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Louis van Kessel & Dinie Haan

THE DUTCH CONCEPT OF SUPERVISION
ITS ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS AS A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

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ABSTRACT.
This paper sketches the essential characteristics of the Dutch concept of supervision. It differs from the concepts used in Anglo-Saxon literature because it stresses the educational function of supervision as a method of education and staff development, excluding the administrative component. It describes the development of supervision in the Netherlands; the contribution of supervision to professional competence, seen as a goal of two-dimensional integration; an illustration of the handling of this goal-setting in the practice of supervision; a distinction between a primary object of supervision (*the dimension of professional competence*) and a secondary object (*the dimension of how the supervisee learns* this professional competence: deutero-learning); the nature of the learning material; the necessary basic conditions; features of the learning process in supervision; the structure of the total course of the learning process; the framework of guidelines for interventions by the supervisor.

INTRODUCTION

In this paper we describe the essential characteristics of the Dutch concept of supervision. It is part of a triptych intending to enable our English-speaking colleagues to make a first acquaintance with the Dutch concept of supervision.[1] The two companion papers are 'The Intended Way of Learning in Supervision Seen as a Model' and 'The Role of Learning Hypothesis in the Facilitation of the Learning Process in Supervision'.[2] We hope they will enrich the frame of reference of the readers and their own supervisory practice.

Introduction of supervision in the Netherlands and Europe

Supervision was introduced to the Netherlands from the United States in the early fifties as part of the educational component of Marshall Aid. Dutch supervisors in turn contributed to the introduction and further development of supervision in a number of other European countries: Germany (Oberhoff, 1986, p. 57), Switzerland (Hubschmid et al., 1986, p. 33), Austria (Gothardt-Lorenz, 1986, p. 44) and Belgium.

At the time of its introduction, supervision was coupled to the implementation of social casework (De Jongh, 1953), which was new in Europe at that time. Consequently, supervision initially appeared in particular as an educational method within curricula of the professional schools for social and cultural work (the 'sociale academies'), which did not belong to the system of university education. Supervision was not introduced to university courses like child and adult education theory and pastoral clinical education until the late sixties. In the seventies and eighties it spread to other professional fields and courses, such as teachers, general practitioners, nurses and psychotherapists (Van Kessel, 1985, p. 9). Recently it has been extended to other professions and functions, such as supervision for managers.

Professionalization of supervisors

Specific supervision training courses have been in existence in the Netherlands since 1968. They played an important part in the development of what may be called the *Dutch concept of supervision*. Pioneering work in this field has been carried out by the publications of Zier (1967, 1988), Andriessen (1975) and Siegers/Haan (1983, 1988). Nowadays this generic concept of supervision is accepted by the *Dutch Professional Organization of Supervisors* (LVSB, 1991) as the guiding principle for the development of the practice and theory of supervision as a specific method, and as a standard for the training of supervisors. This concept has become rather familiar in the German-speaking countries and in Belgium, but it is still relatively unknown in English-speaking professional circles.

GENERAL OUTLINE

The Dutch concept of supervision focuses on the educational function. It excludes the administrative component, which is much more a part of the American and British concepts, as the Anglo-Saxon literature on supervision shows (e.g. Pettes, 1979; Kadushin, 1976; Kaslow, 1977; Shulman, 1982). Following Haan (1974, pp.46-57), we might see the difference between them in terms of 'exclusive supervision' (no other goals than learning/teaching goals) versus 'inclusive supervision' (a complementary combination of administrative, supportive/enabling and educational goals (e.g. Kadushin, 1976). In terms of a distinction made by Munson (1981), we could also refer to the 'competence' model against the 'sanction' model.

Separation of learning from authoritative control

Although attempts have been made in the USA since the twenties to establish a conceptual difference and a separation of learning from authoritative control (Robinson, 1936, p.53); Kadushin, 1976, pp.116-117; Kutzik, 1977, p.49; Morton and Kurtz, 1980), as far as we can see there is a general preference for a combination of administrative and educational supervision of (student) professionals, not only in clinical social work (Poertner & Rapp, 1983; Waldfogel, 1983, pp.321-323), but also in psychotherapy supervision (Goguen, 1986, pp.71-72).

Pettes (1979, p.3) remarks: 'Attempts have been made through the years, to divorce the administrative and teaching functions, perhaps the most successful currently being in Switzerland.' We assume that the Swiss concept and practice referred to by Pettes are due to the influence of Dutch supervisors and literature on supervision (Zeller, 1990, pp.190-192; Hubschmid et al., 1986, p.33).

From the start supervision has been conceptualized in the Netherlands as an educational function (Kamphuis, 1961, pp.94-95). Nevertheless, in practice the first decennia of its existence witnessed the same mixture of supervisory functions that we have described for the Anglo-Saxon countries, because the supervisor was a staff member of the agency which also selected the 'cases' (i.e. clients) for the student or junior professional. However, since 1967 (Zier, 1967) there has been a strong movement to conceptualize supervision as a specific method of fieldwork education and staff development, organized strictly separated from the administrative controlling and supportive function. In the Netherlands the latter function is a part of '*werkbegeleiding*' (directing and guiding the implementation of the practical work done by the agency practitioners) performed by the '*werkbegeleider'*. This functionary is a member of the agency who is responsible and accountable to the administration for the methods and results of the services performed by the workers in relation to the policy of the agency.

A specific method of fieldwork education and staff development

In the Netherlands supervision is seen as a specific method of fieldwork education and staff development for those in professions or functions where the work is mainly or largely person-oriented. *Fieldwork education* is part of professional training aimed at acquiring the capacity to engage in a profession competently at the level of a junior professional. *Staff development* is concerned with all the activities which are deliberately aimed at the maintenance, further development or extension of the skills

acquired during the primary phase. In both cases the aim of supervision is characterized by the fact that it helps the (would-be) professional to learn how to operate on his/her own in the direct implementation of the profession in the specific work situation, which also implies learning to function within an organization.

Focus on the learning process for better professional competence

Our concept therefore focuses on the *learning process* by the supervisee/worker: the supervisor helps him/her to learn from experience during the realization of his/her professional tasks with a view to improving professional performance in the future. S/he is therefore not responsible for the co-ordination and direction of the (student) worker's present job performance to ensure the fulfilment of the agency's purpose of serving clients. The supervisor only has a professional responsibility. For that reason we prefer the supervisor, whether of a student or of a professional, to assume a position that is as independent as possible from the agency or the place where the (student) professional carries out fieldwork practice. This ensures that the (future) professional can develop a professional competence independently of the immediate interests of the agency where s/he has to work. In our concept, the supervisor is a representative of professional competence but is not accountable for seeing that the job gets done by the supervisee. The supervisor is only responsible for the process of learning and its outcome as a contribution to professional competence.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF SUPERVISION TO PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE AS A GOAL: TWO-DIMENSIONAL INTEGRATION

Supervision makes a specific contribution to the development of professional ability. As we know, professional work does not mean a mechanical application of a set of externalized procedures: it is ego-involved work. Competent performance in a person-oriented profession presupposes that the professional has sufficiently combined and internalized both the professional requirements and his/her own disposition and abilities to result in a ‘professional person’ (Towle, 1954, p.3) or a ‘professional self’ (Reynolds, 1953, p.253, following Robinson, 1936, p.25). At the same time, as Saari (1986, p.71) reminds us, it should not be forgotten that it remains critical for the professional to remember that personal and professional selves should be kept separate and differentiated. We can therefore define the main objective of supervision as *integration*.

In the tradition of the *American Clinical Pastoral Education*, Klink (1966, p.177) defines the aim of supervision in comparable terms: ‘Supervision is rather a method of education designed to effect those personal changes which will permit the integration into practice of self-understanding, relevant theory, substantive knowledge, and functional skills. The measure of its educational achievement is to be found in its effect on practice in specific instances.’

Integration of the personal competence and professional role profile: a professional self

Although the kind of objective of the Dutch concept is very close to the description Klink gives, its specific content is different. We will therefore explain what we mean by *integration.* Karen Horney (1970, pp.171-172) has described it in the following way: ‘A healthy integration is a result of being oneself, and can be attained only on this basis. If we are sufficiently ourselves to have spontaneous feelings, to make our own decisions, and to assume responsibility for them, then we have a feeling of unity on a solid basis.’ This kind of integration of the *personal self* is necessary for the professional competence aimed at by supervision, but it is not sufficient. Integrated functioning in a general human way calls here for a specific content: it needs to be related to and interwoven with the demands which characterize professional work. Through this integration of personal competence and the professional role profile, the professional worker comes to acquire the different facets of the required professional ability in such a way that they are united in a whole of a higher order and s/he can function as a *professional self*.

Characteristics of a professional person
In other words, it is an essential characteristic of a professional to be able *as a professional person*:

1. Continuously to adapt in an interactive situation and in it to function congruently in accordance with thinking (cognitions, insights, perceptions, beliefs and attitudes), feeling, willing and acting, which are mutually interdependent.

   This means that s/he is aware of:
   - his/her own action capacities and objectives, so that his/her aims correspond to his/her capacities;
   - his/her own feelings and preferences, and is able to cope with them adequately;
   - his/her own norms and values and how they affect his/her actions and strivings.

2. To integrate the points listed under (1.) with the demands which may be made on a proper professional performance in a specific situation.

Professional competence thus requires the integration of two dimensions

- The professional is able to combine his/her integrated functioning in a general human way as a person (*first dimension*);
- With his/her methodical activity within the framework of professional performance in a specific work situation (*second dimension*) in such a way that the resulting integrated whole can be said to operate as a professional person.

Although at a certain moment it may be necessary for the supervisor to ask the supervisee to concentrate on aspects of the first dimension (the personal self), it is very important to realize that s/he does so in function of the second dimension.

These statements can be illustrated with an example.

EXAMPLE

In the domain of his personal self, a male student psychotherapist is an introvert diverger, as measured on Kolb's *Learning Style Inventory* (Kolb, 1976) and the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator* (Myers-Briggs, 1962), with a WASP upper class socialization. In the domain of the professional self he has to function in the role of family therapist on the basis of the method of system orientation within a State-funded agency, and he has to work with disadvantaged black families.

We can imagine that this professional task presents this supervisee with several obstacles to functioning in an integrated manner in his/her professional role. It may be evident that a (student) professional's familiar repertory of (personal) practices and his/her own norms, values and emotional reactions are regularly insufficient or inadequate to cope with the professional demands.

Integration is not only desirable in terms of the standards which may be demanded of competent professional activity. There is a second reason: Focusing on integration in the process of the acquisition of professional competence is also necessary because a ‘learner in education for the professions’ (Towle, 1954) inevitably comes into regular contact with a process of *disintegration*, irrespective of whether s/he likes it or not. The confrontation with professional demands may result in a loss of balance in the personality achieved by the supervisee. The familiar repertory of (personal) practices, the norms, values and emotional reactions acquired during his/her own socialization are regularly insufficient or inadequate to cope with the professional demands.

Also a fully trained professional is continually confronted with new demands of integration: personal development is not static, and professionals are also continually confronted with changes in professional demands, views and circumstances as a result of social change. It is obvious that any newly adopted role will influence the comprehension and definition of the totality of the *personal self* in relation to the

professional self. Towle (1954, pp. 21-22) claims: 'For the attainment of the change implied in the objectives of professional education it is clear that the individual's potentiality for growth is a decisive factor. In order that educational systems may facilitate, rather than obstruct, learning, it is important to consider the integrative process in the adult learner.'

THE HANDLING OF THE GOAL OF TWO-DIMENSIONAL INTEGRATION IN THE PRACTICE OF SUPERVISION

A desired goal must be deliberately sought after. The integration concept of supervision is therefore also very important for the handling of the learning process in supervision. During this process it is impossible to devote an equal amount of attention to all the facets of both dimensions all the time. It is not necessary either:

- The relation between the dimensions and components is not an absolute or static balanced situation;
- The learning of integration also calls for concentration on the dimensions and facets by themselves as well as for their mutual interaction. If the supervisor and supervisee neglect this interaction, the result is a supervision which resembles, for instance, administrative supervision (exclusively aimed at the pole of the performance of the function in the specific work situation) or method training (exclusively aimed at the pole method).
- The supervisee can introduce work issues to all poles of the two dimensions to discuss in supervision:
  - lack of methodical knowledge;
  - difficulty in handling methodical principles in a personal and creative way;
  - lack of insight into or difficulty in coping with personal values and norms (opinions/insights) in relation to those of the client systems or work situation;
  - difficulty in functioning in the work situation (organizational functioning);
  - the tendency to overemphasize personal involvement (emotions) and to relate this insufficiently to the professional function to be performed;
  - all kinds of blind spots in relation to his/her own functioning, etc.

Within the framework of the integration concept, the supervisor listens to the supervisee's narrative of his/her professional experiences as learning material in order to help the supervisee to problematize[3] and to formulate his/her learning themes. The supervisor and supervisee can determine the primary orientations of the supervisee in his/her experience and reflections, and which particular dimensions the supervisee should integrate more. The supervisor hereby teaches also the supervisee to examine these aspects him/herself, to thematize them and work more on certain facets.

The supervisor adjusts his/her interventions to the various facets. The supervisee thereby becomes aware of the discrepancies between the facets of the first dimension of integration in relation to one another (thinking, feeling, willing, acting) and in relation to the mutual integration of the second dimension components (person, professional frame of reference, method, specific work situation, wider social context). This can be made clearer by the following example.

EXAMPLE

The supervisee, a trainee psychosocial worker, has conducted an interview with a client. The following is his experience report for the supervision:

Supervisee's notes for the supervision	***Authors' comments***
'The client didn't stop talking, he had so much to say. Although I started to ask questions after a while, I was unable to pin him down to them.'	The supervisee apparently wants to act in a particular methodical way, and is unable to achieve that satisfactorily.

'Then I decided just to listen for the time being. It suited me because I felt terribly insecure beforehand.	This methodical choice appears to be motivated by personal considerations rather than by professional demands.
'But I was not satisfied with that because I didn't think this was a social work interview.'	Discrepancy between methodical activity (ability), on the one hand, and view of method and profession (knowledge) and what he wanted to achieve (desires), on the other, affects feeling (as reaction to the procedure).
'On the other hand, it was very safe for me; I could observe him.'	Personal feeling in relation to a personal activity (a reactive mechanism) which apparently pleases him.
'I didn't think that this was social work. But I thought that he could carry on talking because he clearly felt the need to do so at that moment. I felt a clear discrepancy between my own professional needs and his personal ones.	Discrepancy between view of work to be done - opinion of the desirable methodical treatment in this situation - and personal emotional perception of the client's needs, in which this personal perception is not linked to a specification of a general opinion of the desirable methodical way to act in this situation at this moment with this client with his needs in this situation.

To sum up: this social worker displays behaviour that is personally convenient and which seems to put his client at his ease, but which he thinks does not fit his conception of the professional task to be performed (including its translation in methodical terms). He is also unable to situate the activity carried out in terms of this conception.

This supervisee clearly has a number of integration problems which call for attention if the supervisor is to help develop supervisee's methodical practice further. The discrepancies become clear to the supervisee himself through an exploration of both dimensions in the supervision. Specific integration tasks emerge on this basis which now operate as *learning objectives* in the supervision, particularly if it appeared in the course of the supervision that this supervisee is regularly confronted with integration problems of this kind.

THE OBJECTIVES OF SUPERVISION

In the light of the preceding train of thought we can now summarize the objectives of supervision as follows.

The ultimate objective of supervision

Integrated functioning of the professional in actual professional practice, i.e., the professional possesses a professional action competence consisting of:

- Functioning on the basis of an interrelatedness of thinking, feeling, willing and acting;
- By this person with his/her idiosyncrasies who engages in a specific profession with the corresponding methods and methodical principles in a specific work situation, which is situated within and in an interactive relation with the constantly changing social context.

This can be illustrated by a kaleidoscopic prism (*figure 1*).

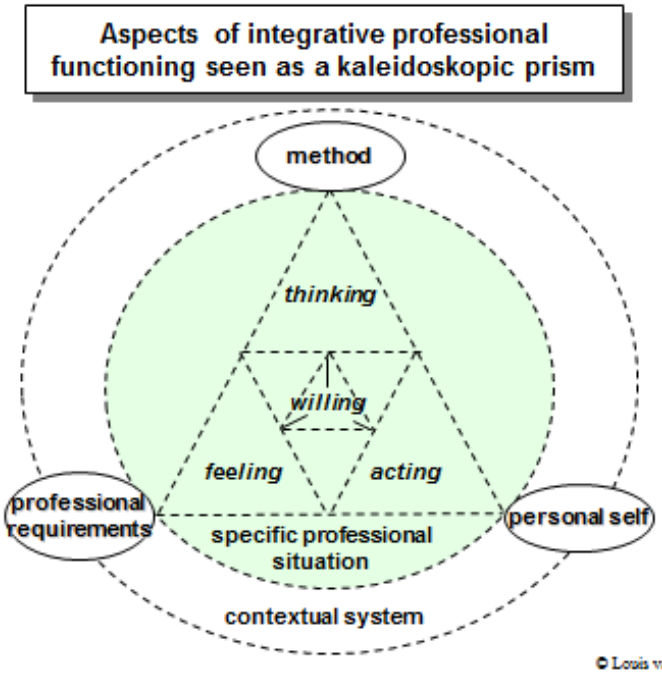

Figure 1

© Louis van Kessel (1990)

Two intermediate targets are essential for the achievement of this ultimate objective (*figure 2*).

- *As (secondary) intermediate target: integrative capacity*.

  In order to be able to function as a constantly integrated professional person in professional practice - the objective of the supervision in terms of content- the professional should be in possession of an 'integrative capacity' (Towle, 1954, p.91). Therefore supervision is aimed at the development of a *personal creative integrative capacity* (Zier, 1968) as its direct target.

- *As (primary) intermediate target: the ability to reflect*.

  Integrated functioning and the capacity for integration are not acquired once and for all. They presuppose that the professional can reflect on the interrelatedness of all the facets that have been mentioned of personally coping with professional tasks in a specific work setting in the light of professional requirements. Furthermore, this should enable the professional to adjust his/her behaviour to take account of the demands which may be made on good professional performance. Supervision therefore makes primary methodical use of *reflection as a learning instrument* and at the same time it envisages *the development of the supervisee's capacity for reflection* as its main objective. The extent to which the supervisee displays this ability is evidence of the extent to which s/he is able to act professionally on his/her own.

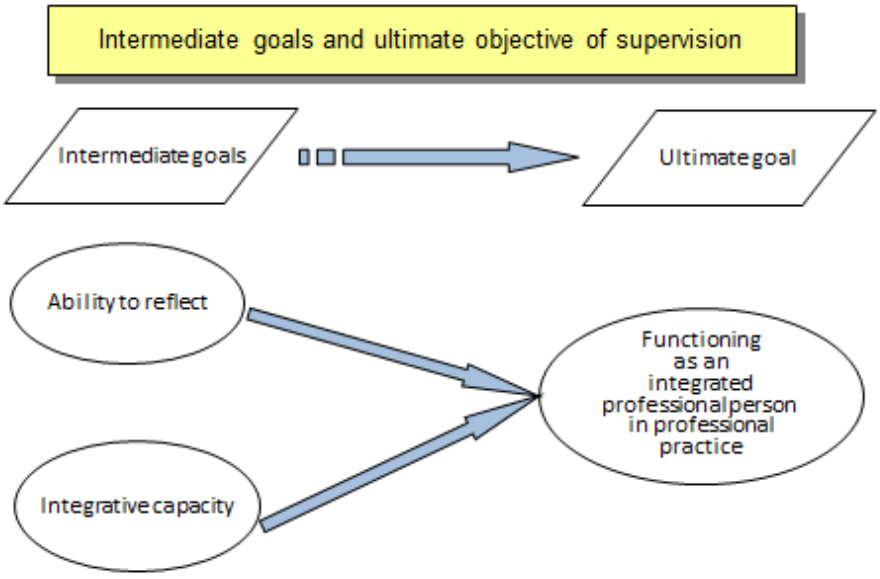

Figure 2 © Louis van Kessel (1993)

***Primary and secondary object*:**
the first order dimension of professional competence
***and the second order dimension of how the supervisee is learning*.**

Supervision is particularly aimed at the skill which is required for a methodical (= intentional, conscious, systematic and processual) use of the relationship between the professional and client system (individual, group or larger entity). Apart from themes related to the use of the relationship, other themes may arise such as: What is my relation to my profession? How do I function as a member of a team or organization? How do I cope with pressure of work, work planning?

Apart from the question of how the supervisee copes with his/her professional tasks (*the dimension of professional competence*), both supervisor and supervisee should explicitly concentrate on how s/he copes with this during the learning process of the supervision (*the dimension of how the supervisee is learning* this professional competence). After the supervision - which is temporary - the supervisee should be able to learn from facing up to professional tasks in other situations without the help of the supervisor. In order to be able to operate this *transfer of learning* or *generalisation*, the supervisee should have internalised the method of learning under supervision after the supervision is over, so that it becomes an essential part of professional competence. The supervisee therefore has to develop his/her 'executive control processes' or 'cognitive strategies' (Gagné, 1975) in the desired direction. That is why attention should also be paid during supervision to 'deutero-learning' (Bateson, 1942), 'meta-learning' (Miles, 1967, p.472), or 'double loop learning' (Argyris, 1978): The supervisee should appropriate the method of learning required during the supervision as a skill and should be able to link it with the professional dimension mentioned earlier.

We are entitled to suppose that coping better with what is specific to learning in supervision will also be reflected in how the supervisee copes in his/her role as a professional worker faced with professional tasks. During supervision the process of adjusting how one copes with professional tasks through reflection on the experiences undergone is *slowed down*. On the basis of the internalised supervision learning process, this process, by analogy, will be speeded up in practice. The supervisee develops the

ability to observe his/her own functioning through binoculars, thereby becoming a 'participant observer' (Shephard, 1967), who can engage in 'self-spectatorship' (Barnat, 1980, p.60) and function as a 'reflective practitioner' (Schön, 1987).

This is why the supervisee is expected to display an increasingly self-sufficient supervisory functioning in the course of the supervision process. She/he should show that she/he is increasingly mastering the learning process aimed at in supervision, reflects more consciously on experiences undergone with respect to professional tasks, can integrate the insights arising from them more effectively in his/her handling of (aspects of) the professionals tasks, and is able to direct his/her own learning process more effectively. The degree of success of the supervision can be read off from the extent to which the supervisee makes advances in this respect. S/he demonstrates the competence to be autonomous in realizing the integrating task, or in the words of Towle (1954, p.5) '[...] professional education trains for professional self-dependence.'

The object of learning in supervision is thus (see *figure 3*) the supervisee him/herself:

- In his/her tackling of professional tasks: the *professional dimension* as *first order object*;
- In the way in which s/he copes with it and learns in the process of the supervision itself and in the implementation of professional tasks: the *learning dimension* as *second order object*.

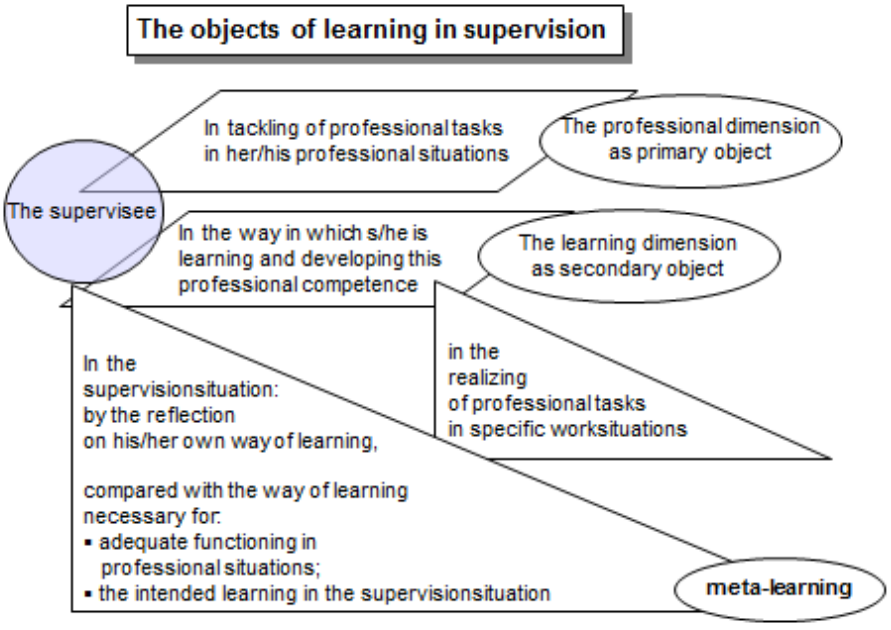

Figure 3 © Louis van Kessel (1993)

THE NATURE OF THE LEARNING MATERIAL

The nature of the learning material is another element which distinguishes supervision as a method from other methods of guiding the learning processes. The learning material which forms the source for the learning process strived to in supervision is to discern in three parts.

- Experiences (felt experiences, accounts of one's own actions, etc.) undergone by the supervisee as practitioner in his/her own personal manner of performing professional tasks, both there and then with

clients and in collaboration with colleagues and functioning within the agency, form the *first source of learning material*.

- The functioning of the supervisee in the here and now interaction in the supervision situation itself can form a *second (additional) source* of learning material as 'parallel process' (Ekstein & Wallerstein, 1959, pp.135-139) in so far as this is relevant for learning to function in dealing with professional tasks. The 'games people play in supervision' (Kadushin, 1976, pp.239-248) can be seen as an example of this.
- The personal way of dealing with the learning tasks which learning in supervision impose on the supervisee is a *third source* of learning material. The manner of dealing with these (connected with the style of learning) may display parallels with (desirable and undesirable aspects of) the style of work of the supervisee (Van Kessel, 1990). Moreover, this information is important for the aim of deutero-learning. We can also consider 'problems about learning' (Ekstein and Wallerstein, o.c., pp.137-157) in this connection.

NECESSARY BASIC CONDITIONS

A learning process of the kind envisaged by supervision presupposes certain *basic conditions*. They are the translation of the objective, the nature of the learning process and the procedure, which combine to form the basic structure of supervision as a method. These conditions create the preconditions for the learning process envisaged in supervision. If they are not adequately present, we cannot refer to these activities as supervision, as is shown in practice: the learning process which is the aim is not feasible to the desired extent.

We consider the following basic conditions to be necessary.

- Parallel with the supervision sessions, the supervisee should practice his/her (future) profession in a specific work situation with at least a certain degree of autonomy in order to acquire experience in coping with professional tasks. If supervision is linked with a trainee placement, a specific requirement is made of the content and nature of this placement: observation or participation is not enough.
- Since the actual work experience is the most important learning material for supervision, there should be a direct, iterative (i.e., cyclically recurrent), seamless linkage and interweaving between work situation and supervision as a learning situation. This requires the supervisee to keep on bringing his/her own experiences in coping with professional tasks into the supervision and to report on how s/he integrates the learning experiences and insights acquired in the supervision into dealing with professional tasks in the work situation. This is an ideal type perspective, because it is not *per se* necessary for the learning material to be of this kind in each supervision session. Nevertheless, there should be a continual connection with the work of the supervisee. Previous work experiences may only be used as additional material.
- To facilitate the interaction between the acquisition of experience in carrying out one's professional duties in a specific work situation and reflection on this in supervision, it is necessary to hold sessions of a fixed duration and at regular intervals ('time-spaced learning' on a regular basis without large intervening periods), deciding beforehand how long the entire learning process is to take. In principle this will be a frequency of once a fortnight, a total number of sessions ranging between fifteen (minimum) and thirty (maximum), each with a time limit of roughly one hour per supervisee; and a limited number of participants (no more than three or four).
- Supervision may be carried out in one of three ways: with one supervisee (individual supervision), with a pair of supervisees (triadic supervision), or with three supervisees (group supervision).

FEATURES OF THE LEARNING PROCESS IN SUPERVISION

Supervision is based on the *primacy of reflection* and the *enhancement of the supervisee's reflective capacity*. This does not mean that reflection is the only learning instrument, but that other means used will have to be translated into reflection in the end.

In supervision, a person who practices a profession or carries out a function where the work is mainly or largely person-oriented assumes the role of supervisee and talks about his/her experiences in dealing with his/her professional tasks.

One of the methodical principles of supervision is that the supervisee's account should describe the following features of professional behaviour: the professional task, the situation, the event; what s/he did or did not do, thought it his/her duty to do, or had wanted but not dared to do; what s/he experienced, how s/he dealt with his/her feelings and those of the other(s); and how s/he related and relates to it all.

Through the act of narrating, the supervisee appropriates his/her own actions and assumes responsibility for them (cf. Baart, 1984, p.155). By reflecting on the narrative - and thereby indirectly on his/her experience and actions - s/he examines what learning tasks still have to be accomplished in order for his/her work to conform more to the desired professional activity that is the goal.

We can state that the *actor* in this process of reflection engages in an *internal critical-hermeneutic dialogue* as a *spectator* on his/her way of coping with professional tasks, and subsequently assumes the role of *director*. This facilitates a *jump in learning* which can be viewed as a transformation leading to new integration.

The first phase of the learning process in supervision is therefore *retrospective and inductive* by nature: Supervisees must continually bring their actual work experiences into the supervision. The specific experience of their own professional behaviour is the pretext for acquiring greater insight into the actual and desirable interpretative activity and behaviour in professional activity. The supervisee's own (personal) interpretative activity and behaviour are continually set against the professional demands made on them. The *learning themes* which emerge in this way thereby become *learning tasks.* This leads to a learning process in which the worker develops his/her own professional activity (further) in the direction of functioning as a professional person.

The learning process in supervision is therefore not only aimed at ‘learning to assume insights on the basis of experiences’, but in the second phase - which is *deductive and prospective* by nature - it is also aimed at 'learning to develop ways of coping with professional tasks' (Van Kessel, 1989): experiential learning becomes connected with action-oriented learning through reflection. To support this we can use, e.g., the theory of experiential learning as developed by Kolb (1984) (Van Kessel, 1988).

The learning trajectory can be outlined as follows: from an *inductive phase* (investigation of the experience and arriving at an insight) to a *deductive phase*: the insight acquired is tested as a hypothesis in dealing with new professional tasks, the aim being integration. The experiences acquired in this way form new learning material for further investigation. In short, it is an iterative research and action process: from experience undergone in one's own coping with professional tasks, to insights, from insights to action, from action to experience, etc., etc. This general structure we can describe as follows (Van Kessel, 1989, p.58):

- I tackle professional tasks on the basis of my personal predisposition and/or my picture of the professional conduct required (e.g. as I have learnt it in terms of method and technique in my training): I attempt something, I act and try;
- I undergo an experience/ I feel / I interpret it in a certain way;
- I reflect on and compare it with (my idea of) the correct professional behaviour;
- I acquire/develop an insight;
- I draw a conclusion for new situations in which I have to act;
- I make use of it / try it out / apply it in my future behaviour;
- I acquire experience with it;
- I reflect on it, etc.

As this process is repeated in cycles, I broaden my grasp of the field. New (aspects of) learning themes emerge, new connections are made, new relationships and points of view are established and integrated in behaviour. The result is a cyclical learning process in which the way in which professional tasks are tackled comes more and more into line with the demands which may be made on competent professional behaviour.

It is a characteristic of supervision that although it starts from the practical experience of the supervisee, it is not primarily concerned with a specific problem at work which the worker is trying to solve. Supervision is not a problem-solving method, practical guidance on 'how to do it', nor a method to ensure that the work is done. The most important feature is not the practical problems but the learning themes of the supervisee. Moreover, we consider that the professional behaviour as well as the kind of learning that is intended to be improved in supervision have the character of heuristics and *learning by discovery* (Bruner, 1962, p.94). A learning method of this kind is of great importance for behaviour in professional practice, because it is characteristic of many of the problems that face a professional that they are insoluble but that they can be handled. Professional work assumes the ability to feel for the particular nature of the task, the process and those involved. This demands creativity in dealing with specific situations with peculiar and unexpected aspects, as well as insight into one's own behaviour and attitude toward them, their effects on others and vice versa (interaction). At the same time, this activity should be deliberate, systematic, processual and aimed at a goal on the basis of certain methodical principles, which are in some way connected with the approach chosen. To this end the worker should have the capacity to formulate problems, should be inventive and should have a capacity for critical reflection in dealing with professional tasks. It takes times to learn all this.

This is why we prefer to view learning in supervision as a process of re-education focused on the adaptable reaction to the tasks which the professional environment poses, and which involves the integrated function of the total organism of a human being - thinking, feeling, willing, perceiving and behaving (cf. Kolb, 1984, p.31). A learning method of this kind enables a supervisee to develop and internalize *learning heuristics* (Kolb, p.156) as a *methodological goal* (Lippitt, Watson & Westley, 1958, p.99) on a second order level.

STRUCTURE OF THE TOTAL COURSE OF THE LEARNING PROCESS

If we consider the total course of the learning process that takes place in supervision from a distance, we can identify the following structure (within the cyclical course).

A. Work (*input*)

(1) The worker *works* (thinks, feels, endeavours, acts) in a specific work situation on the basis of his/her acquired personal capacities and preferences (the result of his/her socialization) and tries to realise the demands which may be made on correct professional conduct, and
(2) *reacts* (thinks, feels, endeavours, acts) to his/her own person, profession and the professional task posed by the specific work situation (client, type of service, institution).

B. Supervision (*through-put*)

(3) Provides an narrative (written and oral) in the supervision of what s/he has done, intended to do, experienced and thought.
(4) The supervision is intended to stimulate the process of reflecting on this, leading to:

C. Professional competence

Output 1

(5) Integrative functioning in professional activity: s/he learns to use his/her thoughts, feelings, strivings and contactual skills in a more integrated way in this specific professional role, in the work situations corresponding to that profession and with the potential and limitations of his/her personality, (this is the final goal of the supervision in terms of content), and to:

Output 2

(6) More competent reflection on his/her professional experience, and

(7) More competent integration, so that after the supervision is over s/he can develop his/her professional skills further on his/her own (methodological goal / deutero-learning / meta-learning).

FRAMEWORK OF GUIDELINES FOR INTERVENTIONS BY THE SUPERVISOR

Many methodical approaches and styles of work are possible within the generic concept of supervision outlined here, provided the following methodical principles are respected by the supervisor in his/her methodical activity.

- The process is aimed at the objective of two-dimensional integration;
- The basic conditions are present and are maintained, or restored in the event of disturbance;
- The learning process gives shapes to the learning trajectory (see companion paper 'The Intended Way of Learning in Supervision Seen as a Model')[4] which is appropriate to learning in supervision, whereby the reflection behaviour of the supervisee on his/her own experiences and behaviour in realizing his/her professional tasks is the core activity;
- The learning material meets the above requirements.

What is specific to learning in supervision is the fact that it takes place in the interface between adapting to the personal way of learning to work (the research and acting strategies) of those involved, on the one hand, and orientation to the demands which may be made on a professional by his/her profession in dealing with specific work situations, on the other hand. The supervisor is a guide in this learning process who not only follows, but also guides it as a *communicative opponent* (Stapert/Benjamins, 1976, p. 82). This guidance takes place from three perspectives (Van Kessel, 1989):

- *The professional frame of reference* (Siegers/Haan, 1988, p.212).
  A supervisee not only wants to learn something, but also must learn something, namely how to cope in an integrated way on his/her own with the demands which may be made on a good and adequate professional behaviour. Such demands can be found in professional definitions. They are an important frame of reference for both supervisee and supervisor in this respect.
- Secondly, guidance takes place on the basis of a conception of how this supervision-specific learning (*supervisory learning*) should be conducted (see companion paper 'The Intended Way of Learning in Supervision Seen as a Model')[5]. The supervisee should learn in such a way that the goals of the supervision are achieved. At the right moment the supervisor should provide the learning assistance which the supervisee cannot yet provide.
  The supervisor thereby promotes the supervisee's increasing capacity for self-reflection on experiences undergone in his/her work and for translating this in more effective and adequate professional behaviour. This brings us to the third point.
- Thirdly, guidance on the basis of the conviction that the supervisee should eventually be able to apply the way of learning which is envisaged in the supervision on his/her own: the supervisee should be able to become his/her own 'supervisor'. To do so, the supervisee must adjust his/her familiar way of learning - the personal learning style (Van Kessel, 1990).

NOTES

[1] These three papers are based upon the work that was done by the authors for an international course for supervisors *'Facilitating the learning process in supervision'*, which was a joint initiative of the Amsterdam Institute of Higher Professional Education (Hogeschool van Amsterdam) and the Amsterdam Summer University (1990, 1991).

[2] Kessel, L. van, and Dinie Haan, The intended way of learning in supervision seen as a model. *The Clinical Supervisor*, 11 (1993) 1, 29-44.
Haan, Dinie and L. van Kessel, The role of learning-hypothesis in the facilitation of the learning process in supervision. *The Clinical Supervisor*, 11 (1993) 1, 45-62.

[3] 'Problematize' an 'problematization' refers to the approach to learning and teaching by Paolo Freire (1974).

[4] Kessel, L. van, and Dinie Haan, The intended way of learning in supervision seen as a model. *The Clinical Supervisor*, 11 (1993) 1, 29-44.

[5] Ibidem.

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