

## A RESPONSE TO THE FINDINGS OF JEVNE

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### *Abstract*

This brief response to the findings of Jevne (1981) on the competencies and issues in Canadian counsellor education is an attempt to determine some rationale for the findings and to raise questions as to why the respondents answered as they did.

### *Résumé*

Cette brève réponse aux conclusions de Jevne (1981) se rapportent aux compétences et aux questions posées dans le domaine de l'éducation des conseillers au Canada est une tentative de déterminer une raison d'être des conclusions et de poser des questions sur le pourquoi des réponses données par les sujets.

It is commendable that Dr. Jevne (1981) has done a Canada wide study to determine which competencies are seen to be needed as outcomes in counsellor education. This field, nebulous by nature, poses problems for the serious researcher. Nevertheless, this study is done by an interesting method and in a comprehensive manner, and any results that surprise or confuse the reader probably stem more from the different perceptions of who counsellors are than from the research methodology.

Indeed, it is difficult to study the needed competencies of counsellors, as a specific group, because their roles and/or professional status vary widely from province to province. The first question to be addressed in a study of this nature might be: Has the profession become so diversified that very few general principles or professional competencies can apply to the profession as a whole? If such be the case, this may explain the priority Dr. Jevne's respondents gave to human traits instead of professional skills.

The survey of the literature, comprehensive as it is, sets a cognitive stance to prepare the reader for the results of the research, but the abrupt transition from literature to research methodology leaves the reader still wondering if the present study is an effort to confirm a Canadian version of a similar American study or if it is meant to clarify the opinions of counsellors and counsellor educators of Canada in regard to certain priorities in counsellor education programs.

The rank ordering of selfawareness and personal characteristics as the most important needed competencies of counsellors may reflect the humanistic influence of the 1960's and early 1970's when a number of the respondents were in training

themselves. That alone, though, cannot give the total answer. Could it be that there is a growing awareness that in all helping professions the "human element" is a prerequisite to successful interaction? One wonders how the respondents would have reordered the other competencies had self-awareness and personal characteristics been assumed as "givens" of the profession.

Skills no doubt can be learned without knowledge of theoretical bases and often the technician can operate skillfully without knowing why, but it would seem that such behavior would be superficial and less than genuine. Since the respondents placed a high priority on self awareness and personal characteristics, they may have assumed these would be a means of producing depth, thus requiring less consideration for theory.

Perhaps one reason the professional/ethical competency ranked lower in this study than the American study is that professional/ethical conduct is in many ways related to self awareness and personal characteristics as defined here. A real difference in the two studies may not exist.

It is surprising that considering the lack of clarity as to the direction of the profession and the competencies of counsellors that there should be such a high degree of unanimity on candidate selection criteria.

The study stimulates many questions in the reader's mind but probably none so strong as the reason for such low priority to train skilled professionals who can teach, do research, or train other counsellors. The low ranking awarded assessment and research skills makes one cynical about the expressed concern about determining our effectiveness in counselling.

Although there is no current dictionary of counselling terms, it appears there was a general consensus among respondents about the meaning of those used in this research.

The study is a worthwhile one and, while it replicates more than it discovers, it shows a general trend in the thinking of counsellors and counsellor educators as to the needed competencies of present and future counsellors in Canada.

Follow-up research of this nature might employ different statistical means of analysis that would give a clearer picture of how much greater priority one competency was ranked above another.

*References*

- Jevne, R. Counsellor competencies and selected issues in Canadian counsellor education. *Canadian Counsellor*, 1981, 15, 57-63.