

Online Counseling Teaching Management during the COVID-19 Pandemic for Teacher Professional Students: Classroom Action Research

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Received: July 11, 2022

Accepted: August 10, 2022

Online Published: August 12, 2022

doi:10.5539/hes.v12n3p146

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5539/hes.v12n3p146>

Abstract

This class action research required to develop online counseling teaching. The objectives were 1) to develop a learning management plan for an online counseling unit that promotes the competency in the counseling service of teaching professional students and 2) to study the change in the competency in the counselling service after studying with the online counseling unit learning management plan. The target group was teacher professional students, faculty of education, Government University in Thailand, who enrolled in the course of educational psychology and teacher guidance, academic year 2021. The instruments used in this research were: 1) the counseling unit learning management plan 2) a model reflecting learning outcomes in the counseling unit, and 3) a knowledge test in the counseling unit. The researchers analyzed quantitative data with percentile analysis and qualitative data with content analysis. The results showed that most of the students had 70% or more of post-learning knowledge of counseling. It reflected that learning counseling is useful for future use in the teaching profession. Including observation from the practice of counseling, it was found that students were able to apply the learned skills to psychological counseling.

Keywords: counseling, classroom action research, COVID-19

1. Introduction

Counseling is a process of helping people with problems to find a solution from the problems. With the use of counseling skills and techniques, interpersonal communication is used as a two-way communication between counselors. It facilitates counselors to express their concerns, self-examine, and understand the facing problem situations until a solution of the problem can be found. In this process, counselors receive an understanding of themselves, others, and their surroundings until able to decide and deal with the problem or problem solving effectively. It is similar to develop oneself to grow in thinking and behavior expressed to the social environment (Corey, 2016; Gladding, 2018). The effectiveness of counseling depends on mentoring skills which must be properly trained (Reinkraut, Motulsky, & Ritchie, 2009; Erlinayumas et al, 2018).

Teacher professional students must have knowledge and understanding of counseling, appreciating the value of counseling services, and skills in counseling. It collectively referred to competency in counseling and especially counseling skills practice. The effective consultation affected to the future when having to act as an advisor for students. It helped students to solve problems and develop themselves with their fullest potential. Counseling skills could be a tool to help class teachers follow up on issues in discussing with distress students. It assisted students to quickly understand the problems that they were facing and make counseling effectively (Somanandana, 2018).

In order to teach teacher professional students being competent in providing counseling services, it must be done under the supervision of a supervisor (Schofield & Pelling, 2002) which was in a normal circumstance for a classroom practice. Teacher acted as a supervisor who provided feedbacks closely and made students confidently to bring what they have learned to serve. However, during the epidemic situation of the COVID-19 virus, people in society had to adapt to a new way of life known as the new normal. The change in lifestyle is a social distancing. An educational institution was a place where a large number of students gathering. There was always a high risk from a poor management system. COVID-19 among students may spread to people in their home

(Ministry of Education, 2020).

The ministry of higher education, science, research and innovation has announced that higher education institutions offer online teaching and learning. Therefore, teaching and learning in higher education institutions focus mainly on online formats to reduce the chance of spreading the virus. Teaching counseling must also be online which had a limitation of practice. In this research, the researcher required to develop a model of online counseling learning management. The research objectives included 1) to develop a learning management plan for an online counseling unit that promotes the competency in the counseling service of teaching professional students and 2) to study the change in the competency in the counseling service after studying with the online counseling unit learning management plan. The results of the research could be information for teachers to develop learning management in online psychology counseling. There was also a guideline for designing learning management in courses that was practical in the online format.

2. Method

2.1 Participants

This research was a classroom action research. The researcher conducted 2 operating cycles. The target groups used in this research were teacher-professional students, faculty of Education, Government University in Thailand, who enrolled in the educational psychology and guidance for teacher course. The first operating cycle was carried out in the first semester. There were 47 students, divided into 16 males (34.04%) and 31 females (65.96%). The second operating cycle was implemented in the second semester. There were 21 students, comprising 9 males (42.86%) and 12 females (57.14%).

2.2 Research Instruments

The instruments used in this research consisted of 1) the learning management plan of counseling unit.

Table 1. Structure of a Brief Counseling for Learning Management Plan

No.	Activities
1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teacher gave students to study the video clip. - Teacher asked two volunteers to talk, one of whom was the speaker and the other is a listener. This activity allowed students to see the importance of active listening skill. - Teacher provided knowledge about active listening skill. - Teacher and students summarized the knowledge gained.
2.	<p>Teacher performed 7 rounds of activities according to the number of skills. All rounds were in the following order:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teacher explains the meaning and objectives of basic skills in providing counseling services. - Teacher gave an example of using basic skills in providing counseling services. - Teacher opened a video clip of the example situation. Then, students chose questions that reflect their using of counseling skills that were relevant to the story (except for the silence skill). - Teacher answered and explained the correct answers (except for the silence skill). - Teacher set a problem situation and asked students to write a speech for responding the situation. It reflected on the skill that corresponds to the story (except for the Silence skill). - Teacher asked the volunteers to show their own answers to classmate. Classmate analyzes that answer. Was the answer correct? Why? Then, teacher explains the answer. (except for the silence skill) - Teacher and students summarized the knowledge gained.
3.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teacher reviewed the basics of counseling including reviewing the steps of counseling process. - Teacher demonstrated how to be a counselor and let students to observe and record what the teacher had done on the worksheet. - Teacher made student groups and allowed students practice as a counselor. - Teacher allowed students to reflect on the importance and benefits of being a counselor and skills using in counseling. - Teacher and students summarized the knowledge gained.

2) The reflection on learning outcomes form in counseling and 3) the knowledge test of counseling unit. These instruments were passed the content validity by 2 experts in counseling field and 1 expert in research and evaluation methodology field. The IOC (Index of item Objective Congruence) were 0.66-1.00. The index would be .50 (Turner & Carlson, 2003). It mean these instruments can use in this research.

2.3 Data Collection

The researchers described the management of counseling unit with Kemmis's cycle-based classroom action research (Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon, 2013) for 2 practice sessions and 3 weeks each. It initiated by design learning management plan (Plan: P), a learning management of counseling according to the learning management plan (Act : A), observing participation in learning and learning behavior of students (Observe : O), and reflection of the results of the practice (Reflect : R). Then, the results of the practice in cycle 1 were used to develop a learning management plan and continue learning in the second cycle of operation, as shown in the following figure 1:

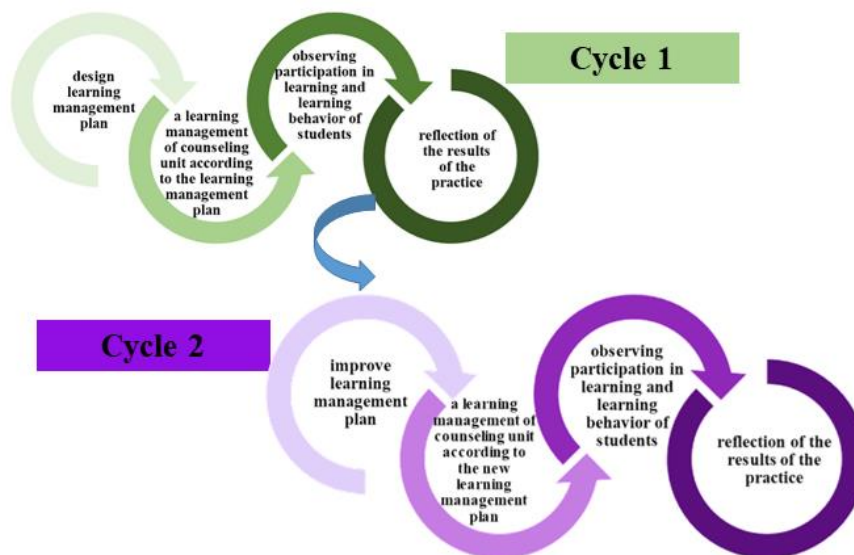


Figure 1. Learning cycle of counseling unit

2.4 Data Analysis

Quantitative data was analyzed with the scores from exercises, test and questionnaire. The researchers analyzed the qualitative data by using the information obtained from the student's memorandum and the learning outcome reflection in counseling psychology unit for content analysis.

3. Results

This research was a classroom action research. The researchers conducted 2 phases by collecting data in the beginning of 2021 and using it to improve learning management in the end of the year. The total research period was divided into 2 cycles. Therefore, researchers presented results into 2 parts according to the classroom action research cycle. as follows;

3.1 Part 1: Operating Cycle 1

The researchers conducted research in an early 2021 by organizing the course of educational psychology and guidance for teachers with counseling psychology unit. The results were presented according to the classroom action research process (Plan, Action, Observe and Reflect).

3.1.1 Plan

The researchers designed a plan for learning management of 3 counseling sessions. Then, the experts reviewed the plan. Researchers corrected the plan according to the recommendations of experts. The structure was summarized as follows table 1.

3.1.2 Act

The researcher created an online room by using Google classroom application for teacher to send learning materials to students. It was a way for students to submit assignments and created mock classes using the Class Dojo application to reinforce student participation in the learning process. Students created a group in application LINE as a channel for communication between teachers and students. Then, they managed learning according to the online learning management plan via the ZOOM application 3 times. Researchers designed activities for all students to participate in learning by dividing into leading, organizing learning activities, and

summarizing. Students submitted assignments in Google Classroom.

3.1.3 Observe

Researcher observed student from a first learning arrangement. Students did not participate in all classes. Some students didn't turn on the camera, complete the assignment, and be on time. From the memorandum review, students suggested to have more break times. In the second learning management, researcher provided feedback about the answer on the worksheet and commended the students for submitting their work on time.

Researcher showed class participation scores from the class Dojo application. It allowed students to receive score of class participation and increased the interval of break from 1 to 2. However, some students did not answer the questions. The practice of using 8 basic counseling skills included active listening skill, questioning skill, paraphrasing skill, supporting skill, Identifying consequences skill, informing skill, silencing skill, and Summarizing skill (Somanandana, 2018). It was found that there were students who did not understand how to use those skills correctly. Researcher explained further in class and checked student's worksheets. When found that any student didn't understand, researcher provided additional explanation in the comment box of Google classroom learning. In the third learning management, researcher provided feedback about on the work submission and commended students who submitted all assignments on time. Student who did not have extra score was called to answer. So that every students had a score for their participation in the class. For the part of the practice as a counselor, researcher found that students were excited. It was fun to try out the role of a counselor in a group of friends.

3.1.4 Reflect

- (1) Students reflected on their learning outcomes after studying with an online counseling unit.

(1.1) Most of the students reflected that achieve learning outcomes because studying included knowledge and the practical part. Teacher gave an example to teach and give feedback when submitting work. Students had opportunities to express their opinions. There was always a discussion in class and demonstration before starting the practice. Some students reflected that learning design make students not bored. Online learning was like study in a real classroom.

(1.2) Students reflected on the value gained from studying in the counseling unit. It was useful because counseling was a process to help others that focus on listening and comfort. It could be applied to closing people.

(1.3) Obstacles in online learning were found. Most of the students agreed that online practice was unable to recognize facial expressions and behavior of the counselor fully. In addition, practicing with acquaint student made a difficult to speak. The students gave suggestions by alternating online and onsite learning. Screen clips were recorded for review. The number of practice sessions should be increased.

- (2) The results of a study on the change in the competency of providing counseling services in educational institutions.

(2.1) Knowledge of counseling:

Reflecting on the knowledge of counseling found that the students had a correct understanding of counseling. It provided a process to allow counselor to solve problems by self. It was not troubleshooting advice.

(2.2) Appreciation of providing counseling services in educational institutions:

The reflection of the students found that counseling was important because it helped others to feel at ease. It made the service provider be happy. The service could be used in the teaching profession to help for teaching their students in a future.

(2.3) Skills in providing counseling service:

Students could apply their counseling skills to their conversations with clients. Researchers obtained information from recording of an observer's mentor speech and an observer's counseling process. However, from the observations of the researchers in each group, it was found that some students who took on the role of counselor suggested solutions to some client. The students reflected on the importance of practicing as counselor.

- (3) Scores from worksheets and tests

From an analysis of scores in the worksheets (total score = 7), it was found that 43 students had scores higher than 80% (91.48%), 1 student had scores between 70-79% (21.27%) and 3 students had scores below 50% (12.75%). When analyzing the scores from the test (total score = 10), it was found that 15 students had scores from test higher than 80% (31.91%), 15 students had scores between 70-79% (31.91%), 8 had scores

between 60-69% (17.02%), 6 had scores between 50-59% (12.76%) and 3 students had scores below 50% (6.40%)

Table 2. Scores from worksheets and tests in operating cycle 1 (N=47)

Worksheet score			Test score		
percent	number of students	percentage	percent	number of students	percentage
80-100	43	91.48	80-100	15	31.91
70-79	1	21.27	70-79	15	31.91
60-69	0	0.00	60-69	8	17.02
50-59	0	0.00	50-59	6	12.76
Below 50	3	12.75	Below 50	3	6.40

In this regard, researcher used the data from the operating cycle 1 to plan a learning management in the operating cycle 2.

3.2 Part 2: Operating Cycle 2

This cycle 2 was conducted in the end of the academic year 2021 by organizing in a course of educational psychology and guidance for teachers of counseling unit. The results of this research period were as follows:

3.2.1 Plan

The learning management plan in operating cycle 2 was adjusted to the following key points:

- (1) Adjusted the activity no.1 from teaching with clips to live teaching and adding more analytical thinking for students. It made students more involved in learning.
- (2) Increased the time for practicing as a counselor in the third time.
- (3) Added worksheets for observing listening activity in the first class. It allowed students who were not role-playing to participate in more activities.
- (4) Added a teacher for the third time to participate in observing the students' practice and provided feedback.

3.2.2 Act

Researcher adjusted a learning management according to the information obtained from operation cycle 1 to following key points:

- (1) Asked question by allowing students to answer in the chat channel of Zoom application. Then, teacher asked 1-2 volunteers to open the microphone to answer questions for participating in the activity.
- (2) Asked for cooperation from all students to turn on the camera. It excepted for the period of being an observer,
- (3) Asked students for permission to record their screens throughout the learning period. Then, teacher sent a link to students for reviewing their knowledge in LINE groups after completing the activity. It excepted for the time when teacher gave counseling demonstration. There was no screen recording due to the need to maintain the confidentiality of client.
- (4) Sent warning message to the LINE group immediately when teacher checked the work in Google classroom and found that there were students who did not submitted the work.
- (5) Increased the time for the third training as a counselor.
- (6) Added another teacher as an observer to practice as a counselor in the third time to observe the students more thoroughly.

3.2.3 Observe

Researcher observed the learning of the students. By the first learning management, students participated in the class. All students submitted assignments on time. But in submitting the memorandum, it was found that there were still students who did not submit assignments on time. By the second learning management, researcher provided feedback on the assignment submission, praised, and, increased the break time from 2 to 3 sessions. For the practice of using 8 basic counseling skills, there were students who did not understand how to use those skills correctly. It was observed from answering questions in class. Then, researcher explained further. For class participation, some students did not have any extra points for answering questions. The delivery of assignment,

all students submitted their works perfectly on time. Researcher sent additional explanations in the comments section of Google classroom to students who didn't understand the worksheets. By the third learning management, researcher provided feedback on the assignment submission and commends the students for submitting their perfect works on time. Researcher called for students who did not have any special grades to answer. So that everyone had a score for their participation in the class. Then, researcher described the application of the basic skills in the part that most students still didn't understand.

For the part of practice as a counselor, researcher increased the practice sessions of 10 minutes to 20 minutes each for observing students during the counseling practice. Researcher received assistance from teacher in the same course to observe. This made possibility to share the number of observations in sub-rooms with another teacher and observed in each sub-group longer.

From the observations, students who pretended to be counselor and client turned on the camera while talking to each group. The camera did not turn on for the observer to not draw the attention of counselor and client. Teacher provided feedback when the practice completed,

3.2.4 Reflect

- (1) Students reflected on their learning outcomes after studying with an online counseling unit.
 - (1.1) Most of the students reflected that achieve learning outcomes. Although it was an online learning management, teacher managed to learn focusing mainly on students. Camera was on all the time. Teacher provided real practice and gave feedbacks. Screen recording while studying allowed students to review studying.
 - (1.2) Students reflected that counseling unit was helpful from helping people with realizing on listening and comfort. To train as a counselor could change one's attitude and aware of having the right principles in counseling.
 - (1.3) Obstacles were a practice being online that could not recognize facial expressions, behavior of the client fully, and confidence in being a counselor. Students still lacked experience in service and lost internet signal sometimes. They suggested to increase the number of rounds in training as a counselor and required teacher to be a mentor while practicing. The practice should be done in the classroom where they actually met.
- (2) The results of a study on the change in the competency of providing counseling services in educational institutions.
 - (2.1) Knowledge of counseling, reflecting on the knowledge of counseling found that students had a correct understanding of counseling.
 - (2.2) From appreciation of providing counseling services in educational institutions, students reflected that recognizing the importance of counseling because this process helped people to solve problems by releasing stress with comfort. It included a service to help students in teaching profession.
 - (2.3) From skills in providing counseling services, students reflected that they could apply counseling skills to discuss with client.
- (3) Scores from worksheets and tests

From an analysis of scores in the worksheets (total score = 7), it was found that 21 students had scores higher than 80% (100%). When analyzing the scores from the test (total score = 10), it was found that 14 students had scores from test higher than 80% (66.67%), 6 students had scores between 70-79% (28.57%), and 1 had scores between 50-59% (4.76%)

Table 3. Scores from worksheets and tests in operating cycle 1 (N=21)

Worksheet score			Test score		
percent	number of students	percentage	percent	number of students	percentage
80-100	21	100.00	80-100	14	66.67
70-79	0	0.00	70-79	6	28.57
60-69	0	0.00	60-69	0	0.00
50-59	0	0.00	50-59	1	4.76
Below 50	0	0.00	Below 50	0	0.00

4. Discussion

Researchers discussed the results into 2 issues as follows:

4.1 *The Learning Management Plan of Online Counseling Unit should Focus on Classroom Interaction*

Design of a learning management plan for the counseling unit during the epidemic situation of COVID-19 requires online learning. There must be an emphasis on interaction in the classroom between the teacher and the content, teacher and students, and students with students. Therefore, learning management should have a variety of teaching techniques by emphasizing the interaction between teachers and students. From the opinions of students, it was found that teacher emphasized on the students' interaction in the classroom. As an example of a saying that reflected *"It was taught using a question and answer method accompanying lecture class. Class participant ratings had real practices that lead to more understanding."* and *"The classroom atmosphere was very good. Teacher taught well. Students interacted with the teacher."* *"Teachers encouraged students to participate in activities all the time. It made students to not feel bored"*.

In addition, teachers had to provide reinforcement to make students want to have more interaction in class. As an example of a saying that reflects *"Teacher had extra points for those who answer questions. It was motivated students very well and empowered everyone to express themselves."* Consistent with research by Kumar, Saxena & Baber (2021), learner-content interactions played a key role in the successful achievement of expected learning outcomes. The findings of Kumar, Saxena & Baber (2021) showed that social interaction had a positive impact on the effectiveness of learning. Furthermore, research by Sun, Sun, Sha, Gu, Hou, Zhu, & Fang (2022) reflected that interactions between teacher and students not only directly affected learning outcomes, but the psychological climate and participation in learning also influenced learning outcomes.

Therefore, designing an online learning management plan must be emphasized on interaction. It included interaction between students and content of lesson, interaction between teachers and students as well as social interaction between students because of their influence on learning and learning outcomes. In this research, researchers required students to interact with the content by focusing in real practice and interact with teacher by sharing opinions and exchange experiences with each other. Students interacted with classmates by giving feedback on their opinions. Students' opinion reflected that the design of this learning management was a part that enables students to achieve learning outcomes. As an example of a saying *"Teacher designed the teaching class with an understanding of the COVID-19 situation, not boring, and felt love this subject."* and *"Achieving learning objectives, even online because students and teachers cooperated to turn on the camera all the time."*

4.2 *The Learning Management of Online Counseling Unit Could Improve Competency in Providing Counseling Services*

Although the learning management of counseling unit was an online learning, it could develop competence in providing counseling services. This probably came from teacher managed a class in variety ways. Students practiced by using real problem situations. Results were evaluated during the study by doing exercises, answering questions, reflecting, and providing feedback. Students had opportunities to ask questions from teacher all times and learning progression obviously. A summative evaluation was used through test and reflection. As an example of a saying *"Teaching method and various media helped to understand the content very well. Students could ask teacher at any time"* and *"There were a mix of video clips, lectures, and practice sessions. In the demonstration period, students who were sample cases turn on the camera and microphone during the question and answer period."*

The learning management was also consistent with the reflection of knowledge and the value gained from studying in the counseling unit. It reflected that students had increased knowledge of counseling. The importance and benefits of providing counseling could be used to help others including having practice in providing counseling. It assisted to understand the use of various skills to help others.

As an example of a saying *"Counseling was a process of helping between the counselor and client by means of interpersonal communication."* So that client could release distress, self-examined, understand the problem, and solve that problem by self. *"Practicing to be a counselor and client made them able to understand each skill better"* and *"Practicing as a counselor could be practiced with friends and become a counselor who can give advice on various problems in the future."*

However, the limitation of this research was the measure of competency in counseling services. The skill component was not fully measurable. Because it was a learning management during COVID-19 situation, the learning management must be designed online. Teacher was unable to observe the student's counseling during the practice session throughout the counseling session due to many students. Therefore, the results of

observations from peers in the group must be used as a reflection of the change.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1 Suggestions for Applying the Research Results

The learning management of counseling unit was during the COVID-19 pandemic, so researchers had to design an online practice-based learning. Therefore, when referring to the research results, the context of learning management must be considered because the success factor during online learning and onsite class might be different.

The success factor of the online counseling practice was the close feedback to students because it was a part of enhancing confidence for students. However, if students could be managed properly during the practice session in onsite classroom, it would help teacher to teach closer and observed the performance of skills more clearly.

Reinforcement was a key factor that make students want more interaction in online classroom learning.

5.2 Suggestions for Future Research

For learning in the counseling unit, counseling training was important to enable students for building confidence in being a consultant. Therefore, if there was a need to continue learning online, instructor may conduct on-going research on issues of student supervision design during the online practice.

Students probably were monitored for their experience of being a counselor on an on-going basis. It can be used as a qualitative research issue relating to the transfer of experience from classroom learning to practice as a counselor.

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