

'Sharing insight' - thinking aloud in reflective supervision



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Background information

- The current neoliberal discourse threatens the ability of social workers to critically think and be innovative in work with service users.
- Aim of the study was to understand how reflective supervision is utilised and strategies to support critical reflection.

Critical reflection

- Individual insight linked to a wider social and political context.
- Change in awareness leading to changes in action through deconstructing and reconstructing assumptions and discourses (Fook & Gardner, 2007).
- Supports practitioners in reflecting, evaluating and altering practice through the identification of theories; developing new theories within practice and changing existing power relationships (Beddoe & Egan, 2009).



Critical reflection in research

- As a methodology, provides a shared co-constructed meaning of experiences; integrative and offers a language of the experience being studied; and is transformative through the agency created by participants (Fook, 2011).
- Needs to be continually developed and examined through research so it remains relevant to the ever-changing neoliberal contexts of practice (Beddoe, 2015; Ruch, West, Ross, Fook, & Collington, 2015).

Reflective supervision

- Supervision encompasses critical reflection on the professional, organisational, administrative and cultural contexts of the work undertaken with service users (Beddoe & Egan, 2009).
- Reflective supervision is a particular supervisory approach that supports practitioner development, knowledge and action.
- Knowledge comes from multiple narratives and provides a social and cultural context for supervision (Hair & O'Donoghue, 2009).
- The importance of the exploration of culture, language, structural barriers, power, authority and privilege within practice (Hair, 2014; Hernández & McDowell, 2010).

Methodology



- Eight supervisory dyads working in community-based child welfare social in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand.
- Data was gathered from two separate audio recorded sessions that were each transcribed:
 - the *supervision session* between supervisor and supervisee.
 - *follow up thinking aloud session* with the researcher.
- At the conclusion of the thinking aloud session, the supervisory dyads evaluated their experience of the process.

Thinking aloud

- A cognitive interview technique where participants vocalise their thought processes through the examination of transcribed material for deeper reflection (Priede & Farrall, 2011).
- The process has been important in the analysis and review of practice in supervision (Cooper, 1999; Maidment & Cooper, 2002).
- The use of open-ended questioning in the thinking aloud process provides the opportunity to identify a shared process in supervision, meanings and content that surfaced from each session (Rankine & Thompson, 2015).

For supervisees

I got so much out of it and also I've continued to carry it – from when it was recorded to today and then revisiting it again. It wasn't just an isolated incident; it's actually had impact further on ... I think that it's growth and self-awareness. (Grace)

It's really advantageous to be able to see it written down ...this shows how important (supervision) is to my work, to my practice, to my personal and my professional development and safety. I think it reaffirms for me that the things that I wanted out of supervision is what I'm getting. (Susan)



For supervisors

I like getting [the transcript] back and reading it and it's just really good for my professional development ... I haven't done that since I was doing my supervision post grad diploma so it's actually been a really nice process ... and think about... "What am I doing here and what is it I am trying to achieve?" (Bridget)

It's made me think is there another way that I could review my supervision ... I feel like I've been on a journey... it's shown me that there's actually quite a lot of structure to our supervision ...I was reflecting now about this process, ... it really affirms for me that there is a place for Maori doing supervision together. (Ohaki)

Future development of thinking aloud

I think if that [thinking aloud process] can happen more frequently, it will be definitely another resource for our professional learning. (Jackie)

I think it needs to be used more regularly as a learning tool and an opportunity to keep refreshed... just an extra pair of eyes on the value added [to] supervision and difference it is making. (Debbie)

I think it would be hugely beneficial to do it for every single supervisor and supervisee relationship because...it would be different in a different session [and] how I shift and change my responses based on who I'm working with. (Jen)



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Recommendations

- Reflective supervision as the place for transformation demands critical discussion in practice and research.
- Supervisors and supervisees need to develop critical analysis and application of this in practice.
- The development of thinking aloud as a learning tool to assist critical reflection in practice for the practitioner.
- Thinking aloud offers an example of critical reflection within qualitative research approaches.
- Models supporting critical reflection and reflective supervision need further development.

Thank you for your attention!



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