

The Reflective Learning Model: Supervision of Social Work Students

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A key task for the field education supervisor is to facilitate reflection in beginning practice, and to promote in the student a sense of ownership, mastery and understanding of his or her clinical process. At the same time the supervisor is charged to instruct and guide the student. A major challenge for the supervisor is to balance these two dimensions of supervision and maintain a focus on the student's experience rather than the supervisor's expertise. The authors present a Reflective Learning Model which identifies the importance of both facilitative and didactic interventions within effective supervision. A case study is provided to demonstrate the model in action.

Keywords: Student Supervision; Field Education; Practice Teaching and Learning;
Reflective Learning

Introduction

The Reflective Learning Model emphasises the importance of reflection for responsive practice. The ability to reflect however is dependent on the practitioner's level of competence and experience. The skills and interventions employed by the supervisor of a student are thus different from those employed by the supervisor of an experienced practitioner. The model presented here, developed from previous work by the authors (Davys and Beddoe, 2000; Davys, 2001) uses Butler's (1996) stages of competence to consider the skills and processes required when supervising a social work student. The paper presents a case study to demonstrate the model and illustrate how supervision can encourage a student to deepen his or her understanding of the multiplicity of understandings (and misunderstandings) present in a challenging practice scenario.

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The Reflective Learning Model rests on the premise that supervision is a forum for learning and that the main vehicle for learning is reflection. Reflection in this context refers to a conscious bringing to the surface of different forms of knowledge, while attending to the thoughts and emotions present in the student both *in situ* and after the experience. This is neatly described by Ruch (2000, p. 108):

Reflective learning is an holistic, creative and artistic phenomenon which endeavours to hold theory and practice together in a creative tension. It also allows for uncertainty and mistakes and acknowledges the humanity of practitioners and clients. Reflective learning which acknowledges the complexity, diversity and emotionality of situations offers more scope for student practitioners to reach informed decisions which, by embracing the breadth of knowledges which influence decisions, could help avoid defensive, routinised and ritualistic responses.

It is the contention of the authors that students benefit from clear, structured facilitation of their experiences as reflection may not always come easily. As a 'learning process', supervision is driven from the experience of the learner (the supervisee) rather than from the wisdom and knowledge of the supervisor, a view supported by Morrison (2001) who asserts that 'the key to learning and development lies in the ability to engage in, and make use of, the worker's experience' (Morrison, 2001, p. 57). This poses a challenge to the supervisor of a student who must therefore assess what experience a student has, in the broadest sense, and how can that experience can be drawn into learning.

Three fundamental tensions are present in student supervision:

1. The balance between the didactic processes of teaching (information giving and instruction) and facilitation of student learning through reflection.
2. The fostering of reflection in situations where there is limited experience and which are overlaid by anxiety. This anxiety may stem from a number of sources which include the nature of the work and the student assessment process (Ruch, 2002).
3. The management of the dependence-autonomy continuum as students test their new knowledge and skills in "real" work (Beddoe, 2000).

Reflection, Competence and the New Practitioner

The task which lies at the heart of all supervision is to develop student/practitioner competence. Butler (1996), in rejecting models which suggest that competence is developed through an increased repertoire of skills and techniques or through the unconscious imbedding of basic principles, describes a model of performance development based on reflection. His model rests on the assertion that, 'through reflection, performance is transformed. And it is this transformation that brings about improvement in the performance' (Butler, 1996, p. 277). Reflection, however, is not necessarily an easy option for the very new practitioner.

Butler (1996) describes five stages of competence development. For the purposes of this paper we shall focus on the first two stages of this model, novice and advanced

beginner, as they reflect the stages of development commonly demonstrated by student practitioners.

Novice, the first stage of Butler's model, describes a context where practitioners (students) are new to the work and have no experience of the situations which might arise. Practice at this level is 'rule governed'. In order to begin to practise the student requires rules to shape and guide practice. The behaviour of novices is 'extremely limited and very inflexible' (Butler, 1996, p. 278).

The second stage of Butler's model, *Advanced Beginner*, is characterised by the practitioner's belief that there is an answer to every problem and that someone will know what to do. The source of knowledge is thus located in someone other than the student and most commonly that person is the supervisor. At this stage the student will have had sufficient experience of practice to be able to identify the main areas of importance but his or her repertoire of interventions will be limited and solutions will be considered either right or wrong. In a similar vein, Loganbill *et al.* (1982, p. 17) describe a beginning practitioner as exhibiting 'naïve unawareness ... narrow and rigid thought patterns' and as having a strong dependence on supervision. It is important however to consider this dependence in context. Lizzio *et al.* (2005, p. 251) remind us that, for the student, dependence may be seen as professional safety and demonstrate appropriate deferral to the expertise of the supervisor and also be an indication of trust and safety within the relationship.

Other challenges are presented for the supervisor. At this beginning stage practitioners are often resistant to reflection in that they are 'generally impatient with complex answers or invitations to think the problem out for themselves' (Butler, 1996, p. 278). Butler concludes that novice and advanced beginners 'can take in little of the complexity of their performance situation, it is too new, too strange, and they have to spend time remembering the rules they have set for them' (Butler, 1996, p. 278). He identifies three requirements for novices and advanced beginners:

- support to understand the performance setting;
- help to set priorities; and
- assistance to learn to reflect on their own performance and become less rigid and more flexible by developing and trusting their own personal practical knowledge (Butler, 1996, p. 278).

Beginning practitioners or students thus require a mixture of interventions which are equally weighted at both ends of the didactic–facilitative continuum. High levels of instruction and information (didactic) are necessary in order that the students have a context and guidelines to begin to undertake the basic tasks of practice and high levels of positive feedback and support (facilitative) are required in order that they can accept the challenge to reflect upon the action taken and the consequences of that action. Without reflection, according to Butler, the practitioner will not progress; however, premature encouragement to reflect can overwhelm the student and create resistance and distress. Yip (2006, p. 781) identifies appropriate conditions for self-reflection which include:

A supportive environment, social workers readiness to undergo self-reflection, individual space for individual workers to undergo reflective practice, worker's own reflective practice and awareness of one's limits and breaking point.

Yip (2006, p. 787) exhorts 'related parties' to ensure the presence of these appropriate conditions in order that social workers may safely engage in reflective practice. Effective supervision of a student therefore requires preparation, judgement and careful choice of the best way to promote learning within a range of supervisory interventions.

A recurring caution appears in the literature that didactic methods of supervision create over-dependence on the instructions, experience and expertise of the supervisor (supervisor focused) and produce surface learning. Surface learning, often defined as learning as a means to an end, focuses on content rather than underlying purpose and meaning. Clare (2007), discussing the work of earlier educationalists [Marton and Saljo (1976), Gardiner (1984) and Howe (1989) cited in Clare (2007)], describes surface learning as 'extrinsically motivated, passive and reproductive' in contrast with deep learning which is an 'intrinsically motivated process of personalised meaning construction' (Clare, 2007, p. 434).

The didactic-facilitative tension in supervision is usefully explored in a study by Lizzio *et al.* (2005), who investigated supervisee perceptions of the learning processes and outcomes of professional supervision. One of the questions for the researchers was whether 'deep/surface learning, anxiety and self management are salient to supervisees' perceptions of their approach to professional supervision' (Lizzio *et al.*, 2005, p. 243). Lizzio's findings described an 'orthogonal', as opposed to a polarised, relationship between didactic and facilitative approaches to supervision. In other words the use of the one did not exclude the other. They found that supervisors who were perceived by their supervisees to use a facilitative approach used a wide range of interventions which addressed both the content and process of supervision. Didactic interventions to instruct and inform were used within a facilitative approach to supervision.

Significantly Lizzio *et al.* (2005) remind us that it is not the techniques or interventions which characterise a supervisory approach but rather the 'higher order' goals of that particular approach. Where the higher order goals include supervisee learning and development within a supervisee or student focused framework of learning then didactic interventions are not an obstacle to deep learning.

As the student gains experience the need for structure becomes less but the need for encouragement and normalising of feelings and experience increases. The more experienced student needs help to value the learning and growth which comes from making mistakes. This task is complicated when the supervision relationship includes an assessment component which prompts students to promote their competence rather than their inadequacies.

The student supervisor's challenge is neatly summarised by Lizzio *et al.* (2005) who describe the need to find 'an appropriate balance between supervisory authority and supervisee autonomy, between evaluation and support and between transmission of

required knowledge and the reflective engagement with the supervisees' experience' (Lizzio *et al.*, 2005, p. 240).

Lizzio *et al.*'s research findings are interesting. Not only do they suggest that facilitative approaches assist (but do not guarantee) deep learning but they also indicate that facilitative approaches reduce student anxiety. Finally, paradoxically, they found that a student learning focus reinforces the supervisor authority and enhances the perception of supervisor ability.

The Reflective Learning Model

The Reflective Learning Model was developed through the need, perceived by the authors, for a practical model of supervision which guided the supervisor from the greetings at the beginning of a supervision session to the farewell at the end. Many models of supervision provide theoretical frameworks which describe developmental stages of supervision (Loganbill *et al.*, 1982; Brown and Bourne, 1996; Hawkins and Shohet, 2006) or the theoretical (and therapeutic) processes and skills of supervision (Loganbill *et al.*, 1982; Juhnke, 1996; Bond and Holland, 1998; Tsui, 2005; Hawkins and Shohet, 2006) but few provide the new supervisor with a structure which guides the process from beginning to end.

To this end we developed a model which we called the Reflective Learning Model of supervision. This model rests on two premises. The first premise asserts that the main purpose of supervision is to facilitate supervisee learning and development. As such the model is underpinned by an understanding of the principles of adult experiential learning (Kolb, 1984; Schön, 1987). The second premise reflects Butler's (1996) assertion that learning becomes transformational through reflection. As Morrison observes: 'It is not sufficient to have an experience to learn. Without reflecting on the experience it may be lost or misunderstood' [Further Education Unit (1988) quoted in Morrison (1993, p. 45)].

The Reflective Learning Model

This model, whilst promoting the importance of the beginning of the supervision session, 'hello how are you', and the end, 'I will see you next on ...', focuses on the process in between these two interactions which is where the 'work' of supervision occurs. It assumes that the supervisor and student will have devoted time and energy to building an effective relationship in the beginning stages of practice learning (Beddoe, 2000).

Beginnings

All supervision sessions begin with an opportunity for the supervisor and the student to catch up and to engage before focussing on the task in hand. We have described elsewhere the specific tasks and themes of the beginning of the supervision session (Davys and Beddoe, 2000). Suffice it to reiterate here that this is an important

moment of connection with the student and an opportunity to model the maintenance of ongoing professional relationships. The 'beginning' will include the setting of the agenda, an important task for all supervision and no less so for student supervision. The question of who sets the agenda in student supervision is interesting as a central purpose is to encourage student ownership of his or her work and of the supervision process. The agenda therefore must reflect student concerns and issues. The dilemma of course is that students usually have large areas of 'unknown' which will not find their way onto the agenda. Thus in student supervision it is important that supervisors are alert to the missing elements of the agenda and, where necessary, introduce topics which require attention. When the supervisor and student have established and prioritised the agenda the supervision cycle can begin.

The Reflective Learning Model describes four stages *event*, *exploration*, *experimentation* and *evaluation* which are addressed sequentially but allow for the student and the supervisor to move back and forth between the various stages if necessary (see Figure 1). The model mirrors the stages of experiential learning as described by Kolb (1984).

Case Study

Sharon is a third year social work student who is on placement in a government funded community health service. She is an able, enthusiastic student who is keen to get involved in practice and less enthusiastic about the preparatory ground work.

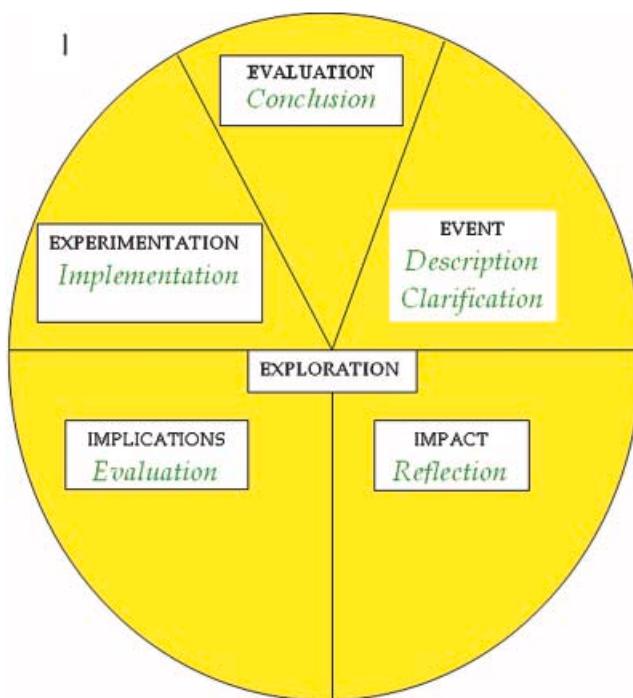


Figure 1 The Reflective Learning Model for Students.

Beginning

Sharon arrives at supervision visibly upset but struggling to present as composed. She has obviously not prepared for supervision and has rushed in from a visit in the community. The supervisor notes all this and chooses, for the start, to attend to Sharon's distress but makes a mental note to raise the issue of preparation with Sharon at some point.

The supervisor comments on Sharon's breathless arrival and observes that she looks upset. Tears begin to flow as Sharon launches into an account of her home visit that morning, 'A disastrous visit, a non-compliant rude service user'; Sharon doubts she is cut out to be a social worker and 'is never going to do another home visit'.

The supervisor listens to this and is sympathetic to Sharon's experience. She then asks Sharon what she wants to talk about in supervision today. Sharon appears surprised that the supervisor should ask and says with a shaky laugh that there is only one thing on her mind at the moment. The supervisor agrees but comments that this visit has obviously brought up a lot of feelings and is dominating her attention at the moment. She wonders if there were other things that Sharon has noted during the week which she wanted to put on the agenda as well. She asks if Sharon has noted anything in her notebook as preparation for supervision as they had agreed when they contracted for supervision. The supervisor does not expect that Sharon has done this but wants to reinforce the expectation of preparation for supervision and to illustrate the fact that critical incidents can dominate and highjack agendas. She is pleased that Sharon's response shows that although she has not recorded anything for an agenda she has remembered their agreement and that she has the ability to contain her immediate distress and name one other issue for the agenda. The supervisor has been reviewing Sharon's case notes and wishes to include case recording as an agenda item.

The agenda thus has three items and Sharon, to the surprise of neither, wants to discuss the morning's visit first.

The Event

Having identified the item of top priority on the agenda, the student and supervisor begin to focus on this item. The task for this stage of the model is for the student and the supervisor to identify the core issue or key question which the student wants to address in supervision about this agenda item.

The student is invited to tell the story. This is an important place for the student to start regardless of how well the supervisor may know the case or situation. Ownership of the situation leads to responsibility for the subsequent intervention and assists the student to gain both confidence and competence. Ford and Jones (1987) suggest that when a supervisor claims any ownership of the case or situation the student's role and sense of responsibility for outcome is proportionally diminished.

The retelling of the story enables the student to hear for him or herself the detail and to re-experience the situation. It enables the supervisor to hear the story from the

student's perspective and to hear where the student places emphasis and possibly what the student omits.

The task for the supervisor is to encourage the student to tell enough of the story for both the student and the supervisor to understand the context and issues but not, at this stage, to begin to address the issue.

The supervisor, having listened to the student [Ford and Jones (1987) suggest that the student be uninterrupted during the story telling], may then need to clarify with the student some of the issues, the context and/or the information to ensure that he or she understands the situation. Ford and Jones (1987) suggest here that the supervisor is framing the problem from two perspectives. The first is to get a clear understanding of the problem/issue presented by the student and the second is to hold the student and the problem in a broader context. What is the significance of this particular problem for the student and what might it suggest about the student's stage of knowledge and competence?

The task for the supervisor and the student in the Event stage is to explore the supervision issue sufficiently in order to identify what it is that the student wants from the supervision session. What is the question that the supervisee is bringing to supervision and what does he or she wish to take away from the session?

The Event

The supervisor encourages Sharon to pick up her story of the morning's events but contains it within the context of 'Let us work out how best we can use supervision to help you with this situation. What do you want from supervision?'

Sharon's visit involved a home visit to a long term woman service user of the agency, Paulette. Paulette's regular worker was going away and had asked that the student make a routine visit. Paulette had been told that a student was coming to see her.

Sharon's task was to make contact with this service user, to engage with her and to discuss whether there were any issues for her at present. As she drove up Sharon had seen a woman enter the house, but when she knocked at the door no one would answer. Sharon stood for five minutes knocking at the door and calling out explaining who she was. Her frustration and embarrassment were exacerbated by the appearance of a neighbour who was obviously curious about her presence and who was all too ready to give Sharon a loud account of Paulette's failings. Paulette finally opened the door and told Sharon in no uncertain terms to get lost. Sharon fled.

The supervisor encouraged Sharon to identify what she wanted from supervision about this situation. Sharon said she wanted to know how she could get this woman to let her into the house and how to deal with manipulative ungrateful service users.

The supervisor knew Sharon to be an enthusiastic student who was respectful of others and polite. She suspected that she would have had little experience in dealing with nosy neighbours and that her inexperience would not have prepared her for an angry rejection by the service user.

The Exploration: Impact and Implications

The Exploration stage of this model is where the work of supervision occurs and where the issue is explored, understood and potential solutions identified. The stage is divided into two phases: impact and implications.

Impact

The impact phase of the Exploration stage is the time where the student is encouraged to reflect on the issue brought to supervision and to consider how this issue has impacted on him or her and what meaning this event has in terms of current or previous experience. How is he or she feeling about the issue? How have these feelings been addressed, accommodated, expressed? How have the feelings affected the work in hand? What ideas, thoughts, judgements or opinions has the student had about the situation? Are there any patterns to these ideas, feelings? Have they been experienced anywhere before? And so on.

The task for the supervisor in this phase is to help the student to locate themselves in the event. How has the situation impacted on them? How have they responded? What meaning does it have to them as student practitioners?

Implications

The second phase of Exploration, implications, moves the student from a focus on themselves to a broader focus on the context of the 'event' or issue. The issue brought to supervision is considered here in terms of broad frameworks such as theory, policy, legislation, treatment protocols, and professional ethics. The phase encompasses Ford and Jones' (1987) evaluative phase and allows the supervisor to assess what knowledge the student possesses and what knowledge he or she requires.

In student supervision this is the phase where the supervisor is most active and where he or she has an opportunity to teach, inform and prescribe, possibly at times even proscribe. In short, it is the place for didactic interventions. It is also a place for feedback, reassurance and affirmation.

During the Exploration stage of the model the student and supervisor may move between impact and implication phases as the issue is explored and uncovered. Reflection on thoughts and feelings may raise questions of a more conceptual nature and theory may be explored. This in turn may prompt a reflection on feelings and actions and patterns may be identified and so the discussion may move back and forth between the two phases and deepen as different aspects are examined and integrated.

The task of the Exploration stage is to reach some decision or understanding about the issue being discussed.

Impact and Implications

The supervisor can see that Sharon is still very upset about the incident and encourages her to talk about how she feels. Sharon describes a range of feelings:

anger, frustration, helplessness and embarrassment. She talks about all her enthusiasm for the visit and how she had looked forward to her first solo home visit. She describes Paulette as 'spiteful' and 'ungrateful'.

The supervisor sympathises with this experience and affirms Sharon for her honesty and courage in owning her strong negative feelings. She observes that it is hard when good intentions and goodwill are rebuffed. She wonders what was going on for Sharon at the time and if Sharon has ever experienced anything like this before. Sharon is able to connect her feelings with an earlier experience in her childhood and is encouraged by the supervisor to recall how she handled that situation.

With support Sharon is able to examine her own position in the situation. She realises that she wanted so badly to do this 'right' and that the presence of the neighbour not only exposed her inability to make a connection with the woman but also embarrassed her by making her a party, however unwillingly, to a criticism of the service user. This compounded her sense of helplessness and, she realises, a sense of incompetence. How can she be a social worker if she can't even get in the door to talk to the service user?

Implications

The supervisor asks Sharon how she would have liked it to be. What was her goal in visiting this home? Sharon is clear that her goal was to make contact with Paulette, begin to establish a relationship and to gather relevant information. What could she have done differently? Sharon is unable to answer this question and becomes stuck in her feelings about the service user and her judgements of her behaviour. Sharon is also unable to imagine what was happening for Paulette when she refused to answer the door.

The supervisor questions Sharon on her preparation before visiting Paulette. Who had she spoken to and what had she read? Sharon admits that she hadn't read the file. She had had a brief conversation with the regular social worker but it was hurried and she felt the visit was routine.

The supervisor recognises this as an important teaching moment in supervision. She reviews with Sharon the purpose of the visit and asks her what process she would follow in preparation for any home visit. The response alerts her to the fact that Sharon did not have any structure for preparation and lacks a framework for assessing potential issues which might arise from a new visit. The supervisor is also concerned that Sharon had made this visit without prior consultation with her supervisor.

The supervisor recognises that Sharon is still distressed about the visit and chooses to address the casework issues before the more procedural concerns. As she knows the service user she is able to summarise some of the information which would have been on Paulette's file. Paulette has a history of mental health problems which are usually well managed but which from time to time need review and remediation. Paulette also has a long history of dealing with official agencies and in the past has

had three children taken into care. When she is unwell she can become very suspicious of strangers and fierce about her privacy from interfering social workers and neighbours.

On the basis of this, the supervisor wonders, is Sharon able to hazard a guess at what might have been going through Paulette's mind whilst Sharon was knocking on the door? Sharon is now able to make some thoughtful comments about how Paulette may have been responding to her visit and as she explores this she is able to recognise that her criticism of Paulette is lessening and her criticism of herself increasing. The supervisor applauds her for this shift and encourages her to focus, not on what she has done wrong, but on what she can learn from this situation.

The supervisor again asks what Sharon could have done differently. From her response the supervisor recognises that Sharon is not confident in her knowledge of mental illness and management. She thus spends some time outlining the basic parameters of mental illness management from the agency perspective and gives Sharon a copy of the guidelines for practitioners and other relevant literature and notes that she will follow up on this 'homework'. The supervisor checks out what Sharon is thinking and how she is feeling about this situation now. Sharon is able to recognise her own projected feelings and acknowledges her sense of helplessness and incompetence. She understands more clearly the dynamics at play in the visit and how her newness and lack of preparation have compounded an already complex situation.

The supervisor then addresses the issue of Sharon's acting on a new task without consulting her supervisor. She reminds Sharon of the contract agreement and wonders why Sharon has not followed this. Sharon agrees that she had not followed the procedure but expresses her confusion about the relative status of her supervisor and the senior practitioner who had passed the case on to her. The supervisor accepts this as a legitimate confusion and reinforces the need for Sharon to check out all new work with her.

The supervisor asks Sharon what she is going to do next. Sharon appears a little startled at this and admits she would like to withdraw from the case. The supervisor however believes that Sharon is capable of addressing the situation and encourages her to plan a second visit. As she does this Sharon finds she is able to use the information provided by the supervisor to plan a more careful visit which will include plenty of notice to the service user.

The Experimentation Stage: Implementation

It is our experience that the focus on an issue brought to supervision often ends when a solution has been chosen or when an understanding or insight has been gained. The supervision session will then move on to the next item on the agenda. All too often, in these situations the plan or strategy identified by the supervisee is not put into effect or the insight is not integrated into practice or awareness. Many good ideas from supervision are lost to practice due to incomplete understanding, lack of knowledge and/or lack of confidence. The learning from supervision is lost. In the

Reflective Learning Model, the Experimentation stage explicitly attends to how the student will move forward with the issue.

At this stage of the model the plan or strategy identified through the Exploration stage is tested. Is this the best plan? What are the limitations? What will happen if the plan fails? What resources does the student need in order to put this plan into action? The student is provided with support to consider how he or she will act on the plan and encouraged to identify fears or knowledge gaps which will make the implementation problematic. The supervisor is thus able to consider what extra tuition, support or resources the student may need to promote a successful outcome.

Experimentation

Sharon feels good about her plan and the decision to have a second visit. The supervisor however wants this to be as successful as possible for both Sharon and Paulette. She asks Sharon how and when she is going to do this visit and asks her to imagine the steps. Sharon is able to articulate the early steps of making the appointment but as she contemplates the actual visit she becomes less sure and confesses to being worried about doing this. The supervisor enquires if there was any help she wants. Sharon wonders if someone could go with her. The supervisor has also been thinking along these lines and is happy to agree to accompany Sharon. The supervisor however does not want to take over the case and continues to discuss how Sharon is going to begin her visit. She suggests they role play a possible conversation with Paulette. As they explore this conversation Sharon finds her own words to express what she wants to say and grows more confident in her delivery. The supervisor gives her feedback to this effect.

The supervisor then asks Sharon to consider what she will do if, after all of this preparation, Paulette still refuses to answer the door. Sharon is able to consider this possibility in the context of her new understanding of the service user and within her framework of preparation. She recognises that she does not have total control over events and thinks that, if she has followed through with her preparation, she will have done her best and will be able to withdraw from the situation and consider the next step with her supervisor.

The Evaluation

The Evaluation stage of the Reflective Learning Model brings the student and supervisor full circle to consider whether or not the agenda item has been successfully addressed. Does the student now have sufficient information, knowledge and confidence to move forward? What has the student learned from the reflections and the teaching in the supervision session? What new questions have arisen as a result of the supervision and how and in what time frame will they be addressed?

When this stage is completed the student and supervisor will focus on the next agenda item and begin the cycle once more.

Evaluation

Sharon and her supervisor have now completed the discussion of the issue. The supervisor is keen to establish whether or not the issue is sufficiently addressed for Sharon. On reflection Sharon says she is very happy with the outcome which is more than she had asked for and 'much better'. She has discovered a way to approach meetings with Paulette and along the way has changed her assessment.

The supervisor also enquires what Sharon has learned from talking about this experience. After some thought Sharon says that she realises the importance of preparation. If she had read the file she would have had a better sense of the person she was going to visit and would also have been able to identify in advance the areas where she had little knowledge. She also ventures, tentatively, that she is learning not to beat herself up when she makes an error. The supervisor is warm in her affirmation of Sharon's learning, particularly the last and reinforces the importance of learning from mistakes.

The supervisor then suggests that they focus on the second agenda item.

Endings

Axiomatically, all good processes have a beginning and an end (Davys and Beddoe, 2000, p. 444).

When the supervisor and the student have addressed all of the items on the agenda or, as is most often the case the supervision time is up, the supervision session ends. The ending of the session is important as it marks the conclusion of this period of learning and teaching. It is useful for both the student and the supervisor to spend a moment reflecting on the themes, progress, challenges and triumphs of the student in his or her work. It is a time when general feedback can be given which assists the student to locate him or herself in the practice-learning journey. The tension of assessment in student placements is real and regular feedback on a student's progress can be reassuring and can assist some students to recognise the areas they must address for successful outcomes.

Ending

Sharon and her supervisor have now addressed all three issues on the agenda and the supervision time is almost up. The supervisor asks Sharon how the session has been and asks if there are any themes Sharon has noted.

Sharon is warm in her appreciation of the session and particularly the help she received in relation to the first issue. She says she feels much calmer but feels really bad about the judgments she now realises she made. Mindful about the stress of assessment, the supervisor reiterates that it is not the mistakes which are of concern but rather whether or not Sharon has learned from them. She asks Sharon to repeat what she has learned from discussing this particular service user and is fulsome in her reinforcement of that learning and her commendation of Sharon's honesty and willingness to explore these issues.

Sharon is unable to identify any other issues or themes. The supervisor however has noted that until this point Sharon has applied a standard interview process and been successful in her interactions with service users. With this confidence she is eager to engage with service users and is often peremptory in her preparation and impatient with information offered by colleagues. More attention to preparation may have prevented the distress of the morning's visit. The supervisor is aware that preparation is a theme of today's session. Sharon was not prepared for supervision, she had not prepared for the visit and when reviewing the case recording of the work Sharon had done to date (the supervisor's agenda item) there was evidence of poor information and rushed recording. The supervisor draws these themes together and comments that this appears to be one of Sharon's next professional challenges and is perhaps a useful focus for future supervision. She sets Sharon two tasks for the next supervision session: to prepare an agenda, and to spend time thinking about her approach to 'preparation' for direct work with service users.

The supervisor rounds off the session with an affirming comment on Sharon's progress to date and they confirm the time and place of the next meeting.

Conclusion

It is recognised here that student supervision cannot rest solely on reflection and that students require parameters, guidelines and information in order to begin to construct their own sense of mastery of the skills and interventions required by practice. This model and the case study presented urge supervisors to find a middle ground between didactic teaching and instruction in supervision on the one hand, and boundary-less reflection on the other. The latter can create anxiety in the student who has little content or context on which to reflect and insufficient experience through which to mediate anxiety and distress. This mix of telling and reflection is well put by Schön (1987) in his description of the conditions for learning professional artistry.

The freedom to learn by doing in a setting relatively low in risk, with access to coaches who initiate students into the "traditions of the calling" and help them, by the "right kind of telling", to see on their own behalf and in their own way what they need to see. (Schön, 1987, p. 17)

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