0	0	100
ability to merge the client's goal-setting with his motivation	0	0	0	22,6	77,4
ability to create such conditions for the client that he was able to choose the best course of action (or a way to solve a difficult situation)	0	0	0	0	100
ability to remove the client from the state of the Victim, to form the position of the Author	0	0	0	0	100
ability to reorient the client from finding reasons to find solutions, translate the language of states into the language of action, translate the problem into tasks	0	0	0	0	100
ability "not to deprive the client of experiences, but to direct them in a constructive direction"	0	0	0	0	100

The **organizational skills of a counseling psychologist** should include:

- ability to organize a workplace for psychological counseling;
- the ability to allocate time, manage their time and the time of others;
- ability to plan the sequence of certain tasks, etc.

According to the results of scientific research, we found that respondents are 100% convinced that the above organizational skills should have a very high degree of development of a counseling psychologist.

The **control and evaluation skills of a counseling psychologist** should include:

- ability to reflect on their experiences and their professional activities, etc.
- ability to professionally assess people, problem situations, different ways to solve the problem;
- ability to analyze the results of psychological assistance obtained during the control;
- the ability to accept invaluable feelings, views, unique individual psychological qualities of clients, Kociunas R., (1999);
- the ability to "... control their own passions, while being able to listen, seek clarification and take into account the racial and cultural differences of people...", Ford, Harris, Schuerger, (1993), etc.

Respondents are one hundred percent convinced that the above control and evaluation skills of a counseling psychologist should have a very high degree of development.

Thus, gnostic, communicative, perceptual, didactic, technological, organizational, control and evaluation skills of a counseling psychologist determine the psychologist's ability to conduct psychological counseling. According to practicing counseling psychologists, the proposed professionally important skills of a counseling psychologist should generally have a very high degree of development.

Conclusions

At present, there is no clear classification of professionally important abilities and skills of a counseling psychologist in psychological science. Therefore, we made an attempt to classify empirically selected professionally important abilities and skills of a counseling psychologist in certain groups. This provides opportunities: 1) most systematically present the necessary professionally important characteristics of a counseling psychologist, 2) to

review educational training programs for psychologists; 3) select the necessary methods and techniques for the diagnosis and verification of these professionally important characteristics of the candidate for the position of "counseling psychologist".

Professionally important abilities and skills of a counseling psychologist are interconnected and interdependent. Since "... abilities act only as an opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills", Lukashevich V.V., Pronina E.N., (1999), volitional, gnostic, speech and perceptual abilities act as a basis for development and formation of gnostic, communicative, perceptual, didactic, technological, organizational and control and evaluation skills. This classification of professionally important abilities and skills by certain groups is not final, it can be supplemented and improved.

Psychological science requires a clear statement of basic theoretical and empirical provisions. Therefore, based on the analysis of scientific achievements and the results of anonymous questionnaires, we have classified professionally important abilities and skills of a counseling psychologist by certain groups. We grouped the professionally important abilities of a counseling psychologist in four areas - volitional, gnostic, speech and perceptual; and we grouped professionally important skills in seven areas - gnostic, communicative, perceptual, didactic, technological, organizational, control and evaluation. We believe that professionally important abilities and skills should be classified separately. Since abilities are due to natural personality traits and mental phenomena, and skills are developed, formed and improved during a person's life. Abilities and skills are interconnected and interdependent. Abilities underlie the development, formation and improvement of the necessary professionally important skills of a counseling psychologist.

According to the results of scientific research on the expert assessment of the reference level of development of a counseling psychologist of professionally important abilities and skills, we found that respondents are convinced that these abilities and skills should have a very high level of development.

The prospect of further research is the comparison of real professionally important abilities and skills of a counseling psychologist with the reference, as well as the study of the reference level of development of a counseling psychologist of professionally important qualities.

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