Mapping Fieldwork and Supervision Practice in the Social Professions (Part 2)

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Abstract

Little is known about the experiences, practices and perceptions of fieldwork supervisors in the context of third-level professional education and training programmes in the social professions. The first instalment of this two-part article (Tierney, 2011) explored the general area of supervision in the social professions, highlighting its threefold focus on accountability, learning and support. It then examined fieldwork practice in professional training programmes, drawing on the work of – among others – Holmes and Bryant (1977), LaBoskey and Rickert (2002) and Webber (1999, 2000a, 2000b). This second part of the article looks at supervision in the specific context of fieldwork placement within professional programmes. It considers the distinctive features of supervision in such a context; the tensions, challenges and opportunities arising for practitioners; the factors shaping student learning during fieldwork; the typical stages of the fieldwork experience and features of effective supervision. It suggests that greater clarity regarding appropriate models of supervision in youth work and community work may be difficult to achieve without a more robust and generally agreed articulation of what constitutes good professional practice in these fields.

Keywords

Social professions; supervision; fieldwork placement; reflective practice

Introduction

There is a small body of literature that is directly relevant to supervision of students on fieldwork placement. Since the 1960s (Tash, 1967; Davies and Gibson, 1967; Mathews, 1966) educators in youth work and community work have discussed supervision as a way of helping students to enrich understanding and gain skills to bring theory and practice into a coherent and workable whole. A series of conferences and workshops were held and papers issued in the 1970s (Marchant, 1987), though there has been little published since then that is directly related to youth work and community work. This is perhaps not surprising as the area of fieldwork supervision in social work, a practice that one could argue is far more established than either youth work or community work, has been under-researched. Gardiner (1989) cites a heavy reliance on US (Towle, 1954) and UK literature (Young, 1967) originating in social case work. It was not until the late 1990s that another body of thinking about fieldwork supervision in social work emerged from Canada and Australia (Bogo and Vayda 1987;

Cooper and Briggs, 2000). Gardiner (1989) usefully draws attention to the idea of 'concept leakage' from the therapeutic arena to describe supervision, thereby contributing to confusion between supervisory and therapeutic relationships. The traditional focus in supervision privileged hierarchical relationships, describing a 'right' way to practice that students had to be taught as they were inexperienced and needed expert supervisors. Students who did not fit expected patterns were 'pathologised' and the language of therapy became the language of supervision (Gardiner, 1989:6). While it is not possible to avoid the social work emphasis in literature on student fieldwork supervision, it is important to be aware of the problems of 'concept leakage' and its implications for how supervision is thought about in the context of youth work and community work education and training. Therefore, I will start by discussing student supervision in youth work and community work.

Student supervision in youth work and community work

Unlike social work supervision, it appears that there is, in community work at least, a 'strong emphasis' on the student's role in relation to managerial functions, with less attention paid to their own motivation and processes (Holmes and Bryant, 1977:160). Youth work appears to have adopted early on a preference for non-managerial supervision or peer supervision in the context of practice generally (Tash, 1967), though this model appears to be influential in the approach taken to student supervision. It is not clear why this choice was made in youth work. It may be to do with the fact that the thinking originated in the YMCA, a strongly value-led organisation with a commitment to collaboration and empowerment.

Who is involved in student supervision?
While Webber (1999) identifies three parties in the supervision process – student, college staff and the fieldwork supervisor – McNamara *et al* (2007) add in a fourth, the fieldwork agency. Overall, the role of fieldwork supervision is considered crucial to the process of putting 'theory into action' (Ledwith, 2007), though Webber (1999) also notes the valuable role of the college visiting staff. According to Webber (1999:4), 'maximum student learning' will only take place if supervisors can 'help students to reflect on their experiences and provide them with opportunities to try out new skills and knowledge', while Crockett (2007) reiterates the role of supervision in shaping the professional self of the supervisee and supervisor. Like Webber, Beddoe (2000) puts the supervisory relationship at the heart of the fieldwork placement, citing as its focus the preparation of the student for professional practice in turbulent organisational (and sectoral) times. She contends that there is a move away from therapeutic and apprenticeship models to a focus on reflective and facilitative teaching and learning, seeing the development of a 'learning relationship that will provide the student with a supportive but challenging context' as the way forward (2000:41).

Distinctive features of student fieldwork supervision
The short answer to the question of whether there are distinctive features of student fieldwork supervision seems to be yes. Supervision in fieldwork practice is by definition

time-limited and may further be defined as a 'structured, interactive and collaborative process that involves monitoring, facilitating, coaching and supporting students', the primary purpose of which is to ensure that the student has the opportunity 'to reflect on their own practice and their observations of the agency's work' (Beddoe, 2000: 41–42). The fieldwork placement and specifically the supervisory relationship is conceptualised as the learning context where students realise their 'goals of integrating theory with the realities of practice and where they experience and absorb the contradictions and conflicts of practice' (Davys and Beddoe, 2000). In this context, one aspect of the supervisor's contribution lies in the relationships supervisors have with other workers, local people and organisations. Specifically, it relates to their capacity to link the students into those relationships, and the ways in which this will impact on the variety and type of work the student will experience. Part of the supervisor's skill in the preparation for placement lies in linking these relationships and ongoing work activities to student learning in a way that benefits both (Holmes and Bryant, 1977:153).

The differences are not so much in terms of supervisory techniques used, but are more related to the purpose of supervision and the boundaries of the role. Some of the key differences identified include the fact that the fieldwork placement is a short-term and contained setting (Tash, 1967; Brown and Bourne, 1996), a formal assessment by the supervisor of the student may be a feature of the relationship, and finally the college or training agency is party to the relationship between student and supervisor and therefore both have an additional accountability to the education provider. The issue of the supervisor as assessor, even if not ultimately or solely responsible, as noted earlier (Webber, 1999) can only be a source of tension where a preference for non-managerial or peer supervision has been expressed.

Brown and Bourne (1996) identify a number of advantages of gaining student supervision experience for those aspiring to staff supervisor roles. Student supervisors need to think about learning needs/styles, both their own and those of students. They need to be able to think about the 'other' and make a contract about working together with students in ways that take account of different dimensions of power in the relationship. In addition, they need to be able to balance the capacity to care and the ability to 'control' and make joint assessments with the student, while being in a position of authority. Other supervisor skills include: assisting students in making choices, establishing content and focus of sessions from amid all the options, assisting students to reflect and explore issues/events in depth, and plan for action, followed by evaluating completed work and student's progress. In short, supervision involves a series of regular scheduled meetings, and a process of enabling students to learn and work to an appropriate standard, including maximising learning opportunities from informal contact. How then can the quality of that supervision be promoted?

A number of features that facilitate quality supervision from the student perspective have been identified, including sufficient time, trust, supervisor understanding, feeling supported, having structure and intention for supervision along with supervisor expertise. Conversely, students experience poor supervision when time is constrained or supervision is marginalised in terms of other priorities, when there is lack of clarity about roles and responsibilities, lack of direction and structure for the work, where there is conflict between learning and organisational goals and where supervisors do

not follow up on agreed actions (McNamara *et al*, 2007:86). In addition, issues of 'fit' of supervision style and the potential for personality clashes will influence the supervision experience for both student and practitioner. One way of dealing with the complexity of the role and the multiplicity of parties involved (student, college, supervisor and fieldwork agency) is to have clear contracting between the four parties distinguishing between operational and practice issues and exploring the impact of the agency culture on the fieldwork experience. McNamara *et al* (2007: 85) suggest that contracting happens at three levels. Firstly, contracts are made at the level of administration and practicalities. Secondly, contracts made at the professional level agree purpose, focus and expectations. Finally contracting at a psychological or relational level sets boundaries, outlines the limits of confidentiality and negotiates personal agendas. At the most basic level, the role of any college tutor needs to be clearly communicated and understood, especially in relation to any overlap with the supervisor's assessment role.

Fieldwork assessment revisited

Fieldwork practice often has specific assessment standards which may include a formal role for supervisors. While they may not be gate-keepers, supervisors are part of a gate-keeping process; they can and do have a good deal of responsibility and influence in relation to students' progression to professional qualification. Both Webber (1999) and Salmon (1977) re-iterate the need to ensure that the criteria for the assessment of fieldwork placements are consistent with the practice being pursued. In other words, those setting assessment criteria need to be alert for concept leakage. They need to ensure, for instance, that casework evaluative criteria are not used to assess students' community work or youth work practice. Experience has demonstrated the importance of student's capacity to play an active role in their own assessment, with a high correlation between competence and the capacity for self-reflection and self-criticism (Salmon, 1977:174). Assessment becomes a joint project of student and supervisor, a far cry from the traditional dichotomous relationship. This is echoed by Tash (1967:160) who, while acknowledging the impact of assessment on the student's work and their relationship with the supervisor, indicates that the impact is mitigated if the student knows that they themselves also have an active role to play in self-assessment. In these circumstances evaluation and assessment can be a valuable part of the learning experience.

More recently, Webber (1999) outlines a number of supervisor assessment tasks including writing one or more reports, and attending three-way meetings with the student and college tutor member. The question of what gets assessed and what gets rewarded will vary according to the fieldwork model implemented (Wilson, 2000). Different practices dominate in different countries in relation to grading, or not, of assessment. Both options are defended strongly by those who practise them. Tensions between the assessor and developmental roles persist even though, as noted previously, supervisors are often not ultimately or solely responsible for student assessment. The development of trust is central to negotiating these tensions, as is an acknowledgement of the explicit power imbalances between student and supervisor. These are more pronounced when there is difficulty in the relationship or when a student is 'marginal

pass or fail'. The supervisor needs to be aware of the power associated with their assumed competency, practice knowledge and position, and needs to be clear about the boundaries of the role. At the same time, Webber (2000) observes that negotiating the supervisor's role in the assessment of fieldwork placement is a balancing act, as is negotiating the role overall; both aspects are well known to all college staff attempting to navigate placement arrangements.

A note on gate-keeping

The issue of 'gate-keeping', mentioned above, is a source of tension when negotiating placement arrangements and deserves more attention at this point. In a context where the supervisor has something of a gate-keeper role in relation to entry to the profession/occupation, supervision might be understood to have political effects in shaping the professional identities of the supervisee and supervisor (Crockett, 2007:24; Davys and Beddoe, 2000:438; McNamara *et al*, 2007:73). These 'identities are not just formed through skills, knowledge and status, they are the product of attitudes and values held by particular occupational groups' (Tucker, 2005:205) and are formed by a sustained and critical reflection upon interventions (Jeffs and Smith, 1990:24). Supervision during placement explores the 'values and principles of professional practice, deconstructs and reconstructs it in ways that define and support professional practice and its underpinning values' (McNamara *et al*, 2007:76).

All of this has implications for what is considered a 'good' or effective fieldwork placement. There are aspirations in youth work and community work endorsement frameworks, as in social work, that all fieldwork supervisors are themselves professionally qualified (for example NSETS, 2006). This is both unrealistic and contentious, there are simply not enough qualified practitioners to supervise, not to mention the fact that the term 'qualified' is contested in the first place. Practitioners may be understandably reluctant to act as gate-keepers when the field itself is somewhat unbounded, when there is no clear entry point, and there is limited clarity about career progression. So how do practitioners become student supervisors?

From practitioner to supervisor

There is a suggestion (Reynolds, 1965; Ford and Jones, 1987) that becoming a student supervisor is the last stage of practitioner development where they have relative mastery of practice, and it has traditionally been regarded as a developmental step in the career path of practitioners. In social work in particular, it gives a sense of having come full cycle. Too often, however, the reality is that practitioners undertake to supervise students on fieldwork just because they are asked or even put under pressure, especially in a context of scarcity of placements (Davys and Beddoe, 2000). In many cases, it becomes a relationship founded on 'availability rather than suitability', so while new supervisors may be excellent practitioners they may not have had any opportunity to prepare for the modelling of professional practice inherent in the supervisor role (Davys and Beddoe, 2000). Gardiner (1989) suggests that new supervisors go through some of the same phases as students in relation to learning about their role, while Wilson (2000: 40) says that as students are expected to grow and develop as practitioners, so too will supervisors 'grow and develop in their roles as they get a better understanding of their own behaviour and the purposes and functions of

supervision'. Three levels of learning interaction between student and field work supervisor are identified (Wilson, 2000), namely a focus on content of learning, a focus on the process of learning, and 'learning to learn'. This last point raises the question: how do students learn during fieldwork practice and what does this mean for the supervisor's role?

Student learning during fieldwork practice

Wilson (2000) outlines a number of models of supervision in the context of fieldwork practice that reflect different assumptions about practice, teaching and learning, and the purpose of fieldwork placement within an overall frame of the accountability, learning and support functions of supervision. The models generally are somewhat stylised and do not necessarily provide sufficient practice guidance for supervisors. One model though, the 'Loop Model', articulates a clear process of people learning in four inter-related stages, based on Kolb's (1976) cycle of experiential learning. This model, developed by Bogo and Vayda (1987), involves four phases of learning:

- Retrieval or description
- Reflection on choices made, effectiveness, knowledge/values/assumptions made
- Linkages to relevant theoretical literature
- Making decisions about future responses

The model articulates an explicit theory of learning that integrates theory and practice in an ongoing learning loop, which is in turn consistent with both youth work and community work's commitment to 'learning by doing' and 'reflective learning'. Any difficulties in integration are linked to missing one or more phases. Martin (1997), on the other hand, outlines three staff approaches to conceptualising how students learn in fieldwork practice, each of which has clear implications for the supervisor-student relationship. One approach is based on the idea that students learn by osmosis, another on the idea that they learn by questioning and the last on the idea that they learn by working collaboratively. Webber's study of fieldwork practice internationally suggests that students also learn by 'reflectivity' (1999: 3) as encapsulated by the 'reflective practice' and 'academic apprenticeship' models of fieldwork that rated highly in integrating theory with practice, a key aim of fieldwork practice. The reflective practice model highlights the role of the supervisor in promoting student learning by helping them to 'reflect on their experience and try out new skills and knowledge' (Webber, 1999), an approach that is consistent with the Loop Model of learning. In this event, expectations of supervisors in relation to their role in both conceptualising and helping students make connections between theory and practice needs to be well articulated.

Simply claiming to have adopted a model does not guarantee that student learning will take place; the implications of the model for practice need to be clearly understood and followed through in implementation. Whatever model is formally adopted, developing the capacity to work with the three functions of supervision (accountability, learning and support) in a way that balances the student's learning, the organisation's work and the education provider's requirements is crucial. Taken together, it is clear that the tensions and overlaps between what might be seen as the 'enabling and ensuring' functions of supervision in a training and education context are potentially

problematic (Prins, 1969) given the focus of fieldwork as a developmental process which goes beyond individual learning into occupational competences.

Teaching what we know

Following on from this, it appears that the level of effectiveness of supervisors as enablers and ensurers of student learning on fieldwork is related to their understanding of learning and teaching, which in turn may be linked to their overall practice framework (Beddoe, 2000; Gardiner, 1989). In other words, we teach what we know. This has implications for the selection of fieldwork placements and supervisors. It is important to emphasise the need for the supervisor to give priority to the facilitation of the new supervisory relationship, to 'build a base which, in recognising the limitations, constraints and power differentials, is able to hold the relationship within its many contradictions and tensions' (Davys and Beddoe, 2000: 440). One point well made is that being an excellent practitioner is not by definition the same as being an excellent supervisor (Webber, 1999). In the same way as students learn to be practitioners, practitioners can, and increasingly need to be willing to, learn to be supervisors. This means that helping students to learn the skills of their occupation and to integrate theory with practice are seen as part of their own ongoing professional development as practitioners. Central to supervisors' development of an approach to supervision is to ground it in what supervisors actually do, and the assumptions they make about teaching, learning and their overall practice (Davys and Beddoe, 2000).

Supervisors are practitioners on two levels: firstly in their workplace and secondly as a supervisor of students. The roots of practice can be located in an analysis of society, with the fieldwork practice located within that analysis. Practice is not static, it may shift as different agendas dominate, it consists of how supervisors understand their own practice, its underpinning assumptions and what they know about its methods and approaches. The totality of this 'knowing' can have an enormous impact on shaping the theory that underpins supervisors' approaches to practice (Moore, 1995; Beddoe, 2000). In this way, a person's approach to practice can be understood by looking at their approach to supervision and *vice versa*.

Variability of training and practice

Despite the centrality attributed to the role, it appears that little sustained attention has been paid to the training of fieldwork supervisors. Webber's (1999) study across thirty-four institutions involved in youth worker education and training in England, Canada and the USA found that in practice, training provision for supervisors ranged from a few hours to two days, to in one case an accredited module on a Masters programme, with little clarity about whether attendance was voluntary or compulsory. Without adequate support and training, fieldwork supervisors may struggle in a new role as much as the students they are responsible for, and have little or no opportunity to consider or develop their practice (Wilson, 2000). Such opportunities might enable supervisors to explore the kinds of links being made between their specific practice, general ideas about that practice, and communicating that practice to students (Davys and Beddoe, 2000). At the same time, making too many demands on a supervisor contributes to a reluctance to take on the role. Equally, not providing enough clarity can have the same effect.

In practical terms, it may be impossible to guarantee students access to fieldwork placements where the philosophy of all supervisors, and their modelling of principles in practice, is consistent with that of the college, simply because there are not enough suitably qualified staff. If there is acceptance that there is learning in less than ideal contexts, the question remains of how to support students to make best use of 'difficult' or less than ideal fieldwork placements. One way to do this is provide opportunity for students to practise negotiating workplans and expectations prior to placement as part of a structured placement planning exercise. Another way is through the provision of feedback opportunities built into fieldwork through 're-call' days and seminars during placement. In order to be useful in contributing positively to students' experience of fieldwork placement, these seminars need to have both a clear focus and enough flexibility for students to shape the process and content (Webber, 1999:6).

Fundamentally, the relationship between college and supervisor may be seen as one of 'professional trust' since little of what actually happens in supervision between student and supervisor is available directly to the college.

Supporting effective supervision

Writing in the context of clinical medical practice, Wheeler and Richards (2007:62–63) identify seven areas of positive impact of supervision on those being supervised, including heightened self-awareness, improved skills, and raised self-efficacy beliefs. The provision of support, the timing and frequency, as well as the inclusion of a theoretical orientation all contributed to the development of the supervisee and positive impacts on the work being undertaken. Another study suggests that the quality of the relationship between supervisor and supervisee appears to be the 'single most important factor' for effective supervision in any context (Kilminster and Jolly, 2000:833). This comes more sharply into focus when the supervisor is both facilitating student learning and 'gate-keeping' (even partially) entry to a 'community of practice', as in the case of fieldwork supervision. It is a relationship that acts both as a vehicle for learning, where theory is related to practice, and as an experience of a learning relationship in itself (Beddoe, 2000). Given students' tendency to retain vivid memories of their first supervision experience, it can be significant in terms of the students' learning about supervision and the nature of the professional relationship itself.

The supervisor's previous relevant work experience is a major source of credibility among those being supervised. In fact, the more substantial the occupational experience in the 'core professional functions', the more likelihood there is of the supervisor being accepted (Kadushin and Harkness, 1976: 280). Fieldwork practitioners are already at an advantage as student supervisors, since, unlike the manager or line manager who is in danger of losing 'professional authentication' (Moore, 1970:211), fieldwork supervisors are required to be deeply involved in ongoing youth work or community work practice rather than be somewhat removed. Nonetheless, taking on a supervisory role can involve an unsettling of a heretofore stable professional identity, as practitioners may feel under pressure to act as role models, and 'exhibit exemplary behaviour' as well as professional judgment and competence (Kadushin and Harkness, 1976: 292). There is some permission for the student to be 'dependent' on the supervisor, while the supervisor has the 'dubious prerogative of independence' (1976:293).

While effective supervision should ideally be mutually (though differentially) beneficial for supervisee and supervisor, both youth work and community work have a particular reason to move beyond that individual benefit and into making connections between 'private troubles' and 'public ills' (Mills, 1959). Students in supervision during fieldwork practice need to reflect on their work in the context of the underpinning principles of the occupation for which they are being prepared, and make connections between actions and principles. As a result, the supervisory relationship can be both intimate and challenging, often evoking deeply felt personal experiences, values and beliefs as students struggle in the meaning-making process.

Given the potentially intimate and challenging nature of the relationship, it is important for both supervisor and student to avoid being drawn into dynamics that are outside the remit of supervision, by developing a framework that is appropriate to the work setting, that is clear enough to be explained to the student, and flexible enough to adapt to different students, levels, and contexts. As mentioned above, the practitioner's work style and initial professional formation influences their supervising style (Hawkins and Shohet, 2006: 69). Whatever the style adopted, the task that 'lies at the heart of all supervision' is to develop the student's capacity to undertake the professional practitioner role (Davys and Beddoe, 2009). As such, supervision requires the ability to switch awareness between multiple contexts including the work that the student is doing, the student's process, the supervisor's own process in the here and now, work within the wider context of the organisation, as well as wider organisational, inter-organisational and sectoral issues.

A framework for fieldwork supervision

Davys and Beddoe (2000) present a framework within which to undertake the supervisor role during fieldwork placement. It has four stages, and extends a framework outlined by Holmes and Bryant (1977). The four *stages are preparation, beginnings, middle and endings*. While the nomenclature of stages leaves something to be desired, the bases are covered in a way that is likely to be useful to a supervisor or in a training context and may contribute to the development of 'good' supervisor characteristics of 'availability, accessibility, affability and ability' (Kadushin and Harkness, 1976: 325–327). Each stage is discussed in turn below.

Getting started and staying going
The two key areas of initial *preparation* relate to self-preparation and agency/college preparation. If fieldwork is at least partly about professional identity formation, then the fieldwork supervisor must first be able to articulate his or her own professional identity, beliefs, methods of work and particular skills and expertise as a practitioner before they can think of engaging students in a systematic exploration of their developing occupational identity. The second aspect of preparation relates to the agency and college and involves exploring the expectations of both, including any possible tensions. Importantly it also involves clarifying the work and learning opportunities that might be available to a student and preparing an orientation plan for them.

Beginnings

Beginnings focus on establishing a relationship with the student, contracting and expectations, goals, appropriate work-plans, and thinking through how coursework and assessment requirements might influence the supervisory relationship. This includes thinking about and preparing for the first three-way visit from the college tutor. It should not be assumed that, while the supervisor has power and authority to act invested in them by their multi-faceted role, the student is powerless. Students can and do complain or withhold their active co-operation which is needed in the supervisors' workplace. Students might be developing an occupational identity in one context, but have a raft of valuable and not-so-valuable life experiences that can impact positively and/or negatively on the placement experience and supervisor relationship (Gardiner, 1989). Equally, both supervisor and students are full or potential members of the 'community of practice' within which the fieldwork placement takes place. Following successful completion of the programme of education and training, supervisor and student will find themselves colleagues in a community of practice, therefore the traditional novice supervisee and expert supervisor divide is not appropriate to adults in professional education and training.

As mentioned above, one way of dealing with the challenges raised in the supervision relationship is to establish a contract; a clear, and if necessary a tough and challenging working agreement. It should provide clarity and safety about where both student and supervisor stand, be robust enough to enable the supervisor to feel free and responsible to make challenges to and assessments of the student appropriate to the role and context, while respecting the student's right of appeal. Any working agreement should state clearly that the central focus of supervision is the effectiveness of students in their occupational role; that the student accepts responsibility for their own development alongside whatever responsibility is invested in the supervisor. In addition, any power or responsibility the supervisor has for assessment should be clearly articulated including how these will be exercised.

Supervision is a complex activity and we should not lose sight of that complexity. It is also worth remembering that much of what workers in the social professions (including students) do is unsupervised and therefore what comes to supervision is partial, and a story which is influenced by the supervisor's presence (Gardiner 1989; Christian and Kitto, 1987). This partiality is likely to be exacerbated in a context where students are concerned that reporting negative experiences is likely to count against them in assessment terms (Webber, 1999). The three inter-related functions of supervision (accountability, learning and support) provide a useful way of thinking about the supervisor's focus of attention, mitigating partiality and thereby managing the complexity to some extent.

Middle

The middle stage is primarily about ongoing supervision, and engaging the student in reflection and assessment on their ongoing work. It may also involve highlighting any difficulties that may arise in the placement or supervisory relationship. At this stage it is important to remember that behavioural changes can occur quickly but that changes in thinking and attitude take longer (Kilminster and Jolly, 2000: 833), so students may need a good deal of attention at particular times during this middle stage. As Tash

(1967) notes, given the short time frame (often six to fourteen weeks), along with the potential to be 'thrown in at the deep end' in work situations, students may need frequent supervisions. These frequent supervision sessions focus on supporting the student, helping them to prepare, develop observations, reflect, and in many instances to be selective.

Endings

Endings can be as important as beginnings. They focus on supporting the student to disengage from and evaluate their work with the organisation against the initial goals and expectations set by them and the university or other education provider. It is also likely to involve a formal written report and a final meeting with the student and college tutor to facilitate assessment and feedback. Generally, a formal opportunity for the student to say goodbye to those they have worked with as colleagues and in groups is considered good practice.

Establishing Focus in Supervision

Having outlined this framework, it is useful to look in more detail at what happens within supervision. Beddoe (2000: 42) outlines a range of foci designed to aid student development in supervision. They can help both supervisor, and student, establish a focus for sustained reflection at different times in the process and may be particularly useful in this middle stage. They include:

- knowledge needed for practice
- developing an awareness of the different contexts of practice
- examining issues of ethics and accountability
- exploring beliefs, attitudes and values
- linking theory to practice
- developing the capacity for self monitoring and self care
- effective use of supervision
- exploring the developing professional identity
- identifying the theoretical and personal approaches to practice
- management of work and managing organisational, college and other sometimes conflicting expectations.

Beddoe (2000) has developed and expanded the earlier model of Ford and Jones (1987), identifying four phases in supervision. The first of these phases is *descriptive*, where the focus is on the student without interruption, describing some situation or issues they bring to supervision. The descriptive phase is followed by *clarification*, which has a more reflective focus, where the supervisor asks key questions designed to probe for deeper reflection. Then, the *evaluative* stage involves feedback both by student to self and from supervisor to student, and finally the *implementation* stage where plans for action are discussed, and agreed. Beddoe (2000) has added in a fifth phase, *reflection and conclusion*, which in some ways mirrors the last stage of the fieldwork practice placement itself. The important thing to note about these phases is that they are repeated for each issue that is raised in supervision.

Beddoe (2000) outlines a series of questions that usefully frame supervisor reflection at the different stages outlined above. These include questions about the extent to which practice reflects the 'retrieve, reflect, link and act' process of 'loop

learning' (Bogo and Vayda, 1987) outlined earlier. Ford and Jones (1987) also set out a number of useful questions for the supervisor:

- To what extent is my purpose driven by student's work or learning agenda, how shared is this purpose, how conscious am I of ethical dimensions?
- How much information to share with others, in evaluating fieldwork?
- What extent of student's time is used to promote learning or to contribute to smooth running of agency?
- What is the quality of my relationship with student?
- What work can I support?
- How comfortable am I in the role?
- What issues might there be for me, what might be issues for the student?
- How supportive is the agency at this time for students and field educators?
- What more might be done to create a positive earning environment?

Reflecting on the complexity of these questions, and taking into account the totality of the supervisor role, (which it must be remembered is only part of a practitioner workload), it is evident that fieldwork supervisors carry a high degree of responsibility for the development of future practitioners, and therefore the future of their occupational area. As noted earlier supervisors who have previous relevant and substantial work experience have more credibility with those being supervised then practitioners are already 'ahead' as student fieldwork supervisors. This raises the question of how supervisors can be encouraged and supported to take on that responsibility.

In many ways, supervising students seems a thankless task for practitioners. Despite the acknowledged centrality of the supervisor role, it is often neither financially well rewarded, nor highly regarded by the institutions sending students to fieldwork organisations (Webber, 1999). There are ongoing questions about how to support and compensate supervisors. There are, in very practical terms, some actions that the university or education providers can take to offer some support to supervisors. The provision of a fieldwork manual that clearly outlines what is meant by supervision, the underpinning principles, session content, and role of the supervisor, especially in relation to assessment (Webber, 1999: 4) is one such support. Crucially, the model of fieldwork needs to be communicated to all parties as well as the expectations of fieldwork learning, and how it relates to the programme objectives overall. Another suggestion is to provide opportunities for supervisors to explore their own practice together, as well as create opportunities for them to have access to some college facilities such as the library (Webber, 1999).

Conclusion

This article has comprehensively mapped relevant literature relating to both fieldwork practice and supervision. It has navigated routes that examine supervision in the social professions, explored the purpose of fieldwork practice, highlighted distinctive features of student supervision and identified approaches that support effective supervision in the context of fieldwork practice placement.

Both youth work and community work have had, and continue to have, a tendency to draw on theories and practices from other disciplines. The current literature on supervision is largely influenced by social work, medicine and psychotherapy theory and practice. It therefore reflects these disciplines' assumptions, values and conceptualisations of relationships between the supervisor and supervisee, and, in turn, their conceptualisations of those they work with as clients, patients or service users as distinct from participants or 'partners' in the process. In addition, the literature originates mainly in the UK, the USA, and more recently Australia and New Zealand. Methods and principles of supervision in community work and youth work still rely to a marked extent upon those developed for social work casework (Salmon, 1977; Tash, 1967). This may be partially explained by the initial provision of community work education and training within social work programmes in the UK.

The reliance on literature from other disciplines and countries is challenging, not simply because of a desire to claim youth work and community work as distinct practices, but also because supervision itself is not a neutral, value-free activity undertaken uniformly in all circumstances and across all disciplines, contexts and countries. How the role of the practitioner in relation to those they work with is defined has implications for the purpose and process of supervision of students undertaking professional education for that role. Perhaps it should not be surprising that the lack of a robust and generally agreed articulation of what constitutes professional community and youth work practice in the first place has resulted in the absence of a body of literature and the development of appropriate models of supervision for that practice. It is hoped that this article will contribute to discussion and debate that might help to develop such models.

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