

Supported Education

3.8 Practitioners' Competencies

What makes a good SEd counselor? Can we isolate and/or quantify the necessary elements? What would constitute a minimum of formal qualifications? The ImpulSE project consortium has not focused on identifying necessary formal qualifications for SEd employment.

SEd counselors in the consortium member countries come from a wide range of vocations and training. Although we may see a formalization of SEd competence education in the future, we forge ahead under the assumption that recovery-oriented helping relationships can be created and maintained by counselors from wide-ranging backgrounds. It is advantageous for the SEd service in question to have members in the organization who can wield a significant amount of professional authority, since this authority is often essential in collaboration with partners and with respect to negotiating SEd service identity with legislators.

The consortium has been interested in these questions from the beginning of the ImpulSE project and conducted a brainstorming exercise with the object of defining SEd counselor attributes. The following breakdown resulted.

- **Partnership attitudes**
 - (1) "Nothing about us without us." Promotes participation in all processes.
 - (2) Focuses on independence; is proactive and process-oriented.
 - (3) Dares to be informal/self-disclosing, with self-irony and personable language use.
 - (4) Has emotional availability.
- **Partnership skills**
 - (1) Asks questions, listens and responds accordingly without delay.
 - (2) Collaborates, shares power.
 - (3) Connects/relates to, and shares experiences with open communication.
 - (4) Is comprehensive in approach; does not ignore subjects students want to discuss.
- **Knowledge of:**
 - (1) Educational system.
 - (2) Welfare and healthcare systems.
 - (3) Coaching/counseling techniques.
 - (4) Tools/instruments for enhancing studies.
 - (5) Community integration opportunities.

- (6) Mental health care resources beyond traditional treatment regimes.
- (7) Target group disability.
- (8) SEd research.

- **Collaborative skills**

- (1) Bridge building for community integration.
- (2) Networking skills.
- (3) Advocacy and negotiating skills.

- **SEd attitudes**

- (1) Hope inducing.
- (2) Respectful.
- (3) Makes use of empowerment language and solution-oriented pragmatism.
- (4) Has patience, tolerance and empathic supportiveness.

- **SEd skills**

- (1) Helps with choosing the educational goal of preference.
- (2) Helps with getting the educational goal of preference.
- (3) Helps with keeping the educational goal of preference.
- (4) Recognizes vulnerabilities and signs of relapse.

We make an argument for Supported Education as a human rights based role recovery-oriented service. Paramount to a successful Supported Education process is the relationship between the practitioner and the student/consumer. Part of the efficacy of various SEd interventions is the relationship that develops between the practitioner and the individual receiving help. The practitioner can facilitate the process by being a skilled listener who is empathic and respectful. By engaging or connecting with the student/consumer, the practitioner increases the chances of the SEd process helping the student/consumer to achieve the desired educational goals. The findings with respect to the importance of the relationship in leading to successful helping and learning outcomes is perhaps the most researched topic in all of behavioral science. The implementation of the Supported Education process demands an interpersonally skilled practitioner (Anthony & Farkas, 2009, p. 13, adapted to Supported Education).