Models of Supervision: Theory and Application

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Scott A. Wilkes, J.D., Ph.D.
SUPERVISION DEFINED

A social work supervisor is an agency administrative staff member to whom authority is delegated to direct, coordinate, enhance, and evaluate job performance of supervisees.

Implementing this responsibility, the supervisor performs an administrative, educational, and supportive function.
Each supervisee has an individual style of learning. In an effort to conceptualize these styles, educators have created typologies. It is rare to find anyone exhibiting a pure type. More commonly, individuals are prone to one form of learning as the dominant style and use the others to a lesser degree. The styles include:

- The Intellectual Learner
- The Intuitive Learner
- The Practical Learner
INTELLECTUAL LEARNER

The Intellectual Learner:

- The intellectual learner leads with their mind. They want to anticipate and prepare for encounters with clients. They believe the more they know beforehand, the better the result. They are strong in their analytical skills but may be hesitant to initiate an intervention.

Supervisor Response:

- The supervisor of the intellectual learner will need to help the supervisee gain awareness of how feelings affect their work with clients. As the supervisee is better able to integrate intellectual and emotional ways of understanding.
INTUITIVE LEARNER

The Intuitive Learner:

- The intuitive learner leads with their senses. They are empathic and attuned to the feelings of their clients. They are motivated by a desire to be helpful and rely heavily on practice wisdom or prior experience. They are likely to get in “over their heads” quickly.

Supervisory Response:

- The supervisor of an intuitive learner will need to help the worker make conscious what is now done naturally. With the supervisee, the supervisor will label techniques and build in the theoretical underpinnings of practice so that the supervisee can identify and control their responses.
The Practical Learner:

- The practical learner is guided by a desire to make things better and seeks every opportunity to perform a concrete service. They are less attuned to client’s problems for which there is no immediate solution. They are more comfortable with facts than with feelings and desire to uncover a solution quickly.

Supervisory Response:

- The particular challenge of supervising a practical learner lies in appreciating and supporting the very real skills required to carry out a concrete task, while demanding a more reflective level of practice.
THE PURPOSE OF SUPERVISORY MODELS

- A supervisory model provides a theoretical framework by which we can apply empirically specific methodologies to create order and meaning out of perceived meaningless data.

- Effective supervisors have a clear idea of where they are with their supervisees, where they are going with their supervisees and how they are going to get there.
SUPERVISION MODELS

- *Outcome Oriented Supervision*
- *Postmodern Supervision*
- *Interactional Supervision*
- *Solution Focused Supervision*
- *Psychodynamic Supervision*
- *Reflective Supervision*
- *Developmental Supervision*
OUTCOME-ORIENTED SUPERVISION

- A model of supervision that shifts the focus of the supervisee’s performance from process to outcome.

- By focusing on the outcome and individual achievement, it allows the supervisee to reflect on his or her own accomplishments as a way of monitoring and describing their own performance and allows greater receptiveness to the supervisory process.

- Framing the inquiry to focus on outcomes
**INTERACTIONAL SUPERVISION**

- A model of supervision which conceptualizes staff members as constantly interacting with a number of systems that are directly related to their work.

- The relationship between the systems and individual is always reciprocal.
POSTMODERN SUPERVISION

- Postmodern supervision is predicated on a “constructivist” philosophy. The essential tenants consist of a belief that the self is socially constructed and there is no essential self nor defined roles for the self to perform.

- The identity and construction of the social work supervisor is experienced as multiple roles. The process of supervision, involves the blurring of boundaries between the use of multiple roles.
POSTMODERN ROLES

- **The Supporter Role** - Supervision that explores emotional hurdles faced by a supervisee that relate to issues beyond his or her immediate work, without being so intrusive as to lead to the dual relationship of the supervisor becoming the supervisee’s therapist.

- **The Supervisor Role** – Supervision that focuses on the supervisee in their role as social worker, rather than as a person.

- **The Case Consultant Role** – Supervision that offers advice on best practice options, clearly articulating the practice expertise of the supervisor.

- **The Trainer Role** – Supervision that focuses on instruction to the supervisee in how to do an intervention, rehearsing techniques or coaching live performances of therapy.
POSTMODERN ROLES

- **The Colleague Role** - The supervisor shares clinical responsibilities with the supervisee, working together collaboratively to fulfill a mutual mandate.

- **The Advocate Role** - The supervisor encourages the supervisee to take action, or the supervisor becomes involved in direct action to garner the resources necessary to ensure the wellbeing of either the supervisee or the client with whom the supervisee is working.

- **The Partnership Role** - Supervision that involves two people engaged in working together, rather than one person, the supervisor, delivering supervision to another person, the supervisee.

- **The Coaching Role** - Supervision that involves the process of searching for positive ways to bring out the best in supervisees by encouraging the supervisee to stretch and develop new skills beyond their comfort zone.
SOLUTION FOCUSED SUPERVISION

- A model of supervision which utilizes key concepts of solution-focused therapy. It is predicated on four basic assumptions:
  - The social worker knows what is best for the themselves.
  - It is not necessary to know the problem in order to solve it.
  - The Supervisor’s role is to identify and amplify change.
  - Techniques used with clients have relevance in clinical supervision.
SOLUTION FOCUSED SUPERVISION

- Focus on the nature of the relationship.
- Realize the supervisee has the skills or potential to learn the skills.
- Emphasize incremental progress.
- Focus on what is working in the present.
- Reframe the work to reveal the supervisee’s strengths.
- Assure there is no single method for working with the client.
- Maintain a level of accountability.
- Understand problems are socially and linguistically constructed.
- Conduct the supervisory session as a cooperative partnership.
- Allow the supervisee to be responsible for the direction of the session.
PSYCHODYNAMIC SUPERVISION

- Supervisor is interested in supervisee’s personal issues only to the extent they affect the client intervention. The supervisor focuses on dynamics such as resistance, ways of reacting to clients, and transference issues.
- A presumption is made that the supervisee’s interaction with the supervisor parallels the client’s behavior with the supervisee.
PSYCHODYNAMIC SUPERVISION

- Supervisor’s employing a psychodynamic model will ask the following questions:
  - What similarities do you see between our supervisory work and the relationship you share with your client?
  - Think out loud about what purpose your client’s resistance might be serving?
  - Why do you think you are having a strong emotional reaction to your client?
  - Where, and with whom, else in your life might you experience this emotion?
Reflective supervision is focused on the experiences, thoughts and feelings of the supervisee that are directly connected with the work. It is characterized by active listening and thoughtful questioning by both parties.

The role of the supervisor is to help the supervisee answer his/her own questions, and to provide the support and knowledge necessary to guide decision-making.

The supervisor provides an empathetic, nonjudgmental ear to the supervisee. Working through complex emotions in a “safe place” allows the supervisee to manage the stress she experiences on the job.
REFLECTIVE SUPERVISION

Reflective

- Stepping back from the immediate, intense experience of hands-on work and taking the time to wonder what the experience really means. Through reflection, the supervisee examines his/her thoughts and feelings about the experience and identifies the interventions that best meet the client’s needs.

Collaborative

- The concept of collaboration (or teamwork) emphasizes sharing the responsibility and control of power. Collaborative supervisory relationships are characterized by a clear understanding of the reciprocal expectations of each partner.

Regularity

- Supervision should take place on a reliable schedule, and sufficient time must be allocated to its practice. It takes time to build a trusting relationship, to collaborate, and to share ideas, thoughts, and emotions.
DEVELOPMENTAL SUPERVISION

• Based on the individual
• Considers “levels” or stages of professionalism
• Supervisory approach varies depending on the level
• Levels are predictable
• Levels can’t be skipped
• Level not necessarily related to years of experience
• Both supervisee and supervisor levels of development must be considered
• Movement can be affected by change (assignment, setting, client population, etc.)
SUPERVISEE LEVELS

Supervisee Level 1

- Focus is on self and basic skills; Highly motivated; May be rigid and anxious; Wants answers, Focus on the “right way”; Very dependent upon supervisor; Has difficulty conceptualizing tasks and assignments.

Supervisee Level 2

- Focus is on the client; Motivation fluctuates; More assertive; More frustrated and/or confused; Dependency/autonomy conflicts; Considered the “teenage years”.

Supervisee Level 3

- Focus is on the client, but also is self aware and can reflect and use prior knowledge; Has personal sense of identity and style; Functions with more autonomy; Does less pigeon-holing of clients; Consistently motivated; Displays appropriate use of self.
# SUPERVISORY TYPOLOGY

## LEARNING STYLES

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEARNING STYLES</th>
<th>SUPERVISORY MODELS</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Intellectual Learner (Head)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Outcome Oriented</strong></td>
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<td>Issue: May need to focus more on the process rather than the outcome.</td>
<td>Issue: May not be willing to accept feedback or input from others.</td>
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<td><strong>Intuitive Learner (Heart)</strong></td>
<td>Issue: May need to focus more on the outcome rather than the process.</td>
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<td>Strategy: Focus on what is their vision of success and how will they know when it is achieved.</td>
<td>Strategy: Focus on relationship building, establishing consensus, and motivating others on the treatment team.</td>
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<td><strong>Practical Learner (Hands)</strong></td>
<td>Issue: May be too bogged down with details and not able to see the “forest for the trees”.</td>
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<td>Strategy: Focus on the incremental, concrete steps taken toward progress of the goal.</td>
<td>Strategy: Utilize group supervision, treatment teams, direct observation and shadowing techniques.</td>
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SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY

1. Break up into small groups of 3 or 4 members.
2. Read the Case Scenarios.
3. Refer to the Supervisory Typology.
4. Answer the questions related to the identification of the learning style and supervisory model.
5. Identify a rationale for your decisions.
6. Discuss the process in the larger group.