

adult education, educational techniques, styles and patterns as well as her expositions of an educational evaluation, programme and contract definitely withstand the theoretical developments of the times, as contemporary commentators such as Coleman (2003), Hawkins and Shohet (2006), Tsui (2005) and Lewis *et al.* (2007) present the same notions, although their views are substantiated with altered, present-day terminology. Nevertheless, supervisor as well as supervisee participants of the case study could not reflect on their application and utilisation of the supervision content as discussed here. Hence, the participants follow no identifiable supervision process and are not aware of principles, techniques and styles to be employed.

Supervision methods

Case study participants reported that the one-on-one supervisee and supervisor dyad is the default supervision method in operation, which agrees with international research by Bogo and McKnight (2005) and Hensley (2002) on this topic. Group supervision takes the form of staff development, according to the participants. No other method of supervision, such as peer supervision as described by Bogo and McKnight (2005) and Tsui (2005) is exercised by participants. Although coaching and mentoring (Bluckert, 2008; Collins-Camargo & Kelly, 2006; Connor & Pokora, 2007; Lewis *et al.*, 2007; Perrault & Coleman, 2005) are described in recent texts as emerging supervision methods, participants responded that these methods are not formalised and in use.

Consultation

Coleman (2003) states that consultation is sometimes confused with supervision and concludes that there is a definite distinction between the two modes. Although consultation may involve some of the same functions of a supervisor, it does not usually carry administrative responsibilities and accountability. Case study participants could shed no light on the differences between supervision and consultation. One social worker participant reflects: *"I'm on a so-called consultation level, but the only difference with supervision is that I now see my supervisor less. She still has to sign my statutory reports and still inspects my work."* In this context it seems that the participant's supervisor is also regarded as her consultant. This is in direct opposition to international position statements, such as that of the American Board of Examiners in Clinical Social Work (2004). This particular Board drew the distinction between an agency-employed supervisor in an organisation, who confers authority and accountability, and a consultant who is not given authority as a supervisor and who rather provides education, support and expert opinions. As an additional distinction from the Anglo-American tradition of supervision in social work, the supervisor in Scandinavian and other European contexts, for example, comes from outside the organisation in which the supervisee is employed – which is normally referred to as external supervision. The supervisor's position is rather comparable to that of a consultant, bearing responsibility only for the educational supervision process and support (Bradley *et al.*, 2010). Creative contemporary modes of consultation thus exist, which specifically have an impact on the context-specific organisation model and structural-functional model employed in an organisation.

ANTICIPATING THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISORY PRACTICE

The findings of the above case study clearly reveal that social work supervision practices in South Africa have not kept up with international theoretical and local social developments since the changing times of the 1990s. As a consequence, Hoffman's (1987:222-226) recommendations for future supervision and Botha's (2002:3) conclusions, which serve as premises for the empirical study reflected in this paper, are still relevant. Although the

significance of supervision is emphasised by the case study participants, the goal and definition of supervision in leading South African texts (Botha, 2002) are diffused and clinically orientated, based as they are on action guidelines (Department of Social Development, 2006), but not specifically framed within a social development paradigm. It is furthermore evident from the case study that formalised academic training of supervisors is still lacking and that the functions of supervision remain centred on a deficit orientation with administrative control as the basic premise. The figuration of context-specific and structural-functional, organisational and interactive process models is also not common. Moreover, consultation appears to be diffused against the use of internationally creative contemporary models. Based on these findings, the future of social work supervisory practice within a social development paradigm is anticipated and addressed to supervisors, but specifically to management structures on the micro and national levels.

- The emergence of a postmodernist orientation in supervision is occurring through social constructionist practice approaches such as solution-focused and strengths-based practices. Social constructionist approaches recognise that supervision in any particular context is shaped and influenced by global, local and personal determinants (O'Donoghue, 2002). A renewed future interest in supervisee empowerment and more explicit recognition of the different contexts and discourses in which social work supervision is immersed should be cultivated by all parties involved in social work in South Africa. A prerequisite for a social constructionist approach to supervision should, however, be fair working conditions for social workers and supervisors.
- Within the context of globalisation and neoliberal social work's emerging emphasis on managerialism and marketisation (Ferguson, 2009), the operationalising of the following specific recommendations on the fundamentals of supervision is proposed:
 - Standardised, accredited and accessible supervision training should be developed by partnerships between organisations and universities to complement the social development theoretical paradigm practised in South Africa and the specific outcomes on supervision of the BSW qualification. To be nationally registered as an accredited supervisor should also be a future option.
 - The definition of supervision should institute a movement away from a deficit and merely clinical orientation, and should be a national endeavour in order to contextualise supervision in South Africa in line with the Integrated Service Delivery Model of the Department of Social Development (RSA, 2006b).
 - The functions of supervision should be optimised by supervisors to deliberately embrace other functions rather than just fixating on the administrative function, without negating control as a management function, which will be more prominent in future with the inception of the new Children's Act, No. 38 of 2005 (RSA, 2006a).
 - Practice theories of supervision, focusing on specific outcomes-based and competency interaction models, should be developed by individual organisations and supervisors by means of research to include samples from the organisation's multiple sites, representing a range of geographical locations and service sections.
 - The content of supervision practices should be revisited and reconceptualised by supervisors and individual organisations with the aim to fit their specific contexts in a facilitative, practical, user-friendly and caring way without inhibiting the development of social workers' professional identity and continuous learning. Ultimately, all

organisations employing social workers should have a comprehensive policy directing the content of supervision, which ideally could also be operationalised as the key to the recruitment and retention of staff.

- Supervision methods should be expanded by organisations' supervision policies beyond individual supervision on a face-to-face basis. Internet-based supervision as an alternative in rural areas and peer supervision, mentoring and coaching as specific empowerment activities in the protégé's career development should also be employed.
- The contextualisation and practice of consultation should be a national endeavour to obtain government-extended funding opportunities, especially in the context of external supervision/consultation practices for the benefit of education and support of social workers.
- The historical analysis of supervision practices reveals that values in the traditional view of supervision reflect dominant notions of Western individualism and paternalism, and promote a form of homogeneity based on a heterosexual imperialist male worldview (O'Donoghue, 2002). Culturally friendly values (Engelbrecht, 2006b) that do recognise the needs of all people of diverse backgrounds, gender and worldviews should be constructed in a context-specific way by individual organisations in order to be operationalised by supervisors as the foundation of South African supervision practices.
- The same ethical violations that can occur in a social work-service user relationship can be paralleled in a supervisory relationship (Dewane, 2007). Although professional conduct is included in the ethical code of the SACSSP (2007), neoliberal productivity standards in a managed and care environment increasingly create ethical compromises for social workers and supervisors when marketing and profit become the principal drivers. Therefore a visionary national ethics audit within the context of supervision could add value to the professional conduct of supervisors and social workers, and should result in minimum standards as benchmarks for supervision in South Africa.

CONCLUSION

An overview of the historical development of supervision shows that the quality of social work service delivery has always been determined by the quality of supervision (Rabinowitz, 1987:88). However, from this paper's examination of the interplay between the historical development and current practices, it appears that the existing theoretical foundation and practices of social work supervision do not extensively meet the dynamics of the contemporary international and local social work domain. The future thus holds distinct challenges encompassing the significance and timeliness of supervision in South Africa. To this end, the quotation from Cicero in the Preface to Kadushin and Harkness's (2002:xvii) study is appropriate: "No wind is favourable unless you know the port to which you are heading". The modern translation in a supervision context could be: if we do not know where we are going with supervisory practices, we will probably end up somewhere else.

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