

Article 35

Developing Wisdom in Counselors of the Future: Ignatian Pedagogy Applied to Counselor Education and Supervision

Paper based on a program presented at the 2015 Association for Counselor Educators and Supervisors National Conference: Leadership for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Practice, October 9, Philadelphia, PA.

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Abstract

The counselor's wisdom has been identified as an essential ingredient to culturally relevant counseling. The Ignatian pedagogical paradigm (IPP) is a promising avenue for developing wisdom traits in counselors. Cultural relevance and openness to different perspectives are integral to IPP in terms of the use of focused reflection on personal context, the person's relationship to the world, action taken in response to experience, and reflection on that experience. Character traits of wisdom are defined and the relevance of wisdom in the development of effective, culturally relevant therapeutic relationships is established. The five components of IPP are described and related to the development of the counselor's knowledge, skills, and attitudes. It is theorized that wisdom in the self of the counselor is developed as the IPP is applied in counselor education. Applications of IPP are discussed in relation to clinical practice, leadership roles, and counselor education programs.

Keywords: counselor education and supervision, self of the counselor, wisdom, pedagogy

Counselor education programs are designed to prepare counselors with the competencies necessary to build transformative relationships with people who have identified need for assistance. Accreditation standards guide education programs to prepare counseling and related professionals to provide services consistent with the ideal of optimal human development (Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs [CACREP], 2009). Researchers indicate the most valuable contribution a counseling professional can make to client outcome is within the

counseling relationship (Wampold, 2001). The counselor's personal character is one of the single most important factors in the development of trust and the therapeutic bond in counseling. The counselor's traits most desirable in the counseling relationship have been described as traits of *wisdom* (Hanna & Ottens, 1995). Wisdom is defined as a set of cognitive, affective, and reflective personal characteristics that are interactive as well as both personal and interpersonal (Sternberg, 1998). Hanna and Ottens (1995) further specified wisdom traits in terms of a counselor's abilities, including dialectical reasoning, metacognition, perspicacity, reflectivity, sagacity, or deep listening. Additionally, wisdom is identified as an essential ingredient in culturally competent counseling (Phan, Rivera, Volker, & Maddux, 2009). Wisdom traits of the counselor, specifically, cognitive ability, real-world skills, insight, reflective attitude, concern for others, and emotional intelligence, were found to be a significant factor in the therapeutic relationship (Osterlund, 2011). An important question remains, how can wisdom be taught in counselor education and supervision?

The Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm

Counselor educators are aware of training standards and the competencies students need to demonstrate as well as the evolving high training standards set forth by accrediting bodies, such as CACREP. According to CACREP (2016), counselor educators teaching in CACREP-accredited programs have increased faculty productivity in areas such as research, publication, and service and demonstrate a commitment to meeting the highest academic standards. The Ignatian pedagogical paradigm (IPP) is a practical and relevant approach that counselor educators might consider because of its potential to provide an integration of knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary for counselor competency and to address the development of a counselor's phronesis (practical wisdom) based on the exercise of self-reflectivity and character development in the process of counselor education. Korth (2008) described IPP as a way of learning and a method of teaching that takes a holistic view of the world, focusing primarily on the character development of the student through a teaching and learning process in the context of the student-faculty relationship. The faculty accompanies the students in their intellectual, spiritual, and emotional development by creating conditions and opportunities for students to learn from experiences, participate in self-reflection, and take actions that further their development as a counselor.

The IPP is the foundational model of pedagogy in Jesuit education, with the goal of developing men and women of competence, conscience, and compassion (Korth, 2008). Jesuits serve a justice-based mission, mindful of the needs of the poor and marginal; seek to understand different cultures on their terms; are open to the religious experiences of people from other traditions; and work with and for others (Traub, 2008). The history of Jesuit education is based on Ignatius Loyola (1491–1556), the cofounder of the Jesuit order of the Catholic denomination. The Jesuit humanistic values of reflection on experience and emotions and intentional action are consistent with humanistic psychology and cognitive behavioral therapy, which are consistent with healthy human development and thus a natural fit as a foundation for counselor education pedagogy.

There are five critical elements of IPP: a) context (the world of the faculty, the student, and the relationship to their environment); b) experience (both cognitive and affective); c) reflection (reconsideration and reaction to experience, increasing awareness, and considering different viewpoints); d) action (movement beyond knowing, flowing from knowledge and experience); and e) evaluation (learning from experience, receptivity to feedback, both formative and summative). Using the five elements of IPP, faculty can create an opportunity for students to reflect on and learn from their own experiences and perhaps find action or movement which brings further healing, either personally or in the world.

IPP and Faculty/Student Relationships

In terms of the first critical element, the relationship between the faculty, the student, and the environment is the context in which learning and growing takes place. The faculty sets the stage for a trusting relationship to develop by first knowing him/herself. Parker Palmer (1998) described this phenomenon by stating, “. . . if I am willing to look in that mirror and not run from what I see, I have a chance to gain self-knowledge—and knowing myself is as crucial to good teaching as knowing my students and my subject” (p. 2). If students are expected to grow in their self-knowledge and be receptive to critical feedback in a counselor training program, students need the context of a supportive relationship with faculty and fellow students in the process of their learning. Faculty can model the practice of self-knowledge by authentically connecting to students, not only intellectually, but emotionally and spiritually (Palmer, 1998). Consistency is important in terms of the context of the program environment. Students learn about ethical values but may question what they learn if they do not observe the ethics being practiced amongst the faculty and their peers.

IPP and Experience

The second critical value, experience, is important both in terms of past and present. During their training in counselor education, students explore their personal histories in order to better understand themselves and make sense of life's pain or traumas. Some may have a better understanding or affinity for intellectual understanding of experiences but need help connecting the emotions to their experiences. While other times the opposite is true, and emotions need to be connected to intellectual understanding. The reflection on past experiences is essential but so is the ability to reflect on personal reactions in the present moment. A famous here-and-now intervention is suggested by Yalom (2002) when he suggests asking (a client, student, or partner) in the present moment, “how are we doing?” as a way of bringing our experiences into the present moment and allowing our authentic, connected self to be present.

IPP and Reflection

Reflection is essential to learning from past and present experiences. The difference between someone who is ready to be a counselor and someone who is not depends on their ability to reflect upon their experiences, and learn from them. According to Nouwen (1972), an effective helper is someone who has reflected on, learned from, and acted upon their own suffering, and only then can they help another articulate the pain they experience. A potential student may apply to a program to become a counselor,

and they may have significant experience, but if they have learned nothing from their experience, how can they be of service to someone else who is struggling? The ability to be self-reflective is demonstrated when someone can look back on their reactions in a conflictual situation and discover motives or mistakes they may have made in response to an experience. In this aspect of experience, humility and lack of defensiveness are gateways to growth both interpersonally and intrapersonally.

In order to promote self-reflection in an advanced skills course, Hall (2013) suggested using daily mindfulness practice. She uses three activities based on Ignatian pedagogy, “being attentive to the reality about you, reverence for what you encounter, and appreciate how this kind of presence leads to revelation” (Gray, 2008, p. 200, as cited in Hall, 2013). During the course, counseling students learn about mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR), and they are required to experience 3 weeks of daily mindfulness practice. Students practice various forms of mindfulness, including sitting meditation, body scans, walking meditation, and mindful eating, with different focuses of awareness. They are instructed to focus on breath, the body, an object, sounds, thoughts, or choice-less awareness, while maintaining a stance of self-compassion and non-judgment. Students are asked to keep a journal for reflecting on their experiences and write a reflection paper evaluating their practice at the end of the 3 weeks. Students reported achieving the goal of anchoring to the present moment, rather than ruminating on the past or future. Some reported the challenge of maintaining mindfulness but feeling inspired to continue the journey towards greater self-knowledge, compassion for others, and a deeper connection to their own spirituality (Hall, 2013).

In IPP, reflection is not only a path to awareness of self, but awareness of others. Cultural relevance and openness to different perspectives are integral to IPP in terms of the focused reflection on personal context, the person’s relationship to the world, and the action they take in response to their experience and reflection on that experience. Counselors-in-training cultivate their concern for others, which is demonstrated by action that is the product of the development of an attitude of social justice and the betterment of others. As an example, Cates, Huntington, Arman, and Beres (2013) integrated the IPP with the RESPECTFUL counseling model (D’Andrea & Daniels, 1997), which asks students to assess themselves or their clients for a variety of cultural and spiritual/personal characteristics: R (religious/spiritual identity), E (economic class background), S (sexual identity), P (psychological maturity), E (ethnic/racial identity), C (chronological/ developmental challenges), T (trauma and threats to well-being), F (family background and history), U (unique physical characteristics), and L (location of residence and language differences). Students are encouraged to consider their own cultural and spiritual backgrounds, as well as those of their clients. by using the RESPECTFUL model as a guideline, while the IPP is used as an educational paradigm by the instructors (Cates et al., 2013).

IPP and Action

In counselor education, the hope is that students are able to make timely interventions with clients and learn how to convey empathy in the words that they speak. Action, in the IPP tradition, means that a student moves beyond knowing into action for the betterment of society. In cultural issues coursework, students may be required to experience a culture outside their familiar territory. The role of the counselor educator is

to inspire students to move outside their comfort zone and experience how “the other” may be treated in this world. Through experiences that have been reflected upon, students use their knowledge to act in service to others. Students can then be encouraged to advocate for themselves, their clients, and their profession based on a different worldview.

IPP and Evaluation

In counselor education, the student’s ability to give and receive appropriate feedback is essential. Counselor educators learn the importance of providing both summative and formative evaluative feedback to students during their training programs (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009). Critical feedback and evaluation of performance can be one of the trickiest aspects of counselor training. Students who may already feel vulnerable and exhausted by their own experiences of self-evaluation may be reluctant to receive feedback from their peers and supervisors. The balance begins with the faculty’s ability to model giving and receiving feedback in a manner that reflects not only openness, but also discernment about what to do (what action to take) with the feedback. Some faculty may not solicit feedback outside the formal evaluations they might receive at the end of a course. Others may inquire with students about their performance and how they can better meet students’ needs or how the students might be getting more out of supervision or coursework during the progression of the course.

Students may benefit from setting the stage for openness to critical feedback by talking about the topic at the beginning of courses. Questions in a critical feedback self-assessment can be used, by asking students and faculty to discuss their experiences with giving and receiving critical feedback are essential to creating an atmosphere of openness (Hulse-Killacky, Orr, & Paradise, 2006). Questions such as, “what is a memory you have when you received critical feedback in your childhood?” gives students the opportunity to practice the IPP principles by allowing students to reflect on their previous experiences with getting critical feedback in childhood and beyond. Once self-awareness is increased about reactions to feedback, students are better able to respond with openness to hearing feedback and incorporating ideas into their future actions.

IPP and Jesuit Values

The Jesuit values that are foundational to the IPP are the following:

1. *Cura Personalis*: Latin phrase meaning “care for the person,” *cura personalis* is having concern and care for the personal development of the whole person. This implies a dedication to promoting human dignity and care for the mind, body, and spirit of the person.
2. Unity of Mind and Heart: Our hearts and minds are not divided; they are congruent when the whole person is educated and engaged.
3. *Magis*: Latin meaning the “more,” *magis* embodies the act of discerning the best choice in a given situation to better serve God or the greater good. *Magis* does NOT mean to always do or give “more” to the point of exhaustion. *Magis* is the value of striving for the better, striving for excellence.

4. **Men and Women for and With Others:** This value embodies a spirit of giving and providing service to those in need and standing with the poor and marginalized. We are encouraged to pursue justice on behalf of all persons.
5. **Contemplatives in Action:** Although we are thoughtful and philosophical, we do not merely think about social problems, we take action to address them. Developing the habit of reflection centers and strengthens one's spiritual life and guides our actions.
6. **Finding God in All Things:** This may be the one phrase that sums up Ignatian spirituality. It invites a person to search for and find God in every circumstance of life; God is present everywhere and can be found in all of creation. Many find this Jesuit value the most difficult; if you are uncomfortable with the term God, consider finding the good or sacred in all things. (Regis University, n. d.)

These Jesuit values, which are the foundation of the IPP, are also consistent with the wisdom traits that have been established as necessary traits for the self of the counselor in the therapeutic relationship. Appendix A shows the connections between wisdom traits and the Jesuit values that are the foundation of IPP.

Wisdom Traits and Ignatian Pedagogy

The five critical elements of IPP create a context for teaching the wisdom traits—cognitive ability, real-world skills, insight, reflective attitude, concern for others and emotional intelligence—which have been identified as essential for the self of the counselor. Cognitive ability and real-world skills are wisdom traits that are further cultivated in the context of the student/faculty/environmental relationship. Students grow deeper in their ability to understand themselves and others by examining past experiences and learning from them. Problem solving is a real-world skill that requires the ability to identify and properly frame a problem so that the solution does not lead to more problems (Hanna, Bemak, & Chung, 1999; Sternberg, 1985).

Counselor educators can teach problem solving using case studies in which students are required to contemplate the context of the problem and create solutions that fit the situation. Brief solution-focused therapy is taught by using exception-seeking and coping questions, as well as problem-free talk (De Shazer et al., 1986). Counselors can use problem-solving skills when they are working with clients with a solution focus on client strengths. Beyond cognitive ability, the IPP requires students to expand their cognitive knowledge to integrate their affective awareness and to expand their knowledge of self to openness and sensitivity to the perspectives of others.

Deautomatization, as a wisdom trait, is related to problem solving and cognitive ability in that a person resists tendencies towards habitual, automatic behavior and thinking patterns, with an emphasis on awareness of actions and responsible choice. The Jesuit value of contemplatives in action is by definition the act of self-reflectivity and taking intentional action for the betterment of self and others. One of the practices of Ignatian spirituality encourages healthy “detachment” from things and behaviors that could be termed “addictive” or disordered behavior. Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is a therapeutic approach that emphasizes the importance of thinking and how thoughts

influence emotions and actions or behaviors (Beck & Greenberg, 1984). The counselor helps the client to identify and change distorted thinking, which can result in problematic behaviors and feelings.

The wisdom ability of dialectical reasoning and tolerance of ambiguity can be promoted by the IPP activities such as reflection on experiences in which there are no easy answers, or navigating a solution when values are at odds. Dialectical reasoning requires awareness of context, the interdependence of phenomena, situations, and the interplay of opposing views, with consideration for all sides of an issue and oriented towards beneficial change (Hanna et al., 1999). In the action aspect of IPP, a person practicing IPP will be challenged to demonstrate openness to alternate viewpoints and recognize the ambiguity intrinsic to the nature of human beings and their interactions with others and the world (Hanna et al., 1999). Counselor educators can create opportunities for counseling students to engage in conversations about diversity. For example, in an advanced counseling skills course, students are paired up and asked to talk with their partner about their differences (gender, race, ethnicity, marital status, etc.). Students then reflect on this experience paying attention to their feelings and identifying how they can use skills and insights from this experience in the future to create therapeutic relationships with their clients.

Wisdom traits of perspicacity, insight, and emotional intelligence are present in each aspect of the IPP. Perspicacity is the ability to see through situations, not being easily fooled or deceived, intuitively understanding and accurately interpreting the environment and looking beyond appearances (Hanna et al., 1999). In order to have perspicacity, a person must be able to perceive from a fully connected standpoint—mind, body, and spirit. Mindfulness has been described as a method to help a person connect with self and be fully present to others. During the practicum and supervision component of counselor education programs, faculty can teach counseling students to better listen to “their gut” or intuition by providing live supervision, asking students in the moment what they were thinking and feeling. Ask them to verbalize these perceptions that may inform the approach they need to take with the client.

Cura personalis, or care for the whole person, is necessary for a counselor’s self-care. During a counselor education program, counselor educators model self-care and can teach counseling students to set wellness goals. Caring for the whole person is part of the wisdom traits of affective awareness and empathy (Hanna et al., 1999). Affective awareness is similar to emotional intelligence, which has been defined as having a high level of self-awareness, the ability to manage emotions, the ability to self-motivate, having empathy for others, and possessing good relationship skills (Goleman, 1995). Affective awareness has also been described as recognition of the interdependence of cognition and affect, and the ability to experience the full range of emotions without becoming dysfunctional (Hanna et al., 1999). Affective awareness and emotional intelligence are necessary for counselor educators to model and promote in their students. When utilizing IPP, emotional intelligence is promoted as affective awareness is essential to experience, and emotions are a focus in the IPP activities of reflection, action, and evaluation.

Finding God (or the sacred) in all things requires the wisdom perspective of having a greater purpose, fulfillment, and meaning in life. Finding God in all things can also mean finding the good in all things; this strengths-based, positive psychology

perspective of spiritual engagement and optimism is linked to happiness (Seligman & Peterson, 2003). Counselor educators can create opportunities for counseling students to talk about purpose and meaning in life during education about existential theories and topics of grief, death, and dying (Frankl, 1985). For example, students can be asked to journal on the following prompt: “Describe parts of yourself that are ‘dead’ or how may you not be fully alive? What would you need to do differently to be fully alive?” This type of reflection can inspire students to explore and deepen their own personal values and beliefs about the purpose and meaning in their life and what that means for them in terms of their counseling vocation.

In conclusion, IPP requires the awareness of context, the utilization of experience, self-reflection, action and evaluation, which enhance the development of characteristics of wisdom in the counselor. Wisdom traits have been established as essential for counselor competence in therapeutic relationships with diverse clients. IPP can be intentionally incorporated into counselor training programs from admissions, to training and evaluation. Cates et al. (2013) provided an example of utilizing IPP during practicum, when students begin counseling work with clients under live supervision with expert faculty. There are intentional opportunities in context (of the supervision relationship), experience (with counseling client/s), reflection (students journal and reflect on their experiences), action (in supervision and then translating the feedback into changed behavior in the counseling room), and evaluation (formative and summative). IPP can have an impact beyond counselor education in terms of leadership development and the betterment of others and the community at large.

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Note: This paper is part of the annual VISTAS project sponsored by the American Counseling Association. Find more information on the project at: <http://www.counseling.org/knowledge-center/vistas>

Appendix A
Wisdom Characteristics & Jesuit Values Important for a Counselor and the Alliance

Sternberg(1985)/ Hanna et al. (1999)	Webster (2007)	Ardelt (2003)	Characteristic Description (Osterlund, 2011)	Jesuit Values
Problem Solving- Finding	Experience	Cognitive	Cognitive Ability: Ability to identify and properly frame a problem so that the solution is efficient and does not lead to more problems; ability to reframe problems and solutions. Learning from the environment. Ability to cope with a wide range of people and life situations in an optimum fashion; the ability to find fulfillment and meaning in life.	Contemplatives in Action
Effective Coping Skills		Cognitive/Reflective		<i>Magis</i> ; Finding the sacred in all things
Dialectical Reasoning	Openness	Reflective/ Cognitive	Real-World Skills: Recognition of context, interdependence of phenomena, situations, and the interplay of opposing views; considers all sides of an issue; oriented towards beneficial change. Recognition of ambiguity as intrinsic to the nature of human beings and their interactions with others and the world; able to perceive, integrate, and appreciate shades of gray.	Unity of Mind and Heart
Tolerance of Ambiguity		Cognitive		Men and women for/with others
Perspicacity		Cognitive/Reflective	Insight: Ability to “see through” situations; not easily fooled or deceived; ability to intuitively understand and accurately interpret the environment; looks beyond appearances. Thinks before speaking, acting, making decisions; Concerned with the limits and presuppositions about knowledge; awareness of awareness; knowing about knowing; thinking about thinking; intuitive knowing.	Unity of Mind & Heart
Judgment/ Metacognition		Cognitive/Reflective		Contemplatives in Action
Deautomatization	Reminiscence	Cognitive/Reflective	Reflective Attitude: Resists tendencies towards habitual, automatic behavior and thinking patterns; emphasis on awareness of actions and responsible choice. Listening skills, deep insight, and awareness of human beings and relationship; possessed of self-knowledge, and is capable of self-transcendence. Learns from mistakes of self and others.	Contemplatives in Action
Sagacity		Reflective/Affective		Cura Personalis; Unity of Mind and Heart
Affective Awareness	Emotional Regulation	Affective	Emotional Intelligence: Recognizes the interdependence of cognition and affect; awareness of emotion and feeling states. Ability to experience full range of emotions without becoming dysfunctional. A strong sense of the feelings and outlooks of others; understanding others from their subjective point of view and from a perspective that is not self-centered. Concern for Others: Compassion for others; caring for the welfare of living beings and the environment.	Cura Personalis; Unity of Mind and Heart
Empathy		Affective		Men and women for/with others
Concern for Environment		Affective/Reflective		Contemplatives in Action
	Humor		Recognition of life’s ironies and a well-developed sense of humor, especially the self-effacing kind; ability and willingness to make others feel comfortable; use of humor as a mature coping strategy.	<i>Cura Personalis</i>