

Registered Counsellors in South Africa:

Is there light at the end of the tunnel?

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the current situation of registered counsellors in South Africa. Of the total population of 256 registered counsellors, who are registered with the Professional Board for Psychology of the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA, 2007), 82 responded. An online survey revealed that the current situation of this profession is in a highly controversial state. It was found that the potential workforce of registered counsellors consists of valuable professionals who work in suitable work settings and have favourable demographic characteristics that facilitate the provision of psychological services to previously disadvantaged communities. Counter to this, it was found that more than half of these professionals were not working within their profession and had moved into alternative career fields or continued studies in psychology masters. Themes that emerged from the survey concern lack of public and professional knowledge of the scope of practice, an urgent need for the marketing of this profession and dissatisfaction with the Professional Board. There were some perceived benefits associated with the registration category. The article concludes that unless the identified problems are not redressed within the near future, it is likely that there will be no light at the end of the tunnel for registered counsellors in South Africa.

Keywords: counselling; disadvantaged communities; primary health care; psychological services; registered counsellor; Professional Board for Psychology, HPCSA, registration

The registration category 'registered counsellor' was created by the Professional Board for Psychology of the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) and signed into law by the South African Minister of Health in December 2003. This category was called into being in an attempt to make basic primary psychological counselling services available to previously disadvantaged communities in South Africa. Four years after the first registered counsellor registered within this profession it is time to investigate the current situation of registered counsellors in terms of who these professionals are and what it is that they do.

REGISTRATION CATEGORY: REGISTERED COUNSELLOR

Background context

South Africa is a developing country with a history of various social, political and economic struggles. The general delivery of health services, and in particular psychological services, is one key area of those struggles. Psychological services have been largely fragmented, under-resourced and inaccessible to the majority of the population. Until recently, these services have been mainly administered by registered clinical, counselling and educational psychologists as well as a small number of lay counsellors that have been trained by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and some other specialists, particularly nurses, who have gained additional training (Leach, Akhurst, & Basson, 2003).

To be specific, South Africa is a country of about 40 million people with a 'black' majority of almost 90% (Statistics South Africa, 2002). The country has 11 official languages with IsiZulu and IsiXhosa being the home language of 40.8% of the population. In addition, a large proportion of the population (43.6%) live in non-urban areas (Statistics South Africa, 2002). In light of these circumstances, the delivery of health care services and resources is significantly out of synchrony with these demographics. Pillay and Petersen (1996) found in their survey of clinical and counselling psychologists that 92.4% of their respondents were White, and spoke English or Afrikaans (91.2%), with the majority of their clients being mainly White (over 75%). This situation showed a slight improvement in the demographic characteristics of psychologists over the years. In 2004, the psychologists registered with the HPCSA comprised of about 82% White and 18% Black¹ psychologists

(Duncan, Van Niekerk, & Townsend, 2004). In regard to the demographic characteristics of the population, these findings imply that the majority of the population does not have access to psychological services and those who do are likely to receive these services from someone who does not speak their language. In response to this reality, the Professional Board for Psychology of the HPCSA sought the need for a new middle-level registration category that would be able to redress these problems. Therefore, the Professional Board conceptualised and created the new registration category 'registered counsellor'.

Scope of practice of the 'registered counsellor' category

The Professional Board defined the scope of practice of registered counsellors in relation to that of psychologists. The overall document provides detailed regulatory guidelines in terms of education, training and the registration as a registered counsellor in sections on core competencies, registration level, multiple entry considerations and registration as a professional (HPCSA, Professional Board for Psychology, 2005). Only the essential elements will be discussed here.

The registered counsellor "must execute formalised, structured and short-term interventions" at primary curative or preventative levels with the "application of concrete and predetermined decision making rules" (HPCSA, Professional Board for Psychology, 2005, p. 2). The registered counsellors' core competencies differ from those of psychologists, who are expected to function at a more complex and specialised level. Concerning psychological assessment, the core competencies specify that the registered counsellor may conduct 'general', versus the psychologist 'specialised' screening. This involves assessment in terms of intellectual/scholastic abilities, aptitudes, interests, career placement and personality profiling. Further, the registered counsellor may identify symptoms for referral, conduct basic, short-term psychological intervention such as supportive counselling that might include the provision of basic psycho-education, training and the promotion of primary psychosocial wellbeing. The core competencies outline that the registered counsellor needs to be able to refer to equivalent peer professionals and to senior specialists such as psychologists. Lastly, the registered counsellor is expected to demonstrate ability in the conduct of research projects and the implementation of its findings as well as be able to implement policies, standards and projects. One fundamental similarity

between registered counsellors and psychologists is that both are allowed to conduct private practice (HPCSA, Professional Board for Psychology, 2005).

The HPCSA specifies that the required registration level is an accredited 4-year B.Psych. or an equivalent Psychology Honours degree with an approved 6 months practicum in the designated practice area. The domains of practice are Career Counselling, Trauma Counselling, Primary Mental Health, Family Counselling, School Counselling, Sport Counselling, HIV/AIDS Counselling, Human Resources, Pastoral Counselling and Employee Well-Being (HPCSA, Professional Board for Psychology, 2005). The registration as a professional further directs that the registered counsellor must train in the specified core competencies with a focus towards a particular practice domain (maximum two). The specialised domain needs to inform the counsellor's particular title, which must be clearly communicated to the public, other professionals and peers. Furthermore, a final national examination assesses the counsellor's applied intervention and ethical professional competencies in addition to the university theoretical examination.

Recent studies on registered counsellors

Not much literature has accumulated with regard to the professionals who fall in the recently legalised registration category registered counsellor. Therefore, the only related body of literature that exists, focuses on either the profession of counselling psychology and/or lay counselling in South Africa. Only two studies have specifically addressed issues concerning this new registration category (Elkonin & Sandison, 2006; Kotze & Carolissen, 2005). Both studies have focussed on the employment patterns of B.Psych. graduates and their success in registering and finding work within the profession.

Elkonin and Sandison (2006) investigated the career paths of 84 graduates who had completed the specifically designed B.Psych. degree at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University between 2002² and 2004. The authors were interested in the actual number of graduates who had successfully registered with the Professional Board for Psychology and were subsequently working as registered counsellors. A telephone survey revealed that out of 62 graduates 26% (n=16) had written the Board examination and 19% (n=12) had successfully registered with the Board. Of those

registered counsellors only half (10%, n=6) were found working as registered counsellors, of which five were English or Afrikaans speaking. These six registered counsellors were employed by the South African Police Service (SAPS), Child Line, Child Rape Crisis Centre, a Child Guidance Clinic, a private school and a Child Care Service in England. Comparatively, the majority of graduates reported having moved into alternate career fields or continued with post-graduate studies.

Elkonin and Sandison (2006) revealed possible reasons for the small number of graduates who actually registered and were found working as registered counsellors. These reasons involved the initial controversy surrounding registered counsellors first not being able to work in private capacity, as it was originally stipulated by the Minister of Health in 2003. A winning class-action suit against the Minister of Health in 2005 resulted in the legalisation for registered counsellors to practice in private capacity (Elkonin & Sandison, 2006). Further reasons expressed were difficulty with registration and employment. Specifically, some graduates reported not having written the Board examination to register because they felt that it would be a waste of time and money grounded in their realisation that there was a lack of advertised jobs in the private and public sector. Other reasons cited were the experienced difficulties in interacting with the Professional Board and the Board's inefficiency in responding to graduates' requests. The quest to seek paid employment as a registered counsellor was expressed by most graduates as a nearly impossible task. Graduates speculated that the lack of employment opportunities might be based on the perception that registered counsellors are seen as lay counsellors and not as professionals and/or that social workers might be the preferred employment candidates. Further reasons were lack of public and professional knowledge of the registered counsellor category's scope of practice. Despite these results, Elkonin and Sandison further reported that 14 graduates were planning on applying for master studies in psychology, which together with the others who had already continued studies, would result in about 40% of B.Psych. graduates progressing to registration as psychologists.

These findings were very similar to an earlier study (Kotze & Carolissen, 2005). Kotze and Carolissen investigated the degree that B.Psych. graduates succeeded in working as registered counsellors. Their survey revealed that of the 69 B.Psych. graduates from the University of Stellenbosch and the University of the Western Cape

only 15% reported being employed as registered counsellors at the time that the study was being conducted. Interestingly, none of these employed graduates were working in the health sector. Kotze and Carolissen found that more than half of their sample had continued with studies outside the profession of psychology. Reasons for this were reported as being lack of work opportunities, professional and public ignorance concerning the competencies of registered counsellors as well as problems with the Professional Board examination.

Aim

In response to the limited literature, which indicates that only very few graduates register and succeed in finding work within this profession (Elkonin & Sandison, 2006; Kotze & Carolissen, 2005), it remains to determine what the current situation of registered counsellors actually is. Therefore, this study aimed to provide a general overview and first insight into who these registered counsellors are and what exactly they do. To answer these three questions, an online survey was employed to describe the demographic characteristics, work environment, work content, and general income of these professionals as well as issues regarding the category itself.

METHOD

Participants

The total population of 256 registered counsellors who were registered with the Professional Board for Psychology of the HPCSA³ were invited to participate in the study. It was decided to focus the study on the entire population because no study had previously been done on all registered counsellors in South Africa. Secondly, since the legal implementation of this registration category in 2003, this population included all the professionals who had ever become and remained registered to this day. Thirdly, the number of registered counsellors appeared manageable for an Honours project.

Of the total population of registered counsellors who were contacted via mail (N=256), five letters were returned as undelivered. Of these 250 registered counsellors, 82 (32.8%) responded and agreed to participate in the study. This

response rate indicates that about one third of registered counsellors participated in the study. According to Mangione (1998), if the response rate is less than 50% then the results might not be scientifically acceptable. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001) it is important that the respondents are representative of the population. It would thus appear that the low response rate obtained in the present study could have negatively affected the generalisability of the findings. However, as is pointed out in the next paragraph the sample was nonetheless reflective of the characteristics of the population of registered counsellors in South Africa. This suggests that the findings are still of value beyond the present study.

Sample representation of the population: Gender, race, region

The sample characteristics are distributed similarly to the characteristics of the population of registered counsellors (see Table 1). The distribution was within one percentage point difference between the population and sample distribution for most demographic characteristics. Nevertheless, more White participants (6.1% unit difference) and fewer Black participants (4.4% unit difference) were present in the sample compared to their distribution in the population. Regarding geographical distribution, the sample had about the same distribution of professionals in different locations compared to the distribution in the population. There were only maximal 2 % units difference between the geographical distribution of the sample compared to the population. The degree of representation needs to be evaluated in light of the context of a developing country in which this study was being conducted. Babbie and Mouton (2001) explain that social science research conducted in a developing country like South Africa comes with its own sets of problems such as outdated contact information, different degrees of availability and access to internet, and other technologies, as well as different degrees of familiarity with surveys due to varying socioeconomic backgrounds of the population. Babbie and Mouton suggest that a sample is representative of the population from which it was selected if the aggregate characteristics of the sample closely approximate those same aggregate characteristics in the population. Therefore, the sample of this study is very representative of its population of registered counsellors thus allowing for possible generalisations.

Instrument

An online survey was selected as the data collection instrument for several reasons. Firstly, surveys are useful in describing the characteristics of a large population (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Secondly, surveys allow the access to a large number of people living in many different places. This was applicable to the research population that was spread across the whole of South Africa. Thirdly, surveys are flexible by facilitating the use of questions on many different topics (Babbie & Mouton, 2001), which was required to provide a broad descriptive overview of the population. Therefore, the online survey proved itself as the most appropriate measurement to meet the goal of this descriptive study.

The survey consisted of an electronic opening page (see Appendix A), the questionnaire (see Appendix B), followed by a closing/thank you page (see Appendix C). The opening page informed the respondent about the purpose of the questionnaire and ethical considerations regarding participation. Further, the content and procedure of accessing the questionnaire were briefly discussed.

The questionnaire was based on a self-compilation, where specific items were drawn from similar studies (Benjamin, 2005; Elkonin & Sandison, 2006; Gardiner, 2006). Elkonin and Sandison used a similar telephonic survey with a structured questionnaire that enquired about graduates' career paths and opinions about the registration category and the Professional Board. Similarly, Gardiner (2006) and Benjamin (2005) employed online surveys with mostly closed and some open-ended questions enquiring about the work of clinical and industrial psychologists respectively.

The survey questionnaire consisted of 36 questions and was largely of quantitative nature (31 close-ended and 5 open-ended questions). It was decided to utilise mostly close-ended questions to keep the questionnaire structured and to the point (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The open-ended questions were important for the participants to express their own opinions and experiences and thus providing vital information that might have been missed by the close-ended questions.

The content of the questionnaire consisted of the Informed Consent question, followed by 35 questions that were divided into five sections (see Appendix B). The

five sections enquired about the participant's demographic information, work environment, work content, general income and comments on issues such as the registered counsellor category, Professional Board and benefits as a registered counsellor. As it was anticipated that some participants would not be working as registered counsellors, they were at least encouraged to provide their demographic information. The comment section was deliberately placed at the end, since participants had a chance to reflect on the topics that had been covered in the previous sections and to add any opinions and experiences that they wanted to express.

Procedure

A list of registered counsellors was obtained from the HPCSA in May 2007. The list included names, postal addresses, registration numbers, registration dates, gender, race and region. All registered counsellors were contacted via an initial letter that was sent to their postal addresses (see Appendix D). The letter informed them of the purpose of the study and invited them to participate. To participate, respondents had to access the online survey via the provided URL address. Alternatively, as stated in the letter, registered counsellors were given the option to request the survey via email and/or a paper and pencil format (Appendix E) that was offered to be sent to them. This way, registered counsellors from different socioeconomic backgrounds, who might have had different accessibility to technology, had equal chances to participate in the study.

Follow-up emails in case of email questionnaires (see Appendix F) and follow-up letters, in case of paper and pencil formats (see Appendix G) were posted 2 weeks after each sending of the requested questionnaire format as was advised by Babbie and Mouton (2001). To increase the response rate, the researcher located the telephone numbers of as many registered counsellors as possible, by means of the online white pages telephone book. Registered counsellors were contacted telephonically in the evenings between 5pm and 7pm, during week days. These times were chosen to ensure that potential respondents were most likely to be at home and available. Each telephone call followed a structured interview format (see Appendix H). Give that a respondent agreed to participate, the rights of the participant were read out and explained to him/her. Informed consent was obtained orally before the proper interview could start. In total, 44 responses were directly completed online, 25

responses were received via email, 10 by paper and pencil format and 3 responses via the telephonic interview. All responses that were not directly submitted online were entered into the online questionnaire by the researcher after they were received.

The data was collected in Zoomerang, an online survey tool, and recoded into excel. Frequencies and cross tabulations were analysed with close-ended questions. Open-ended questions were analysed thematically. Responses were themed and common trends and patterns were discussed.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

To determine the current situation of registered counsellors, who they are and what they do, the results will be reported and discussed in six sections. Section one (1) will establish and reflect on the demographic characteristics of the total population, followed by those of the sample. The second section (2) will reveal the current situation of registered counsellors in terms of the proportion of registered counsellors who were found working versus not working within their profession (i.e. as registered counsellors). The demographic characteristics will be revisited and discussed in terms of these two distinguished sub-samples to identify possible differences in trends. Thirdly (3), to answer the question what registered counsellors do, the responses of registered counsellors who were found working within their profession will be reported and discussed in regard to the work environment, work content and income of these professionals. The fourth section (4) will address the professionals of the other sub-sample, who were found not to be working within their profession and reveal why they are not working within their profession and what they are doing instead. The fifth section (5) will report and discuss the degree that both sub-samples, i.e. respondents of the total sample, intend to become psychologists. The last section (6) will reveal possible reasons for this sub-sample trend in regard to all respondents' comments on various issues. These issues involved the respondent's experiences with and opinions of the registration category, the Professional Board and the benefits associated with being a registered counsellor.

Population versus sample: Who are the registered counsellors?

The population

The demographic characteristics of the population of registered counsellors in terms of gender, race and region are shown in Table 1. The population of registered counsellors consisted of 85.2% (n=218) females and 14, 8% (n=38) males. This trend suggests a stronger gender inequality compared to psychologists registered with the HPCSA in July 2004⁴, who constitute of 67.6% females and 32.4% males (Shefer, Shabalala, & Townsend, 2004).

Most of the registered counsellor population consisted of White professionals (59.8%, n=153), compared to 22.7% (n=58) Black, 9.0% (n=23) Coloured and 7.0% (n=18) Indian registered counsellors who formed the minority of these professionals. This racial distribution demonstrates a significant improvement to the one of psychologists registered with the HPCSA in July 2004 (Shefer, Shabalala, & Townsend, 2004). This profession constituted of 82.3% White psychologists. Specifically, 9.2% of psychologists were of Black ethnicity, which signals an improvement of the racial distribution of Black psychologists to registered counsellors by 13.5 percentage point difference. Indian psychologists made up 6.3% and Coloured psychologists 2.1% of the psychology profession. Interestingly, counter to the racial distribution of psychologists, registered counsellors revealed a greater proportion of Coloured than Indian professionals. In regard to the distribution of Coloured professionals, Coloured registered counsellors consisted of 6.9 percentage points difference compared to psychologists. Indian registered counsellors revealed only a slight improvement of 0.7 percentage points difference to the racial composition of psychologists. These findings reveal a possible discrepancy between the racial distribution of registered counsellors that seem significantly more favourable for Black and Coloured professionals and not necessarily for Indians in this registration category compared the registration category of psychologists of the HPCSA.

In terms of geographical distribution, about half of all registered counsellors resided in Gauteng (49.2%, n=126). The Western Cape was the second most popular city for registered counsellors (19.1%, n=46). This trend is reflected in the geographical distribution of psychologists registered in May 2004 (J. Louw, personal

communication, October, 2007). Of 5431 psychologists, half were located in Gauteng (50.7%, n=2752) and 22.0% (n=1195) in the Western Cape. The fact that Gauteng and the Western Cape are the two economically strongest provinces in South Africa explains how most professionals are found in these regions.

The sample

The demographic characteristics of the registered counsellor sample are shown in Table 2. Results reveal that the sample of registered counsellors consisted of mostly females (85.4%, n=70) and some males (14.6 %, n=12). The majority of registered counsellors were White (65.9%, n=54), followed by Black (18.3%, n=15), Coloured (9.8%, n=8) and Indian professionals (6.1%, n=5). Most registered counsellors indicated English (57.3%, n=47), and a quarter Afrikaans (24.4%, n=20) as their home language. Other languages were Sesotho, Tshivenda, IsiXhosa, Northern Sotho, and Xitsonga and one other being Dutch. Therefore, 18% of registered counsellors had an African language as mother tongue. These findings indicate a significant improvement compared to the language distribution of psychologists registered in 2000, of which 90% were English or Afrikaans speaking (Louw, 2002).

The ages of registered counsellors ranged from 21 to 51 years of age. Most registered counsellors were between 21 and 30 years old (67.1%, n=55). The finding that most registered counsellors were young is anticipated since the registration category became largely known through the introduction of the B.Psych. degree at university level, where the majority of students are between 18 and 25 years old.

Regarding the training to become a registered counsellor, the majority of participants graduated with the B.Psych. degree (63.4%, n=52). The other respondents were able to enter the profession with a general Psychology Honours degree (19.5%, n=16), some with both (3.7 %, n=3), or a B.Psych. equivalent (3.7%, n=3). The equivalent degree was once a research masters degree and once a diploma in psychology. Also, some registered counsellors entered the profession with a Bachelor of Educational Psychology (Edpsych.) degree (4.9%, n=4), one with an Honours in BEdpsych. (1.2%), two with an Industrial Psychology Honours degree (2.4%), and another respondents held a Family Therapy qualification (2.4%). The finding that most registered counsellors entered the counselling profession with a B.Psych. degree is

expected since it was specifically created for this profession (HPCSA, Professional Board for Psychology, 2005). Interesting is the finding that graduates with a Bachelor in Education, a diploma in psychology and a Family Therapy degree were granted permission to registered, which might be examples of what the Professional Board refers to as the 'equivalent' to a B.Psych. degree (HPCSA, Professional Board for Psychology, 2005).

The South African institutions and universities at which registered counsellors studied their degree are depicted in Figure 1. Out of all South African universities, 17.1 % (n=14) of respondents had studied their degree at the University of Johannesburg, 14.6% (n=12) at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University and 13.4% (n=11) at the University of the Western Cape. The finding that the three universities that produced most of the registered counsellors are located in the economically strongest regions being Gauteng and the Western Cape support this finding.

Since the implementation of the registration category 'registered counsellor' in 2003, the category steadily grew in number. Based on the sample, the number of professionals who registered as counsellors increased from 8.5% (n=7) in 2003, to 14.6% (n=12) in 2004, to 24.4 % (n=20) in 2005. The category seemed to have its highest number of registrations in 2006, when 42.7% (n=35) professionals registered. For this year of 2007, only 9.8% (n=8) of registered counsellors registered up to May. This increasing trend might be associated with the battle surrounding the permission for registered counsellors to practice in private capacity, which was only resolved in December 2005. Since then, registered counsellors have been able to practice in private capacity. Elkonin and Sandison (2006) identified this issue as an important source of upheaval and a possible reason for graduates not registering with the Professional Board. This might explain why the registration rate doubled from 2005 to 2006.

All registered counsellors could specify one or more of ten practice domains that they had chosen to specialise in for registration. Results in Table 3 show that Trauma counselling (21.5%, n=26) and Primary Mental Health (21.5%, n=26) were the most prominent practice domains in which registered counsellors chose to register. This

was followed by a preference for School Counselling (14.9%, n=18) and HIV/AIDS Counselling (14.9%, n=18). These results suggest that most registered counsellors specialised in practice domains in the health sector, followed by the education sector and least often in the labour sector. This trend seems to reflect the main focus of the Professional Board for Psychology.

What is the current work situation of registered counsellors?

One important finding revealed in this study is that surprisingly few registered counsellors were found working in their profession (as registered counsellors) at the time that the study was being conducted. The analysis showed that out of the total sample of 82 participants, a minority (46%, n=38) were found working in their profession. This national trend reflects the findings of Elkonin and Sandison (2006), who found that only half of the graduates, who had succeeded in registering with the Professional Board, were working as registered counsellors. These findings indicate that only about every second registered counsellor is likely to find employment in this profession. These findings suggest a drastic weakness of this profession. The implication will be discussed at the end of the article.

In conjunction, most respondents indicated that finding work as a registered counsellors was experienced as 'very difficult' (38.4%, n=28). Of 73 responses 23.3% (n=17) respondents found it fairly difficult, 17.8% (n=13) had no opinion, 13.7% (n=10) found it fairly easy and only five respondents found it very easy (6.8%, n=5). These results might reflect what Elkonin and Sandison's (2006) graduates refer to as 'a nearly impossible task' in regard to finding work as a registered counsellor. These work-finding experiences further underline the weakness of this profession and highlight a significant problem for this registration category.

Working⁵ versus non-working⁶ registered counsellors: Who are they?

Of the respondents who were found working as registered counsellors (N=38), 86.8% (n=33) were females and 13.2% (n=5) males. This group of respondents consisted of mostly (68.4%, n=26) White, some Black and Coloured (each 13.2%, n=5) and only two Indian registered counsellors (5.3%). Compared to the total sample of

respondents (N=82), White respondents were about equally divided between working versus non-working registered counsellors (26 out of 54). More Coloured respondents were successful in finding work in their profession (5 out of 8), whereas only one third of Black respondents were found to be working in the field (5 out of 15). This might indicate that Black registered counsellors had more difficulties finding work within their profession than other ethnic based registered counsellors. General employment trends of a post-apartheid South African support this finding.

Most working registered counsellors had English (60.5%, n=23) as their mother tongue and just less than a quarter of all respondents expressed Afrikaans (23.7%, n=9) as their mother tongue. These findings resonate the language distribution of graduates who were found working as registered counsellors of which five out of six spoke English or Afrikaans in the study by Elkonin and Sandison (2006). African languages were only spoken by very few working respondents (13.1%, n=5). Of these, 2 out of 3 spoke Northern Sotho, one IsiXhosa, one Sesotho, and another spoke Tshivenda. One practicing registered counsellor indicated Dutch as his/her mother tongue. English and Afrikaans speaking respondents of the total sample were about equally divided in both working and non-working registered counsellors. Compared to all registered counsellors, only one third of African language mother tongue respondents were working as registered counsellors (5 out of 15). This might indicate the current reality that not many African language speaking registered counsellors are actually benefiting the majority of the country, which was one vital purpose for the creation of this profession.

Respondents' ages differed between those who had succeeded in finding employment within their profession, versus those who did not. Many working registered counsellors were between 26 to 30 years old (36.8%, n=14). About half of that size consisted of registered counsellors who were between 21 and 25 years of age (15.8%, n=6). Compared to the total sample, only about one quarter of all 21 to 25 year old registered counsellors, were found working within their profession (6 out of 26). Contrastingly, nearly all 46 to 50 year old registered counsellors had succeeded and were found working within their profession (5 out of 6). Except for these findings, age did not seem to be a factor in all the other age groups, which were about half divided between working and non-working respondents in their field. The former results

might suggest that age difference in terms of maturity and work/life experience might be a vital factor that contributed to registered counsellors' success in seeking employment.

Significant differences appeared between the institutions where registered counsellors studied their degree for their profession in term of their success in finding employment in their profession. Of the listed institutions, all, except four were found to be about half represented by working registered counsellors. In this regard it was found that of all respondents only 5 out of 15 of the registered counsellors who graduated from the University of Johannesburg, were found working. Similarly, 1 out of 5 who graduated from the University of Stellenbosch and 1 out of 7 who graduated from the North-West University were found to be working as registered counsellors. Contrastingly, all three registered counsellors who graduated from the Midrand Graduate Institute ended up working within their profession. Reasons for this trend could possibly be investigated in regard to the courses offered, which is beyond the scope of this research study. Irrespective of the reason, this trend might explain why all three universities have ceased to offer the B.Psych. degree all together, as will be discussed later on.

The registered counsellors who were found working within their profession covered all practice domains, except Human Resources. As depicted in Table 4, about one quarter of practicing registered counsellors specialised in Trauma Counselling (25.9%, n=15), followed by Primary Mental Health (17.2%, n=10), HIV/AIDS Counselling (17.2%, n=10) and School Counselling (12.1%, n=7). Specifically, more than half of respondents who specialised in Trauma counselling (15 out of 26), in HIV/AIDS counselling (10 out of 18), and Family Counselling (5 out of 9), were found working within their profession. Less than half of all sample respondents who specialised in Primary Mental Health (10 out of 26), School Counselling (7 out of 18), and Career Counselling (5 out of 11) were successful in seeking employment in their profession. The three respondents who specialised in Human Resources were all unsuccessful in seeking employment in their specialisation. This employment trend might provide first insight into which specialised practice domains that seem to receive the most and least amount of attention.

Working⁵ registered counsellors: What are their work environments, work contents and income?

Work environment: Employment sector, employer, position (job title), superiors, city

Of all the respondents who had successfully entered employment in their profession (N=38), 60⁷ indications were made. Results revealed that most work was in private practice (31.7%, n=19), and in the public sector (30.0%, n=18). Further 20.0% (n=12) of respondents worked in non-profit organisations (NGOs) and 18.3% (n=11) in the private sector. As shown in the Table 5, registered counsellors who engaged in private practice were about equally likely to do so full-time or part-time but not for free. Further, registered counsellors working in the public sector, in NGOs or in the private sector were working mostly on a full-time basis, with only very few working part-time or voluntarily. These results might suggest that at least half of all working registered counsellors seem to be providing more financial available services as public organisations and NGOs are likely to provide free, inexpensive or sliding scale rates for the services that they offer.

Within the different employment sectors, registered counsellors worked in a variety of work settings. Of 38 working registered counsellors, 36 indicated the place/organisation with which they were employed (see Figure 5). Some registered counsellors indicated two work settings⁸. About one quarter of working respondents worked for the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) in colleges or high school settings (23.6%, n=8.5). Further, 19.4% (n=7) engaged in private practice, 18.1% (n=6.5) worked in NGOs and 16.7% (n=6) at universities. Examples of NGOs were Family Life Centres, Life Line, Rape Crisis, FAMSA, Perinatal Research Unit, Victim Empowerment Programmes and senior associations. Some registered counsellors were offering their services in private organisations and clinics (13.9%, n=5) such as rehabilitation, secondary care and performance wellness centres, as well as organisations that outsource services for occupational health and safety programs, as well as a retail company. Fewer registered counsellors were working in public organisations (8.3%, n=3) such as SAPS, clinics, and a non-profit organisation. These results reflect the findings of Elkonin and Sandison (2006) who identified the South African Police Service (SAPS), Child Line, Child Rape Crisis Centre, Child Guidance Clinic, and a private school as the employers of their registered counsellors.

The finding that the education sector provided most employment for the respondents who were working as registered counsellors (40.3%, n=14.5), suggests that this sector has been better informed about this registration category and been more willing to make vacancies available. The actual preparation and training of registered counsellors in terms of the B.Psych. degree could have favourably contributed to this trend. Furthermore, NGO's were the next work setting in which registered counsellors found work. This could largely be attributed to the fact that NGO's were surveyed and "expressed positive acceptance and keen interest" (Elkonin & Sandison, 2006, p. 601) towards the new registration category during the development stage of the profession.

The job titles that registered counsellors held differed based on their work setting. In colleges and schools, most counsellors called themselves School Counsellors; in university setting their title was mostly Junior Student Counsellor and in private practice it ranged from Registered Counsellor to Registered Psychological Counsellor, to Psychological Counsellor. In NGO settings, those professionals referred to themselves as Trauma Counsellor, Registered Counsellor and simply Counsellor. In private organisations, professionals took on the label of their area of clientele and added counsellor, such as Addiction/Support Group/or Performance Wellness Counsellor. In public organisations there was an Intake Counsellors and a psychometrist. These professional titles meet the practice framework requirement of a chosen title that needs to be aligned with the registered counsellor's training and experiences (HPCSA, 2005). Nevertheless, there remains great variability among the titles.

Registered Counsellors who were found working within their profession reported to a variety of superiors. Many registered counsellors reported to a psychologist (40.3%, n=14.5), others to principals, directors or head of department (23.6%, n=8.5), some to none (18.1%, n=6.5) and a few to social workers (13.9%, n=5). Nurses were least reported to (2.8%, n=1), and one reported half to a GP and half to one of the other categories. These findings reflect those of Elkonin and Sandison (2006), who revealed that, along counselling psychologists, Life Line counsellors, programme managers, peers groups and social workers were the supervisors of registered counsellors.

This trend could be based on psychologists being the immediate superior professionals who have called this registration category into being by means of the Professional Board for Psychology.

Respondents working as registered counsellors were found mostly in urban areas across the whole of South Africa. The city where most respondents who worked as registered counsellors were working was Johannesburg (34.2%, 13), followed by Cape Town (23.7%, 9), Port Elizabeth (15.8%, 6) and Pretoria (10.5%, 4). The other six registered counsellors were found working in Pietermaritzburg, Witbank, George, the Vaal triangle and one each in the rural areas of Thoyandou Town and in Thabazimbi. Results indicate that counselling services are mainly serving urban communities and hardly any rural communities. This suggests a discrepancy and inequality in availability of counselling services for disadvantaged communities, which exist on a larger scale in rural areas.

Work content: Working hours, clientele, core competencies and psychological testing

Results revealed that the amount of time that practicing registered counsellors work varied on a wide spectrum. Of the total sample of respondents who were working as registered counsellors (N=38), 31.6% (n=12) were working between 36 and 40 hours per week and 21.1% (n=8) worked about half of that time, namely 16 to 20 hours a week. The other registered counsellors expressed working one to five hours (13.2%, n=5), six to ten hours (10.5%, n=4) and a few engaged in different amount of hours. This shows that most of the workforce was committed to working full-time, and two thirds of that size were working on a part-time basis.

Nearly all respondents who had found work within their profession (94.7%, n=36) expressed that their work involved the consultation with clients. Of those, the responses (N=24) indicated that many registered counsellors were seeing about 6 to 10 clients per week (29.4%, n=10), with some serving 1 to 5 clients per week (26.5%, n=9). The other respondents who worked as registered counsellors were seeing 11 to 15 clients (14.7%, 5) and 16 to 20 clients (14.7%, 5) a week. At the time when this study was being conducted, on average about 422 people received services from registered counsellors per week. In a country of 40 million people, this number might

appear insignificant, but it remains an important contribution to the communities and people in this country.

Respondents working as registered counsellors have diverse clientele. Exactly half of the working respondents (50.0%, n=18) indicated that their client base was made up of one quarter males and three quarters females. Furthermore, 36.5% (n=27) of respondents indicated that part of their clientele constitutes of Black clients, followed by 32.4% (n=24) of them indicating that they have White clients. Only 20.3% (n=15) of working registered counsellors indicated that their client base included Coloured clients and 10.8% (n=8) of respondents indicated having Indian clients. The finding that Black clients are represented in most clienteles implies that the race group that constitutes the majority of the country is finally attended to. This is an important strength of this new profession.

The distribution of age categories that constitute the clientele of registered counsellors revealed that most of the clients that make up registered counsellors' clientele are young clients between the ages of 1 to 30 (59.6%, n=44). These results suggest that the working registered counsellors seem to be working with mostly children, adolescence and young adults. This information is vital in terms of the benefits that this has on the young generation of South African communities.

The Professional Board specifies a number of core competencies. Respondents were asked to indicate the amount of time that they engaged in these activities. Table 6 provides an overview and reveals that respondents working as registered counsellors more often than not demonstrated these core competencies. Specifically, registered counsellors engaged in general screening and interpretation of psychological functioning with most or all their clients (52.8%, n=19). Identification of symptoms for referral (40.0%, n=14) and promotion of psychological wellbeing (57.1%, n=20) with clients occurred by many registered counsellors with every client. Basic psycho education was conducted with more than half their clients (45.7%, n=16). The majority of respondents indicated that they only sometimes referred clients to peer professionals (62.9%, n=22) and senior professionals such as psychologists (54.3%, n=19). In terms of referrals, these results reflect the findings by Elkonin and Sandion (2006), who revealed that most registered counsellors appeared competent and

effective in making appropriate use of referrals. Nevertheless, it remains to be contested if the frequency of referral to both peers and senior specialists is not less than initially intended, as a lot of emphasis is placed on this core competency by the Professional Board (HPCSA, Professional Board for Psychology, 2005). Overall, these findings suggest that registered counsellors who are working within their field might mainly focus on psychological assessment and basic psychological intervention and less so on referrals. This trend supports the value and relevance of the core competencies of psychological intervention and assessment as was originally stipulated in the practice framework of registered counsellors (HPCSA, Professional Board for Psychology, 2005).

Along the above discussed core competencies, the practice framework further directs that registered counsellors need to engage in training, be able to implement and manage projects as well as conduct research on a general basis (HPCSA, Professional Board for Psychology, 2005). Of the respondents found working as registered counsellors 36 responded. The vast majority indicated that they engage in training (69.4%, n=25) and project implementation (61.1%, n=22). Contrastingly, the majority of them did not engage in project management (55.6%, n=20) nor conduct research on a general basis (61.1%, n=22). The finding that most did not engage in research is supported by other studies that found about 63% of psychologists who had graduated from the Free State University (Viljoen, Beukes & Louw, 1999) and 87% of psychologist graduating from the University of Cape Town (Gardiner, 2006) did not spend 'any' time involved in research. Despite this comparison, these findings provide a first indication of the extent that registered counsellors engage in these activities and suggest possible areas that might require more attention for the B.Psych. degree in the future.

Respondents were asked if their work as registered counsellors requires the use of psychometric tests, and if yes, respondents were invited to provide detail on the type of test used. Of all respondents who were working as registered counsellors (N=38), 68.4% (n=26) conducted psychometric testing. The psychometric tests that were being used are listed in Table 7. Most of these tests are listed by the Professional Board (HPCSA, Professional Board for Psychology, 2006) and involve the assessment of personality functioning, intellectual functioning, interest, potential,

aptitudes, career development, psycho-education problems and learning problems. These findings indicate that registered counsellors are conducting assessment in terms of the general screening of intellectual/ scholastic abilities, aptitudes, interests, career placement and personality profiling as stipulated by the HPCSA (HPCSA, Professional Board for Psychology, 2005).

What is the income of working registered counsellors?

Respondents were asked to indicate if they had income from sources other than their work as a registered counsellor. Results showed that the majority of working registered counsellors (70.3%, n=26) had no income from other sources than their counselling work. As is shown in Table 8, most practicing registered counsellors (62.2%, n=23) earned their total income from their counselling work. Contrastingly, 21.6% (n=8) of working registered counsellors had the majority of their income from other sources and their profession- related income covered only a minority of their total income. Other sources of income included work in the property/investment sector, nursing sector, health sector, NGOs, and education sector. These findings might lead one to assume that the income from registered counsellors is satisfactory, but this assumption needs to be evaluated in light of most registered counsellors being female and possibly being supported by their spouse. Additionally, as will be covered in a subsequent section, comments on the earning capacity of registered counsellors expressed great dissatisfaction.

Non-working⁶ registered counsellors: Why are they not working within their profession and where are they working instead?

Results showed that 54% (n= 44) of registered counsellors out of the total sample (N=82) were found not be working within their profession of counselling. Out of 43 responses, the most prominent reason was due to not finding employment within their profession. The second reason was that they found or chose alternative employment. As a third reason, 9 registered counsellors indicated that they had continued studies, of which 3 had done so with clinical psychology masters and 6 in alternative career fields. Similarly, Kotze and Carolissen (2005) found that many graduates had continued with studies outside the profession. Other minor reasons for not working within their profession were travel overseas, followed by pregnancy and the birth of a

child. Also, most of these registered counsellors had never previously worked within their profession, and the few ones who did had done so mostly part time or temporarily for less than one year. A few had done voluntary work as a registered counsellor. These responses mirror the same difficulties and reasons revealed by Elkonin and Sandison (2006). A third topic that emerged was the reason for registered counsellors not having opened up their own practice. They argued that they did not know how much they could charge clients, what opportunities were potentially available to them, followed by some not having the needed finances and client base to do so. These findings might suggest a possible need for clarification on behalf of the Professional Board in terms of what private practice incorporates, allows and requires in regard to registered counsellors.

Most registered counsellors who had failed in finding employment within their profession were found working in alternative fields that included work at different levels in companies, in an NGO, pharmacy, university, and school. They were working in employee health and wellness programmes, as change managers, human resources practitioners, admin clerks, professional nurses, reading therapists, lecturers, practicum managers, tutors, as well as teachers of life orientation. Some were working as au pair, pizza deliverer, cashier, cleaner and others were pensioners or unemployed. Many explicitly stated that despite them not working within their profession, they felt that their training had given them many useful skills that they made use of in their work environment. This was similarly expressed in Elkonin and Sandison's (2006) study, in which the learned skills and abilities were successfully employed in alternative forms of employment. Also, the fact that many work settings were similar to the one's of working registered counsellors could possibly support that the counselling skills were of important use.

Working⁵ versus non-working⁶ registered counsellors: Do they intend to qualify as psychologists?

Exactly half (50.0%, n=19) of all respondents who were working as registered counsellors (N=38) indicated that they did intend to qualify as a psychologist at a later stage. Just more than one quarter (26.3%, n=10) were not sure if they were going to pursue a career as psychologists. Just less than a quarter (23.7%, n=9) of them were

certain that they did not plan to qualify as a psychologist. The results reflect a similar trend as identified by Elkonin and Sandison (2006) who revealed that about 40 % of graduates, of which 23% had already entered psychology masters studies, who had completed the P.Psych. degree at the NMMU, were going to progress to registration as psychologists. In comparison to respondents who were not working within their profession, many of them (46.38%,n=19) did intend to continue studies to qualify as psychologist (N=41). Just less than those (41.46%, n=17) were uncertain about their future regarding the pursuit of a career as a psychologist. Contrastingly, only very few (12.2%, n=5) registered counsellors did not intend to qualify as a psychologist. These results might suggest that the future goal of progressing to the registration as psychologist is similarly present by the biggest proportion of respondents of both sub-samples. These findings might indicate that the distinction between having experienced success in finding work within the profession might not play as a big role in determining if professionals want to proceed to the registration as a psychologist. Either way, it appears that registered counsellors do possibly perceive the registration category as a middle step within their career path to psychology masters level.

All respondents: What were their experiences of and opinions on various issues?

Comments on the registration category

A number of themes emerged regarding registered counsellors' comments on the registration category (see Table 9). Overall, negative responses on the category (74.6%, n=56) largely outweighed solely positive ones (8.0%, n=6) as well as responses that reflected both positive and negative opinions (17.3%, n=13). The most prominent three themes that emerged most often were the lack of recognition by the public and other professionals as well as the need for marketing of the profession in the future. Most registered counsellors expressed concern for the public's awareness and recognition of their profession. Registered counsellors felt that the public has been largely oblivious of the profession of registered counsellors in terms of the skills and services that are being offered as well as the level of qualification and legal framework that surround their registration with the HPCSA. The misconception of registered counsellors as equivalent to psychologists or lay counsellors was expressed as an additional concern. Respondents felt that many other professionals are discrediting their qualifications and level of competence regarding their capabilities as

an important health professional. As a result, most registered counsellors expressed the urgent need for the promotion and marketing of their profession and competencies by educating the public, other professionals and important governing bodies such as the government and the health department. These issues seem to be the concern of most registered counsellors at a national level and are confirmed the Elkonin and Sandison (2006) and Kotze and Carolissen (2005).

Experiences with the Professional Board for Psychology

Seventy two responses revealed numerous themes that were being addressed regarding registered counsellors' experiences with the Professional Board for Psychology (see Table 10). About two thirds (66.7%, n=49) of the sample of registered counsellors expressed dissatisfaction with the Professional Board, whereas 20.8% (n=15) were completely satisfied and some others (12.5%, n=9) felt both positive and negative about them. Table 10 demonstrates that many registered counsellors experienced the Professional Board as unhelpful, inefficient and difficult to get hold of telephonically. Also, respondents complained about requests being responded to with delay such as the late sending of registration cards. Poor administration and organisation was perceived as another source of dissatisfaction on behalf of registered counsellors, as some reported about the losing of forms by the Professional Board. Further dissatisfaction was expressed regarding the identification, search for, and successful contact with relevant Board members as well as them providing accurate and clear information. These registered counsellors struggled to find appropriate respondents to assist them with their query or request, which was perceived as grounded in the poor communication between the different departments of the Professional Board. Some registered counsellors experienced the Professional Board as unprofessional as well as disinterested and unconcerned about their registered counsellor members. Contrastingly, a few registered counsellors were generally satisfied with their interaction and registration with the Professional Board and experienced no problems with them. The finding that the majority of respondents had negative opinions and experiences with the Professional Board was previously voiced by participants of the previous two studies (Elkonin & Sandison, 2006; Kotze & Carolissen, 2005).

Benefits associated with being a registered counsellor

Respondents were invited to comment on the benefits that are associated with being a registered counsellor (see Table 11). Despite the overwhelming negative impression of the registration category and the experiences with the Professional Board, most respondents commented positively on the perceived benefits associated with their profession (70.0%, n=49). About one quarter of respondents felt that there were no benefits at all (24.3%, n=17), whereas 4 respondents perceived both positive and negative aspects regarding the associated benefits (5.7%). The themes that emerged ranged from respondents arguing that there were no benefits to benefits experienced in the meaningful and independent contributions as well as the practical experiences that were gained from the training and the work in the field. Gained practical experiences were expressed as extremely valuable in light of further study such as in the pursue of a clinical masters in psychology. Also, the fact that this profession lends itself to conducting private practice and being self-employed was valued by many registered counsellors. Many registered counsellors experienced personal development and growth as an important benefit associated with their training and/or profession. In this regard, many expressed that they had learned a lot about themselves and grown into more insightful and sensitive human beings. The positive perception of the training experience (internship) and the B.Psych. degree reflect a known finding of one of the previous studies (Elkonin & Sandison, 2006) and thus highlight the perceived value of the training in general.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study suggest that the current situation of registered counsellors is in a highly controversial state. On the one side are findings that the registration category has provided valuable professionals and proof for their ability to make important contributions to the provision of psychological services to especially previously disadvantaged communities. On the other, stronger side, this study has revealed numerous problems and obstacles for these professionals. Unless these problems are not overcome in the near future, it is likely that there will be no light at the end of the tunnel for registered counsellors in South Africa.

The light

This study suggests that the potential workforce of registered counsellors in South Africa is well trained and qualified. With most of them specialising in Primary Mental Health, Trauma, HIV/AIDS and School Counselling, they are able to address some fundamental problem areas in this country. These professionals are young and constitute of a significantly greater proportion of Black, Coloured and Indian professionals speaking more African languages than other health care professionals. This suggests that registered counsellors have potential to make important contributions in the delivery of psychological services to previously disadvantaged communities in this country.

Possible evidence for this has been provided by some of the registered counsellors who were found working within their profession. Exactly half of all respondents who work as registered counsellors were employed in the public sector (30%) and in NGOs (20%), which offer more affordable, sliding scale-charging or free services. This suggests a positive change in comparison to the delivery of psychological services by other professionals like psychologists, who have largely been available to privileged clients through private practice. The finding that a certain proportion of Black clients existed in the client bases of most registered counsellor and that most clients were children, adolescence or young adults (younger than 30 years) addresses important demographic characteristics that form part of the majority of the South African population. Furthermore, respondents working as registered counsellors engaged in most of the core competencies that are specified by the HPCSA (HPCSA, Professional Board for Psychology, 2005). A majority demonstrated the use of general screening, identification of symptoms and the promotion of psychological well-being with all of their clients and demonstrated ability to conduct training, project implementation as well as various psychological assessment tests. As a result, registered counsellors seem to be able to provide valuable primary psychological health care services within their range of competencies to especially previously disadvantaged communities. Nevertheless, there were also numerous shortcomings that constituted and surrounded this profession.

The dark reality

The current situation of registered counsellors in South Africa is looking grim.

Since the legal implementation of this registration category in 2003, only 256 professionals have registered in this category with the Professional Board for Psychology of the HPCSA. Despite this small number, findings of this study further indicate that more than half of all registered counsellors (54%) are not actually working within their profession in that they have been thoroughly trained for 4 years. The main reason of this daunting national trend is the lack of available and advertised vacancies. In conjunction, this study revealed the lack of public and professional knowledge of the scope of practice of registered counsellors in terms of who these professionals are and what services they are able to offer. In addition, many registered counsellors showed great dissatisfaction with the Professional Board for Psychology.

This situation seems to coincide with the fact that of the 12 South Africa training institutions that have produced the registered counsellors in this study only four seem to be offering the B.Psych degree in 2008. Personal conversation with people in the psychology departments of these institutions revealed that the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, the University of the Western Cape, the University of Venda and the Midrand Graduate Institute will be the only available institutions to be offering the B.Psych degree next year, with the former two indicating that they are likely to phase it out in the near future. Their justified argument is grounded in the ethical dilemma of training professionals for a field that offers virtually no employment.

Furthermore, findings revealed many shortcomings regarding the demographic characteristics of the registered counsellors in the sample. Only one third of the Black and African language speaking respondents were successful in seeking employment within the profession. Further, the finding that the large proportion of registered counsellors were working in the public sector needs to be evaluated in light of the finding that most work was offered in the education sector. Taken together, this might suggest that the reality is not as beneficial for low-income earners as those above described services are likely to apply to public schools and university settings. As a result, it appears that along with the 31% of working registered counsellors working in private practice, only about 20% of work done in NGO's might directly benefit previously disadvantaged communities.

In addition, many registered counsellors seem to be planning to progress to psychology masters levels in the near future. This trend seemed applicable irrespective if respondents were working or not working within the profession. Together with the repeatedly mentioned benefit of this registration category offering practical experience that would benefit further training in psychology masters strongly suggests that most registered counsellors might perceive of this profession as simply a step towards the registration as a psychologist in the future. In addition, the findings that respondents perceived the registration category and the Professional Board for Psychology as mostly negative raises the question on how committed these professionals will stay with their profession, that to this day is only offering minimal benefits along multiple problems.

In retrospect, it could be argued that these findings are not valid in light of the limiting response rate (32.8%) of this study. However, this study revealed a high degree of representation of the sample characteristics compared to those of the population. Additionally, this study seems to have mirrored a possible national trend of most of the findings that were initially revealed by Elkonin and Sandison (2006) and Kotze and Carolissen (2005). Another limitation of this study could have been the restricted insight into the situation of registered counsellors who were not working within the profession as well as little insight into how possible findings might have been related. Since this study solely aimed to provide the first insight into the situation of registered counsellors this study provided the initial information that may be further investigated in subsequent studies. Furthermore, the insight into who the registered counsellors are and what they do is hoped to contribute to the information that is possibly necessary to make informed judgements about the future of this profession.

Future directions

Overall, the findings of this study seem to be outlining a critical situation of the profession of registered counsellors in South Africa. It appears that the problems and obstacles of this profession are largely outweighing their benefits. As a result, it will be vital to make clear decisions about the future of this profession as time is running out. Therefore, if the decision will indicate that there is hope for this profession then actions need to be taken in the form of education in and promotion of the profession

to the general public and other professionals. Contrastingly, if it is decided that there is not much hope for this profession it will remain fundamental to determine how the governing bodies will proceed. One way or another, this study was aimed to directly contribute to this decision making process by providing the first insight and overview of the situation of registered counsellors in terms of who these professionals are and what they are doing at the present time.

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Appendix A: Opening page of survey

Registered Counsellor Survey

Dear Registered Counsellor

Thank you for demonstrating interest in this study regarding your profession. The purpose of this questionnaire is to gain a better understanding of what your profession entails, what significant contributions it provides, as well as what your personal experiences and opinions are in regard to the category itself.

Your responses to this questionnaire will remain strictly confidential. The researcher will not attempt to identify you with your responses to the questionnaire, or to name you as a participant in the study, nor facilitate anyone else doing so. Your responses will be saved automatically in a data file to ensure that all participants remain anonymous. Please be advised that this survey is voluntary and that you have the right to terminate the survey at any time, in which case your responses will be excluded from the survey.

This questionnaire consists of five (5) sections. Section 1 deals with your personal information, Section 2 with your work environment, Section 3 with the contents of your work, Section 4 with your income and Section 5 invites you to comment on the registration category and the role of the Professional Board for Psychology.

There may be a 60 seconds delay as the questionnaire loads but it should run smoothly from that point on. This questionnaire will take about 20 minutes. Please answer all questions. Your participation in this research is very important. Thank you for your time!

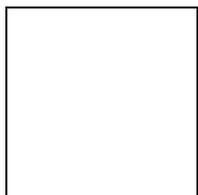
To start, please press 'START SURVEY' below.

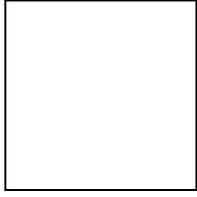


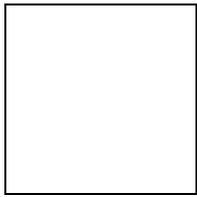
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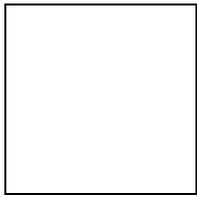
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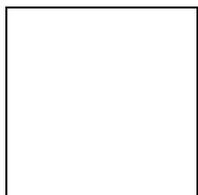
Appendix B: Online survey questionnaire

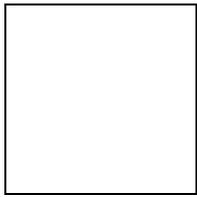










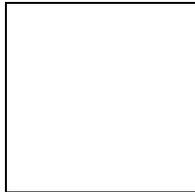


Appendix C: Closing page of survey

Thank you very much for completing this survey.
Your participation has been greatly appreciated. As a small reward I offer you an abbreviated copy of the survey results. Please inform me via email at ablest001@uct.ac.za or phone 082 224 2250.

Yours sincerely
Esther Abel

Thank you!



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Appendix D: Survey cover letter



UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

Department of Psychology

[Date]

Dear [Name of Registered Counsellor]

My name is Esther Abel, currently doing an Honours degree in psychology at the University of Cape Town. As part of the degree, I am conducting a study into the registration category of registered counsellors. As you will know better than anyone, this category has been fraught with controversy since its implementation (take a look for example at Elkonin & Sandison, 2006)¹. I believe we still do not know enough about the work that people who are registered in the category do to make informed judgements about its future. As a result, I propose, with your help, to provide a first insight into this area of expertise. Your assistance will provide the basis for a general overview of what your profession entails, what significant contributions it provides, as well as what your personal experiences and opinions are in regard to the category itself and the role of the Professional Board for Psychology. The Board has provided me with the addresses of all registered counsellors, and my intention is to approach all of you to participate in a survey about these matters. This will provide the most comprehensive picture of your profession up to now, which may influence the way we think about and plan for psychological services in this country. Your participation in this research is very important.

I am conducting the study under the auspices of the Department of Psychology at the University of Cape Town. The study and questionnaire have been approved by an ethics committee of the University. Furthermore, I would like to stress that your name and contact details will be kept confidential at all times. In all communication about the project participants will remain anonymous and care will be taken that no identifying information will be communicated to anyone. This study is being conducted in complete independence of the Professional Board.

I would be most grateful if you completed the online questionnaire, which will be easily accessible on the following website:

<http://www.zoomerang.com/survey.zgi?p=WEB226MKZ9TX47>

There are only 35 questions and the process should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. There may be a 60 seconds delay as the questionnaire loads. If you prefer to complete the questionnaire in paper-and-pencil format, or via email, please contact me and I will forward you the questionnaire. It would be very helpful if you could complete the questionnaire as soon as possible.

Thank you very much for participating. If you have any queries and/or would like an abbreviated copy of the survey results, please feel free to contact me at ablest001@uct.ac.za or phone on 082 224 2250.

Yours sincerely

Esther Abel
University of Cape Town

Johann Louw (Supervisor)
Department of Psychology
University of Cape Town

¹ Elkonin D. S. & Sandison, A. (2006). Mind the gap: have the registered counsellors fallen through? *South African Journal of Psychology*, 36, 598-612.

Appendix E: Survey of email and paper-and-pencil format

**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN*****Department of Psychology***

[Date]

Dear Registered Counsellor

Thank you for demonstrating interest in this study regarding your profession. The purpose of this questionnaire is to gain a better understanding of what your profession entails, what significant contributions it provides, as well as what your personal experiences and opinions are in regard to the category itself.

Your responses to this questionnaire will remain strictly confidential. The researcher will not attempt to identify you with your responses to the questionnaire, or to name you as a participant in the study, nor facilitate anyone else doing so. Your responses will be saved randomly in a data file to ensure that all participants remain anonymous. Please be advised that this survey is voluntary and that you have the right to terminate the survey at any time, in which case your responses will be excluded from the survey.

This questionnaire consists of five (5) sections. Section 1 deals with your personal information, Section 2 with your work environment, Section 3 with the contents of your work, Section 4 with your income and Section 5 invites you to comment on the registration category and the role of the Professional Board for Psychology.

This questionnaire will take about 20 minutes. Please answer all the questions. Your participation in this research is very important. Thank you for your time.

Return options for the completed Survey

Please choose ONE of the two options listed below:

- You may complete the survey on the computer in the word document format in which you received it. Please return the completed survey as an attachment to ablest001@uct.ac.za
- You may print the survey and then complete it by hand. Please return the completed survey via mail to

Esther Abel
Unit 8 Bradwell Mansions
Bradwell Road
Vredehoek
Cape Town
8001

Thank you very much for your time and effort. If you have any queries please feel free to contact me at ablest001@uct.ac.za or phone on 082 224 2250, or Johann Louw (Supervisor), Department of Psychology, University of Cape Town, Rondebosch 7701, Tel. 021- 650 3414.

REGISTERED COUNSELLORS SURVEY

Informed Consent:

Do you agree that you have read the previous page and understood everything, especially your rights regarding your participation in this research/ survey?
(Please mark with 'X')

- ____ YES, I agree and herewith give my informed consent to participate in this survey.
- ____ NO, I do not agree and herewith do not give my informed consent to participate in this survey.

Start of the Survey

A) Demographic Characteristics:

This section refers to some basic demographic information about yourself. Please mark with 'X' next to the relevant options or fill in the blank spaces where applicable.

1. Gender:

- Male _____
- Female _____

2. Race:

- Black _____
- Coloured _____
- Indian _____
- White _____
- Other, please specify _____

3. Please indicate your home language:

- Afrikaans _____
- English _____
- IsiNdebele _____
- IsiXhosa _____
- IsiZulu _____
- Northern Sotho _____
- Sesotho _____
- Setswana _____ (continued on next page)
- SiSwati _____
- Tshivenda _____
- Xitsonga _____
- Other, please specify _____

4. Please indicate your age category:

- 21-25 _____
- 26-30 _____
- 31-35 _____
- 36-40 _____
- 41-45 _____
- 46-50 _____
- 51+ _____

5. Concerning your profession as a Registered Counsellor, what degree did you study?

- B.Psych. _____
- Psychology Honours _____
- Other, please specify _____

6. At what institution did you study your above mentioned degree?

- University of South Africa _____
- University of Johannesburg _____
- University of Witwatersrand _____
- University of Pretoria _____
- Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University _____
- University of Cape Town _____
- University of the Western Cape _____
- University of Stellenbosch _____
- Rhodes University _____
- University of Fort Hare _____
- University of the Free State _____
- University of KwaZulu-Natal _____
- University of Limpopo _____
- North-West University _____
- University of Venda _____
- Walter Sisulu University
for Technology and Science _____
- University of Zululand _____
- Other, please specify _____

7. What year did you register with the Professional Board for Psychology of the HPCSA for the first time?

- 2003 _____
- 2004 _____
- 2005 _____
- 2006 _____
- 2007 _____

8. What is/are your specialised practice domain/s? Please mark with 'X' one or more.

- Career Counselling _____
- Trauma Counselling _____
- Primary Mental Health _____
- Family Counselling _____
- School Counselling _____
- Sport Counselling _____
- HIV/AIDS Counselling _____
- Human Resources _____
- Pastoral Counselling _____
- Employee Well-Being _____

B) Work Environment:

This section refers to your current, and if not applicable, to your most recent (paid and/ or unpaid) employment as a Registered Counsellor. Please mark the relevant options with 'X' or fill in the blank spaces where applicable.

9. Are you currently working as a Registered Counsellor?

- YES _____
- NO _____

If NO, please comment on why not and when last you worked as a Registered Counsellor:

10. In what city do (did) you work?

- Johannesburg _____
- Durban _____
- Cape Town _____
- Port Elizabeth _____
- Bloemfontein _____
- Pretoria _____
- East London _____
- Pietermaritzburg _____
- Other, please specify _____

11. Please indicate (mark with 'X') the sector(s) and the relevant type(s) of employment in which you engage(d) as a Registered Counsellor.

Sector	Type of employment			N/A
	Full Time	Part Time	Volunteer	
Private sector				
Public sector				
NGO				
Private practice				

12. Name of (main) employment organisation: _____

13. Your job title (if applicable): _____

14. Who do you report to? (if applicable, e.g. GP/ psychiatrist/ psychologist/ nurse/ counsellor/ social worker/ officer etc.)

15. Who reports to you? (if applicable, e.g. subordinate counsellor, volunteer etc.)

16. What was your experience at finding work as a Registered Counsellor? Please mark with 'X' below your choice. It was:

Very easy/ fairly easy/ neither easy nor difficult/ fairly difficult/ very difficult

17. Please explain why you rated the previous question the way you did:

C) Work Content:

This section refers to the type of work in which you spend most of your time as a Registered Counsellor. Please mark with 'X' or fill in the blank spaces where applicable.

18. About how many hours per week do you engage in income producing work as a Registered Counsellor?

19. About how many hours per week do you engage in unpaid volunteer work?

20. As a Registered Counsellor, do you consult with clients? Please mark with 'X'.

- Yes _____ If Yes, please proceed to question 21.
- No _____ If No, please proceed to question 26.

21. In a typical week, about how many clients do you see? Please give one number:

22. In a typical week, roughly what percentage of males and females make up your clientele? Please mark ('X') each row once. (Must add up to 100%)

	0 %	25 %	50 %	75 %	100 %
Males					
Females					

23. In a typical week, roughly what percentage of each age category makes up your clientele? Please mark ('X') each row once. (Must add up to 100%)

	0 %	20 %	40 %	60 %	80 %	100 %
0-20 year olds						
21-30 year olds						
31-40 year olds						
41-50 year olds						
50 + year olds						

24. In a typical week, roughly what percentage of each race group makes up your clientele? Please mark ('X') each row once. (Must add up to 100%)

	0 %	25 %	50 %	75%	100 %
Black					
Coloured					
Indian					
White					

25. The Professional Board specifies the following core competencies. Please indicate ('X') how often you engage in these activities in the spaces below.

	NEVER (with no client)	SOMETIMES (with less than half the clients)	OFTEN (with more than half the clients)	ALWAYS (with every client)	N/A
General screening/ interpretation of psychological functioning (e.g. aptitudes)					
Identification of symptoms for referral					
Referral to peer professionals (e.g. other counsellors)					
Referral to senior specialists (e.g. Psychologists)					
Basic psycho education					
Promotion of primary psychosocial well-being					

26. Please indicate ('X') if you generally engage in the following.

	YES	NO
Training		
Project Implementation		
Project Management		
Research		

27. Do you conduct psychometric testing?

- Yes _____
- No _____

If Yes, please state which 3 tests you use most often:

28. Do you intend to qualify as a psychologist?

- Yes _____
- Maybe _____
- No _____

D) General Income:

This section refers to your source(s) of income. Please mark ('X') the relevant options or fill in the blank spaces where applicable.

29. Do you have an income from sources other than working as a Registered Counsellor?

- Yes _____
- No _____

If Yes, please specify:

30. Roughly, what percentage of your income comes from working as a Registered Counsellor? Please mark ('X') each row once. (Must add up to 100%)

	0 %	25 %	50 %	75 %	100 %
As a Registered Counsellor					
Alternative/ Other					

31. Please indicate ('X') the sector in the economy from which you draw your main source of income:

- Health Sector _____
- Education Sector _____
- Labour/ Business Sector _____
- Other, please specify _____

E) 'Registered Counsellor' Category:

If you want to, please comment on the following in the spaces below.

32. Comments on the Registered Counsellor category (e.g. recognition by the public and other professionals, strengths, weaknesses/areas for improvement, future ideas etc.)

33. Comments on the experiences with the Professional Board (e.g. registration, interaction, etc)

34. Comments on the benefits of being a Registered Counsellor

35. Additional comments of your choice

End of Survey

Thank you very much for completing this survey.
Your participation has been greatly appreciated. As a small reward I offer you an abbreviated copy of the survey results. Please inform me via email at ablest001@uct.ac.za

Yours sincerely
Esther Abel

Appendix F: Follow up letter for email

Dear [Name of Registered Counsellor]

The data collection of my research study on Registered Counsellors is drawing to an end. Since I recall having sent you the Registered Counsellor Survey as an email attachment, but not yet heard from you, I would like to inquire if you received the survey and have had a chance to look at it. If you have completed and returned the survey email, I would like you to resend it, since I have not yet received it. (If you have completed the survey online already, I apologize for this inquiry).

Thank you so much for your time and effort. Your participation in this survey is very important!

Please feel free to contact me if you would like me to resend the survey to you and/ or if you have any further queries. Thank you very much.

Kind regards
Esther Abel

Appendix G: Follow up letter for paper and pencil format

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

Department of Psychology

[Date]

Survey Reminder Letter

Dear [Name of Registered Counsellor]

Thank you very much for contacting me a few weeks ago to request the survey in a paper and pencil format. Based on your request I send you the survey.

So far, I have not yet heard from you or received the completed survey from you. Therefore, I would like to find out if you have received the survey (with the enclosed, stamped envelope).

If you have not received my letter with the paper and pencil survey, please inform me via my contact details below and I will gladly send the survey to you again. Also, please feel free to contact me for any further queries.

Your participation in this survey is very important. Every response and therefore your response counts and may make a difference to the profession of all Registered Counsellors in this country in the future. Please take a few minutes to complete and return the survey to the provided address.

Thank you so much for your time.

Yours sincerely

Esther Abel
University of Cape Town

My Contact Details:

Tel: 021 461 7643 or 082 224 2250

Email: ablest001@uct.ac.za

Address: 8 Bradwell Mansions
Bradwell Road
Vredehoek
Cape Town
8001

Appendix H: Telephonic interview introduction

I – Interviewer

R– Respondent

I: Good morning/afternoon/evening. I would like to please speak to Mrs. / Mr.?

R: Speaking.

I: Hello, I'm calling from the University of Cape Town. I'm Esther Abel, an Honours student here and conducting a study on Registered Counsellors. I have send you and all other RCs a formal letter of invitation to participate in this study, I'm not sure if you have received this letter yet...?

R: No, ...not that I know of.

I: Ok, that's not a problem, I can tell you about it now if you have a minute or two or I can email or fax it to you if you would prefer that?

1)

R: Yes, I do have a minute.

I: Great, ok, basically I am conducting the study to shed more light on the profession of registered counsellors in this country. To be specific, based on the controversy surrounding this registration category I am conducting a survey to shed more light on what your profession actually entails, what significant contributions it provides, and on your personal experiences and opinions of the category and the role of the Professional Board for Psychology. Therefore, since you are a Registered Counsellor I would like to invite you to participate via a short questionnaire that I can either email to you or ask you over the phone. Would you be interested to participate?...[If yes], what option of participation would you prefer? [If no], I also have alternative options of providing you with the online URL address or I can send you the questionnaire in a paper and pencil format?

R: ...

2)

R: No, sorry, I don't really have time to hear you out now.

I: No problem, I could email or fax it through to you? Or I could also call you back at a later stage...?

R: Yes....

R: No...

[If respondent is reluctant to participate]

I: Ok, I understand that you might be very busy but is there no chance that I could at least email the questionnaire to you so that you can have a look at it in your own time and maybe reconsider. Your opinion and experiences are really important and might directly influence the future of this profession.

[General questions that might arise]

R: Am I protected?

I can assure you that this conversation and your participation in the survey is completely confidential and voluntary. To be specific, I will not attempt to identify you with your responses in the questionnaire, or to name you as a participant in the study, nor facilitate anyone else doing so. Oh, and you have the right to terminate the survey at any time, in which case your responses will be excluded from the survey.

If you have any other questions about the confidentiality of this survey you can contact my supervisor Professor Johann Louw (Department of Psychology, UCT, Rondebosch 7701, tel. 021 650 3414.)

Also, I'm conducting the study under the auspices of the Department of Psychology at UCT. The study and the questionnaire have been approved by the ethics committee of the University. And to add, I would like to emphasise that this study is done

completely independent to the Professional Board for Psychology of the HPCSA. So, your participation and your responses will remain completely confidential and anonymous.

R: So how can I participate?

I: Ok, great, you have two options to participate in this survey.

- 1) Option one is that you can complete the questionnaire that I can send to you via email. And all you have to do is complete it and simply email it back to me.
- 2) Option two is that you can complete the survey with me over the phone, at any specific time, when you would like me to call back; or, if you want to, now!?

[If these options are not desirable for the participant offer them two more options, namely:]

- 3) Option three is that you can complete the questionnaire in your own time online and I will provide you with the link that will lead you to the website where the survey is located.
(<http://www.zoomerang.com/survey.zgi?p=WEB226JHDKXQC4>)
- 4) Option four is that I can send you the questionnaire in a paper and pencil format accompanied by a stamped and addressed envelope. So, all you need to do is complete it and send it back.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

A sincere word of gratitude is offered to my supervisor, Johann Louw, who provided me with the registration list of registered counsellors and with valuable support and advice throughout all stages of the present study. I wish to thank Erica Thomas for assisting me with the use of the survey tool. Lastly, I wish to express my gratitude to all the registered counsellors who have participated in the present study and who have not given up hope regarding the future of their profession.

NOTES

¹ In the article the term, *Black*, was used as defined in the Employment Equity Act (1998), namely, as ‘a generic term [used to refer to] . . . Africans, Coloureds and Indians’ (chapter 1, n. p.).

² The students of 2002 had already graduated with a B.A. Psychology degree and were registered for an honours degree in 2002.

³ HPCSA, May 2007.

⁴ HPCSA, 1. 6. 2004.

⁵ ‘Working’ and ‘practicing’ registered counsellors refers to the registered counsellors who were found working within their profession of counselling irrespective if it involved paid, unpaid employed work or work in private practice.

⁶ ‘Non-working’ is referred to registered counsellors who are not working within their profession as registered counsellors

⁷ As registered counsellors could indicate more than one employment sector, the frequency exceeded the 38 responses of professionals who were working within their profession.

⁸ When participants indicated two work settings, the frequency was divided and counted as 0.5 counts for each work setting.

Table 1.
Demographic characteristics of registered counsellors

	Population ^a		Sample	
	%	n	%	n
Gender ^b				
Males	14.8 %	(38)	14.6 %	(12)
Females	85.2 %	(218)	85.4 %	(70)
Race ^b				
White	59.8 %	(153)	65.9 %	(54)
African	22.7 %	(58)	18.3 %	(15)
Coloured	9.0 %	(23)	9.8 %	(8)
Asian/ Indian	7.0 %	(18)	6.1 %	(5)
Other	1.6 %	(4)	0 %	(0)
Region ^c				
Gauteng	49.2%	(126)	50.0%	(39)
Western Cape	19.1%	(49)	20.5%	(16)
Eastern Cape	9.8 %	(25)	11.5 %	(9)
Northern Province/Limpopo	7.4 %	(19)	5.1%	(4)
Kwa-Zulu Natal	6.6 %	(17)	5.1%	(4)
Free State	2.7%	(7)	1.3%	(1)
Mpumalanga	2.0 %	(5)	1.3%	(1)
Northern Cape	2.0 %	(5)	1.3%	(1)
North West	1.2 %	(3)	3.8%	(3)

Note: ^a N=256. ^b N=82. ^c N=78. Fourteen respondents omitted to indicate their region.

Table 2.

Demographic distribution in the registered counsellor sample

	n	%		n	%
Gender			Language		
Females	70	85.4	English	47	57.3
Males	12	14.6	Afrikaans	20	24.4
Race			Sesotho	4	4.9
White	54	65.9	Tshivenda	4	4.9
Black	15	18.3	IsiXhosa	3	3.7
Coloured	8	9.8	Northern Sotho	2	2.4
Indian	5	6.1	Xitsonga	1	1.2
			Other (Dutch)	1	1.2

Table 3.

Distribution of practice domains of the registered counsellor sample

Practice domains	%	n
Trauma Counselling	21.5	26
Primary Mental Health	21.5	26
School Counselling	14.9	18
HIV/AIDS Counselling	19.4	18
Career Counselling	9.1	11
Family Counselling	7.4	9
Employee Well-Being	5.0	6
Human Resources	2.5	3
Sport Counselling	1.7	2
Pastoral Counselling	1.7	2

Note: As the number of practice domains by each participant varied, the total frequency exceeds the 82 respondents to the survey. N=121.

Table 4.

Practice domains of working registered counsellors

	n	%
Trauma Counselling	15	25.9
Primary Mental Health	10	17.2
HIV/AIDS Counselling	10	17.2
School Counselling	7	12.1
Career Counselling	5	8.6
Family Counselling	5	8.6
Employee Well-Being	3	5.2
Pastoral Counselling	2	3.4
Sport Counselling	1	1.7
Human Resources	0	0.0

Note: As respondents could indicate more than one practice domain, the total frequency exceeds the 82 respondents to the survey. N=121.

Table 5.

Sector of employment where registered counsellors work

	n	%		n	%
Private Practice			NGO		
Full Time	9	15.0	Full Time	7	11.7
Part Time	10	16.7	Part Time	3	5.0
Volunteer	0	0.0	Volunteer	2	3.3
Public Sector			Private Sector		
Full Time	10	16.7	Full Time	9	15.0
Part Time	4	6.7	Part Time	2	3.3
Volunteer	4	6.7	Volunteer	0	0.0

Note: As the number of employment sectors by each participant varied, the total frequency exceeds the 38 respondents who were working as registered counsellors.

N= 60.

Table 6.

Occurrences of registered counsellor sample engaging in core competencies specified by the Professional Board for Psychology of the HPCSA

% (n)	Never (with no client)	Sometimes (with less than half clients)	Often (with more than half clients)	Always (with every client)	N/A
General screening/ interpret. of psycholog. functioning	13.9 % (5)	27.8% (10)	25.0% (9)	27.8% (10)	2.8% (1)
Identification of symptoms for referral	0.0% (0)	31.4% (11)	28.6% (10)	40.0% (14)	0.0% (0)
Referral to peer professionals	11.4% (4)	62.9% (22)	5.7% (2)	14.3% (5)	5.7% (2)
Referral to senior specialists	2.9% (1)	54.3% (19)	25.7% (9)	17.1% (6)	0.0% (0)
Basic psycho education	2.9% (1)	20.0% (7)	45.7% (16)	25.7% (9)	5.7% (2)
Promotion of psychosocial well-being	0.0% (0)	5.7% (2)	34.3% (12)	57.1% (20)	2.9% (1)

Note: Three of the respondents who were identified as not working within their profession did not answer this question. N=35.

Table 7.

Psychological tests used by registered counsellors

Psychological tests		n
Self-Directed Search Questionnaire	SDS	4
Values Scale	VS	2
South African Vocational Interest Inventory	SAVII	2
Jung Type Indicator	Psytech	2
Differential Aptitude Test: Form R, S, K & L	HSRC	2
Senior South African Individual Scales (Revised)	SSAIS(-R)	2
Junior South African Individual Scales	JSAIS	1
Junior Aptitude Test	JAT	1
Values and Motives Inventory	Psytech SA	1
Jung Personality Questionnaire	JPQ	1
General Scholastic Achievement Test	GSAT	1
Myers-Briggs Type Indicator	MBTI	1
Meyer Interest Questionnaire	MB- 10	1
Nineteen Field Interest Inventory	19FII	1
Raven's Progressive Matrices	RPM	1
ESSI Reading and Spelling Test	ESSI	1
Bender Visual Motor Gestalt Test		1
Developmental Test of Visual- Motor Integration	Beery	1
Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire	16 PF	1
Goodenough Harris Draw-A-Person Test		1
Individual Scale for Xhosa-speaking pupils		1
Non-verbal assessment for deaf learners	TONI	1

SHL Test	SHL	1
Leiter		1

Table 8.

Sources of income for working registered counsellors (RC)

% of income		% of income	
from RC work	from other work	n	%
100%	0%	23	62.2%
0%	100%	2	5.4%
50%	50%	2	5.4%
25%	75%	8	21.6%
75%	25%	2	5.4%

Note: One working registered counsellors did not answer this question. N=37

Table 9.

Ratings of comments on the registration category

Strengths	n
1. Serving and benefiting the majority of the South African communities at more affordable rates than psychologists	6
2. Work experience (esp. if want to continue studies to become a psychologist)	3
3. Good course, training; credibility for workplace; able to enter private practice; legal registration with HPCSA; fees are 50% less than of psychologists	1
Weaknesses	
1. No recognition by the public	27
2. No recognition by other professionals (organisations, NGOs, hospitals, government, health system)	24
3. Unclear and restricted practice guidelines	7
4. Insufficient specialised training and guidance	5
5. Low earning capacity	4
6. Competition with social workers, lay counsellors and counsellors from council of counsellors	3
7. Lack of advertised posts; non-user friendly title; non-domain specialised and too simple exam; perceived threat to other professionals; CPD limitations for registered counsellors	2
8. Limited referral from other professionals; difficulty to source clients; discouragement from/ perceived threat to other professionals	1

 Future Ideas

- | | |
|--|----|
| 1. Category requires increased awareness, promotion, visibility, publicity and marketing | 17 |
| 2. Increased clarity on practice framework, methods of assessment and place/position in healthcare system; enhance training | 5 |
| 3. Rename title to 'psychological counsellor' | 4 |
| 4. Redefinition of profession; increased interaction/assistance among registered counsellors and with psychologists; provision of vacancies by HPCSA and health department | 3 |
| 5. Provision of referral lists; restricted student selection into B.Psych. courses based on public demand/ availability of vacancies | 2 |

Note: The themes that emerged most often are listed in descending order under each theme category. As respondents indicated a variety of opinions, the frequency exceeds 74 of responses made to this question.

Table 10.

Rating of comments on the interaction with the Professional Board for Psychology

Dissatisfaction with the Professional Board	n
Experienced the Professional Board as unhelpful and inefficient	10
Difficulty contacting the Professional Board telephonically	9
Delayed and slow in terms of responses to requests	8
Perception of poor administration/ organisation	7
Difficulty finding correct person and receiving clear information	6
Perception of Professional Board as unprofessional	4
Poor interdepartmental communication	3
Perceived lack of interest and involvement with registered counsellors	2
<hr/>	
Satisfaction with the Professional Board	
Quick/ simple registration process	8
No problems with overall experience	7
Good interaction	6

Note: The themes that emerged most often are listed in descending order under each theme category.

Table 11.

Perceived benefits associated with being a registered counsellor

Benefits	n
1. None	17
2. Possibility to make meaningful and independent contributions to people in need	9
3. Practical experience, esp. for further training in Psychology Masters	8
4. Opportunity of having private practice and being self-employed	7
5. Personal development and growth as an individual and counsellor	6
6. Provide more affordable services than psychologists to people in need	4
7. Registration/practice number; certificate/ qualification; good/interesting psychological based training; work with less severe and more ordinary client problems; ability to claim from medical aid; complements other professions	3
8. Registered with HPCSA; title; enhanced professional recognition; learned knowledge and skills for professional helping; ability to balance private and community work; charge clients; personal fulfilment; enjoyment of work as a registered counsellor	2

Note: The themes that emerged most often are ranked in descending order.

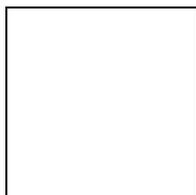


Figure 1. Distribution of South African institutes/universities where the registered counsellors of the sample graduated.

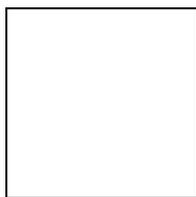


Figure 2. Work settings of the sample of registered counsellors who worked within their profession.

¹ In the article the term, *Black*, was used as defined in the Employment Equity Act (1998), namely, as ‘a generic term [used to refer to] . . . Africans, Coloureds and Indians’ (chapter 1, n. p.).

² The students of 2002 had already graduated with a B.A. Psychology degree and were registered for an honours degree in 2002.

³ HPCSA, May 2007.

⁴ HPCSA, 1. 6. 2004.

⁵ ‘Working’ and ‘practicing’ registered counsellors refers to the registered counsellors who were found working within their profession of counselling irrespective if it involved paid, unpaid employed work or work in private practice.

⁶ ‘Non-working’ is referred to registered counsellors who are not working within their profession as registered counsellors

⁷ As registered counsellors could indicate more than one employment sector, the frequency exceeded the 38 responses of professionals who were working within their profession.

⁸ When participants indicated two work settings, the frequency was divided and counted as 0.5 counts for each work setting.