Supervision and continuing professional development: Supervisors' hopes for meaningful, supervision-supported CPD

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Abstract

Continuing professional development (CPD) is now embedded into the New Zealand Association of Counsellors (NZAC) practices, such as its members' supervision, processes for membership renewal and applications for annual practicing certificates. Since its implementation in 2017, a number of developments have been made to NZAC CPD requirements, and in 2020 the process went online. During the same year, six experienced supervisors participated in a small-scale study in which they were interviewed about their experiences of the CPD process and its effects on supervision. The research project was part of a postgraduate paper in professional supervision and worked to introduce and engage researcher-students, all of whom were experienced counselling practitioners, in a supervised collaborative project. This article offers a review of literature on CPD and supervision, and presents the new findings about supervisors' hopes for meaningful, supervision-supported CPD. The findings highlighted limitations with current competencies for CPD and questioned these competencies as reflecting dominant Pākehā constructions of counselling and therefore, having effects for Māori practitioners. The study also revealed a tension between treating professional development as a requirement to be accounted for and hopes for supervision as a space to reflect on and shape future professional development.

Key words: supervision, continuing professional development, professional identity, reflective practice

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Background

The New Zealand Association of Counsellors *Te Roopu Kaiwhiriwhiri o Aotearoa* (NZAC) announced in October 2017 that members would be "registered" under a new self-regulatory process. This process was a response to the "belief that ongoing continuing professional development [CPD], together with more robust tertiary qualification standards for new entrants, are critically important to ensuring high quality, professional counselling services" (NZAC, 2017, p. 2). The announcement refers to "a more rigorous CPD programme" (p. 4) to support this claim. This two-pronged attention to further professionalising counselling, that is, counsellor education standards and the "more rigorous CPD programme", has been intended to provide increased confidence in the eyes of the public and funders of counselling services, and to better position members of NZAC as qualified professionals.

The decision to implement the new CPD programme was the outcome of a project in which the NZAC National Executive invited former counsellor and author Rhonda Pritchard to "review the current processes of establishing continuing competence… in comparison with the processes of other similar professional bodies" (Pritchard, 2015, p. 1). She found that change was needed to improve commitment to, and reporting of, members' professional development. The political environment for this development was that the National Executive recognised that NZAC was "not in a position to confidently declare self-regulation" (p. 2).

While membership standards and ethics processes were considered robust, "an improved accounting for or monitoring of" CPD was considered a proactive response at the time to "questions about NZAC counsellors' [sic] credibility [that might arise] with the minimal recertification requirements" (p. 2).

Pritchard referred to competency as a key rationale for linking competence and CPD. Drawing on an understanding of competence (Epstein & Hundert, 2002) and its components (Sperry, 2010), she stated, "professional development relates to what we learn. Competence relates to how we apply the learning and the effects on our clients" (p. 3). It was within this context of ideas about learning and the application of learning that supervision became the site at which the "accounting for and monitoring of" (p. 2) CPD should be located. Addressing members about the role of supervisors, Pritchard noted that, "It is envisaged that in the future there will be a more extended conversation between you and the supervisor about your goals and plan and about what you have learned and how it has been applied" (p. 4).

The New Zealand Association of Counsellors' Code of Ethics (2020a) identifies professional development as one of three components of competent practice, alongside supervision and practicing "within the limits of their knowledge, training and experience" (Section 5.9.c.). In the process to implement and monitor members' CPD, counsellors' professional supervision was viewed as the appropriate site for this to occur. The original 2002 version of the Code of Ethics stated, "Counsellors shall undertake appropriate professional development activities" (Section 5.9.b.). This was amended at the 2020 Annual General Meeting of NZAC to read: "Counsellors shall undertake appropriate professional development activities according to the Association's requirements. If selected for audit, this includes complying with the Association's auditing processes and standards" (NZAC, 2020b). This amendment consolidates the process of CPD and its role within supervision as a regulatory process for NZAC members. Research into the effects of this regulatory requirement of CPD being included in supervision, and what this means for supervision, is timely.

This article reports the findings from a small qualitative study that asked supervisors what effects monitoring practitioners' CPD had on their supervision. Local and international literature about CPD and supervision is examined, the study's findings are presented, and implications of the findings are discussed.

Literature Review

Continuing professional development (CPD) is fundamental to maintaining competent counsellor practice (Sperry, 2010) and supervisors are acknowledged as providing a vital contribution to the CPD process (Stricker, 2012). In this review of literature, four areas are explored. Firstly, supervision as a site of practitioner CPD. Secondly, research findings indicating that CPD promotes professional identity are discussed. Thirdly, the desire across professions that CPD will provide for professional recognition is considered. Lastly, the process of CPD and its constant search for *meaningful* professional development is addressed.

Supervision as a site for CPD

CPD (sometimes referred to in the literature and in other professions as continuing education or continuing professional education) is viewed as a lifelong process which starts with a qualification. However, over time it can face challenges of cost, accessibility, and executive decisions about the type of CPD that should be undertaken. The question of whether CPD is shaped for personal or organisational purposes (Alsop, 2013; Halton et al., 2014; Walston & Khaliq, 2010) poses a further challenge.

A number of international authors locate conversations about CPD within counsellor supervision. Within the American context, where supervision is only mandated while a counsellor is in training, Falvey and Cohen (2004) identified supervisors as accountable for promoting practitioners' professional development (p. 63). Wilkins (1997) found that conversations in supervision help "clarify" (p. 12) relevant professional training and personal development, which lead to an "extension of skills and knowledge" (p. 13) that are "vital to the proper functioning of a counsellor" (p. 10). Supporting this view, Gaete and Ness (2015) argued for a learning alliance within supervision that copes with the demands of continuing professional development. They cited Holloway (1995) who stated that the "main goal of supervision" (p. 60) is to foster professional development. However, Ungar's (2006) postmodern view of a supervisor includes one who takes a supporting role in CPD and may assist a practitioner to explore "emotional hurdles… beyond his or her immediate work" (p. 61). Describing supervision as a "thinking space", Simmonds (2010) encouraged practitioners "to remain aware of their experience, knowledge and skills" (p. 19) while they consider "future positions" (p. 21). According to Alsop (2013), when these future positions include developmental needs, supervision can offer opportunities to start thinking about longer term plans.

Along with engagement in CPD, regular attendance at supervision is also required for members of the New Zealand Association of Counsellors (NZAC, 2020a, Section 9.1). In Crocket et al.'s (2007) study on the effects of supervision for counselling practice, the "links between effective supervision and effective counselling practice" (p. 55) were reported. This focus on effective supervision is particularly relevant when considering CPD, as the authors noted the "increasing emphasis on supervision offering quality assurance for counselling practice" (Crocket et al., 2007, p. 55). Whereas discussions about accountability in supervision have been, according to one of the participants in the study, "less formal in the distant past" (p. 62), they are now fundamental in NZAC's enhanced CPD programme. Another participant in Crocket et al.'s research reported that there was a shift amongst supervisors who were now speaking about "accountability [and] the need to prove ourselves" (p. 62). From this study, it appeared that supervision, therefore, was viewed as a site in which the quality of counselling practice could be explored. The notion of accountability translated into the understanding of supervision as the pragmatic context for discussions and monitoring of professional development, supporting quality practice. Positioning supervisors, however, as evaluators of counselling practice does raise questions about the potential threat to the relational foundations and power relations of effective supervision.

Power relations in supervision are clearly in the spotlight (see Crocket et al., 2007). Discussing the position of power within the supervision relationship, Fine and Turner (2014) suggested that, while it is an ever-present ingredient in all relationships, looking at supervisory relationships only through the lens of power could be narrow and misleading (p. 302). With this caveat in mind, a central question to consider is how power relations are constructed and played out between the participants in the supervisory relationship (p. 298) and how these might be related to discussions and decisions about CPD. How that might happen in supervision links to negotiation of power relations.

These ideas link back to the Code of Ethics (NZAC, 2020a) and the task of supervision as "mentoring professional identity development" and having "a monitoring purpose with regard to counsellors' work" (Section 9).

CPD and professional identity development

The CPD literature makes several points about counsellors' professional identity. Gignac and Gazzola (2016) have referred to this as a lifelong undertaking, punctuated by periods of personal and professional growth. Citing a number of authors (e.g., Burkholder 2012; Myers et al., 2002; Prosek & Hurt 2014), Gignac and Gazzola (2016) also observed that developing a professional identity has not been a straightforward enterprise for counsellors. They conclude that professional identity "remains an elusive, ever-evolving construct often interfering with the ability of individual counsellors to clearly articulate their professional identity, and hinders a collective understanding." (p. 300).

In a later case study, Gignac and Gazzola (2018) found counsellors faced identity challenges and various tensions in coping with the changes in their professional regulations. However, they "embraced their counsellor identity work as a lifelong project and took ownership of being active agents in becoming professionals" (p. 218). Furthermore, Gignac and Gazzola suggest that counsellors navigate their "professional identity amid changes to the remit of their profession" (pp. 209–210) and that their values are congruent with "their desire to be in the helping profession" (p. 224). One participant commented that supervision "was instrumental in helping them shape their counsellor identity" (p. 215).

A useful comparison can be examined with social work, where the question of professional identity and professional recognition was explored in a qualitative study with Aotearoa New Zealand social workers (Beddoe, 2015). Beddoe noted that social workers used words such as "fight", "battle" and "struggle" (p. 168) to describe their attempts to gain professional recognition amongst other health professionals and recognised that continuing professional development and further education were essential to enhancing their visibility, credibility, and professional identities.

CPD and professional recognition

Discussing the purpose and requirements of CPD, Beddoe (2015) observed that in many professions, formal expectations set by regulatory or professional bodies include CPD as a requirement. For example, social workers in Aotearoa New Zealand are required to train to a minimum of bachelor's level, attend supervision, undertake assessments of competency, and participate in CPD. Contrasting social work to other professions, Beddoe noted that social workers struggle to separate their personal investment in CPD from a "preoccupation with comparative status" (p. 172). She added that in addition to requiring CPD, some organisations also expect a practitioner to complete a fixed number of CPD hours, finding that the investment of time varies between 10 to 80 hours per year.

Quality of care, employment morale and organisational viability were cited as reasons for engaging in CPD by Walston and Khaliq (2010). In their study of healthcare executives, these authors suggested that preferred options for continuing education include "hands-on experience, on-campus leadership training, skills building workshops . . . self-study, and formal degree programs" (p. 114) as well as "offsite seminars" (p. 117). They observed that the hospital executives in their study placed a high level of importance on continuing education that maintains current skills while preparing for future challenges and trends in professional recognition. While Beddoe (2015) agreed that CPD is a method that raises skill levels, she has suggested that in the Aotearoa New Zealand social work context, CPD is perceived in part as a tool to achieve greater professional standing for social work in multidisciplinary settings or other contested spaces: "Engagement in higher education is crucial to maintaining a critical analysis as well as ensuring the adequate articulation of the profession's contribution to society" (p. 173).

Beddoe (2015) also discussed the experiences of CPD for supervisors, managers, and professional leaders. The introduction in 2003 of voluntary registration of social workers in Aotearoa New Zealand created a perception by legislators that regulation would protect a vulnerable public. CPD is viewed in this context as "both raising and legitimising expectations of professional development" (p. 166). In the same way, counsellor CPD as a formal expectation set by regulatory bodies is based on the premise that a more robust programme of professional development will ultimately benefit clients. This thinking links closely to the developments by NZAC over the past four years, as discussed in the opening section of this article and noted in the self-regulatory document (NZAC, 2017).

Neimeyer et al. (2012), in their American study with psychologists, declared that CPD should be mandated, believing that this significantly increases participation in CPD activities and enhances targeted outcomes, including maintaining competence, delivering effective services, and protecting the public. Wise et al. (2010, in Neimeyer et al., 2012), argued that while the available evidence is convincing, mandating CPD raises various considerations, such as how CPD is delivered, its application in the workplace, and how to measure meaningful outcomes and cultivate competence. NZAC has moved to mandate CPD through its 2017 policy and has now constituted this further within the Code of Ethics (2020a, Section 5.9.b.).

Personal and professional hopes for meaningful CPD

Practitioners have both personal and professional expectations of learning from CPD. Carroll (2014) demonstrates a reflective process based on the premise that CPD is accessed to support professional development, and that supervision provides a place of reflection and learning. "Together reflection and practice create a wonderful team called praxis, which is the essence of supervision" (p. 135). Carroll also noted that "through reflection and critical thinking, the events of our lives can make sense for us." (p. 135). This process can be used in supervision to support the application of professional learning into practice, enhance awareness, pay attention to counselling practice, and invite meaning and hope at different levels. Neimeyer et al. (2012) suggested that translating "informal, incidental, and non-formal forms of learning… could bring a wider range of CPD activities beneath the umbrella of… professional development activities" (pp. 484–485).

As Gignac and Gazzola (2018) reiterated from their research, counsellors' meaning and sense making were at the heart of their work and their values were congruent with their identity and life purpose. This also aligns with Wilkins' (1997) findings in that "Personal and professional development is not solely about… meeting the requirements of the professional organizations: it is about preserving and maintaining what is good and… about working in a way which is personally meaningful" (p. 97).

Summary

Many authors have emphasised the role of supervisors and their contribution to the CPD process. They acknowledge that conversations in supervision afford practitioners space to consider, debate and clarify the purpose of mandated, yet meaningful CPD. The relevance of CPD in forming and maintaining professional identity for practitioners in the helping professions is also noted, as is the link between meaningful CPD and effective, professional, and quality services to the public.

Method

Recruitment of participants

An invitation to participate in this research was circulated through six branches of the NZAC and aimed at members who were supervisors and who were interested in reflecting on their experience of CPD and its effects for supervision. All six participants were aged 40 years or more and had between four and 25 years' experience as counselling supervisors. Four participants identified as female and two as male. One identified as Māori, one as Asian and the others as Pākehā. Participants were located within two branches, with four from two cities and two from smaller centres.

Procedure

This research project was part of a postgraduate paper in professional supervision and worked to introduce and engage researcher-students, all of whom were experienced counselling practitioners, in a supervised collaborative project. Researcher-students collaboratively worked together on a semi-structured interview schedule for their interviews with participants. Participants were matched by the first author to a researcher, ensuring that the researchers were not currently in a supervision relationship with participants. Individual interviews were then conducted, recorded, and transcribed by each researcher-student. Participant identities were confidential to each individual interviewer and the first author, and participant anonymity was maintained through the use of initials selected by the interviewers. Each interviewer then reviewed their own transcript before sharing it with one other researcher-student for analysis. Transcripts were analysed using the themes of hopes for supervision-informed CPD, aspects supervisors found useful, and difficulties and tensions encountered in participants' experiences of the NZAC CPD process.

Findings

Some participants recognised that fulfilling mandatory CPD requirements could be perceived as a "tick box" to satisfy a condition for the Annual Practicing Certificate. However, all participants expressed hope that meaningful CPD should always (as one participant described) "be more than just a tick box exercise" (HP). They expressed the belief that the NZAC regulatory requirements for supervision-supported CPD could be a meaningful part of their practice, commenting that it should be "exciting and meaningful" for the counsellors' practice, "provide thoughtful discussions" and be supportive and encouraging. It is clear that the participants have varying hopes for meaningful CPD-related processes and also varying perspectives about the difficulties that they have faced with regard to the changes by NZAC in recent years. These findings are now discussed as hopes for meaning and as difficulties and tensions.

Hopes for meaning

Counsellor professional identity

Numerous authors have posited that supporting the construction of professional identity is an important task of supervision (Crocket, 2002; Redstone, 2009; White, 1997). Some of the participants connected CPD with this construction, expressing a view that CPD is "essential for professional identity. . . . To me, you can't be a good supervisor without CPD frameworks. To me, the heart of what makes me a good supervisor is to be interested in professional identity" (LP).

Some participants expressed hope that the CPD competencies would provide a framework for intentionally developing a counsellor's professional identity and potential specialisation. "Well, it gives direction. Where does she want to go? What are her goals? What is she doing towards those goals?" (LP). Another participant remarked, "Well [historically] there was no structure, but now there is, and I think that is a good thing. If we don't know what we are aiming for, how are we going to know how to plan and strategise?" (RM). One participant talked about supporting a counsellor they supervised to develop an area of specialisation was part of their commitment to best supervision practice: "To specialise in trauma. . . . Being the best practitioner [supervisor] I can be" (SP).

Both MP and HP agreed that the CPD framework provides a structure within which supervisors can support counsellors in supervision to consider and select specific competency areas that will be useful in developing their practice. This seems to indicate that these participants believed that previously the engagement in professional development was variable across the profession and that gaps in quality may have existed. The framework can now facilitate counsellors to make use of supervision in their deliberation on the areas of competency to focus on, choice of CPD activity, and as a way to measure what has been achieved and what might be possible in future. Both MP and HP encouraged the counsellors who consulted them to consider possibilities and be intentional in their choice of CPD, and to reflect on their process and experience in meaningful ways.

Reflective practice

Some of the participants expressed hope that the CPD process would become meaningful as it provides a framework for reflection which enables counsellors to transport the learning from CPD activities into their practice. Both MP and HP acknowledged the benefits of supervision as a space to reflect on their practice. They encourage counsellors to share in supervision what they "appreciate", what they are "achieving", and, just as important, "their doubts" about their work methods or any issues regarding the policies and procedures of their place of employment. HP's position on the importance of reflective practice is informed by narrative therapy studies and through participating in a small reflective supervision team in which members "valued… [their unique] collegial conversations". One participant, considering their hope for counsellors who consult them in supervision, said, "Being able to reflect on your practice is actually the most important thing… CPD is meaningful for the practice… Reflecting on what you do is the value" (HP). HP added, "reflecting on your practice… connects you with the best aspects of yourself and your counselling". HP's comments align with Carroll's (2014) assertion that reflection is presented as the learning methodology of supervision and is a bridge between information and wisdom, helping practitioners make sense of their experiences.

Collaboration

Within this hope for meaning, participants also wanted to uphold what they saw as meaningful in their existing supervision practice; CPD needed to add something to supervision and not take away from its existing value. Participants' hopes for meaning highlight the values and processes that inform their supervision practices.

One participant located meaning in collaboration and growth within supervision, and she spoke about this with some respect. "So, I am hoping that in the CPD it is more from the spirituality – from the inside out rather than the outside in" (LMP).

LMP's "inside out rather than outside in" metaphor speaks of how she aims for development to come from, and be centred around, the counsellor. However, her metaphor also acknowledges the outside influence of defined "competencies" on practice. To mediate between the demands of externally-defined competencies and her wish for growth to come from within, she talked about creativity in shaping a focus within the CPD competencies to align with what would already be happening in supervision.

HP stated that collaboration is part of her role as a supervisor and who she is as a person. She spoke of "being excited" when discussing CPD with supervisees and how much she valued "narrative ideas of collaborative enquiry".

MP also valued collaboration and Hawkins and Shohet's (2012) "seven eyed" supervision approach, which informed his practice, and provided a flexible space for collaborative discussions. MP invited his supervisees to "discuss their ideas" about CPD, and he would gain an understanding of "what they were hoping to achieve". If they had concerns, he would "work more intentionally with them" and endeavour "to bring them up to speed".

Learning and education

Some of our participants hoped that placing CPD conversations within supervision opened up more opportunities for learning and education. MP spoke of valuing education and ensuring "it always features in supervision sessions". As a former schoolteacher, HP also values education and stated that she is "reasonably proactive" when it comes to her practitioners' CPD. She regularly asks the practitioner "how are you getting on with your CPD?" or "what stage are you up to with that?". MP stated that counsellor education "seems to be an academic exercise" and new graduates are ill-prepared "on a practical level". He added that beginning counsellors rely on a combination of supervision and CPD to bring them "up to speed". HP is also aware of the connection between supervision and CPD and will facilitate an extra supervision session if it is "coming up to CPD time", showing that meaningful CPD can be fostered within the supervision engagement.

Identity of the counselling profession

Participants expressed hope that in providing a framework for development and accountability, the CPD process would not only strengthen the professional identity of individual counsellors, but also strengthen the identity of the counselling profession, in the eyes of potential funders and the general community. LP clearly connected practices of CPD to supporting professional recognition of their identity and practice:

> But I am so relieved because it gives us a professional look. If we are not doing this stuff, how can we say that we are regulating our [professional] body? And this is the uncomfortable position that NZAC found itself in. We were losing the potential to say we are robust in our practice because we had nothing to prove it. (LP)

Similarly, another participant made the comment that CPD is "more visible and it makes it sort of more accountable in a way, so I think it's useful" (HP).

However, some participants were unsure of whether this hope was realised: "I don't have any perception of whether outside NZAC, people know, and my perception is that they don't know how robust a) our training is and b) our internal processes around membership or our professional body is" (SP). In a similar vein, SP commented, "So how that's seen outside of the community is dictated by the discourses and ideas that people in the community have about it, it's quite a hard one to respond to."

For some, the activities, conversations and values that they engaged with supported their own CPD and were considered important contributors to their sense of belonging to the counselling profession and the NZAC. HP commented "We work best if we can work collaboratively alongside people… We absolutely really value those collegial conversations as being the sort that you don't get anywhere else". Likewise, SP said, "We all stand on the same ground of NZAC ethics and values."

The concepts of "collective care" and "self-care" were discussed by SP, who encouraged NZAC members to become more active in supporting other members and to uphold their ethical responsibilities. "To find ways to have conversations that are supportive and collegial. It is actually much easier to kind of hold each other to account and support each other" (SP).

Some participants noted that tension remained regarding NZAC members' decision for self-regulation rather than registration under the HPCA Act. Some commented that statutory registration would have provided access to funding and employment within various health spaces that counsellors cannot currently access, while others believed that self-regulation protected diversity, creativity, flexibility, and partnership. For instance, SP stated, "… it almost feels a bit punitive, like we are being punished for choosing not to be registered… we are very deliberate about not pigeonholing ourselves. We don't necessarily subscribe to the medical model like other health professionals."

Difficulties and tensions

A number of areas of difficulty and tension were identified by participants. These included a concern about the limited perspectives of the current competencies for Māori members of NZAC; struggles for both counsellors and supervisors with the management of the CPD process going online; and questions about costs of CPD activities.

Kaupapa Māori perspectives

RW spoke about the presence of only one CPD competency in NZAC's ten areas of competence (NZAC, 2019a) reflecting kaupapa Māori perspectives. Acknowledging the presence of Puawānanga Kaitiaki (see NZAC, 2020c) is a positive step, he said. But there was "still a way to go". He noted that although there is an NZAC Māori Roopu, their contribution to the CPD is still only reflected in one competency, potentially positioning kaupapa Māori perspectives as an adjunct within the CPD competencies. He questioned if the inclusion of only one competency reflected a democratic value system, rather than the Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Treaty of Waitangi) partnership that aspired to within both the Constitution (NZAC, 2019b) and the Code of Ethics (NZAC, 2020a). "We know NZAC is primarily [Pākehā], well Māori only represent a small amount of 3000. I think 160 of us… So how does the minority have a voice in the majority?" (RW).

Having all but one of the competencies representing Pākehā constructs of counselling leaves Māori practitioners translating the concepts into kaupapa Māori. The translation is not an exchange of one word for another. RW pointed to how meanings in language embody practices that are culturally located, rather than universal. "When we use kupu Māori [Māori words] we are in a different mindset" RW).

Going online

While there were many hopes for meaning expressed, some of our participants had difficulties with parts of the CPD process. Half of the participants commented that the shift to an online system seemed to occur without prior discussion or meaningful communication with the members. MP stated that he felt "unhappy, unsupported and frustrated". LP commented that it was "quite fragmented" and took up "energy and extra stress", while SP also communicated that it was confusing and questioned the privacy of information and where that information would go. MP further stated that the new system did not go smoothly and "many counsellors did not really understand the technical process". He spent "hours [in supervision with counsellors] explaining what to do". MP also expressed concerns about now having to accept or reject a counsellor's CPD reflections online. It felt "like being put in the position of… a policeman for NZAC". These participants' responses take up the question explored in the literature about power in supervision relationships (e.g., Crocket et al., 2007). The participants were aware how their supervisory relationships could be affected by the systems put in place through the professional organisation.

RW further commented that the move to submitting CPD online shifted an element of the supervision relationship in a way that wasn't expected: the online process enabled his supervisor to comment independently on his CPD plan without this being necessarily contracted for. He also noted that this online process attracted additional cost, "because for every hour there is a cost", which needs to be absorbed.

In contrast, when commenting on the online CPD process HP considered that in comparison with the previous "unwieldy way", the new system "feels like it's more in our faces". HP continued, "What they put online [is] more visible, more accountable [and this] has raised the consciousness of therapists and will have an overall positive impact, plus will generate more robust discussions about CPD". HP suggested that for counsellors who have struggled with the NZAC software, liaising with technologically minded peers could be helpful and added, "There is nothing that can't be overcome."

Cost

When discussing the costs of CPD there were noticeable differences in our participants' opinions. The literature clearly constructs CPD as a site for professional identity development (e.g., Beddoe, 2015; Crocket, 2002; Gignac & Gazzola, 2016) and for recognition of the profession (e.g., Beddoe, 2015; Walston & Khaliq, 2010). Professional learning and development are likely to incur some cost. HP stated that "cost need not be a barrier"; there are "several free or low-cost resources" available, and "reflecting on your practice doesn't necessarily mean going to expensive courses".

In contrast, MP believed courses are "too expensive" and many counsellors struggle to pay. To reduce costs MP stated that, although it takes time and effort, he considered it his responsibility as a good supervisor to research CPD opportunities and resources to pass on free of charge. MP commented that while peer group discussions can minimise costs, many counsellors were reluctant "to speak their mind" in an open forum fearful they "would be judged". When discussing possible changes to the current system MP suggested that the frequency of supervision sessions and the required amount of CPD should be linked to the number of paying clients a counsellor was seeing per week.

Discussion and implications for practice

The study's findings show that the introduction of mandatory CPD requirements has created a tension between demonstrating professional development to NZAC as a means of members "ticking off" what is needed to obtain their Annual Practicing Certificate, and using the process as a motivation or a framework to reflect on and shape meaningful future professional development. Compared to other health and helping professions (see Beddoe, 2015), NZAC seem to have left the criteria for what is "adequate" CPD fairly open; no minimum number of hours have been prescribed or different types of learning accounted for. Rather than specifying formal CPD activities or prescribing numbers of hours or points, NZAC have required counsellors to determine what constitutes CPD and reflect on their learning in supervision. This approach aligns with Carroll (2014) and reflects Neimeyer et al.'s (2012) notion that value is added when practitioners formalise the CPD process and add mechanisms of reflection, evaluation and recording to informal, nonformal, and incidental learning.

The findings suggest that if CPD and discussions about growing competencies are embedded within supervision conversation, then the CPD requirements and formalised competencies have the potential to become a useful framework to promote counsellors' development, education, and professional identity. If these conversations reflect supervisors' hopes of being reflective and collaborative, then there is potential that any tensions can be negotiated within the supervision relationship. In contrast, if these conversations are not embedded, and CPD viewed as a "tick box" exercise, then it may not be so reflective and opportunities for meaningful CPD may be missed. Similarly, if conversations are reflective, but not collaborative, then this can also prove difficult. An example of this was noted by one participant (RW) concerning the change to online processing, when their supervisor commented independently on their CPD plan without this being explicitly contracted.

NZAC has introduced an online process that some of the research participants found difficult and continues to require improvement. While some viewed this as an adjustment difficulty, it seems that the change itself does not align well with the principle of informed consent, as counsellors do not have any other option than to place their CPD goals and reflections online. Little information is available about who has access to the information, for what purposes, and how the information is stored.

NZAC states that "Professional supervision is a partnership. It is a contractual, collaborative and confidential process based on informed consent" (NZAC, 2020a, Section 9). However, when supervisors are required to "approve" counsellors' CPD plans and reflections, there are potential effects for the relations of power. Fine and Turner (2014) described how monitoring can affect supervision relationships. The participants in this study could see that the power relations within supervision are brought into different focus by the new CPD process.

Expectations for supervisors are articulated by NZAC explicitly within the NZAC Supervision Policy (NZAC, 2018) and also with the NZAC Code of Ethics (NZAC, 2020a). However, neither of these documents makes mention of CPD within supervision nor speaks directly to this change and what it has produced. It seems that when these documents come up for review, it may be important for this change in power relations to be considered and made visible. It may also have implications for counsellors undertaking supervision education, and CPD for current supervisors.

The context of supervision as the site where CPD is formed, reflected on, and signed off, invites reflection on the cultural context of supervision in Aotearoa New Zealand. Central to this are the meanings and responsibilities of Te Tiriti o Waitangi (The Treaty of Waitangi) partnership. The practices and effects of colonisation continue within wider society and can be and are perpetuated within supervision. RW, the practitioner who identified as Māori, described an ongoing process of deconstructing Western concepts of counselling in his practice and substituting these with tikanga Māori. In supervision, RW translates the supervisor–supervisee relationship, as "tuākana tēina" (an older and younger sibling relationship). RW's translation is unique to Aotearoa New Zealand, and as he described, upholds the mana (a person's authority, power, prestige) of both supervisors and counsellors. On hearing this account, how might a Pākehā practitioner experience an invitation to approach supervision shaped by the metaphor of siblings immersed in mutual learning?

This participant's search for a suitable supervisor highlighted that not all Pākehā supervisors can work with this approach to the supervisory relationship.

The construction of supervision practices unique to Aotearoa New Zealand is still evolving (Beddoe, 2015; Crocket, 2017). McConkey (1999) posed the need for such a construction following the adoption of overseas supervision practices. Nearly two decades later, Crocket has suggested that McConkey's questioning of supervision practice in Aotearoa is still relevant (Crocket, 2017). The NZAC Code of Ethics (NZAC, 2020a) supports members to take up this invitation of McConkey and Crocket to construct something particular to our Te Tiriti (Treaty) context. For example, "counsellors should work towards bi-cultural competence" (Section 5.2.b.), and "Counsellors shall actively support the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi" (Section 4.3). Likewise, in the NZAC Constitution, the National Executive is "entrusted to reflect Māori perspective by encouraging or promoting dialogue with Māori and with Māori counsellors" (NZAC, 2019b, Section 11.C., p. 10).

The inclusion of Puawānanga Kaitiakitanga in the CPD competencies can be seen as part of an effort towards bicultural competence and provides an invitation for Pākehā practitioners to increase their ability to provide services effective for Māori. RW did see the inclusion as a "positive step", while also acknowledging there was "still a way to go". If there is a way to go towards acknowledging a mātauranga Māori contribution to counselling practice, the question is then what might this look like? How might the positioning of Puawānanga Kaitiakitanga within the competencies,

as an option, produce bicultural competence in relation to Western knowledges? This participant invites reflection on how there may be potential to reproduce historical and colonising effects for relationships between Māori and Pākehā within the current competencies. At the 2021 NZAC AGM, members of the Māori Roopu questioned whether Puawānanaga Kaitiakitanga needed to be compulsory and include Māori members.

There are other Māori models of practice that may be useful to consider alongside Puawānanaga Kaitiaki, for example, the Takarangi Competency Framework (TCF), developed by Matua Raki (2012). The TCF centres the primacy of culture and the valuing of indigenous knowledge. The TCF is mentioned here, not in comparison to Puawānanga Kaitiakitanga, but as further mātauranga Māori for possible reflection within CPD conversations by practitioners. The TCF is a competency framework and therefore does not necessarily inform the supervision process but could be useful to inform CPD. Rather, the TCF matrix (see Matua Raki, 2012; Te Pou, 2021) provides tangible examples of what different levels of competency may look like in therapeutic practice. There is scope to support practitioners by mapping their beginning explorations into understanding mātauranga Māori, and by connecting them with supervisors of higher competency within this framework who can guide them. Inclusion of clinical knowledge and mātauranga Māori in the TCF can invite practitioners to consider that a meeting and blending is possible, without subsuming one within the other.

NZAC will review the CPD competencies at some stage. Perhaps there may be some consideration of how the structure of the competencies potentially replicate historical cultural relationships, and an effort could be made to promote something more aligned with bi-cultural partnership responsibility to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. By consulting with the Māori Roopu about CPD competencies, exploration of further frameworks could be considered to help shape or change the structure of competencies within NZAC's offering for CPD. As a reviewer of this paper commented, "There is a clear need for kōrero to develop well-informed models of supervision that incorporate Māori values and principles" (personal communication).

Research limitations

This small-scale study examined the perspectives of six supervisors. While there are a number of themes raised amongst some of the participants, it is not possible to determine if these six opinions are representative of the greater population of supervisors. Further research, with a larger number of participants, perhaps eliciting the perspectives of supervisors and counsellors, would be useful. Furthermore, it would be useful to research whether ethnocultural factors feature in local and international supervision or CPD literature. Another valuable addition to this research would be to interview more Māori supervisor practitioners to gain a better understanding of their hopes, alongside the difficulties and tensions that they have faced with the incorporation of the CPD process into supervision. If the tensions raised by RW are seen within the wider Māori Roopu, then revisiting the competencies is warranted.

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