


**SOCIAL WORK
SUPERVIS^{ION}:
**

**CHALLENGES
& ADV^{ANCE}NCES
**

SEMINAR 2015

SOCIAL WORK SUPERVIS[!]ON:

CHALLENGES & ADV[▲]ANCES

Proceedings from **"Social Work Supervision: Challenges and Advances" Seminar 2015**
Organized by the Social Work Accreditation and Advisory Board (SWAAB)
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Day 2 Keynote 2: West Meets East: Sharing and Demonstration of Supervisory Strategies and Skills – Part 2

Associate Professor Kieran O'Donoghue
Massey University
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Video: The Interactional Process of the Supervision Session: Skills and Strategies
A/P Kieran O'Donoghue, Supervisor (In person)
Dr Polly Yeung and Dr Michael Dale, Supervisees (On video)

Introduction

A/P Kieran used a recording of a supervision session he had with two of his workers to demonstrate the structure and flow of a supervision session. He would pause between video segments for participant discussions. This video aimed to demonstrate the interactional map of the supervision session (O'Donoghue, 2014).

Table 1 below illustrates the stages and phases of this map.

Session Stages	Supervisee Phases	Supervisor Phases
Preparation	Continual consideration. Session preparation.	Reviewing records. Thinking about the forthcoming session. Attending to the setting.
Beginning	Social engagement. Orientation.	Starting Checking-in.
Planning	Agenda setting. Prioritising items.	Agenda setting. Prioritising items.
Working	Telling the story or presenting an item. Interactively processing.	Clarifying and exploring the story or issue. Facilitating decision making and task setting.
Ending	Summary and review. The practicalities of next session.	Reviewing what was covered. Finishing up the session. Finishing the notes.

The video was prepared on the assumption that both the supervisor and supervisees had prepared for the session by working out what they were going to discuss and what they wanted from their respective sessions.

Starting the Session – Engagement

The supervisor started the supervision session by asking the supervisee to share how her day was. And then how her work was going. He elicited her sharing by asking her to share

'what was on top for her'. While she was sharing, he constantly reflected her feelings and probed her about her concerns and fears regarding what she was sharing. He let her share for approximately 3 minutes, without interrupting her with the exception of his use of attending skills and listening responses. After she had finished her sharing, he then moved on to ask her to set the agenda and goals for the day. They would later process the things she had identified for the day.

A/P Kieran then paused the video and posed 4 questions to the participants. He asked:

1. What did you notice about how the session started?
2. How was the supervisee engaged?
3. How were the focus and the agenda clarified?
4. What skills and strategies were used?

The participants expressed that they liked how the supervisor caught up on how the last session had left off at the start of the new supervision session. This helped to allow both supervisor and supervisee to catch up with the agenda. Another participant expressed that he appreciated the supervisor helping the supervisee to scope the session.

Exploring the Use of Practice Theory and Models: The Supervisee Tells the Story

In the next part of the session, the supervisor went on to get the supervisee to tell her story and experience. The supervisor then started to summarize her experiences and helped her to reflect and process them. He tried to explore with her the different practice theories and models that she had used in her work. He then continued to probe and explore with her the skill sets that she had used in her work. Once again, reflection and other attending skills were paramount in his interaction with his supervisee.

Again, A/P Kieran paused the video and requested the participants to consider several points.

1. What did you notice about the skills and strategies used in the session to assist the supervisee to reflect?
2. What did you notice happen to the supervisee as she began to process her experience?

The participants expressed that the supervisor had gotten his supervisee to talk about the models and justify and evaluate her usage of them. He then took a step back to look at the processes with the supervisee. The participants also noted that the session was well regulated through the posing of good questions. A/P Kieran responded that it is important to keep in touch with the supervisee and slow her down if she needs it – this is so that they will be able to process the important issues.

Exploration of an Issue

A/P Kieran showed a second recording of a supervision session with a different supervisee to illustrate how to explore an issue with a supervisee. He expressed that in exploring an issue, the supervisor should help the supervisee first give an outline of the issue before eliciting the details of the story. In this segment of the recording, the supervisor helped the supervisee to tell his story and to clarify, categorize and highlight the main points he would like to cover for the supervision session. A/P Kieran then paused the video and asked:

1. What skills and strategies did you notice the supervisor use to assist the supervisee to tell his/ her story?

The participants expressed that the supervisor first allowed him to tell the story completely before beginning to process it with him. In response, A/P Kieran expressed that the supervisor could ask challenging questions as a means to get the supervisee to think through and process what had happened on his own. This is important as it allows for reflection on the part of the supervisee and it causes the supervisee to do the work instead of the supervisor. A/P Kieran also expressed that in asking such questions, the focus is not on the answer but on the thinking process and the effect of the question on the supervisee.

A/P Kieran also expressed that as he was speaking to his supervisee he had a checklist in mind of the things that he wanted to ascertain or to process with his supervisee. He also mentioned that supervisors ought to give their supervisees the space to share what was going on and the issues to address or process will naturally emerge from there.

Finishing the Session

A/P Kieran shared that as the session comes to an end, the supervisor should give feedback to the supervisee and ask for feedback as well. He also added that it is important to question the supervisee what he/ she would be doing after the supervision session. The participants also shared that they felt that that would round up the session well.

Conclusion

A/P Kieran expressed that supervisors must begin by orientating their supervisees when they come in for supervision, and prepare them to be vulnerable and to share their emotions. Similarly, the supervisor must also orientate the supervisee when the session ends and prepare them to go back out onto the field, especially when they have opened up themselves and been vulnerable during the session. He shared a checklist for supervisors (see Table 2) and also encouraged supervisors and supervisees to review their sessions through exploring the following questions:

- How well have we prepared?
- How well have we engaged with each other?
- How well have we focused upon supervision?
- How well have we managed our agenda and priorities?
- How well have we worked through the items?
- How well have we made decisions and identified actions?
- How well have we concluded our sessions?