

Counselor Preparation in England and Ireland: A Look at Six Programs

John McCarthy



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International issues in Counseling have drawn considerable interest in the past two decades. Pedersen and Leong (1997) outlined the global need for counseling as a result of urbanization and modernization throughout the world. The twelfth edition of *Counselor Preparation* (Schweiger, Henderson, & Clawson, 2008) was the first in the series to offer a chapter about counselor training outside of the U.S.

The literature specific to the Counseling profession in the United Kingdom and Ireland—specifically related to counselor preparation—is somewhat limited. According to Syme (1994), counseling in Britain dates back to the 1940s. Initially such training was limited to priests, youth workers, and volunteers of the National Marriage Guidance Council. University counseling courses started in the 1950s. Various accreditation bodies exist in this region. Among UK programs, two foremost organizations are the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), and the United Kingdom and European Association for Psychotherapeutic Counselling (UKEAPC). In Ireland, the National Centre for Guidance and Education (NCGE), an agency of the Irish Department of Education and Science, offers support in the development of guidance practice.

The purpose of this study was to examine counselor preparation at selected institutions of higher education in England and Ireland from a comparative standpoint to that in the United States. Six programs were selected, based on proximity, convenience, and/or known contacts, and these included the Cork Institute of Technology (Ireland); the University of East Anglia (England); the University of Cambridge (England); the University of Limerick (Ireland); The University of Manchester (England); and West Suffolk College (England). Information of each program was collected through websites, literature, and personal interviews.

The discussion centers on four points of comparison with counselor education programs in the United States: a) The master's degree isn't the focal point; b) Research is required; c) Personal therapy is strongly encouraged and sometimes required; and d) A previous career prior to the pursuit of a counseling degree is relatively common. The identified themes are not meant to be conclusive, particularly given the relatively small number of courses of study involved in this article. If more courses of study were included, it is conceivable that different observations would have emerged. Nonetheless, the observations are noteworthy and present both similarities and contrasts to the general approaches of counselor education programs in the U.S.

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John McCarthy, NCC, is a Professor in the Department of Counseling at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Correspondence can be addressed to: john.mccarthy@iup.edu.