

The Internationalization of Counselor Education in Tibetan School Communities in India

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Abstract

This qualitative case study adds to the Counselor Education and Supervision (CES) research base on culturally sensitive practices when internationalizing counselor education. It examines why and then how Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) school and mental health counselors synthesize Western mental health with Buddhist philosophy and practices.

Problem

Non-Western schools and communities may adopt elements of Western mental health knowledge, practice, and philosophy to supplement culturally specific mental health practices and services (Duan et al. 2011).

We did not find any literature that has deeply examined how Buddhist counselors working with non-Western Buddhist communities integrate Western mental health, especially within a Tibetan culturally context.

Purpose

This qualitative case study adds to the Counselor Education and Supervision (CES) research base on culturally sensitive practices when internationalizing counselor education.

It examines why and then how Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) school and mental health counselors synthesize Western mental health with Buddhist philosophy and practices.

Relevant Literature

Dean, C., et al. (2011). Internationalizing counselling: A Southeast Asian perspective. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, 24(1), 29–41.

Kubota, R. (2009). Internationalization of universities: Paradoxes and responsibilities. *Modern Language Journal*, 93(4), 612–616.

Leong, F. L., & Leach, M. M. (2007). Internationalising Counseling Psychology in the United States: A SWOT Analysis. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 56(1), 165-181. doi:10.1111/j.1464-0597.2007.00283.x

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Marsella, A. J., & Pedersen, P. (2004). Internationalizing the counseling psychology curriculum: Toward new values, competencies, and directions. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, 17(4), 413–423.

Savickas, M. L. (2007). Internationalization of Counseling Psychology: Constructing Cross-National Consensus and Collaboration. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 56(1), 182-188. doi:10.1111/j.1464-0597.2007.00284.x

Sugamura, G., Haruki, Y., & Koshikawa, F. (2007). Building more solid bridges between Buddhism and Western psychology. *American Psychologist*, 62(9), 1080–1081.

Tuicomepee, A., Romano, J. L., & Pokaeo, S. (2012). Counseling in Thailand: Development from a Buddhist perspective. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 90(3), 357–361.

Research Questions

1. How do CTA counselors adapt, integrate, and synthesize Western mental health philosophies and practices with Buddhist philosophy and practices?
2. Why do counselors and school administrator's synthesis Western mental health and Buddhist philosophy and training?
3. What Western mental health trainings, knowledge, and skills are perceived to be most useful to communities served by the CTA?

Theoretical Framework

Savickas (2007) Internationalizing counseling psychology

1. Define counseling psychology from an international perspective,
2. Crystallize a cross-national professional identity,
3. Encourage construction of indigenous models, methods, and materials,
4. Promote international collaboration

Procedures

Step 1: 14 question survey delivered online prior to a conference for professional counselors in Dharamsala. Survey was created by the research team: one who is Indian and works with the CTA closely. Another who is familiar with the Tibetan Buddhist psychology. Additional consultation from two CES faculty familiar with the topic and method for survey question construction. This had low turnout as a result of accessibility.

Research team provided this survey prior to the conference for those who were unable to do the online survey. The surveys were anonymous and intended for roughly 20 counselors working for the CTA. Two responded online. We have received 8 survey submissions.

Step 2: Research team had data collection problems at the conference due to travel and conference scheduling . 6 surveys were collected, follow up interviews may still occur but IRB review is needed.

Data Analysis

Strategy developed by Colaizzi (1978) which combines within-case and across-case analytic strategies.

Identification of themes using coding and sorting

Limitations

Multiple language differences. Most participants are native Tibetan language speakers and know English as a second language and studied counseling as an advanced degree in English.

Data collection problems. Limited on the ground access to CTA counselors who work with Tibetan communities at difficult to travel areas.

Low Internet accessibility and physically remote for researchers. Part of the survey has been online and was too complex for accessibility level.

Limited comparability-Examines one cultural group

Findings/ Conclusions

Research is being conducted currently .

Social Change Implications

Inform Central Tibetan Administrators on how to integrate counselor education opportunities into their community

Add to the body of knowledge in the Counselor Education and supervision field regarding East –West exchanges, culturally sensitive internationalization of counselor education, and examine inherent problems and strengths of integrating Western mental health within the context of other cultures.

Add a greater understanding of the process by which cultural educational exchanges are operationalized.