

My Philosophy of Teaching in Counselor Education

Gregory C. Wright, LCPC, NCC

Department of Counselor Education & Family Studies, Liberty University

Author Note

Gregory Cecil Wright

I have no known conflict of interest to disclose.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Gregory Cecil Wright.

Email: gcwright@liberty.edu

People are often turning to counselors for assistance in navigating the fast-paced and stressful issues of life. Counseling is something that has attracted people to seek out professional assistance to help relieve their mental health issues. Even though there is an urgent need for help and a great employment opportunity, counselors must practice self-care and must wisely manage their wellness and the high demands placed on them professionally, in order to avoid the potential for burnout (Murphy & Kruis, 2023).

In light of the demand for and demand on counselors, my teaching philosophy as a counselor educator is one that focuses on an integration of constructivism and transformative learning, where the students can become effective counselors based on student-driven and learner-centered approaches. (Bruner, 1996; Mezirow & Taylor, 2009; Vygotsky, 1978). It is crucial that counselor educators provide a collaborative and inclusive environment that encourages respect, exploration, learning, and critical thinking, all of which helps to develop students that are capable and effective in their prospective communities (Vipler & Sawatsky, 2023). This aligns with Carl Roger's Person-Centered Therapy, which encourages a working and collaborative relationship and promotes autonomy, genuineness, unlimited acceptance and assistance, and empathy (Rogers, 2020, p. 230). Additionally, I recognize that counselor educators are gatekeepers in the field of counseling and must be in tune with their students such that they can guide, facilitate, and encourage growth in developmentally-sound, ethical, and effective ways that ensure counselors-in-training successfully progress through their training and into the field.

As a counselor educator with over 16 years in education as a classroom and music teacher, I believe in implementing new strategies and approaches that can be used to reach each student. "No child left behind" was a slogan that was used in early childhood education in the early 2000's. I believe in using this same approach in counselor education today. As a supervisor and teacher in counseling, I interact with the students with an integrated interpersonally sensitive style (therapeutic, committed, perceptive, and invested), attractive style (flexible, open, supportive, warm, and friendly), and task-oriented style (goal-oriented, thorough, and focused). I believe that there is always room for growth and learning and that the integration of therapeutic approaches and strategies can be used, in order to reach each student where he/she is mentally and emotionally. It is important, as a counselor educator, to activate the student's prior knowledge and to challenge the students' worldview; giving them the opportunity to critically reflect and transform through every aspect of the learning/teaching process (Vipler & Sawatsky, 2023).

I also believe that it is essential to offer in-person, as well as online (asynchronous and synchronous), teaching/learning styles, which fully encourage student interaction, reflective learning, and student contribution in the learning process. Their learning can be assessed via discussion boards, quizzes, group work/projects, weekly real-time discussions, presentations, and research. These are designed to get the students to critically reflect, to engage with differing opinions respectfully, to take ownership of their learning experience, to become autonomous thinkers, and to explore new assumptions through a more intense form of conversation (Vipler & Sawatsky, 2023). I believe that this helps to properly and effectively prepare students to be able to meet the needs of the people, who will come to them for help.

Students grow, change, and develop their own philosophy of counseling as a result of their interaction with the curriculum, course work, their faculty, fellow students, personal reflections, and evolving worldview. Counseling theories are presented to the students, and they are given the autonomy to decide which counseling theory they believe and embrace. It is my duty as a counselor educator to be effective, objective, inclusive, culturally sensitive, and ethical, as I work together with the students in this explorative process.

Every aspect of the rigorous learning experience is used to help the students to become effective, competent, culturally sensitive, and ethical counselors in the field of counseling. CACREP (2024) explicitly discusses required competencies pertaining to ethics, professional identity, legal standards, and best practices throughout education programs. By the end of the program, the students should be competent in all aspects of counseling, ranging from their state laws to ethics. I also believe that the students should be able to effectively state their own personal philosophy of teaching and should be able to explain and demonstrate best practices as counselors in the field. It is important for counselor educators to model best practices and to always encourage exploration, autonomy, and personal reflection for all students in the program. Reflection, along with learner autonomy, is crucial for the development of adult professional identity (Cranton, 2016). “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:10, KJV).

References

- Bruner, J. S. (1996). *The culture of education*. Harvard University Press.
- Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs. (2024). *CACREP Standards*. <https://www.cacrep.org>
- Cranton, P. (2016). *Understanding and promoting transformative learning* (3rd ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003448433>
- King James Bible*. (2008). Oxford University Press. (Original work published 1769)
- Mezirow, J., & Taylor, E. W. (2009). *Transformative learning in practice*. Jossey-Bass.
- Murphy, J., & Kruis, N. (2023). Emotional exhaustion and turnover intentions among counselors in rural Substance Use Disorder treatment programs. *Substance Use & Misuse*, 58(2), 180-187, DOI: [10.1080/10826084.2022.2151314](https://doi.org/10.1080/10826084.2022.2151314)
- Rogers, C. (2020). *Client-centered therapy* (2nd ed.). Robinson.
- Vipler, B. S., & Sawatsky, A. P. (2023). When I say... transformative learning. *Medical Education*, 57(12), 1184-1186. doi:[10.1111/medu.15189](https://doi.org/10.1111/medu.15189)
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvjf9vz4>