



The Meaning and Value of Supervision in Social Work Field Education

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Abstract

Supervision has played an important role in social work field education for many years. This evaluative qualitative study considers perspectives of field instructors and students regarding the meaning and value of supervision. Findings align with the limited information available through literature review. Field instructors value teaching and giving feedback to students that shapes their professional practice in the field setting. Field instructors also value the opportunity to develop their own leadership and management skills. Students value learning from experienced professionals in the field, feedback on skill development, and the opportunity to process what is happening in field experience.

Keywords: field education, field instructor perspective, meaning and value, social work education, student perspective, supervision, qualitative

Introduction

Field Instructors play a significant role in social work education since field education is considered the profession's signature pedagogy (Bogo, 2015; Council on Social Work Education, 2008; Kanno & Koeske, 2010). Field experience is a critical point in the educational progression where students learn the adaptive and flexible qualities necessary for success in the social work profession. If students cannot move into the field experience and surmount pre-placement anxieties and trepidations accompanying the new experience, then periods of struggle and uncertainty may affect professional progression. Kanno and Koeske (2010) reported that students' negative emotions, low self-confidence, and anxiety can impact the quality of learning and competence

integration. While students may or may not have the ability to articulate meaning of the supervisory relationship in the field experience, quality supervision makes field education worthwhile and transforms the experience. The supervisory relationship shapes how students and supervisors approach the overall field experience, quality of learning, and skill development that ultimately impacts clients (Pehrson, Panos, Larsen, & Cox, 2009).

The purpose of this study is to articulate responses from students and field instructors about the meaning and value of supervision as a component of social work field education. The study includes a review of pertinent and relevant literature on types of supervision used in social work education, as well as its meaning and value. Archival data from students and field instructors provides the substance for furthering the base of knowledge about the meaning and value of supervision.

Literature Review

Social Work Education Includes Field Education as Signature Pedagogy

In 2008, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), for the first time, recognized field education as “signature pedagogy,” meaning that social work education had two integrated and equal parts including classroom and field curricula. Implementing field education as signature pedagogy involves preparing students in the educational setting for some period of time, while integrating practice in field agencies simultaneously, and then shifting priority from the educational setting to the professional practice setting. Using this sequence, students can culminate the integration of learning and professional practice by the time they graduate. Students are expected to demonstrate competence in the field setting. An integral part of this process involves utilizing social work field instruction, or supervision, while students are in agency-based practice. Further, *how* supervision is utilized (i.e. structure, content, individual versus group, relationships, and pedagogy) remains paramount in this process.

Holosko and Skinner (2015) emphasized that social work education has yet to fully integrate this supervisory model into educational practice. To strengthen the supervisory model, field directors must take, and be given, the lead in adopting and operationalizing field education as their signature pedagogy, including field instruction while students are engaging in field education. Social work field instruction, or supervision, has taken many forms over the years. Contemporarily, Marc, Makai-Dimeny, and Osvat (2014) referred to supervision as an interactional process in which a qualified supervisor is assigned or designated to assist and direct practice of supervisees in defined learning or practice areas. Further, the supervisory process requires that the supervisee become aware of his/her professional responses

and limitations and work with the supervisor to enhance his/her quality of services offered to clients. Supervisors must focus on quality of service to supervisees' clients, supervisees, and host organizations (Marc et al., 2014).

Types of Educational Supervision

Social work supervision was initially, and for many years, provided as an apprentice-based model whereby students were matched, one-on-one, with social workers performing a variety of skills in an agency-based setting. Individual supervision is still a preferred option when supervisees are offered a choice of supervision modality (Alschuler, Silva, & McArdle, 2015). "In one-on-one supervision the supervisor-student dyad parallels the process between the worker and client in treatment. In group, the student gains understanding, acquires new skills, and develops professional identity by watching and learning from peers" (Zeira & Schiff, 2010, p. 428). Given the demand for social work field education placements and limited numbers of social workers who qualify and are willing to accept students into agency-based placements, social work educational programs have developed alternative models of supervision in order to meet the needs (Zeira & Schiff, 2010). Types of educationally-based supervision now include supervision provided by field instructors outside of versus within the practicum agency, individual versus group supervision, and even supervision provided by faculty and/or contracted social workers (Cooper-Bolinsky & Ketner, 2016). Students may receive supervision from more than one supervisor, including an agency-based supervisor and a field instructor. Regardless of modality, quality and effective supervision in field education are essential in order for students to demonstrate acceptable performance in any social work program's competencies.

Aspects of Effective Supervision

The literature provided great insight into some critical aspects of effective social work supervision. This content is included in the literature review for the purposes of establishing the knowledge to form the context of the meaning and value of social work educational supervision. In essence, it is assumed that the critical aspects of effective social work supervision are integral in developing positive meaning and value for both field instructors and students.

First and foremost, effective supervision is complex and involves a triad of functions: administrative and managerial tasks, professional development including educational or clinical tasks, and supportive tasks including reflection and emotional support (Alschuler et al., 2015; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; Marc et al., 2014; Osvat, Marc, and Makai-Dimeny, 2014). While this may appear elemental, recognizing and organizing the functions helps supervisors prepare for supervision. Further, students should also understand that supervision requires more than casual conversation; supervisors

modeling these skills facilitates student preparation as well.

The effective supervisor possesses and uses several skills in the supervisory process. The supervisor-supervisee relationship is important. Trusting relationships create an environment where supervisees can discuss difficulties in practice without fear of censure (Nickson, Gair, & Miles, 2016). Bogo, Regehr, Power, and Regehr (2007) cautioned that giving only positive feedback is not conducive to student learning; however, there must be a strong, well-established relationship between supervisor and supervisee in order for giving and receiving more critical feedback to be productive. Likewise, giving feedback should be systematic, timely, clear, and invite dialogue. Alschuler et al. (2015) included active listening and modeling (as opposed to using an authoritative style) as important aspects of establishing a trusting relationship. Marc et al. (2014) added that maintaining a neutral perspective as much as possible also helps with building and maintaining the relationship.

Traits of support and safety are also recognized as key elements of successful supervision (Nickson et al., 2016). Students need encouragement to try out their skills as they learn and develop; students need to know that they are well-educated on a concept or model and that supervisors give permission and support. Everett, Miehl, DuBois, and Garran (2011) stated that field instructors need to help students integrate knowledge, skills, and values of the profession into practice. Marc et al. (2014) recognize a fundamental skill of supervisors is the ability to correctly identify problems, solve or minimize them (i.e. problem-solving skills), and facilitate student skill development.

Good supervisors also facilitate reflection and encourage expression, the capacity to respond rationally, and support supervisees emotionally (Bogo, 2015; Marc et al., 2014; Nickson et al., 2016). Students miss some of the learning potential if encouragement and usage of reflection are not integrated into supervision. While supervisors often do not like confrontation or giving criticism, it is essential in skill development of students, especially early in practice development (Bogo et al., 2007). Alschuler et al. (2015) state that supervisors should not shy from sharing their own experience with students, such as challenges with boundaries, how to attend to use of self, and management of dual relationships. An effective model of student learning is from example, and if supervisors are not willing to share experiences from which they learned, then students may miss the opportunity to learn how to manage in these types of situations.

Dedicated and adequate time for supervision enhances the quality of supervision (Nickson et al., 2016). Students more readily recognize the importance of time for supervision when supervisors model the priority (Alschuler et al., 2015). This includes time for preparation as well as the actual supervision meetings.

Supervisors may use verbal feedback, process recordings, give direct advice, recommend readings, and give written feedback as aids in the supervisory process (Everett et al., 2011). Osvat et al. (2014) also include exercises, games, case presentations, use of probing questions, circular and reflective questioning, feedback, and sharing as helpful aids. Supervisors are encouraged to seek and use creative aids in facilitating student learning.

Meaning and Value of Supervision

There is an abundance of information in the literature about the importance of supervision as well as the qualities that make up effective supervision; however, there is very little addressing the meaning and value of the supervisory experience to field instructors, and even less regarding students. Yet, it is a reasonably common practice for field instructors to receive little or no compensation for supervising students. So why *do* field instructors engage in supervision and *do* students understand and/or appreciate this valuable gift from field instructors?

Field Instructors

In general, field instructors see their primary roles as teaching, mentoring, using reflective feedback, and facilitating social work skill development in students (Bogo et al., 2007; Bogo, 2015; Cleak & Smith, 2012; Everett et al., 2011; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; Marc et al., 2014). When working with entry-level students, the role focuses more on teaching, providing structure, and mentoring; working with more advanced students shifts the focus to teaching, mentoring, and consulting (Everett et al., 2011). As previously established, field education can be time consuming and requires the supervisor to have and use advanced skills.

Most field instructors enjoy social work and want to introduce students to a good example of professional practice; in other words, being a good role model for students matters. Most field instructors advocate for normative standards of professional behavior and consider it important to set and maintain high performance standards in social work (Bogo et al., 2007). As such, practicing social workers see themselves as professional gatekeepers. Further, facilitating learning is appealing and field instructors are gratified when students use feedback and develop strong skills (Bogo et al., 2007). In fact, the process of providing feedback can be rewarding. Supervision also helps with preventing burnout (Osvat et al., 2014).

Field instructors identify evaluation as the least desirable aspect of supervision. In general, writing formal evaluations, assessing student practice, and engaging students in the evaluation process is stressful, complex, and difficult (Bogo et al.,

2007). Evaluation emphasizes the power differential and makes using some modalities of supervision (for example, strengths perspective) more difficult (Bogo et al., 2007; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014).

Field instruction becomes difficult, and significantly less desirable, when working with underperforming or resistant students. Giving feedback is difficult when students are not receptive, or when they do not accept and use the feedback. Field instructors also note that part of the difficulty in giving negative feedback is because it feels personal (Bogo et al., 2007). Yet, “feedback must be provided to the student regarding performance deficits, and explicit expectations for change must be enunciated. Again, given the fact that problematic behavior is most likely to be manifested and detected in the field placement, it becomes the challenging responsibility of the field instructor to enact many of these underspecified and ill supported but legally necessary corrective actions” (Bogo et al., 2007, p. 102). Field instructors also note conflicting feelings about recording a negative evaluation for a student who fails to achieve or adhere to performance standards, in part, because of questioning if anything more could or should have been done to improve student performance. The conflict between having high standards for performance in the profession, protection of clients, and gatekeeping for the profession also pose challenges for field instructors. Field instructors take seriously the roles of nurturing and educating students, as well as maintaining high standards for service to clients. Sometimes, depending on the severity of problems experienced in supervising students, field instructors opt to withdraw from supervising current and/or future students.

Students

Students usually begin the supervisory experience with apprehension, recognizing the fear of having to perform, to be intellectually and professionally honest, and having to be graded and evaluated by the supervisor (Schneider & Berman, 1991). Students appreciate field instructors who understand these issues and design supervision in a manner that minimizes them. Cleak and Smith (2012) reported that student satisfaction with supervision is impacted by students’ relationships with supervisors, the agency context and fit, and available learning opportunities. Yet, many social work students do not know how to initiate and sustain a relationship with field instructors (Everett et al., 2011).

Bogo et al. (2007) reported that students perceive criticism as helpful when given after a trusting relationship is established. However, criticism was viewed as harmful when given in a demeaning or harsh manner. “Without preparation, criticism can be responsible for damaging self-esteem and self-confidence, decreasing motivation for learning social work practice, and impeding growth” (Bogo et al., 2007, p. 103). Students are also concerned about sharing mistakes and uncertainty for fear of

judgment, and express appreciation for supervisors who utilize a strengths-based focus rather than a problem-based approach (Alschuler et al., 2015).

Students also emphasize the need for a safe and secure environment for practice and supervision (Bogo et al., 2007; Everett et al., 2011; Litvack, Mishna, & Bogo, 2010). Students recognize the need to develop competence, use of self, and identity and emphasize the safe environment as necessary in personal development (Everett et al., 2011). Students have higher regard for supervisors who mentor and educate in the field setting. Students desire supervisors who model the therapist-client relationship in supervision, with some emphasis on understanding and compassion (Alschuler et al., 2015). Hurlock et al. (2008) provided an example whereby a mentor was able to work with a student who learned a positive practice skill from a negative situation. The student recognized the need to reposition herself to see the positive by asking how to do something about the situation versus living in anger and emotion. By working the process, the student was able to recognize the need to move past the emotion as well as seeing this experience as one that may be similarly lived by the clients whom she may serve in the future.

Methods

This evaluative and qualitative study was conducted via archival data review and analysis. End-of-semester field evaluations were used from Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) and Master of Social Work (MSW) field participants in one university in the Midwestern United States. Within the evaluations, exploratory questions about the meaning and value of the supervision process were asked. Both field instructors and students addressed their perceptions of engagement in this aspect of field placement. Upon review of evaluation data, the researchers determined that the responses align with and add support to findings in the body of literature regarding the supervisory relationship.

Specific Evaluation Questions Asked

What is the meaning of supervision in field education to you (field instructor or student)? What benefits do you receive from supervision in field education (field instructor or student)?

Participants

Participants included 22 field instructors (3 males, 17 females, and 2 not identified) who provided field instruction (supervision) and 86 social work students (9 males, 77 females) who participated in BSW and MSW field education in the spring of 2017. The field instructor participants supervised 7 BSW juniors, 17 BSW seniors, and 6 MSW

clinical students. The field instructor participant responses included those supervising 30 social work students, or 34.9% of those placed in field education in this particular semester. Some field instructors were assigned to supervise multiple students at multiple educational levels, though no supervisor was assigned more than three students. Student composition included 30 BSW juniors, 40 BSW seniors, and 16 MSW clinical students.

The study utilized archival field education evaluation responses from students and field instructors. Students were required to complete the entire survey as a component of field education; student identification was required in this process. However, evaluative questions were open-ended, and student responses could be as short or long as one chose, and could have been either favorable or unfavorable. Field instructors were not required, but were encouraged, to complete the survey, and responses could either have been identified or anonymous. In total, 40 field instructors completed at least some evaluative items in the survey; 22 completed the specific questions utilized in this study.

The majority of the field instructors (81.8%) were experienced: 4 participants reported supervising for the first time, 13 participants indicated having five or less years of supervisory experience, 3 participants had between five and ten years of supervisory experience, and 2 participants had more than ten years of supervisory experience.

Instruments

Archival data from two evaluations, implemented as electronic surveys, were utilized in this study: (1) the Department's Field Instructor Evaluation of the Field Program, and (2) the Department's Student Evaluation of the Field Practicum. Each of the evaluations have been used by the Department for years in evaluating field education; the tools are periodically evaluated and modified to stay current. Two questions were identified as areas of focus for evaluation review and feedback to address perceptions of the meaning and value of field instruction, one to the field instructor and one to the student evaluation. Completing the field instructor evaluation was optional, and may have been completed anonymously or with self-identification; completing the student evaluation was required, and also required self-identification. Both evaluations were executed through Qualtrics, the online survey forum supported by the University. Demographic information was collected through multiple choice items while the evaluative items were collected through open-ended questions.

Procedures

Data from the instruments were reviewed by the field education taskforce upon completion of the spring 2017 term. After review by the taskforce, the data was

accessible to the research team for use in this study. The field education taskforce reviewed the survey results for determining needs for improvement in field education; the items selected for inclusion in this study were also evaluated by the taskforce. The research team accessed the archival data after the taskforce review and actions were completed. NVivo 11 Pro software was used in data analysis. Content analysis included identification of themes, supporting comments, and word frequencies.

Results

These analyses do not include comprehensive lists of comments acquired in the evaluation processes; however, the field education taskforce (in addition to the researchers) determined the identified responses to be an appropriate representation of the comments received. Analysis was supplemented through use of NVivo. A word analysis of all comments from both field instructors and students produced the following top ten words (in rank with most used being first): supervision, social, able, work, field, feedback, agency, questions, worker, and knowledge.

Field Instructor Responses

Field Instructors provided responses about their perception of the meaning and value of supervision of students in field education. Responses indicated interest in contributing toward professional development and furthering of the profession. Field instructors also identified the personal benefit of gaining leadership experience.

Contribution to Professional Development

Eighteen (18) field instructors who responded ($n=22$, 81.8%) reported a perception of contributing to the professional growth of students and overall to the discipline of social work. Phrases used by field instructors that supported this theme included “giving guidance and support,” “helping improve the lives of others,” “training,” “instrumental in preparing for the future,” “increasing knowledge,” and “providing mentoring.” The following quotes from field instructors are included to provide context:

“I enjoy helping future social workers improve their knowledge, increase their confidence in their abilities as a social worker, and hopefully continue to fan the flames of their passion for social work and helping improve the lives of others.”

“[I enjoy] allowing the intern to shadow myself and other FCMs (Family Case Managers), allowing the intern to interact with clients on her own but supervised, providing feedback on her work, providing one-on-one training/instruction, and mentoring. Supervising an intern allows me to have a hand in their training and abilities

before they venture on their own."

Personal Benefit of Leadership and Supervisory Experience

Five field instructors ($n=22$, 22.7%) noted benefiting in their own professional growth and preparation for leadership and management. Phrases used by field instructors that supported this theme included "leading more" and "preparing for promotion." Quotes that expand the theme included:

"[I] benefit personally, [supervision] challenges me to know more in order to lead more."

"Supervising an intern provides me the benefits of preparing myself for possible promotion as a DCS (Department of Child Services) supervisor."

Interestingly, no field instructors offered negative comments regarding their role in supervision.

A word analysis of the comments from field instructors produced the following top ten words (in rank with most used being first): social, worker, work, agency, intern, students, learning, field, role, and supervision.

Student Responses

Students also provided responses about perception of the meaning and value of the supervision experience and relationship with their field instructor. Responses indicated the importance of the opportunity to receive feedback, the exposure to knowledge and experience by the field instructor, and the benefit of time to process and reflect upon field experience and service to clients.

Opportunity to Seek Feedback

Nearly half of the total, 45 students ($n=86$, 52.3%), reported a benefit of receiving feedback from the supervisor. Responses included the value of being able to ask questions and address concerns, as well as to learn about their own strengths and weaknesses. Phrases used by students that support the theme included "getting feedback about questions or concerns," "watch and help with what needs improving," and "applying feedback to practice makes it better and stronger." Quotes that expand on this theme included:

"Supervision is getting feedback and support from a seasoned social worker about whatever questions or concerns you may have once you engage in the social work practice."

“Having supervision lets the social worker at your agency watch and help you on what you need to improve on. They are there to teach and support you along your journey.”

Supportive Relationship and Opportunity to Process

Over a quarter of the students, 25 students ($n=86$, 29.1%), reported benefiting from an opportunity to process and reflect upon their field experience in supervision. Students viewed the relationship as having a supportive role in their learning and practice, and placing emphasis on self-care. Phrases students used that support the theme included “professional advice,” “talk me through anything,” “reflect on field and self-reflect on strengths and weaknesses,” and “receive help when needed.” The following quotes are provided to more fully develop the context:

“[...] to receive professional advice and supervision on how well I am doing at practicing my skills as a fitted social worker. I get to learn things about social work but also about myself.”

“Supervision to me is a time for me to ask any questions, bring up any concerns and getting to debrief about any cases I was involved in during the week that had remained on my mind. I feel like supervision recharged me because I was able to get everything out that I may have been holding in during the week and got to ask questions if I hadn’t already got them answered by staff.”

Benefit from Field Instructor Knowledge and Experience

Over a quarter of the students, 24 students ($n=86$, 27.9%), reported benefiting from both the knowledge and experience of their field instructors. Responses indicated that students benefited from the relationship with established professionals in social work. Phrases students used that support this theme included “[the supervisor’s] years of experience,” “gain insight from a seasoned professional,” and “receive knowledge of the field.” The following quotes are provided to more fully develop the context:

“My field instructor has a lot of experience and knowledge, which is beneficial for me to hear and take from.”

“Supervision is a time to check in with a higher level social worker with more field experience than yourself. It is a time to check progress and ask questions related to your performance. I received knowledge of the field I hope to enter and what it takes to get there. Also, how to improve on my skills.”

A word analysis of student comments produced the following top ten words (in rank with most common being first): supervision, social, able, questions, feedback, field, work, knowledge, experience, and agency.

Discussion

Holosko and Skinner's (2015) reference to social work education not fully integrating the supervisory function into field education highlights the disconnection often overlooked between curriculum and field education. Holosko and Skinner (2015) emphasize the need for supervisory training for those who serve as field instructors. Field directors need to be able to select and train field instructors, assign students to them, and then trust that supervisors adhere to effective cohesions and healthy relationship formation. The focus of field directors is supervisory in many aspects, but not in the development and maintenance of the supervisory relationship between students and field instructors (Marc et al., 2014). At least in part, field education allows students to learn the expectations of employees, so they are more prepared to move into an employee role. Learning, while in the student role, to be responsible and responsive to the employer, is a critical component. In this context, students must learn self-empowerment through expression and negotiation of needs in supervision. Field directors remain on the periphery to assist and offer guidance if communication or performance issues create an impasse in the supervisory relationship.

Field instructors connect with an intrinsic value to provide something beyond themselves. Field instructors' responses indicated an awareness of the ethical responsibility to give back to the profession. Field instructors grow in their own therapeutic prowess through relating to a neophyte, though it can bring unique challenges. It is important to recognize the word "able" from the word analysis, which is affirmed in the field instructor responses. Field instructors can serve students not only as an educator and role model, but through infusing passion and motivation. One field instructor responded that the instructor provides a "sounding board" for students, indicating the need to allow students to vent, test, and exchange in an open supervisory dialogue. Additionally, "able" applies to field instructors' sense of ableness: "to know more in order to lead more" and to be able to "shift paradigms" quickly between theory and therapy practice. Interestingly, while field instructors want to "fan the flames of [student] passion", field instructors also want to enhance their supervisory abilities "to continue learning and researching best practice." There is clearly a connection between ableness and the supervisory relationship, and these aspects of supervision affect its value.

The word analysis from students also included the word "able." Students indicated significance of the supervisory relationships with field instructors as crucial in their learning. There was also high expectation of integration of skills under the tutelage of

the field instructor. Such connections seemed to provide students with confidence and assurance through the field experience via “professional advice” and the opportunity to develop “critical thinking.” Further, the ability to test assumptions and to “ask questions” increased the sense of ableness from students.

The theme of ableness serves as a strong foundation tying the presenting study to the literature. First, the concept of a strong and well-established trusting relationship was identified in the literature, as well as being mentioned in both field instructor and student responses. The trusting relationship serves as a fundamental and essential core in order for the essential work of supervision to occur. Another recurring theme is a well-informed field instructor with a commitment to mentorship. Supervisors must be able to model, share knowledge (of multiple etiologies including supervision, practice, challenges, client populations, clinical interventions, etc.), and share their own experiences in helping students develop skills. While field instructors often hesitate to share personal experiences and challenges, both the literature and the current study recognize that students value this sharing as part of their learning. Lastly, both the literature and the current study support the theme of creating a safe and secure learning environment. When supervisors create this setting, students can explore, process, seek and incorporate feedback, and practice learning. Emotional support is included in the theme of need for a safe and secure environment and is recognized as important to both field instructors and students in the study.

This theme of ableness within the supervisory relationship ties to the role of field instructors. The benefits of further understanding and enhancement of this dynamic should carry forward to ongoing work with field instructors. To fulfill this premise, the concept of ableness can be enhanced in ongoing training and continuing education with field instructors. There are several options to incorporate discussion related to this topic based on results from this descriptive, evaluative study. Further education could be shared in online webinars to enhance the spirit of ableness and its impact both on the supervisory relationship with the student and within the self-reflective aspect of the role of the field instructor. Classroom-based training and processing of this phenomenon may also be of value to the field instructors and administrators of field programs. Ongoing field evaluation processes can explore the outcomes of this training and continued promotion of the meaning and value of the supervisory relationship.

The student perspective from the current study offered reinforcement to points learned in the literature, but did not propose any new themes as valuable in supervision. However, there was one especially interesting finding. Field instructor responses proposed a theme related to personal development of leadership and management skills. For many years, personal development of leadership and management skills has been recognized as a needed component in field instructor training, and thus, the training benefited field instructors and students (Bogo, 2006; Bogo et al., 2007).

Yet, researchers could find no available literature to validate that field instructors, themselves, recognized this development as motivation for serving as a field instructor. Perhaps the acknowledgment, now by field instructors, adds a deeper level of meaning and value to the skills of leadership and management in field supervision. Finally, results of this study also reinforce the notion that effective supervision is complex and involves a triad of functions: administrative and managerial tasks, professional development including educational or clinical tasks, and supportive tasks including reflection and emotional support (Alschuler et al., 2015; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; Marc et al., 2014; Osvat et al., 2014).

Summary

The meaning and value of supervision held intrinsic value for both field instructors and students. Field instructors felt a sense of legacy, responsibility, and personal growth from their contribution as a supervisor. Students' understanding and trust in the supervisory relationship was also significant. The supervisory relationship opened opportunities for testing theories and techniques, self-reflection, critical thinking, observation, feedback, and acceptance. Students reported value in opportunity for both growth and learning, as well as the importance of mentorship in successfully tackling any new challenge in the field setting. The responses from the current study affirmed significance of supervision and a perception that the relationship would fulfill expectations from both field instructors and students in the field education experience. One concept introduced by this study is the perception by field instructors that there is value in their own personal development of leadership and management skills while supervising students. Previously, there had been substantial literature noting need for training of such skills. Perhaps this finding indicates the trainings have reached a deeper level of value in field instruction.

Limitations

A study conducted in a single university offered greater control of the study design and more manageable data to interpret; however, the study sample size was small, which limits generalizability of results to other settings or broader contexts. Not all potential students and field instructors responded to the evaluations, thus, there was possible bias by those who chose to participate versus those who chose not to participate. It was not assumed that full participation would have produced different outcomes, but would have provided a richer and more complete data set. The duration of this archival data study was short, utilizing a single field cycle, which also limits generalizability. Qualitative studies tend to utilize smaller data sets to allow for more complete analysis, which was the limitation accepted by these researchers in executing this study.

Implications

Students' responses indicated high expectations of supervision, but students did not understand how to engage in supervision to mitigate the insecurity and anxiety felt from a new learning experience. Students, perhaps, do not feel adequately prepared to engage in high quality supervisory relationships. Students can benefit from pre-briefings on dynamics of the supervisory relationship, the importance of the relationship for successful supervisory experiences, and ways to engage effectively with the supervisor.

The field director plays a vital role in successful field education experiences, including the supervisory experience for both students and field instructors. Field directors need to take, and be given, autonomy to establish the program's field pedagogy, and to design training for field instructors and students that adequately prepares each for successful engagement. This pedagogy and training must include focus on the concepts of ableness including the importance of the supervisory relationship, creating a safe and secure environment, mentorship and sharing experiences from which students can learn, and effective ways to give and receive feedback. Furthermore, the role of faculty field liaison becomes integral and vital as well, as they are directly involved in oversight and management of placements. The involvement of this role within the concept and training with ableness will also promote understanding for field instructors and students.

Agencies and field instructors must orient students to the field setting. Slowing things down during those first few orienting days can be an important time for decreasing student anxiety and apprehension as well as developing the supervisory relationship. (Everett et al., 2011). Well-designed orientations including time for field instructors and students serve several purposes. First, students learn agency policies and expectations and share their own learning expectations. Field instructors and students can negotiate and establish tasks and timelines, and process feelings and feedback. Further, field instructors can engage in practicing development of their own management and leadership skills early. There is also opportunity for the field instructor to grow interpersonally and professionally (Bogo et al., 2007).

Lastly, social work programs should periodically meet with field instructors to assess the meaning and value of supervision for them. Despite barriers that exist with field instructors in regards to the demands of high caseloads, support or lack thereof for field instructor work with students, and personal buy-in of particular field instructors, there remains opportunity to enhance aspects of training. Use of the field manual, field seminar, and field instructor trainings are important mediums to address this concept. If the factors that motivate and reward field instructors are not built into the pedagogy of field education, then the profession is at risk of decreasing or losing field instructors,

which is simply a very expensive cost to the future of the profession. Keeping high quality field instructors involved in training future social workers is critical to not only the students who benefit from field experience, but to the profession itself and the quality of services provided to clients. In that same vein, students need to be prepared to engage in learning in the field and effectively use supervision. Student training should also include information about field instructor perceptions of working with resistant students and those who do not respect and/or fully embrace being invited into an agency to practice and be trained by experienced professionals. Students also need training on understanding and using critical feedback productively, and how to manage resistant feelings effectively in supervision. With adequate and quality preparation and training for both supervisors and students, healthy supervisory relationships are staged to develop.

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