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Supervision: a necessary contribution to the quality of professional performance, illustrated by the concept of supervision used in the Netherlands

Supervizija, neobhodni prispevek h kvaliteti poklicnega dela: prikaz razumevanja supervizije, kakor se uporablja na Nizozemskem

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Abstract

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This article sketches the main points of the "Dutch concept of supervision". It differs from supervision-concepts generally used in English speaking countries, because it stresses the educational function of supervision as a method of professional training and continuing professional training, excluding the administrative component. A description is given of the development of supervision in the Netherlands

against its American ancestry and of existent differences with Anglo-Saxon concepts. Several aspects of the concept of supervision now common are described in more detail and are illustrated by examples of supervisory teaching and training.

Key words: supervision, history of supervision, the Dutch concept of supervision.

Povzetek

Prispevek zarisuje osnovne značilnosti "Nizozemskega modela supervizije". Ta se razlikuje od modelov supervizije, ki jih v glavnem uporabljajo v angleško govorečih deželah, ker poudarja edukativno funkcijo supervizije kot metode temeljnega in nadaljevalnega poklicnega usposabljanja, izključuje pa administrativno funkcijo. Prikazan je razvoj supervizije na Nizozemskem v primerjavi z izhodiščnimi značilnostmi "ameriške" supervizije, ter tudi drugačnimi današnjimi značilnostmi anglo-saksonskih konceptov. Prispevek bolj podrobno obravnava nekatere vidike - danes običajne - supervizije ter te ilustrira s primeri usposabljanja za supervizijsko delo.

Ključne besede: supervizija, zgodovina supervizije, Nizozemski model supervizije.

Introduction

In this paper, I present a sketch of the "Dutch concept of supervision". After looking at its origin and the first stage of development against the background of the American supervisory tradition, I describe in broad outlines some important differences between current concepts in the English speaking countries and the Dutch concept. Subsequently, important characteristics of the latter are described in more detail and illustrated with some examples.

Origin and development of supervision in the Netherlands

Within the framework of an innovation of European welfare work, supervision was introduced in 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; Weigand, 1990, p. 45; Belardi, 1992, p. 61), Switzerland (Hubschmid et al., 1986, p.

55; Zeller, 1990, pp. 190-192), Austria (Gotthardt-Lorenz, 1986, p. 44), Belgium and also in the last five years in Slovenia and Hungary (Van Kessel/Sárváry, 1996).

At the time of its introduction, supervision was coupled with the teaching and learning of social casework (De Jongh, 1953), a method which was new in Europe at that time and in which strong emphasis was put on the use of a "personal relationship" between the social worker and the client. From our present conceptual point of view we would call this supervision practice a "method oriented student supervision".

Consequently, supervision initially appeared in particular as a training method within the curricula of the professional schools for social and social pedagogical work (then called "sociale academie"). Supervision was not introduced to university courses like child and adult education theory and pastoral clinical education (Andriessen, 1975) until the late sixties. In the seventies and eighties it spread to other professional fields and courses, such as teaching (Griffioen, 1980), general practice (Alting von Geusau & Runia, 1991), physiotherapy, nursing and psychotherapy (Van Praag & Van Asperen, 1993). Also in this decades, it has been extended to other professions and functions, such as supervision for managers.

Training activities for supervisors started as early as 1951 (De Jongh, 1953). 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* (Van Kessel/Haan, 1993). 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, 1992; 1996) as the guiding principle for the development of the practice and theory of supervision, and as a standard for the training of supervisors.

Supervision in the English-speaking world

The concept of supervision as it was introduced in the Netherlands, was part of the tradition of the American theory and practice of supervision which had its origin¹ in the American welfare work in the last two decades of the previous century (Burns, 1965; Kadushin, 1976, p. 4 ff; Kutzik, 1977, p. 29 ff). Over there, until the 1920s supervision was "broadly conceived in management terms" (Austin, 1957, p. 569), accentuating "overseeing", watching the work of another with responsibility for its quality." (Austin, 1960, p. 579).

Because the handling of the relationship factors appeared to be influencing the success of the work processes greatly (Waldfoegel, 1983, p. 320), supervision started to develop with an integrated educational component from 1900 onwards. However, it was not until 1920 that it was primarily accepted as an educational process within the framework of managing the workers. A vision which is also found in Virginia Robinson's (1936) "supervision in social casework", the first book about supervision to be published ever.

As a sequel to this tradition, in the English speaking countries it's still quite prevailing to differentiate supervision in three functions: administrative/ma-

nagerial; supportive/enabling/helping; educational/teaching (e.g. Young, 1967; Pettes, 1979; Kadushin, 1976; Kaslow, 1977; Shulman, 1982; Munson, 1983; Hawkins/Shohet, 1989). Supervisors must encompass these diverse functions: being partly as counselor they give support; they are educator too; and in many situations they are also a manager with responsibilities both for what the supervisee is doing with and to the client and also to the organization within which both do their work (Hawkins/Shohet, 37). Mostly, the supervisee is expected to be accountable to the supervisor; and the supervisor (designated by an agency, organization, or statute to supervise another person's practice) is a person with some official sanction to direct and guide the supervisee's practice (Munson, 1983, p. 3).

For the supervisor as well as for the supervisee the three functions do not always fit comfortably together. The dual role of supervision (management and teaching/support) can cause several problems (Kadushin, 1976, p. 445). Already since the twenties attempts have been made in the USA to establish a conceptual difference and an actual separation of learning from authoritative control (Robinson, 1936, p. xi; p. 53; Kadushin, 1976, pp. 116-117; Kutzik, 1977, p. 49; Pettes, 1979, p. 3; Morton & Kurtz, 1980; Rich, 1993). But as far as we can see there is in the English-speaking world up till now a general preference for a combination of administrative and educational supervision of (student) professionals. This not only in (clinical) social work (Poertner & Rapp, 1983; Waldfogel, 1983, pp. 321-323; Brown/Bourne, 1996, p. 9;), but also in the field of social pedagogy (Hudson, 1994), and in psychotherapy supervision (Goguen, 1986, pp. 71-72) or the helping professions in general (Hawkins & Shohet, 1989, p. 5). As a consequence, supervision is mostly seen as part of a managerial function within an agency or organization (e.g. Shulman, 1982) which Hudson (1994) calls "the line management focus" (p. 48). One of the few authors who appears to make an exception for this combination is Holloway (1995, p. 3), who detaches "clinical supervision" and "administrative supervision", although she restricts supervision only to a dyadic situation taking place within an organization.

The Dutch concept

During the first two decades of its existence, supervision in the Netherlands witnessed the same mixture of supervisory functions that we have described for the English-speaking countries. But particularly since the end of the sixties (Zier, 1967), in contrast to the views described above, the Dutch concept of supervision excludes the administrative/managerial component. This function is conceived as part of what has been called in Dutch "werkbegeleiding" performed by the "werkbegeleider", a functionary of the agency. He 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, and who also in the end selects the "cases" for the student or (junior)professional (Van Kessel, 1992).

The Dutch concept of supervision thus focuses on the *learning process* by the supervisee. This means:

- The supervisor helps the supervisee(s) - either student-practitioners or graduated professionals, workers in direct care as well as employees in secondary functions - to learn (better) from their own experiences during the re-

alization of their professional tasks in order to improve professional performance in the future.

- The supervisor does not assign the cases and has no managerial oversight of the supervisee's clients: he is therefore not responsible for the co-ordination and direction of the (student) worker's present job performance to ensure the fulfillment of the agency's purpose of serving clients; he does not carry any direct responsibility for the welfare of the clients with whom the supervisee is working; neither does supervision provide the quality-control function to ensure that the standards of the agency in which the work is being done are upheld.
- The supervisor, however, does have a professional responsibility to develop or to further the professional quality/competence of the supervisee, by means of fostering and facilitating the exploration of and reflection on the implementation of the several professional tasks: with clients, colleagues, within the team and the organization.
- For the last mentioned reason it is to be preferred that the supervisor, in the case of student supervision as well as of postgraduate supervision, assumes a position that is as independent as possible from the agency or the place where the (student) professional carries out his fieldwork assignment. This enables the (aspiring) professional to develop independently a professional competence which is not interwoven with the immediate interests of the agency where he has to work.
- In this concept, the supervisor is seen as a *representative of professional competence*, but he is not accountable for seeing that the job gets done by the supervisee; in case of student supervision he represents the aims of the educational institution too.
- The supervisor is only responsible for the process of teaching and learning from professional experiences and their results as a contribution to professional competence, and he has to evaluate and grade these results. Such a distant and external position creates a better opportunity for the supervisee to investigate personal strengths, possibilities and personal reactions which reveal no particular idiosyncratic personality problems, but must be dealt with in order to function effectively in this profession, or those which may stem from painful experiences and troubles the supervisee has had in the realization of his work tasks.

In short: In the Netherlands the supervisees do not function in the setting *under* supervision, but learn to function professionally with the *help of* supervision. Following Haan (1974, pp. 46-57), we might see the difference between the dominant Anglo-Saxon concepts and the Dutch concept 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). In terms of a distinction made by Munson (1981), we could also refer to the "competence" model as against the "sanction" model.

The concept in outline

In the Netherlands, supervision is seen as a specific method of guidance as

part of training and continuous training of both practising workers and management (Van Kessel, 1985, p. 5; Siegers/Haan, 1988, p. 37; Siegers, 1995). The pretension of supervision is general: it is not committed to a particular profession, method or field, although elements and techniques from various workmethods can be used. However, this can only be the case when they functionally contribute to the goals of supervision. They also have to fit in with the framework of supervision.

Supervision is particularly functional in professions and functions in which the handling of relationships is important. It is oriented towards the development of a "highly integrated and competent professional" (Stoltenberg/Delworth, 1987, quoted in: Rich, 1993, p. 157). This goal of supervision can be seen as the promotion of a *two-dimensional integration* (Van Kessel, 1990b; Van Kessel/Haan, 1993); on the one hand of the requirements demanded for practising a specific profession or function (*the professional dimension*), and on the other hand of the dispositions and skills of the person who practices the profession/function, as a developing person (*the personal dimension*). This process of integration can be seen as a permanent task a professional is faced with. This integration results in a "professional person" (Towle, 1954, p. 3): a (new) identity with accompanying professionalism³.

The intended integration of profession or function on the one hand, and person on the other, are in the case of professional functioning inextricably interwoven since the profession is practiced by means of self-handling of the person. Nevertheless, functioning in a personal way, alone, is not enough for functioning professionally. This requires an integration of a number of specific aspects of both dimensions described above. This will be illustrated by means of a picture which resembles a kaleidoscope, with which I also want to emphasize the necessary movements of the parts in relation to each other (figure 1).

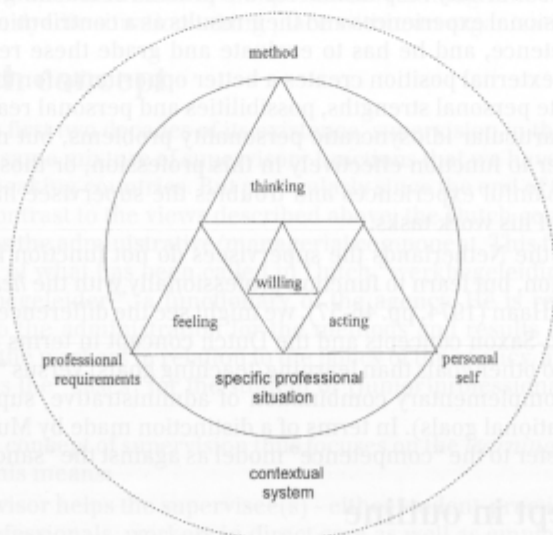


Figure 1: Aspects of integrative professional functioning, seen as a kaleidoscopic prism.

In order to do his work well, a "Professional Person" should be able to function both integrated and integrating. For realizing this a competence is required which exists of a deliberate mutual gearing to:

- his own action capacities and objectives, so that what he is aiming at corresponds to his capacities;
- his own feelings and preferences, and is able to cope with them adequately;
- his own norms and values and how they affect his actions and strivings.

When it comes to handling situations of life in a generally human way, integration from the pole "person" is sufficient. For professionally handling professional tasks, integration from this pole is necessary, but it is not sufficient. It also changes meaning. The personal dimension now finds expression through the professional dimension: certain requirements are made on the personal way the person (re)acts. In the case of a professional performance, the professional may be expected to be able to work with his clients and co-operate with his colleagues in a methodical way (in figure 1 the pole: "method"). The person and his dispositions and way of reacting to situations, tasks and fellow human beings, is involved in this. Apart from that, methodical handling should be in accordance with the sort of profession and the requirements demanded by that profession (pole: "profession") exercised by the person concerned. This requires an integration of the poles "person", "profession" and "method". In addition to this, in the integration of these three poles, the aspects of "thinking", "feeling", "willing" and "acting" should be involved in their mutual interaction.

Concentrating on and reflecting on aspects of the personal dimension is always done in supervision as part of and as contribution to the development of the supervisee as a "Professional Person", and on that which he needs in order to develop or improve his functioning. This means that a supervisee learns to reflect better on the following aspects of his professional handling:

- What he aims for in regard to a concrete work task in a concrete situation; how he realizes this goal in a methodical way; how goal and method of working accord with that which may be expected of him from the point of view of how a profession should be practised.
- If and how he is conscious of this in its realization; if and how he is conscious of his own handling competence and limitations; if and how he is able to deal with this in a methodical way.
- If and how he is conscious of his personal feelings, preferences, limitations and traps; if and how he is able to deal with this in a methodically adequate way.
- If and how he is conscious of the influence of his own personal norms and values and how these have a favourable or unfavourable effect on his professional actions and targets. If and how he is able to deal with this in the given situation in a methodically adequate way.

Furthermore, a profession is practised in a concrete institutional setting with specific clients and their themes, methodical assignments, circumstances, colleagues, policy of the organization, etcetera. All these are part of the *contextual system* which affects both professionalism and the professional. In order to be

able to deal with this professionally, he has to be continuously aware of this and determine his relation to these. This tuning, too, confronts him continuously with questions of integration.

The kaleidoscopic model as aid

The kaleidoscopic model is an aid in supervision with the help of which the supervisee can work out the working- and learning themes proceeding from the aspects mentioned above. The supervisee can introduce *work issues* to all poles and facets to discuss in supervision, from which *learning themes* can be developed. Thus, contributed practical experiences, for example, can refer to:

- lack of particular methodical knowledge;
- difficulty in handling methodical principles in a personal and creative way;
- some lack of insight into or difficulties in coping with personal values, norms and opinions in relation to those of the client systems or work situation;
- the tendency to overemphasize personal involvement (emotions) and to relate this insufficiently to the professional function which he is performing;
- difficulty in functioning in the work situation (organizational functioning);
- all kinds of blind spots in relation to his own functioning, etc.

During the supervision it is impossible to direct the same attention to all various poles and facets of the kaleidoscopic model at every moment. It may be necessary for the supervisee concerned to concentrate more emphatically on some of them, because he might learn from them and regarding them. Moreover, it is important that supervisor and supervisee do not lose sight of the relationship between the various poles and facets. If that is the case, supervision could become more like "administrative supervision" (exclusive orientation to the pole of the performance of the function) or "method training" (exclusive orientation on the pole "method").

On the basis of the specific needs and development of this supervisee or of the requirements of the profession, the aspects differentiated in the kaleidoscope mentioned above can be more or less accentuated during the supervision. This approach from several perspectives is necessary in the process of working through, as will become apparent from the following vignette.

Vignette 1

During a supervision session a supervisee (social worker) reports the following professional experience:

"I had a conversation with a client, which actually got out of hand. The client was extremely difficult and impatient. I would like to know how to deal with such clients in a better way".

Comment

Under the surface of this practice-experience there is much more than meets the eye. During the reconstruction, which could take place with the help of

the supervisor, the following can come up as "second narrative", a term introduced by Zier (1983; 1988).

The worker became angry ("feeling") because he did not find the client's behaviour adequate ("thinking": view, norm). He became so angry that he walked away without properly winding up the consultation ("acting"). He does not feel happy about the incident because he is of the opinion ("thinking") that he should be able to deal with such a consultation in a professional way ("method"). This opinion is not of a personal nature, but a view which is acquired during the course of the professional socialization. Through his personal reaction he shows what it means to him instinctively, when he is not successful. This specifically personal reaction has possibly also got its roots in his socialization. When it appears that certain patterns in his professional handling are connected to this, it could be worked on during the course of the supervision.

He would like to change this behaviour ("willing"), but does not know how. This has possibly got to do with a lack of capability of methodical acting or of methodical knowledge, or of self-handling in connection with these. Unfortunately, he is not able to discuss these experiences properly in the team of which he is a member (context). As it is, everyone is responsible for his own work because of the high work pressure (organization/society). When there is time, he notices again and again that the conversation remains superficial. He cannot put his finger on the problem.

This example shows that the supervisee's report of his practice-experience can be taken as a "first narrative" which can be adapted to a "second narrative" with the help of the supervisor. The latter in itself can lead to further adaptations. With the help of the supervisor, the supervisee can, through the act of reflection, change the meaning and implications of his personal professional experiences. In this way, the experience is being de- and reconstructed through which new insights and actions are developed. These, again, can generate new insights and actions, particularly when the "self-directing capacity" (Van Kessel, 1996) of the supervisee reaches maturity.

With the help of the kaleidoscopic model presented above, the supervisor listens to the supervisee's narrative of his professional experiences which he presents as learning material in the supervision. On the basis of this the supervisor helps the supervisee to reflect on the experiences he got in realizing his professional tasks. The supervisor and supervisee together can determine the primary orientations of the supervisee in his experiencing and reflecting, and determine which particular dimensions the supervisee should integrate more. The supervisor hereby also supports the supervisee in learning to examine these aspects himself, to work on them thematically and develop certain facets in an integrated way.

Discrepancies

The supervisor adjusts his interventions to the various facets of the kaleidoscopic model. The supervisee thereby becomes conscious of the mutual discrepancies between the facets. Such discrepancies may become apparent *from what*

the supervisee presents in supervision as content-material from his work practice (vignette 2) and *the way of how* he presents the material (vignette 3).

Vignette 2

During one of the following sessions the supervisee tells he had an interview with another client.

Supervisee's narrative

The client couldn't stop talking, he had to get a whole story off his chest. Although I started asking questions after some time, I did not succeed in keeping him to his story.'

'I then made the decision to act as a sounding board for that moment. This was quite convenient as I felt terribly insecure to begin with.'

'However, I was not satisfied to act as a sounding board because I felt that this was not a social work interview.'

'On the other hand, for me it was safe: I was able to observe him.'

'From my point of view, in this way it had nothing to do with social work. Yet, I felt that he had to *žunload*' because he clearly needed to do so at that moment. I clearly felt the discrepancy between my own work goal and his needs.

Comment

Apparently, the supervisee wants to deal with this professional task in a methodical way. He feels not able, yet, to realize this sufficiently.

Apparently, dealing with this in a methodical way is determined by personal consideration rather than by professional demands or principles.

The discrepancy between actually dealing with this in a methodical way (ability to handle) on the one hand, and method-view/professional view (thinking/) and what he wanted to live up to (willing) on the other hand, has consequences on feeling (as a reaction on the way of handling things).

Personal feelings in relation to a personal handling (a reaction mechanism) which apparently suits him/her well.

Discrepancy between views on the work task (view on desired methodical handling in this situation) and personally and instinctively perceiving the client's needs. This personal observation is not related to a realization of an universal view on the desired methodical way of acting and methodical handling in this particular situation at this particular moment with this particular client with his particular needs.

The worker in this example displays a behaviour which personally suits him/her well, and with which his client appears to feel comfortable. However, it seems to be wrong to the worker when looking upon this behaviour from the point of view of the professional task and its methodical transformation. Also, he is not able to place his actions within a methodical framework.

This supervisee clearly has a number of integrational problems which require a working on before he is able to develop his own methodical way of acting as a worker. By investigating the various aspects of the dimensions during the supervision, the discrepancies became clear to the supervisee. On the basis of this, certain integration tasks originated which acted as "learning themes" in the supervision. As it happened, during the course of the supervision this supervisee appeared to be wrestling with such integrational problems.

Vignette 3

During the course of a number of sessions, the supervisor notices that in his reporting of his work-experiences, the supervisee-social worker constantly relates the way he feels or has felt. He hardly describes what happened, in what context things happened, what he intended to do, what he actually did and from what view he defined the professional task. Moreover, the supervisee describes the experience more as a personal one than as a professional one which, acting from a method, he acquired in a concrete work situation.

Comment

In this example we can recognize discrepancies between the personal dimension and the professional dimension, and between feeling on the one hand, and acting and thinking on the other. Also, for the supervisee the method and context do not seem to be points of orientation for the action.

Reflection and Reflectivity

Integrated functioning and the capacity for integration are not acquired once and for all. They need to be substantiated: redefined continuously. Reflection and reflectivity play a central part in this. The extent to which a professional is able to act professionally on his own and to keep up the standards of his own professionalism, will strongly depend on the extent to which he has learned to reflect independently on the professional experiences acquired and has developed an "observing self" (Bowen, 1974, in: Boeckhorst, 1989, p. 17). If this reflection does not take place, the worker gets stuck in natural reaction patterns, which often evolve out of previous experiences of life. These affect the methodical approach. By learning to observe and reflect on these reaction patterns, the supervisee is able to distance himself from them and integrate them in the desired professional acting. At the same time, the worker learns how to reflect.

Integrated functioning in the professional practice - the ultimate and substantial goal of supervision - therefore, can only be learned by making the personal and concrete dealing with professional tasks the subject of reflection. Dealing with professional tasks should be questioned from the perspective of the

professional requirements. On the basis of this, one's own handling of this can be adjusted to meet the requirements of a good professional practice.

The extent to which the supervisee proves to be able to do this is also proof of the extent to which he is capable of independent professional functioning (the professional dimension). According to Towle (1954, p. 163), "... one of the measures of professional maturity is the extent to which learning has become conscious." Reflectivity is an important quality of professionalism. More and more attention is paid to this in the contemporary professional profiles (Schön, 1985; 1987).

Intermediate goals: reflectional skills and integrational capacity

The ultimate goal of supervision is time and again being able to function as an integrated "Professional Person" in a specific situation in the professional practice. In the supervision this goal is only virtually present, as it is realized outside and also still after the supervision-situation. Apart from that, integrated functioning is not a permanent and static fact, it has to be realized again and again. For the professional, the clients, the professional tasks and -situations are continuously subject to changes. In order to attain this ultimate goal the achievement of *two intermediate goals* is pursued in the supervision: *reflectional skills* and *integrational capacity*.

Applied to vignette 1

For the time being, at any rate, the supervisor does not advise the supervisee of how to deal with these or similar clients. This can be done in the "werkbegeleiding", which is more alike "fieldwork/administrative supervision". The supervisor tries to get the supervisee to reflect on his own experience during the performance of his professional tasks and on how he is handling this experience. At the same time, by doing so, he tries to develop the reflectivity. The supervisee can use this for dealing with his own professional experiences in future (different) situations. The supervisor gets the supervisee to further concretize the experience he described and look upon it from various points of view. Many aspects appear to play a part. Also, various hesitations and obstacles are discovered in order to change the familiar reaction-pattern. In this act of concretization and problematization, the supervisee can work on one or more of the following themes:

- His own reaction pattern: his feelings, norms and values. Personal experiences from his own life history which unconsciously could influence his behaviour towards this client (counter-transference).
- His view of how he should practise his profession.
- His methodical skills needed for such a consultation.
- His perception of and being to the culture of his team or in his organization.

Possibly, attention will be paid to everything because all aspects are related to and interwoven with each other. However, it cannot all be worked on at the same time. Such a process of working on and through⁴ will in the long run lead to a more integrated way of functioning in professional situations.

Two objects of learning and guidance in supervision

In order to let the supervisee work on the intended goals, the interventions of the supervisor -and of possible fellow-supervisee(s)- must be aimed at two objects, namely: the professional dimension and the learning dimension. The *professional dimension* can be looked upon as the primary object of supervision. Hereupon, the supervisee contributes his own professional experiences. In addition, what the supervisee ought to acquire in order to be able to function adequately in his professional role, belongs to this. The criteria for this purpose are determined by the professional group concerned. Both supervisees and supervisors have to be guided by these.

Applied to vignette 1

Aspects which come up to work on in this respect are:

- How should a capable social worker express communicatively and interactionally the situation described above?
- What behaviour, what experience and what attribution of significance is desired from a professional point of view?
- What should this supervisee develop in particular concerning his personal abilities in order to be able to deal with this professional task in a better way?

It is important to pay attention to the learning dimension needed to make the adaptation of professional experiences successful for future professional acting. A supervisor, therefore, has to aim his interventions at the manner in which and the way of learning along which the supervisee learns the necessary professionalism. This learning takes place within the supervision as well as within the setting in which the profession is practiced. In order to be able to function successfully in supervision, the supervisee has to be (and often to become⁵) capable of realizing a way of learning which is necessary and desirable in supervision. When the supervisee learns how to deal with his professional experiences in a supervisory way, he is also able to do so after the supervision and without the help of the supervisor.

Applied to vignette 1

In his first contribution to the supervision, the supervisee described his client's behaviour. He did not mention his own behaviour and experiences. What does the supervisee tell in meta-language? Does he not perceive his own feelings? Is he not aware of the part he plays himself in the interaction, or is he of the opinion that that is not important in supervision? He also does not describe what reasons could possibly play a part in his client's behaviour. By doing so, what does he tell about his way of working? Does he go deeply enough into this? Is he sensitive enough on that score in his observations or does he express his opinion too quickly? Finally, he wrote that he would like to know how he could deal with such a client in a better way. What does he tell by writing thus? Does he particularly want good advice?

From what has been stated above, the following provisional picture emer-

ges. The supervisor can discuss this with the supervisee little by little, which the latter can examine further. Where his learning style is concerned (compare Kolb, 1984; Van Kessel, 1990a), he gives the impression of being strongly directed towards concrete instructions. When the right advice is given he is able to put that into practice quickly. Perhaps that can also be found in his contact with clients and colleagues. What are the implications of this for the practising of his profession?

The observational and reflectional skills of the supervisee are not sufficiently developed. Also, he is not yet able to ask him-herself what sides there are to his client's behaviour and what his own reaction is to this. This theme does not only play an important part in the "professional dimension", but also in the "learning dimension", for it complicates learning during the supervision. For, supervision appeals to the reflectivity of the supervisee.

Where the guidance of the supervisor to the supervisee is concerned, the above-mentioned implies that the supervisor has to strongly curb the supervisee's tendency to progress. He has to make the supervisee look back continuously, in order to discover other aspects of himself as well as of his client's and from the viewpoint of his profession.

By learning to reflect on the experience gained in a purposive, conscious and systematic way, the inner dialogue of the supervisee is stimulated and he becomes his own critical opponent and interlocutor. As a result, the supervisee becomes more skilled in (Van Kessel, 1989, p. 66):

- reflecting on his own professional experiences with the intention of keeping his own professional handling at the required standard or to develop further;
- handling professional tasks more consciously during the execution of his work, because he is capable of looking at his own dealing from the dual perspective of the *observing and participating self* (Boeckhorst, 1989, p. 16). He becomes an *observing participant* (Shepard, 1964, p. 379), a *reflective practitioner* (Schön, 1987), who is capable of reflection-in-his-action.

Nature of the learning material

For the benefit of his learning process, the supervisee needs to contribute learning material to the supervision. Experiences from his own "professional" dealing form the prime source for this material. In it the supervisee realizes in his own personal way the performing of his professional tasks. These concern clients, colleagues and the institution. Usually, these experiences are contributed in writing, whether or not backed up by a passage from an audio- or video recording. This written contribution serves as preparation for an oral explanation. The supervisee's behaviour in the here and now of the supervision offers a secondary source. It offers supplementary learning material. This can be used as "parallel process" (Ekstein/Wallerstein, 1959, p. 177-196) or as "mirroring" (Searles, 1955; Kutter, 1990).

Applied to vignette 1

The supervisee expected advice from his supervisor in his attitude. This appe-

ared to be analogous to his tendency to instruct his clients, instead of asking them questions empathically and patiently, and listening to them carefully. This theme was discovered after the supervisor had told the supervisee: "I expect you would like me to advise you on how to deal with this client." After the supervisee had confirmed this, the supervisor asked: "And do your clients always expect this of you, too? Is that what they really expect? And what does your advice mean to them?"

Every supervisee deals with learning- and work tasks in his own way, corresponding to his own personality: the individual *learning style* (Kolb, 1984; Van Kessel, 1990a). What the supervisee in this respect shows in the supervision can be used as a third source. The learning style can show parallels with aspects of the work style of the supervisee.

Applied to vignette 1

It was not easy for the supervisee to perceive his own experiences. He had difficulties dwelling on them, for he was easily of the opinion that the work would become unnecessarily complicated in case you did. He appeared to have obtained this work- and learning attitude in his socialization. During his childhood, his parents used to have a small business and their family motto used to be: "Set to work as there is always something that can be done".

Necessary basic conditions

For an intensive and individualized learning process, which is the intended purpose of supervision, a number of necessary basic conditions are required. When these are not sufficiently present, one can speak of an activity that at best resembles supervision. The following conditions are necessary:

- Parallel to the supervision sessions, the supervisee must work continuously and to a large extent independently in his profession. In case of supervision to students who are in training one can speak of a future profession.
- The current experiences in exercising the profession offer the most important learning material. In the supervision, the supervisee works on this primarily by reflection. Therefore, a direct connection and interaction between professional experiences and insights into the supervision as a learning situation is necessary, as a result of which more and more can be learned both in and from the work.
- In order to be able to realize this connection and interaction, it is necessary for the supervision sessions to take place on a regular basis. Moreover, each session has to be of limited and fixed duration. This amounts to a frequency of once a fortnight/three weeks, and a total number of fifteen sessions at the least, and thirty at the most, each lasting one hour per supervisee.
- Supervision which is so intensive and geared to the individual professional worker requires a limited number of participants. A maximum of three or four supervisees, who, independent of one another, practise their profession in a work situation. Also, they are not part of each other's lives.

Forms

Supervision can be given in one of the following forms:

- with one supervisee: individual or dyadic supervision;
- with two supervisees: triadic supervision;
- with three or four supervisees: group supervision.

Conclusion

Supervision is a value-oriented and process-oriented activity, in which the supervisee's *work themes* are transformed into *learning themes*. The latter are placed within the framework and perspective of what the supervisee ought to learn and develop in order to arrive at adequate professional and/or functional practice. The primary method of training is the supervisee's self-reflection on his own professional experiences. The improvement and development of the supervisee's own reflectivity is a central goal. Apart from methods of working and interventions which promote reflection, other means can be used as well. In the end, these ought to contribute to the intended reflection.

Supervision is action-oriented as well. The supervisee has to transpose the insights which are obtained through reflection into handling his own professional tasks, if necessary, with the help of the supervisor.

Although the personal experiences gathered in his professional practice are the basis of the process, supervision is not aimed at solving practical problems. Not the practical experiences and problems, but the supervisee's learning themes, which crystallize out of this, form the leitmotiv of the supervision process.

The learning method which is promoted in supervision, has the character of self-discovered searching rules, also called "heuristics" (Van Kessel, 1989, p. 60).

Notes

1. A second, historically later, root of supervision, and which is methodically less clearly documented, lies according to Fleming/Benedek (1996, p. 7 ff) in the supervised analyses in the framework of the psycho-analytic associations. According to Blanton (1971, p. 48), Freud put the relevance of this as follows: "I do not believe that one can give the method of technique through papers. It must be done by personal teaching. Of course, beginners probably need something to start with. Otherwise they would have nothing to go on. But if they follow the directions conscientiously, they will soon find themselves in trouble. Then they must learn to develop their own technique". Following this tradition, August Aichhorn and Anna Freud also employed a kind of supervision approach in their "Erzieherkurse", which took place in Vienna in the thirties (Gotthardt-Lorenz, 1986, p. 45). Also the Balint-groups which were developed about 1950 in London by the Hungarian psycho-analyst Michael Balint (1964) belong to this tradition.
2. In case of a practice placement, this function is called "praktijkbegeleiding", delivered by the "praktijkbegeleider", which corresponds with the function of "practice teacher" or "fieldwork supervisor".

3. Following Robinson (1936,p.25), Reynolds (1953,p.253) speaks of a "professional self".
4. For a more elaborate description of the way in which the supervisee can be guided during the supervision, the reader is referred to Van Kessel (1989; 1996).
5. This is usually the case in a first training supervision.

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