

01-09-2016

Dear Mr. Simon Harris TD and Minister for Health in the Republic of Ireland,

My name is Kevin Stevenson and I am an Irish and Canadian citizen currently living in Spain. I teach English and I am pursuing doctoral studies with Sofia University in Bulgaria. I have become quite keen on pursuing a degree in Psychotherapy and/or Counselling. I have been exploring what the Republic of Ireland offers and my interest is growing, however, the changes that are taking place with the regulation of such professions has provoked me to further research the situation. I hope my insights can be of value for the procedures.

I believe that the professions of counsellor and/or psychotherapy ought to be subject to State regulation. This is important to maintain the quality for the profession. We can look at the difference between private and public education in the United States for example in which private education does not require teachers to hold degrees in Education. The pay is less for private sector teachers, but they do not need to spend the time and money on a Bachelor of Education, HDip or a PGCE for example. I believe these degrees in Education do produce teachers of higher quality, and I believe this to be reflected in the Canadian education system, which is an example of a country holding high education standards, in part because of the teaching degrees teachers require. Each province is in charge of Education, but require teachers to at least hold a Bachelor in Education, HDip or a PGCE to teach, even in private schools.

State regulation will also make it clear for persons requiring psychotherapy or counselling services, which is important for their situation. Having a search on the internet for the best service is frustrating for anyone who is in need of such services. By having the professions regulated under the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005, Part 5 section 48 will provide these professions with the guarantee that professionals wishing to pursue these professions are up to the standards. It will also allow foreign credentials to be more easily understood and accepted or rejected.

Comparing these professions with the teaching profession becomes even more useful when we consider if the 2005 Act should regulate one profession, thus merging Counselling and Psychotherapy into one profession and having one registration board, or having two separate boards for each profession. As we know, the teaching profession has Primary and Secondary teachers who usually belong to one registration board. But in Ontario for example there is a Public and a Catholic board, however, all teachers are registered in the Ontario College of Teachers. If we are to consider Psychotherapists and Counsellors as two separate but equal professions under the umbrella of Social Health Care, then there should not be an issue having both under one registration board.

With regards to the "grand parenting" qualifications to be set for existing practitioners. I believe it is essential that current professionals practicing should at least possess a NFQ level 8 Honours bachelor's degree in any field, coupled with a Level 9 course at Post Graduate or Master's level in Psychotherapy or Counselling. The other requirement could be that they have a level 8 Honours in Psychotherapy or Counselling without Level 9 work. The titles for the exclusive use of registrants should be Counsellor or Psychotherapist, depending on the route the professional wishes to take. Being registered as one or the other, or both should be possible. That stated their qualification allowing them to practice should involve both Counsellor and Psychotherapist theory and practice.

It is my hope that my opinions serve you well.

Sincerely,

Kevin Stevenson HBA (UofToronto) MA (UofSofia) PhD Candidate