

STATEMENT ON SUPERVISION

Supervision is a well recognised method of enhancing skill development in professional practice. Supervision was defined by Bernard and Goodyear (1992) as a training mode wherein an experienced practitioner guides the learning of a less experienced practitioner. The supervisory relationship is evaluative, extends over time and has the simultaneous purposes of enhancing the professional functioning of the less experienced member(s), monitoring the quality of professional services offered to the client and serving as a gatekeeper for professional membership.

Holloway (1987) found the supervisory relationship to be the common element across models of supervision, and to have an important role in bringing about change within supervisees. This proposal parallels the finding that the quality of the therapeutic relationship has consistently been a central contributor to therapeutic progress (Beutler, Machado and Neufeldt, 1994). Efstation and colleagues defined the supervisory working alliance as “the relationship between supervisory participants when the supervisor acts purposefully to influence the supervisee through the use of technical knowledge and skill” (Chen and Bernstein, 2000 p 485).

Supervision occurs within an organisational context and hence consideration of the ecological perspective is important. When either supervisee or supervisor is required to adopt a role within the organisation which conflicts with their personal and or professional identity they are likely to experience discomfort. This can be manifested as a drop in their performance level, a deterioration of collegial relationships or even by leaving the organisation. When examining supervision outcomes, it is therefore important to look beneath the initial layer of skill development to the level of the supervisee interaction with the organisation and specifically the degree of fit between the organisational context and the supervisee and/or supervisor (Ringer and Robinson, 1996).

Measurement of supervision quality has typically focussed on supervisory relationship dimensions such as clinical vs. personal or organisational focus, rapport and supervisee identification with the model being taught. It can also be evaluated by measuring the skill development of the supervisee. Satisfaction with supervision is perhaps the most common informal measure of the supervisory working alliance. However greater satisfaction is not necessarily associated with improvement in self efficacy in supervisees. Kolb's (1984) study of the supervisory alliance found that for optimum learning to occur there was a need for a well managed level of discomfort within the relationship. While Ladany, Ellis, Myrna and Friedlander (1999) stated

“it is quite possible that effective supervision is not always the most satisfying supervision (i.e., the struggle inherent in learning may not always be experienced as the most satisfying)”. (, p 454)