The “grand challenges” for supervision: Examining trends in research and practice

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My aims today

• To briefly explore the nature of changing professional work with reference to theories of professionalism
• To consider the impact of the climate of austerity on supervision
• To consider the research agenda for supervision
Trouble ahead

There may be trouble ahead

All site visitors please note that while there is:

- Moonlight
- Music
- Love
- Romance

It is advised that you:

- Face the music
- Dance
Changes in professional work

- **Intrusion** of non-clinical management into clinical decision-making (Lymbery 1998; Coburn 2006).
- Stability is no longer a virtue
- Loss of **professional autonomy** in managed environments (Evetts, 2009)
Climate and people

- Expectations of reflexivity – ability to cope with constant change
- High stress environments – compulsory resilience
- Austere practice, austere supervision

(Ruch – webinar, 2016)
Symbolic shifts

- Language used even in our own associations can symbolize a shift from 'doing' practice to 'managing' it.
- The intensifying of management talk -outputs - ‘quality’ imitates the knowledge claims in classical professional models (Noordegraaf & Schinkel, p.112)
- Major impact on conceptualisation of supervision from professional to managerial
- Supervision research not keeping up with practice world changes
Manthorpe *et al.*, note the presence of a kind of dyadic approach in the discussions of supervision, with supervision grasped either as *largely introspective* (a therapeutic model) or as its antithesis, an *instrumental tool for surveillance* and the soft exercise of power and authority.

(2013, p.3)
Does it have to be one or the other?
Where next in this brave new world?
Middle ground

- Acknowledge the role of regulation
- Need for supervision that is pragmatic and can survive the working environments we are in but holds on to protecting that reflective space
- Developing and evaluating new models
- Importance of ongoing research
  (Davys & Beddoe 2010; Beddoe & Davys, 2016)
Messages from research

• International Delphi study to explore the research agenda for supervision
• Ideas for collaboration were born at a concerned in Stockholm in 2012
• Researchers:
The big challenges facing supervision here as well?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Challenges identified</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Time and workload constraints</td>
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<td>1=</td>
<td>Lack of valuing of reflective supervision</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Inadequate training for the supervision role</td>
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<tr>
<td>3=</td>
<td>Loss of funding for supervisory roles due to cuts</td>
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<tr>
<td>3=</td>
<td>Impact of managerialism and risk thinking /surveillance</td>
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<tr>
<td>4=</td>
<td>Organisational culture not supporting</td>
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<td>4=</td>
<td>Lack of focus on mission on social work</td>
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<td>4=</td>
<td>Lack of consistency of provision/models</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Insufficient research on supervision</td>
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## Most urgent research issues

<table>
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<th>Rank</th>
<th>Issue for urgent research</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Exploring the relationship between supervision and client outcomes</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Exploring relationship and process and evaluating models</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Researching how supervision can improve decision-making /critical reasoning</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Explore effectiveness of supervision in supporting staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>4=</td>
<td>Explore training for supervisors</td>
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Professional agency & autonomy

Many respondents expressed concern about the loss of and threats to professional discretion and autonomy in supervision.

These concerns stretched beyond threats to professional identity - encompassed strong fear of the demise of professional agency with supervision as a forum for critical reflection.
Autonomy & Agency

- the loss of professional self-determination and **autonomy** needed for professional strength. This could be understood to involve supervision aligning itself with neo-liberal trends.

- An understanding of professional **agency** is needed especially for creatively developing one’s own work and working contexts, for learning at work and for bargaining the professional identity (Eteläpelto *et al*. 2013).
Supervision as emancipatory

➢ ‘There remains a strong belief, however, in supervision as an emancipatory support for professional self-respect and identity. It is the potential loss of professional autonomy that may be seen as a major tension’. *

➢ As supervisors it is our job to manage that tension

*Karvinen-Niinikoski, Beddoe, Ruch & Tsui (in press)
Advocacy for supervision in hard times
A professional conversation to:

• Support effective professional practice
• Reinforce resilience & self-care
• Facilitate personal professional development
• Encourage lifelong critical reflection on practice
Build, sustain, transform

Main functions of supervision restated

Career long supervision

BUILD SUSTAIN TRANSFORM
BUILD

• Build professional identity
• Guiding the integration of theory and practice
• Focusing on learning in supervision
• Balancing the management of risk at personal / professional/ service delivery levels
• Modelling ethical practice in complex contexts
SUSTAIN

Containment of emotion and stress and fostering emotional awareness

Self-care and intellectual refreshment practitioner & supervisor for professional growth

Develop the emotional competence of both parties
TRANSFORM

- Building a strong relationship in which challenge can occur
- Supervisee as learner not subordinate
- Supervisor as facilitator and teacher
- Curiosity and exploration
- Humour and creativity
- Creative use of live observation and feedback
What are the barriers?

- Organisational climate
- Need to promote cultural models
- Fetishizing the management of risk
- Persistence of traditional bureaucracy
- Fear of seeming incompetent
- Fear of judgement
- Mismanagement of power & authority
- Time
Finally ..... 

Keep these questions to the forefront:

1. How has my supervision today helped sustain professional competence and belief in the practitioner's agency in complex work?

2. How do we address change at all levels in supervision- self, client/patients / work organisation/ socio-political climate?
Thank you for listening
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References


References


