TOWARDS THE CONSTRUCTION OF SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISION IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND: A STUDY OF THE PERSPECTIVES OF SOCIAL WORK PRACTITIONERS AND SUPERVISORS

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Abstract

This thesis presents the construction of social work supervision from the perspectives of social work practitioners and supervisors. In particular, the research explored how social work supervision was constructed, the influence of the Aotearoa New Zealand context upon its construction, and where and how social work supervision can most effectively be improved. In order to provide a background for informed analysis and discussion of the research findings, key themes within the international and Aoteaorua New Zealand supervision literature were discussed.

The thesis was a mixed methods study that was informed by a constructionist conceptual framework with regard to the framing and exploration of the research questions. The methodological approach used was derived from pragmatism and involved a combination of survey research with qualitative individual interviews, with the survey being used to recruit and purposefully select participants for the individual interviews.

The key findings from the study were: a) social work supervision was predominantly constructed from a professional standpoint, with the social, organisational and interpersonal context influencing how supervision was produced in any setting at anytime; b) the Aotearoa New Zealand context influenced supervision through the discourses of biculturalism and indigenous development, with multiculturalism being a secondary influence; and c) that improvements were needed in the professional and organisational systems that support supervision as well as in the practice and provision of it.

The implications and recommendations arising from these findings focus on social work supervision theory and practice, cultural competence and the further
development of professional supervision. From these implications it is suggested that the future research and development agenda for social work supervision both internationally and within Aotearoa New Zealand concerns theory-building, responding to the dynamics of culture and difference within supervision and the professionalisation of supervision. The recommendations related to the professionalisation of supervision concern: formal education and training; the role of supervision within organisations and contribution to organisational development; and the need for a stronger evidence-base regarding supervision’s contribution to client practice and social worker well-being and development.
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Glossary of Maori terms used in this thesis

This glossary is arranged in alphabetical order. Only brief translations are given and it should be noted that fuller and multiple meanings may be attributed to words depending on the context in which they are used.

awhi  caring and supporting
hapu  tribe
iwi  tribal group
karakia  spiritual incantation or prayer
kaumatua  male elder
kaupapa  process or procedure
kuia  female elder
Pakeha  white or non-Maori New Zealander
mana  prestige
Maori  the people indigenous to New Zealand
maoritanga  Maori culture
marae  meeting place
roopu  branch or group
runanga  a board, assembly caucas or council
tangata whenua  people of the land
tangihanga  grieving period prior to burial
tauiwih  non-Maori
t te taha Maori  Maori ways
t te reo  language
tikanga  cultural practices
wairua  spiritual and/or metaphysical
whaiora  clients
whakama  shame or being ashamed
whanau  family including extended family