ESSENTIAL PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES OF SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISORS IN A NON-PROFIT WELFARE ORGANISATION

by

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

Social work supervisors who possess essential professional competencies will have a positive influence on their supervisee, the organisation, and the end service user. They bring about professional growth and change, which encourages the development and maturity of the social worker, resulting in optimum practice. These are key responsibilities of the supervisor, who should be competent to offer supervision at a level that is beneficial to the ecosystem of supervision within the organisation.

According to South African policy documents, social work supervisors should be competent to fulfil the expectations and requirements of their position. This implies that supervisors are equipped for their position as social work supervisors, and that they possess the skills, knowledge and experience that are critical for social work supervisors. However, the literature reveals that supervisors are not well prepared for their position, they do not receive training prior to their appointment, and there is no focus on the identification or development of their competencies. There are no policy documents or research papers that explore the essential professional competencies of supervisors. This aspect is critical to examine further, as there is an identified need in South African policy documents to increase the retention and quality of services of social workers, and competent supervisors can contribute significantly to solving this problem. A competent supervisor will lead to a competent supervisee, thus benefitting the organisation and the service user.

This study explored and described the essential professional competencies of social work supervisors in a non-profit welfare organisation. This was done by examining which competencies are deemed essential for supervisors, and how they are implemented or experienced. By exploring a conceptual framework for supervisors in South Africa and considering a model and definition of competence within the context, the development and importance of professional competencies could be better understood and explored.

An instrumental case study design was deemed the most appropriate design for the research, as it provided a clear context for the research topic to be explored. The study further assumed an exploratory and descriptive research design in order to provide a detailed description of the phenomenon being studied, namely the essential professional competencies of social work supervisors. A qualitative approach was used in the study in order to explore the topic at hand, as it was complementary to the explorative and descriptive research design. Data was gathered

by means of a semi-structured interview schedule, which was administered during individual face-to-face or telephonic interviews. This allowed for data to be gathered that provided a rich description of the research topic. The design of the semi-structured interview schedule was based on the information obtained from the literature review chapters.

The findings from the empirical investigation reveal that the two main categories in which supervisors should be competent are foundational and functional competencies. Foundational competencies include four subthemes, namely that supervisors should be competent in: emotional intelligence; anti-discriminatory supervisory practices; professional relationships; and ethical practices and legal knowledge. The functional competencies focused on three main subthemes, namely that supervisors should be competent in: balancing the three supervision functions (administration, education and support); implementing the supervision process; and possessing specific managerial competencies for the non-profit organisation (NPO) sector.

The findings indicate that supervisors are not fully equipped for their position, and that they require training and equipping in order to understand and implement the competencies that are essential for their practice. Furthermore, the findings show that supervisors have a high workload, they are responsible for a large number of staff, and their supervisory responsibilities are often over-shadowed by structural issues. Supervisors in South Africa need to be competent in balancing their supervision responsibilities alongside the middle management responsibilities that they are expected to bear.

Recommendations were made on four of the systems involved in supervision. Specific recommendations were made for each theme, subtheme and category. The general recommendations focus on: supervisors prioritising their competencies and creating opportunities to practise them and improve in them; organisations needing to emphasise the importance of professional competencies, specify them in supervisors' job descriptions and encourage opportunities for competencies to be learnt and practised; training institutions needing to offer more training in foundational and functional competencies, on both an undergraduate and postgraduate level; and finally, ethical and legal bodies needing to incorporate competencies into policy documents and to facilitate national development programmes to operationalise foundational and functional competencies.

OPSOMMING

Maatskaplike werk supervisors wat die noodsaaklike professionele bevoegdhede het, sal 'n positiewe invloed op hulle werker, die organisasie en die eindverbruiker van die diens hê. Hulle veroorsaak professionele groei en verandering, wat die ontwikkeling en volwassewording van die maatskaplike werker aanmoedig en lei tot optimale praktyk. Hierdie is sleutelverantwoordelikhede van die supervisor, wat bevoeg moet wees om supervisie aan te bied op 'n vlak wat voordelig is vir die ekosisteem van toesighouding binne die organisasie.

In terme van Suid-Afrikaanse beleidsdokumente moet maatskaplike werk supervisors bevoeg wees om aan die verwagtinge en vereistes van hulle posisie te voldoen. Dít impliseer dat supervisors toegerus is vir hulle posisie as maatskaplike werk supervisors, en dat hulle die vaardighede, kennis en ervaring het wat belangrik is vir maatskaplike werk supervisors. Die literatuur toon egter dat supervisors nie goed voorberei is vir die posisie nie, dat hulle nie vóór hulle aanstelling opleiding ontvang nie en dat daar geen fokus is op die identifisering of ontwikkeling van hulle bevoegdhede nie. Daar is geen beleidsdokumente of navorsingspublikasies wat die noodsaaklike professionele bevoegdhede van supervisors ondersoek nie. Dit is van kritiese belang dat hierdie aspek verder ondersoek word, aangesien 'n behoefte in Suid-Afrikaanse beleidsdokumente uitgespreek word dat die behoud en kwaliteit van dienste van maatskaplike werkers verhoog moet word, en bevoegde supervisors sal kan bydra tot die oplossing van hierdie probleem. 'n Bevoegde supervisor sal lei tot 'n bevoegde werker, wat dus die organisasie en die diensgebruiker sal bevoordeel.

Hierdie studie het die noodsaaklike professionele bevoegdhede van maatskaplike werk supervisors in 'n organisasie sonder winsmotief ondersoek en beskryf. Dit is gedoen deur ondersoek in te stel na die bevoegdhede wat as noodsaaklik vir supervisors beskou word en hoe hulle geïmplementeer of ervaar word. Deur 'n konseptuele raamwerk vir supervisors in Suid-Afrika te ondersoek en 'n model en definisie van bevoegdheid binne hierdie konteks te oorweeg, sal die ontwikkeling en belang van professionele bevoegdhede beter begryp en verken kan word.

'n Instrumentele gevallestudie-ontwerp is beskou as die gepaste ontwerp vir die navorsing, aangesien dit 'n duidelike konteks vir die navorsingsonderwerp wat ondersoek word, verskaf. Die studie gebruik verder 'n verkennende en beskrywende navorsingsontwerp om 'n gedetailleerde beskrywing van die fenomeen wat bestudeer word, te kan verskaf, naamlik die

noodsaaklike professionele bevoegdhede van maatskaplike werk supervisors. 'n Kwalitatiewe benadering is in die studie gebruik om die onderwerp te verken, aangesien dit die verkennende en beskrywende navorsingsontwerp komplementeer. Data is versamel deur middel van 'n semi-gestruktureerde onderhoudskedule wat van individuele aangesig-tot-aangesig of telefoniese onderhoude gebruik gemaak het. Hierdeur was dit moontlik om data te versamel wat 'n ryk beskrywing van die navorsingsonderwerp verskaf het. Die ontwerp van die semi-gestruktureerde onderhoudskedule is gebaseer op inligting wat in die literatuurondersoek verkry is.

Die bevindings van die empiriese ondsoek toon aan dat die twee vernaamste kategorieë waarin supervisors bevoeg moet wees, fundamentele en funksionele bevoegdhede is. Fundamentele bevoegdhede sluit vier subtemas in, naamlik dat supervisors bevoeg moet wees in: emosionele intelligensie; nie-diskriminerende supervisiepraktyke; professionele verhoudings; en etiese praktyke en regskennis. Die funksionele bevoegdhede het op drie subtemas gefokus, naamlik dat supervisors bevoeg moet wees in: balansering van die drie supervisiesfunksies (administrasie, opvoeding en ondersteuning); implementering van die supervisieproses; en besit van spesifieke bestuursbevoegdhede vir die sektor waarin die organisasie sonder winsmotief voorkom.

Die bevindings dui aan dat supervisors nie volledige vir hulle posisie toegerus is nie en dat hulle opleiding en toerusting benodig om die bevoegdhede wat vir hulle praktyk noodsaaklik is, te begryp en te implementeer. Die bevindinge toon verder dat supervisors 'n groot werkslas het, dat hulle vir 'n groot getal personeel verantwoordelik is en dat hulle toesighoudende verantwoordelikhede gereeld deur strukturele kwessies oorskadu word. Supervisors in Suid-Afrika moet bevoeg wees in die balansering van hulle supervisie verantwoordelikhede saam met die middelbestuursverantwoordelikhede wat van hulle verwag word.

Aanbevelings is gemaak oor vier van die stelsels wat in supervisie betrokke is. Spesifieke aanbevelings is vir elke tema, subtema en kategorie gemaak. Die algemene aanbevelings fokus op: dat supervisors hulle bevoegdhede prioritiseer en geleenthede skep om hulle te beoefen en te verbeter; dat organisasies die belangrikheid van professionele bevoegdhede moet benadruk, hulle in die supervisors se posbeskrywings moet spesifiseer en geleenthede moet aanmoedig vir bevoegdhede om geleer en beoefen te word; dat opleidingsinstellings meer opleiding in fundamentele en funksionele bevoegdhede moet aanbied, op die voorgraadse en nagraadse vlak; en laastens, dat etiese en wetlike liggame bevoegdhede in hulle beleidsdokumente moet

insluit en nasionale ontwikkelingsprogramme fasiliteer om fundamentele en funksionele bevoegdhede te operasionaliseer.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 PRELIMINARY STUDY AND RATIONALE

Social work supervision is unique to the field of social work and critical to social service delivery. In South Africa, supervision in social work is unique from that of other professions, as it is a prescribed professional requirement for social workers in practice to receive supervision (DSD & SACSSP, 2012; SACSSP, 2007). This, according to Engelbrecht (2010), is what separates South African definitions of supervision from international definitions and the literature. In international contexts, supervision is used more widely in a variety of professions and para-professions, and within a more clinical practice setting (Bogo & McKnight, 2006). Furthermore, the supervision of social workers in South Africa may only be offered by another registered social worker, who should possess sufficient competencies and skills to develop and support the supervisee, as set out by the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP, 2007). These competencies of being able to offer effective supervision and support to social workers are also emphasised in the Department of Social Development's Integrated Service Delivery Model towards improved social services (DSD, 2006b).

The supervision of social workers, as described by the Department of Social Development and the SACSSP (DSD & SCSSP, 2012), is an interactional process within a relationship, in which a social work supervisor promotes efficient and professional service delivery by the supervisee. This is achieved by the supervisor performing educational, supportive and administrative functions. Thus, the supervisor integrates the developmental role of the educator with that of the provider of support, and offers oversight of the supervisee's clients (Bogo & McKnight, 2006; Munson, 2002). According to Kadushin and Harkness (2014), the supervisor is regarded as an overseer, who watches over the supervisee and who is responsible for the quality of work produced. Supervision thus is a relational process, in which the supervisor supports the supervisee through a variety of functions and methods in order to promote effective and efficient work by the supervisee, and ultimately deliver the best possible services to the service user.

Social work supervision in South Africa is also unique because it takes on a strong social development approach, which has been adopted by national government policies since 1997 (Patel & Hochfeld, 2012). Social development can briefly be defined as an approach to social welfare that seeks to correct inequity and discrimination by promoting the well-being of the population while linking social services to economic development (Midgley, 1995). Furthermore, within this social development context, supervision in South Africa often takes place within non-profit welfare organisations, with over 20% of social workers working in this sector (Bradley, Engelbrecht & Höjer, 2010; Earle, 2008). The non-profit organisation (NPO) is distinct from many other organisations, for example government and emerging organisations, as it is governed by the Non-Profit Organisations Act (RSA, 1997a), which stipulates requirements for the management and structuring of the organisation. Furthermore, the NPO Act emphasises the importance of good service delivery (Carpenter & Webb, 2012). NPOs also receive subsidies from the government, and these are heavily tied to service delivery (DSD, 2005) and consequently to effective supervision (Engelbrecht, 2010). Further attributes that make NPOs unique are that they typically are managed by a board of directors and can oversee a variety of different projects and programmes. NPOs that deal specifically with child and family welfare are appointed as designated child protection organisations (RSA, 2006) and the social workers in such organisations are granted statutory authority to work within the remit of the Children's Act.

The social work supervisors in such an organisation are usually in a middle management position. They act as a buffer between the organisation's management structures, the staff and the service users (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014). They are tasked with a variety of managerial responsibilities beyond the supervision of social workers. These include, for example, managing a number of social workers – with considerably high caseloads, the management of community workers and volunteers, the orientation of new social workers, taking responsibility for their own statutory cases, as well as participating in the organisation's management board (Engelbrecht, 2010). These middle management tasks become closely tied to the role of supervision and affect the basic supervisory process, as well as the tasks and abilities that the supervisor should possess in order to balance supervisory and managerial responsibilities (Bradley *et al*., 2010).

In order to regulate supervision in non-profit welfare organisations there are specific South African policy documents that guide the supervision of social workers. These include the Department of Social Development's Recruitment and Retention Strategy (DSD, 2006a), the

Department of Social Development's Integrated Service Delivery Model towards improved social services (DSD, 2006b), and the Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). These documents emphasise the importance of quality supervision being provided by supervisors who possess sufficient competencies to fulfil the required supervisory position. While the policies are helpful in defining the process of supervision, there is no focus on the actual professional competencies that are essential for social work supervisors. It therefore is important to have an emphasis on competencies and not just frameworks that focus on supervision.

Competencies refer to the supervisor's utilisation of knowledge and skills that are specifically related to the social work discipline to bring about growth in the supervisee, and consequently in the client and the environment (Guttman, Eisikovits & Maluccio, 1988). Competencies can also be understood as the habitual use of knowledge, communication, emotions, values and reflections in daily practice, for the benefit of the supervisee and the service users (Epstein & Hundert, 2002; Falender & Shafranske, 2004). In essence, it is the knowledge, values and skills that the supervisor brings to the professional relationship, and the use thereof to benefit the outcomes of the supervisory process.

Such competencies that promote and benefit the supervisory relationship can be referred to as professional competencies, as they are essential to the success of the professional supervisory relationship. Supervisors should possess these professional competencies in a number of different areas, which can be divided into two categories, namely foundational competencies and functional competencies (Falender & Shafranske, 2004). Foundational competencies are those that the supervisor should possess inherently, and they are intrinsic to the supervisor. These include, for example, skills and knowledge in cultural diversity, self-reflection, professional relationships and ethical boundaries. Functional competencies, which are more procedural, are specifically related to the requirements of the supervisory position, for example the ability to conduct assessments, do performance appraisals, execute managerial tasks and functions, offer emotional support, and utilise the methods and processes of supervision to the benefit of the supervisee and the service user (Falender & Shafranske, 2004; Webb, 1983).

Requirements for professional competencies can be observed in many professions around the world, for example nursing, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, education, psychology and engineering. The importance of professional competencies in these different contexts is emphasised and explained in policy frameworks such as "Essential Competencies of Practice

for Occupational Therapists in Canada" (ACOTRO, 2003) and the "National Competency Standards for the Registered Nurse, Australia" (ANMC, 2006), for example. However, in social work, such policies outlining the competencies of a supervisor are scarce, even within an international context, and they are non-existent in South African. Grus (2013) highlights this by stating that there is a significant lack of research on and understanding of essential professional competencies that make the supervision process successful.

Nevertheless, the South African Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession (DSD & SACSSP, 2012) emphasises the importance of social work supervision and offers guidelines for effective supervisory practices. Within this document, the norms and standards of supervision are defined, along with the roles, tasks and responsibilities of supervisors. Norms and standards include, for example, specifications relating to legislative requirements, formulating supervision agreements and contracts, registration requirements for supervisors and ethical responsibilities. Some of the roles and responsibilities include overseeing appropriate intervention techniques, identifying training and personal development needs, setting culturally sensitive boundaries, and conducting performance management appraisals (DSD & SACSSP, 2012).

While the abovementioned supervision framework is helpful in defining how supervision should be conducted and what tasks should be carried out by the supervisor, there is no focus, however, on the professional competencies that are essential for supervisors to possess in order to be able to fulfil their roles effectively. The characteristics, competencies, skills and experiences of the supervisor influence how the supervisor conducts supervision and interacts with the supervisee (Grus, 2013; Hawkins & Shotet, 2011). The Supervision Framework (DSD & SACSSP, 2012) clearly neglects to define who the supervisor should be. Hence, the Framework suggests managerial methods to enhance the performance quality of supervisors, but fails to address the essential professional competencies that are required to fulfil the supervisory role.

In the workplace the assumption is that a good social worker will make a good supervisor, but this is not always the case (Cousins, 2004). Many social workers are promoted internally within their organisation to the position of supervisor, usually as a result of them applying for the post or because they have been working at the organisation for the longest period. These social workers find themselves promoted to the position of supervisor without sufficient training, knowledge, experience and competencies (Bradley *et al*., 2010; Cloete, 2012). Cousins (2004)

agrees that, globally, supervisors do not receive sufficient training and preparation for the supervisory role and this results in inadequate supervision. In South Africa, some social workers may do a course in supervision during their undergraduate studies, but this cannot prepare them sufficiently for being a supervisor. Moreover, there is very little contemporary research on the field of social work supervision in South Africa when compared to research on social work intervention, for example research related to poverty alleviation or child and family welfare (Engelbrecht, 2010).

The above challenges are reflected in the Department of Social Development's Recruitment and Retention Strategy for Social Workers (DSD, 2006a). The main goal of the strategy is to identify conditions that have a negative impact on social services, as well as to provide guidelines that will safeguard the recruitment and retention of social workers. Within this document, the professional supervision of social workers is identified as a key strategy in ensuring retention. However, the Recruitment and Retention Strategy indicates that the significant decline in the productivity and quality of social work services can largely be attributed to the absence of formal supervision, as well as poor-quality supervisors who lack the capacity and training to conduct professional supervision (DSD, 2006a). By focusing on developing competencies, supervisors would be more skilled and equipped to offer quality supervision, and this would contribute significantly to the retention of social workers.

In summary: although there are many policies and legislative documents that specify the functions, tasks and responsibilities of a supervisor, the structure and service delivery of social service organisations, and specifically those of non-profit social welfare organisations, there is no focus on the essential professional competencies of the social work supervisor, as highlighted above. Supervision in itself is a competence, and it is critical to understand the integration of foundational and functional competencies as essential components of being an effective supervisor (Grus, 2013). Consequently, the essential professional competencies of social work supervisors in non-profit welfare organisations have been identified as a significant research gap.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

In order for supervisors to offer the best service they can to the supervisee, and ultimately to the service user, they need to be professionally competent to offer supervision (Falender *et al*., 2004). However, South African legislation and policy documents (DSD & SACSSP, 2012) do not provide guidelines for or explanations of these essential competencies. Botha (2002) highlights the need for South African research that focuses on supervision and renewing supervisory practices. Prominent authors and researchers on supervision in South Africa (Botha, 2002; Engelbrecht, 2010) cover a variety of significant issues in supervision, for example the supervision process and developing competencies in the supervisee *per se*, but do not focus specifically on the essential professional competencies of supervisors.

In addition, the international literature that looks at competencies in supervision are within the field of psychology or clinical supervision (Cohen & Laufer, 1999; Falender *et al*., 2004; Getz, 1999; Žorga, 2006). While similarities can be drawn to social work supervision and the South African context, the practices and context of predominantly first world countries differ significantly, particularly as supervisors in South African non-profit welfare organisations function within a middle management position, with a vast array of tasks and responsibilities beyond the direct supervision of social workers (Bradley *et al*., 2010). This points to a need for research that considers the political, social and organisational environment of social work supervision in NPOs, and the professional competencies that are relevant and essential for such a context.

Furthermore, significant work has been done on competence based theories which apply to the supervision of front-line social workers (Sutherland, Fine & Ashbourne, 2012; Welch, 1985). However, these theories do not encapsulate what competencies the supervisor (of the front-line social worker) should possess, particularly in the non-profit context, in order to be able to develop the competencies of the supervisee. This indicates a gap in the theory and research that look at the development and identification of the essential professional competencies of the supervisor. Grus (2013) concurs, and states specifically that research needs to be undertaken into the competencies that are essential for supervisors, as there is a significant lack in the understanding of professional competencies that make the supervision process successful.

Through raising awareness about competencies and increasing an understanding of them, the research will contribute to helping senior managers in identifying, promoting and supporting social work supervisors. Furthermore, the research can contribute to the development of training courses that would aid senior management and supervisors alike in understanding, developing and utilising essential professional competencies for social work supervision.

Based on the above discussions, the following **research questions** can be identified:

- What professional competencies are essential for a social work supervisor to possess in the NPO context?
- What foundational competencies are essential for social work supervisors?
- How are foundational competencies implemented or experienced?
- What functional competencies are essential for social work supervisors?
- How are functional competencies implemented or experienced?
- What aspects influence the development and implementation of essential professional competencies?

, 1.3 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this research was to gain an understanding of which professional competencies are essential for social work supervisors in a non-profit welfare organisation in order to offer effective social work supervision to supervisees and, ultimately, to lead to the best services being rendered to the service user.

In order to achieve this aim, the following objectives were formulated:

- To synthesise a contextual framework for understanding competence-based supervision within a non-profit welfare organisation;
- To analyse the competence model and the definition of competence within the parameters of supervision within a non-profit welfare organisational context;
- To explore and synthesise essential foundational competencies regarding the inherent knowledge, skills and values of supervisors for the supervision of social workers;
- To explore and synthesise the essential functional competencies of social work supervisors related to the utilisation of processes, methods, activities and techniques for social work supervision;

- To investigate the essential professional competencies of social work supervisors in a non-profit welfare organisation through an empirical study;

- To offer recommendations for the promotion and acquisition of essential professional competencies for social work supervisors within non-profit welfare organisations.

1.4 THEORETICAL POINTS OF DEPARTURE

The definition of professional competencies (Bogo *et al*., 2006; Getz, 1999; Nash & Larkin, 2012; Žorga, 2007) will first be provided as a context for understanding why competencies are important for social work supervision, and in order to identify which competencies are essential for a supervisor within the NPO context. In essence, professional competencies can be understood as the ability to think critically and analytically by incorporating one's knowledge, skills, values and emotions related to the social work discipline to the benefit of the individual being served, thus incorporating functional and foundation competencies (Epstein & Hundert, 2002; Kaslow, 2004; Wimpfheimer, 2004). Competencies are characterised by attentiveness, self-awareness, presence of mind and critical thinking (Kaslow, Falender & Grus, 2012). This implies that the individual has the ability to utilise inherent characteristics and abilities to positively influence the professional supervisor-supervisee relationship.

Secondly, a competence-based approach to supervision (Cohen & Laufer, 1999; Grus, 2013; Kaslow, *et al*., 2012; Webb, 1983) is described and synthesised. This allows for the process and functions of supervision to be explored and understood within the context of a competence model. The competence-based approach also emphasises the importance of the supervisor possessing certain essential professional competencies in terms of intellectual, performance, personal and consequence-related competencies (Guttman *et al*., 1988). This theory served as a theoretical point of departure in order to ascertain which professional competencies are essential for supervisors, in order to, in turn, promote the competencies of the supervisee within the context of a NPO.

1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

The research design and methods give a brief overview of how the research process progressed.

1.5.1 Research design

The research design was presented as a case study of one particular organisation. Conducting a case study allows for an in-depth analysis of a case and the social issue pertaining to it (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Fouché & Schurink, 2011). Flyvbjerg (2006) argues that, in order to become an expert in understanding a specific research problem or social issue, one needs to have knowledge and expertise that are context dependent. This can be achieved through conducting research based on case studies. Making use of a case study, according to Yin (2003), would be appropriate if the focus of the study was to answer "how" and "why" questions; if the researcher cannot manipulate the behaviour of those involved in the study; and if the researcher wants to cover contextual conditions because they are relevant to the phenomenon. These factors were relevant to the nature of this study of the essential professional competencies of social work supervisors in a non-profit welfare organisation.

The case study therefore was limited to one prominent non-profit welfare organisation in the Western Cape. This organisation offers predominantly social welfare services, and its large number of social workers and supervisors were willing to participate in the research. Furthermore, the organisation offers a similar range of services to other non-profit welfare organisations, and has a similar work environment. For example, all non-profit organisations have a managerial board, are registered as a non-profit organisation, have registered social workers, and offer supervision in accordance with the Non-Profit Organisations Act (RSA, 1997a) and the Social Service Professions Act (No. 110 of 1978; RSA, 1978). In addition, the organisation is also a designated child protection organisation, which means that it has been granted statutory authority by the state, as have a small number of other NPOs. Therefore, the data that was collected from the one non-profit welfare organisation offered a good representation of non-profit welfare organisations in South Africa. This allowed for the findings of the research to be generalised to the non-profit welfare sector and gave insight into essential professional competencies in such organisations. A profile of the organisation was compiled upon commencement of the empirical study.

The research design is the plan that sets out how the participants will be engaged and how the research will be conducted (Mouton, 2001). This study used an exploratory and descriptive research design, which are complementary to the case study research approach (Yin, 2003).

Exploratory research is conducted in order to gain insight into and understanding of a phenomenon. Exploratory research typically arises out of a lack of basic information on a new area of interest and, in order to become familiar with a phenomenon, it usually answers a "what" questions; for example, what essential professional competencies are essential for social work supervisors? Descriptive research, on the other hand, focuses on providing an in-depth description of a particular phenomenon by collecting accurate information about it, and generally answers a "how" or "why" question (Fouché & De Vos, 2011; Yin, 2003).

The intention of this study was to explore which professional competencies are essential for the social work supervisor, and why. As limited literature was available on the competencies of a social work supervisor within a social welfare organisation, an exploratory study therefore was necessary, hence answering the "what" question. Once this foundation was provided, the study aimed to motivate why certain competencies are important and how they can contribute positively to successful and effective social work supervision, thus answering the "why" and "how" questions of a descriptive research design.

In summary, the study was an instrumental case study that used exploratory and descriptive research to give insight into a particular phenomenon. The focus of such a case study is less on the particular situation or case, which is more of a secondary interest, but rather on understanding the phenomenon and contributing to theory (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 2003).

1.5.2 Phases of the research

The research took place in two phases, focusing on two different levels that have an influence on social work supervision. The first phase involved social work supervisees and their views on what competencies supervisors should possess. The second phase focused on social work supervisors and their experiences regarding professional competencies that are required for their position. As indicated, social work supervisors in a non-profit welfare organisation are often in a middle management position (Bradley *et al*., 2010; Engelbrecht, 2010), which means that they are dealing directly with the organisation's management committees as well as the frontline staff. By exploring social work supervision on the two different levels, as indicated

above, the researcher had the opportunity to provide a detailed and realistic context of supervision within a non-profit social welfare organisation. This approach complements the case study research design, which focuses on exploring the case using in-depth data collection methods and multiple sources of information (Fouché & Schurink, 2011).

1.5.3 Research approach

Qualitative research methods were used for both phases of the study. According to Fouché and Delport (2011a) the qualitative approach is concerned with naturalistic observation and understanding, rather than controlled measurement, and focuses on assumptions, experiences, reactions, views and perspectives related to the research topic. This was a relevant approach for this particular study, which sought to gain an understanding of the essential professional competencies of social work supervisors. The study did not seek to measure any particular aspects of supervision, but to understand what competencies are required for supervisors to be more effective in their role. This was achieved by gaining comprehensive insight into the experiences, needs and expectations of supervisees and supervisors. This extensive and meaningful exploration was achieved successfully through the qualitative approach, as the literature (Bless, Higson-Smith & Kagee, 2006; Creswell, 2014; Fouché & Delport, 2011a) supports the view that qualitative methods allow the researcher to gain a meaningful and in-depth record of human experiences.

1.5.4 Research methodology

The literature study, sample size and ethical consideration all make up important aspects of the research methodology.

1.5.4.1 Literature study

The purpose of the literature study is for the researcher to gain a richer understanding of the nature and meaning of the identified problem (Fouché & Delport, 2011b). The literature study allows the researcher to understand the topic that is being explored and contributes to the clear formulation of the problem. The review ensures that duplication of previous studies is avoided

and gaps in the research field are identified (Bless *et al*., 2006; Mouton, 2001). The literature study forms chapters 2, 3 4 and 5 of the research paper.

For the purpose of this paper, a literature study was conducted in the research field so as to gain an understanding of the research topic and to establish a frame of reference from which to proceed. Local and international literature was reviewed in order to gain an accurate and thorough understanding of social work supervision. Literature from multiple disciplines, particularly business management, sociology and psychology, was explored in order to develop a holistic understanding of the topic being studied. It also served to incorporate relevant theory and knowledge from other fields into the theory of social work supervision.

The research thus followed both a deductive and an inductive approach in developing the research instruments and formulating the research findings. The researcher was able to develop questions from the literature study for the purpose of the semi-structured interview schedule, and to gather specific experiences and observations from the participants. Through this information, the research then followed an inductive approach, allowing new themes, subthemes and categories to emerge from the data to enlighten the research topic.

1.5.4.2 Sampling and data collection

i.   Target groups

The case study, as mentioned previously, was demarcated to one prominent non-profit welfare organisation in the Western Cape. This organisation was a suitable representative of non-profit welfare organisations and gave a realistic depiction of essential professional competencies for social work supervisors.

Non-probability, purposive sampling was used for both phases of data collection to select the participants. This was the most appropriate technique, as the participants could be selected based on their knowledge and availability as voluntary participants in the research (Bless *et al*., 2006). The selected organisation had approximately 80 social workers and 20 supervisors.

Phase 1

Social workers are the immediate beneficiaries of social work supervision and thus could give valuable insight into the essential professional competencies of social work supervisors.

The population of this target group was approximately 80 social work supervisees. The sample consisted of approximately 20 social workers who were required to be interviewed. The sample participants needed to meet the following criteria for inclusion; a social worker:

- Registered with the South African Council for Social Service Professions;
- Practising in the non-profit welfare organisation for a minimum of one year;
- Receiving professional supervision from a social work supervisor; and
- Not acting as a social work supervisor.

The research instrument for this phase was a semi-structured interview schedule, which consisted of both open and closed questions. The goal of this phase was to determine the supervisees' views on essential professional competencies for social work supervisors. This was relevant, as the supervisees are the direct users of supervisory services and were able to highlight whether their supervisors possessed the necessary competencies to nurture the supervisees' professional needs. The themes for the interviews were compiled on the basis of the literature discussed in the literature review chapters. (See Annexure 3 for the interview schedule that was used with the social workers, and Annexure 1 for the document relating to receiving informed consent from the participants.)

Phase 2

For the second phase of the research, the researcher continued to made use of non-probability purposive sampling to select a group of social worker supervisors from the non-profit welfare organisation. The population of this target group was approximately 20 social work supervisors. The sample consisted of 10 social work supervisors who met the following criteria for inclusion:

- Registered with the South African Council for Social Service Professions;
- Had at least one year's experience of social work supervision; and
- Practising in a social work supervisory position.

The research instrument was a semi-structured interview schedule specifically for the social work supervisors and was administered by the researcher. The interview schedule was aimed at determining what competencies are required of the supervisors within the context of a non-profit welfare organisation. The interview schedule was mostly qualitative, including open and closed-ended questions, and was compiled on the basis of the literature review. The interview schedules for the two phases were reasonably similar, as they both sought to explore the essential professional competencies of social work supervisors. The research instrument was effective in collecting data from both participant groups. (See Annexure 4 for the interview schedule that was used with the supervisors, and Annexure 2 for the document relating to receiving informed consent from the participants.)

Although the research approach was qualitative, the research instrument included a small number of quantitative questions. These were related primarily to the demographic details of the participants, allowing the researcher to generate a meaningful profile of the participants, which provided further insight for the study. The quantitative questions were not the focus of the study and were not directly linked to the investigation into the specific essential competencies, thus the approach remained a qualitative one.

The data from the interviews was transcribed and the main themes were analysed for the next phase of the research.

ii.   Data analysis

The data collected was primarily qualitative. By assuming a qualitative approach, the researcher was able to gather in-depth data, with rich descriptions of the experiences and needs of each of the participants. The data from each of the interviews was organised, analysed and interpreted in order to identify trends and determine the outcomes of the empirical study (Brod, Tesler & Christensen, 2009; Schurink, Fouché & De Vos, 2011). The qualitative data was transcribed appropriately. Once this was done, common themes and trends were identified from the participants' responses and organised into meaningful themes and subthemes. This allowed for the systematic presentation of the findings from the qualitative data, which was compared to the literature presented in the literature study chapters.

   iii.   <u>Pilot study</u>

A pilot study was carried out for the first phase of the research. The pilot study allowed the researcher to adapt the research instruments in order make it optimally effective for obtaining the required data (Bless *et al*., 2006; Engelbrecht, 2016). The pilot study allowed the researcher to test the nature of the questions in the interview schedules in order to ensure that they were clearly understood and gathered the information that was required for the study. Due to the fact that a similar research instrument was used for both phases, it was only necessary to conduct one pilot study.

1.5.4.3 Ethical considerations

Ethics, according to Strydom (2011), comprises a set of moral principles that are widely accepted and that guide behaviour concerning conduct towards research participants. Research ethics emphasises the importance of the researcher treating the participants in a humane and sensitive manner (Bless *et al*., 2006).

The nature of this study was such that it did not explore deeply personal experiences or difficulties, but more theoretical and practical experience of what competencies social work supervisors should possess and require for effective supervision to take place. This research therefore was considered to be low risk in terms of ethical concerns. However, it was still important for the researcher to consider ethical guidelines and issues that could have arisen, particularly in relation to confidentiality and informed consent.

The researcher ensured that informed consent was given by the participants in both phases of the research. This was done by giving all the participants a full explanation of the purpose of the study, as well as how the data would be collected and utilised. The participants were provided with a written description of the study and an indication of how the research results would be used. When the researcher met personally with the participants, the study was explained verbally. The participants were also requested to sign a form to declare that they voluntarily consented to participate in the study and to the results of the study being used as indicated by the researcher. (See Annexures 1 and 2 for the informed consent forms.)

In terms of confidentiality, the research did not record any personal identifying details of the participants, and their details could not be associated in any way with the data that was

collected. In this manner, the researcher ensured that the anonymity of the participants was safeguarded, thus allowing the participants to contribute freely to the research.

In addition to these ethical considerations, the researcher obtained official consent from the participating organisation before any interviews were conducted. This was done by means of submitting the research proposal to the organisation to explain the purpose and procedures for the study. The researcher had already received provisional permission and consent to conduct the study within the organisation.

Permission was obtained from the Departmental Ethical Screening Committee (DESC) before the study commenced (see Annexure 6). The researcher furthermore is registered with the South African Council for Social Service Professions, and is committed to the Code of Ethics of the social work profession. In conclusion, the research posed a minimal risk, as defined by the Department Ethics Screening Committee (DESC) of Stellenbosch University.

1.6 STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

Chapter 1 provides a description of the study, detailing the background, problem, aim, objectives, as well as the research methodology.

Chapter 2 provides a conceptual framework for competence based supervision in a non-profit welfare organisation. The chapter explores the definition of supervision and then provides an overview of the theories, models and perspectives that underlie supervision. Following this, the international context of supervision is discussed, and then the chapter narrows down on the South African supervision context.

Chapter 3 provides a conceptual framework for the competence model and competencies within the context of supervision in a non-profit welfare organisation. This is done by discussing the competence model in order to provide insight into the definition of competence. Competence is then defined, whilst considering the perimeters and the domains of the definition.

Chapter 4 entails a discussion of the first competence domain, namely foundational competence. The foundational competencies identified include emotional intelligence, anti-

discriminatory supervision practices, professional relationships and ethical practice and legal knowledge.

Chapter 5 is the final literature review chapter, which explores functional competencies. These competencies focus on the day-to-day activities of the social work supervisor and include the supervision functions, the supervision process and specific managerial competencies for the NPO setting.

Chapter 6 provides the methodology that was used in the empirical study, motivating why certain research decisions and procedures were followed.

Chapter 7 discusses the empirical study of the essential professional competencies for social work supervisors in a welfare NPO. The qualitative data is presented by means of themes, subthemes and categories, and is based on the literature from the literature review chapters.

Chapter 8 is the final chapter and presents the conclusions and recommendations of the empirical study.

1.7 IMPACT

Lack of competent and skilled supervisors has been identified as a main reason for social workers not offering good services, and for leaving the profession (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014). Supervisors who possess the necessary competencies to offer supervision will contribute to greater success in the service delivery to the supervisee and the welfare organisation, thus positively influencing service users, which will lead to the procurement of funding. A study of the essential professional competencies of social work supervisors is significant, as there is a considerable research gap in both South African and international research on this topic. The findings of the study present the essential professional competencies that supervisors should possess, and highlight the importance of promoting these competencies in order to ensure that the supervision process is used to its optimal benefit. These findings can be used to aid senior managers in promoting and supporting social work supervisors, as well as contribute to training or the development of a certificate short course for supervisors and/or senior managers to identify and utilise professional competencies in the supervisory relationship. The study further contributes to the limited field of research on supervision in South Africa, and builds on the

prominent South African work by Engelbrecht (2004; 2006a; 2006b; 2010; 2012a; 2012b; 2013; 2014a; 2014b).

1.8 CONNECTION WITH DOCTORAL PROGRAMMES IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK, STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

Research based on social work supervision in non-profit welfare organisations is of particular interest to the Department of Social Work at Stellenbosch University. This is also where Engelbrecht is based. The topic is within the Department's research expertise, and as such will contribute to existing research and promote future research on the topic. The research contributes to building on the Department's research outputs and focus on supervision.

1.9 CONCLUSION

Chapter 1 has provided an in-depth discussion of the research problem, motivating the need for research on the essential professional competencies of social work supervisors. The chapter has provides the aim and objectives of the study, and explains how these will be operationalised through an explanation of the research design and methodology. This chapter lays the foundation for the study. The following four chapters are the literature review chapters, which are followed by a detailed chapter on research methodology, the empirical study, and finally the presentation of the conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER 2

A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR COMPETENCE-BASED SUPERVISION IN A NON-PROFIT WELFARE ORGANISATION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the work report in this chapter was to develop the first part of a conceptual framework for enhancing supervisors' essential professional competencies. It is apparent that there is very little research and literature available that focuses on developing the competencies of the supervisor. The supervisor plays an important role in the support, education and administrative guidance of supervisees. It is thus crucial that supervisors possess the essential professional competencies that will aid them in offering high-quality supervision.

Research focuses largely on the supervisees – how they can be developed and how their competence can be fostered – but not much on the supervisors. It is often assumed that supervisor already possess the competencies necessary for their position, but this is not always the case (Grus, 2013). If supervisors are expected to promote supervisees' competence, then it is logical that the supervisors themselves need to be competent.

In order to develop these essential professional competencies, it is important to consider the context in which supervisors in South Africa practise. The context of the country, the community and, more particularly, the organisation plays a significant role in how supervision is conducted, as well as how the supervisee and supervisor, respectively, are managed. The organisational milieu offers some perspective on who the supervisor should be, and what competencies he/she should possess in order to function optimally in the given environment. The challenge in looking at the context of supervision, however, is that many aspects of supervision have not been researched from a South African perspective (Engelbrecht, 2014a). Definitions of supervision are based on international practices and definitions, and models of supervision apply primarily to the supervisee and not to the supervisor. Looking at social work supervision and supervisors' competencies within a South African context is a new and unexplored topic.

For this reason, the chapter starts with the broadest variable, namely supervision, including an exploration of the international context of supervision, followed by an exploration of the South African context. The next chapter will focus on defining competence and presenting the competence model, with the ultimate goal of identifying specific domains of essential professional competencies. Information will be reviewed critically in order to synthesise a conceptual framework that is applicable to supervision in South Africa, and more specifically to develop essential professional competencies (EPC) in supervisors. This is portrayed visually in Figure 2.1 below.
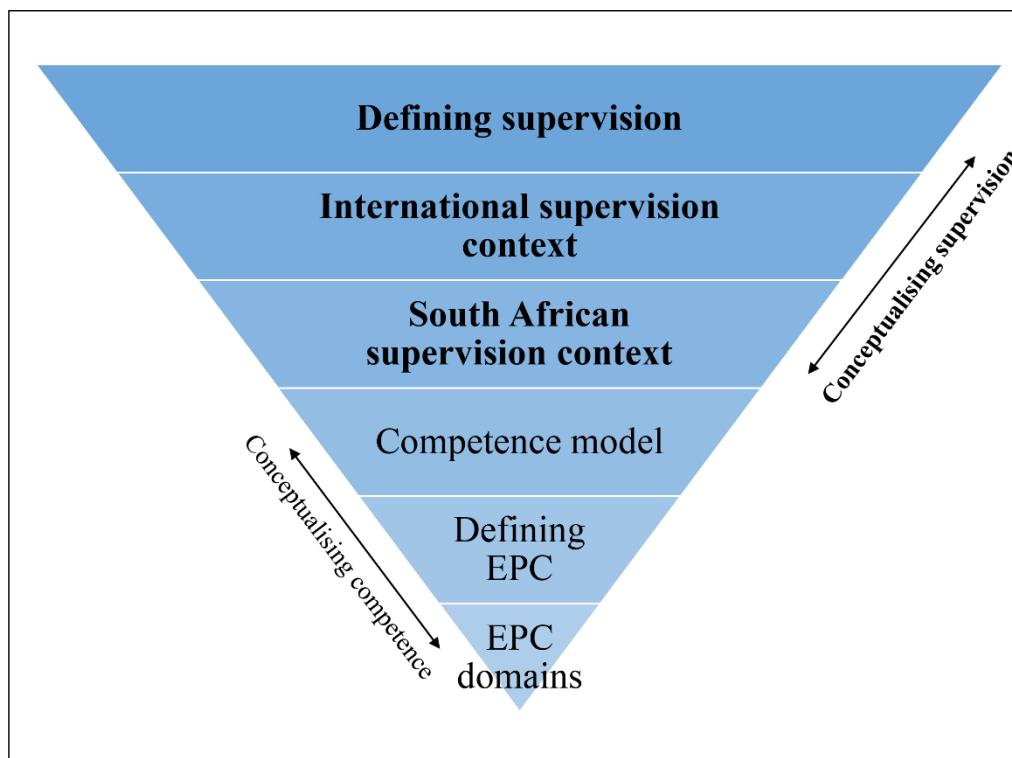
Figure 2.1: Conceptual framework

Exploring all of these aspects will contribute to understanding the essential professional competencies that are necessary for social work supervisors. In the light of this, *the objective of this chapter is to synthesise a contextual framework for competence-based supervision within a non-profit welfare organisation*. Diagrams are used for the purpose of understanding the context of the supervisor and the complexity of the many factors that shape the supervision process. A basic ecosystems approach is used throughout the study to explain the nature of the relationship between the supervisor, the supervisee and the environment.

The systems within the ecosystem are all interrelated and interdependent (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Dale, Smith, Norlin & Chess, 2006; Engelbrecht & Terblanche, 2014). Ecosystems

theory will not be explained in detail, as it does not fall within the ambit of this study. It is used purely for illustrative purposes to aid in the understanding of the complexity of supervision, and follows below.

In pursuing an understanding of essential professional competencies it is important to firstly consider what is meant by supervision and who the supervisor is, before we can explore other factors that might influence the essential professional competencies of the supervisor.

2.2 DEFINITION OF SUPERVISION

The definition of a concept or practice depends heavily on the context in which it is being applied. However, the context cannot be understood fully if the concept itself is not clear. It becomes a situation of whether the chicken or the egg came first when the concept and the context are both being explored. For the purpose of this research, both the context and the concept are important to understanding supervision and essential professional competencies. For this reason, a basic definition of supervision is given below. This allows for a universal understanding of supervision, whilst creating the image of the context of supervisory practices. A discussion of the international contextual influences on supervision, along with the South African context for practice, will follow the definition. This provides a foundation for the following chapter, which aims to provide a comprehensive definition of essential professional competence in the light of the contexts and theories applicable to the South African practice setting.

Supervision developed alongside the social work profession out of a need for professional *support for and accountability of* the social worker. Subsequently, the social work supervisor became defined as an *administrative staff member* who has authority to direct, co-ordinate, enhance and evaluate the job performance of the supervisee in order to assist the supervisee to become more effective in helping people. In executing this responsibility, the supervisor performs *administrative*, *educational* and *supportive* functions when interacting with the supervisee. This means that the supervisor needs to integrate the developmental role of the educator with that of the provider of support, and offer administrative oversight of the supervisee's work with clients (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; Munson, 2002).

Tsui (2005) suggests three approaches to defining social work supervision, namely the normative, empirical and pragmatic approaches. The normative approach considers the ideas and ideals of supervision, not necessarily the daily practice of supervision, and focuses on what

the supervisor should do. There is emphasis on the administrative and educational functions of supervision, with the aim of offering control, guidance and support to the supervisee (Engelbrecht, 2010; Hawkins & Shotet, 2006). The empirical approach to defining supervision focuses on collecting empirical data about the roles, styles and behaviours of social work supervisors. This approach centres on four areas of specialisation, namely direct services, organisation and administration, training and personnel management. Finally, Tsui (2005) also argues for a pragmatic approach to supervision that does not focus on providing a formal definition of social work supervision; instead, it aims to recommend actions for successful supervision. This definition is reflected in the South African Recruitment and Retention Strategy for Social Workers (DSD, 2006a), which defines supervision in terms of transferring skills, mentoring and monitoring services, and offering professional support.

In additional to Tsui's (2005) definitions, Engelbrecht (2010) argues that one needs to consider the context in which supervision takes place in order for it to be thoroughly defined and understood. This suggests a shift away from clinical definitions and international understandings of supervision, from which most of the definitions above are derived. There is a noted need (Engelbrecht, 2010) to define social work supervision from a social development perspective, a development approach specific to the welfare system in South Africa. Such a definition would look at how the social and economic context of the organisation and supervisor interplay, and how themes of empowerment, participation and integrated practice can be accomplished (Patel & Hochfeld, 2006).

This study considered a holistic approach to defining supervision and incorporated Tsui's (2005) three approaches in order to define what supervision should be, and to determine what research and actions would achieve that definition. At the same time, it considered the social and economic context of supervisory practices in South Africa from a social development perspective.

Engelbrecht (2014a) identified thirteen determinants for formulating a definition of social work supervision. These determinants are based on international and local definitions, which each have factors in common when considering a definition of supervision. These determinants were selected by Engelbrecht (2014a), as they can also be integrated into the South African social development paradigm. These determinants are important to understand when considering what competencies a supervisor in South Africa should possess, as they indicate how the

supervisor should function in his/her role. The following determinants for the definition of social work supervision are identified (Engelbrecht, 2014a):

1. *Goal of supervision*: The goal might include, for example, to promote the efficient and professional rendering of social work services. This is the most common goal of supervision and is also reflected in South African documents pertaining to supervision (DSD & SACSSP, 2012; SACSSP, 2007). The Supervision Framework (DSD & SACSSP, 2012) does not give a direct definition of the goal of supervision, but instead highlights the principles of supervision to be achieved. These are: to promote and protect the interests of service users; to promote the active recognition of cultural systems that shape all the parties involved; to encourage and value professional development; accountability; and to promote respect for the inherent dignity and worth of every person. These goals all lead to the professional and efficient rendering of social work services.

2. *Functions of supervision*: There is consensus on the functions of supervision, as articulated in international (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; Tsui, 2005) and local (Botha, 2002; Engelbrecht, 2014a) texts. These functions are also reflected in the Supervision Framework (DSD & SACSSP, 2012) as relevant to the South African context. The three primary functions are support, administration and education, with the greatest emphasis being placed on the administrative function in most NPOs (Bradley *et al*., 2010). The administrative or normative function is focused on ensuring that supervisees adhere to, and implement, agency policies and procedures. The aim is to ensure that supervisees render effective and professional services in accordance with organisational and statutory norms. This function entails all the management functions and tasks of the supervisor in respect of the supervisee's work (DSD & SACSSP, 2012; Tsui, 2005). Ideally, the time spent proportionately on these functions is likely to reflect the organisation's mission and human resources practices (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). However, this is not the case in reality, and time spent on each function is likely to reflect the prominent agenda of the organisation, with much energy being spent on the administrative function in South African settings, reflecting an underlying managerial ideology.

3. *Mandate of supervision*: As established previously, supervision is a professional requirement as set out by the SACSSP (SACSSP, 2007). This means that social workers

must receive supervision from another registered social worker. It should be a formal arrangement that is mandated by organisational policies.

4. *Time-span of supervision*: In some contexts, supervision can be infinite or bound by a specific time span. Within the South African context, a social worker should receive regular supervision while in practice, regardless of their years of experience. Thus supervision could be interminable (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). Botha (2000) also refers to consultation, where the supervisee starts to work more independently and uses consultation on a need-to-know basis. Consultation, however, is an activity of supervision, and does not replace it; it is seen as part of the overarching supervision process (DSD & SACSSP, 2012; Engelbrecht, 2014a).

5. *Authority of the supervisor*: The supervisor is typically based in middle management within the organisation and engages with tasks associated with such a level of management and supervision (Bradley *et al*., 2010). The supervisor is granted authority and seniority over the supervisee. In addition, according to the SACSSP (2007), the supervisor can also be held liable for the supervisees' actions.

6. *Configuration of theories, models and perspectives underlying supervision*: These are typically based on an organisation's school of thought on management. They could include, for example, the competence model or strengths perspective (Engelbrecht, 2014a). Ideally, the school of thought should shape the way in which supervision is conducted; however, in reality, the supervisor is typically focused on administrative control. Supervisors are often unaware of the different models of supervision and lack the skills to adopt a specific approach to supervision (Bradley *et al*., 2010; Tsui & Ho, 1997). This will be discussed further in 2.3 below.

7. *Distinct value and ethical base of supervision*: This is strongly determined by the organisational culture, as well as by the individual supervisor. However, social workers and supervisors alike are however governed by the ethical guidelines as set out by the SACSSP (2007).

8. *Nature of the supervisor-supervisee relationship*: The supervisor-supervisee relationship can be of a professional or anti-discriminatory nature, for example. An anti-discriminatory approach is significant in South Africa, as it is likely that the supervisor and supervisee are from different cultural or religious backgrounds. As a result of the

supervisor being on a middle-management level, and of the professional requirement of supervision, supervision typically is professional in nature (Bradley *et al*., 2010). For this reason there is no peer supervision, as the supervisor-supervisee relationship is not of a collegial nature because of the more senior position of the supervisor. Issues of authority and power come into play, and these can complicate the relationship.

9. *Designated roles of the supervisor*: Roles could include supporter, expert, motivator and enabler, for example. Engelbrecht (2014a) suggests that, in the South African context, the supervisor should specifically fulfil the role of being a modeller, where emphasis is placed on setting an outstanding and professional example in all aspects of social work and supervision.

10. *Nature of the supervision process*: Supervision might take on an interactional and developmental nature, or be cyclical and guided by phases and tasks (Engelbrecht, 2014b). Typically, supervision is a cyclical process, where the personal development of the supervisee and the supervision contract are reviewed after each phase of evaluation. This may be founded on strengths-based principles – for example, the process is based on a positive relationship and ownership of the process is attributed to both the supervisor and supervisee (Engelbrecht, 2014a).

11. *Distinct supervision tasks*: Tasks could include conducting assessments, contracting, developing personal development plans, performance management and appraisal of supervisees (Engelbrecht, 2014a; SACSSP & DSD, 2012). The supervisor also has the responsibility to monitor tasks and control the supervisee's activities.

12. *Methods of supervision*: Among the various methods are, for example, individual and/or group supervision. In most organisations, supervision is typically conducted through individual sessions. Some organisations adopt an integrated approach, including group or peer supervision. However, in reality, group sessions are usually focused on staff development and do not focus on the individual supervisory needs of each supervisor (Bradley *et al*., 2010; Engelbrecht, 2014a)

13. *Supervision activities*: Activities could include, for example, coaching, mentoring and consultation. These are typically linked to the supervisee's level of growth and experience, suggesting a development approach to supervision. For example, a student social worker might receive more direct coaching from his/her supervisor; a newly

qualified social worker might experience a mentoring approach to supervision; and supervision for an experienced supervisee would be more on a consultation level (Engelbrecht, 2012a; Kadushin & Harkness 2014).

Based on the above determinants and the discussion of supervision in South Africa, the following definition of social work supervision in a welfare organisation can be constructed for the purpose of this study: *Social work supervision is the ongoing professional relationship between a social worker and a social work supervisor, with the primary goal of promoting efficient and professional social work services. This is achieved through practising three functions, namely education, support and administration, with the integration of functions as the ultimate goal. Supervision is a professional requirement mandated for social work practice based on the ethical values and guidelines of the SACSSP, and is rooted in a school of thought typically reflecting the context, mission and vision of the organisation. The supervisor is the line manager of the supervisee and thus is granted authority and seniority over the supervisee. Supervision is a cyclical process and includes a number of tasks and activities relating to the supervisee's workload and level of professional development. Supervision assumes an individual approach, with integrated group and peer methods. The supervisor fulfils specific roles, depending on the context of the organisation but with an emphasis on the role of a modeller, sets the example of an exemplary social worker, and encourages the supervisee to practise within his/her best professional and ethical capacity.*

It is clear from this definition that supervision is a complex and multidimensional activity. If performed in a holistic way it can be of great benefit to the supervisee, and ultimately to the service user (Falender & Shafranske, 2004). One dimension of supervision that is often overlooked is the use of practice theories, models and perspectives that underlie supervision.

2.3 THEORIES, MODELS AND PERSPECTIVES UNDERLYING SUPERVISION

There are many theories, models and perspectives that have been applied to supervision and that affect how supervision is conducted and how it fits into the larger picture of the organisation. These models typically apply to the supervisees, and how they are developed and supervised. The model of supervision that is used within an organisation is relevant to the supervisor's competence and skills to successfully utilise that model for the benefit of the supervisee. It is important for the supervisor to understand the different models of supervision

and to be competent in conducting supervision sessions within the framework of an appropriate theory, model or perspective. The theories, models and perspectives underlying supervision are organised in terms of their nature and scope. Tsui (2005) clustered the models of supervision together, and Engelbrecht (2014a) adapted these further to apply to the South African social development context. These are discussed below:

1. *Organisation models* reflect the structure of the organisation and how supervision is managed within the organisation. In some organisations the functions and activities of supervision may be executed by different people through different modes of supervision. For example, the administrative function of supervision might be conducted by a different person from the support and education function. The case work model, for instance, has a high level of administrative accountability and control in a one-to-one relationship – such as is the case in England (Bradley & Höjer, 2009) and in South Africa (Bradley *et al*., 2010). Such a model can limit the achievement of developmental outcomes, support and education, as the focus is on job-related tasks and outputs. Another organisational model is the group supervision or peer supervision model. This form of supervision tends to happen intermittently in a variety of contexts, but is seldom the primary form of supervision (Donoghue, 2003; Tsui, 2003). A final example is that of external supervision (Bradley *et al*., 2010), where the supervisor is not part of the organisation and some of the functions of supervision are outsourced.

2. *Structural functional models* focus on the objectives, functions and structure of supervision. They are a configuration of how supervision functions are achieved in supervision. These models include, for example, the integrative model – an integration of models that emphasise all three supervisory functions; and the supervisory functions model, which focuses on a specific function (Bradley *et al*., 2010). A further example is models of authority, in which authority is built into the supervisory relationship. This authority is used to meet the needs of the supervisee. This authority is best achieved by adopting the competence model of authority, in terms of which the supervisor is sanctioned because of his/her knowledge and skills to handle the job effectively and professionally (Tsui, 2005). Munson (1981) argues that the competence model of authority is the most productive model for enhancing supervisor-supervisee interaction and job satisfaction.

3. The *process theories model* refers to the interactions between the supervisor and the supervisee in the supervisory process. In this model, instrumental, goal-orientated behaviours refer to the administrative and educational functions, while expressive behaviour denotes the supportive function. The supervisor can adopt a proactive or reflective approach in order to instruct, encourage, collaborate with or entrust the supervisee in different circumstances (Tsui & Ho, 1997). There are two types of process models (Tsui, 2005); firstly, the developmental models, which focus on the stages of development of the supervisee in the supervisory process, which could include the development theory of professional identity. The second interactional process model comprises the growth-oriented models, which are supervisee oriented, for example the competence model. Growth-oriented models focus on helping the supervisee develop a better understanding of his/her personal and professional self.

4. *Practice theories, models and perspectives* are a configuration of how social workers execute their interventions, which are translated into supervision to fit the supervisees' theoretical orientation. These are often theories adopted from therapy, as they provide concrete guidance on practice skills and allow the supervisor to build on theories that are already known. Examples of these models are the person-centred, psychodynamic, cognitive-behavioural and strengths-based models. The strengths perspective is used most commonly and, as previously established, it informs the developmental approach of social welfare in South Africa and is in line with the competence model (Engelbrecht, 2004; Engelbrecht, 2012b).

5. A *comprehensive model* stresses the importance of supervision as an interactional process involving four parties, namely the organisation, the supervisor, the supervisee and the service user. It is important to consider supervision as a multifaceted interactional process that affects all four parties. This model of supervision considers how each party shapes the supervision process, instead of only looking at the supervisor-supervisee relationship (Tsui, 2005). For example, the organisation has expectations of the supervisor in terms of administrative control and reporting; the supervisor implements this during supervision, whilst considering the supervisee's learning and developmental needs; the supervisee is accountable to the supervisor and implements learnings from supervision in practice with the service user; the service user should be encouraged to give feedback to the organisation on services received (Tsui & Ho, 1997). This allows for all four parties to shape and to be involved in the

supervisory process, although it still leaves supervision sessions at the discretion of the supervisor.

These different models all provide a means for how supervision can be conducted. By adopting a model, the supervisor has a framework from which to work during the supervision sessions in order to achieve specific goals according to the supervisee's and organisation's needs and requirements. Practice models should form an integral part of practice, and it is thus important for the supervisor to have knowledge of the models and also have the competence to implement various models according to the learning needs of the supervisee.

The models form an important part of the process and definition of supervision. From the above it is clear that there are many dynamics and interactions that make up the supervisory relationship. The complexity of supervision can be represented by means of a diagram, such as the one below. This diagram will be built upon throughout the course of this study.
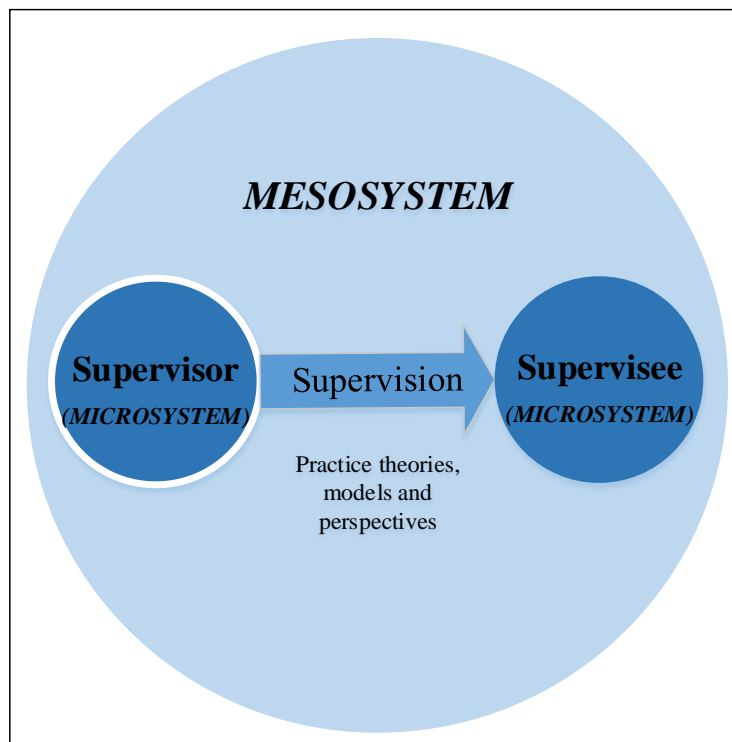
Figure 2.2: Micro- and mesosystems in supervision

Figure 2.2 represents the social work supervisor in the supervision relationship with the supervisee. The supervisor and supervisee can each be seen as a basic system within the environment. This most basic system is commonly referred to as the microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Wait, Meyer & Loxton, 2005:156). The relationship and interactions between the two microsystems are called the mesosystem. Thus the supervisor and supervisee

are *microsystems* who enter into the supervisory relationship, which can be considered as the *mesosystem*. As with the ecological perspective, each system is interrelated and interconnected, and they influence each other. For example, the supervisor influences the supervision process, and the process itself can have a reciprocal effect on the supervisor.

It is important that the supervisor should possess essential professional competencies for the successful fulfilment of his/her supervisory roles and responsibilities. Within the mesosystem, the supervisor should apply essential professional competencies to the supervision process, and the supervisee should reap the benefit of having a supervisor who is professionally competent. Furthermore, competence comes into the mesosystem by means of the theories, models and perspectives that are underlying supervision, as well as the nature of the supervision process.

The micro- and mesosystems are also influenced by other factors beyond these two systems, namely the exo- and macro-systems. These can be considered as the organisational and South African (or country) contexts respectively. These contexts, however, are also heavily shaped by international trends and research. Many South African practices and documents are influenced by international supervisory practices. These contexts will be discussed in more detail below in order to provide more insight into the factors that influence the supervisor, and consequently the essential professional competencies that they should possess.

2.4 INTERNATIONAL SUPERVISION CONTEXT

The context in which supervision is implemented has a notable influence on how supervisory processes and roles are practised, and consequently how competence is perceived and defined. In order to understand the context of social work supervision in South Africa it is imperative to explore how it differs from international practices and trends. Welfare policies and practices are quite unique to each country, but, as Bradley *et al*. (2010) state, this type of work requires the guidance and support found in supervision, and therefore it is a relevant field to explore further. This allows for insight into the unique pressures and challenges that the organisation, supervisor and social worker encounter. The political and legislative influences on the field of social work and the emphasis placed on supervision all play a key role in the experiences and practices of a supervisor. Tsui (2005) stresses the need to develop research that considers the societal and organisational context of supervision. In order to do this, it is necessary to explore

international supervisory practices and literature because of their influence on South African practices and policies.

Definitions and models for supervision are based largely on international research and texts, particularly from England and North America (Dunbar-Krige & Fritz, 2006; Gray & Mazibuko, 2002). It is researchers and authors from these two regions that are the chief contributors to the academic field of supervision. These definitions and applications of models, functions and responsibilities are indigenous and specific to each country, and are relevant to the unique history and cultural tendencies of each area. It is from international texts (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; Munson, 2002) that South African definitions of supervision have been developed. While these contributions are significant and set a valuable example in social work practices, one cannot fully understand supervision in South Africa by looking only at international research. There are several international contexts that have shaped prominent research on and definitions of supervision, and these are summarised briefly below in order to indicate how the South African context for supervision is unique. These specific countries (see discussion below) are discussed because they are extremes along the continuum of varying supervisory practices around the world, and because research from their countries has contributed significantly to shaping the practices of supervision, particularly in South Africa.

Supervision in **Sweden** is often offered as a private service that the organisation contracts in, also referred to as external supervision. In such cases the supervisor typically focuses mainly on the support function, and the well-being of the supervisee is priority (Bradley *et al*., 2010). The supervisor is thus not part of the middle management of the organisation, which allows for more openness and a deeper support function to be offered, without the supervisee fearing that this could affect his/her performance appraisals. There is an emphasis on encouraging self-awareness and reflection. Supervision also commonly takes place in a group setting. Some organisations combine this supervision with internal supervision by the line manager, with a focus on case management and administrative control (Bradley & Höjer, 2009). This can cause tension between the external supervisor and the management where there are different priorities in support or administration. There is a drive for postgraduate education in supervision, with the goal of supervisors being educated in social work and supervision, but it is not yet a requirement (Bradley *et al.*, 2010; Karvinen-Niinikoski, 2004). As in South Africa, supervision is only offered to social workers by another qualified social worker. However, it is also significant to note that there are no licensing procedures for social work and the title of social worker is not protected or restricted in Sweden. It is thus not a regulated profession, although

there are recognised social work professional bodies. This has had an influence on the profession and consequently on supervision, as it becomes difficult to delineate the tasks and responsibilities of social workers and supervisors alike (Hussein, 2011; Weiss-Gal & Welbourne, 2008).

In **England**, supervision has a strong managerial focus. Supervision is linked to performance management, which is considered at a local level as part of the government's transformational agenda (Bradley & Höjer, 2009; Lambley, 2013). This means that there is an emphasis on accountability, and supervision assumes an administrative and management format with the goal of giving feedback to the government concerning outputs and achievements. Supervision is an internal function of the organisation, it is normally undertaken by line managers, and is offered on an individual level. Supervisors are usually promoted to their position on the assumption that they are competent practitioners, and might receive some in-house training (Bradley *et al*., 2010). Due to accountability pressures from the government there is limited time for education and support; instead, supervision tends to be a functional discussion about cases. The professional status of social workers is recognised by the government, and social workers and their supervisors alike need to be registered in order to practise (Weiss-Gal & Welbourne, 2008).

Social work supervision in **New Zealand** is shaped heavily by the cultural environment and background of the organisational setting and the supervisee. In recent years, literature and practices in New Zealand have been moving away from American and British practices and the country is developing practices that are culturally sensitive and appropriate to its context (New Zealand Social Workers Registration Board, 2013; O'Donoghue & Tsui, 2011). Supervision tends to differ across fields of practice and across practitioner populations with regard to form, functions, models and approaches. For example, supervision could be in the form of student fieldwork supervision, managerial supervision, clinical supervision, cross-disciplinary supervision and cultural supervision – focusing on the cultural development and competence of the practitioner. Supervision is typically one on one and can be either internal or external to the organisation. In a child welfare organisation, supervision is usually done by a line manager who takes on supervisory responsibilities as well responsibility for performance appraisals. Some organisations would use a duel model of supervision in which the line manager offers administrative guidance, and peer supervision is used for education and supportive functions. Most supervisees are allowed the opportunity to choose their supervisor, as this is considered an important factor in contributing to the success of the supervisory

experience (O'Donoghue, 2003; O'Donoghue & Tsui, 2011). Supervisors do not necessarily have to be registered social workers and do not need professional training in social work supervision; these factors are considered a preference and are not enforced (New Zealand Social Workers Registration Board, 2013). However, supervision is considered a professional necessity for competent practice and this is reflected in professional codes of practice (O'Donoghue & Tsui, 2011).

Tsui (2005) is a prominent researcher and contributor to the field of social work supervision in his local context of practice, Hong Kong. Supervision in **Hong Kong** is relatively informal and unstructured and differs significantly from supervision in South Africa. Supervision sessions tend to be infrequent and take place both individually and in a group context, and team work and team building are promoted through supervision. The goal of supervision is to achieve successful client outcomes and enhance staff development, thus evaluating staff performance is not a requirement (Tsui, 2003). A considerable emphasis is placed on discussing personal matters and providing emotional support. Verbal contracts are used as a means to discourage conflict, and disputes are resolved through traditional authority and reconciliation. The supervisor has freedom to make decisions according to his/her personal preferences. Whilst the supervisory practices are based on those of North America and England, as are those of South Africa, the cultural context plays a determining role in how supervision is actually conducted and practised (Tsui, 2004). Social work supervisors do not necessarily have any training in social work supervision, and supervision is based on imitations of superiors and guided by organisational policy (Tsui, 2004). The supervisor is typically on a middle-management level and is responsible for reporting to top management on the supervisees' activities.

Supervision in the **United States of America** is based on clinical practices. Clinical supervision focuses heavily on the dynamics of the client situation and the social worker's interventions, not necessarily on the organisational context (Gibelman & Schervish, 1997), and thus is likely to include only the educational and supportive features of supervision. Supervision can be offered by non-social workers from a variety of settings and, in some instances, social workers are not supervised at all (Bogo & McKnight, 2006; Weiss-Gal & Welbourne, 2008). In such situations, social workers are encouraged to seek clinical supervisory consultation outside of the organisation or to use peer models of supervision as an alternative.

As previously mentioned, clinical supervision forms the premise for a large body of research and literature on supervision (Munson, 2002), which cannot be applied fully to the South African context. Due to the fact that clinical supervision is usually not agency based and focused more on the dynamics of the client, the supervision tends to include only educational and supportive features, and not administration (Bogo & McKnight, 2006). This differs from South Africa, as in South Africa the supervisor is a line manager in the organisation and the organisational policies and climate have a substantial influence on the process and outcomes of supervision. Furthermore, there is a heavy focus on administrative control in the South African context, with little time or training to pay attention to educational or emotional support needs (Bradley *et al*., 2010).

Clinical supervision is practised by a range of interdisciplinary professionals, for example nurses, psychologists, education counsellors and social workers, whereas in South Africa it is only social workers and related social service professionals who practise supervision. Accordingly, the definition of supervision is dependent on the context, namely the interdisciplinary clinical or traditional social work context (Engelbrecht, 2010). The literature (Bradley *et al*., 2010; DSD, 2006a; Engelbrecht; 2010; Patel & Hochfeld, 2006) indicates that supervisors in South Africa seldom practise in a completely clinical setting, and social work supervision is shaped by developmental social welfare. This requires supervisors to adopt a generalist approach to their work, with a focus on micro- and macro-interventions. According to Engelbrecht (2010), clinical supervision practices can be considered to be incompatible with the social development paradigm of South Africa.

Considering all of the above factors, international practices and research (Bogo & McKnight, 2006; Munson, 2002; Tsui, 2004) have made valuable contributions to South African supervisory practices; however, a more local approach to supervision that considers the NPO context and the social development paradigm is needed. This will be explored further in the section below.

2.5 SOUTH AFRICAN SUPERVISION CONTEXT

Supervision in South Africa is unique, as it is to each country, because of the specific political and societal context in which social work is practised. However, many supervisory practices, books and research publications are based extensively on international texts (Engelbrecht, 2010). It is important to understand the local context for practising supervision. For this reason, the historical development of and main influences on supervision in South Africa will be discussed below.

2.5.1 Historical development

Social work and supervision developed hand in hand. As the social work profession and the need for accountability grew, supervision became more formal and purposeful. The social work profession was initiated by the Dutch Reformed Church in response to concerns about poverty and congregational needs. As early as in 1657, relief was offered to poor white farmers, but not to indigenous Africans due to negative racial attitudes. Black Africans created their own self-help initiatives and voluntary associations to reduce the impact of the government's discriminatory practices (Brown & Neku, 2005). In 1904, Afrikaner women's organisations were established in order to offer practical help to victims of the Anglo-Boer War. These services grew from emergency relief and educational programmes to comprehensive child and family care services in well-established and influential organisations (ACVV, 2009). The National Department of Public Welfare was established in 1937, and social work became the only approved service profession for social welfare (DSD, 2006b). In the years to follow, particularly from the 1960s to 1990s, there was an increased focus on social work supervision. Universities started presenting courses on supervision, and scholarly articles on supervision were published (Engelbrecht, 2010).

South Africa held its first democratic elections in 1994, which led to the end of the apartheid political system and consequently a transformation of social welfare services. Subsequently, the White Paper for Social Welfare (RSA, 1997a) was developed, and it proposed policies and programmes for appropriate developmental social welfare services. The White Paper identified poverty as its major focus and saw development as the main vehicle to alleviate poverty, thus taking on the principles of social development theory (Gray, 2006). Following the White Paper, the South African Council for Social Service Professions was established in 1998. The council serves to regulate the social work profession by providing ethical and practical guidelines for

the practice and registration of social workers. It was also post the 1994 elections that the non-profit sector became more prominent and social services were officially offered and recognised in such organisations (Gray & Lombard, 2008).

In 2003, social work was declared a scarce skill in South Africa (Department of Labour 2008a, 2008b). There were various reasons for this, including poor working conditions and salaries. Many social workers left South Africa, resulting in a considerable shortage of social workers and supervisors (DSD, 2006a; Engelbrecht, 2006a). As a result, the Department of Social Development developed the Recruitment and Retention Strategy for Social Workers (DSD, 2006a). The main goal of the strategy was to identify conditions that had a negative impact on social services, as well as to provide guidelines that would ensure the recruitment and retention of social workers. High caseloads, a lack of structured supervision and work-related stress were all factors contributing to the decline in the quality of social work services (DSD, 2006a; Engelbrecht, 2006a). Within the Retention Strategy, effective and quality supervision of social workers was identified as a key tactic in ensuring social worker retention.

With this has come a new emphasis on supervision, with attempts to define supervisory processes and roles more clearly in the hope of leading to more focused and quality supervision. This is reflected in the Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession (DSD & SACSSP, 2012), for example, which aims to encourage competent professional social work supervisory practices. It can further be seen by the SACSSP identifying supervision as an area of specialisation in social work practice (SACSSP, 2012), as it places weight and priority on the importance and development of supervision. However, supervision remains a challenge in the daily turbulence of the non-profit welfare organisation context, as supervisors and social workers are faced with complex cases and managerial red tape. For this reason, a brief discussion on non-profit welfare organisations as well as South African policy documents will be provided below in order to provide insight into the working environment of the social work supervisor. These factors all play an important role in shaping and determining the essential competencies that supervisors need to possess.

2.5.2 Non-profit welfare organisations

As mentioned previously, social work is prominent in the non-profit organisation sector, with several large organisations taking on a significant portion of welfare and statutory work. NPOs share a common context and environment, as they are governed by the same legislation, namely the Non-Profit Organisations Act (RSA, 1997b). This leads to homogeneity in terms of registration requirements and managerial structures, and makes NPOs suitable organisations to focus on for social work supervision, as they are similar in structure and share common features. The organisation has an impact on the practices of the social worker and supervisor, and thus an impact on what professional competencies are considered to be essential. The essential professional competencies thus are identified and discussed within the specific NPO context. In order to do this, it is important to first understand the context of the NPO in terms of historical development and policy guidelines, and these factors are discussed below.

2.5.2.1 History

Prior to South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994 there were two non-government welfare sectors, namely the private or formal voluntary welfare sector and the alternative or informal welfare sector (Gray & Lombard, 2008). The private welfare sector was considered a key partner of the government in welfare provision, particularly casework and statutory services. Formal voluntary organisations were closely tied with the historical development and provision of social work services to white Afrikaners, thus considered by some as supporting the apartheid government. This sector constituted nearly a quarter of social work positions in South Africa and was significantly subsidised by the government, particularly for social work salaries (Gray & Lombard, 2008).

On the other side was the informal, alternative welfare sector. This comprised community-based organisations that were birthed during the struggle against apartheid in an attempt to address the needs of the disregarded black majority. With economic liberalisation in the 1980s, many informal organisations received foreign funding that could be channelled directly to the organisation, rather than channelled through the government. Although the apartheid government was not supportive of the informal welfare sector, it allowed many organisations to emerge and serve the marginalised black population (Habib & Taylor, 1999).

Following the 1994 elections, the welfare sector was transformed, with the formal and informal welfare sectors being merged into one group, namely the not-for-profit or non-governmental organisations. NPOs still bore a large majority of the welfare work, and some prominent

organisations were contracted by the government to carry out welfare and statutory services as designated child-protection organisations (RSA, 2006).

Non-profit organisations are defined as a trust, company or association of people "established for a public purpose" and "the income and property of which are not distributable to its members or office-bearers except as reasonable compensation for services rendered" (RSA, 1997b:1[x]). The non-profit sector is commonly referred to as the third sector, after the private and government sectors (DSD, 2012). The non-profit sector is characterised by numerous organisations of varying size and scope of operations across multiple developmental and social formations. These organisations can range from community and faith-based organisations, sports and social clubs, and welfare or charity organisations to a multitude of other development and social forms of organisations (DSD, 2012; RSA 1997b).

The new welfare system of non-profit organisations retained the partnership model of social service provision that were characteristic of the apartheid welfare system, but also introduced the White Paper for Social Welfare (RSA, 1997a), which articulated a development approach to welfare services (Gray & Lombard, 2008; Habib & Taylor, 1999). Furthermore, in recognising the important role of NPOs, the Non-profit Organisations Act 71 of 1997 (NPO Act) was proclaimed (RSA, 1997b). The NPO Act was designed to be an enabling framework for NPOs that would support them in becoming robust and sustainable organisations (DSD, 2012). At present, 159 097 NPOs are registered according to the NPO Act (DSD, 2016).

i.   Non-profit Organisations Act, 71 of 1997 (NPO Act)

The NPO Act is administered by the Department of Social Development and serves three main purposes. Firstly, it qualifies organisations to establish themselves as legal structures. Secondly, it regulates the way in which such a legal structure operates, for example offering registration with the Non-profit Organisations Directorate in the Department of Social Development. Thirdly, it provides tax benefits and other incentives for NPOs to sustain themselves financially. The objective of the NPO Act is to enable NPOs to maintain adequate standards of governance and public accountability, while enjoying freedom and autonomy (DSD, 2012; RSA, 1997b). This means that NPOs should be allowed to function with independence and freedom, while still being accountable and transparent to the public and the

government for use of funds, resources and delivery of programmes; government interventions only take place when absolutely necessary.

Welfare organisations, as discussed above, fall under the jurisdiction and requirements of the Act. The NPO Act is particularly relevant for welfare organisations, as they are generally well-established organisations. This means that they have fully functioning managerial boards, multiple layers of management within the organisation, various projects, programmes and services being rendered, and the majority of them receive funding from the state as well as other prominent donors. The NPO Act is pertinent to such organisations because they are required to have certain monitoring, governance and accountability structures in place, which should aid the organisation to operate efficiently in order to optimise accountability to the public and the government.

The NPO Act is currently under review (DSD, 2012), with proposals to amend the Act in order to make it more applicable to the diverse nature of NPOs in South Africa. This however, will not have a significant impact on larger, well-established welfare organisations. The identified problems relate mainly to the issue that the NPO Act assumes a "one-size-fits-all" approach, which is impractical and inefficient, considering the great diversity of the NPO sector. The proposed changes put forward registration, monitoring, governance and accountability processes that are appropriate to the size, level of functioning and income levels of an organisation. Therefore, a risk-based and proportionate approach will be employed when dealing with NPOs when their assets, services, beneficiaries or reputation are at risk of damage or abuse (DSD, 2012).

Considering the above, there are various requirements placed on NPOs that require administrative work, monitoring and reporting. These responsibilities tend to fall onto middle management to oversee and to produce the necessary documents. Middle-management supervisors are typically more present in the day-to-day functioning of an organisation than managerial board members, and have access to financial records and authority over staff, projects and programmes. For this reason they are often responsible for the reporting and monitoring that is required by the Department of Social Development in accordance with the NPO Act (Bradley *et al*., 2010; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014). The main reporting responsibilities include written narrative and financial reports on the organisation's activities. The social work supervisor is responsible for overseeing multiple social workers, community projects and volunteers. This means that the supervisor is involved in projects and services in

which government and donor funds are spent. The supervisor would thus be responsible to report, or oversee reporting, on how funds and resources have been used; the number of service users and beneficiaries; the success of projects, programmes or interventions; and the evaluation, longevity and sustainability of services (RSA, 1997b). This can often be time consuming and stressful, as the supervisor has other numerous areas of responsibility that are urgent and require regular attention. Thus reporting and monitoring are typically regarded as a last priority and the supervisor needs to carry this additional responsibility on top of his/her already heavy workload. Furthermore, supervisors are not typically trained extensively for reporting, monitoring, evaluation and financial reporting, and these issues are not reflected in any of the South African documents on supervision (DSD & SACSSP, 2012; SACSSP, 2007).

ii.   Demarcation of NPOs

For the purpose of this study, the terms NPO, welfare NPO and non-profit welfare organisation are used interchangeably, but they refer specifically to a NPO that deals with child and family welfare and is a designated child-protection organisation, as these areas of remit are the same for the case study organisation. This means that the organisation is governed by the NPO Act (RSA 1997a), it works within the remit of the Children's Act (RSA, 2006) and it employs social workers and supervisors as its primary staff. This provides a clear context for the research, and aids in making research generalisations.

2.5.3 Social development approach to welfare services

As previously established, the social development approach significantly shapes welfare policies and social work services, and consequently also supervisory services (RSA, 1997a). Social development is viewed as a method for eradicating societal imbalances through the development of a variety of programmes, for example literacy, health and housing programmes. The foundations for the social development approach arise from the fact that the state is obliged to address inequality and discrimination in access to services and in meeting the basic needs of the population (Bak, 2004; Patel & Hochfeld, 2012). Gray (2006) clarifies these concepts by distinguishing between social development, developmental social welfare and developmental social work. *Social development* can be understood as a theory and approach to social welfare that proposes a macro-policy framework for poverty alleviation that

combines social and economic strategies. It is a process of planned social change, designed to promote the well-being of the population in conjunction with economic development (Midgley, 1995). *Developmental social welfare* is the name given to South Africa's welfare system, particularly the White Paper for Social Welfare (RSA, 1997a), which is moulded by the theory of social development. *Developmental social work* is then the type of social work that is relevant to and practised within the developmental social welfare system. Developmental social work is a contributor to social development, as it focuses on group and community work, with an emphasis on human resources (Bak, 2004). The White Paper (RSA, 1997a) expresses that South Africa needs social development, a holistic approach to dealing with social welfare issues, rather than just social work to deal with the paramount problem of poverty.

South Africa adopted a development approach to social welfare as national government policy in 1997 by means of the White Paper for Social Welfare (RSA, 1997a). The first chapter of the White Paper for Social Welfare states that "social development and economic development are two interdependent and mutually reinforcing processes", which supports and agrees with the above definitions (RSA, 1997a:1[8]). The White Paper was a means for transforming social welfare services and is operationalised by means of the Integrated Service Delivery Model (DSD, 2006b). During the apartheid era, the welfare system for whites was based on Western European institutional policies and a residual system was used for black people. This model was not only inequitable and prejudiced, but relied on micro-social work interventions and residential care (Patel, 2005; Patel & Hochfeld, 2012). Post-apartheid policies aimed to bridge the gap between micro-social work interventions, aimed at individuals and families, and macro-interventions to address the structures and institutions that cause social and economic injustice. Thus, emphasis was placed on generalist social interventions, which use multiple methods of interventions as set out in the Integrated Service Delivery Model (DSD, 2006b). In addition, there was a shift to preventative services, and community-based and community development-orientated services (Earle, 2008; Hölscher, 2008; Patel & Hochfeld, 2012).

This is a significant factor that distinguishes South African social work practices, and consequently social work supervision, from that in many other countries that do not use a social development model. In South Africa, social workers are practising generalist, not specialist, social work, and they need to deal with micro- and macro-interventions, issues and policies (DSD, 2006b). In practice this means that social workers are not only focusing on, for example, child protection, the elderly or substance abuse, but most likely are working in all areas of intervention, on all levels. In some organisations, social workers might focus on one area, for

example child protection, but they are still required to work with multifaceted problems (Bak, 2004; Gray & Mazibuko, 2002). This has a direct influence on the social work supervisors, who consequently also have to be proficient as generalist supervisors. They need appropriate knowledge of many methods, techniques and strategies for micro- and macro-interventions in order to offer effective and supportive supervision, as indicated in the Integrated Service Delivery Model (DSD, 2006b). This generalist practice is a far stretch from the clinical and specialist practice settings on which the majority of literature and research on supervision is based. For this reason, South African supervisors need policy guidelines that are relevant to their practice settings and can aid them in becoming competent generalist practitioners.

2.5.4 South African policy guidelines and legislation

South Africa does not provide many detailed guidelines for social work supervision. The two policy frameworks that focus specifically on supervision are the South African Council for Social Service Professions' (SACSSP) *Policy guidelines for course of conduct, code of ethics and the rules for social workers* (SACSSP, 2007) and the *Supervision framework for the social work profession*, initiated by the Department of Social Development (DSD) and the SACSSP (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). These policies, although helpful in outlining the basic principles and expectations of social work supervision, have significant shortcomings for addressing the practical and contextual issues that South African supervisors face in daily practice. It is important to look at these policies, as gaps in policies, supervisory training and support contribute to problems of ineffective supervision (Jacques, 2014). These two policies will be discussed below to highlight areas that relate specifically to social work supervisors in order to determine how these policies influence supervisory practices and how they contribute to the understanding and development of essential professional competencies.

    i.   <u>Policy Guidelines for Course of Conduct, Code of Ethics and the Rules for Social Workers (SACSSP, 2007)</u>

The SACSSP is the statutory body for the social service professions and their respective professional boards. The Policy Guidelines for Course of Conduct, Code of Ethics and the Rules for Social Workers (SACSSP, 2007) was implemented by the SACSSP for the Social Work Profession in order to guide the behaviours and interactions of social workers. The aim

was to ensure a basic standard of compliance and service delivery and to avoid ethical dilemmas that can occur easily because of the nature of social work interactions. Naturally, the requirements and expectations of social work supervision are also included in the Policy Guidelines.

As previously established, the Policy stipulates that only registered social workers may act as supervisors for social workers when dealing with social work matters, a situation that is not found commonly outside of the South African setting. The following is a short excerpt from the Policy (SACSSP, 2007) that touches on a few fundamentals of social work supervision:

- Supervisors should have the "necessary knowledge and skills to supervise or consult appropriately and should do so only within their areas of knowledge and competence" (SACSSP, 2007:37). This point has already been proven to be problematic within social work supervision, because supervisors do not receive sufficient, if any, training for their supervisory or managerial responsibilities (Carpenter & Webb, 2012). Furthermore, it has become impractical and unrealistic to expect supervisors to only practise within their field of knowledge and competence. They are often required to adopt a generalist approach, according to the social development paradigm, and need to oversee multiple projects, levels of staff and programmes in order for the organisation to survive the economic and workload pressures placed on NPOs (Bradley *et al*., 2010; Engelbrecht, 2010).

- Secondly, supervisors are responsible for understanding and setting "clear, appropriate and culturally sensitive boundaries" (SACSSP, 2007:37). This seems a logical requirement and necessary for the smooth functioning of the workplace and staff relationships. However, it is unlikely that the supervisor would have received training in this matter (Cloete, 2012). The outcome of this point is left at the discretion of the supervisor, who is most likely dealing with people from different cultures, such as her supervisees, colleagues on management level and the managerial board of the NPO (Bradley *et al*., 2010). Having cultural competence is critical for the supervisor to work effectively and constructively in the diverse environment of a NPO. Competence to be culturally sensitive and set appropriate boundaries is a skill that can be learnt and fostered; it cannot just be assumed that supervisors will be culturally competent (Engelbrecht, 2006b; Grus, 2013).

- Furthermore, the Policy states that supervisors should "evaluate supervisees' performance in a manner that is fair and respectful" (SACSSP, 2007:37). Performance appraisal is a significant part of the supervisors' responsibilities, but coupled with their many other responsibilities it becomes difficult for them to balance being functional managers as well as supportive supervisors (Bradley *et al*., 2010; Engelbrecht, 2010). Supervisors need to be competent to conduct performance appraisals that do not threaten the supervisory relationship, but that encourage supervisee growth and still promote the sustainability of the organisation.

- The final point on supervision is that "the supervisor could be held liable in an instance where a complaint of alleged unprofessional conduct is lodged against the supervisee" (SACSSP, 2007:38). This places enormous pressure on the supervisor to ensure that supervisees' work is of a suitable standard and within the appropriate legal boundaries. It is challenging for supervisors to focus on the education and support of the supervisee when they are buckling under the pressure of their workload, and overshadowed by the responsibility of avoiding allegations of malpractice (Bradley *et al*., 2010).

The Policy Guidelines for Course of Conduct, Code of Ethics and the Rules for Social Workers (SACSSP, 2007) offers basic guidelines for supervision. It is understandable that such a document cannot fully explain and specify the requirements and expectations placed on a social work supervisor – this is the intended purpose of the Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). Nevertheless, the guidelines are idealistic and offer very little support or guidance for supervisors who are working in the NPO context and dealing with multiple responsibilities and pressures. The Policy furthermore does not aid employers/managers of supervisors to know what "competence" looks like, or who the social work supervisor should be.

ii.   <u>Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession (DSD & SACSSP, 2012).</u>

The Supervision Framework was developed out of a perceived need for more effective social work supervision, as highlighted in the Recruitment and Retention Strategy for social workers (DSD, 2006a), in order to improve social work services. Issues such as a lack of adequate training, structural support and unmanageable workloads were identified as have a negative impact on the supervisor's ability to offer effective supervision. The Supervision Framework, however, neglects to address the abovementioned issues, which have been identified as significant obstacles to optimum social work supervision. Social workers often find themselves promoted to the position of supervisor without receive any training for the new position. Some social workers do a short module on supervision and management during their undergraduate studies, but this is not offered uniformly across all tertiary institutions (Bradley *et al*., 2010; Cloete, 2012; Earle, 2008). Supervisors need training to cope with increased job pressures, expectations and requirements, as well as to be updated with supervisory practices, models and methods. The Framework does not adequately address this issue of training and only states that supervisors "should attend a supervision course presented by an accredited service provider recognised by the SACSSP", as well as to "have a portfolio of evidence … which demonstrated social work supervision/management courses completed" (DSD & SACSSP, 2012:32). The SACSSP does not provide any information about accredited service providers, available courses or how to find information on such courses. Furthermore, there is no means of monitoring if training is taking place or whether portfolios of evidence are being kept for supervisors. If supervision were a specialisation within social work, then supervisors would need to be registered and there would be greater control over their training and expertise. This, however, is still not established and merely an ideal set out by the SACSSP (2012). Additionally, the area of training seems vague and easy to overlook when organisations and supervisors are overwhelmed with demanding workloads (Engelbrecht, 2010).

Topics that the Framework does cover include basic concepts of supervision, roles, functions, phases of supervision, models, as well as some guidelines for the norms and standards of supervision. This is helpful as a refresher for supervisors, as this is information that would be covered in a basic undergraduate course, but it does not address the real day-to-day challenges that supervisors face. The Framework also touches on supervision models, but does not explain how they are operationalised in practice. Furthermore, the Framework has an astoundingly limited bibliography on which the document is based. The bibliography is comprised of a few popular international texts (for example Kadushin and Harkness, 2014); and some international

texts that are not particularly relevant for application in the South African context (for example the Devon Partnership, Supervision Policy, G05). Also included are unpublished newsletters and master's theses (for example Ndzuta, 2009); and a very limited number of scholarly and research articles that are South African and relevant to the current context (for example Engelbrecht, 2010). This highlights two issues: firstly, that the Framework is largely based on outdated, unpublished and international texts. There are some international texts that are foundational to supervision (for example Kadushin and Harkness, 2014) and these should be included in such a document, as their value and contribution are not refuted. However, it would be ideal to see more South African texts and research reflected in the document, or even international texts that reflect similar practices and developmental approaches as used in South Africa.

The second issue is that it is evident that there is a shortage of South African literature and research on and publications in the field of social work supervision. This is not indicated in the Framework (DSD & SACSSP, 2012) or in the Retention Strategy (DSD, 2006a) as an area of concern or priority. Up-to-date, relevant and contextual research would provide insight for policy documents, such as the Framework, as well as employers, supervisors, social workers and the SACSSP, into the practical setting and experiences of social work supervisors. While this is not the focus of this study, it is an issue that is worth noting as a priority for addressing the shortcomings of supervision, and consequently of social work services.

Considering the above factors, the Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession (DSD & SACSSP, 2012) does not contribute notably to addressing the issues identified in the Recruitment and Retention Strategy (DSD, 2006a), particularly to identifying ways to increase the capacity and competence of supervisors. Addressing supervisory shortcomings will require more than an overview of theory and basic supervision techniques. Increasing capacity and competencies will require addressing how supervisors are promoted and equipped for their position, and supported to deal with managerial and supervisory requirements and pressures. If supervisors are not competent to do their job, or encouraged to develop their competencies, theories and Frameworks will make little difference in improving the situation of social work supervision.

Figure 2.3 helps to understand how the above factors influence supervision further, adding to the micro- and mesosystems discussed previously by showing how organisational factors and countries policies also are part of the system that influences the supervisor and supervision.
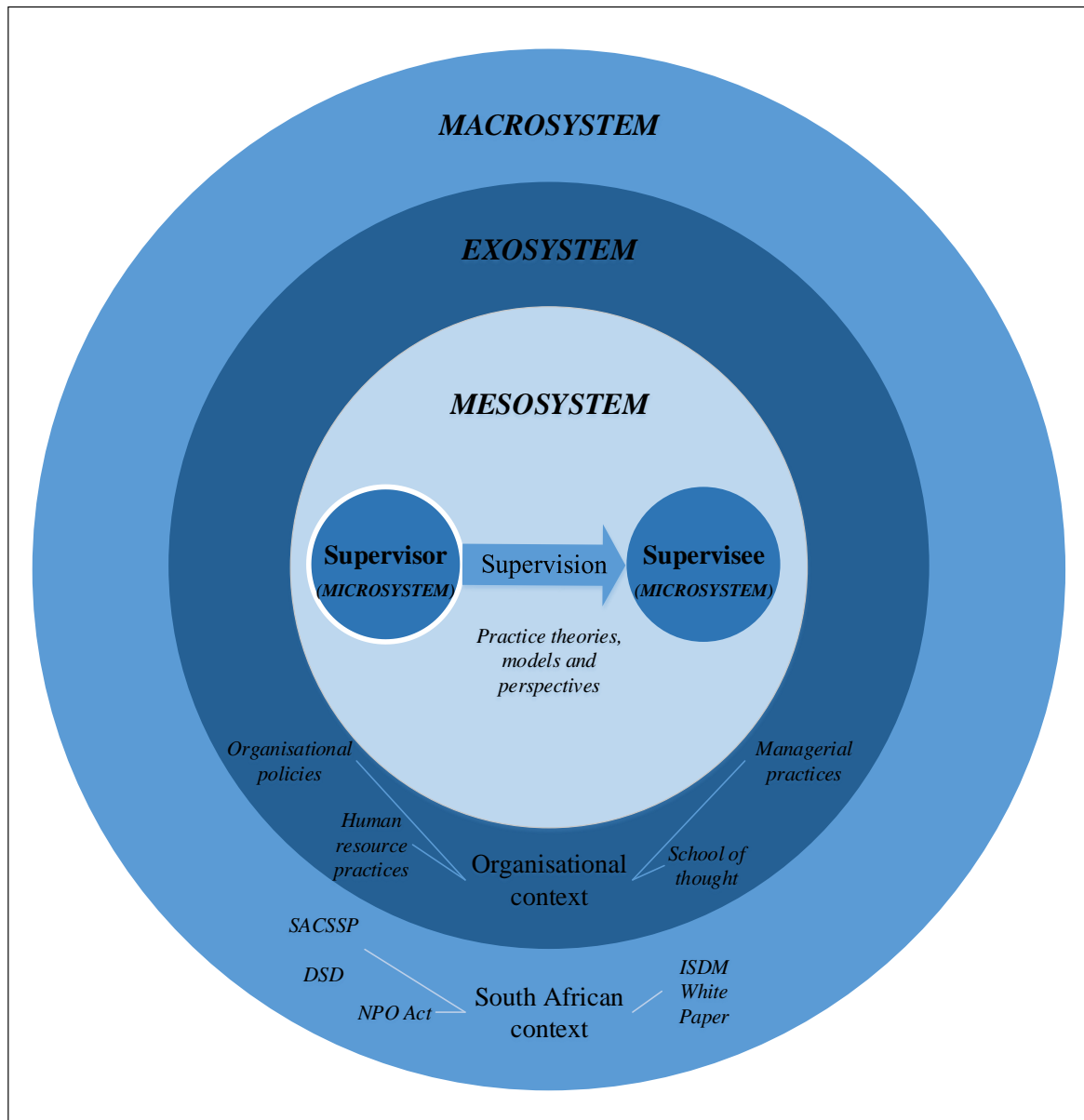
Figure 2.3: Ecosystem of supervision

The exosystem depicted in Figure 2.3 represents the organisational context. As discussed previously, the organisational context and policies have a significant influence on how supervision is conducted, how staff are managed, and what expectations are placed on the supervisor. The organisational context in this study included the school of thought on management theories and approaches, as reflected in organisational policies and mission documents. This system also affects the value that is placed on supervision and the job demands of a supervisor. This would have an influence on what essential professional competencies are expected of supervisors in order to fulfil their supervisory role in a manner that meets the requirements of the organisation and the needs of the supervisee.

The final level in the ecosystem would be the macrosystem. This is the broadest level of analysis and includes factors beyond the organisation, more specifically South African policy documents and welfare practices. These include guidelines set by the SACSSP (2007) and the DSD (DSD & SACSSP, 2012) for social work supervision, as well as the NPO Act (RSA, 1997b), and the White Paper (RSA, 1997a), which all influence social work practices and supervision. Each of these documents mentions the importance of competent practice, specifically pertaining to social work supervisors. However, little attention is paid to how competence is achieved and fostered for social work supervisors.

Within this context one needs to consider how supervisors and supervisees are managed and developed. Looking even deeper into the organisation is an approach to illustrate how supervision is conducted and what model of supervision is adopted in the organisation. The model of supervision provides insight into what essential professional competencies need to be developed within the supervisor.

2.6 CONCLUSION

Social work supervision is a complex and often overlooked aspect of social work. It is a critical feature of social work practice, and contributes to greater job satisfaction and consequently more effective and efficient social work services. It is imperative that the supervisor is competent to implement the process of supervision and to interact with the supervisee in a manner that leads to optimum practice. In order to develop and promote this competence it is necessary to understand supervision within the South African context, as outlined above. This helps to understand the pressures and expectations placed on supervisors in NPOs and how this affects their performance as supervisors.

The policy guidelines that shape supervision give significant insight into how supervision is viewed and prioritised, and also indicates many gaps in the definition of supervision and support for supervisors. These issues are further perpetuated by a strong influence from international research and policies that are far removed from the South African context of social welfare services. Reviewing these policies and understanding the context provides a foundation from which competencies can be understood and expanded upon. The definition and concepts of competence will be explored further in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE COMPETENCE MODEL AND COMPETENCIES WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF SUPERVISION BASED WITHIN A NON-PROFIT WELFARE ORGANISATION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to continue the description of the conceptual framework for understanding the essential professional competencies of social work supervisors. The previous chapter laid a foundation by providing the context of supervision in South Africa, how it is shaped by international influences, and the limitations of local policies and guidelines. The purpose of this chapter is to take a closer look at the competence model, how essential professional competencies (EPC) are defined, and what the domains of essential professional competencies are. A summary of the flow of topics for discussion is provided in Figure 3.1 below.
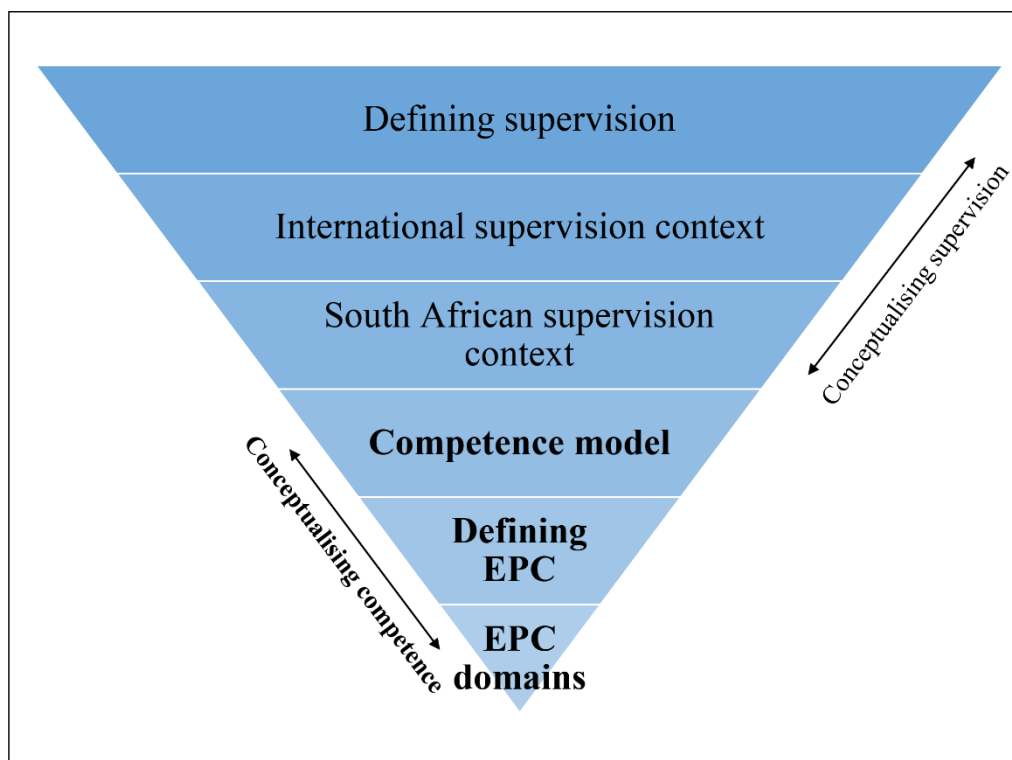
Figure 3.1: Conceptual framework

As established previously, the competence of supervisors is an area that is lacking research (Grus, 2013) and definition (DSD & SACSSP, 2012; SACSSP, 2007:37). This chapter seeks to understand how the competence model is an appropriate model not only for the process of supervision, but also to apply to supervisors in terms of their professional development and progress. With this in mind, essential professional competencies can be explored further by providing a definition that is clear and provides an underpinning on which specific domains, or categories, of competence be extrapolated. Thus the second objective of the study, which was *to analyse the competence model and the definition of competence within the parameters of supervision within a non-profit welfare organisational context*, is achieved in this chapter.

3.2 COMPETENCE THROUGHOUT THE SUPERVISORY ECOSYSTEM

Throughout Chapter 2, the analogy of an ecosystem was use to understand the various influences on the process of supervision and, more specifically, on the supervisor. The supervisor is the most basic system of the ecosystem, namely the microsystem. A variety of factors, such as the supervision process (mesosystem), the organisation context (exosystem) and the South African context (macrosystem) define and shape what competencies are essential for the social work supervisor. It is clear that professional competence is reflected in many South African policy documents, and it is expected that supervisors should be competent to conduct supervision (DSD & SACSSP, 2012; SACSSP, 2007). Throughout the ecosystems of the supervisory process, competence has been touched on and identified as significant. This is represented in Figure 3.2 below.
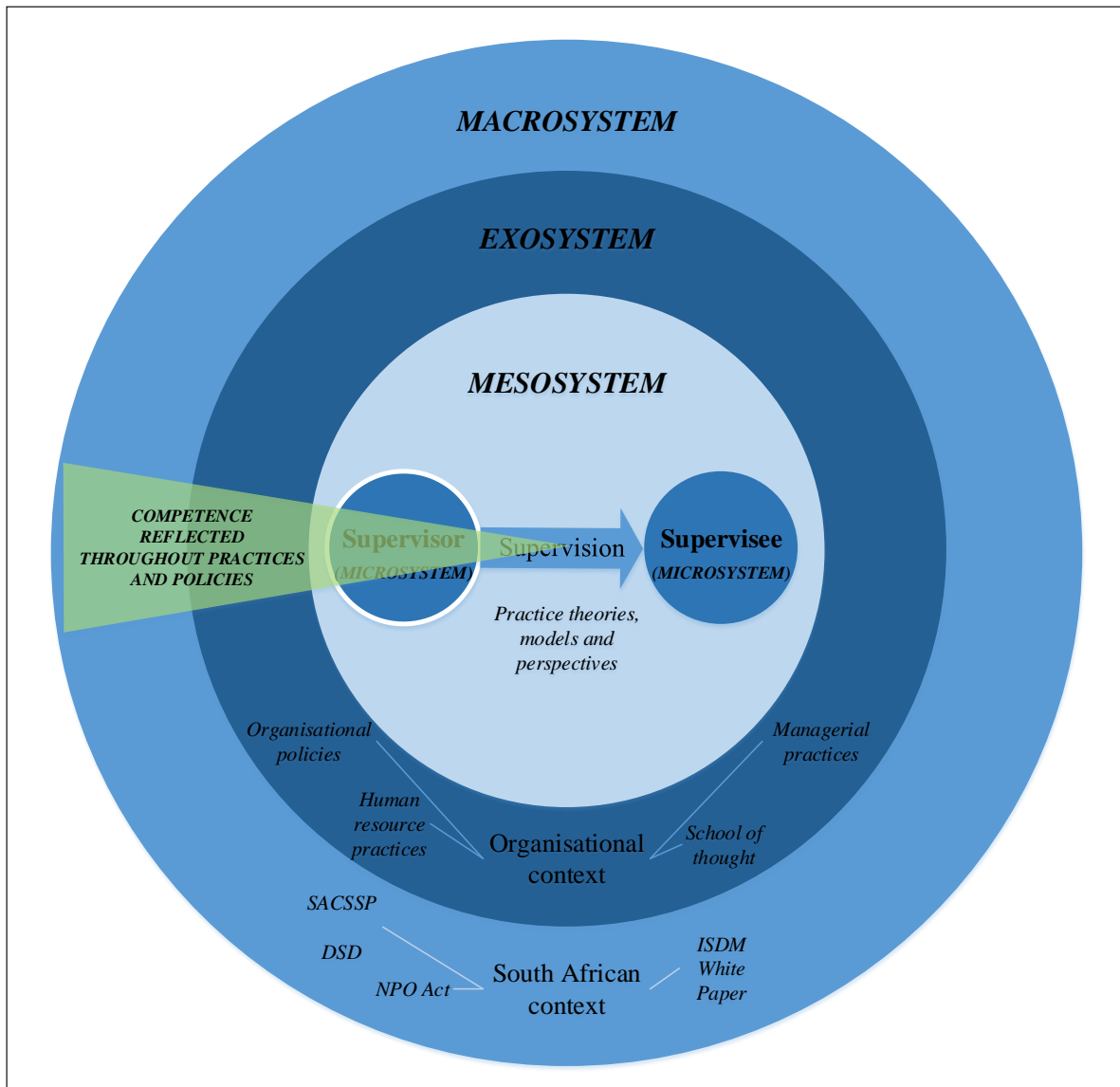
Figure 3.2: Competence reflected throughout the supervisory ecosystem

Professional competence appears to be a common factor throughout the ecosystem of supervision. However, little attention is paid to the practical identification and development of essential professional competencies. In order to pursue this further, the next step would be to investigate what essential professional competencies are and how they can be developed. This will include an exploration of the competence model, followed by a closer definition of essential professional competencies by placing them in two domains.

3.3 THE IMPORTANCE OF A COMPETENCE MODEL

A model is a tool that is used as an aid to understanding reality. Models clarify the supervisory process and can provide a common language for the supervisor, supervisee and organisation (Tsui, 2005). There are numerous models that apply to social work supervision, although all of them apply to the supervisor-supervisee relationship. These models usually apply to supervisees, how they are developed and supervised, and how supervision is conducted. This leaves a gap for models or theories that focus on the *supervisor*, and how the supervisor should be educated, developed, taught and fostered to be an effective worker. The supervisor is generally considered a middle manager, and typically would fall into organisational and managerial theories in terms of staff care, needs, development and so on (Lewis, Packard & Lewis, 2007).

The management and development of a supervisor go beyond managerial theories and practices, and have to consider the unique nature of social work and supervision. The social work supervisor is not a stagnant manager who oversees predictable workers and programmes, but is constantly evolving to meet organisational and supervisee needs. With this in mind it is critically important that the supervisor is also encouraged to develop and grow his/her professional knowledge, skills and values. This means that there has to be a focus on the supervisor, so instead of looking at the supervisor-supervisee relationship, it first is necessary to consider the *organisation-supervisor* relationship. The competence model contributes to developing supervisor competencies, ensuring continuous professional growth.

The competence model is focused on cultivating competencies in order to encourage effective and professional social work practice. A supervisor who is competent to be in a supervisory position, and possesses competence in understanding all aspects of his/her responsibilities and roles, therefore would be more valuable to a supervisee than a supervisor who is not fully competent (Žorga, 2006). As with any model, adopting a competence approach will not meet all the managerial and supervisory needs or responsibilities of the supervisor, but it will highlight the importance of developing supervisor competencies, and the fruits of this will overflow into many aspects of their work. In essence, essential professional competencies can be developed by means of a competence model.

Admittedly, the demands of reality mean that supervision, management and social work responsibilities probably are carried out on a day-to-day basis, irrespective of the particular model that is employed by the organisation. However, the use of an appropriate model, namely

the competence model, amidst the demanding environment of the NPO, would benefit the supervisor, and consequently the organisation as a whole (Guttman *et al*., 1988).

These benefits can be seen in supervisors who display the competencies they require to proficiently fulfil their responsibilities, and this has a positive effect on the supervisee. As mentioned previously, a competent supervisor will lead to a competent supervisee, which will result in a satisfied service user (Falender & Shafranske, 2004; Falender *et al*., 2004). Competent practice needs to start with the supervisor, as illustrated in Figure 3.3 below.
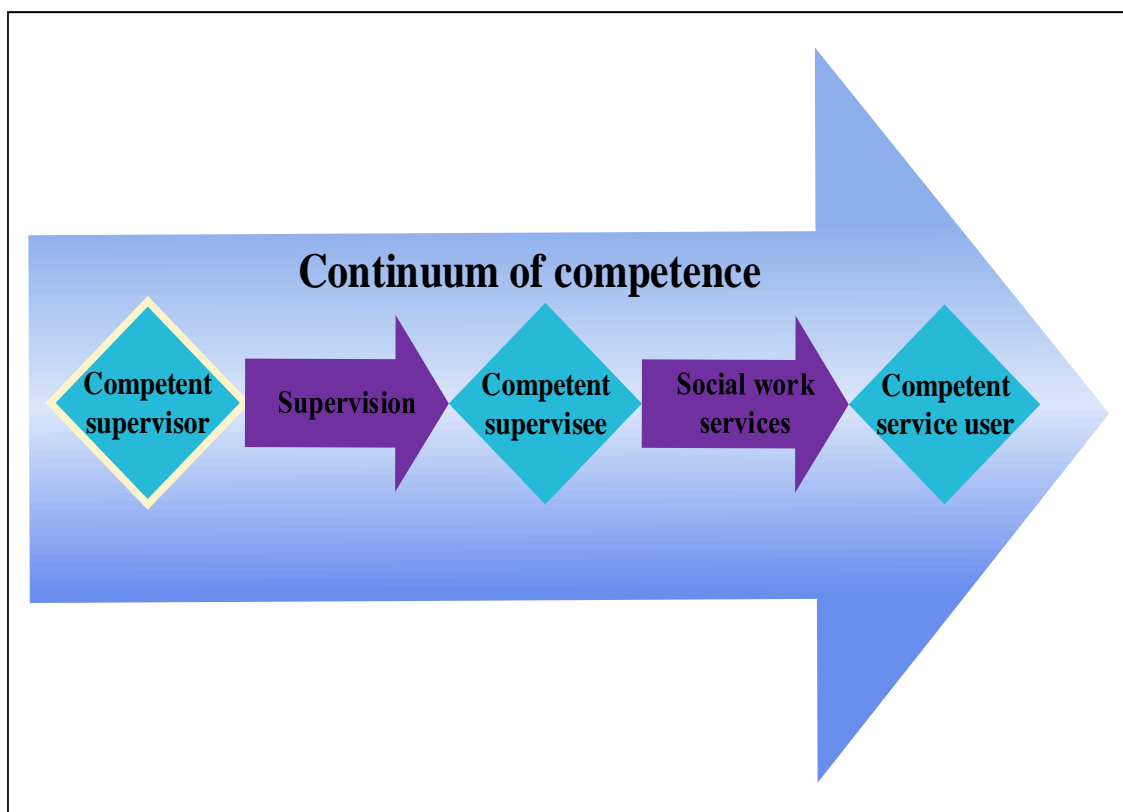
Figure 3.3: Continuum of competence

It is important that competent practice starts with the supervisor. Organisations cannot expect supervisees to be competent, and to foster service users' competence, if the supervisors are not professionally competent. Social work is a sequence of relationships and processes, starting with the supervisor and the supervision relationship, and organisations need to have a culture of competence that emphasises the importance of developing and fostering competence in all staff and activities. Essential competence needs to start here in order for it to be cultivated further down the line in the supervisee and the service user. One of the outcomes of social work services is to promote *service users'* well-being, which is achieved through empowering them to become more competent (Hepworth, Rooney, Dewberry Rooney, Strom-Gottfried & Larsen,

2010). In order to do this, the *supervisee* needs to possess essential competencies so as to offer effective and relevant services to the service users. The supervisees' competencies are developed by means of supervision by the supervisor, where the goal is to promote competent practice (SACSSP, 2007). In order for the *supervisor* to promote competence, he/she first needs to possess essential professional competencies. Thus the competent supervisor can promote competence in the supervisee; the competent supervisee can promote competence in the service user; and the service user develops and grows in his/her competencies, leading to greater empowerment and success with problem solving. Competence therefore needs to start at the beginning of the supervision process, namely with the supervisor, in order for a true competence approach to be adopted by the organisation.

In the light of the above, the competence model was explored with the goal of drawing similarities from different fields of practice to social work supervision and, more specifically, competence was considered within a South African context. As established, the model is used to promote competence, hence it can be applied to a supervisee or a supervisor, as the end result is the same, more specifically a worker who knows the right thing to do, at the right time, in the right place. This will lead to the delivery of good services, namely fruitful and efficacious supervision.

3.4 COMPETENCE MODEL

The competence model is concerned with promoting competencies in order to encourage supervisor development and growth, which consequently result in effective and professional social work practice. This can be applied to social workers and to supervisors alike, where developing competence can result in improved practice (Guttman *et al.*, 1988; Žorga, 2006). The competence model focuses on the outcomes of an activity, rather than the process followed to achieve the outcomes (Shardlow & Doel, 1996). The model is not about the process of supervision, but more how competencies can be developed by focusing on certain outcomes. The model can thus be suitably adapted to consider the supervisor, as it is not reliant on the process and phases of supervision specifically, but more on the development of the individual involved. Thus the discussion below will consider how supervisors' essential professional competencies can be developed deriving from the competence model.

Adopting the competence model requires the organisation, or senior management, to play a facilitating role, enabling supervisors to demonstrate achievement of anticipated outcomes (Engelbrecht, 2004). The emphasis should primarily be on enhancing the supervisor's *professional skills* through the use of attainable outcomes, not only measuring success and achievement by means of performance appraisals. Should the competence outcomes be used chiefly for performance appraisals, the supervisor's opportunities and openness to develop both functional and foundational competencies would be hampered.

Engelbrecht (2004) argues that the competence model is a suitable model for use in South Africa and the unique practice settings in NPOs. The model is particularly compatible with the White Paper for Social Welfare (RSA, 1997a), which proposes a welfare system that facilitates the development of human capacity, as well as having social workers who can demonstrate competencies. Furthermore, the competence model complements the standards and practices set out for social work education, as determined by the South African Qualifications Authority Act (RSA, 1995), which emphasises setting outcomes and striving towards competence.

With this in mind, the competence model is directly related to outcomes-based education (OBE). OBE focuses on the demonstration of outcomes, specific assessment criteria, retrospective planning and facilitation (Engelbrecht, 2014a). Similarly, the competence model focuses on the outcomes of supervision and how these outcomes are reached. In this respect, supervisors have to demonstrate their accomplishment of a set of outcomes relating to their supervisory and managerial responsibilities. According to Engelbrecht (2004), this once again is a suitable approach for supervision and education within the South African context, as it is relevant to the context and situation of workers and organisations alike. Thus, developing competencies should be interpreted as empowerment from a strengths perspective, according to a situationally relevant and theoretically accountable competence model.

Guttman *et al*. (1988) identify four categories according to which competencies are differentiated. These are intellectual competence, performance competence, personal competence and consequence competence. These competencies are directly related to the professional responsibilities of supervisors and the successful fulfilment of their position. These general categories are discussed below in order to provide a foundation for understanding how competencies can be developed. There will be a more detailed discussion of the definition and domains of competencies towards the end of the chapter.

1. *Intellectual competence* is concerned with knowing what to do, when to do it and with whom to do it. The emphasis is on developing knowledge that is practical and useful, as well as utilising more abstract knowledge. The desired competencies in this category firstly need to be identified and described, then the supervisor creates opportunities to practise them and should be able to demonstrate them, for example communication skills. Supervisors should also be able to adapt their competencies based on environmental demands. This is particularly relevant for a supervisor who has multiple supervisees in an NPO, because it is likely that the supervisees have diverse learning styles and have different work specialities and demands. This means that supervisors need to be competent to adjust their own skills and competent to meet the educational and supportive needs of each supervisee. Transferring knowledge and altering skills are central aspects of the competence model. Being competent in knowing what knowledge to apply to particular people and circumstances therefore is the competence that is being developed (Engelbrecht, 2004; Guttman *et al*., 1988).

2. *Performance competence* involves understanding how to act in any given situation. The supervisor needs to learn to appraise a situation, think of different activities that might be useful in handling the situation, and weigh the benefits and costs of particular responses in order to bring about the desired results. The supervisor should be able to assess the impact of systems in the environment, thus focusing on an ecological perspective. The strengths in the environment should be facilitated, while limitations must be inhibited. The supervisor learns how to use relevant information about situations to generate responses to them, whilst evaluating which response would be more effective. Through this, supervisors must be able to critically evaluate their performance and actions in order to use the knowledge at their disposal (Engelbrecht, 2004; Germain & Gitterman, 1996; Guttman *et al*., 1988). To summarise, being competent to act in a variety of situations by using the most appropriate and effective responses is the competence that is being developed.

3. *Personal competence* consists of the supervisor understanding him/herself and the desire for self-development. Typically, personal competence would be developed in the reciprocal relationship between the supervisor and the supervisee (in developing supervisee competence); however, in the supervisors' context they are less likely to be in a regular, interactive relationship with a senior manager in order to develop personal competence. For the supervisor, personal competence is about self-awareness regarding

personal understanding of work situations and activities. The supervisor needs to be open to opportunities that will enhance self-awareness and should welcome occasions for learning and professional development (Engelbrecht, 2004; Guttman *et al*., 1988). Being able to self-reflect, show self-awareness and create opportunities for learning and growth thus comprise the competence that is being developed.

4. *Consequence competence* involves supervisors being able to determine the effectiveness of their interventions, and this takes place on two levels. The first level focuses on supervisors making an ecological assessment to determine the extent to which their interventions have influenced the interaction between systems, and whether development has taken place or not. The second level focuses on the extent to which intervention goals have been achieved. On this level, the supervisor would decide at the outset what the desired outcomes are, and then measure the degree to which these outcomes have actually been achieved (Engelbrecht, 2004; Guttman *et al*., 1988). Therefore, the competence that is being developed is the ability to evaluate interventions and development based on predetermined outcomes and intervention plans.

The supervisor should aim to develop competence in all four of these areas in order to work at a high level of effectiveness. These competencies can be developed through intentional interactions and proactive self-awareness, as explained by the three approaches below.

3.4.1 Approaches for developing competencies

Guttman *et al*. (1988) suggest that developing competencies involves a combination of capacity and skills, aspects of motivation and the qualities of the environment, which all contribute to the achievement of tasks and goals. These aspects can be further understood in the light of the theoretical approaches discussed below. These approaches underlie the competence model and show different ways in which competencies can be fostered. The three approaches discussed below, as originally examined by Webb (1983), are specifically identified because they are relevant to social work practice, and more specifically to the supervisor. Additionally, these theoretical approaches encompass the categories and definitions of competence addressed above and that will be elaborated on further in this chapter.

3.4.1.1 Nurturing/average acceptable environment – Heinz Hartmann (1958)

The concept of a nurturing environment refers to the nature of environmental conditions that either facilitate or discourage growth. The nurturing environment provides opportunities for supervisors that are consonant with their professional growth and maturational needs, and also consists of stimuli that are neither excessive nor deficient for optimal development (Webb, 1983). This means that the environment, which is controlled by the organisation, needs to be tuned in to the supervisors' needs. It needs to be aware of the supervisors' learning needs and try to provide for these in an individualised manner.

The supervisors' past experience can produce a variety of feelings about their competence. These experiences need to be identified with the goal of recognising the supervisors' learning patterns and planning appropriate experiences that foster professional growth. This suggests the purposive use of the environment in the process of developing supervisors' competencies. This is achieved when senior management, together with the supervisor, strive to establish a compatible learning environment that is focused on recognising the supervisors' increasing acquisition of knowledge and mastery of skill. This recognition heightens the supervisors' sense of efficacy and competence, linking with White's (1959) theories, and provides the nurturing climate for growth.

3.4.1.2 Theory of competence motivation – Robert White (1959)

White (1959) believes that individuals are innately driven to "have an effect", which compels them to interact with their environment because of the pleasure resulting from such an experience. The individual develops a sense of efficacy and ability from the successful impact of their actions, and this contributes to a sense of competence and self-esteem. The supervisor feels reinforced to repeat these experiences of efficacy, thus they are learning through doing, in other words "success breeds more success". Competence motivation can be mobilised and supported by providing opportunities for successful action (Germain & Gitterman, 1996). This is supported by Hartmann's (1958) notion of the nurturing environment, in which the environment is tuned to the supervisor's needs and creates opportunities to learn new skills. It is also important to encourage competence in mastering new skills to encourage growth, instead of only looking for opportunities in which the supervisor repeats old skills.

Thus supervisors should identify areas of competence practice in their area of work, as well as new areas in which they would like to, or need to, succeed. According to White's (1959) theory, one competent experience motivates the supervisor to continue on a success course. Supervisors should be encouraged to work within their strengths and look for areas of achievement, so that meaningful practice will be encouraged. Focusing on competence and learning experiences makes it easier for supervisors to self-evaluate and critique their own work. Genuine appreciation of areas of competence can reframe negative feedback into an expectation for ongoing growth (Webb, 1983).

3.4.1.3 Communication – Virginia Satir (1983)

Satir's (1983) ideas about feedback, metacommunication and congruent-incongruent messages originate from her work on family therapy, but have been applied to the setting of supervision because they are critical aspects of the supervisory process and relationship (Webb, 1983). As Gebhard (1984) states, communication between people can be understood by focusing on the process rather than the content, thus Satir's work is transferrable to social work supervision.

Communication is vital to the supervisory process, since understanding depends on the accurate reception of messages being transmitted. Successful supervision depends on the effective communication of the supervisor and the supervisee. Metacommunication (a message about the message) is central to understanding communication. Metacommunication conveys the sender's attitude, feelings and intentions, and also punctuates and explains the real, and possibly hidden, messages to the receiver (Rasheed, Rasheed & Marley, 2011). There should be congruence between the communication and the metacommunication so that there are no conflicting messages. Congruence signifies harmonic understanding between the giver and receiver of the message. Incongruent communication results in strained supervisor-supervisee relationships, as well as organisation-supervisor relationships.

Satir (1983) claims that discrepancies and contradictions in communication and metacommunication can result in feelings of inadequacy, and subsequently lead to feelings of low self-esteem. This has a domino effect onto one's feelings of competence. Both parties, for example the supervisor and organisation, should respond to each other in ways that enhance each other's self-esteem. Enhanced self-esteem can lead to increased levels of self-help, self-discovery and growth potential. This ties in with White's (1959) concepts of competence

motivation. Successful and congruent communication can lead to enhanced self-esteem regarding one's competencies, and promote a secure environment in which to practise new competencies. Communication should be open by allowing for feedback and reflection, similar to Hartmann's (1958) nurturing environment concept. Managerial meetings should be structured in a way that promotes competence in the supervisor by means of congruent communication.

By creating learning opportunities through a nurturing environment, open communication and encouraging self-efficacy and motivation, professional competencies can be nurtured and developed. Based on this foundation for understanding competencies and how they can be fostered, it is now possible to take a more in-depth look at how competencies are defined in terms of essential professional competence.

3.5 DEFINING COMPETENCE

Due to the nature of the concept of competence it has numerous definitions and applications, depending on the professional field and context (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Orr, Sneltjies & Dai, 2010; Wimpfheimer, 2004). Some would argue that a true definition of competence cannot be provided (Stoof, Martens, Van Merriënboer & Bastiaens, 2002). This is because it is easier to identify competence in its absence than it is to specify what a proficient level of competent practice involves. Thus the definition of competence should be tailored specifically to the context and profession in which it is being applied (Kitchener, 2000). This can further be understood by defining competencies as the skills, behaviours or qualities that contribute to success within a given context. Depending on the requirements for success, different sets of competencies make up different skills sets (Orr *et al*., 2010). Competencies therefore can be applied to many disciplines, and for the purpose of this study will be defined in terms of the competencies that are essential for social work supervisors.

There is general consensus that competence is about *knowing* what to do, at what time and with whom. It is about being able to use communication, knowledge, technical skills, reasoning and reflection in daily practice for the benefit of the individual (supervisee) and the community being served (social work service user). Competence is the capability and demonstrated ability of a person to understand and perform tasks in an appropriate and effective manner that is consistent with his/her level of professional training and education (Kaslow, 2004). The

competent supervisor should be able to *understand and perform tasks* consistent with his/her professional qualification, be sensitive to cultural and individual differences and *promote optimum practice* in the supervisee (Epstein & Hundert, 2002; Guttman *et al.*, 1988; Žorga, 2007). This reflects a holistic and integrated approach to competence. The integrated approach recognises that competence is a combination of knowledge, attitudes and skills, while the holistic approach acknowledges the cultural and social context in which competencies are applied (Bloom, Engelhart, Furst, Hill & Krathwohl, 1956; Falender *et al.*, 2004; Genuchi, Rings, Germek & Erickson Cornish, 2015; Orr *et al.*, 2010).

Further to the definition, competent practice must yield results that can be observed and measured to a degree. Appropriate and effective action requires review, critical thinking, and ensuring that competencies are carried out according to set standards and guidelines, thus achieving outcomes as described by the competence model. These results allow for supervisors, along with their actions and competencies, to be managed in a constructive way within the organisation (Parry, 1996; Rodolfa, Eisman, Rehm, Bent, Nelson & Ritchie, 2005).

3.5.1 Perimeters of the competence definition

The term competence is associated with many other related terms, such as performance, ability, knowledge and qualification. This leads to confusion about the meaning of competence and how to purposefully define it and apply it to a situation or profession. With this in mind, a brief discussion will follow to differentiate competence from some terms that are commonly used interchangeably, as identified by Stoof *et al.* (2009).

1. *Competence versus characteristics*: Characteristics refer to personality descriptors and traits, for example decisiveness, self-esteem or taking initiative. It is very difficult to develop or train such traits. Naturally, social workers are assumed to have a certain level of values, principles and ethics, which are enhanced and encourage through basic education, for example Biestek's principles (Hingham, 2006) and ethical guidelines as set out by the SACSSP (2007). If certain traits are important for a position, for example a social work supervisor, then these would be sought during the recruitment process. They are very difficult to assess or develop. Managers of supervisors and social workers alike focus on appraisals of competent performance, not on psychoanalytical

explanations of the supervisor's or supervisee's behaviour (Parry, 1998). Thus, a definition of competence would not include characteristics or personality traits.

2. *Competence versus knowledge, skills and attitudes*: It is difficult to discern whether these concepts are related to competence or not, particularly as they become more intrinsic features. Skills refer to doing something, an action that is much easier to assess than intrinsic competencies. Skills are specific and situational, whereas competencies are more generic and allow for more opportunities for them to be applied (Parry, 1996; Parry, 1998). On the other hand, it is less clear whether attitudes contribute to competence or not. It is still possible for a supervisor to be competent in his/her job, regardless of personal or professional attitudes (Stoof *et al*., 2009). However, poor attitudes could affect job performance and consequently competence, but it is not obvious how one teaches and assesses attitudes. Knowledge needs to be combined with skill in order for it to reflect true competence; in other words, knowledge must translate into the ability to apply the knowledge in the supervision process for competence to be observed (Association of Social Work Boards, 2009). For example, a supervisor might have knowledge of how to conduct group supervision sessions, but never actually have practised the skill of doing it. Therefore, a definition of competence would include a combination of knowledge and attitudes that are translated into skills.

3. *Competence versus performance*: Performance is directly observable, whereas competence is inferred from performance because it is not directly observable. Competence is performance that is effective. This means that an activity can be conducted and completed, but if not done well this does not reflect competence. For example, a supervisor is required to write a report on a programme. The completion of the report, thus getting the job done, indicates that the performance is complete, but does not indicate the quality thereof. However, if the report is thorough, detailed and insightful, it would indicate competence in performing the required job (Stoof *et al*., 2009). Thus, a competence definition would include expectations of outputs that indicate performance, which would indicate optimum practice.

4. *Competence versus qualification*: To clarify, within the South African context, supervisors must be trained and registered social workers (SACSSP, 2007). Social work supervisors, however, are not required to have any specific training in the area of

supervision (Bradley *et al*., 2010). The social work qualification does not necessarily make a supervisor competent. Training in supervision might make a supervisor more effective in his/her job, but a qualified person is not necessarily competent. While training does lead to increased knowledge and opportunities to identify and work toward competence, it does not make one competent (Falender *et al*., 2004). The qualification in this aspect is incorporated into the definition of competence in that a supervisor must be a qualified social worker and provides a particular view of what a social worker and supervisor are, and that criteria would be included as evidence for competence (Stoof *et al*., 2009). For example, if a supervisor only has a social work degree, then his/her level of competence can only be compared and evaluated against the training received. Should a supervisor attend training specifically related to supervision, then the level of evaluation and standards of practice would be more specifically related to supervision activities, outcomes and practical knowledge. Training allows for the integration of knowledge with technical skills and professional values. Thus, it is important to consider the stage of professional development at which the supervisors are, and their years of experience as social workers and supervisors, which will indicate which competencies they should be able to master.

3.5.2 Definition of competence

Considering the above discussions and limitations of competence, the following diagram represents how competence is defined as part of a process.
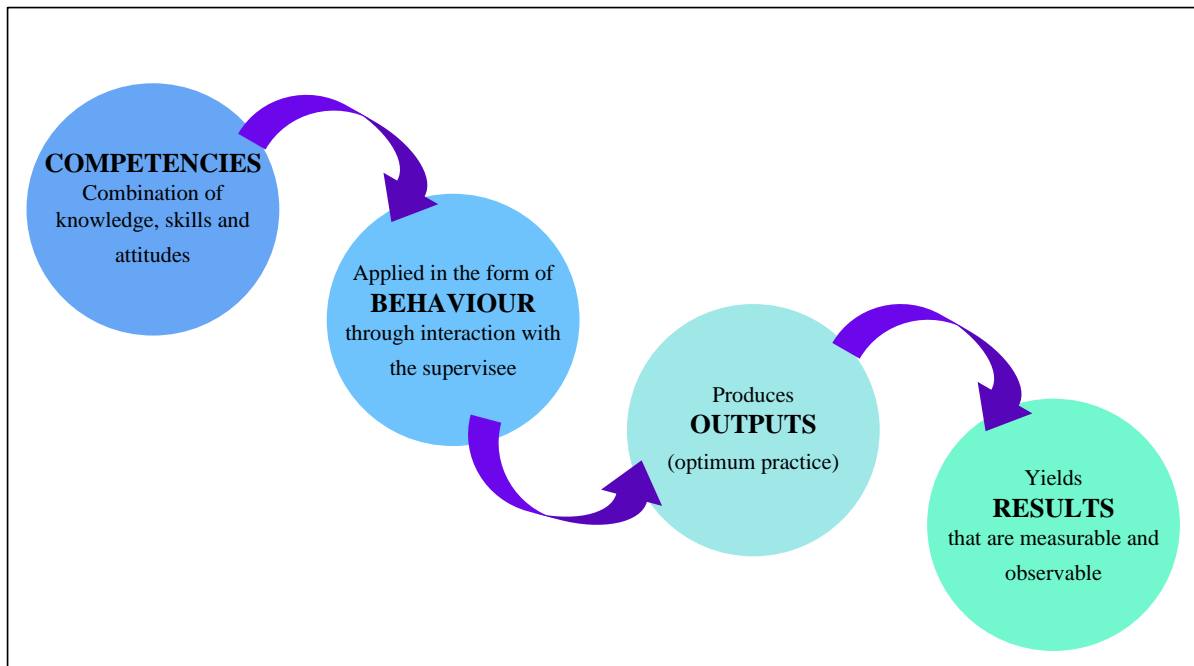
Figure 3.4: Definition of competence (adapted from Parry, 1996)

Competence can thus be understood as a combination of knowledge, attitudes and skills that are critical to the supervisor's job and affect a major part of the job. These competencies are practised through interaction with the supervisee. These competent behaviours lead to outputs, namely optimum service provision to the supervisee. This all yields results that indicate the achievement of outcomes. These results also allow for feedback on which competences are necessary for the supervisor to successfully achieve optimum practice (adapted from Kaslow, 2004; Parry, 1996). Thus, although this study aims to identify and explain some of the essential professional competencies of supervisors, they only truly become competencies, and the supervisor competent, once the knowledge is combined with skills and put into practice.

Furthermore, it is also important to bear in mind that essential professional competencies are those competencies that are considered indispensable for supervisors to succeed within their position. There are many competencies that one should possess in order to interact successfully with people, and many competencies that supervisors should have in accordance with the social work profession. The purpose of this study is not to explore the plethora of competencies supervisors could possess, but specifically the professional competencies that are essential for them to succeed at supervision. This is explored whilst considering the context of the supervisor within an NPO setting in South Africa. Based on this understanding, and the above definitions and parameters, it is now possible to look at more specific types of categories and how these can be identified and applied to the social work supervisor in the workplace.

3.5.3 Competence domains

Competencies are often clustered into professional and personal categories. These competencies have also been referred to as hard and soft; personal and task; input and process; and behavioural and vocational competence (Parry, 1996; Stoof *et al*., 2009). These categories typically imply that the worker, in this case the supervisor, should possess professional competencies for the successful fulfilment of his/her work responsibilities, and then softer, intrinsic competencies that are personality traits. While personality traits can contribute to professional success, they are difficult to identify and to develop. Furthermore, you could have two supervisors with opposite personality traits, for example creative and conforming, but both are good at supervision. This approach to competence suggests that the professional categories are essential and the personal categories of competencies ideal for the person, but not for the job. For the purpose of this research, essential professional competencies needed to fulfil the definition of competence discussed above, namely a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes that lead to optimum practice. With this in mind, competencies can still be put into two categories, both of which are essential for the social work supervisor. These categories are identified as functional and foundational competence domains (Kaslow *et al*., 2012; Rodolfa *et al*., 2005).

These domains of competence are the domains of professional activity in which competencies are developed and applied. They are clusters of knowledge and skills that are used for the professional practice of social work supervision. In other words, the domains reflect the *professional activity in which competence is developed and applied*. Foundational competencies are, as indicated by their name, the underpinning of what supervisors do and how they can do it successfully, for example emotional intelligence and cultural competence. Knowledge and skills within the foundational domain provide the groundwork for supervisors to acquire functional competency (Rodolfa *et al*., 2005). They do not include the basic principles and practices of social work; this should be the foundation for any social worker, especially one who is promoted to, or in the position of, supervisor. Functional competencies involve the day-to-day services provided by supervisors. These could include the skills that make, for example, assessments, contracting and performance appraisals a success (Engelbrecht, 2014a). Foundational and functional competencies affect one another, meaning that the absence of a competence in one domain would make the successful application of a competence in another domain more challenging. The supervisor needs to be competent in both the functional and foundational domains of competencies. These competencies are not personal

characteristics or attributes that make a person amicable, but are the essential professional competencies that contribute to achieving the outcomes set for the job. They are tangible and observable abilities that can be taught, learned, nurtured and developed, and that are critical to the success of supervision.

Furthermore, as previously explained in terms of the ecological perspective, changes in the environment could lead to changes in the foundational and functional domains, as the supervisor needs to adapt to the demands and expectations of the environment. This should result in the acquisition of new knowledge and skills. The following two chapters will explore more specific foundational and functional competencies that are consider essential for social work supervisors.

It is necessary to note that Rodolfa *et al*. (2005) undertook a comprehensive study on foundational and functional competencies for clinical psychology. As previously established, clinical psychology cannot fully be translated or applied to social work supervision practices in South Africa, but there are some links that can be made and similarities that can be drawn. Furthermore, it has been established that there is limited literature and research in this field, thus it is necessary to use literature from other fields to provide insight into the topic being explored. Although this research into the essential professional competencies of social work supervisors also uses the terms foundational and functional competencies, they are not based on the categorisation or domains as defined by Rodolfa *et al*. (2005), unless where specifically stated. This research study has selected terminology that is most appropriate for the topic, and classified the foundational and functional competencies according to the unique South African context of social work supervision.

3.5.4 The impact of a neoliberal discourse on the competencies of a supervisor

The negative impact of neoliberal practices has become a popular research topic for the field of social work (Bradley *et al*., 2010; Ferguson & Lavalette, 2006; Spolander *et al*., 2014). It is important to note that the competence model in this context does not conform to neoliberal tendencies and approaches. Neoliberal ideas are based on concepts from market economics, where competition, freedom of choice and evaluations will result in more effective interventions. There is emphasis on achieving outcomes, and relational aspects are of less importance (Bradley *et al*., 2010; Harvey, 2007). This is reflected in NPO practices, in which

priority is placed on the administrative function of supervision, with high levels of accountability linked to performance management and efficiency measures (Engelbrecht, 2012b; RSA, 1997b). While the competence model is also associated with setting outcomes, the outcomes are not primarily purposed for performance appraisal and control over the worker (Guttman *et al*., 1988). Competence outcomes are more specifically tailored to the individual worker, his/her learning needs, professional aspirations and skill development. These outcomes might be related to specific tasks and responsibilities in the worker's daily job, but the focus remains on the development of the worker as opposed to accountability to the organisation. Engelbrecht (2004) supports this notion by suggesting that the competence model is about empowerment from a strengths perspective, which is contradictory to neoliberal practices.

3.5.5 Benefits of developing supervisor competencies

It is clear from the above discussions that developing supervisor competencies is the joint responsibility of the organisation and the supervisor personally. The organisation should allow time and opportunities for the supervisor to focus on developing competencies, as well as include the setting of competence outcomes as part of the job expectations of the supervisor. The supervisor, in turn, is responsible for identifying areas in which they can grow and develop competencies, and for creating opportunities and situations that encourage positive competence motivation. Allowing supervisors opportunities to develop in competence has manifold benefits. Not only will the supervisor be competent to provide the best quality supervision of the supervisee, and consequently affect the service users' experiences, but there are also organisational and professional benefits, as discussed below:

1. *The supervisor* who adopts a competence approach is developing his/her professional knowledge and skills in the field of social work in order to provide relevant and appropriate supervisory services. This means that supervisors and supervisees alike are constantly maturing and evolving according to the needs of the organisational and political environment, as well as the findings and recommendations of academic research. This is essential, as social workers need to remain educated and on top of new academic developments. For this reason, the SACSSP introduced continuing professional development as a means to ensure that professionals keep pace with developments and advances in their discipline and field of practice (SACSSP, 2010). Using a competence approach would ensure that continuous professional development

is taking place in a way that benefits the supervisor, the supervisee, the service user and the organisation.

2. *The supervisee* benefits enormously from having a competent supervisor. Supervision plays a vital role in supervisee job performance, satisfaction and motivation (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; Tsui, 2005). If the supervisee is offered administrative, educational and emotional support from a competent supervisor, and encouraged to develop his/her competencies and thus also pursue continuous professional development (SACSSP, 2010), he/she will be fully equipped and competent to work efficiently and effectively (DSD, 2006a). A competent supervisor should be able to identify the supervisee's strengths and encourage him/her to use these capabilities in practice, as well as be able to address weaknesses tactfully (Newman, 2010). The supervisee thus benefits from having a competent supervisor and also benefits from being encouraged to grow and develop professionally.

3. *The service user* is the indirect beneficiary of adopting a competence model in managing supervisors and supervisees. The supervisor who is competent is able to use his/her skills and knowledge to promote optimum practice in the supervisee. This means that the supervisee is offering the best possible service to the service user. The service user thus benefits from having a social worker who is competent, knows what to do and how to do it to the advantage of the client, thus leading to greater service user satisfaction (Guttman *et al.*, 1988; O'Donoghue & Tsui, 2011).

4. *The organisation* benefits by developing supervisors' essential professional competencies through a competence model because a focus on developing competencies, and consequently achieving specific outcomes, leads to a higher level of accountability of the worker to the organisation and a higher quality of work. Such a model focuses on quality improvement, meaningful measurement of outcomes and a continuous learning process (Belar, 2009). It becomes easier for the organisation to monitor how the supervisor and supervisee are progressing and achieving tasks, without a heavy focus on performance reviews but instead focusing on outcomes and how they can successfully be achieved. Performance management is not the primary focus of the model, but rather an indirect benefit of promoting supervisor competence. This means that all workers are working optimally, service users are most likely to be satisfied with the services provided, and there is a high level of accountability within the organisation.

Accountability, as well as effective and efficient services, is significant for the organisation for keeping with NPO requirements, particularly with regard to reporting, which was previously established as a necessity for NPO registration (RSA, 1997b).

3.6 CONCLUSION

In aiming towards defining essential professional competencies it is necessary to look at how competencies are developed and how they are demarcated. It is not logical to expect supervisors to possess essential competencies if they are not given the opportunity to learn and develop their competencies. The competence model provides a tool for understanding how competencies can be developed within the supervisor by providing opportunities for him/her to learn by setting realistic outcomes and achieving them successfully. Increased learning and motivation for the job will be beneficial to the supervisee and the organisation.

Through understanding the competence model the concept of competence can be described more clearly. It is evident that competence comprises a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes, which are observable through the behaviour of the supervisor and which result in the achievement of outcomes. By categorising competencies into functional and foundational competencies, it becomes easier to pinpoint what professional competencies are essential for the social work supervisor. Functional and foundational competencies will be discussed further in the following two chapters.

CHAPTER 4

ESSENTIAL FOUNDATIONAL COMPETENCIES FOR SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISORS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Functional and foundational competencies are complementary to each other. Each one is more effective within the presence and application of the other. This means that functional competencies are most effective when practised and applied alongside foundational competencies. Because of the interrelatedness of the two categories of competencies, there may be some instances where foundational and functional competencies overlap (Belar, 2009). This shows how competent practice is a fusion of practical, professional and personal knowledge and skills, and the supervisor needs to possess both foundational and functional competencies in order to be a proficient supervisor.

Foundational competencies are the underpinning of what social work supervisors do and how they do it successfully. They are the groundwork for functional competencies and contribute to the professional growth and performance of the supervisor (Rodolfa *et al*., 2005). The purpose of this chapter thus is to explore the foundational competencies that are considered essential for social work supervisors. Foundational competencies are more intrinsic than functional competencies, and they can be harder to assess and train. However, they still comply with the definition of competence provided in Chapter 3 and are critical for the supervisor.

This chapter explores which foundational competencies are indispensable for the social work supervisor, particularly in the NPO setting. This will be done by exploring foundational competencies such as emotional intelligence, anti-discriminatory supervision, professional relationships and ethical competencies. As in the previous chapters, this chapter will also follow the flow of discussion from the broadest variable to the most specific. This is depicted in Figure 4.1 below:
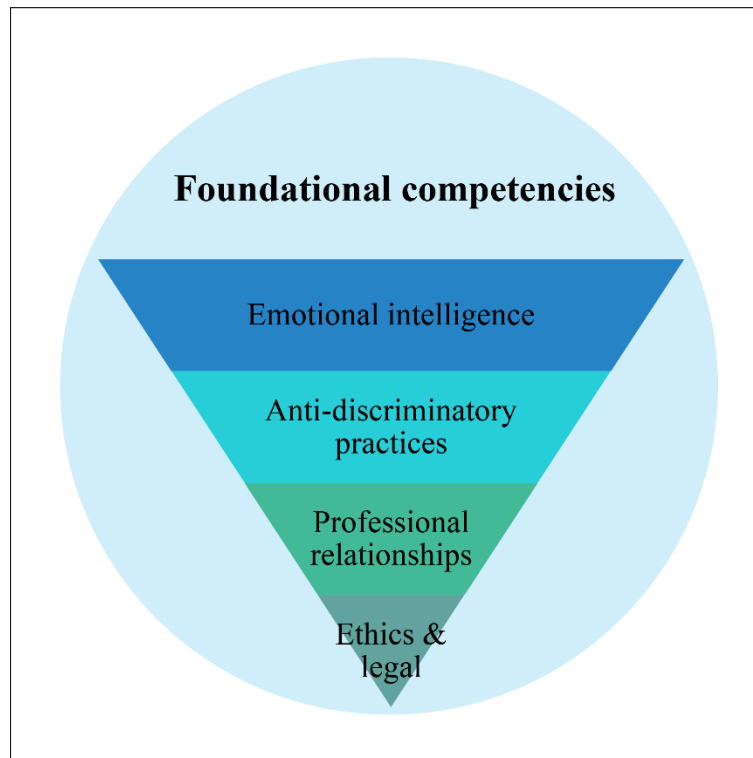
Figure 4.1: Foundational competencies

Figure 4.1 shows how the flow of foundational competencies will be discussed in this chapter. These four areas of competencies will not be discussed to their full extent. Each competence is far too intricate to explain and explore fully. Instead, the main aspects that are relevant to the social work supervisor will be discussed. All of the competencies that have been identified are considered essential in ensuring that supervisors are optimally competent to fulfil their role as social work supervisors within an NPO setting. Although there are many foundational competencies that could be regarded as essential, these four competencies have been identified on the grounds of the central role that they play in social work supervision, as identified in prominent research and literature (Harrison & Turner, 2011; Morrison, 2007; Pullen-Sansfaçon, 2014; Rodolfa *et al*., 2005). They are also identified as critical because they are each identified by various authors as a necessary competence for social work and supervisors (Engelbrecht, 2006b; Fouad *et al*., 2009; Martin, 2014). There are other competencies that are important for supervisors at this level, for example workplace wellness and adult education. However, these competencies, amongst others, were not as prominent in the research and literature as the ones identified for this chapter. As established previously, there are many competencies that supervisors need to possess, but this study focuses only on the ones that are deemed essential for social work supervisors. This chapter thus fulfils objective three of the

study, which was *to explore and synthesise essential foundational competencies regarding the inherent knowledge, skills and values of supervisors for the supervision of social workers*.

4.2 EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Emotions are at the centre of social work services. The service user's problems and experiences are tied in with his/her emotions and emotional well-being. Awareness of emotions helps the supervisee and supervisor to be more empathic and to build a genuine relationship with the service user. Supervision is also tied to emotions because focus is placed on the emotional support of supervisees, as well as on optimising the emotional functioning of the supervisee, which is linked to higher performance outcomes (Howe, 2008; Martin, 2014). For these reasons, emotional intelligence (EI) is not only necessary for the social worker, but also for the supervisee. Before supervisors can support supervisees in developing their EI, it is important that they first attend to their own EI. In addition, research (Martin, 2014) shows that high levels of EI lead to greater work performance, satisfaction and problem-solving ability and a reduction in stress. These are all attributes that a supervisor should also possess. Thus EI is an essential competence that is necessary for the supervisor's professional development and functioning, as well as for the benefit of the supervisee (Martin, 2014; Morrison, 2007; Rahkar Farshi, Vahidi & Jabraeili, 2015). To add to this, Martin (2014) states that emotional intelligence is compatible with concepts of supervision and the social development paradigm, thus reaffirming the relevance of this as an essential professional competence.

4.2.1 Brief definition of EI

Now that is has been established that EI can be considered an essential professional competence for social work supervisors, it is important to understand some of the factors that make up the concept. On the most basic level, EI is considered the ability to understand ourselves and other people as emotional beings (Goleman, 2006). This allows an understanding of how emotions affect behaviours, beliefs, thoughts and perceptions. How we adjust, modify and regulate our emotions as we relate with others is a central element of EI. This is achieved by using emotional information from ourselves and others, integrating it with our thinking, and using this information to guide our decisions and actions. It is the ability to identify, express, understand

and assimilate emotions, and to regulate positive and negative emotions in the self and others. It is thus a set of acquired competencies that predict positive outcomes (Neale, Spencer-Arnell & Wilson, 2009).

On the most basic level, emotions reflect the relationships between people; for example, anger, frustration and joy might be emotions that are experienced in the supervisor-supervisee relationship. Emotional intelligence then refers to the ability to recognise the meanings of such emotions and to reason and solve problems on the basis of them. Emotional intelligence can influence the dynamics and working relationship between a supervisor and supervisee, and also the service user. Moods and emotions can greatly influence the components and strategies of problem solving, in both a negative and positive way (Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2000; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). It is thus critical for the supervisor not only to understand the concepts of emotional intelligence, but also to reflect emotional intelligence in their professional manner and practice, as well as to be able to foster it within the supervisee.

Understanding the importance of emotional intelligence means that it cannot be left to chance that the supervisor would possess such intelligence; the development and implementation of emotional intelligence needs to be intentional. Fortunately, emotional intelligence is something that can be taught and learned. It is a combination of knowledge (understanding the emotions of the self and others), skills (utilising emotions for positive outcomes), and attitudes (recognising the importance and power of emotions in interactions). Emotional intelligence is applied throughout interactions between the supervisor and supervisee, and can lead to measurable outputs and results such as higher work performance and motivation and decreased stress (Martin, 2014; Morrison, 2007; Singh & Prakash, 2015). Emotional intelligence thus fulfils the definition of competence as provided in Chapter 3, and it is clear that it is an essential professional competence that supervisors should possess (Matthews, Zeidner & Roberts, 2002; Mayer & Ciarrochi, 2006).

4.2.2 An EI model for social work supervision

As emotional intelligence has gained popularity, research and literature in the field has grown and, naturally, also differences in defining and explaining EI. The above definition leaves much space for subjectivity and openness in understanding and applying the principles of EI. Through the use of a model it is possible to give clearer boundaries to the concepts of EI, and it provides means by which EI can be observed and learnt. As previously established, a model is a tool that aids in understanding a concept or phenomenon and provides a common language for grasping how EI can be applied within the field of social work, and more particularly to the social work supervisor (Tsui, 2005).

Martin (2014) suggests that, of all the models in understanding EI, the *ability model* is the most applicable and relevant for the field of social work. The ability model, based on work by Salovey and Mayer (1990:189), defines emotional intelligence as "the ability to monitor one's own and other's feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions". Emotional intelligence focuses on "the recognition and use of one's own and other's emotional states to solve problems and regulate behaviour" (Salovey & Mayer, 1990:189). This is clearly relevant to social work, and even more so for supervision, as the supervisor fulfils the three functions of supervision (administration, support and education) that are closely tied with emotions, problem solving and aiding the supervisee to regulate his/her behaviour in a way that best serves the service user (Botha, 2002; Engelbrecht, 2014a; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; Tsui, 2005).

The ability model identifies four emotional abilities that are key to emotional intelligence: recognition, use, understanding and management (Martin, 2014; Mayer *et al*., 2000). These concepts are clarified below, along with the use of an example:

i. *Recognition – perception and expression of emotion*: This refers to one's ability to recognise one's own emotions as well as emotions in other people. Emotions can be linked to a physical state, feelings, thoughts or language in self or others. For example: a supervisor meets with a disgruntled supervisee over a challenging legal situation. The supervisor *recognises* the emotions of the supervisee, as well as how the situation might make him feel.

ii. *Use – assimilating emotion in thought*: Assimilating emotions refers to the ability to match one's mood appropriately, based on the recognition of emotions mentioned

above. It means weighing emotions against one another and prioritising ways of thinking for a more positive outcome. Continuing the example: the supervisor is able to match his mood to that of the supervisee appropriately; by *using* appropriate emotional responses, the supervisor is able to display concern and support.

iii. *Understanding – analysing and labelling emotions*: This suggests the ability to understand the complexity of emotions, and the ability to label them appropriately. It is an understanding that the emotions being displayed or expressed are not the only emotions that a person is experiencing, and that these emotions can change. For example: the supervisor can recognise that, while the main emotions being displayed might be displeasure and anger, he *understands* that there are also other feelings underlying these emotions, such as fear, anxiety, apprehension or distress.

iv. *Management – reflective regulation of emotion*: Management of emotions refers to the ability to determine effective action in the light of this understanding of emotions. It is the ability to monitor and regulate emotions through reflection so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth. To complete the example: the supervisor realises the need to *manage* the anger in order to reach a point of reflection on the emotions underlying the problem, and consequently to identify actions that will address the supervisee's concerns.

Using the four steps or abilities to move through a problem helps the supervisor to achieve the most positive outcome that is possible. Misreading the supervisee or prioritising the supervisor's own feelings would likely have led to an unproductive session of negative banter. Failure to understand the complexity of emotions means it is difficult to move the interaction forward towards problem solving by addressing emotions at a deeper level, as the focus stays on the initial dissatisfaction. Effective emotional intelligence within the ability model leads to the empowerment of the supervisee, builds capacity and encourages positive change (Martin; 2014; Morrison, 2007).

4.2.3 Significance for the supervisory ecosystem

From the above discussion it is clear how EI can be beneficial to supervision and social work practice alike. Morrison (2007) proposes that emotional intelligence is central to social work practice, and particularly significant for supervision. Emotional intelligence influences all areas of social work practice, such as engagement, observation, assessment, decision-making, planning and intervention; these elements are all fundamental to supervision as well. Morrison (2007) goes further to claim that EI is an essential competence for managers to possess. This is supported by Singh and Prakash (2015), who argue that being competent in emotional intelligence leads to greater effectiveness as a leader and manager.

It thus is evident that social work supervisors should possess the competency of emotional intelligence. Not only is EI a critical competence to teach to supervisees, but a skill set that will aid the supervisors in their roles and responsibilities. It is important for senior management to look at ways to foster and encourage the use and growth of emotional intelligence, and this most certainly would have a positive effect throughout the ecosystem of the organisation.

4.3 ANTI-DISCRIMINATORY SUPERVISORY PRACTICES

Supervisors who are competent within the domain of emotional intelligence are well on their way to being effective supervisors who will greatly benefit the supervisee and service user. However, emotions, learning styles and communication patterns, for example, are shaped by the supervisors' and supervisees' worldviews and personal experiences. Factors such as race, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation and religious beliefs shape how supervisors and supervisees interact. The supervisor should be able to observe the wider context of the personal, professional, political and educational dimensions that can affect the working relationship (Engelbrecht, Abdullah & Herselman, 2014). The supervisor needs to be mindful of differences and be able to practise in a way that is considerate of such differences, without highlighting them to the extent that they become an issue themselves.

One of the areas of diversity is *age*, or more specifically *generational differences*. Each generation has a particular perception that moulds its expectations, beliefs and work styles (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Engelbrecht, 2014a). Supervisors need to understand generational differences and use them as a tool to create more productivity, innovation and ownership of

work (Kupperschmidt, 2000). Supervisors thus need to be competent in understanding how generational differences influence the dynamics of supervision, but they also need to understand how to work with generational differences in order to work effectively with the supervisee. According to Engelbrecht (2014a), supervisors are mostly over 30 years of age, whilst most social workers are in the early adult life phase, which results in a definite generation gap between supervisors and supervisees. Ageing, experience, life stage and career stage all influence the supervisory relationship, and the supervisor needs to be competent in understanding these challenges (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008).

Gender differences appear to be less of a factor in terms of diversity issues, as the majority of positions for social workers and supervisors are held by women (Bradley *et al*., 2010). This means that there is homogeneity in the workplace in terms of gender. However, it also implies that women bring 'feminine' qualities to the social work environment with regard to their communication styles and relationship-building skills, for example. This could be challenging for supervisors, as managerial skills appear to be more 'masculine', as they tend to play down the behaviours that are more readily identified with women (Engelbrecht, 2014a). Thus supervisors need to be competent to work with both genders, but they also need to be aware of how their gender is socially constructed and how this influences their thinking and supervisory styles (Engelbrecht, 2014a; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014).

Anti-discriminatory supervision refers to all the above-mentioned factors, but especially considers *race and cultural discrimination*, which are of particular relevance in South Africa with its rich cultural history and diversity (Engelbrecht, 2004; Engelbrecht, 2006b). It is necessary to note that cultural differences can often overlap with religious, socio-economic and racial differences. For the purpose of simplicity, these are assumed to be included in the concept of *cultural competence*, and the supervisor should be competent to practise effectively and appropriately considering all the differences of the supervisee.

The SACSSP's Policy Guidelines for Course of Conduct, Code of Ethics and the Rules for Social Workers (2007) touches briefly on cultural competence and sensitivity, but fails to give any clear guidelines or measures to explain what cultural competence means. The code of conduct states that supervisors should be "sensitive to cultural and ethnic diversity" (SACSSP, 2007:1). It also states that supervisors are responsible for "setting clear, appropriate and culturally sensitive boundaries" (SACSSP, 2007:37). This point is also reflected in the Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession, with the addition of stating that

supervision should "promote active recognition of the cultural systems that shape the social workers…" (DSD & SACSSP, 2012:17). These policies clearly recognise the importance of being culturally sensitive and practising in a way that is culturally appropriate. However, these policies do not provide any more information or guidelines on what such an approach means, or how it can be achieved.

The importance of cultural competence is supported by other research and literature, which reinforce that cultural competence is necessary for working effectively with differences, and it is particularly important for managers or supervisors (Bailey & Aronoff, 2004; Ben-Ari & Strier, 2010; Benhabib, 2002). It is also agreed that cultural competence can be taught, learned and attained, thus fulfilling the definition of a competence (Ben-Ari & Strier, 2010; Benhabib, 2002; Engelbrecht *et al*., 2014; Harrison & Turner, 2011). However, there is a level of internalisation that is essential for cultural competence to be genuine and meaningful. This can be understood by exploring the meaning of cultural competence and its application below.

4.3.1 A brief definition of cultural competence

Cultural competence is an evolving concept with multiple definitions and applications. For the purpose of social work supervision, cultural competence can be understood as a process by which the supervisor responds respectfully and effectively to people of all cultural backgrounds (Engelbrecht, 2006b). This implies that supervisors need to have a good understanding of how their practice is affected by personal and structural issues surrounding cultural differences. Thus the supervisor should strive towards learning new patterns of behaviour that demonstrate understanding of diversity and knowledge of how to communicate and interact with people across cultures. The supervisor who is culturally competent should work towards gaining knowledge of different cultures and worldviews, and acquire knowledge of his/her own culture and worldview. The supervisor should be able to reflect on his/her own cultural experiences and assumptions, and how these might influence the supervisory relationship (Fouad *et al*., 2009).

One of the primary functions of supervision is to offer support to the supervisee, and in particular to deal with job-related stress. As Engelbrecht (2006b) points out, it might be the supervisor who is the very cause of this stress, or who might add to the stress because of a lack of understanding of appropriate language, behaviours and practices in different cultures.

Supervisors, even those of the same cultural group as the supervisee, need to examine their cultural prejudices and predispositions, and conduct supervision in a way that offers culturally relevant support and guidance.

It would be amiss not to mention the important role and influence of the organisation in which the supervisor and supervisee practise. As established previously, supervision takes place within an ecosystem, and it affects the supervisee, the service user and the organisation. All of these systems influence the other systems, and it is necessary to note that cultural competence also guides how organisations value diversity and cultural knowledge. Often deadlines, time constraints and high workloads can act as impediments to culturally competence practice. The organisation needs to show its value of cultural diversity, and this should be reflected in policy documents, administrative procedures and the prioritisation of tasks (Ben-Ari & Strier, 2010; Harrison & Turner, 2011). Anti-discriminatory practices should be promoted in the workplace, included in organisational legislation and policies in order to instil anti-discriminatory practices in supervisory practices, and in supervisees' interventions, thus ensuring anti-discriminatory practices towards service users.

4.3.2 Cultural friendliness

As with all the foundational competencies, cultural friendliness can be taught and learned; however, it needs to be internalised in order for it to be truly effective. It is possible for a supervisor to have knowledge of cultural competence, but not the genuine ability to respond with empathy, respect and sincerity. Engelbrecht (2006b:256) refers to this as cultural friendliness and states that it "includes cultural sensitivity but also requires an internalised disposition that should form part of the supervisor's identity". This implies that a supervisor should have the necessary knowledge base, values and skills, which comprise a competence, by showing cultural sensitivity, but should also be culturally friendly, which is a genuine disposition that cannot be switched on and off.

This suggests that the focus should be on awareness of cultural dimensions, and being non-judgemental, rather than only focusing on a set of skills and knowledge (Engelbrecht *et al*., 2014). With this understanding of cultural friendliness, supervisors should focus on cultivating respect and appreciation for cultural diversity and show a willingness to learn from supervisees' cultures, rather than trying to become an expert on cultural diversity. A supervisor who has all

the knowledge but cannot convey it effectively in practice would only be marginally less offensive that a supervisor who has no knowledge of cultural diversity. Instead, a supervisor who shows a genuine desire to learn about cultures, shows honesty and respect to the supervisee, and maintains open communication will offer a far more effective and meaningful service to the supervisee. This, however, still fulfils the given definition of competence (Chapter 3), as competence is the combination of knowledge, skills and values, but these must be applied through interactions, be observable and produce optimum practice. If cultural competence were not fully internalised, thus also being culturally friendly, it would not lead to optimum practice and results. It is important then to consider the meaning, definition and application of cultural competence, to move beyond the knowledge base, and to fully embody the definition of competence, thus also including the notion of cultural friendliness.

Naturally, as with all the essential professional competencies for supervisors, the supervisor should possess this essential competency in order to promote optimum practice through interaction with the supervisee, but it is also a model and example for the supervisee in terms of how to work within a culturally diverse setting. A supervisor who is culturally competent is likely to foster cultural competence in the supervisee, and consequently benefit the service user. Practising cultural competence, and internalising it into a way of practice, will lead to flourishing professional relationships and effective achievement of supervisory outcomes.

4.4. PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNICATION

Social work supervisors not only need to consider their emotional responses and cultural attitudes when interacting with supervisees and organisational staff, but also need to be competent in interpersonal relationship as well as in inter-disciplinary relationships. It might seem common sense that a supervisor should have competence in relationships, but it easily could not be the case. Someone who is proficient in performance appraisals and administrative work might lack the interpersonal skills that are essential for the supervision relationship to be successful. Rodolfa *et al*. (2005) identified relationships as an important foundational competence for clinical psychology. As established previously, there are many differences between clinical psychology and social work, but similarities can be drawn and research can contribute to developing thoughts in the field of social work and supervision. Due to the fact that prominent research (Rodolfa *et al*., 2005) identifies professional relationships as an

essential competence, and due to the fact that social work and supervision are based on relational interactions (Hepworth *et al*., 2010; Hingham, 2006), professional relationships are identified as one of the essential professional foundational competencies for social work supervisors.

This being said, relationship competence is defined as the "capacity to relate effectively and meaningfully with individuals, groups, and/or communities" (Rodolfa *et al*., 2005:351). This means that the supervisor should be able to build and maintain professional relationships within the organisation, particularly with the supervisee, as well as with interdisciplinary colleagues. Relationships come down to the basic principles of social work practice, which are put into work and observed through interactions. Communication plays an important role in preserving and fostering professional relationships. It is the foundation for a healthy relationship and needs to be considered when exploring professional relationships as an essential foundational competence for social work supervisors. Good levels of communication can lead to better relationships and higher productivity, which, according to Sebastian (2010), lead to greater success in one's personal and professional life. Relational competence can be observed and practised in three main areas, namely interpersonal relationships, affective skills and expressive skills.

4.4.1 Interpersonal relationships

The supervisor who is competent in interpersonal relationships is able to form effective relationships with a wide range of people within the organisation, community and his/her peer groups. On the most basic level, the supervisor should be able to listen and be empathetic with others; show respect and interest in people's diversity; demonstrate skills verbally and non-verbally; and be open to feedback. These are basic relationship standards that any social work supervisor should be able to meet (Hepworth *et al*., 2010; Hingham, 2006). In addition to these basic relational skills, the supervisor should be able to engage with peers; form effective working alliances with supervisees; effectively negotiate conflictual and complex relationships; be involved in organisational activities or governance; and should seek out, integrate and provide constructive professional feedback (Fouad *et al*., 2009). Relational competence does not mean that the supervisor is the most liked person on the office, but that he/she is able to build genuine relationships that are effective and meaningful for achieving the outcome of the organisation and supervision sessions. Meaningful interpersonal relationships

also contribute to the professional development of the supervisor, as they allow opportunities for collaboration, peer learning and feedback. It thus is important for the supervisor to be competent in this area in order to benefit the whole ecosystem of supervision.

Relational competencies are reflected in the SACSSP (2007) Code of Ethics document, which emphasises respecting colleagues, showing loyalty to colleagues, maintaining workplace confidentiality, having appropriate professional boundaries, and being involved in interdisciplinary collaboration and consultation. Relational competence is beyond being friendly in the workplace; it is about building professional relationship that are beneficial to the ecosystem of the organisation.

4.4.2 Affective skills

One area of relational competence that the supervisor should be competent in is affective skills. These skills are related more specifically to maintaining professional relationships by dealing effectively with conflict, differences and communication problems. Basic behaviours that the supervisor could demonstrate in this area include tolerance of and understanding interpersonal conflict; tolerating ambiguity and uncertainty; demonstrating active problem solving; working collaboratively; and being able to make appropriate disclosures regarding interpersonal situations (Fouad *et al*., 2009). Balancing these skills will aid the supervisor in preventing conflict and solving problems proactively and effectively. The SACSSP (2007) also emphasises the importance of affective skills in maintaining and promoting professional relationships.

As part of the affective skills set, conflict resolution is an important competence for the supervisor. There are many factors that can lead to workplace conflict, usually brought on by high levels of stress. Stress can be the result of a high workload, not being rewarded or recognised for work done, lack of control over work circumstances, being treated unfairly, burnout, and personal circumstances that inevitably affect one's work. Ideally, many of these situations are avoided or dealt with before conflict arises, as this is part of the supportive role of the supervisor (Jacques, 2014; Tsui, 2004).

However, despite the supervisor's best guidance, stress and conflict still arise in the workplace, and sometimes this is best resolved by use of mediation. Mediation can be understood as a process in which people in conflict are supported by a neutral third party in order to find a

mutually acceptable way forward (Hopkins, 2004). The role of the mediator is to attempt to diffuse emotions, to help in solving the problem that led to the conflict, and to address the conflict before it becomes irreconcilable. It is important for the supervisor to recognise that mediation is a voluntary process, so the parties involved need to agree to the process and should be well prepared for what to expect. The mediator should be mindful of how the venue is set up and how each person is sitting.

There are five stages of mediation that the supervisor should understand and be competent to implement. The five phases are briefly outlined below (Reyneke, 2014):

i.   *Stage one – establishing guidelines*: During this stage the mediator establishes guidelines. This includes clear guidelines of establishing respect for one another, confidentiality and allowing each party the opportunity to talk. Another important task of this stage is for the mediator to explain his/her role, emphasising that he/she is an impartial party, offering support and not judgement.

ii. *Stage two – hearing the stories*: This stage is when each party has the opportunity to tell his/her story about what has happened. The mediator can use four restorative questions to guide this (Jansen & Matla, 2012; Zehr, 2003):
   - What happened? (tell the story)
   - What do you think has been affected? (explore the harm done)
   - What do you need to put things right? (restore the harm)
   - How can we make sure that this does not happen again? (moving forward)

iii. *Stage three – agreement*: Once each of the parties has had the chance to share their story and discuss how to move forward, they need to be in agreement. It is important to help them choose an option that is practical, and on which everyone can agree. The mediator should avoid putting forward his/her own suggestions or evaluating suggestions that are made. The parties should feel that the solution is of their own making, thus increasing the likeliness that they will see the solution process through.

iv. *Stage four – clarification*: The mediator should clarify exactly what is expected from all involved. It is important for both parties to be clear on what is expected from them

and the agreed path forward. This should be done in order to reach a formal agreement with which everyone is comfortable.

v. *Stage five – closure*: The final agreement should be a win-win for everyone involved, and both parties should be satisfied before mediation comes to a close. Everyone involved should receive credit for their ability to solve problems and for participating in the mediation process, so as to encourage a positive attitude and approach towards problem solving in the future. Finally, it is important for each person to feel that he/she has been heard and that his/her needs have been met, as this will lead to the restoration of relationships. After mediation, all parties need to go back to their work environment, as successful conflict resolution and restored relationships will help the team to work well together again.

Supervisors needs to be competent in these mediation skills, as they are the key persons in the organisation who helps staff, and more specifically social workers, with conflict resolution. Conflict resolution and mediation could arise out of client-related problems, or out of office problems, which the supervisor as middle manager is responsible for resolving.

4.4.3 Expressive skills

Expressive skills are linked to verbal and non-verbal communication concerning ideas, feelings and information. At a minimum, the competent supervisor should be able to communicate clearly using verbal, non-verbal and written skills, and this should be done in a way that others can easily understand; non-verbal behaviours should be consistent with verbal communications; the supervisor should have the ability to use and show understanding for professional language; as well as produce professionally written documents. The goal of this area of competence is that communication is enhanced between the supervisor and related parties. The supervisor, for example, should be able to write accurate reports; use correct professional terminology during supervision; and communicate effectively with supervisees and peers. On the whole, verbal, non-verbal and written communications should be informative, articulate, succinct and demonstrate a grasp for professional language and concepts (Fouad *et al*., 2009; Rodolfa *et al*., 2005).

The supervisor, particularly as a middle manager, is at the centre of communication within the organisation. He/she needs to communicate effectively with the management of the

organisation, with inter-disciplinary parties, funders, stakeholders, the staff that he/she manages, and more specifically with supervisees. The supervisor primarily needs to be competent in face-to-face communication. This means that, in the first place, staff should feel comfortable to approach the supervisor and talk about issues, and the supervisor should be competent in showing empathy, asking appropriate questions and establishing rapport (Reyneke, 2014). The supervisor should not only be competent in face-to-face interactions, but also in written communication. Supervisors need to be able to write performance reports, emails, letters, professional reports and progress reports, to name a few of their written responsibilities. It is important that the supervisor possesses the skills to write clearly, to think logically, and to write objectively and to the point. Good written communication skills are essential in the social work profession, and the supervisor should show good comprehension and practice in this area, especially if it is an area in which they expect to see their supervisees excelling.

All the relational skills promote and enhance the supervisory relationship, making the supervisor more effective in supporting and educating the supervisee. Clear and professional communication will also enhance the supervisor's ability to write appropriate reports for NPO purposes, or for performance evaluations, for example. This is clearly an important area of competence that should be focused on in the development and identification of competent supervisors.

4.5 ETHICAL PRACTICE AND LEGAL KNOWLEDGE

The final essential professional competence for social work supervisors is competence in the area of ethical practice and legal knowledge. This includes the application of ethical concepts and awareness of legal issues regarding professional activities, as well as advocating for the profession (Rodolfa *et al*., 2005). The supervisor needs to be knowledgeable in ethical and legal practices for his/her own benefit, as well as that of the organisation, social worker and service user. Ethical practice is at the very centre of social work and supervision, and it thus is an area of competence in which the supervisor must excel (DSD & SACSSP, 2012; Fouad *et al*., 2009; Freud & Krug, 2002; Pullen-Sansfaçon, 2014; SACSSP, 2007). It is vital that the supervisor not only has knowledge of ethical and legal requirements, but also the ability to convert this knowledge into practice. For this reason, the aspects of ethical knowledge and

legal practice have been identified and categorised as competences, as the comprise the ability to take knowledge and skills and apply them practically in practice to achieve outputs, in accordance with the theoretical definition of a competence (Kaslow, 2004; Parry, 1996).

4.5.1 Areas of ethical and legal competence

As mentioned previously, a supervisor could be "held liable in an instance where a complaint of alleged unprofessional conduct is lodged against the supervisee" (SACSSP, 2007:38). The supervisor therefore needs to be competent to conduct supervision in a manner that considers and works within the parameters of ethical and legal boundaries. This area of competence can be divided into three categories, namely knowledge of ethical and legal standards; awareness and application of ethical decision making; and ethical conduct (Fouad *et al*., 2009).

i. *Knowledge of ethical, legal and professional standards and guidelines*: It is essential that the supervisor shows expert understanding and application of the SACSSP's Policy Guidelines for Course of Conduct, Code of Ethics and the Rules for Social Workers (2007). This is the main policy document and delineates the social work profession, supervision and ethical conduct. The supervisor should also have fluent knowledge of other relevant ethical, legal and professional guidelines that influence the social work profession and the field of work that is relevant to the welfare NPO, for example the Social Service Professions Act, No. 110 of 1978 (RSA, 1978) and the Children's Act, No. 38 of 2005 (RSA, 2006).

While it is difficult to assess whether a supervisor is competent in this area, there are behaviours and decisions that would be reflected in their practice. The supervisor should, for example, be able to *spontaneously identify ethical and legal issues and address them proactively*. This is of particular relevance in welfare organisations, where social workers are dealing with multifaceted problems and potential ethical complications. The supervisors should be able to independently identify legal and ethical issues that arise during practice, analyse the situation accordingly, and take appropriate action (Fouad *et al*., 2009).

This is reflected in a second observable behaviour, which is the supervisor demonstrating *awareness of potential conflicts in complex issues and preventing*

problems or unprofessional conduct from taking place. The supervisor should not only be proactive when dealing with problems as they arise, but also have the foresight to prevent the occurrence of problems by understanding the different legal and ethical issues that shape practice. During supervision, the supervisor should be able to guide and educate the supervisee to practise in a way that is ethically and legally sound. The Supervision Framework (DSD & SACSSP, 2012:21) identifies this as a role of the supervisor, namely to "ensure correct interpretation of policies ad legislation". The supervisor should have a working knowledge of policies and legislation for his/her own practice, but also for the benefit of the supervisee and, consequently, the service user. This is further supported by the Code of Conduct, which states that, "in order to curb incompetencies by practitioners it is recommended that the supervisors and managers of practitioners identify training needs and implement a development plan" (SACSSP, 2007:13). The functions of supervision, and particularly the educational function, strongly underlie the understanding and prevention of ethical and legal conflicts arising in supervisees' practice.

A final practical area in which the supervisor can demonstrate knowledge of ethical, legal and professional standards and guidelines is showing *awareness of the obligation to confront colleagues regarding ethical problems*. This is supported by the SACSSP Code of Conduct, which states that social workers, and thus supervisors, are "concerned about the ethical compliance of their colleagues' conduct" (SACSSP, 2007:7). The Code of Conduct further clarifies that, if the supervisor believes that a colleague has acted in a manner that is incompetent or unethical, he/she should approach the issue with the colleague or take action through the appropriate channels within the organisation (SACSSP, 2007:13, 14). It thus is important for the supervisor to be competent in the area of ethical and legal knowledge, as this is integrated into all areas of practice of the supervisee and his/her peers. The supervisor has a responsibility to the organisation, supervisee and social work service user to ensure that all conduct is within the ethical and legal guidelines of the social work profession.

ii.   *Awareness and application of ethical decision making*: Commitment to the integration of ethics knowledge into professional work is an essential area of competence for the social work supervisor. The supervisor should be able to demonstrate the knowledge and ability to apply ethical decision making in avoiding and dealing with dilemmas.

Practical ways in which this competence can be observed and demonstrated are through the supervisor *applying ethical principles and standards in professional writings or presentations*, which includes applying ethical concepts in research design, professional teaching and in training activities (Fouad *et al*., 2009).

Ethical practice and decision making should be integrated into all areas of work in which the supervisor is engaged, and ideally should be the point of departure for every interaction and supervision session. Ethical decision making should not only be reflected in the supervisor's practice, but also be taught and discussed during supervision. Ethical decision making is shaped by personal emotions and intuitions, as well as cultural and professional inputs. The supervisor needs to develop reflective self-awareness in order to be aware of how his/her own value preferences influence the resolution of ethical dilemmas. The supervisor should be able to identify potential conflicts between his/her personal belief systems and the potential ethical and legal issues that arise during social work practice and supervision (Freud & Krug, 2002; Mattison, 2000)

iii. *Ethical conduct*: This marks the final area of competence and is achieved by the supervisor being able to independently and consistently *integrate ethical and legal standards* into all foundation and functional competencies. This means that the supervisor is always practising in a manner that is ethical, and considers the ethical dynamics of each situation and interaction. All the functional competencies, for example, needs to be rooted in ethical practice. Thus, when the supervisor is carrying out the functions of supervision or engaging in the supervision process, ethical conduct and legal standards need to be integrated into each area of interaction.

In order for ethics to be fully integrated into practice, it once again is necessary for the supervisor to be aware of how his/her own moral principles and ethical values are integrated into his/her professional conduct. The supervisor should be able to articulate knowledge of his/her own principles and values during interactions, and to show awareness and critical reflection of his/her own moral shaping (Fouad *et al*., 2009). Finally, ethical conduct is also most obviously observed through ethical behaviours and interactions, including, for example, displaying capacity for appropriate boundaries, openness to new ideas, and showing honesty, integrity and value-based behaviour.

Many of these behaviours are also dependent on the supervisor's character and personality, factors that are hard to measure and to observe in the professional person, but they are important to consider when selecting and developing a supervisor.

4.5.2 Virtue ethics

Virtue ethics, as suggested above, refer to a form of ethical practice that emphasises the importance of fostering character traits that cohere with the values and traditions of a given community (Pullen-Sansfaçon, 2014; Reamer, 2013). Virtue ethics defines morality, the basis upon which an action can be held to be good or bad. Understanding ethics, values and virtue ethics is of particular importance for social work supervisors, as they often have a high degree of responsibility to apply the ethos of the organisation and manage the dilemmas of supervision and social work intervention.

Furthermore, supervisors tend to be shaped more by the organisation's rules than by broader social work values. Ethical practice in social work supervision should be based on organisation rules, personal values, as well as professional social work values (McBeath & Webb, 2002; Pullen-Sansfaçon, 2011). This can be referred to as defensive social work, where the supervisor is focused on the organisational policies and requirements, which cloud his/her moral compass and professional ethics in dealing with the supervisee. This is reflected in Chapters 2 and 5, where the supervisor is weighed down by the pressure of the organisation to meet funding requirements, NPO reporting expectations and performance evaluations, to name a few of the managerial and legislative pressures weighing on the supervisor. The supervisor should thus be able to balance organisational, professional and personal ethics and values, combining them in order to practise competently and make sound moral decisions that are in the best interests of the organisation, the supervisee and the service user.

In addition, the supervisor should be able to foster virtue ethics within the supervisee, helping supervisees to rationally realise the role of their personality and character in shaping ethical decision and practices. According to Pullen-Sansfaçon (2014), a virtue should promote human flourishing, and therefore be as good for the person embodying it as it is for the people in his/her surroundings. As with the previous competencies, supervisors should be competent in an area themselves before they can foster competence in their supervisees. A virtue ethics approach relies on a call to conscience in the supervisors, and is a function of reflection and

self-understanding, leading to the supervisor being able to make ethical decisions that lead to "doing the right thing". These areas of reflection and self-understanding can be taught and learnt, and it thus is important to consider how these are incorporated into the concept of competence and ethical practice (McBeath & Webb, 2002). Supervisor should work towards developing their virtues, and the benefits will be reaped in their professional development, supervisory relationships and organisational involvement.

4.6 CONCLUSION

The foundational competencies of the social work supervisor are the intrinsic knowledge, skills and behaviours that a supervisor should possess in order to optimise the supervisory relationship. These competencies are harder to observe, measure and teach than the functional competencies, but they still fulfil the definition of a competence in that they are a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes, which are applied in the form of behaviour that produces outputs and yields results. These competencies, although they are more covert, are still teachable to the supervisor, who can learn them through formal and informal methods of teaching, peer learning and professional feedback, for example. This chapter has focused on foundational competencies that have been identified in prominent research and literature as being critical to the supervisory relationship. Emotional intelligence, anti-discriminatory supervisory practices, relational competence and ethical and legal knowledge are essential competencies if the supervisor is to offer the best service possible to the supervisee, thus also benefiting the service user and the organisation. It is important for these competencies to be sought after when promoting or employing someone in the position of supervisor. Furthermore, they should be identified as a core aspect of supervisors' professional development, alongside the functional competencies. Maintaining and enhancing the foundational and functional competencies will lead to a supervisor who is growing professionally and making a meaningful contribution in the field of social work. The functional competencies will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONAL COMPETENCIES FOR SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISORS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the functional competencies that are considered essential for social work supervisors. These functional competencies are related to the processes, methods, activities and techniques that are employed during the supervision process. Functional competencies can be understood as the combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes that make the *processes and tasks of supervision* run smoothly.

This chapter explores which functional competencies are necessary for the supervisor in an NPO context. These competencies are specifically identified because each of them is central to the supervision process and relationship (Botha, 2002; Engelbrecht, 2014a; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; Tsui, 2005). The supervisor must be proficient in these areas, otherwise the basic foundations of supervision would be amiss. Because of the importance of these areas, and as they all fall into the provided definition of competencies (Chapter 3), they are identified as essential functional competencies for social work supervisors, and will be expounded on in this chapter. This will be done by means of looking at how to select an appropriate model for supervision, the supervision functions and the process of supervision. The tasks, roles and responsibilities that the supervisor has to fulfil, and which competencies would enhance the service that the supervisor is offering, will be considered. Finally, the chapter will also consider competencies that might be relevant to a supervisor working in an NPO setting due to the particular work pressures and expectations of such an environment.

The chapter thus explores essential functional competencies by looking at the broadest variable of supervision, namely the model, then becoming more specific by considering the functions, until finally focusing on the specific process of supervision, whilst bearing the NPO context in mind. All of these aspects form the functional competencies that are essential for the supervisor to possess, as represented in Figure 5.1:
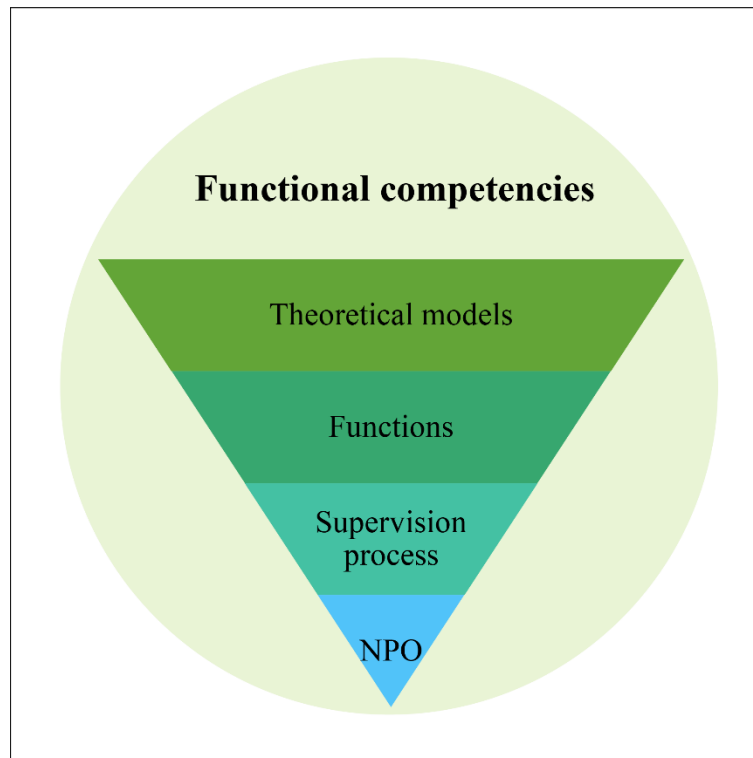
Figure 5.1: Functional competencies

Figure 5.1 shows the flow of functional competencies and how they are discussed in this chapter. All of the aspects are significant in developing and ensuring that supervisors possess the required essential professional competencies.

This discussion fulfils objective four of the study, which was *to explore and synthesise essential functional competencies of social work supervisors related to the utilisation of processes, methods, activities and techniques for social work supervision*. The first step to achieving this objective, as per the framework above, is considering how a supervisor should select a theoretical model for supervision.

5.2 SELECTING A THEORETICAL MODEL FOR SUPERVISION

Before the supervisor can start implementing the supervision process, he/she needs to be competent in selecting an appropriate model for supervision. The model that is selected needs to be appropriate for meeting the needs of the supervisees in aiding them to develop professionally and to meet the needs of their service users more efficiently. The model also needs to aid the supervisor in achieving the organisational requirements and expectations that are to be fulfilled during supervision. Some of the models of supervision were discussed in

Chapter 2. The reality, however, is that many supervisors have a limited knowledge of models and do not practise a specific model during supervision (Engelbrecht, 2010; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014). It is easy to be caught up in the demands of the job and only to focus on getting the essentials of supervision done (Bradley *et al*., 2010). Supervisors can learn how to supervise through trial and error, imitation, by following organisational models of leadership, or by using an eclectic approach, but without a clear model the supervisor may not be able to conceptualise the process of supervision in a holistic manner and achieve the goals effectively (Tsui, 2005). Using models makes it easier for supervisors to explain to the supervisee and organisation what they are doing, and thus increases accountability (Payne, 2014). It therefore is important for supervisors to be competent in understanding and applying an appropriate theoretical model for supervision.

There are basic guidelines, or thoughts, that supervisors can employ to aid them in choosing a suitable model for supervision, and this is explained briefly below based on the principles contained in Hepworth *et al*. (2010) and Payne (2014). These principles are applied to social work intervention, but can also be applied to the supervision process. The supervision process mirrors direct social work practice, and the principles of social work intervention can be applied to the supervision process as well.

The following five guidelines can be considered when choosing a model that is appropriate for supervision (adapted from Hepworth *et al*., 2010):

1. *Supervisors value maximum realistic self-determination, empowerment and enhancing strengths to increase the supervisee's voice in decision making*: This implies that the supervisor does not hold all the power when it comes to decision making and the course of action. Where possible, the supervisor should encourage supervisee involvement and participation, encouraging the supervisor to make decisions and empowering him/her to take ownership of the supervision process and his/her own professional development (DSD & SACSSP, 2012; Engelbrecht, 2004). The strengths perspective and competence model are examples that focus on the empowerment of the supervisee, while focusing on ownership of professional development.

2. *Supervisors assess circumstances from a systems perspective*: It is important for the supervisor to assess the problem and plan appropriate interventions whilst bearing the organisation, supervisee and service user in mind. This is supported by research

(Engelbrecht & Terblanche, 2014; Tsui & Ho, 1997) that emphasises the importance of considering all the parties, or systems, involved in the supervision process. Successful supervision that takes the systems into consideration would see the organisation, supervisor, supervisee and service user's benefit. Furthermore, assessing and utilising all the systems allows for greater ideas from peer learning and access to resources on all levels of the organisation.

3. *Supervisors are sensitive to diversity*: The supervisor should be mindful of each supervisee's individuality in terms of personality, level of professional development, and uniqueness of service user's problems. The supervisor should not assume that an approach that works with one supervisee will work with another. For example, the supervisor would have to be more intentional about encouraging ownership and empowerment with a supervisee who is very shy and nervous than with a supervisee who is more motivated and resourceful. Case load and intensity of problems are also significant when considering the amount of support, education and ethical guidance a supervisee will require.

4. *Supervisors draw on evidence-based practice*: Supervisors should constantly be learning from their peers and from academic resources. This gives them the opportunity to find new models, or a more appropriate model for working with supervisees and approaching specific supervisory challenges. Supervisors, however, are expected to act within their level of competence, so knowledge of a model does not necessarily mean that they have the skills to carry it out. Supervisors should be encouraged to engage in peer learning to learn new models and approaches to practice. The supervisors should reflect competence in terms of at least understanding and implementing a few models of supervision to meet the unique needs of their supervisees.

5. *Supervisors think critically about practice, check out assumptions and examine alternatives*: The supervisor should avoid making assumptions about the supervisee and the supervisee's service users. By placing the supervisee in a mould, the supervisor forces his/her preconceived ideas and experiences onto the supervisee instead of looking at each supervisee and his/her workload as a new experience and a unique situation. The supervisor should be competent to assess each supervisee individually and choose a model that is relevant for the practice situation.

By considering these factors, the supervisor should reflect competence in selecting an appropriate model for supervision. Supervisors should be constantly learning, growing and enhancing their skills and knowledge in understanding and applying models for supervision. Appropriate and successful use of models should aid the supervisor to competently balance and practise the functions of supervision and work towards achieving the goals of supervision more effectively. The functions are the next area in which a supervisor should be competent when approaching the supervision process and relationship. These functions are discussed below.

5.3 THE FUNCTIONS OF SUPERVISION

The functions of supervision underlie all the activities and interactions of the supervision process. If they are balanced and carried out correctly they will benefit the supervisee greatly by providing an environment that encourages well-being, motivation and commitment. As previously established, the three supervision functions are support, education and administration. This is supported by local (Botha, 2002; Engelbrecht, 2014a; Jacques, 2014) and international (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; Tsui, 2005) texts, as well as the Supervision Framework (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). The social work supervisor should be able to understand these three functions and implement them during supervision sessions in order to promote the professional development of the supervisee. The supervisor needs to be competent in practising these three functions, as well as balancing them in accordance with the organisational and supervisee's needs. The supervisor who is able to understand and carry out these three functions will greatly benefit the supervisee and, consequently, the service user. A brief description will be given below of each function. It is important that the supervisor is competent in understanding and applying these functions. It is also necessary that the supervisor is able to balance managerial responsibilities and pressures from the organisation, whilst providing education and support to the supervisee.

5.3.1 The education function

The education function focuses on the learning and development of the supervisee. It is concerned with teaching the supervisees the competencies that they need in order to perform their tasks effectively (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). One of the goals of the education function is to help supervisees translate what they have learnt in an academic or training setting into practice, and this does not come automatically for all. This is relevant for all social workers – new ones straight out of tertiary education, and hopefully those who are being trained and equipped continuously. The education function supplements training by individualising general learning through applying it to the specific work situation or service users of the supervisee. With this in mind, the developmental stage of the supervisee affects which educational methods are employed with the goal of encouraging participation, independence and self-learning. The supervisor also needs to consider each supervisee's individual learning style and needs, which is shaped by both personal experiences and cultural factors (Jacques, 2014; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; Tsui, 2005). The education function should maintain an individualised focus by being directed at the specific educational needs of the supervisee within the context of his/her prescribed workload and community of service (DSD& SACSSP, 2012).

It furthermore is important that the supervisee is involved in the learning process and is allowed to contribute ideas. As Jacques (2014) states, educational supervision is a reciprocal process between the supervisee and the supervisor. The supervisee utilises the educational input from the supervisor to guide the intervention, while the supervisor uses supervision sessions to identify the training and developmental needs of the supervisee. As discussed in Chapter 3, if the learning opportunities are identified carefully, through a nurturing environment (Hartmann, 1958), and allow for the supervisee to successfully accomplish new tasks, their motivation and performance are affected positively.

It is important for the supervisor to value the professional development of the supervisee and to be competent in this area of supervision. Typically, the educational aspect of supervision is not necessary for accountability to the top management of an organisation, as there is a heavy focus on administrative control, but the education function is of utmost importance in aiding the supervisee to grow professionally (Tsui, 2005). Supervisees need to be encouraged to grow through their professional experiences, to learn new models and techniques, and to mature in their area of expertise. This will not only encourage the growth of the individual supervisee,

but also the social work profession, as stagnation will be avoided and continuous growth and learning encouraged.

5.3.1.1 Adult education principles

It is important for supervisors to consider how their supervisee learns, and what approach to learning and teaching helps the supervisee to flourish. Adult education principles help to guide the supervisor in understanding supervisee learning, whilst considering his/her individual learning styles and needs. As stated by Engelbrecht (2014a), it is likely that supervisors have not had any training in adult education principles, and they need to consider new ways of learning.

The following are basic education principles that supervisors need to bear in mind when working with supervisees. These are based on the work of Knowles (1971) and Engelbrecht (2014a). Supervisees:

- are self-directed and autonomous. If they are motivated and enthusiastic they will find learning easier;
- learn best when they enjoy the learning process, materials and learning methods;
- have a foundation of life experiences, knowledge and skills that can be incorporated into their learning;
- will set their own goals and learning pace;
- must see a reason and usefulness for learning something;
- learn better in an informal and relaxed environment, giving them the opportunity to be involved and to participate;
- seek opportunities to reflect on their learning and thus need constant feedback on their performance;
- appreciate a movement in learning, from simple and concrete material to complex and abstract material;
- want to experience empathy and support in a non-judgemental and facilitative environment; and
- require a variety of teaching methods and strategies that consider their personal learning styles.

These principles should accommodate the supervisee's learning styles, and should be taken into account throughout the supervision process, but particularly with the educational function.

5.3.2 The support function

The goal of the support function is to help the supervisee adjust to job-related stress (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). Social work can be a high-stress profession, especially in South Africa, where social workers are faced with high workloads and complex, multi-problematic service users and communities (Earle, 2008). Job-related stress can have a negative impact on performance, motivation and commitment, and can lead to burnout and job dissatisfaction. It therefore is important that the supervisor offer the necessary support to the supervisee, which will in turn make the latter more effective at his/her job. The support function is concerned with caring for the social worker and dealing with situations that might lead to stress (Hawkins & Shotet, 2011). The supervisor is responsible for reducing anxiety, enhancing adaptation to adversity, renewing faith and restoring emotional equilibrium. The support function should include both practical and emotional aspects. For example, the supervisor should offer emotional support by listening to and encouraging the supervisee, but should also help the supervisee to pinpoint the source of stress and identify means to prevent it or cope with it more positively in the future.

The supervisor needs to be competent to offer supportive supervision in a way that balances the other two functions. Often the administrative function overrides the other two and does not create an environment that is conducive to support. The supervisor needs to possess the competence to be genuine in showing and prioritising emotional support. A great concept that aids the supervisor and supervisee is emotional competence, or intelligence. It is a method of using awareness of feelings as a guide to decision making. A supervisee who is competent in analysing and managing emotional factors will be able to control and use emotions appropriately and conceptualise the consequences or benefits of actions (Goleman, 2006; Jacques, 2014; Lewis *et al*., 2012).

5.3.3 The administrative function

The administrative role of the supervisor involves the induction of workers; work planning, assignment and delegation; monitoring, reviewing and evaluation; administrative control; achievement of organisational objectives; and performance management. This is a significant weight of work and responsibility for a supervisor, and it is inevitable that this function is dominant over the other two. Even more emphasis is placed on this function, as there is expected accountability to the organisation, as well as to funders and the Department of Social Development. In South Africa the administrative role of supervision takes priority (Bradley *et al*., 2010; Engelbrecht, 2010; Jacques, 2014).

A significant part of administrative accountability comes from report writing for statutory cases. As mentioned previously, supervisors can be held accountable for social workers' conduct (SACSSP, 2007). This is controlled primarily through the overseeing of reports and statutory documents. The supervisor is responsible for ensuring that the supervisee's work is in accordance with statutory norms (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). This is particularly important for reports that need to be in accordance with the Children's Act (RSA, 2006).

In addition, a further goal of administrative supervision is to ensure the effective and appropriate implementation of agency objectives, policies and procedures. The supervisor is responsible for ensuring that organisation policy is implemented, and is held accountable for doing so. This includes performance appraisals of supervisees' work and achievement of set outcomes (discussed further under 5.4.7). Administrative supervision seems to carry negative connotations, with the impression being created that it is only there to fulfil bureaucratic expectations. However, the outcome of administrative supervision is to encourage good practice that is planned and purposeful (Jacques, 2014). The supervisor needs to be competent in establishing accountability between the supervisee and the organisation, and vice versa. Supervisees have knowledge because they understand their service users, and supervisors have knowledge because they understand the organisational ethos and managerial culture. It is important to balance the feeling of power and authority in order to avoid power games, relational difficulties and a lack of motivation. The supervisor needs to be highly competent in this area in order to use administrative supervision to the benefit of the organisation and the supervisee, without causing damage to the supervision relationship. This could mean that the educational and supportive functions are jeopardised and the supervision relationship becomes about control and performance, instead of encouraging optimum practice in the supervisee.

The functional competencies play a significant role in the supervision relationship and in the progress of the supervisee. The supervisor must be competent in understanding and applying all the functions and show the ability to balance them appropriately to the benefit of the supervisee and the organisation. Supervisors need to be mindful of blockages and power games that could interfere with the three functions.

5.3.4 Blockages and power games

Blockages and power games occur in the supervision relationship, where they hinder the supervision relationship as well as the purposes and functions of supervision. Supervisors need to be competent to overcome these games so as to remain focused on the outcomes of supervision, and not to be distracted by the supervisee. Similarly, the supervisors also need to be conscious of how they can feed into power games and avoid entertaining them or engaging in them during supervision.

The following is a list of supervisee and supervisor games based on the work of several authors (Engelbrecht, 2014a; Kadushin and Harkness, 2014; Tsui, 2005)

Supervisees' games:

- 'Two against the agency' – the supervisee argues that there is conflict between bureaucratic requirements and professional values. He/she tries to avoid organisational policies and procedures for the apparent sake of the client;
- 'Be nice to me because I am nice to you' – seducing the supervisor by flattery. If the supervisor accepts this flattery, he/she falls into the trap of the supervisee's game;
- 'Evaluation is not for friends' – the supervisee redefines the supervision relationship to a social relationship, and consequently supervisors find it difficult to correct or evaluate supervisees;
- 'Protect the sick and the infirm' – supervisees emphasise their inferiority in order to appeal to the supervisor's sympathy;
- 'Maximum participation' – the supervisee tries to transform the supervision relationship into a democratic relationship by citing democratic principles as an excuse for relaxing administrative arrangements;

- 'If you knew X like I knew X' – the supervisee tests the supervisor's knowledge outside of their field of expertise. If the supervisor does not confess ignorance, he/she has to play the game of the supervisee;

- 'So what do you know about it?' – the supervisee claims to know more than the supervisor;

- 'Putting the supervisor down' – supervisees make use of verbal abuse or threats of violence against the supervisor;

- 'I have a little list' – this game aims to discuss something that is not relevant to supervision in order to hijack and control the content of the session;

- 'Heading them off at the pass' – supervisees open the supervision session by confessing mistakes to gain the supervisor's sympathy and to divert critical review;

- 'Little old me' – increased dependence on the supervisor by the supervisee acting ignorantly or innocently, thus the supervisor is obliged to proceed step by step;

- 'I did what you told me' – blaming the supervisor for instructions that failed, thus passing responsibility to the supervisor;

- 'It's all so confusing' – the supervisee tries to appeal to various authorities, and consequently reduces the authority of the supervisor;

- 'What you don't know won't hurt me' – using distancing techniques to reduce the authority of the supervisor, implying that the supervisor has no right to give instruction.

Supervisor's games:

- 'They won't let me' – passing the buck, the supervisor blames top management for not allowing certain things to happen;

- 'Poor me' – the supervisor complains about his/her position;

- 'I'm really one of you' – proclaiming against policies and regulations of the organisation;

- 'One good question deserves another' – the supervisor passes the burden of decision making onto the supervisee;

- 'I wonder why you really said that?' – the supervisor recasts the supervisee's honest disagreement as psychological resistance;

- 'Remember who's the boss' – the supervisor eliminates participation, allowing no room for negotiation or disagreement by emphasising his/her absolute administrative power;

- 'I'll tell on you' – repeatedly threatens to report concerns to a higher authority. The supervisor instils fear by invoking the power to punish the supervisee with a higher level of authority;

- 'Father/mother knows best' – by personalising the supervision relationship, the supervisor appears to love and protect the supervisees;

- 'I'm only trying to help you' – transforming the supervision relationship to a social worker-client relationship.

The best way for supervisors to deal with power games is not to play them. Supervisors need to be competent to identify games and address them in an appropriate manner. Supervision games and blockages can have a significant effect on how the three functions are implemented, particularly during the supervision process. When the three functions are implemented through the supervision process it signifies the ongoing professional relationship between the supervisor and supervisee. The supervision process will be discussed next.

5.4 THE SUPERVISION PROCESS

The functions of supervision and the model that is used for supervision are both integrated into the supervision process. The day-to-day supervision of social workers takes up the majority of the supervisor's time and energy. Supervision follows a process that allows for the natural progression of professional growth, learning and achievement. It is thus important to consider the supervision process and what competencies the supervisor needs in order to conduct this process effectively. The supervisor who is competent in the supervision process should be able to promote the development and professional conduct of the supervisee, thus resulting in the delivery of optimum services to the service user (Falender & Shafranske, 2004; Falender *et al*., 2004). However, research (Engelbrecht, 2010) suggests that supervisors do not often follow an identifiable supervision process, and that supervisors are not aware of various techniques that can be employed. This even more highlights the need for this to be an area of competence for supervisors, as they need to learn about the process and possess the skills to practically and meaningfully implement the supervision process.

The process of supervision is most likely taught in undergraduate courses, although it is not a requirement (Bradley *et al*., 2010; Cloete, 2012). For this reason it is necessary to review the process of supervision and highlight what competencies are essential for the supervisor. This

will aid the supervisor in taking his/her knowledge and raw skills and combining them into refined skills. The practical application of these identified competencies within the supervision process are what will make the supervisor truly competent, as competencies need to be applied practically, observed in behaviour, and lead to outputs, thus meeting the requirement of the definition of competence as discussed in Chapter 3.

The following section will provide a brief overview of the supervision process and each phase within the process, whist elaborating on what essential professional competencies the supervisor should possess.

5.4.1 Overview of the supervision process

In South Africa supervision is an on-going activity, and a registered social worker receives supervision regardless of years of practice or experience (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). Due to the on-going nature of supervision, the supervision process has taken on a cyclical approach. Engelbrecht (2014b) argues that the cyclic process, based on progressive phases, is in support of development theory as well as the strengths-based approach. These are both relevant in terms of a competence approach and in terms of social work practices in South Africa.

The supervisor needs to understand each phase and their importance in the supervision process. Each phase lays the foundation for the phase to follow, and it is thus critical that each one is carried out successfully. The phases are operationalised by means of specific tasks that the supervisor needs to be competent to carry out. The phases and associated tasks, as discussed by Engelbrecht (2014b), are:

1. *Engagement phase*: create an inventory of job-specific competencies.
2. *Assessment phase*: complete a personal development assessment register.
3. *Planning phase*: design a personal development plan.
4. *Contracting phase*: determine the nature of the supervision relationship.
5. *Implementation phase*: execute supervision sessions and documentation.
6. *Evaluation phase*: performance appraisal and launch into a new cycle.

The cyclic nature of supervision and its associated phases can also be demonstrated visually as in Figure 5.2 below:
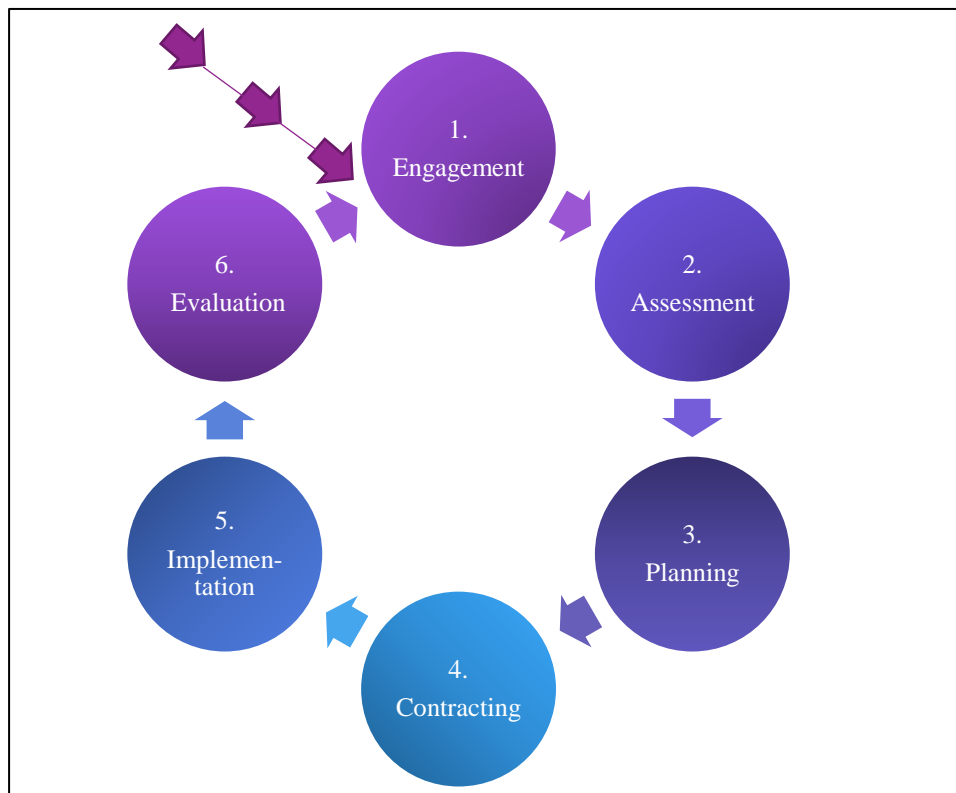
Figure 5.2: Process of supervision (Engelbrecht, 2014b)

The supervisor is responsible for facilitating these phases, encouraging supervisee participation and ensuring that each task is achieved successfully. It is therefore critical that the supervisor possesses the essential professional competencies necessary for the supervisory role. For this reason, each phase and task will be discussed briefly in order to give insight into what competencies are necessary for the supervisor to possess. A competent supervisor would be able to successfully implement each of these phases in such a way that the supervisee's professional development is optimised, and consequently service delivery is improved. The phases and associated tasks will be discussed further below.

5.4.2 The engagement phase and tasks

The engagement phase is the first phase in the supervision process. This phase sets the foundation for the supervisory working relationship. The first task to be achieved in the cyclical supervision process is to *compile an inventory of job-specific competencies* for the supervisee.

The inventory allows for the formulation of supervision outcomes and creates a standard against which work performances are appraised, which is in accordance with the competence model of supervision (Engelbrecht, 2004; Shardlow & Doel, 1996). These competencies provide the supervisee, supervisor and organisation with a common language to define expectations for practice. The competencies should be in line with the organisation's mission and service plan, as well as in line with the supervisee's level of capability and skill (Engelbrecht, 2014b). The competencies range from knowledge, skills and values relating to social work methodologies, assessments, contracting, documentation, and monitoring and evaluation.

The supervisor needs to be competent in compiling an inventory of job-specific competencies. This involves having knowledge of competencies, job expectations, organisational procedures and supervisee development. The supervisor should value both organisational mission and supervisee development and be able to conceptualise the competencies that are relevant and appropriate. This area of competence can easily be measured or observed, as the outcome would be a comprehensive inventory in a document. It will also affect tasks in the phase to follow and ultimately lead to improved practice by the supervisee.

5.4.3 The assessment phase and tasks

The assessment phase includes the task of *formulating a personal development assessment*. This assessment is based on the competencies as identified in the inventory of job-specific competencies, as discussed above. This serves as an important step of information gathering, before the personal development plan is concluded in the next phase. The supervisor would need to aid the supervisor to compile a register of learning needs, strengths and capabilities, which should be included in the personal development plan and actively pursued during supervision sessions. The personal development assessment would include details with regard to the organisation, the supervisee's strengths and virtues, the service users and intervention approaches (Botha, 2002).

During this phase it is important to employ strengths-based terminology and practices, and encourage the supervisee to take ownership of the process and focus on identifying strengths instead of focusing on deficits. The supervisor thus needs to understand how to conduct this phase by encouraging supervisee participation and ownership (Engelbrecht, 2014a).

The supervisor needs to reflect competence in understanding and assessing according to the supervisee's learning needs, styles and professional development. Once again, this assessment needs to be matched with the organisational setting, service users and intervention approaches. The supervisor needs to understand how to analyse all these aspects and tie them together into the assessment, whilst encouraging the supervisee to participate in the process. The supervisor should possess skills for assessment and critical thinking, and the ability to foster supervisee ownership. It is important for the supervisor to value supervisee development and participation. If these two aspects are not valued, then this phase will not encourage supervisee ownership and development, but rather just lead to the production of a document that does not fully encourage growth and empowerment.

5.4.4 The planning phase and tasks

Following the assessment phase is the planning phase, during which the personal development plan is compiled. As with all the phases, the successful completion of this phase depends on the success of the previous two phases. Each phase lays the foundation for the next phase and for a fruitful supervision process.

This phase is a time of planning for the supervisor and supervisee for the future supervision sessions. The supervisor needs to be competent in using the *personal development plan* as a tool that identifies the learning and developmental needs of the supervisor, based on the personal development assessment in the previous phase. Each competence in the personal development assessment informs specific outcomes listed in order of priority. Outcomes should be formulated in a way that indicates action in a specific area or activity that can be qualified.

The outcomes define specifically what the supervisor will learn, how it will practically be achieved and how it will be assessed. There should be a competence with a specified outcome, supervision activities that will aid in achieving the outcome, and an indication of what assessment method will be followed. The clearer the outcome, the easier it is for the supervisee to achieve it and for it to be evaluated at a later stage. The outcomes should be realistic and easy for the supervisee to understand, as an idealistic and complicated plan could make it more challenging to achieve outcomes and thus affect the success and significance of supervision. The supervisor takes primary responsibility for the structuring, monitoring and evaluation of the personal development plan. However, the compilation of the plan should include the

supervisee, encouraging his/her participation and input, in order to match the supervisor's educational strategies and the supervisee's learning styles (Engelbrecht, 2014b).

Examples of competencies that could be included in the personal development plan are competencies in the areas of: policies and legislation; methodologies; engagement with service users; contracting; assessment; integration of theories; documentation; management; monitoring; and evaluation. It is important that these competencies are formulated in a positive way, focusing on what the supervisee can do and allowing for an increased sense of achievement. This is in support of the theory of competence motivation (Webb, 1983; White, 1959), which states it is important for the supervisee to have opportunities to learn successfully and thus lead to increased motivation and the desire to have more learning opportunities. The focus should not only be on what the supervisee can already do, but include realistic, achievable competencies to stretch and grow his/her competencies. This is necessary to prevent stagnation and encourage the professional growth of the supervisee.

The supervisor needs to be competent in translating the supervisee's competencies into a personal development plan. The supervisor should be able to identify the supervisee's strengths, as well as opportunities for successful future learning so as to enhance competence motivation. The supervisor also needs to be clear in defining the outcomes, activities and assessment methods for each competence so as to aid the supervisee in the learning process; this is a significant part of the educational function of supervision (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014). Lack of clarification can be detrimental to the learning process and produce feelings of failure instead of success in the supervisee. The supervisor therefore must be competent in this area and must have the ability to correctly and purposefully formulate an appropriate personal development plan.

5.4.5 The contracting phase and tasks

During this phase, the task is to formulate and agree upon a supervision contract. The purpose of the contract is to enhance the commitment of the supervisor and the supervisee. The contract should define the professional relationship, and as with all the phases, should encourage supervisee ownership over the process. The supervisor and supervisee both bring different expectations to the supervision setting, and it is important to clarify these differences before supervision commences by means of the contract (Tsui, 2005). The contract entails the mutual

agreement of the personal development plan that was established in the previous phases. There should be focus on the nature of the relationship; the format of supervision; accountability; supervision outcomes; tasks, roles and responsibilities; scheduling; confidentiality; supervision methods; procedures and manner of feedback; and revision of the supervision contract (Engelbrecht, 2014b; Munson, 2002; Tsui, 2004).

The supervisor should have the insight to ensure that all the necessary aspects of the supervision contract are covered, and these would need to include specific organisational requirements should there be any. As the goal of the contract is not to control and diminish the supervisee, but rather to set clear boundaries and guidelines for a successful relationship, the supervisor again needs to encourage ownership and participation, thus empowering and enabling the supervisee. The supervisor and supervisee should have a clear understanding of what belongs in the supervision sessions by creating clear and helpful boundaries. As with all aspects of supervision, the contract should aid the supervision process, allowing space for creativity and new ideas instead of stifling these by introducing stringent rules and issues of authority.

The supervisor needs to be competent to balance all these aspects of contracting, thereby enhancing the previous phases of the process and encouraging successfully future phases. The supervisor needs to focus on the supervisee's professional growth using the contract as an opportunity to clarify boundaries and expectations. The supervisor needs to be wary of using the contract as a means to enforce authority and to act with condescension towards the supervisee, which would undo the focus on strengths and ownership that are encouraged in the previous phases (O'Donoghue, 2003). With the contract in place, the supervision process moves onto the implementation phase.

5.4.6 Implementation phase and tasks

The implementation phase is the next phase in the cycle of the supervision process. As with all the phases, this phase's success is dependent on the successful outcomes of the previous four phases. If the job-specific competencies, personal development assessment and plan, and the contract have been completed thoroughly and meaningfully, it will aid the smooth running of the implementation phase or, more specifically, of the actual supervisory sessions. *Supervision sessions* are the regular meetings of the supervisor and the supervisee, during which defined outcomes are worked towards based on the supervisee's personal development plan and current workload. These supervision sessions fall within the parameters and definition of supervision

as provided in Chapter 2. Sessions may follow the same phases and techniques as those used by social workers in general interviewing.

Supervisory sessions should allow for the opportunity to focus on the supervisee's development, strengths and competencies. This can be achieved by means of critical reflection in order to encourage the supervisee's knowledge, skills and values (Engelbrecht, 2014b). Tools that can be used by the supervisor in order to encourage critical reflection include the Johari Window, Transactional Analysis and the Karpman Drama Triangle (Connor & Pokora, 2012; Engelbrecht, 2014b). These are tools that the supervisor needs to have thorough knowledge of in order to aid the learning experience of the supervisee. The more in depth and practical the supervisor's knowledge of critical reflection tools, the more the supervisee will be able to learn. It is essential that the supervisor has competence in understanding the implementation phase and methods, particularly techniques for enhancing critical reflection in the supervisee.

5.4.6.1 Reflections tools for supervision

Reflection tools are tools that the supervisor can use during supervision sessions in order to develop the supervisee's insight into professional matters. The tools allow for the supervisee to reflect on his/her behaviour and interactions in order to learn more about him/herself professionally and grow as a result of the reflection. It is important that the supervisor is competent in using these tools, as they can greatly benefit the supervision process, but can also be a hindrance if not applied correctly. The tools for reflection that will be discussed briefly are the Johari Window, Transactional Analysis and the Karpman Drama Triangle, which are based on the work of Connor and Pokora (2012) and are identified by Engelbrecht (2014b) as applicable tools for the South African supervision setting.

i.   Transactional analysis

Transactional analysis focuses on the transactions between people by stressing the roles of the structure and function of the ego states, and how these transactions can be modified to achieve full autonomy and maturity. Certain situations and interactions tend to bring out specific behaviours that affect a person's ego state. The three ego states are the 'parent', 'adult' and 'child'. The supervisor needs to create more awareness in the supervisee of these patterns and transactions in order to lead the supervisee to practise more professional responses

(Engelbrecht; 2014b; Solomon, 2003; Turner, 2011). This could benefit the supervisee's interactions and professional relationships with superiors, colleagues and service users, since he/she will be able to enhance communication and understand barriers to transactions and relationships. The transactional analysis ego states are shown in Figure 5.3 below:
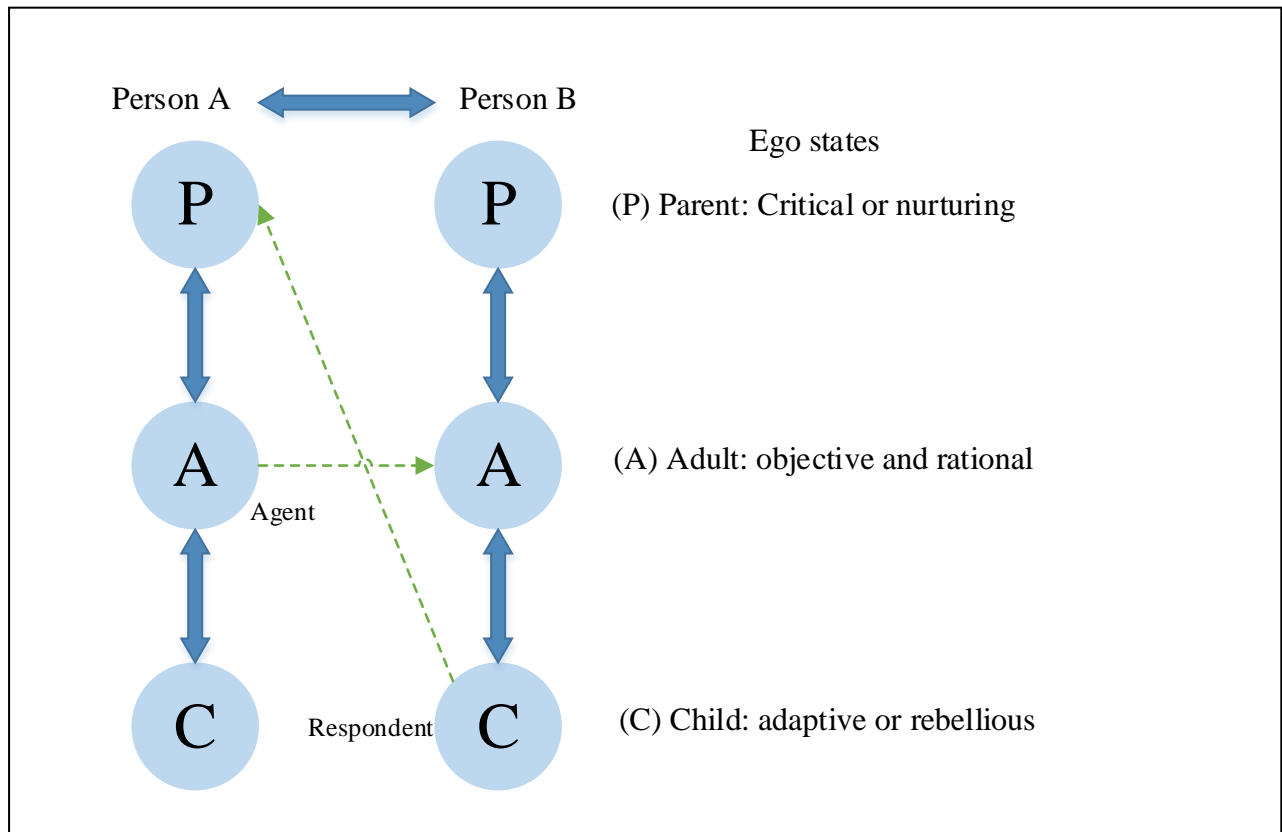
Figure 5.3: Transactional analysis (Connor & Pokora 2012; Engelbrecht; 2014b)

Figure 5.3 shows that each person can move between the ego states during transactions. The adult state is objective and rational and is the type of interaction and communication that is sought after in a professional setting. Ideally, an adult agent, meaning the person who is starting the communication or asking the questions, should lead to an adult response and consequently to open and meaningful communication. However, not all transactions are healthy and the ego state that responds can be different from that of the sender of the message. For example, as indicated by the green arrows in Figure 5.3, the agent asks an adult question, for example *"have you seen my file?"*. Instead of responding as an adult, the respondent replies with the child ego state, for example *"you always blame me for everything!"*. This type of response often pushes the initial agent into a parenting role, and a negative cycle is perpetuated. It is important that the supervisor understands this tool and is competent in applying it and aiding the supervisee to reflect appropriately. Effective use of this tool could aid the supervisee in seeing

communication blockages and power games that he/she might experience with colleagues, management or service users (Connor & Pokora 2012; Engelbrecht; 2014b). Reflection on this process would encourage learning and, ultimately, healthier interactions. Additionally, the supervisor should also be able to reflect on his/her own ego states and transactions in order to ensure that he/she is communicating in an adult way and encouraging adult responses.

ii.   <u>Johari Window</u>

The Johari window is another reflection tool that helps the supervisee to understand the impact of self-awareness and disclosure on service delivery and professional relationships. The supervisor should be able to facilitate greater awareness in the supervisee that will aid the latter in understanding him/herself in relation to service users and colleagues. The Johari Window has four types of personal awareness states in which the supervisee plots information about him/herself. This is followed by a discussion and assessment of how and in which quadrant changes need to be made to professional relationships. This aids the supervisee in considering whether his/her patterns of disclosure and acceptance of feedback are conducive to aiding service delivery (Engelbrecht, 2014b). The quadrants and levels of awareness are represented in Figure 5.4 below:
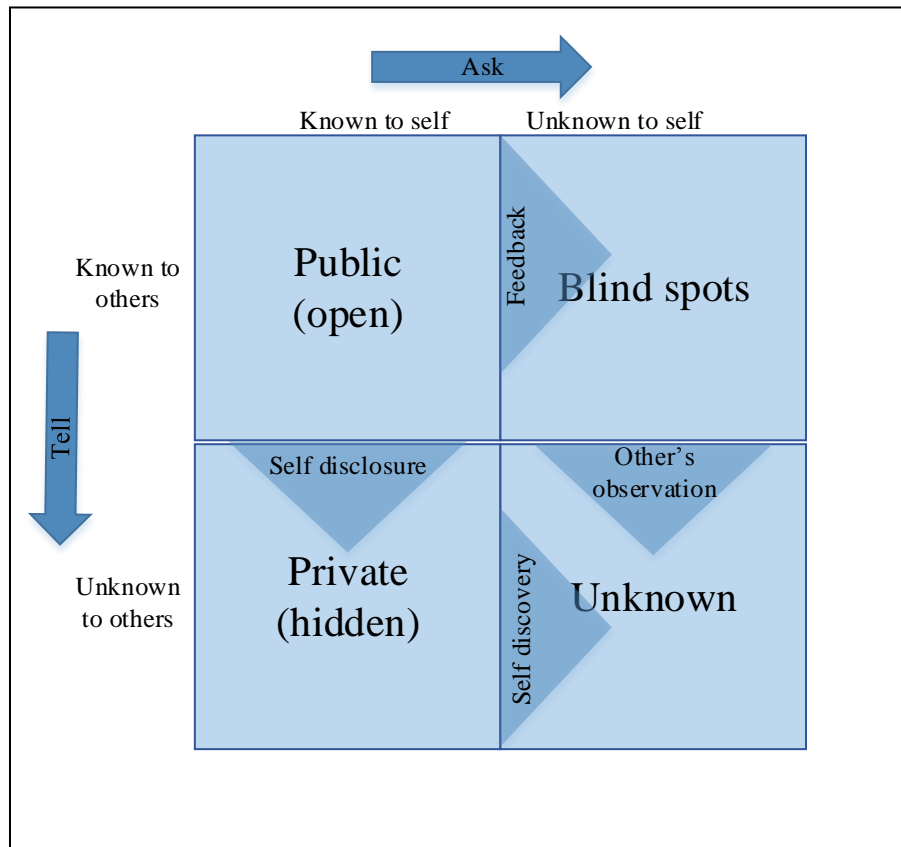
Figure 5.4: Johari window (Connor & Pokora 2012; Engelbrecht; 2014b)

As Engelbrecht (2014b) points out, the supervisor can help the supervisee re-examine his/her assumptions about what information can be disclosed or asked for and whether such interactions lead to better service delivery. The supervisor should be mindful that supervisees might feel obliged to disclose personal issues that are not beneficial to supervision or professional growth. The supervisor should encourage the supervisee to use reflection in order to evaluate what is safe and appropriate to disclose on a professional level concerning work-related matters (Connor & Pokora 2012). It is clear that the supervisor should be competent in understanding such reflection tools because they can be highly beneficial, but also detrimental if not applied properly.

iii.   Karpman Drama Triangle

The Karpman Drama Triangle is another way of helping supervisees to become aware of their interactions and how their internal and external messages can limit their professional behaviour. This reflection can be achieved by defining the roles repeatedly used by the supervisor during interactions. Roles used in such interactions are defined as the persecutor,

rescuer and victim. The role players are often pushed into the drama triangle without being aware of it, and as the roles progress and boundaries are unclear, the cycle continues until someone steps out of his/her role to break the drama triangle. The victim tends to feel oppressed, powerless and ashamed, and looks to the rescuer for help; the rescuer enables the victim and keeps the victim dependent, while they both blame the persecutor for the problem; and the persecutor feels victimised and lashes out towards the victim. Because of the blame and victimisation, the drama triangle is not broken and the roles are perpetuated. A different set of responses might change the negative professional dynamics when a supervisor is stuck in one of the three roles in the triangle (Connor & Pokora 2012; Engelbrecht; 2014b). The Karpman Drama Triangle can be depicted visually as in Figure 5.5 below.
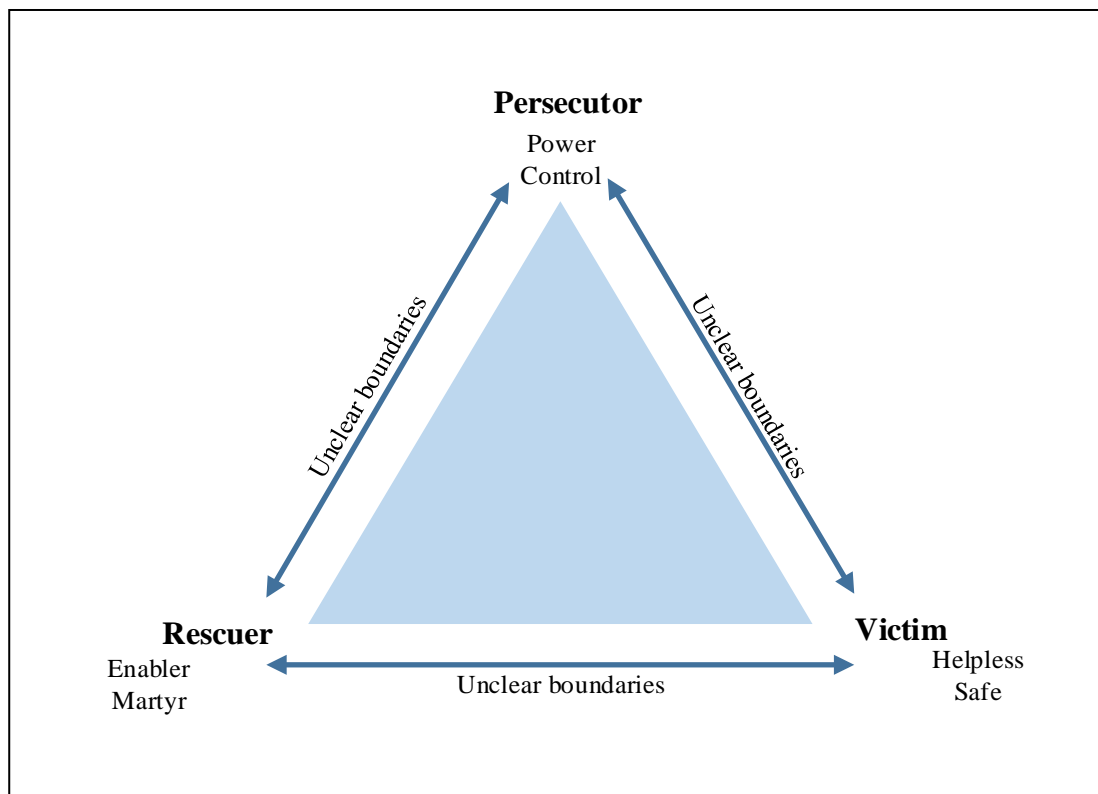
Figure 5.5: Karpman Drama Triangle (Connor & Pokora 2012; Engelbrecht; 2014b)

Once again it is important for the supervisor to understand this tool, and to be able to aid the supervisee in identifying the role players and how the drama triangle is perpetuated. The supervisor needs to be objective and help the supervisee to identify negative behaviour and find suitable alternatives in responding to the other role players.

5.4.7 Evaluation phase and tasks

The final phase of the supervision process is the evaluation phase. This phase does not indicate the end of the supervisory relationship, but just the end of one of the supervision cycles (Engelbrecht, 2014b). It is a time of appraising the supervisee's learning needs, growth, personal development plan and the outcomes of supervision. This allows the supervisor and supervisee to determine how the supervisee is progressing and hence to plan for the next cycle of supervision. The progression of the supervisee can be observed by carrying out a *comprehensive performance evaluation*.

The performance evaluation is the main task for this phase of the supervision cycle. It is the appraisal of the supervisee's functioning and achievement of outcomes, looking at his/her total work functioning. It is time limited and job specific, as it is based on the outcomes set in the supervisee's personal development plan. The performance evaluation is an element of all three supervision functions, namely administration, support and education, and is concerned with the quantitative and qualitative outcomes of social service delivery (Engelbrecht, 2014b; Jacques, 2014). This is an opportunity for the supervisor and supervisee to reflect on the outcomes set in the supervisory contract, and allows for achievements to be recognised to give the supervisee a sense of progress and professional growth. Future development needs are incorporated into the supervisee's personal development plan and included in the contract planning for the next cycle of supervision. The evaluation phase results in the start of a new supervision cycle, in which the development plan and supervision contract are redefined, allowing and encouraging the continuing professional development of the supervisee.

It is thus expected of the supervisor to be skilled in conducting performance evaluations with supervisees, and this is emphasised by the SACSSP (2007). The process requires understanding of how to balance administrative, educational and supportive functions to the benefit of the supervisee's learning needs. Furthermore, the supervisor should be able to conduct performance appraisals in the light of the competence model and strengths perspective, in which the supervisee's strengths are enhanced and deficits are formulated as achievable outcomes in the next supervision contract (Corey, Haynes, Moulton & Muratori, 2010; Engelbrecht, 2014b; Tsui, 2004).

While performance appraisal is part of the supervision cycle, great weight is placed on this aspect in the South African setting. Performance appraisals are tied to service delivery, meeting targets, funding spent and the effectiveness of the organisation, all aspects that are important

when providing feedback to funders and the government (Bradley *et al*., 2010). Thus, where performance appraisal should be to the benefit of the supervisee, there also is a heavy emphasis on how these appraisals form part of the organisation's financial and overall success. It is challenging for the supervisor to balance this pressure from the organisation whilst remaining supportive and developmental in his/her approach to appraisal. The supervisor needs to reflect competence in performance appraisals to benefit the supervisee and his/her professional development and growth, as well as provide the necessary information that the organisation requires in order to determine its effectiveness and success of service delivery (Engelbrecht, 2010; SACSSP, 2007).

5.4.8 Competencies throughout the supervision process

It is clear that the supervisor needs to possess a variety of competencies in order for the supervision process to proceed in a manner that is beneficial to the supervisee, service user and organisation. If the supervisor lacks competencies in one area, the whole process will suffer, as each phase is dependent on the success of the previous phase. If the tasks in one phase are not achieved successfully, the remainder of the process will be affected, as well as the new cycle of supervision when it starts. For example, if the personal development plan is not compiled thoroughly and based on realistic learning needs, then all the outcomes that are agreed upon during contracting, worked on during the supervisory sessions and finally evaluated will not really achieve the professional growth that is aimed for during the supervisory process. This is likely to have a negative effect the service user and the organisation (Engelbrecht, 2014b).

So, while the supervision process is cyclic, the phases overlap in terms of how they flow into each other and how the tasks move from one phase to the next. This is represented in Figure 5.6 below.
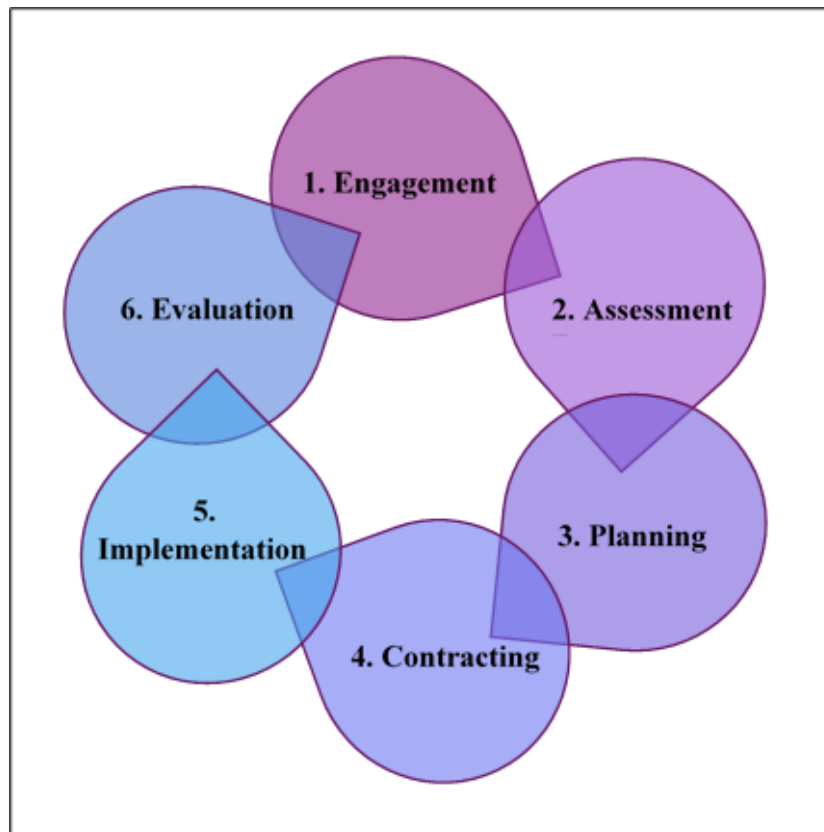
Figure 5.6: Supervision process reviewed

The above figure shows how each phase of the cyclic supervision process is dependent on the previous phase and influences the next phase. If one of the phases fails and breaks the link, the rest of the process is affected negatively. It therefore is important that supervisors are competent in implementing the process of supervision while balancing the three functions of the model of supervision that is appropriate for the setting. Supervisors should have the knowledge and skills to balance all the aspects of supervision and show a positive professional attitude towards the process. These factors are important to consider when promoting a social worker into a supervisory position, or when looking to employ a supervisor. Along with understanding and balancing the supervision process, the supervisor in an NPO has many additional responsibilities that form part of his/her role as a supervisor and that need to be considered in terms of essential professional competencies.

5.5 JOB PRESSURES WITHIN THE NPO SETTING

As discussed in Chapter 2, the supervisor in an NPO has a lot of pressure because of his/her merged management and supervisory responsibilities. Although the supervisor's responsibilities ideally should be separated from management (Botha, 2000), in practice supervisors are expected to fulfil a lot of managerial responsibilities that are closely tied to their role as supervisor (DSD & SACSSP, 2012; Engelbrecht, 2010). The supervisor is appointed into a supervisory position, in relation to which the job description often includes many additional responsibilities besides the cyclic process of supervision discussed above. These additional responsibilities ultimately form part of the supervisor's performance appraisal and job description, and thus place pressure on the supervisor. These additional responsibilities, most of which are administrative, affect the time that the supervisor has for the educational and supportive functions of supervision, as there is a considerable focus on documentation and reporting. The process of supervision is often compromised by the supervisor's additional responsibilities, as it is necessary to meet deadlines for reports and oversee various other projects and staff. This is supported by Engelbrecht (2010), who found that supervisors' actual supervisory responsibilities are often overshadowed by structural work-related issues. A lack of competence in one area of the supervisor's job could result in stress, poor time management, avoidance and low productivity. The more competent the supervisor is to do their entire job, the more effective he/she will be in direct interaction with the supervisee, thus benefitting the service user. These factors have all been mentioned previously, but are highlighted again below to show how they are important areas of competence for the supervisor:

i. *Documentation and funding*: As mentioned previously, NPOs are required to report on the funding that they receive. Due to the nature of the NPO and the organisation's dependence on the government and external funders to financially sustain the organisation, it is necessary that funds that are received are used for their intended purpose and that the expected outputs are achieved. The responsibility for reporting on funding often falls on the middle management supervisor (Bradley *et al*., 2010; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; RSA, 1997b). These reports are typically very detailed and can be strenuous and time consuming to complete. It is important for the supervisor to be competent in report writing, monitoring of projects and evaluating outcomes. Supervisors thus should be able to oversee projects and understand how to put measures in place to ensure good record keeping and reporting. Ensuring that a supervisor is competent in this area is of the utmost importance. The first reason is obviously that a

competent person would produce an insightful and detailed report, meeting the expectations of funders and encouraging the possibility of future funding. The second is that a supervisor who is competent in this area will be able to manage his/her time well, putting measurements in place when a project starts, along with expected outputs as per typical project management and evaluation (Lewis *et al*., 2012). This would ensure that funds are used appropriately, and outcomes are achieved and easily measurable. It would ease the management of and responsibility for funds throughout the organisation if thoughtful preparation was put into the work at the beginning. Finally, a supervisor who is competent in this area would be able to balance the demands of monitoring and evaluation with their process supervisory tasks and responsibilities. This means that supervision is not overshadowed by administrative details, with pressure for achieving numbers and premature outcomes. The supervisor should be able to balance the typical supervisory roles with the role of reporting and documentation so as not to damage the supervisory relationship. Once again, competence in this area is beneficial to the whole ecosystem of the organisation, as all levels clearly gain from this aspect being well managed.

ii.   *Generalist practice*: Social workers are expected to do generalist practice in NPOs. This means that they do not necessarily have areas of speciality, but need to be able to work with a variety of cases, clients and problems (Bak, 2004; DSD, 2006b; Gray & Mazibuko, 2002). The supervisor needs to be competent to work within a generalist setting and offer supervision that is appropriate to generalist practice. Should the supervisor not be competent in this area it could affect the quality of supervision received by the supervisee. A supervisor who is not competent in generalist practice will not be able to assess the supervisees' work holistically, aid them with challenging cases and guide them appropriately in their work. The supervisor needs knowledge of a variety of methods, techniques and strategies for micro- and macro-interventions in order to offer effective supervision.

iii.   *Statutory work*: As Bradley *et al*. (2010) indicate, it is possible that supervisors still have their own statutory case load to manage alongside their supervisory responsibilities, and this is particularly relevant for supervisors who are working in NPO welfare organisations that focus on child protection services. This could be due to high workloads, staff shortages or complex cases. Regardless of the reason, it is

important for supervisors to be competent in statutory work and to maintain a high standard of work. Obviously, as mentioned above, they need to be competent in order to help the supervisee, but also in managing their own case load whilst balancing responsibilities to the organisation and the supervisee. It is important to consider how a potential supervisor manages their case load, how they take initiative and manages their time to fit in all of their tasks. A supervisor who is not competent in managing their statutory work will not only battle to balance his/her supervisory and managerial responsibilities, but also become irrelevant to the supervisee.

iv. *Middle management responsibilities*: As mentioned numerous times, supervisors often are on the middle management level of the organisation. Management is an area on its own that has been research and explored, particularly within the field of social work, and thus it will not be focused on here. However, it is notable to mention once again that the supervisor must be competent in this area. It is important to consider that a supervisor, or potential supervisor, needs to be competent to carry out managerial responsibilities, and participate on the management level of the organisation, without it over shadowing his/her role and time as a supervisor (Bradley *et al*., 2010; Rankin & Engelbrecht, 2014). Management of human resources might be one of the additional responsibilities for which a supervisor in middle management is responsible (DSD & SACSSP, 2012; De Jager, 2014). This could include recruitment, disciplinary hearings, and dismissals. It is also highly likely that as a middle manager the supervisor is involved with the managerial board of the organisation (Bradley *et al*., 2010; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014), and this can be time consuming and challenging for the supervisor to manage. The supervisor would not have received training in many of these responsibilities, and it is important to consider these areas and to encourage the development of competence in these aspects.

Social work supervisors carries many responsibilities within the NPO setting, and carry the weight of limited resources and staff on their shoulders as middle managers. It is important that supervisors can show competence in all these areas of their job, as weakness or poor performance in one area is highly likely to have a negative influence on other areas of their work, including supervision and hence the supervisee. Supervisors should have functional

competencies that make them well rounded and capable to do their entire job, as this would have a positive overflow effect on the organisation, supervisee and service user.

5.6 CONCLUSION

The functional competencies of the social work supervisor inform what skills, knowledge and expertise are deemed essential for the supervisor to effectively carry out his//her supervisory responsibilities. The functional competencies focus on the practical skills that aid in the achievement of the process of supervision, and the practical tasks and roles that the supervisor has to fulfil. There is a myriad of skills, characteristics, fields of knowledge and areas of expertise that a social work supervisor should be competent in; however, it is impossible to cover all of these. This chapter has focused on the most basic functional competencies that are essential for social work supervisors. These competencies include the ability to select a theoretical model, to effectively practise the functions of supervision and to successfully carry out the process of supervision. Functional competencies point to the practical competencies that a supervisor should possess and use on a daily basis. Supervisors should strive towards competence in these areas, and those who are looking to promote or hire should seek these competencies in any potential supervisor. Competence in all these areas will not only lead to better time and work management by the supervisor, but also benefit the organisation, the supervisee and service users, as the main goal of offering effective supervision is likely to be achieved. It is important that functional competencies are encouraged and learnt alongside foundational competencies. Foundational and functional competencies are complementary, and together lead to a well-developed and competent supervisor.

In the light of these discussions on functional and foundational competencies, as well as the contextual framework of supervision and the competence model, it is now possible to empirically explore essential professional competencies. In order to do this, the research methodology will be presented in Chapter 6 to explain the research process and to motivate why certain decisions were made in the empirical study. Following this, Chapter 7 will present the findings of the empirical study.

CHAPTER 6

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Fouché and Delport (2011a) state that there is a process involved in scientific enquiry. The steps of the process give guidance, from identifying a problem and exploring it, to resolving it or reaching a suitable conclusion. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss and explore the processes of research involved whilst investigating the essential professional competencies of supervisors. The chapter discusses the research design, the research approach, the research process, and research ethics. This is done by exploring each aspect further and by motivating why certain decisions and actions were taken during the course of the research process.

Understanding the research process and methodology gives insight into the research as a whole and ensures that the researcher followed ethically and scientifically sound methods of research. This contributes towards achieving the aim and objectives of the study. The aim of this study was to empirically investigate what professional competencies are essential for social work supervisors who are working in a non-profit welfare organisation. Both social workers and supervisors could offer insight into this topic, and therefore both groups were chosen as the unit of analysis for the research. Interviewing both social workers and supervisors provided a rich description of the research topic.

In order to motivate and explain the research decisions and procedures that were followed, the chapter is divided into three main sections, namely the research design, strategy and approach; the research process; and research ethics.

6.2 RESEARCH DESIGN, STRATEGY AND APPROACH

The research design, strategy and approach shape how the research progressed and affected the decisions that the researcher made. These three aspects aided in defining the topic at hand, and also guided what conclusions and outcomes the researcher wished to achieve from the research study. The impact of each aspect on the research process and the decisions that the researcher made are all discussed below.

6.2.1 Research design

The research design gives an indication of how participants will be engaged and how the research will be conducted (Mouton, 2001). The aim of this study was to examine which professional competencies are considered essential for social work supervisors. In order to achieve this aim, the researcher had to ask "what" competencies are essential and "why" they are essential for supervisors. For these questions to be answered in this study, the research assumed an exploratory and descriptive research design. Exploratory research designs are suitable when the researcher is examining a new interest or social phenomenon, such as the professional competencies of social work supervisors (Bless *et al.*, 2006; Fouché & De Vos, 2011). The essential professional competencies of supervisors comprise a relatively new topic and, as the literature study reveals, there is limited research and literature available in this field, and even less so in the local context. Thus exploratory research is necessary, although it cannot always provide conclusive answers for the research and merely point the way towards an answer (Rubin & Babbie, 2007). For this reason, the exploratory design was combined with a descriptive design. Descriptive research provides a more accurate and detailed description of the phenomena being examined, which will complement the exploratory design (Grosser, 2016).

The reason for using the combined research design was that there was limited information on the research topic, and the research aimed to explore the professional competencies of social work supervisors by describing their experiences and exploring what competencies are relevant. The combined research approach is relevant to the qualitative approach (Creswell, 2014; Rubin & Babbie, 2007) that was used for this study. The empirical study, discussed in Chapter 7, describes the participants' experiences, expectations and understanding of professional competencies by means of a qualitative interview schedule (Annexures 3 and 4). The exploratory research design was fulfilled by asking questions such as "what phases of the supervision process are essential for supervisors?" or "what competencies does a supervisor need to possess in the NPO context?" Complementary to this, the descriptive research design stimulated questions such as "how would you describe the current implementation of the supervision process?" and "how does your supervisor aid you in managing your emotions?"

The verbal narratives of 30 participants were categorised into main themes, subthemes and categories on the basis of questions that aimed to explore and describe the essential professional competencies of social work supervisors. As mentioned above, the exploratory and descriptive

research design is suitable for qualitative research (Creswell, 2014; Rubin & Babbie, 2007), and this will be discussed in the next section. In addition, the selected research design is also suitable for case studies (Yin, 2003), and this will be considered after the discussion on the qualitative research approach. Thus, the descriptive and exploratory research design meets the needs of the research approach and strategy, and successfully answers the "how" and "what" questions of the research.

6.2.2 Research approach: qualitative

The research approach that was deemed the most appropriate for the research was the qualitative research approach. Qualitative research provides depth and richness to the data collection process, research findings and interpretation, thus complementing the exploratory and descriptive research designs. The purpose of the interviews was to allow the participants the opportunity to speak openly about their experiences of supervision, and how competencies can be practised, observed and improved upon, as well as what competencies are necessary. In order for this data to be collected, the qualitative research approach was deemed most appropriate.

According to the literature (Creswell, 2014; Fouché & Schurink, 2011; Marshall & Rossman, 2011), qualitative research has certain characteristics that were relevant to and applicable in the research approach for this study:

1. *Natural setting*: Qualitative research is typically collected at the site where participants work or experience the issue. This gives the researcher an opportunity to see how participants behave in their natural context, as opposed to interacting in a laboratory or via email. For this study, the majority of the data was collected at the organisation where the participants worked. This allowed the researcher the opportunity to gain insight into the context in which supervision takes place, what resources are available to each social work office, what the working environment is like, and how staff interact. Conducting research in the natural setting also allows participants to feel relaxed and more comfortable with the research process. Five of the interviews took place over the telephone, although the participants were still in their offices during this time and therefore in their natural setting. Conducting interviews over the telephone did not have a negative impact on the interviewing process or the data that was collected.

2. *Researcher as key instrument*: During qualitative research, the researcher collects data through interviews or observations. The researcher might use an instrument for data collection, but the researcher actually gathers the data, as opposed to using questionnaires or instruments developed by other researchers. This was characteristic of the present study, as the researcher was responsible for formulating the interview schedule, for conducting the interviews and for collecting the data.

3. *Multiple sources of data*: An additional characteristic of qualitative data is that the researcher typically gathers multiple forms of data instead of relying on one single source. This allows for data to be analysed and for themes across the data to be identified. This was achieved in this research, as data was collected through two phases – firstly with the social workers and then with the supervisors. This allowed the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the topic, and to find common themes, subthemes and categories that were prominent in both data collection phases.

4. *Inductive and deductive reasoning*: Qualitative research typically follows an inductive method of interpretation. However, Creswell (2014) asserts that qualitative studies can follow both inductive and deductive reasoning as the research process progresses. The researcher allowed for flexibly in the research and considered both methods of reasoning. Deductive reasoning was used as primary categories arose from the literature, and then further categories, themes and subthemes emerged from the data, following an inductive approach.

5. *Participants' meanings*: The focus of qualitative study should be the meaning that participants ascribe to the issue being explored. For this study the focus remained on what the participants shared from their experiences and knowledge, not on the researcher's opinions or perspectives from the literature. The researcher allowed the data to be at the forefront of the research and only used the literature to support the themes that emerged from the findings.

6. *Emergent design*: The research process is constantly developing and cannot always be prescribed strictly, and there needs to be scope for change as the researcher enters the field and data is collected. The researcher allowed the research design and process to

be modified as data collection and analysis commenced. For example, the researcher adjusted the questionnaire to be more suitable for the interview process.

7. *Reflexivity*: During qualitative research the researcher needs to reflect on how his/her role in the study, personal background, work experiences and culture might shape his/her interactions and interpretations. For this study the researcher prioritised the experiences and reflections of the participants, whilst being mindful of any possible personal experiences that might influence the process. The researcher also wrote a reflexivity report (see section 6.4.2), detailing how personal background and experiences might possibly bias the research process.

8. *Holistic account*: Qualitative research tries to develop an intricate picture of the problem being studied. The researcher attempted to provide an in-depth perspective of the essential professional competencies for social work supervisors. In the research findings, the researcher aimed to consider the wider context of supervision and how this could influence or effect the research and research topic.

The research fulfilled these characteristics for a qualitative study, and the qualitative approach was deemed the most appropriate for the study of the essential professional competencies of social work supervisors.

6.2.3 Research strategy: case study

The case study examination focuses on one specific individual, group or, in this case, organisation. Making use of a case study for research is beneficial, as it provides the researcher with a rich description of a situation and the topic being studied, and is thus suitable for the descriptive research design identified above (Rubin & Babbie, 2007). Additionally, the case study approach is also well suited to exploratory research, as it can be perceived as an exploration of a specific unit (Creswell, 2014). Considering these benefits, selecting a case study strategy for the research was most appropriate for this study.

This research on the essential professional competencies of social work supervisors took place as an instrumental case study. Instrumental case studies are used to gain a better understanding of a social issue. The case study is not the focus of the research, but serves merely to facilitate

the researcher in gaining knowledge about the identified issue (Joubert, 2016). Due to the fact that the organisation is not the focus of the research, is it not necessary to divulge the identity of the organisation, as it does not affect the research process or findings.

The researcher selected the case study approach as it complemented the research topic and did not distract from the issue of essential profession competencies for supervisors, which was the main focus of the study. The researcher selected an organisation that was a good representation of welfare NPOs, as well as for the availability and accessibility of the organisation and potential participants.

Firstly, the organisation was a good representation of welfare NPOs in South Africa as it shares many of the characteristics, practices and organisational traits of other welfare NPOs. These similarities and common practices allow for the findings from the research to be generalised to other NPOs working in the same welfare remit. Legally, all NPOs are governed by the Non-profit Organisations Act 71 of 1997, which regulates the manner in which NPOs operate. Some of the common traits of NPOs include that they are a registered legal entity; they are governed by managerial boards; and they need to maintain accountability to the government and the public. In welfare organisations that focus on child and family services, such as the case study organisation, there is a variety of legislation and policies that guide their practices, the priority of interventions and their services. Some of these polices are the White Paper for Social Welfare (RSA, 1997a), the Integrated Service Delivery Model (DSD, 2006b), and the Children's Act, No. 38 of 2005 (RSA, 2006). More specifically, social work and supervision services are also governed and shaped by documents such as the Policy Guidelines for Course of Conduct, Code of Ethics and the Rules for Social Workers (SACSSP, 2007), the Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession (DSD & SACSSP, 2012), and the Social Service Professions Act (RSA, 1978). Due to the importance of these legislative guidelines and how they shape the governance, practices and services of welfare NPOs, there are many similarities in how welfare NPOs function and provide services. Thus it is clear that generalisations can be made from the case study to other organisations that are working in the same remit.

The second reason for selecting the identified organisation for the case study is that is it a well-established organisation, with many offices and staff who are easily accessible. These factors are important to consider when doing research, as it can be challenging to gain access to participants and data collection can become a tedious process.

In terms of supervision, the case study organisation and other welfare NPOs share similar practices, particularly due to the legislative guidelines to which the organisation prescribes. These include that all social workers need to receive supervision, supervisors are typically in a middle management position, they serve both the managerial board and the frontline staff, and they are responsible for managing multiple programmes as well as non-social work staff. These factors draw further similarities between the case study organisation and other welfare NPOs, further allowing the findings to be generalised and not to be limited to the case study organisation.

Based on these factors, the case study strategy was an appropriate research decision that benefited the data collection process without heavily influencing the findings. The selected organisation served merely as a vehicle for the research to take place and the findings are not specific to the case study organisation, thus fulfilling the definition of an instrumental case study. These factors further motivate why it is not necessary for the participating organisation's identity to be divulged.

6.3 THE RESEARCH PROCESS

The research design, strategy and approach, as outlined above, laid the foundation for the research process to proceed. The research process focuses on how the research topic is selected, formulated and defined, and on the process of data collection and analysis. These aspects are described below.

6.3.1 Selecting a researchable topic

The first step in the research process is the selection and demarcation of the research topic. The research topic can arise out of observations in the field, or from an obvious lack in the literature (Fouché & Delport, 2011a). The researcher was able to observe the need for improved supervision services in the social work field through observation and interaction with welfare NPOs. The need for supervisors to receive training, and to display more competence in the field, was clear. Furthermore, through discussion with key people in the welfare NPO field, as well as academics specialising in supervision, the need for greater clarity around supervisor's competencies became apparent.

Following this, the researcher reviewed the available literature and research on the research topic and found an obvious lack in research and literature focusing on supervisors' competencies, particularly within a South African NPO context. Chapter 1 gave a clear outline of the research topic, and identified the lack of research and literature in their field as a significant factor. Chapter 1 also pointed to the need for supervisors to possess essential professional competencies, as identified in international literature (Epstein & Hundert, 2002; Falender & Shafranske, 2004; Grus, 2013) and in South African policy documents (DSD & SACSSP, 2012; RSA, 2006; SACSSP, 2007), thus further indicating that this is a necessary topic to research.

The need for the research was evident, the topic itself was researchable, and it was realistic to launch an investigation into the topic, largely because the topic could be researched in a prominent welfare NPO that was accessible and supported local research. Furthermore, the participants would be reasonably available for interviews, thus making the data collection process achievable. Finally, the research would be beneficial, as it would add to the field of research on supervision in South Africa, it would be beneficial to the participating organisation and other NPOs in shaping their supervisory practices, and it in general could shape how supervisors' competencies are developed in order to best prepare them for their important role as social work supervisors.

Based on the lack of suitable literature and research, the plausibility of conducting the research successfully, and the potential impact it could have, the research topic – the essential professional competencies for social work supervisors in NPO welfare organisations – was deemed appropriate and much needed.

6.3.2 Literature study

Once the research topic had been clearly demarcated and identified as researchable, the researcher could proceed with an in-depth literature study. One of the primary requirements for conducting research is firstly to conduct a comprehensive literature study on the research topic to provide a solid foundation for the research (Creswell, 2014; Fouché & Delport, 2011b). According to Bless *et al*. (2006), the literature review is a systematic approach that helps to gain an understanding of the research problem. The literature review identifies gaps in current research or literature and deepens the theoretical framework of the research. For this study,

relevant journals, articles, books, scientific journals, government gazettes and the internet were utilised for the literature review. Topics such as social work supervision, supervision in South Africa, supervisor competencies, competence theories, foundational and functional competencies, to name a few, were researched through the aforementioned means. The literature review made up Chapters 2 (conceptual framework of supervision), 3 (competency model and competency definitions), 4 (foundational competencies) and 5 (functional competencies).

International and local authors were used in the literature review in order to enrich the perspectives and context of the study. Local sources were largely limited to one specific researcher (Engelbrecht 2004; 2006a; 2006b; 2010) and one author (Botha, 2002). Owing to the shortage of local research and literature in the field of social work supervision, the researcher had to make use of international sources as well. Literature was used from fields outside of social work supervision, such as organisational management and clinical supervision. Where non-social work literature was used, similarities and connections between the topic and the literature were drawn in order to prove the relevance of the chosen literature (for example Rodolfa *et al*., 2005). Additionally, the participating organisation provided annual reports and brochures, which contributed to gaining an understanding of the service delivery and structure of the organisation.

The researcher used an integrated approach when doing the literate review and assimilated the collective knowledge of all the identified resources to provide an in-depth and theoretical view of the topic. This was significant, as the literature review clarifies the key concepts of the study, provides a detailed context of the various components and offers a theoretical motivation for the study. These aspects shape the perspective of the findings from the empirical investigation. Consequently, the literature review also forms the basis for the questions that were asked in the empirical study.

6.3.3 Developing the research instrument

As already established, the literature study provided the foundation for the research instrument. The researcher made use of a semi-structured interview schedule (Annexures 3 and 4). Semi-structured interview schedules were used as a method of data collection during the in-depth interviews. The schedule guided the interview process, allowing flexibility in the interview to

allow the participants to provide further commentary on the issue being explored and to express themselves freely (Bless *et al*., 2006; Brod *et al*., 2009).

The interview schedule was developed according to Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5, which covered the literature relating to the concepts of social work supervision; the context of South African supervision; the competence model; defining competencies; the specific foundational competencies necessary for supervisors (for example emotional intelligence and professional relationships); as well as the specific functional competencies necessary for supervisors (for example the supervision process and supervision functions). The interview schedule was structured according to the main topics identified in Chapters 4 and 5, focusing on the foundational and functional competencies. Chapters 2 and 3 provided the context and background for the competencies, which were carefully considered whilst compiling the interview schedules. The first section of the questionnaire focused on identifying the details of the participants in order to create a profile of the participants and their supervision trends. This data was collected by means of closed-ended questions, and was mostly quantitative in nature. This was merely to construct a meaningful context for the research by showing who the social workers and supervisors are, and the frequency and methods of supervision in which they engage. Although this data is quantitative in nature, the study still assumes a qualitative approach, and not a mixed-methods approach, as the main focus of the research was not the profiling, but the data that was collected (focusing on the essential professional competencies of supervisors). This data was comprehensive, rich in description, provided meaningful narratives and fulfilled the expectations of a qualitative study.

There were two phases of research, one with social workers and one with supervisors, and a similar interview schedule was used for both phases. The only difference was the manner in which the questions were phrased when directed to a social worker or a supervisor. The purpose of the research was not to gain insight into the differences between social workers' and supervisors' opinions, but rather to gain a holistic description of the professional competencies that are regarded as essential for supervisors; thus the same interview schedule could be used for both data collection phases.

6.3.4 Initial contact with the participating organisation and participants

As previously discussed, the research was conducted as a case study, undertaken in one organisation, from which the findings could be applied and generalised to other organisations. Contact had already been established with the organisation due to previous research and professional interactions. Once the researcher was nearing the data collection phase, the national manager at the organisation was contacted in order to explain the research, to send a detailed research proposal and to request final permission to conduct the research in the organisation.

Once the national manager responded, the researcher ensured that written permission was granted to the researcher to proceed. Furthermore, it was agreed that the national manager would send an email to all the supervisors in the vicinity of the researcher, urging them to participate in the research and to allow their social workers to participate. This was beneficial, as it showed that the organisation was supportive of the research and placed priority on the supervisors and social workers participating.

Following this, the researcher made contact with each supervisor – firstly to request that they participate in the research and to set a suitable date and time for an interview; and secondly for the supervisors to grant permission for their social workers to participate in the research. The researcher explained the purpose of the research to the supervisors. As with the national manager, the supervisors emailed all their social workers, endorsing the research and encouraging cooperation. After this the researcher contacted each social worker via email to arrange a face-to-face interview.

In preparation for the interviews, the researcher sent all the participants a summarised version of the research proposal (based on Chapter 1), the consent form (Annexure 1 or 2), as well as the ethical clearance report (Annexure 6). The researcher decided not to send the participants the interview schedule, as the researcher did not want the participants to prepare beforehand, to formalise their responses or to research the terminology. Unrehearsed responses and genuine reflection on supervision were what the researcher was striving towards.

Once contact had been established with the organisation and interviews were set up with the supervisors and social workers, the researcher could finalise the research instruments and move towards sampling and conducting the pilot study.

6.3.5 Criteria for inclusion and sampling and selecting possible participants

The research followed a non-probability, purposive sampling approach. A sample is a section of the total group that is being studied, or of the population. Purposive sampling is commonly used in qualitative research as it allows the researcher to purposefully select individuals who meet the criteria for inclusion and who will inform an understanding of the research topic (Bless *et al*., 2006; Mouton, 2001).

The research followed two phases of data collection – firstly with social workers and then with supervisors. A sample had to be selected for both data collection phases. Once the researcher had established contact with the organisation and approval had been granted for the research to proceed, the national manager of the organisation put the researcher in contact with all potential supervisors. The researcher made contact with the supervisors via email to explain the purpose of the study and to request that they allow their social workers to participate. Following this the researcher made email contact with the identified social work offices, explaining the research, giving evidence of organisational and ethical approval, and requesting participation. The social workers were selected according to the criteria of inclusion, as well as geographical location. The researcher wanted to conduct as many interviews as possible face to face, thus social workers were selected who were within a reasonable driving distance from the researcher. The criteria for inclusion for the social workers were:

- Registered with the South African Council for Social Service Professions;
- Practising in the non-profit welfare organisation for a minimum of one year;
- Receiving professional supervision from a social work supervisor; and
- Not acting as a social work supervisor.

The population for this target group was approximately 80 social workers, and the researcher selected a sample of 20 workers to participate in the research. The researcher set up interviews with the social workers, mostly via email. Email communication proved to be the most effective, as the social workers and supervisors were seldom available in their offices.

For the second phase of the research – with the supervisors – the population size was approximately 20 and the researcher selected 10 supervisors to be part of the sample. Again, the supervisors were selected according to the criteria of inclusion, and secondly according to

geographical location so as to allow for the majority of the interviews to be conducted face to face. The criteria for inclusion for the supervisors were:

- Registered with the South African Council for Social Service Professions;
- At least one year's experience of social work supervision; and
- Currently practising in a social work supervisory position.

The sample sizes were based on the size of the population, the criteria for inclusion, and the feasibility of gaining access to participants. The sample sizes served as a guideline, and the data collection process would only be concluded once saturation had been reached. Meaning that no new information was being brought to light during the interviews (Brod *et al*., 2009; Mason, 2010). Once the participants had been selected by means of non-probability, purposive sampling, the data collection phase could commence.

6.3.6 Pilot study

It is necessary to conduct a pilot study before embarking on a large-scale interview process. The pilot study is an opportunity for the researcher to adapt the research instrument in order to make it optimally effective in obtaining the required data (Bless *et al*., 2006). In this regard, the researcher undertook a pilot study with three participants in order to determine the validity and reliability of the data collection instrument, as suggested by Rubin and Babbie (2007) and Creswell (2014). The pilot study interviews were conducted face to face as though they were real interviews in the data collection process. The researcher ensured that the ethical aspects were clearly explained and that the participants signed the consent form (Annexure 1). The semi-structured questionnaires were answered with relative ease, and the participants' responses were insightful and meaningful. This meant that is was not necessary for the questionnaire to be changed. Furthermore, as the same semi-structured interview schedule was used for both phases of the research, barring a few minor changes, it was not necessary to do a pilot study for each phase, as the main questions pertaining to the essential professional competencies of supervisors were the same. Once the pilot study had been finalised, the interviews could progress.

6.3.7 Conducting interviews

Before the researcher progressed with the interviews and topical questions, the researcher ensured that the participants understood the purpose of the study, how the data would be recorded and analysed, and provided an explanation of the consent form. The researcher further explained that the interviews would be audio-recorded, and that the information would be stored securely. Many of the social workers were concerned that their supervisors would find out their responses to the research. The researcher explained the principles of anonymity and confidentiality, how the data would be coded and how no personal details would be connected to the data analysis. The participants signed the consent form and gave permission for the interview to be audio-recorded.

Because the same interview schedule was used for both phases of the research, and the interviews were conducted in the same manner, they will not be distinguished in the discussion below, unless otherwise stated.

Once the participants had signed the consent form and understood the research process, the researcher commenced with the interview schedule. The first section of the interview schedule focused on obtaining the identifying details of the participants, as well as basic information regarding the frequency and methods of supervision. Starting with these questions allowed the participants to ease in to the interview and they became more relaxed as the interview progressed. The second section of the interview focused on open-ended questions concerning the foundational and functional competencies of the supervisors. The participants were reasonably open in sharing their experiences and opinions, and the researcher used the interview schedule to prompt the participants when necessary. The interviews took 40 to 60 minutes and were conducted over a period of one month with the 20 social works and 10 supervisors. The research took place from March to April 2016.

Five of the supervisors' interviews were conducted over the telephone. This was done because they were located a significant distance from the researcher and it was not possible to travel to all of them. Telephonic interviews are a recognised method of data collection and are suitable to the qualitative process if the topic lends itself to such an interview (Rubin & Babbie, 2007). Due to the fact that the research focuses on the competencies of supervisors and not personal or emotional experiences, telephonic interviews were deemed appropriate. None of the data collected was negatively affected by the telephonic interview process, while this also allowed the researcher to have a larger sample size. The researcher conducted the telephonic interviews

towards the end of the data collection process in order to become familiar with the interview schedule, and to ensure that the data collected would not be negatively affected by telephonic interviews.

All of the interviews were conducted in English. Although the organisation is predominantly Afrikaans, and participants were given the opportunity to be interviewed and to respond in Afrikaans, they all chose to respond in English. Consequently, some of the participants were responding in their second language, although this did not have a negative effect on the richness and depth of their responses.

The data collection process reached a point of saturation after 30 interviews. This means that the interviews no longer brought new information to light, as the participants' responses became repetitive and did not introduce new ideas or themes into the research (Brod *et al.*, 2009; Mason, 2011). Therefore, the data collection phase came to a close and the researcher could proceed with the data analysis.

6.3.8 Data analysis and interpretation

All the interviews were audio-recorded and the recordings were then transcribed by the researcher. No changes were made to the interviews, and they were transcribed verbatim, maintaining the true meaning of what the participants had communicated. Once all the transcriptions were done, the data analysis could proceed.

Data analysis is the process by which the researcher brings order and structure to the collected data (Engelbrecht, 2016). The transcription of the data was the first step in bringing order to the data. Once the data had been transcribed, the researcher read through all of the interviews in order to gain perspective on the responses and to get an overall picture of the findings. Personal notes were made on the transcriptions to bring meaning to the texts, and to highlight areas of importance or meaningful narratives. Prominent topics were identified and noted based on recurring ideas, patterns of behaviours and beliefs (Brod *et al.*, 2009).

The recurring data and similar narratives were grouped together, and this gave shape to emerging patterns and trends. The data was then coded according to identified themes and ideas that went together (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Predefined coding themes were used

according to the objectives of the study, and emergent themes were used that surfaced during that data analysis process.

The data that fell within the domain of the study was colour coded to differentiate between the various themes and subthemes. The groupings of themes showed that there was agreement in the responses by the participants. The colour-coded themes were then linked to subthemes, and the subthemes were analysed for categories.

The themes, subthemes and categories were then reorganised to ensure that the findings had a good flow and followed a logical argument in accordance with the literature review chapters. The data was presented according to the main themes of foundational and functional competencies. The related subthemes and categories were given under each theme. Supporting excerpts from narratives were provided to enlighten the themes and give depth to the topic, showing the meaning behind the participants' responses and how they had experienced a given theme. The findings were compared with the literature in the literature review chapters, and were shown to be either similar or dissimilar, providing further meaning to the responses.

The quantitative data from the identifying details and supervisory profile was presented by means of graphs and tables so that the data could be clearly viewed, interpreted and understood. Once again, the quantitative data provided a detailed context and profile of the participants, as well as the frequency and methods of their supervision, but was not the focus of the research findings. The qualitative data followed the quantitative data and made up the majority of the empirical study, as the qualitative data was the focus of the study and gave meaning to the topic.

Following the analysis of the data, the researcher engaged in a basic member-checking procedure. Member checking allows the researcher the opportunity to determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings by reporting the main themes, subthemes and categories to the participants (Annexure 5). The participants then have the opportunity to agree with or dispute the findings (Creswell, 2014; Rubin & Babbie, 2007). The member-checking procedure revealed that none of the participants disputed the findings of the research and all were in agreement that the themes, subthemes and categories correctly reflected what they had said during the interviews. Member checking is one of the steps in verifying data and ensures that the researcher has captured the true meaning of the data and presented it accordingly.

6.3.9 Verification of the data

Verification of the research process and the data is a significant aspect contributing to the trustworthiness of the research findings. The research data needs to be valid, meaning that the empirical measure and data adequately reflect the real meaning of the topic being explored. The validity of a study can be established against a set of norms that include credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Creswell, 2014; Schurink *et al.*, 2011; Rubin & Babbie, 2007). The researcher made use of these four strategies as part of the data verification process, as discussed below.

6.3.9.1 Credibility

Credibility underpins the authenticity of the research and the link that it has to the theoretical foundations and sound research practices. Credibility contributes to the assurance that the topic is correctly identified and described (Creswell, 2014; Shenton, 2004). Credibility was achieved in the research because the researcher provided substantive arguments based on theoretical frameworks throughout the study. The introduction indicates which theoretical frameworks are of relevance, the literature review chapters discuss theories in more detail, and the frameworks are applied throughout the data analysis. In addition, the research design was based on models of best practice that are used in scientific research and was substantiated by credible authors of academic research. The data collection process, analysis, interpretation and presentation were described in detail, and once again supported and validated by the literature and research from the literature review chapters. To further increase the authenticity of the data, the researcher ensured that ethical research practices were adhered to and that the limitations of the research were clearly articulated, thus reducing possible factors that could mislead the findings of the research. All of these strategies contributed to the validity and credibility of the research findings.

6.3.9.2 Transferability

Transferability is another step to ensure the validity of research data. Transferability refers to the degree to which research can be transferred to other settings and achieve the same results (Anney, 2014; Schurink *et al.*, 2011). Alternatively, it means how generalisable the research results are. Transferability can be established by providing an in-depth contextual description

of the research. Thus anyone else who in interested in the research can consider the parameters and context of the study and determine if it is transferable to that which they are researching. In this regard, the researcher ensured that a rich, contextual description was given of all the components of the study for both the conceptual background as well as the data analysis. Firstly, in the literature review the researcher ensured that key concepts were clearly defined, always considering the context of South African supervisory practices, and that they were verified by other literary, theoretical and research sources. Secondly, the data from the interviews was in-depth and insightful. The data was presented contextually, clearly stating if the context of the organisation or South African supervisory or social work practices played a role in the data, thus contributing to the transferability of the data.

6.3.9.3 Dependability

Dependability has to do with the reliability of the data, and the notion that the study can be replicated. Thus data should be consistent, despite the changing conditions of the chosen phenomenon being researched, thus leading to results that would be similar if the study were to be repeated (Schurink *et al*., 2011; Rubin & Babbie, 2007). Dependability was ensured by the researcher through keeping a detailed record of how the data was collected, how themes and categories were derived and how decisions were made (as presented in this chapter) so that other researchers would be able to follow similar methods to produce similar results. Additionally, the theoretical foundation of the research and a rich description of the context in which the study is located are provided, adding to the replicability and dependability of the research.

6.3.9.4 Confirmability

The confirmability of research refers to the degree to which the results can be confirmed or corroborated by other researchers. Confirmability shows that the findings truly are derived from the data and are not based on the thoughts or inherent characteristics of the researcher (Anney, 2014; Schurink *et al.*, 2011; Shenton, 2004). Confirmability is achieved by using the verbatim responses of the participants, as presented in Chapter 7. Objective arguments were used to support the data, and the literature review offered an additional verification of the data. The data analysis in Chapter 7 shows that the data itself confirms the findings of the research,

and is substantiate by a theoretical framework and literature from the literature review chapters. The researcher further ensured the validity of the research by implementing a basic member-checking procedure (Annexure 5), in which the participants had the opportunity to confirm the findings of the research, adding to the confirmability and reliability of the research.

The above-mentioned factors of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability all contribute to the validity and reliably of the research. The researcher worked according to strict ethical and research practices, and ensured that the findings were corroborated by the literature or theoretical arguments. In doing so, the researcher ensured that objectivity was maintained and that the research finding reflect the true meaning derived from the data.

6.4 RESEARCH ETHICS

Research ethics is a set of moral principles that guide the acceptable behaviour of the researcher towards the participant (Strydom, 2011). It places emphasis on the humane and sensitive treatment of participants, and provides expectations of the correct manner of conduct (Bless *et al*., 2006; Mouton, 2001). In scientific research, ethics is concerned with what is right and what is wrong in the conduct of research. Determining what is right or wrong depends on the broader society, but within research it also depends on the profession. The researcher needed to be aware of these moral benchmarks, and be able to assess behaviour and decisions accordingly.

In order for this research to be conducted, permission had to be obtained from the Departmental Ethical Screening Committee of Stellenbosch University (Annexure 6). Ethical clearance ensures that no risk is being placed on the participants during the research process. It also provides the researcher with a guideline for research compliance according to which the researcher needs to work. In addition, the researcher is a registered social worker with the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP). The researcher is also bound to the ethical code of practice of the SACSSP, further ensuring that there were clear moral guidelines of acceptable behaviour.

The nature of the research was such that it did not explore deeply personal experiences, or difficulties, nor any of the confidential work related to the social workers' clients. The research focused more on the theoretical and practical experiences of what competencies social work supervisors should possess for effective supervision to take place. Strydom (2011) emphasises

the importance of preventing and avoiding harm to participants, and in social sciences this is mostly of an emotional nature. This was taken into consideration and the participants were informed beforehand of the nature of the research. In addition, the pilot study revealed that the participants could answer the questions easily and that there were no questions that provoked any challenging emotions that the researcher had not foreseen.

As a result, the research was considered low risk in terms of ethical concerns. This was reflected in the interviews, as none of the participants had negative emotional reactions to the questions. The participants were able to reflect on their experiences, whether positive or negative, without any adverse emotional feelings. With this in mind, it was still important for the researcher to consider ethical guidelines and issues that might arise, and also to act in a professional and ethical manner at all times. The most relevant issues that arose during the interviews were concerns regarding confidentiality and informed consent. These two aspects, along with other relevant and important ethical guidelines, are discussed further below.

6.4.1 Ethical guidelines

It is important for a researcher to be mindful of ethical guidelines and best practices during research. The aspects discussed below were most relevant for this research.

6.4.1.1 Voluntary participation

It is important that participants participate in the research process voluntarily. The literature (Bless *et al*., 2006; Rubin & Babbie, 2007) emphasises the importance of participants not feeling coerced into participation, but that participation should be voluntary. As mentioned above, during the initial contact with the participants the national manager urged the supervisors to participate, and the supervisors also encouraged the social workers to participate in the research. The purpose of this was to show the importance of the research, the organisation's support of the research and the benefit of it to the organisation, but at no time were the social workers or supervisors coerced or forced to participate.

To ensure voluntary participation, all of the participants signed a consent form (Annexures 1 and 2), which clearly articulated the purpose of the research. The consent form also stipulated the participants' role during the interview process, and their right to withdraw from the research

process at any time. The researcher also included the telephone number of the supervisors and of the university's Division for Research Development on the consent form, thus ensuring that the participants could report anything disagreeable during the research process.

6.4.1.2 Informed consent

Informed consent goes hand in hand with voluntary participation. Participants can only agree to participate voluntarily if they are fully informed of the purpose and procedure for the research. Thus, according to Strydom (2011), the participants need all the possible information pertaining to the goal of the investigation, the procedures that will be followed, any possible advantages, disadvantages or dangers resulting from the study, and how the data will be used. For the purpose of this study the researcher ensured that the these aspects were communicated to the participants by email prior to the interview while setting up the appointments, and also again face-to-face before the interviews commenced. As mentioned above, the participants were provided with a summary of the research proposal, which included the Departmental Ethics Screening Committee of Stellenbosch University (Annexure 6). Furthermore, the participants signed consent forms showing that they understood the nature of the research and stating that they agreed to participate voluntarily (Annexures 1 and 2).

6.4.1.3 Anonymity and confidentiality

It is important to protect the participants' identities throughout the research process. The researcher needs to ensure that documenting or sharing interview responses or narratives does not expose the participants, and more so does not cause injury to them in a personal or professional manner. Rubin and Babbie (2007) distinguish between anonymity and confidentiality by clarifying that anonymity is when a given response cannot be identified with a given respondent. In the case of an interview schedule, this implies that the participant can never be considered anonymous, because the interviewer or researcher collects the information from an identifiable person, and the researcher can always associate the response with the participant. Furthermore, anonymity can most certainly not be guaranteed if responses are recorded.

For the purpose of this research study, the researcher engaged in interviews that were mainly face to face, with a small number of them being conducted over the telephone. The interviews

were also audio-recorded. Considering this, the researcher could always associate recordings and responses with a specific participant. This was beneficial during the data analysis phase, as it allowed the researcher to have a clearer recollection of each interview, specifically of how participants responded to certain questions, any emotions that were displayed, and points that were emphasised. Bearing this in mind, the researcher could not assure anonymity for the study, and for this reason the researcher focused on confidentiality as a key ethical concern when engaging with the participants at all times.

Firstly, the researcher did not record the participants' names on the audio recordings or on the transcriptions. The researcher made use of codes for each participant, and the codes were used during the data analysis, particularly for the presentation of narratives. The researcher ensured that the information was kept confidential by briefing the participants about the confidentiality procedures that would be adhered to in the research report and any publications, and in providing feedback to the participating organisation. The participants signed a consent form showing that they agreed to the confidentiality agreements and procedures. Furthermore, due to the fact that the participating organisation's identity was not disclosed (see section 6.2.3), the participants' confidentiality and anonymity were further protected and ensured, as they could not be linked to the organisation, nor to any specific office or branch. Finally, the researcher is a registered social worker with the SACSSP, of which the code of ethics emphasises the important of confidentiality and is at the very core of social work practices (SACSSP, 2007).

6.4.2 Personal reflection

Reflectivity refers to the researcher reflecting on how his/her interpretation of the findings is shaped by his/her background and experiences (Creswell, 2014; Engelbrecht, 2016). Personal factors such as gender, culture, history, socioeconomic background and work background might shape how the researcher experiences the data collection process, and consequently how the researcher interprets the data. In considering the validity and reliability of the data (6.3.9), the researcher has to be mindful that he/she is the key instrument during qualitative research and thus needs to be aware of any feelings or factors that could influence how the data is analysed and interpreted. This awareness helps the researcher to prevent any prejudice or bias that might enter into the research process and thus compromise the validity and reliability of the research findings.

The researcher is not part of the participating organisation, nor has she ever been part of the organisation, either on an employed or voluntary basis. Similarly, the researcher has never worked with an organisation competing with the participating organisation. The researcher thus had no personal ties with the organisation. Furthermore, the researcher has no professional or personal ties with any of the participants, and thus was able to remain objective throughout the research process.

The researcher has had the opportunity to work with managers on many levels, and to work with a variety of social work supervisors. These experiences gave the researcher insight into how management and supervision are conducted, the skills that are needed for them to be conducted appropriately, as well as the importance of effective supervision. This experience gave the researcher insight into the context of supervision and how organisations function, but did not prejudice the researcher in anyway.

Additionally, the researcher was able to reflect on personal experiences of managers and supervisors and used this as an opportunity to learn and prepare for the data collection process. There were no significantly negative experiences that had a detrimental effect on the researcher during the research process. As previously indicated, the research is not of a particularly personal or invasive nature, but focuses more on the experiences and opinions of the participants. Consequently, there were very minimal emotional issues linked to the research which could have jeopardised the researcher's interpretation of the findings.

The researcher was able to remain impartial and objective during the course of the research.

6.4.3 Limitations of the study

It is important to consider the limitations that might be imposed on a study. If the researcher is not cognisant of potential limitations it could affect how the data is analysed and the conclusions that can be drawn from the data. Firstly, the researcher needs to be aware of how his/her own subjectivity might have an influence on the research process. Due to the fact that the research used a qualitative approach, it is necessary to be mindful of researcher subjectivity and how this could be a limitation of the study. Personal reflections by the researcher were discussed under section 6.4.2. The following sections considers other possible limitations:

6.4.3.1 Lack of literature and research in the field

The literature study revealed that there was a severe absence of literature or research in the field of social work supervisors' competencies. There was a lack of both local and international literature in the field. Relatively little literature could be found that pertained directly to the essential professional competencies of social work supervisors. Consequently, the literature review consisted largely of research and literature from the related subject fields of counselling, management and non-social work-based supervision. Literature from clinical phycology was a prominent source in the literature review, and was motivated as being appropriate in terms of the study or topic at hand, thus reducing this as a potential limitation of the study.

The research by Engelbrecht (for example 2004; 2006a; 2006b; 2010; 2012a; 2012b; 2013; 2014a; 2014b) featured prominently throughout the study. This is due to the lack of South African literature on supervision, as noted above. The study aimed to provide a South African context for competencies in supervision, particularly in welfare NPOs, and thus demarcated South African literature and research as was available. The work of Engelbrecht was synthesised to link to the study and support the findings, and is thus not considered a limitation of the study.

6.4.3.2 Case study approach

Making use of a case study approach might be considered a potential limitation in research. Reasons for concern are that the case study is a unique situation that yields data that cannot be generalised and used in the field. The researcher was mindful of this concern. Due to the fact that the case study was an instrumental one, the research is not specifically about the organisation, but the organisational case study serves to facilitate a greater understanding of the topic at hand, and not of the organisation itself. The researcher selected the participating organisation because it is a fair representation of similar organisations in the field. Similarities are based on legislative requirements (for NPOs), field of service (family welfare), and relationship with the State (contracting with the Department of Social Development). Based on these similarities of the participating organisation with other welfare organisations, the research data is not limited specifically to the study. Furthermore, by considering factors such as credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability the researcher ensured that a rich description of the context was provided, as well as of the literature and theory underlying the study, thus ensuring that the study is understood within its context, as well as motivating for

the generalisation of the findings. Based on these factors, the case study approach was ultimately not a limitation of the study.

6.4.3.3 Use of an audio recorder

The use of an audio-recording advice was a cause for concern for some of the participants. Whilst the researcher made every effort to explain the ethical guidelines of the study, with an emphasis on confidentiality, some of the participants said that they were hesitant to have the interview recorded, although all of the participants finally agreed. Some of the participants said that they felt awkward being recorded and that they were concerned that they would not sound good. The researcher had to be mindful of how this might influence the interview process. Some of the participants were more reserved and hesitant to answer questions at the beginning of the interview, and to answer questions at length. However, this could also be attributed to general nervousness about interviews, which is common in research interviews. The researcher was mindful of the possible reservations of the participants and made an effort to frame questions in an easy manner, to prompt in a way that encouraged thought and response, and to respond to the participants' narratives in a manner that put them at ease. The researcher had to be considerate of this potential limitation, but it did not impact on the data that was gathered nor the outcomes of the research.

6.4.3.4 Telephonic interviews

As previously mentioned, the researcher made use of telephonic interviews for some of the respondents due to their geographical location and availability. Telephonic interviews are a popular method for conducting interviews (Rubin & Babbie, 2007), and were not considered to be a limitation of the study. Telephonic interviews were conducted with several of the social work supervisors, who also signed the consent form to agree to the conditions of the research. Owing to the fact that the research was not highly emotional for the participants, but more a reflection on their experiences, face-to-face interviews in which the researcher could observe and react appropriately were not critical to the data being gathered. Thus, telephonic interviews yielded the same information as face-to-face interviews and were not deemed to be a limitation of the study.

6.4.3.5 Small sample size

The reasonably small sample size could be considered a potential limitation of the study. Only 30 participants participated in the research. However, as discussed in section 6.3.5, the small sample size did not affect the findings of the study. Due to the fact that the research assumed a qualitative and not a quantitative approach, the sample size was sufficient for generalisations to be made from the findings. The purpose of qualitative research is not mainly to generalise findings, however, but rather to explore meaning and descriptions of the chosen topic (Mason, 2010). Research by Mason (2010) further shows that a sample size of between 25 and 35 for a qualitative study is usually appropriate and sufficient to meet the needs of the study. Thus, whilst the findings can be generalised, as described in the motivation for the case study, they also provide a rich description of supervisors' essential competencies and meet the criteria for a qualitative study. Furthermore, as previously indicated, the research reached a point of saturation, meaning that no more new information came to light towards the end of the data collection phase (Creswell, 2014). Considering these factors, the sample size was suitable for gathering the desired information for the purpose of the research, and thus the sample size was not considered a limitation of the study.

6.5 CONCLUSION

The research methodology provides insight into how the researcher engaged in the research process, what decisions were made, as well as what factors influenced the research process. These are important, as they indicate the validity and reliability of the research, and prove that the researcher followed scientifically sound methods and made decisions that were in the best interests of achieving the research goals whilst acting in a professional and ethical manner. Chapter 6 has provided a review of the methodological decisions that were made based on the research design, strategy and approach; of the research process; and finally of the research ethics. The following chapter focuses on the research findings from the analysis, interpretation and synthesis of the data, as well as its systematic presentation.

CHAPTER 7

RESEARCH FINDINGS ON THE ESSENTIAL PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES OF SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISORS IN A NON-PROFIT WELFARE ORGANISATION

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents an exposition of the empirical findings from the data collected in the semi-structured interviews. The previous chapters explored the concept and definition of supervision and competence, as well as the more specific domains of foundational and functional competencies. These chapters formed a foundation of knowledge from which to understand the importance of professional competencies for supervisors. The research followed a case study approach in order to explore the professional competencies that are essential for social work supervisors. The data was collected through two phases of interviews with social worker and supervisors. Annexures 3 and 4 contain the interview schedules. The gathered data is discussed in accordance with the literature review in Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5 to further explain and understand the findings of the empirical study and to extract meaning. The findings were verified against the literature review and were hence explored in terms of their validity and applicability to the essential professional competencies of social work supervisors.

The social workers and supervisors were interviewed by means of a semi-structured interview schedule. Examining views on the two levels of the organisation allowed the researcher to gain a holistic view of supervision and what professional competencies are considered to be essential. The findings from the two phases of the research are presented by means of themes, subthemes and categories that were identified from the data that was collected in the semi-structured interviews. The data was then grouped together according to common patterns and associations. Thematic analysis was used to gain an understanding of the patterns in and relationships of the data.

In most cases, the empirical findings from both phases are presented together in order to provide a logical flow of data and findings and to show how both levels in the organisation view the essential professional competencies of supervisors. The two phases of interviews used

the same interview schedule, with minor changes to address the questions appropriately. The participants all gave responses that led to the same common themes, as all the questions were focused on achieving the same goal, which was to determine the essential professional competencies for social work supervisors. For this reason, the data from the two phases is presented simultaneously, as it provides an in-depth comprehension of the themes identified. There was no significant difference between the participants' responses in the various phases, and thus they were complementary to each other, leading to them being analysed and presented simultaneously. For clarification purposes, and to ensure anonymity, codes were used to substitute names. The codes are abbreviations and are followed by a number to differentiate between the participants. The research phases and codes are indicated in Table 7.1 below.

Table 7.1: Research phases

Phase	Respondents	Code	Number of respondents	Data collection method
1	Social workers	SW	20	Semi-structured interview schedule (qualitative data)
2	Supervisors	SUP	10	Semi-structured interview schedule (qualitative data)

The exposition of the empirical findings is presented as follows:

- A case study of the participating organisation
- A presentation and analysis of the biographical details of the participants;
- A presentation and analysis of the supervision profile of the participants;
- A discussion of the **two** themes that emerged from the interviews;
- The subthemes that emerged from the **two** themes;
- The subdivision of the themes into individual categories
- Linkages of the themes, subthemes and categories to the literature review;
- Representative verbatim responses from participants.

This chapter achieves the fifth objective of the study, which was *to investigate the essential professional competencies of social work supervisors in a non-profit welfare organisation through an empirical study*.

7.2 PROFILE OF THE CASE STUDY ORGANISATION

In Chapters 1 and 6 it was motivated why a case study was an appropriate approach for this research study, and why the research could also be generalised to other organisations that are working in the same remit as the case study organisation. Furthermore, as previously established, the organisation shall remain anonymous, as it is not the actual organisation that is being examined, but rather the fact that it is an example of how social workers and supervisors function within the NPO sector. Because the research can be generalised and applied to other NPO organisations working in the field, the research is not specific to the organisation and thus the organisation shall remain anonymous. This signifies an instrumental case study, where the case study serves as a vehicle for the research, but is not the focus of the research itself (Joubert, 2016). The following is a brief profile of the organisation to provide a context for it, to show how welfare organisations function, and how this is relevant for social work supervisors. The profile was compiled based on conversations with organisational staff and official organisational documents capturing the organisation's mission, finances and service programmes.

The participating organisation functions in the non-profit sector according to the Non-profit Organisations Act (RSA, 1997b). The NPO Act sets guidelines for NPOs in terms of legal registration, as well as maintaining standards of governance and public accountability. Most NPOs have fully functioning managerial boards, multiple layers of management within the organisation, various projects, programmes and services being rendered, and the majority of them receive funding from the state as well as other prominent donors.

The participating organisation receives funding from the state. A portion of this funding is for statutory work, which the Department of Social Development contracts a small number of NPOs in South Africa to do. Such an organisation is called a designated child protection organisation, and it is given authority to engage in statutory interventions (RSA, 2006). All funding that is received from the state needs to be spent according to agreed-upon contracts, and detailed reports need to be compiled at the end of each funding period.

The organisation functions as a voluntary organisation. Volunteers make up a substantial portion of the work force of the organisation, from community workers all the way up to managerial boards.

The highest level in the organisation is the organisational congress. They meet every three years to discuss organisational strategic planning. Below them is the organisational head office, which acts as the national manager for the various branches of the organisation. There are more than 100 branches of the organisation, and a large portion of these branches offer specialised social work services, which include statutory services. Each branch is independently registered with the Department of Social Development and functions as an independent financial entity. As a result of this independence, each branch has its own managerial board, typically made up of volunteers. The volunteers do not necessarily have any training or knowledge in the specialisation of social work or the related policy documents; in theory, their primary function is to oversee the management issues of the branch.

Within the organisation the supervisor is appointed into a middle management position. The supervisor engages with the managerial board as a middle manager, and is the advocate for the social workers and also the voice of the board back to the social workers. The supervisors themselves could have any number of social workers that they are overseeing, as well as non-social work-related staff and projects. Many supervisors oversee a number of branches, depending on their geographical location and the financial resources available to the organisation and its branches. This means that one supervisor could be appointed as middle manager to oversee multiple branches, and thus be involved with a number of managerial boards and have to work with a large number of social workers. It further implies that, if supervisors oversee multiple branches, they are not situated in the same office as their social workers.

The organisation's core services are child and family services. This includes services for the elderly, families living in poverty and people with special needs. Interventions are based on the social development approach, with emphasis placed on all three levels of intervention with individuals, families and communities (DSD, 2006b).

Kitchener (2000) states that, if competence is to be defined meaningfully, it needs to be tailored to a specific context and profession in which it is being applied. The case study gives a clear context for the field in which the data was collected. Specific details of the case study are omitted so as to maintain the confidentiality of the participating organisation. However, owing

to the fact that it is an instrumental case study, specific details are not essential to the research. The profile of the participants and the profile of supervision that follow next contribute further to creating a clear and specific context for the definition and application of competencies.

7.3 PROFILE OF THE PARTICIPANTS

Information regarding the participants' identifying details was included in the interview schedule in order to build a profile of the participants that contributed to the empirical investigation. The variables were the participants' age, race, gender, number of years of experience as social worker or supervisor, and whether they had received any training in supervision. Creating a profile of the participants gives a better understanding of who the participants are and creates a realistic picture of the social workers and supervisors being discussed. The data collected for the profiles was mainly quantitative in nature. This information contributed to the profile of the case study and created a detailed profile of the participants, thus adding to the validity and reliability of the research (Creswell, 2014; Schurink *et al*., 2011; Rubin & Babbie, 2007). This data does not focus on the specific competencies of supervisors, but merely contributes to creating a comprehensive profile. The study therefore still assumes a qualitative approach, as will be presented later in this chapter by means of themes, subthemes and categories.

Table 7.2 reflects the identifying details of the social workers, and Table 7.3 the details of the supervisors.

Table 7.2: Social workers' identifying details

Code	Age	Race	Gender	Years of experience	Training in supervision
SW1	40-50	White	Female	17	No
SW2	60-70	White	Female	23	No
SW3	40-50	White	Female	30	No
SW4	40-50	White	Female	14	No
SW5	30-40	White	Female	7	No
SW6	30-40	Coloured	Female	9	No
SW7	20-30	White	Female	1	Undergraduate
SW8	20-30	Coloured	Female	2	No
SW9	30-40	Coloured	Female	9	No
SW10	40-50	White	Female	27	No
SW11	60-70	White	Female	40	Postgraduate
SW12	20-30	White	Female	2	Undergraduate
SW13	30-40	White	Female	7	No
SW14	60-70	White	Female	27	No
SW15	30-40	Coloured	Female	8	No
SW16	30-40	White	Female	13	Postgraduate
SW17	30-40	Coloured	Female	5	No
SW18	20-30	Black	Female	2	Undergraduate
SW19	60-70	Coloured	Female	15	No
SW20	30-40	Coloured	Female	5	No

Table 7.3: Supervisors' identifying details

Code	Age	Race	Gender	Years of experience as social worker	Years of experience as supervisor	Training in supervision prior to appointment
SUP1	40-50	White	Male	4	2	No
SUP2	40-50	White	Female	21	6	No
SUP3	40-50	White	Female	8	10	No
SUP4	40-50	White	Female	13	5	No
SUP5	60-70	White	Female	17	10	No
SUP6	50-60	White	Female	21	9	No
SUP7	50-60	White	Female	19	11	Undergraduate
SUP8	40-50	Coloured	Female	1	4	No
SUP9	30-40	White	Female	8	1	Postgraduate
SUP10	30-40	Coloured	Female	8	9	No

7.3.1 Age

The participants were asked to indicate what age bracket they fitted into. This is significant, because age differences play a role in the supervision relationship they form an important part of the supervisors' competencies in non-discriminatory supervision practices (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Engelbrecht, 2014a). Of the social workers (n = 20) who participated in the empirical study, four (20%) were between 20 and 30 years old; eight (40%) were between 30 and 40 years; another four (20%) were in the 40 to 50 age bracket; and the last four (20%) were between 60 and 70 years old. This means that the majority of the social workers were in an early adulthood, midlife phase.

In comparison, the supervisors' (n =10) age groups were: two (20%) were between the ages of 30 and 40; five (50%) were in the 40 to 50 age bracket; two (20%) were between 50 and 60 years old; and one (10%) was in the 60 to 70 age group. This shows a reasonable distribution of supervisors in different age groups, with half of the supervisors in the 40 to 50 age group.

These findings support Engelbrecht's (2014a) statement that supervisors are mostly over 30 years of age, and partly that most social workers are in the early adult phase. These differences in life phases create a generational gap between social workers and supervisors, creating more

challenges for the supervisor to be mindful of. The issue of age difference and its influence on supervision and supervisors' competencies will be discussed further in 7.5.1.2.

7.3.2 Race

The race of the participants was necessary information, as it provided an indication of whether there were any factors of diversity that could influence the competencies that the supervisor needs to possess (Bailey & Aronoff, 2004; Ben-Ari & Strier, 2010; Benhabib, 2002). Of the social workers (n = 20), 12 (60%) were white, seven (35%) were coloured, and only one (5%) was black. Among the supervisors (n = 10), eight (80%) were white, two were (20%) coloured and none were black.

From these findings it is clear that the majority of the social workers and supervisors were white, with the rest mostly coloured. This indicates that there largely is homogeneity between social workers and supervisors in terms of race. The influence of race on the competencies of supervisors is discussed further in section 7.5.1.2

7.3.3 Gender

All 20 (100%) of the social workers who participated in the study were women. Only one supervisor (10%) was male, while the other nine (90%) were females. This shows that the field of social work and its supervisors is dominated by women, and this is supported by the literature (Bradley *et al*., 2010; Engelbrecht, 2014a; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014). The role of gender and the importance of supervisor competence is further discussed in section 7.5.1.2.

7.3.4 Years of experience as a social worker

The number of years of experience as a social worker was one of the criteria for inclusion in the study, with the minimum being having at least one year of experience. This is represented in Figure 7.1 below. A graphical representation of the numbers makes it clearer to understand.
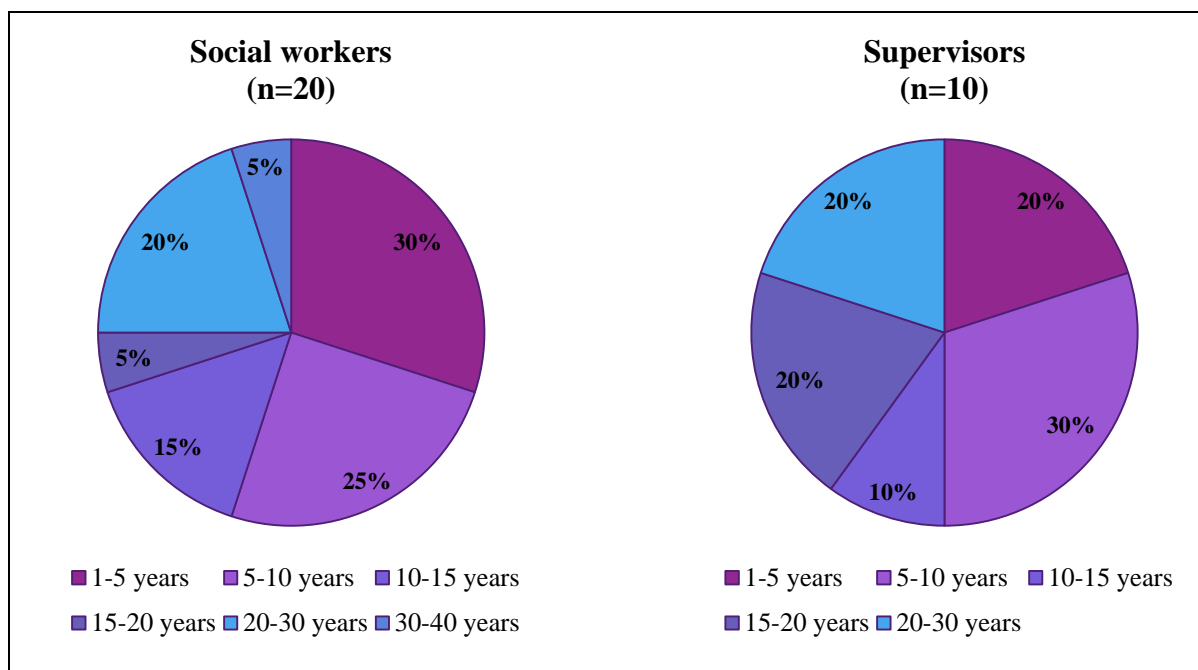
Figure 7.1: Years of experience as a social worker

The findings show that six (30%) of the social workers had between one and five years of experience; five (25%) had between five and ten years of experience; three (15%) social workers had between 10 and 15 years of experience; one (5%) had 15 to 20 years of experience; four (20%) had between 20 and 30 years' experience; and only one (5%) social worker had more than 30 years' experience in the social work field. This allowed for a holistic view of supervision experience, and a rounded view of what competencies they considered to be necessary for supervisors. Having a range of experience means that social workers have different needs, depending on where they are in terms of their career and professional development, thus giving a good idea of what competencies supervisors would need to possess in order to work in an organisation with a variety of social workers.

With regard to the supervisors, two (20%) had between one and five years' experience as a social worker; three (30%) supervisors had between five and ten years of experience; one (10%) had 10 to 15 years of experience; two (20%) had 15 to 20 years of experience; and two (20%) had 20 to 30 years of experience as a social worker prior to being appointed as a supervisor. Understanding the foundations of social work and the legal system, and having experience of receiving supervision are all important when a social worker is appointed as a supervisor. It is a cause for concern that 50% of the participants had less than 10 years of experience as a social worker before they became a supervisor. This confirms evidence in the literature that social workers find themselves promoted to the position of supervisor without

sufficient experience and knowledge (Bradley *et al*., 2010; Cloete, 2012). Experience in the field of social work is critical, and many of the social workers felt that supervisors need to have sufficient experience as a frontline social worker before becoming a supervisor. This is indicated in some of the responses below:

> *"They (supervisors) must have practical experience, if I have a question I might not feel like they can answer if I have more experience than them."* (SW13)

> *"Experience is important: where they (supervisors) have come from, where they have worked, variety of work."* (SW16)

> *"If supervisors have experience they can relate to the problems you are going through. Younger supervisors give examples, but they aren't realistic, they can't relate."* (SW7)

Supervisors with limited field experience have limited practical knowledge compared to supervisors with more experience. This influences how they are able to support social workers and understand the practical challenges of their work. Experience forms an important part of the definition of competence in term of supervisors developing their knowledge, skills and attitudes (Falender *et al*., 2004). There could of course be supervisors with ample experience who still lack essential professional competencies. However, experience in the field provides an important foundation for the supervisor not only to understand the practical aspects of the social workers' job, but also their emotional and education needs. Supervisors also learn during their years as social workers by watching their supervisors, learning from them and seeing how supervision is conducted. This is an important aspect in preparing a future supervisor and is reflected in the response below:

> *"I hadn't had a good role model for supervision during my social work years. When I started as a supervisor nothing had prepared me for the role, especially when a social worker comes to me with a problem. I had to learn from my colleagues, with their years of experience, I needed them for guidance and support."* (SUP6)

From the above it can be noted that supervisors should have sufficient experience as social workers before they are promoted to the position of supervisor.

7.3.5 Years of experience as supervisor

In addition to years of experience as a social worker, the supervisors (n=10) were asked to indicate how many years they had been working as a supervisor. This was a criterion for inclusion in the study, with a minimum requirement of having one year of experience. Four (40%) had between one and five years of experience; five (50%) had between five and ten years of experience; and one (10%) had 10 to 15 years' experience as a supervisor. The supervisors had sufficient years of experience to be able to share their experiences and comment fairly on the competencies that they considered to be essential for supervisors.

7.3.6 Training in supervision

As part of the participant profile, the social workers and supervisors were asked to indicate if they had ever received any training in supervision. Training could have been at either an undergraduate or postgraduate level, or also during any of their time working as a social worker. The theory suggests that most social workers do not receive training in supervision at any time, and consequently the majority of supervisors have not received any training before their appointment as a supervisor (Bradley *et al*., 2010; Cloete, 2012; Cousins, 2004). The study shows that the majority of social workers (15) had never received training in supervision; two had received training on a postgraduate level; and three had training in supervision on an undergraduate level. While training in supervision is not essential for social workers, it can contribute to the supervision process if the social workers have a good understanding of the roles, responsibilities and outcomes of the supervisor and supervision. It can also lead to frustration, however, if the social worker understands how supervision should be implemented and the supervisor is not meeting these expectations:

> *"It's frustrating because I have training, I know how supervision should work, but it isn't happening like that, my supervisor does her own thing."* (SW7)

Further supporting the literature (Bradley *et al*., 2010; Cloete, 2012; Cousins, 2004), it is obvious that the majority of supervisors never received any training prior to their appointment as supervisor. Only two had any training – one (10%) on an undergraduate and the other one (10%) on a postgraduate level. The remaining eight (80%) had never received any form of training in supervision prior to their appointment as a supervisor.

7.3.6.1 Training after appointment as a supervisor

It is important to note that all of the supervisors (100%) indicated that they had received training from the organisation after their appointment as a supervisor, although 80% of them said that they needed more training than what was offered. Financial management, management of human resources and general managerial skills were all identified as areas in which training was lacking. These aspects will be discussed further in section 7.5.2.3, after a more in-depth discussion of the context of supervision and supervisors' competences.

7.4 SUPERVISION PROFILE

After providing their identifying details, the supervisors were requested to indicate the frequency and methods of supervision. This gives insight into how frequently supervisors are meeting with their social workers, how they approach supervision and if they are engaging in any other activities to provide supervisory support. The social workers' supervision profile is presented in Table 7.4, and the profile of supervisory activities by the supervisors in Table 7.5.

Table 7.4: Social workers' supervision profile

Code	Frequency of individual supervision	Frequency of group supervision	Other supervisory activities
SW1	Bimonthly	Quarterly	Office supervision - bimonthly
SW2	Bimonthly	Quarterly	Office supervision - bimonthly
SW3	Bimonthly Open-door policy	Quarterly	Office supervision - bimonthly
SW4	Bimonthly Open-door policy	Quarterly	Office supervision - bimonthly
SW5	Usually monthly, but not scheduled	Weekly – mostly office related	Foster care group supervision - monthly
SW6	Usually monthly, but not scheduled	Weekly - mostly office related	Debriefing - quarterly
SW7	Usually monthly, but not scheduled	Monthly	Debriefing - quarterly
SW8	Usually monthly, but not scheduled	Weekly – mostly office related	Foster care group supervision – monthly
SW9	Usually monthly, but not scheduled	Weekly – mostly office related	Foster care group supervision - monthly
SW10	Monthly	Trimonthly	/
SW11	Monthly	Trimonthly	/
SW12	Bimonthly	Quarterly	Office supervision - bimonthly
SW13	Monthly	Bimonthly	Debriefing - quarterly
SW14	Monthly	Bimonthly	Debriefing - quarterly
SW15	Monthly	Quarterly	Debriefing - quarterly
SW16	Monthly	Quarterly	/
SW17	Monthly Open-door policy	Monthly	/
SW18	Monthly Open-door policy	Monthly	/
SW19	Usually monthly, but not scheduled	Monthly	/
SW20	Usually monthly, but not scheduled	Monthly	Debriefing - quarterly

Table 7.5 shows how often the supervisors engage with their supervisees for supervision-based activities.

Table 7.5: Profile of supervisory activities as presented by the supervisors

Code	Frequency of individual supervision	Frequency of group supervision	Other supervisory activities
SUP1	Monthly	Quarterly	/
SUP2	Monthly	Quarterly	Debriefing - quarterly
SUP3	Monthly	Monthly	/
SUP4	Bimonthly Open door policy	Quarterly	Quarterly office supervision
SUP5	Usually monthly, but not scheduled	Weekly	Foster care group supervision - monthly
SUP6	Monthly	Monthly	/
SUP7	Monthly	Monthly	Team building - trimonthly
SUP8	Monthly	Monthly	/
SUP9	Bimonthly	Monthly	/
SUP10	Monthly	Bimonthly	Debriefing - quarterly

7.4.1 Individual supervision

From Table 7.4 and Table 7.5 it is clear that all of the social workers and supervisors engaged in individual supervision. The majority of the participants do monthly supervision, and the majority of the remaining participants do bimonthly supervision. Some of the participants indicated that they had an open-door policy, and this typically means that the supervisor is located in the same office as the social worker and that, regardless of whether they have scheduled supervision or not, they can see their supervisor at any time for input or support. Whilst all of the participants indicated that they had an "open-door policy" that allowed them to pick up the phone and speak with their supervisors or supervisees, it was said that it was not the same as being in the office with each other. The participants found that supervisors and supervisees who were in the same office were at a distinct advantage.

Seven (35%) social workers and one (10%) of the supervisors indicated that they did not undertake scheduled supervision. They typically met once a month, but these meetings were not scheduled, which could mean that a social worker occasionally does not receive frequent supervision. It also means that supervision time is not set aside, so social workers do not receive appropriate administrative guidance, education or support, and there is only brief input into their reports. This is validated by one of the participant's comments:

> *"I don't know when we are going to have supervision. I don't know if I must make an appointment, there are no set times. I can pop in and ask her questions, but there is no real support for me, just the occasional checking of my reports. I feel lost."* (SW7)

Individual supervision is one of the primary methods of supervision (Engelbrecht, 2012a; Kadushin & Harkness 2014; Tsui, 2005). Supervisors must be competent in all the methods of supervision, but particularly in individual supervision, as it is the primary opportunity to offer administrative guidance, education and support. Individual supervision sessions should follow the cyclic process of supervision (Engelbrecht, 2014b), showing that the supervisor is attentive to the supervisee's needs whilst fulfilling the functions of administration, support and education. Supervision that is not structured or planned tends to be in the mode of crisis management, where supervisees seek help when they experience a specific problem (Bradley *et al.*, 2010; Engelbrecht, 2013).

7.4.2 Group supervision

All of the social workers (n=20) and supervisors (n=10) indicated that they took part in group supervision sessions. Majority of the sessions take place on a monthly, trimonthly or quarterly basis. Based on the participants' comments, group supervision entails a variety of activities that could include one or more of the following: basic topical training, training on policy and legislative changes, discussion of difficult cases, talking through support needs, case study discussions and team building.

Some of the social workers commented that their group supervision was mostly office related, which means that the focus is on office administration, office tasks or issues, and there is seldom opportunity for group discussions and peer learning related to specific social work issues. Once again, the supervisor must be competent in all the methods of supervision, including group supervision. Group supervision should be utilised as an opportunity to

encourage peer learning and growth, not merely for general staff training and for sharing administrative information. Group supervision is an opportunity for social workers to learn from their peers and to develop in a different way from individual supervision (Kadushin & Harkness 2014; Tsui, 2005).

7.4.3 Additional supervisory activities

Besides regular individual and group supervision, some of the participants indicated that they participated in other supervisory activities. These activities were scheduled and served to fulfil at least one of the functions of supervision (Tsui, 2005). Five (25%) of the social workers and one (10%) supervisor indicated that they had office supervision. As group supervision tends to be with all the supervisors' branches, office supervision gives an opportunity to focus on the specific needs within a particular office. In addition, three (15%) social workers and one (10%) supervisor participated in a monthly foster care group supervisory session. This session was for social workers who were dealing with foster care, and gave them an opportunity to discuss challenging cases and to support one another.

Six (30%) social workers indicated that they took part in debriefing sessions as a supervisory activity, as did two (20%) of the supervisors. The debriefing sessions were an opportunity for the social workers to have an open space to speak about the emotional impact of their work and to receive the necessary peer and supervisory support.

While the additional supervisory activities are not a requirement of the organisation, it is encouraging to see that supervisors take initiative to engage with their supervisees on a different level, providing them with more opportunities to learn and to receive support. One of the supervisors commented: *"it's important to use a variety of techniques to keep supervision different and avoid stagnation. As a supervisor you need to provide as many opportunities as possible for your social workers to learn and grow"* (SUP2).

7.4.4 Supervisors' office set-up

The final factor to be considered for the supervision profile was the office set-up and location of the supervisors. The participants felt that this played a significant role in their supervisory relationships and tasks. As indicated by the organisational profile, it is common for the

supervisor to oversee multiple branches or offices. These branches are in different locations, and often are a considerable distance apart. The supervisor typically would be based in one of the branches and travel to the other branches on a scheduled day. The location, number of branches and number of social workers all affect the frequency with which the superior is able to visit each branch and meet with each social worker. Of the supervisors, nine (90%) had multiple offices or branches with social workers whom they supervise. Only one (10%) supervisor was located in the same office as all of her social workers and did not have to travel to other offices for supervision.

This means that 90% of the supervisors have to travel, some quite far, for example 200 km, in order to see their social workers, otherwise they offer supervision remotely. They are not in the same office as all their workers, and thus it negatively affects the service that they are able to offer, particularly in terms of support. This is reflected in some of the participants' narratives:

> *"By the time she (the supervisor) comes in once a month everything is case orientated. Unless someone tells her what's happening in the office she wouldn't know because she doesn't come here unless it's for supervision."* (SW16)

> *"We in the office encourage each other more than the supervisors, they are too far away from us."* (SW2).

In contrast, the social workers who shared an office with their supervisor found this to be a largely positive factor, as did the supervisors:

> *"If it's an important issue and we don't have planned supervision. I can just pop into her office and ask her anything. It really helps. It's easier because she is in the office."* (SW3)

> *"The social workers in the same office as me just pop in to ask questions. We have scheduled meetings, but they can come anytime they need help. It's much easier giving them proper support because they are close."* (SUP4).

Due to many supervisors not being located in the same office as their social workers it adds significantly to their workload in terms of planning, time management, travelling, and learning how to support staff appropriately from a distance. This was identified by the supervisors as an area in which supervisors need to be competent, particularly in terms of job management.

"Workload is overwhelming, especially because my branches are far from each other. I needed to learn how to plan and manage this heavy workload. It's really important for supervisors to do that." (SUP9)

"There's a big difference between an in-office and a travelling supervisor. We need to know how to manage our workload carefully. You are thrown in the deep end, you must know how to cope." (SUP3)

The issue of managing workload, and the importance of being competent in this area, were repeated several times throughout the interviews. This will be discussed more in appropriate themes to follow.

7.5 EMERGING THEMES, SUBTHEMES AND CATEGORIES

Following the questions to obtain the participant and supervision profiles was a more in-depth discussion of the essential professional competencies of social work supervisors. A semi-structured interview schedule was used to guide the interviews with the participants. After a pilot study was conducted, as recommended in the literature (Bless *et al*., 2006; Fouché & Delport, 2011a), no changes were made to the interview schedule, as the participants could answer the questions with relative ease and showed a clear understanding of what was asked. Two main themes emerged from the 30 qualitative interviews that were conducted in the empirical study:

- Theme 1: Essential **foundational** competencies for social work supervisors.
- Theme 2: Essential **functional** competencies for social work supervisors.

Subthemes and categories could be identified from the two main subthemes. These are summarised in Table 7.6 below. A more detail discussion of each theme follows after the summary.

Table 7.6: Emerging themes, subthemes and categories

Theme	Subthemes	Categories
1. Essential **foundational** competencies for social work supervisors.	1.1 Emotional intelligence	(a) Managing emotional intelligence of supervisees (b) Emotional intelligence of supervisors
	1.2 Anti-discriminatory supervisory practices	(a) Age (b) Gender (c) Race and culture
	1.3 Professional relationships	(a) Interpersonal relationships (b) Interdisciplinary relationships (c) Mediation (d) Effective skills
	1.4 Ethical practices and legal knowledge	(a) Knowledge of ethical, legal and professional standards and guidelines (b) Statutory reports (c) Virtue ethics
2. Essential **functional** competencies for social work supervisors.	2.1 Balancing and implementing the three supervision functions	(a) Administrative function (b) Education function (c) Support function (d) Supervision games
	2.2 Implementing the supervision process	(a) Professional development (b) Contracting (c) Performance evaluations (d) High turnover of social workers
	2.3 Specific management competencies for supervisors in the NPO sector	(a) Management of non-social work staff (b) Human resources (c) Involvement with the management board (d) Financial management

The essential professional competencies that were identified by means of the empirical also fulfil the theoretical definition of competencies, as described in Chapter 3. They can all be defined as a combination of knowledge, attitudes and skills that are practised through interaction with the supervisee and organisation. The competent behaviours lead to outputs that yield observable results (Kaslow, 2004; Parry, 1996). In all of the competencies the supervisors need to be given opportunities to successfully implement and develop their abilities, thus leading to competence motivation, as described by White (1959). Furthermore, the organisation and supervisors need to create an environment that facilitates growth and allows room for competencies to be nurtured, and this is a key aspect of the theory of the nurturing environment described by Hartman (1958). Finally, feedback, communication and metacommunication between the supervisor, supervisee and organisation lead to a higher achievement of practising competencies. This sense of achievement is a critical aspect of communication theory, as discussed by Satir (1983). These theories need to be considered when investigating essential professional competencies, and whilst exploring the factors that influence the successful implementation and development of essential competencies (Engelbrecht, 2004; Guttman *et al*., 1988).

With this in mind, the themes, subthemes and categories that were identified during the empirical study are presented below.

7.5.1 Theme 1: Essential foundational competencies for social work supervisors

Foundational competencies are the first theme that was identified upon analysis of the interviews. Functional competencies are the underpinning of what social work supervisors do. They provide a groundwork for who the supervisor should be and how this shapes interactions with the supervisee (Kaslow *et al*., 2012; Rodolfa *et al*., 2005). Foundational competencies shape functional competencies, and consequently have an impact on the supervision process and interactions, and are at the very core of the supervisory relationship. Proficiency in this domain will contribute to the professional growth and performance of the supervisor. A supervisor who is constantly growing and improving in performance subsequently will have a positive influence on the supervisee and his/her professional growth and performance (Falender & Shafranske, 2004).

The foundational competencies that were identified in the literature to be essential for social work supervisors include emotional intelligence (Martin, 2014; Morrison, 2007; Rahkar Farshi *et al*., 2015); anti-discriminatory supervisory practices (Bailey & Aronoff, 2004; Ben-Ari & Strier, 2010; Benhabib, 2002); professional relationships and communication (Hepworth *et al*., 2010; Hingham, 2006; Rodolfa *et al*. 2005; Sebastian, 2010); and ethical and legal knowledge (DSD & SACSSP, 2012; Fouad *et al*., 2009; Freud & Krug, 2002; Pullen-Sansfaçon, 2014; SACSSP, 2007). These four areas of foundational competencies were also identified by the participants during the interviews as being essential for supervisors. They are discussed in more detail below under each appropriate subtheme and category.

7.5.1.1 Subtheme 1.1: Emotional intelligence

When working in a person-centred profession such as social work, emotions cannot be avoided; they are at the centre of all interactions, all problems and all relationships (Morrison, 2007). It is absolutely essential that social workers and supervisors are equipped to understand emotions, and to use them as an opportunity to learn and grow, which is the essence of emotional intelligence. The latter is the ability to understand one's self and other people as emotional beings (Goleman, 2006). Emotional intelligence gives insight into how emotions affect behaviours, beliefs, thoughts and perceptions. How social workers and supervisors adjust, modify and regulate their emotions, as well as how they relate to others, is central to emotional intelligence.

High levels of emotional intelligence are linked to higher performance outcomes, greater job satisfaction, improved problem-solving ability and the reduction of stress (Howe, 2008; Martin, 2014; Singh & Prakash, 2015). This is reflected in the responses by some of the participants: *"there are times the social worker can't see the problem clearly, I need to step in and first sort out their emotions before addressing the case"* (SUP1), and *"sometimes they (social workers) are so stressed, they first need to blow off steam, talk about the problem, and then I can put them back on track"* (SUP6).

The literature (Matthews *et al*., 2002; Mayer & Ciarrochi, 2006) undoubtedly identifies emotional intelligence as an essential foundational competence which social work supervisors should possess. This was confirmed during the interviews, as all of the participants identified this as a critical area in which supervisors should be competent. There were two main categories

that the participants highlighted as important; firstly, the supervisor's role in the development of emotional intelligence within the supervisee, and secondly the supervisor themselves showing emotional intelligence in their professional interactions. These two categories are discussed in more detail below.

(a) Category: Managing the emotional intelligence of supervisees

The role of the supervisor in terms of managing the emotional intelligence of supervisees is to help supervisees monitor their feelings and emotions, and to use this information to guide their thinking and actions (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). This is a very necessary activity for supervisors and supervisees to engage in, especially as social work can be highly demanding and emotional. All of the participants identified the management of the emotional intelligence of supervisees as an essential competence that supervisors should possess. The participants' responses are captured in Table 7.7 below, followed by a discussion.

Table 7.7: The importance of managing the emotional intelligence of supervisees

Subtheme	Category	Supporting excerpts from narratives
Emotional intelligence	Managing the emotional intelligence of supervisees	• *"It is really important for me to be able to help the social workers in managing their emotions."* (SUP2) • *"My supervisor must be able to uplift me, see when I'm struggle and help me manage my emotions."* (SW3) • *"Managing emotions is at the core of what we do. It's essential."* (SUP9)

Social workers need support in managing their emotions and, as indicated in the literature (Hawkins & Shotet, 2011; Howe, 2008; Martin, 2014), as well as the narrative in Table 7.7, this is one of the main functions of a supervisor. In order for social workers to function optimally they need the guidance of their supervisors to help them deal with their job-related stress and emotions by identifying and managing their emotions (Earle, 2008; Goleman, 2006). The importance of this role is reflected in the participants' responses above, where they emphasise the significance of the supervisor's role in developing their emotional intelligence.

There are four emotional abilities that are key to emotional intelligence: recognition, use, understanding and management (Martin, 2014; Mayer *et al*., 2000). Supervisors need to be competent to work through this process to achieve emotional intelligence. The interviews revealed that some supervisors were excellent at following this process through and helping social workers grow in emotional intelligence, whilst others did not think as holistically about resolving emotional issues.

The social workers and supervisors were able to reflect on how emotional intelligence is fostered during supervision, and this is in accordance with the four steps in the ability model mentioned above (Martin, 2014; Mayer *et al*., 2000):

> **Recognition**: The supervisor should be able to recognise emotions in other people, such as: *"my supervisor will stop our session and talk about how I am feeling"* (SW18).

> **Use**: This is the ability of the supervisor to match his/her mood appropriately to that of the supervisee based on the recognition of emotions. For example: *"I try to understand what my social workers are going through, I show compassion and empathy, they need to know that I'm real and that I know how it feels to be struggling"* (SUP5).

> **Understanding**: The supervisor should be able to understand the complexity of emotions and be able to see underlying emotions relating to the problem at hand. Participant SW19 reflected on this: *"my supervisor will pick up the problem, try to understand what's happening and look for the real feelings that I'm going through."*

> **Management**: Finally, effective action needs to be decided upon based on an understanding of the emotions. This can be seen in responses such as *"the goal is for the worker to realise why they find something difficult and then to reach a solution"* (SUP9), and also *"after we spoke about the problem she (the supervisor) helped me to figure out how to manage my time and my workload"* (SW18).

One of the supervisors captured the essence of emotional intelligence and showed that she really understood how to foster it during supervision sessions:

> *"We go through cases and I ask the social workers to reflect on their emotions. I ask: what makes you feel like this? What triggers this emotion? Why are you reacting to this case or client? I try to get the social workers to answer: why are you feeling like this? Not just: what are you feeling? Then we can start working towards resolution."* (SUP1)

The responses show that some supervisors are able to follow through the ability model and are skilled in helping their supervisees process their underlying emotions and then to look for solutions. However, other participants responded that emotional intelligence was limited and that supervisors did not nurture supervisees towards developing their emotional intelligence. This is partly due to time constraints, as reflected in the following responses: *"there is just not enough time, my supervisor doesn't have time to talk through my feelings"* (SW2), as well as SW8, who said *"managing emotions doesn't really happen, there is only really space to talk about work"*. Another limitation to achieving emotional intelligence was the supervisors' limited understanding of it. Many of the supervisors thought that all they had to do was give their supervisees a place to speak about their stress, but not actually to think through the stress or emotions and help them grow through the experience. For example: *"the social workers just need a space to blow off steam, then we can focus again after that"* (SUP6) and *"sometimes they* [the social workers] *just need to blow off steam or talk about a difficult client, once it's off their chest then we can carry on with work"* (SUP3).

The above narratives indicate that there is a need for more training and equipping in the domain of emotional intelligence. The narratives also support the idea that emotional intelligence is important and that social workers need their supervisor's support and guidance in this area. One of the social workers emphasised how addressing emotions helped them deal with job-related stress, as also reflected in the literature (Martin, 2014; Morrison, 2007; Singh & Prakash, 2015):

> *"My supervisor gives me a lot of guidance. I can talk to her about my emotions and stresses. She helps me get to the bottom of it. She helps me to relax, and doesn't let my stress distract me, but helps me to stay focused"* (SW13).

It is clear that there is a need for supervisors to aid their supervisees in managing, understanding and using their emotions appropriately. Emotional intelligence is central to social work practice, and particularly to supervision (Morrison, 2007). It is not only imperative to teach supervisees, but also for supervisors themselves to possess emotional intelligence. This is discussed in the following category.

(b) Category: Emotional intelligence of supervisors

Throughout the interviews, the participants highlighted the importance of supervisors being emotionally intelligent. Supervisors should have the ability to recognise, use, understand and manage their own emotions in order to benefit the supervisory relationship. Emotional intelligence ties in with the category of intellectual competence, as defined by Guttman *et al*. (1988). Emotional intelligence, as with intellectual competence, is about knowing how to react and behave appropriately based on what is experienced and observed, and this also ties in with performance competence. The narratives from the interviews concerning the emotional intelligence of supervisors are captured in Table 7.8 and in the discussion that follows.

Table 7.8: The importance of emotional intelligence in supervisors

Subtheme	Category	Supporting excerpts from narratives
Emotional intelligence	Emotional intelligence for supervisors	• *Emotional intelligence is <u>very important</u>."* (SUP10) • *"She (the supervisors) is good at managing her emotions at the workplace. I think <u>it's important</u> to do that."* (SW15) • *"Supervisors <u>must be emotionally stable, and emotionally smart</u>."* (SW3)

The literature (Morrison, 2007; Singh & Prakash, 2015) emphasises the importance of social work supervisors being emotionally intelligent. This is supported by the participants' responses in Table 7.8, which indicate that they felt that this was an essential area for supervisors to be competent in.

Some of the social workers commented during the interviews that their supervisors did not display emotional intelligence with regard to their own emotions. For example: *"her (the supervisor) emotions influence her in a negative way. She will talk badly about staff if she isn't happy about something"* (SW7), and *"my supervisor doesn't handle her emotions well. Sometimes she will have unnecessary outburst. People are wary of her"* (SW6). These responses show that some supervisors do not have the ability to understand and control their emotions appropriately, and this can affect the supervisory relationship, as supervisees lose trust in their supervisors or become wary of them. The literature (Mayer *et al.*, 2000; Salovey & Mayer, 1990) supports the view that emotions and moods have a significant negative impact

on relationships and problem solving if they are not managed appropriately. This is further supported by the following responses:

"I am in control of my emotions, it's important to teach that to them [the social workers].*"* (SUP10)

"Supervisors must have emotional intelligence. They need to be stable, I need to know where I am standing with my supervisor. Not to always be on eggshells." (SW19)

"Supervisors must be the right type of person to supervise. They need to know how to approach problems, how to manage their emotions, their lives, they must be emotionally balanced." (SW10)

Being competent in emotional intelligence leads to greater effectiveness as a leader and manager (Singh & Prakash, 2015). Supervisors need to be able to nurture emotional intelligence in their supervisees, but also to model emotional intelligence in their own behaviour and interactions. This also points to supervisors having congruence between their communication and metacommunication, so that there are no conflicting messages between their behaviour and their display of emotions. This is a key aspect of communication and feedback, as identified by Satir (1983) and reported in Chapter 3. The supervisory relationship is based on interaction, communication and exchange of information, and if the foundation of this relationship is not emotionally stable it will affect the entire process of supervision (Martin, 2014).

7.5.1.2 Subtheme 1.2: Anti-discriminatory supervisory practices

Social work supervisors need to be mindful of differences that could shape the supervision process and relationship. Factors such as race, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation and religious beliefs can shape how supervisors and supervisees interact. Supervisors need to be sensitive to these factors, but also should not draw unnecessary attention to them – they need to balance how to be considerate of such factors without highlighting them to the extent that they become an issue themselves. Supervisors should be able to adapt their competencies based on environmental demands, for example being able to work with people who display a variety of differences, by tending to supervisees' unique needs and being mindful of the challenges that they face. This fits in to the category of intellectual competence (Guttman *et al*., 1988).

With this in mind, supervisors need to be mindful of how emotions, communication patterns, and approaches to problem solving and learning styles are shaped by both the supervisors' and the supervisees' worldviews and personal experiences. The supervisor should be able to observe the wider context of the personal, professional, political and educational dimensions that can affect the working supervisory relationship (Engelbrecht *et al*., 2014).

All of the participants agreed that it is essential for supervisors to be competent in anti-discriminatory supervisory practices. This was emphasised in some of their responses:

> *"This is really important, we work with diversity, so we need to consider it. If you aren't open to diversity it's a problem. It's important to understand others and for that not to negatively affect my experience of supervision."* (SW18)

> *"It's very important. We work with different people, we are all different in the office."* (SW1)

Based on the participant profile above (section 7.3), there appears to be moderate homogeneity across most areas of difference that could have an impact on the supervisory relationship. A brief summary of the key areas for anti-discriminatory practices is provided below, showing its relevance from the interviews and clarifying which ones will be discussed in more detail. While the participants recognised the importance of each of the factors, some here highlighted as more relevant in their daily practice:

> **Age**: This was one of the aspects that the participants clearly identified as playing a significant role in the supervisory relationship. It is discussed in more detail in the assigned category (a) below.

> **Disability**: None of the participants identified disability as an aspect that influences their work, or their office relationships. They all recognised the importance of being aware of disability and practising in a manner that is non-discriminatory and inclusive, but it does not affect them in their daily practice. This was also not identified as a significant area in the literature. For these reasons it will not be discussed further.

> **Gender**: This was another area of diversity that the participants could identify as having an impact on the supervisory relationship. It is discussed in more detail in the assigned category (b).

Sexual orientation: The sexual orientation of social workers and supervisors was not identified by any of the participants as relevant to the supervisory relationship. Furthermore, it was not identified in the literature as playing a significant role in the supervisory relationship, and for these reasons will not be discussed further.

Race: This is the final aspect that the participants identified a key area in which supervisors should be competent. It is discussed in more detail in the assigned category (c) below.

Religious beliefs: The organisational profile (section 7.2) indicates that the organisation is rooted in Christian values and beliefs. While the employees do not necessarily all hold the same religious beliefs, they prescribe to the values of the organisation. The participants said that this was not an area that caused any differences or conflict in their supervisory relationship.

Three main aspects of anti-discriminatory supervisory practices were identified in the interviews. These are age, gender and race. They are discussed in more detail below.

(a) Category: Age

Generational differences can have a considerable impact on the supervisory relationship. Age can shape ones' worldview, and consequently how problems, relationships, work values and communication are engaged in and navigated. Cennamo and Gardner (2008) say that ageing, life stage and career stage all have an influence on the supervisory relationship, and the supervisor should be competent in understanding and working successfully with these differences (Kupperschmidt, 2000). The participants were in agreement that generational differences are an important factor in supervision and are an area the supervisor should have the competence to manage appropriately. Their responses are captured below.

Table 7.9: The importance of anti-discriminatory supervisory practices with regard to age

Subtheme	Category	Supporting excerpts from narratives
Anti-discriminatory supervisory practices	Anti-discriminatory supervisory practices with regard to age	• *"Working with different ages can be hard, <u>you need to know what you are doing</u>. I need to accommodate each worker's age appropriately."* (SUP5) • *"<u>Supervisors need to be good with different ages</u>."* (SW14) • *"<u>It's important</u> to know what challenges different ages can bring, and to work with the differences."* (SUP6)

From the participant profile (section 7.3) it is clear that, in general, the supervisors are older than the social workers. This is confirmed by Engelbrecht (2014a), who found the same age distribution for social workers and supervisors in South Africa. The difference in life phase and generational gaps create more challenges for the supervisor to be mindful of, as reflected in the narratives in Table 7.9. Not only is it a challenge working with social workers in different life phases, but the supervisor's life phase can also affect the supervisory process. These factors are discussed below. The supervisor needs to be cognisant of these factors throughout the supervision process.

Firstly, in terms of the social worker's age, the supervisors commented how age can affect the supervision process and the way in which the supervisor interacts with the supervisee. Both young and old supervisees present challenges for the supervisor. Young supervisees appear to respond well to change, but can be emotionally dependent, whereas older supervisees are less emotionally demanding but resistant to change. This can be seen in the participants' narratives:

> *"Older social workers are much harder to work with, they don't respond to training or change."* (SUP9)

> *"Older social workers are difficult to work with. The younger workers respond better to new things. The older ones require more input, they want to do things their own way, even if it has a negative impact on the organisation."* (SUP8)

"Younger workers need a bit more support emotionally, the older ones tend to need less emotional support." (SUP4)

"Sometimes younger social workers are emotionally immature. They can be a bit dependent and can't do anything on their own. I need to remember to treat them like a professional, not a child." (SUP3)

It is critical that supervisors are aware of age differences and that they can accommodate these within supervision, but that they also need to address life phase issues if they have a negative effect on the supervision process (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008). Kupperschmidt (2000) validates this by stating that supervisors need to use generational differences as a tool to create more productivity, innovation and ownership over work. However, supervisors also need to be aware of how their life phase can affect their approach to supervision and the way in which they relate to their supervisees. For example:

"Sometimes older supervisors' approaches are dated. They want to do things like they did many years ago, it just doesn't work like that anymore, and it's not realistic." (SW6)

"She (the supervisor) is out of touch and out of date. She thinks everything is still like it was when she was working, she hasn't been in the field for a while." (SW7)

"Younger supervisors are more controlling, they are harder to work with." (SW7)

"Younger supervisors don't have the experience, they need to learn how to exert their authority and to find themselves in the job." (SW2)

The supervisors' life phase, and their experience in the field of work, can affect how they approach the supervision process and how they exert authority. Experience was one of the main factors linked by the social workers with the age of the supervisor. They found that older supervisors had a more rounded experience of the social work field, for example *"older supervisors have more experience, they can relate to the problem"* (SW7). It is significant to note that, while most social workers want an older supervisor, there is also a balance between how many years the supervisor has been out of social work practice. The social workers said that, if the supervisor was both significantly older than them and had also been a supervisor for a long time, their approach to social work was dated and that they lacked understanding of the field and the clients. One social worker commented: *"I want to put my supervisor in the car so*

she can see how people are really living, and the dangers that I am faced with. It's not like her days where you can walk around the streets and just go into people's houses" (SW7). On the other end of the age spectrum, the social workers said that younger supervisors lack depth of experience, for example *"younger supervisors know less, you don't trust their knowledge as much"* (SW13). Another social worker said, *"younger supervisors give ideal examples but they can't relate to what you are going through, they just don't have the experience"* (SW7). Experience is inevitably linked to age, and was one of the main factors discussed when defining competencies in Chapter 3. In order for supervisors to be competent they need to have a balance of experience as a social worker and as a supervisor, and a relevant and current view of the social work field. This fits with the provided definition of supervision, and is confirmed by one of the social workers:

> *"Supervisors need to be open to new ideas and new ways of working."* (SW14)

Supervisors need to be aware of how generational prejudices and perceptions can affect the way in which the social worker and supervisor relate. Some of the supervisor participants commented on how this is a relevant part of supervision and an important competence to possess:

> *"When I started there was a social worker who was many years my senior, it made me anxious. We had an open conversation about how we felt about it and moved on. This was important, else it would have hung over us forever."* (SUP6)

> *"Age can be linked to social workers' perception of the supervisor. You (the supervisor) need to be aware of that, and work on it consciously as you build the relationship."* (SUP10)

It is obvious that age plays a critical role in supervision, and that supervisors and social workers alike recognise the need for the supervisor to be competent in managing generational differences.

(b) Category: Gender

The participant profile revealed that only one participant was male. The social work field is dominated by women, and this is confirmed by Bradley *et al*. (2010). None of the social workers had ever had a male supervisor, and some of the supervisors had worked with an

occasional male social worker, either currently or in the past. Despite the gender homogeneity of the social work field, there still are prejudices and issues that arise during supervision. Supervisors need to be mindful of how gender shapes the supervisory relationship, but also have to be aware of how their gender perceptions and attitudes affect their workers (Engelbrecht, 2014a; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014). Even though nearly all of the participants were women, and the social work field is dominated by women, the participants still identified gender as an essential area in which supervisors should be competent in adopting anti-discriminatory supervisory practices. Some of the participants' narratives are captured in Table 7.10 below and in the discussion that follows.

Table 7.10: The importance of anti-discriminatory supervisory practices with regard to gender

Subtheme	Category	Supporting excerpts from narratives
Anti-discriminatory supervisory practices	Anti-discriminatory supervisory practices with regard to gender	• *"It's important for supervisors to be mindful of this, they can't be prejudiced."* (SW8) • *"We've never had any problems, my supervisor understands the importance of this."* (SW19)

The participants' narratives show that they considered anti-discriminatory practices with regard to gender to be very important for supervisors to be competent in. Supervisors need to be equipped to work with different genders, being mindful of the usual differences and not allowing this to affect practice negatively (Engelbrecht, 2014a; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014). Some of the supervisors were able to reflect on how male and female social workers are different:

"Gender depends on personality as well, but in general male social workers don't share as openly or as easily as female workers do." (SUP6)

"It is a challenge working with men, they think differently, I need to approach them differently." (SUP3)

Although there are gender differences, the supervisors showed competence in understanding them and using this element as a strength to the benefit of the social worker, for example:

> *"Things are different with men social workers than women. Things I never thought would be a problem can be. For example, if a child has been molested the male social workers prefer not to be alone with them, so we need to send a female auxiliary worker with. Or women in the community don't let the men in their house because they don't want people to talk. I need to be aware of these things and help my male workers."* (SUP3)

> *"I encourage men workers to do groups with males, they can connect with men on a different level. It can be used as their strength."*(SUP6)

This is a good example of how supervisors are aware of gender differences, how they affect the social worker and how, through supervision and guidance, they have been able to work with the differences. Supervisors need to be competent to overcome the challenges of different genders in the workplace, as well as the stereotypes that come along with gender. SUP1's statement of *"gender differences are not a big deal. It's about understanding authority, how to exercise authority, and respecting other people's authority"* shows that gender can be managed in the workplace if it is understood within the boundaries of the professional relationship.

(c) Category: Race and culture

Of all the diversity factors that interplay in the supervisory relationship, race and culture are the most challenging. Race and culture are of particular relevance in South Africa and need to be considered carefully by the supervisor (Engelbrecht, 2004; Engelbrecht, 2006b; SACSSP, 2007). The participant profile and discussion on race indicate that the majority of the participants were white, with only a small minority being coloured or black. Once again, there was relative homogeneity within the organisation in terms of racial differences. However, this is even more of a reason for supervisors to be aware of how race can influence relationships and to act competently in this area, as it is easy for supervisors and social workers alike to become accustomed to racial homogeneity and for challenges only to come to light when the homogeneity is challenged. Regardless of whether or not racial differences caused problems in the participants' work, all of the participants identified race as an area in which anti-

discriminatory supervisory competencies are essential (Bailey & Aronoff, 2004; Ben-Ari & Strier, 2010; Benhabib, 2002).

Table 7.11: The importance of anti-discriminatory supervisory practices with regard to race

Subtheme	Category	Supporting excerpts from narratives
Anti-discriminatory supervisory practices	Anti-discriminatory supervisory practices with regard to race	• *"It's important that all cultures are comfortable together. I focus on each of their strengths and personalities."* (SUP8) • *"You need to understand and accommodate cultural difference in working style."* (SUP5) • *"You need to be prepared to learn and to be open to other cultures. It's at the core of what we do."* (SUP2)

The above responses indicate that supervisors are focused on ensuring that cultural differences are not a cause for conflict or disadvantage in the workplace. Differences in language or understanding of work should not put different cultures on the back foot. This is emphasised by Engelbrecht (2006), who states that supervisors need to be aware of appropriate language, behaviours and practices in different cultures so as not to create stress for the supervisee. Participant supervisors showed awareness of this and tried to accommodate and reduce differences, for example:

> *"I take care to ensure that all my social workers are comfortable and understand everything, it's important."* (SUP6)

> *"It can be challenging in group sessions because of language and pace. I have to make sure the pace I work at fits in with the pace of the workers and how their culture approaches work and problems."* (SUP4)

Anti-discriminatory practice also means showing an openness and willingness to learn about and from different cultures. Supervisors should focus on cultivating respect and appreciation for cultural differences. In addition, supervisors should be able to focus on various cultural

dimensions, rather than just focusing on the skills and knowledge of the supervisee (Engelbrecht *et al*., 2014). With this in mind, the supervisor should be open to learn about different cultures and also willing to see how culture can shape practice by focusing on the individuality of each worker (Fouad *et al*., 2009). These two principles are reflected in the responses of the participants:

> *"The basic principle is respect. I need to respect my social workers as individuals."* (SUP7)

> *"With different cultures I just ask them to explain why they do something differently. I can learn a lot from them."* (SUP3)

> *"I can learn a lot from my workers from different cultures. Everyone solves problems differently."* (SUP10)

The statements reflect that supervisors appreciate worker diversity and see it as an opportunity for reciprocal learning. When accommodating different cultures it is necessary that supervisors ensure that boundaries and expectations are sensitive to cultural practices, but still mindful of the legal and ethical remit of social workers. This is in line with SACSSP (2007:37), which states that supervisors are responsible for "setting clear, appropriate and culturally sensitive boundaries". This understanding and accommodation of cultural practices and differences is seen in the following narratives of the participants:

> *"I try to accommodate different cultures styles and approaches, as long as we are always within the law."* (SUP3)

> *"Some cultures approach things differently. For example, black social workers in black communities take a long time to do their interviews. But they first need permission from the elders in the community, and family, they need to consider their clients' culture, and so I have to do the same. This is fine, as long as they are upholding the law, I give them space, but the only thing we don't take our time with is when there is abuse."* (SUP5)

Cultural friendliness (Engelbrecht, 2006b) and anti-discriminatory practices (Bailey & Aronoff, 2004) are central to the work of the supervisor and, based on the narratives and comments from the participants, are key areas in which supervisors should be competent.

7.5.1.3 Subtheme 1.3: Professional relationships

Professional relationships are the very substance of supervision. Supervisors are in relationships with their supervisees, organisational staff, on occasion with clients and also with external role players and professionals, and they therefore need to be competent in relational skills. Rodolfa *et al*. (2005) identify relational skills as an essential competence for supervisors, and this was confirmed by the participants in the interviews. They supported that supervisors should be able to build and maintain professional relationships in the workplace. Some of the participants commented:

> *"Supervisors must be good in terms of people skills."* (SUP10)

> *"Supervisors must have knowledge of people and good people skills. They must be able to have good relationships."* (SUP3)

Relationships centre on communication (Sebastian, 2010), and this is one skill that supervisors should be competent in, as reflected in one of the participant's responses: *"supervisors must be good communicators. They must listen and they must want to build a relationship"* (SW4). Sebastian (2010) found that good communication can lead to healthy relationships, greater job satisfaction and higher productivity, consequently leading to greater success and effectiveness in the workplace. This is echoed in Satir's theory of communication (Satir, 1983), which states that successful supervision depends on effective communication.

Relational competencies can be observed in three areas of practice, namely interpersonal skills, affective skills, and expressive skills, as identified by Rodolfa *et al*. (2005). These categories were also identified by the participants throughout the interviews, as they agreed that these practices could be considered essential competencies for supervisors. The analysis of the themes, subthemes and categories highlighted the following categories, and these are discussed further below: interpersonal relationships (interpersonal skills); interdisciplinary relationships (interpersonal skills); mediation (affective skills); and expressive skills.

(a) Category: Interpersonal relationships

Interpersonal relationships focus on the building of effective relationships with a wide range of people in the workplace. The basic relationship standards and principles of social work are important to the successful building of relationships, and the supervisor should be adept in this,

most basic, level (Hepworth *et al*., 2010; Hingham, 2006). Communication, listening and empathy are some of the basic skills a supervisor should have. Although every social worker should have these skills, as should every supervisor, the participants identified these skills as being essential for supervisors, and that they need to be practised and modelled openly in the supervisory relationship.

Table 7.12: Interpersonal relationships

Subtheme	Category	Supporting excerpts from narratives
Professional relationships	Interpersonal relationships	• *"Supervisors must have good relational skills. They must know how to talk to people."* (SW17) • *"Supervisors must be good at communicating. Not just talking, but how you communicate, how you say things."* (SW6) • *"It's important to have real relationships between supervisors and social workers."* (SW7) • *"Supervisors must be able to work well with people. They must be open, listen well and not domineering."* (SW13)

The supporting excerpts from the narratives of the participants show that interpersonal relationship are key for the supervisor. Social work supervisors must be able to work effectively with people. Their primary task is the supervision of social workers, and this is a relationship based on an interaction in which trust, confidentiality and respect are paramount. It is possible that a supervisor is appointed who is very strong administratively and in terms of managerial functions, but the relational aspect is weaker, and this would affect the supervisee significantly. SW4 said: *"a supervisor needs to be someone who can work with people. It can't be all about the files and reports, they need to connect with us"*. The primary skills the participants felt contribute to building good relationships were listening skills, as reflected in their narratives below:

"The supervisor needs to be a good listener. They need to listen and be patient before rushing into giving advice." (SW12)

"Supervisors must have good listening skills. They need to really hear me, or else how will they know if things are wrong or I'm not coping?" (SW15)

Besides listening skills, the participants also felt that nonverbal communication was essential and that supervisors should be conscious of this. This is one of the key skills of a social worker (Fouad *et al*., 2009; Hepworth *et al*., 2010) and unfortunately appears to be overlooked once the worker moves into a supervisory and managerial position:

"The supervisor's verbal and non-verbal language must relate. She can't say let's talk, but then she is distracted." (SW3)

"Sometimes my supervisor is just sitting behind her desk, with all her files, all her stuff, the radio is on, she doesn't turn to look at me, or engage with me. How must I open up and talk to her when she can't even connect with me from behind her desk?" (SW19)

Supervisors need to be aware of how they connect with their supervisees, and not always think about the relationship in terms of the practical administrative function, but remember that a connection has to be made for the supportive and educational functions as well (Tsui, 2005). In contrast, supervisors need to be aware of relational boundaries (SACSSP, 2007). They should be able to balance the openness, communication and empathy mentioned above with the professionalism and authority of their position. Many of the participants felt that professional boundaries were often overlooked by supervisors. Poor relational boundaries can have an impact on other social workers' relationships with the supervisor and with each other. Some of the participants' comments on professional boundaries are given below:

"There must be good boundaries. I (the supervisor) can be friendly, but if they push me then I need to take a firmer stance." (SUP1)

"There are personal relationships where people are favoured, that's not on. It can't be different rules for different people." (SW17)

"She (the supervisor) sometimes favours other offices of other social workers. This makes us feel bad, and it's really not fair." (SW5)

The SACSSP (2007) also emphasises the importance of good relationships, clear professional boundaries, respecting colleagues and maintaining workplace confidentiality. These are all areas in which a supervisor should be competent. The supervisor should be able to build and maintain interpersonal relationships, but also interdisciplinary relationships, as discussed below.

(b) Category: Interdisciplinary relationships

The participants were asked to share their thoughts on interdisciplinary relationships, whether supervisors are involved on this level, and whether or not this is an area in which supervisors need to be competent. Their responses are indicated in Table 7.13 and in the discussion that follows.

Table 7.13: Interdisciplinary relationships

Subtheme	Category	Supporting excerpts from narratives
Professional relationships	Interdisciplinary relationships	• *"I have to do my own networking. It would have helped as a new social worker if she* [the supervisor] *had orientated me."* (SW16) • *"She* [the supervisor] *doesn't take initiative with networking, even if there are relationships that she needs to help us with."* (SW16) • *"Every relationship I have had to build and maintain myself. It would help if she was more involved with professional relationships."* (SW7)

The above narratives reflect that the majority of supervisors do not play a role in building interdisciplinary relationships or networking. Nearly all of the social worker participants said that they had to take their own responsibility for building interdisciplinary relationships, regardless of whether they felt equipped in this area or in need of help. Many of the social

workers also had to rely on their colleagues for help with networking outside of the organisation. This is also seen in the following responses by the social workers:

> *"We have to do our own networking."* (SW6)

> *"My colleagues had to help me with networking."* (SW16)

> *"She* [the supervisor] *knows a lot of resources, and will put you in touch with people. But a lot of it I have to do myself."* (SW17)

> *"We have to help each other in the office to build new contacts, there is no help from the supervisor."* (SW8)

Some of the supervisors gave similar responses in that they felt the social workers should take their own initiative for building interdisciplinary relationships. For example:

> *"In monthly supervision we do networking, the social workers must use each other as a network and for building relationships."* (SUP9)

> *"I don't get involved, there isn't time for me to help with networking."* (SUP4)

> *"I try to build a network between my social workers, they connect with each other. I can't do more than that."* (SUP7)

> *"I ask the other social workers to orientate new workers and to help them with networking. I don't want my workers dependent on me."* (SUP6)

These responses show that the supervisors do not place much value on networking and building interdisciplinary relationships. The comment by SUP6 shows that some of the supervisors have a limited understanding of the benefit of interdisciplinary relationships when she says *"I don't want my workers dependent on me"*. However, the opposite is in fact true; if the social worker is well established, has a good network of support and interdisciplinary relationships, he/she would be less dependent on the supervisor, as reflected in the comment by SUP2: *"as a supervisor I need to help my workers engage with multidisciplinary teams, state resources, the board, the community, volunteers and clients. This provides more support for my social workers in the long run."* This suggests that some of the supervisors do understand the value of building interdisciplinary relationships, which is also supported by the SACSSP (2007).

Although many of the supervisors did not emphasise this as an area of essential competence, a minority of them felt it was an important skill for supervisors to possess. One supervisor commented: "*I try to emphasise the importance of interdisciplinary relationships; it is very valuable*" (SUP2). In contrast, nearly all of the social workers felt that this was an area in which they needed supervisory support, and the expertise, knowledge and connections of the supervisor. Some further comments include: *"supervisors must be able to network well"* and *"my supervisor knows all the big contacts like government departments, she knows people that we don't know at all"* (SW13). The majority of the social workers were in agreement that interdisciplinary relationships should be regarded as an essential professional competence for supervisors.

(c) Category: Mediation

Affective skills are related to maintaining professional relationships by dealing effectively with conflict, differences and communication problems. The SACSSP (2007) emphasises the importance of affective skills in maintaining and promoting professional relationships, and this was echoed by the participants during the interviews. All of the participants felt that this was an important skill for supervisors to be competent in. The participants identified mediation as the main skill that supervisors should have, and the most relevant in their workplace.

Table 7.14: Mediation

Subtheme	Category	Supporting excerpts from narratives
Professional relationships	Mediation	• *"It helps when she* [the supervisor] *steps in."* (SW6) • *"Supervisors must be able to manage conflict."* (SUP10) • *"It's important for supervisors to know what to do when it comes to mediation."* (SUP2)

Part of the supportive role of the supervisor is to aid in conflict resolution and mediation (Jacques, 2014; Tsui, 2004). The participants felt that this was an important role in which supervisors should be skilled, as reflected by the narratives in Table 7.14. Mediation takes place

in two areas, firstly between the social workers and their clients, and secondly between the office staff. The participants said that it is essential for supervisors to be skilled in mediation when it comes to difficult clients. There are cases where the client and social worker cannot reach an agreement or there is conflict, and then the supervisor needs to step in to relieve the situation and to bring resolution. Some of the participants made the following comments about mediation with clients:

> *"She* [the supervisor] *helps with mediation of difficult clients. She is there to support me and to help me, not to take over the situation. She gives me space to learn."* (SW19)

> *"I sometimes need to sit in with my social workers if there is a challenging client, or a client complaint. It's difficult, but I encourage them to speak about the problem and to reach a solution."* (SUP3)

Supervisors also need to step in and mediate staff conflict within the office. In fact, office conflict was identified as more of an issue than client-related conflict, and an area in which supervisors frequently have to intervene. The participants agreed that this was an essential competence for supervisors. The participants could reflect on the supervisor helping with mediation:

> *"The supervisor will step in with staff issues. She will come and relieve the situation. She gives everyone a chance to talk about what has happened and helps to restore the relationships."* (SW10)

> *"With office issues I get the staff together so that they can each have a say. We then speak about a way to go forward, and most importantly there must be no drama when it's finished. Everything must be resolved."* (SUP5)

From the above responses it can also be observed that the supervisors are able to follow the basic stages of mediation, which include: establishing guidelines, hearing the stories, agreement, clarification, and closure (Reyneke, 2014).

(d) Category: Expressive skills

The final category that was identified by the participants under competencies for professional relationships was the importance of expressive skills. Expressive skills focus on the practical, tangible ways in which supervisors communicate with others. These include verbal, non-verbal and written skills. All types of communication are important and they should be informative, clearly articulated, and also demonstrate proficiency in the use of professional language and concepts (Fouad *et al*., 2009; Rodolfa *et al*., 2005). The participants identified expressive skills as an essential foundational competence for supervisors. One of the main reasons for this emphasis on expressive skills is due to the fact that many of the supervisors are not in the same office as their social workers, as discussed previously (section 7.4.5). They thus rely heavily on communication that is not face to face, and it is therefore really important that the supervisor is skilled in this area. The participants' responses are captured in Table 7.15.

Table 7.15; Expressive skills for supervisors

Subtheme	Category	Supporting excerpts from narratives
Professional relationships	Expressive skills	• *"Because we only see our supervisor once a month we communicate a lot over email, so it's very important."* (SW1) • *"Supervisors must be good communicators!"* (SUP1) • *"Communication is what we (supervisors) do, we must be good at it."* (SUP8)

All of the participants agreed that supervisors must be good at expressive skills, and that it should be considered an essential competence, as reflected by the excerpts from the narratives in Table 7.15. For all of the participants, email was one of the most important tools used for communication. All of the participants email their supervisors their reports, basic instructions are given by email, and occasionally case discussion are held by email, for example: *"most tasks are communicated over email"* (SW10) and *"I'll email my supervisor to say if something has happened on a case"* (SW4). Although email communication can be challenging, as miscommunication and misunderstandings can easily arise, most of the participants have an agreement that if there is a misunderstanding they will contact the other party involved: *"email*

communication can be risky, because you don't always understand the tone. But if we aren't clear then we just pick up the phone and clarify with each other" (SW13). Finally, email communication is beneficial because it keeps a paper trail of discussion and decisions: *"email is good because it leaves a paper trail"* (SW12). Based on the frequent use of email communications and the importance of the information that is included in such communications, it was established by the participants that this was an area in which supervisors should be competent.

The participants also made use of telephone communication, but that was mostly if there was an urgent situation that needed to be addressed. The social workers commented that they called their supervisors if there is a problem: *"if I'm in the field and there's a problem I phone my supervisor for help"* (SW5), and thus telephone communication needed to be clear and helpful, with the supervisor responding in an appropriate way that could be understood easily by the social worker when under pressure.

The final skill that is important for supervisors to possess is written skills related to feedback on statutory reports. The responsibility and weight of legal reports will be discussed further in section 7.5.1.4 below. The written skill of providing appropriate feedback that is helpful and informative is absolutely essential for the social worker and supervisor: *"supervisors must know how to read reports and give good feedback, or else I can't improve my reports and we just go back and forth"* (SW13). Fouad *et al*. (2009) support that supervisor should be able to give constructive, integrated and positive feedback to their supervisees and that this is a key relational skill for supervisors.

It is obvious that many supervisors and social workers communicate frequently by means other than face-to-face communication, owing mainly to the fact that they are in separate offices. It is thus essential for supervisors to be competent in affective skills in order to benefit the supervisory relationship.

7.5.1.4 Subtheme 1.4: Ethical practices and legal knowledge

The last subtheme of essential foundation competencies is ethical practices and legal knowledge. This competence includes the capacity for the supervisor to apply legal concepts, to show awareness of legal issues, as well as advocating for the social work profession (Rodolfa *et al*., 2005). The importance of ethical practice and the necessity for it to be a competence that

supervisors possess is emphasised by South African policy documents and literature (DSD & SACSSP, 2012; Fouad *et al*., 2009; Freud & Krug, 2002; Pullen-Sansfaçon, 2014; SACSSP, 2007). As discussed in Chapter 2 (section 2.5), social workers and supervisors work with a number of policy documents on a day-to-day basis. Some of the legislative documents that are applicable to supervisors include: the Non-Profit Organisations Act (RSA, 1997); the White Paper for Social Welfare (RSA, 1997a); the Integrated Service Delivery Model (DSD, 2006b); the Policy Guidelines for Course of Conduct, Code of Ethics and the Rules for Social Workers (SACSSP, 2007); the Social Service Professions Act, No. 110 of 1978 (RSA, 1978); and the Children's Act, No. 38 of 2005 (RSA, 2006), to name a few.

As mentioned previously, a small number of non-profit welfare organisations are contracted by the Department of Social Development to carry some of the statutory workload, as they are designated child protection organisations. This means that the social workers are given statutory authority and work within the remit of the Children's Act (RSA, 2006). This places great legal and ethical responsibly on social workers, and consequently pressure on supervisors, to ensure that all work is done according to the correct legal procedures. Supervisors need to be competent in this area, as they are responsible for overseeing the social workers' work and can be held liable for possible unprofessional conduct by the social worker (SACSSP, 2007).

The participants all felt that this was an area in which competence was absolutely essential for supervisors. The social workers and supervisors alike recognised the legal responsibility placed on the supervisor and the critical role that they play in ensuring that organisational and social work activities are within the legal parameters prescribed to them.

The participants identified three main areas which they considered to be competent for supervisors, these categories are also identified in the literature study to be essential competencies. They are: knowledge of ethical, legal and professional standards and guidelines (DSD & SACSSP, 2012; Fouad *et al*., 2009); competence in legal report writing (Fouad *et al*., 2009; Rodolfa *et al*., 2005); and virtue ethics (Pullen-Sansfaçon, 2014; Reamer, 2013). These three categories will be discussed below in more detail.

(a) Category: Knowledge of ethical, legal and professional standards and guidelines

Fouad *et al*. (2009) identified knowledge of ethical, legal and professional standards and guidelines as an area in which supervisors should be competent. This was supported by the findings of the empirical study, as all of the interviews revealed that the participants felt that supervisors must be competent in this area. It was agreed by the participants that this could be considered an essential competence owing to the frequent use of ethical and legal documents in their daily work, and the significant weight of the supervisor's input on supervisee actions. The responses of the participants are captured below.

Table 7.16: Knowledge of ethical, legal and professional standards and guidelines

Subtheme	Category	Supporting excerpts from narratives
Ethical practices and legal knowledge	Knowledge of ethical, legal and professional standards and guidelines	• *"It's important for the supervisor to be knowledgeable in this area."* (SW3) • *"Supervisors have to know policies and legislation, it's essential."* (SUP7) • *"Supervisors must have good knowledge of all the legal stuff, we work with it every day."* (SUP5) • *"We* [supervisors] *must be competent in the implementation of policies!"* (SUP2)

The narratives in Table 7.16 indicate that the participants felt strongly that supervisors need to be competent in the area of legal and ethical knowledge. It is necessary for supervisors to have excellent knowledge of the legal and ethical documents and procedures that influence the supervisees, as the supervisor is responsible for guiding, correcting and teaching the supervisees to work within their legal and professional remit. This supports the findings in the literature (Fouad *et al*., 2009) and the expectations of policy documents (SACSSP, 2007), and is reflected in the responses from two of the social worker participants: *"she* [the supervisor] *is the one who has to update us on all the policies, so it's important for her to know everything that's going on"* (SW12) and *"policy, legislation and report writing is important. The supervisor must know the procedures and different options"* (SW8).

In day-to-day practice, the most relevant documents for supervisors are the Children's Act, No. 38 of 2005 (RSA, 2006) and the Policy Guidelines for Course of Conduct, Code of Ethics and

the Rules for Social Workers for social workers (SACSSP, 2007). This is verified by responses from the participants:

> *"My supervisor can explain the Children's Act in black and white, it's really good and helpful."* (SW15)

> *"The Children's Act is the most important. I need to know it well and guide my social workers when using it."* (SUP8)

> *"Supervisors need to keep an eye on social workers with ethical issues. We try our best but sometimes they need to step in because we have overstepped a boundary or not acted in an appropriate manner."* (SW16)

The social workers felt that the majority of their supervisors were very knowledgeable in the area of legal and ethical practices, and if they did not have the knowledge they would make the effort to gather more information and to provide feedback to the social worker:

> *"She is always knowledgeable in this area. If she doesn't know then she will go find out."* (SW10)

> *"My supervisor is very up to date."* (SW4)

> The social workers emphasised the importance of ethical and legal knowledge being focussed on as an area of competence in which supervisors need constant education and information relating to policy changes and applications. This supports Fouad *et al*. (2009), who states that supervisors should be competent to integrate ethical and legal standards. The supervisors confirmed this was an area in which they needed frequent input and that it should be considered as an essential competence for supervisors that needs to be developed and nurtured.

(b) Category: Statutory reports

During the interviews, all of the participants emphasised the important role that supervisors play in overseeing, guiding and correcting statutory reports. The social workers write a variety of reports for statutory interventions in accordance with the Children's Act (RSA, 2006). The practice within many welfare organisations is for the supervisor to review the reports and sign them off before they can be finalised and submitted to court. This role might be considered as

a functional competence as opposed to a foundational one, as it is a practical task taking place in day-to-day interactions. However, the underpinning of this role is more foundational, focusing on knowledge, the ability to apply legal concepts, the ability to identify and address ethical and legal issues, and contribute to the education of the supervisee. The focus is not so much on the actual report and the practicalities of correcting it, but more the impartation and application of legal and ethical knowledge (Fouad *et al*., 2009). This is also identified in the Supervision Framework (DSD & SACSSP, 212) as an essential competence for social work superiors.

Table 7.17: Statutory reports

Subtheme	Category	Supporting excerpts from narratives
Ethical practices and legal knowledge	Statutory reports	• *"The supervisor must be knowledgeable to help with reports."* (SW1) • *"Reports are so important, we need our supervisor's input and guidance."* (SW7) • *"We* [supervisors] *need to know our stuff when it comes to reporting. We are responsible for guiding and correcting the social workers."* (SUP1)

Ethical and legal knowledge needs to be integrated into professional work, and more specifically report writing. The narratives in Table 7.17 emphasise the importance of supervisors being competent in dealing with statutory reports and sharing legal knowledge. Fouad *et al*. (2009) identify this as an essential competence for supervisors, as supervisors should be able to demonstrate competence through applying ethical principles and standards in professional writing, including teaching and training activities. This element is related specifically to report writing, where supervisors need to translate their knowledge through report writing, which is also an opportunity for teaching and equipping the supervisee. This is reflected in some of the participants' comments:

> *"She* [the supervisor] *helps us with referencing the Children's Act in our reports."* (SW19)

"Her feedback is always helpful; I have learnt a lot from the guidance with my reports." (SW18)

"My supervisor always gives positive feedback for my reports, it's helpful to have encouragement when you've handed something in." (SW12)

"Sometimes her changes to my report really irritate me. But when I go back to my client I can see how important the changes and feedback are for me." (SW15)

"My supervisor will ask why I make certain recommendations in my reports, she challenges me and makes me think about it." (SW13)

The above comments show how important supervisor input is in report writing and the central role that supervisors play in helping the supervisees to improve in their report writing skills, and also to ensure that reports meet the legal requirements. This places further emphasis on the necessity for supervisors to be competent in this area.

The participants also commented on how overseeing reports makes up a substantial portion of the supervisors' workload. It is therefore also necessary for supervisors to be competent in this area so that tasks can be managed efficiently and completed according to a high standard, which is critical, as the reports hold legal weight and are submitted to court. Some of the participants' comments on report writing and workload are captured below:

"Reports add a lot to my workload as a supervisor." (SUP9)

"Monitoring reports makes up a lot of my workload." (SUP8)

"Report writing is a challenge; it adds a lot to the supervisor's plate." (SW18)

The importance of accurate statutory reports, the magnitude of reports to oversee, and the need for social workers to have supervisory input all indicate that competence in report writing is essential for social work supervisors.

(c) Category: Virtue ethics

The final category that was identified by the participants in the subtheme of ethical practices and legal knowledge was supervisors possessing and reflecting virtue ethics. This is one of the less observable categories of foundational competencies, which makes it harder to measure and teach. However, if it is considered within the whole domain of ethical and legal practices, it does contribute to the behaviour, activities and outputs of the supervisor within this domain (McBeath & Webb, 2002). Furthermore, virtue ethics was commented on by many of the participants and it is therefore noteworthy to be included in the discussion of supervisors' competencies.

Table 7.18: Virtue ethics

Subtheme	Category	Supporting excerpts from narratives
Ethical practices and legal knowledge	Virtue ethics	• *"Supervisors must have a <u>good moral compass</u>, they need to know where to steer the organisation and the social worker."* (SUP1) • *"I need to feel like I can trust my supervisor. Like they are going to make the <u>best decisions</u> for me and my client."* (SW8) • *"Supervisors should be able to look at their <u>own personality</u> first before they come to correct the social workers. We need to respect them as professionals if they want to have a say."* (SW5)

Virtue ethics are shaped by the community and organisation in which the supervisor is based. They define morality and are the basis upon which an action can be held as good or bad (Pullen-Sansfaçon, 2014; Reamer, 2013). The above narratives support this and the expectation that supervisors should present themselves as virtuous, thus establishing a good relationship for trust and consequently for the supervision functions to be implemented meaningfully. Some of the narratives of the participants around virtue ethics are presented below:

"Supervisors must be human. They must show that they care, that they value people." (SW16)

"They [supervisors] *must show empathy and fairness."* (SW5)

"You [the supervisor] *must be able to carry over the principles and practices of social work into your supervision."* (SUP6)

"We [supervisors] *need to be reliable and trustworthy. Our social workers need to know they can trust in us, we won't share their confidential stuff with everyone else."* (SUP9)

"Supervision is the product of who you [the supervisor] *are. Your individual attitudes and individual approaches, so you need to be a good person!"* (SUP1)

A virtue ethics approach relies on a call to conscience in the supervisors, which requires reflection and self-understanding, leading to the supervisor being able to make ethical decisions that lead to "doing the right thing" (Pullen-Sansfaçon, 2014), as reflected in the comment by SW16: *"if my supervisor is going to guide me ethically, then I need to see and trust that she is an ethical person. Sometimes they need to do their own introspection and make sure that they are acting like a social worker should, with all the principles of a social worker."*

According to McBeath and Webb (2002), these elements of reflection and self-understanding can be taught, learnt and nurtured, and thus can be considered as a competence. More importantly, they also highlight that this is an area in which supervisors should be competent, as supported by the statements from the interviews above.

7.5.2 Theme 2: Essential functional competencies for social work supervisors

As previously mentioned, functional competencies are complementary to foundational competencies, and the supervisors can only perform optimally if they are competent in both of these areas (Kaslow *et al*., 2012; Rodolfa *et al*., 2005). Functional competencies are the skills, attitudes and knowledge that are involved in the practical day-to-day services provided by supervisors, and they make the process and tasks of supervision run smoothly. These competencies are related to the processes, activities and techniques that are employed during, or have an influence on, the supervisory relationship. More specifically, the areas that are identified in the literature to be essential include competencies related to the three supervision

functions (Botha, 2002; Engelbrecht, 2014a; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; Tsui, 2005); the supervision process (DSD & SACSSP, 2012; Engelbrecht, 2014b; Falender & Shafranske, 2004; Falender *et al*., 2004), and the job pressures of working in an NPO (Bradley *et al*., 2010; DSD & SACSSP, 2012; Engelbrecht, 2010). These identified essential competencies were also identified as essential by the participants during the interviews, and are discussed in more detail below.

7.5.2.1 Subtheme 2.1: Balancing and implementing the three supervision functions

Administration, education and support are the three functions that underlie the activities and interactions of the supervision process. If all three functions are balanced correctly they will greatly benefit the supervisee by creating an environment that encourages their well-being, motivation and professional development (Botha, 2002; Jacques, 2014; Tsui, 2005). In order to identify if this was considered an area of essential competence the participants were asked to describe how the three functions are balanced and what areas they consider to be essential.

All the participants agreed that it is important for supervisors to be competent in implementing and balancing the three supervision functions. This is reflected in their responses:

> *"There must be a balance between all the functions, my supervisor must be knowledgeable in this."* (SW11)

> *"Functions must be well balanced. Good administration, emotional support and education from the supervisor is important."* (SW10)

The participants' responses revealed four specific categories that they considered essential for supervisors, namely the administrative function, the support function, the education function, and supervision games.

(a) Category: The administrative function

Table 7.19 below contains qualifying excerpts from the participants regarding the importance of the administrative function of supervision and how it is balanced.

Table 7.19: The importance of balancing the administrative function

Subtheme	Category	Supporting excerpts from narratives
Balancing and implementing the three supervision functions	The administrative function	• *"Admin is a big part of it. Very often there is just admin, you need to get through reports and the workload is too high, so there isn't time for education and support." (*SW4) • *"...you need to be very strong in admin in order to survive. Keeping record of everything, remembering all your social workers' clients and cases."* (SUP4) • *"There is a lot of admin work, it's like a work in itself."* (SW13) • *"Administration always outweighs the other two (functions). But the three functions must run in conjunction."* (SUP8)

Supervisors and social workers alike identified the administrative function as critical to the supervisors' role, as indicated in Table 7.19. They emphasise the necessity for a supervisor to be proficient in this area, and the importance of the administrative function is also highlighted in the literature (Botha, 2002; Engelbrecht, 2014a; Tsui, 2005) and the South African social work policy documents (DSD & SACSSP, 2012; SACSSP, 2007).

It is clear from the participants' responses that a considerable amount of time is spent on administrative work, and that administrative control weighs heavily on the social workers and supervisors. This corresponds with the literature (Bradley *et al*., 2010; Engelbrecht, 2010; Jacques, 2014), which states that administrative work takes up most of the supervisor's time, and is prioritised over the other two functions. It is a significant part of the supervisors' work, which they cannot avoid. SUP5 states: *"Sometimes all the admin is hanging, I don't get to all*

the filing. But this is a problem. I need to keep on top of it, or else my social workers fall behind, and the organisation suffers." Administration is an essential function of supervisors in terms of statutory control (DSD & SACSSP, 2012; Engelbrecht, 2010), but also in terms of establishing accountability between the organisation and social worker. This is achieved by, for example, the social worker keeping detailed progress notes of all client meetings, monthly statistics and file reviews (Jacques, 2014).

> *"If it's not on paper it doesn't count. It takes a long time doing all the paper work, like statistics, reports, court reports and such. But it has to get done."* (SW3)

The other two supervision functions appear to be overshadowed by the mass of administrative work. This is due to the vast caseloads of social workers, the high number of reports social workers need to write and have reviewed by their supervisors, and organisational reports. The demand to keep up with administrative documentation and control is challenging and places immense pressure on the supervisor, so much so that the other functions are compromised in order to prioritise administrative activities. The supervisors focus the majority of their time on administrative tasks, and this allows little time for the supervisor to offer meaningful support or education. This is supported in the literature (Bradley *et al*., 2010; Engelbrecht, 2010; Jacques, 2014), which states that, in South Africa, the administrative role of supervision takes precedence over the other roles. This is seen in the participants' narratives above, and below:

> *"There's not always time to talk about support issues, never mind focus on education. We just have to get reports done. If it's not process notes, its court reports, or statistics, there's so much admin."* (SW14)

This places more emphasis on the need for supervisors to be competent in the administrative function in order for them to fulfil their administrative responsibilities diligently, but also to recognise the importance of balancing it with the other two functions. This is described by SUP8: *"If there's an admin issue you need to be clever at sorting it out. Admin issues usually mean that there's an education issue, and then they need support in this area to fill the gap. All three functions must balance with each other."*

(b) Category: The support function

The support function is an important function in helping supervisors deal with job-related stress, grow in their emotional intelligence and prevent burnout (Hawkins & Shotet, 2011; Howe, 2008; Martin, 2014). The participants were asked to reflect on the supportive function and whether they considered it to be an essential professional competence for social work supervisors.

Table 7.20: The importance of balancing the support function

Subtheme	Category	Supporting excerpts from narratives
Balancing and implementing the three supervision functions	The support function	• *"The support function is <u>the most important</u>. Supervisors must be good at it."* (SW1) • *"<u>Support is so important</u>. First the social worker must be ok, then we can focus on the work to be done."* (SUP1) • *"<u>Support I need to give a lot of</u>. The social workers need me to be available for them."* (SUP5) • *"There are so many difficult cases, I <u>need </u>my supervisor's support."* (SW19) • *"There's <u>not much space </u>in monthly sessions for support."* (SW16) • *"She will call in and ask how you are doing, but it's <u>not in-depth support</u>."* (SW9)

The support function is considered to be important and an essential competence for supervisors, firstly because the social workers and supervisors identified it as a very important function. The support function is vital in helping supervisees to deal with job-related stress (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). This is imperative, as social workers are dealing with high caseloads and complex cases. The significance and necessity of the support function is supported by the literature (Hawkins & Shotet, 2011; Lewis *et al*., 2012) and echoed in the responses by the participants, as indicated in Table 7.20.

One of the main reasons that support is highlighted as an essential competence is because of the high need that social workers have for job-related support. Social workers deal with complicated cases, very high caseloads, child protection issues and emotionally draining cases. For them to function optimally they need the aid of their supervisors to help them identify and manage their emotions (Earle, 2008; Goleman, 2006). The need for support is clearly shown in the participants' responses: *"There should be more support, especially with the high intensity of cases, and the pressures placed on social workers"* (SW17) and *"it gets heavy removing children, working with people is exhausting. I need my supervisor's support to cope"* (SW2).

From the responses in Table 7.20 above it appears that not enough time is given to the support function during supervision. Supervisors need to be able to balance the supervision functions and prioritise a function depending on the situation of the supervisee (Jacques, 2014; Lewis *et al.*, 2012). There are times when a supervisee needs more support, especially when experiencing a crisis. But on-going support is also essential to help supervisees deal with their immense day-to-day workload, the emotional impact of their work, and to prevent burnout. This is reflected in the response of SW17: *"I need to find my own support systems and relaxation methods, there is not enough at work. I get stressed, I'm feeling burnt out, and I don't have energy to carry on every day, so I have to take care of myself."*

Adding to the problem of limited time for support because of work pressures is the issue of supervisors not being in the same office as their supervisees on a day-to-day basis, as discussed previously (section 7.4). Supervisors tend to have set times that they go in to the office, typically once a month. This means that weeks can pass before they know what is happening with their supervisees, and support needs are often missed. For this reason, many of the supervisees rely on their colleagues for support, for example:

> *"She doesn't know what's going on because she isn't here often."* (SW8)

> *"We in the office encourage each other more than the supervisors do, they are too far away from us."* (SW2)

Supervisors need to be competent to balance the support needs of their supervisees, and they should also consider alternatives ways to offer support. The supervision profile (section 7.4) shows that some supervisors make use of a group debriefing session to add to the emotional support that they are able to offer their supervisees. Many supervisors also have a policy that a social worker can phone them at any time for support. SUP5 stated: *"My social workers can*

phone me anytime, I'm always there to speak to them, even if they just need to vent. Then we can talk about it more when I see them face to face."

The above narratives of the participants support the view in the above literature and research, namely that the support function is a critical function in supervision and one that the supervisor needs to be competent in to implement appropriately and meaningfully.

(c) Category: The education function

The final function of supervision is the education function. The education function focuses on the learning and development of the supervisee (Tsui, 2005). It is about the supervisor helping supervisees to develop the competencies that they need in order to perform effectively (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). The participants were asked to speak about the importance of the education function, the role the supervisor plays during supervision sessions, and how education is practically achieved during supervision.

Table 7.21: The importance of balancing the education function

Subtheme	Category	Supporting excerpts from narratives
Balancing and implementing the three supervision functions	The education function	• *"I wish there was more focus on my professional development."* (SW19) • *"I need more opportunities for professional development. It should be a priority."* (SW12) • *"Education is not as much as it should be."* (SW13) • *"Education mainly takes place in group supervision."* (SUP10) • *"If there are areas we need more information then she* [the supervisor] *will give it attention in group supervision."* (SW14)

The majority of the participants expressed a desire for there to be more focus on the education function during supervision, as reflected in Table 7.21. Additionally, all of the participants

agreed that the education function of supervision can be considered an essential professional competence: *"Education is so important to me. I spend all my extra time reading and researching so that I can come up with new and interesting things. This is important for supervisors to do"* (SUP4). The participants recognised the need for education to be part of supervision, but expressed that it seldom was: *"There is space for the learning needs in the education agenda, but honestly, it's the last thing on our minds"* (SUP9).

According to all of the participants, education takes place through two channels. Firstly, the supervisor makes use of an agenda for each session during individual supervision, and one of the points on the agenda is learning needs. This is left up to the supervisee to fill in, and there is not any emphasis on individual learning needs. The literature (Jacques, 2014) clearly states how the educational aspect of supervision is a two-directional activity, with both the supervisor and supervisee taking responsibility for identifying and working on learning needs. This is not the case with many of the participants, however, as is reflected in the response of SUP5: *"There is a space on the supervision form for educational needs, they (social workers) sometimes write something, but usually it's overlooked and we get to the case work."*

The second channel for education is during group supervision, which is the main opportunity for addressing learning needs. Each supervisee has a turn to say what they want to learn more about, but again there is no focus on individual learning needs or learning styles: "*Education goes around in the group. We each get a chance to say what we want to do, but it's just the usual general things, like learn more about adoption, or drug abuse"* (SW8). The importance of individualised learning, and a focus on personal learning styles, is strongly emphasised in the literature (DSD & SACSSP; Engelbrecht, 2014; Jacques, 2014; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; Tsui, 2005), which states that the education function should maintain an individualised focus that addresses the specific learning needs of the supervisee in the context of their workload and community. Many of the participating social workers work in different communities to their colleagues, they all have varying caseloads, and they have their own learning styles. In addition to the need for personalised education, there is also a need for education to be more in-depth and meaningful for the supervisees, as indicated in some of their narratives:

> *"Group supervision training is still linked to the same old stuff, there is no new information, no new perspectives, or case studies. Just the same problems that colleagues want more info on."* (SW12)

"We don't discuss learning needs, only on a basic level. We could look more into the practical things and addressing learning needs more practically." (SW13)

The need for education is clearly reflected in the participants' responses, as is the importance of education and the perception that it should be considered an essential professional competence. However, in practice it shows that there are many shortcomings in the supervisors' competencies with regard to the education function and there is a significant need for it to be improved. This was particularly noticeable with regard to adult education principles. Adult education principles help supervisors to understand how the supervisees learn and what their learning styles and needs are (Engelbrecht, 2014a; Knowles, 1971). None of the supervisors expressed any understanding or use of adult education principles, and none of the supervisees could positively say that the supervisors made use of such principles. This once again points to the lack of knowledge and skills in this area, and that supervisors need to be competent in implementing the education function.

(d) Category: Supervision games

Power games and blockages occur in the supervisory relationship, and can hinder the purpose and functions of supervision if the supervisor is not competent enough to act appropriately in order to counteract the games (Engelbrecht, 2014a; Kadushin and Harkness, 2014; Tsui, 2005) The participants identified supervision games as an area that is important for supervisors to be skilled to counteract. Their narratives are captured in Table 7.22 and in the discussion that follows.

Table 7.22: Supervision games

Subtheme	Category	Supporting excerpts from narratives
Balancing and implementing the three supervision functions	Supervision games	• *"Sometimes supervision changes into a counselling session, which you need to be aware of."* (SUP8) • *"I don't want to talk about my emotions, so I focus on the work, avoid the issue and get out of the office."* (SW17) • *"Social workers can also manipulate."* (SUP1)

		• *"Sometimes social workers email you their problems so that they can <u>avoid</u> talking about it face to face."* (SUP4) • *"Sometimes she* [the supervisor] *will <u>threaten us</u> if we don't get something done, but she never follows it through."* (SW5)

The participating supervisors and social workers all identified that supervisors need to be competent to handle blockages and power games. Power games are a form of confrontation and competition, which are typically introduced to avoid the real issue at hand, as reflected in the narratives in Table 7.22 and confirmed by the literature (Engelbrecht, 2014a; Tsui, 2005). For example:

> *"So you need to spend time trying to identify if it's a true problem or if it's a way to direct attention away from difficult cases. They know when they are in trouble for work that hasn't been done."* (SUP1)

> *"Social workers play a lot of games. They keep you busy with other things if there is something they don't want to do. Or they blame you when there are problems. I need to learn to see what is really important."* (SUP10)

The above narratives clearly indicate that supervisees and supervisors use power games during supervision, and that the supervisor needs to be competent in dealing with the games in order to avoid being trapped by the supervisees' game (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014). The three functions of supervision, as well as the power games, are implemented and operationalised through the supervision process. This is discussed in the next section.

7.5.2.2 Subtheme 2.2: Implementing the supervision process

The supervision process is an ongoing cycle of phases, from when the supervisor and supervisee first interact to when the cycle is complete, and then it starts again with the next cycle. The phases in the cycle of supervision are: engagement, assessment, planning, contracting, implementation and evaluation (Engelbrecht, 2014b). Once the evaluation phase

is complete, a new engagement phase starts and the cycle continues, constantly adjusting to the professional growth and needs of the supervisee.

Supervisors need to be competent in this process, as this is their primary role as supervisor – to carry out supervision to the benefit of the supervisee (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). The supervisor should be able to promote the development, professional conduct and emotional intelligence of the supervisee, thus resulting in delivery of optimum services to the service users (Falender & Shafranske, 2004; Falender *et al*., 2004). Due to the importance of the supervision process and its centrality to the supervisory relationship, it was included as a potential essential competence for social work supervisors. Consequently, the participants were asked if they thought the implementation of the process was an essential competence, and which phases of the process they considered to be important.

All of the participants commented that this is an essential competence for supervisors, as reflected in the comment of SUP1: *"This is what we do, day to day, social worker to social worker. We need to know what needs to be done and how to do it properly."*

However, despite the clear importance of the supervision process and the need for it to be implemented, a clear process could not be identified by the participants, with some of the phases barely existent. Engelbrecht (2010) concludes that supervisors do not follow a specific process for supervision. A brief summary of the phases, arising from the interviews, is given below:

> **Phases 1 to 3 – Engagement, assessment and planning**: These phases are not clearly distinguishable from the participants' responses. None of the social workers or supervisors had made use of an inventory of job-specific competencies, nor a personal development assessment register, nor a personal development plan. These are all tasks that form part of the first three phases and are identified in the literature (Engelbrecht, 2004; Shardlow & Doel, 1996) to have an important place in the process of supervision. Because of the lack of these three phases, the participants did not have the knowledge to comment on them. They could, however, clearly identify a need for a personal development plan and professional development, as well as the important role that the supervisor plays in this. This fits into the above three phases and will be discussed in more detail under the assigned category (a) below. However, the lack of knowledge and implementation of job-specific competence inventories and personal development

assessment registers points to an area in which supervisors need more training and skills.

Phase 4 – Contracting: This was a phase that the participants understood and could clearly comment on. It is discussed in more detail under the assigned category (b) below.

Phase 5 – Implementation: The supervisory functions are an important part of the process, as discussed above and identified by all the participants. An additional part of the implementation phase is the use of critical reflection to encourage the supervisees' development of knowledge, skills and values (Engelbrecht, 2014b). This can be achieved by making use of reflection tools such as the Johari Window, transactional analysis and the Karpman Drama Triangle (Connor & Pokora, 2012; Engelbrecht, 2014b). None of the participants said that they made use of reflection tools during supervision, and this is in accordance with Engelbrecht's (2010) findings that social workers and supervisors are not aware of, nor make use of, any specific principles, techniques or styles during supervision.

All the supervisors appeared to have a limited knowledge of what reflection tools are and how to use them. Once again, the focus was primarily on the practical work of the supervisee, with little time or space for critical reflection and growth: *"We don't use any tools. We try to work developmentally, but in reality we just have to focus on getting through the caseload"* (SUP10). The lack of use of reflection tools appears to be due to limited education and training in this area (Bradley *et al*., 2010; Cloete, 2012; Cousins, 2004), as well as a demanding caseload that does not allow time for such activities (Bradley *et al*., 2010). This signifies an area in which supervisors need training in order to enhance their knowledge and skills in order to gain competence.

Phase 6 – Evaluation: This was another phase that the participants understood and could clearly comment on. It is discussed in more detail under the assigned category (c).

Many of the issues that hinder the supervision process are linked to time constraints, workload pressures and structural issues (Bradley *et al*., 2010; Engelbrecht, 2013). If supervisors are constantly faced with these issues and cannot carry out the supervision process or functions successfully, it can negatively affect the development of their own professional competencies.

Webb's (1983) theoretical approaches to developing competencies all emphasise the importance of a nurturing environment (Hartmann, 1958) and successful opportunities to implement skills, which would lead to motivation and the development of competencies (White, 1959). These aspects of motivation and the nurturing environment also need to be considered when investigating the supervision process and the success of its implementation. Sometimes supervisors do not have training or skills in an area, but they are also not afforded the opportunity to carry out certain aspects of supervision successfully, thus negatively affecting the development of their professional competencies in this area.

Besides the basic phases of the supervisions process, one final point of interest that arose during the interviews was the fact that the high turnover of staff significantly affects the process. Although it is not a part of the process, it plays a major role and for this reason will be discussed further under category (d).

(a) Category: Professional development

The engagement, assessment and planning phases of supervision are not clearly implemented as part of the supervision process. This was confirmed by all of the participants, who emphasised that the focus is always on completing work. However, many of the participants could identify a need for supervisors to implement a personal development plan and to focus more intentionally on professional development. Some of the narratives are reflected in Table 7.23 below.

Table 7.23: Professional development in the supervision process

Subtheme	Category	Supporting excerpts from narratives
Implementing the supervision process	Professional development	• *"We never set our own learning goals. I wish we did, it's really helpful."* (SW1) • *"It would be good if we had an individual development plan."* (SW5) • *"I would like something, like a personal plan, to see where I can grow, and what my developmental areas are. I think it's very important."* (SW5)

From the above responses it is clear that many of the participants had not set any sort of personal development goals. There were no opportunities for formulating an inventory of job-specific competencies, a personal development assessment or a personal development plan. Although these aspects are identified in the literature (Engelbrecht, 2004; Shardlow & Doel, 1996) and appear to play an important role in supervision, this is not the case in practice. One of the main reasons for a lack of focus on this is due to work pressure, as illustrated in the responses of SW10: *"It's a question of making it through the work and setting goals for work, getting my office in order. It would help to have more personal goals set up for me"* and SW17: *"We don't set professional goals. Professional development is second to all the admin work."*

None of the social workers had the opportunity to draw up a personal development plan. Many of them had no specific goals set for their work, nor even task specific outcomes. This aspect is highlighted by the SACSSP (2007) as a critical part of supervision in which supervisors must be competent. However, it was not even defined in the social workers' job descriptions, and this can lead to a lack of purpose and motivation, as indicated by the theoretical approaches to competence (Webb, 1983; White, 1959), particularly when overshadowed by the demand of their large caseloads.

> *"In my work contract there was a job description, but nothing stating outcomes or anything specific to work on."* (SW5)

> *"My job description was just general job-related areas, not even tasks, there was no focus on any professional development."* (SW16)

Besides the recognisable shortfall in this area and the lack of focus on personal development plans, the social workers felt the need for a plan that would focus on what they needed to learn, how it would be achieved practically, and how it would be assessed, which is in accordance with Engelbrecht (2014b). This can be seen in the responses of SW7: *"It would be helpful to have my own specific goals to work on"* and SW2: *"I need areas to concentrate on, to know where I can improve, and to look back on the year and see that I'm a better social worker."*

Considering the lack of focus on personal development it was strongly identified by the participants as an area that needed focus and as one in which supervisors should display more competence in implementing at the beginning of the supervision process.

(b) Category: Contracting

The contracting phase of the supervision process allows the supervisor and supervisee to formally agree upon the expectations and boundaries placed on the supervisory relationship (Munson, 2002; O'Donoghue, 2003; Tsui, 2004). Table 7.24 below contains qualifying excerpts from the participants regarding the importance of contracting during supervision.

Table 7.24: Contracting in the supervision process

Subtheme	Category	Supporting excerpts from narratives
Implementing the supervision process	Contracting	*"It is <u>very important</u> to contract properly."* (SW11) *"It's really helpful having a good contract. <u>This is something a supervisor should be able to do</u>."* (SUP5) *"We don't contract, <u>it's a real need</u> for me."* (SUP6) *"We haven't got a contract. <u>They can be really helpful and I think our supervisor should do it</u>."* (SW12)

The narratives of the participants show that contracting is very important for the supervisory relationship, but that it is not always done. The supervision contract should define the professional relationship, clarify expectations beforehand, and introduce clear boundaries (Engelbrecht, 2014b; Munson, 2002; Tsui, 2004). This is supported by the statement by SW10: *"It is helpful having a contract in place. It helps define some boundaries and rules. It helps me to focus, otherwise I am all over the show."* Contracts are a necessary aspect of supervision that helps to set the supervisory relationship off on a clear and agreed upon course.

The participants all agreed that contracting is an important part of the supervision process and that this is something that supervisors should be competent in to carry out successfully. However, although it is recognised as an essential competence, it is hardly implemented as part of the supervision process. Of all the supervisors, only one could state confidently that they used a clear supervision contract, what was included in the contract and the purpose that it served. The other nine supervisors said that they did not contract at all, or that they might do

it, but with very little priority: *"We have a contract, but I can't remember if I do it or not"* (SUP10) and *"Sometimes we might do an oral contract, but usually not"* (SUP3).

One of the problems contributing to the lack of use of contracts, besides the workload and the high turnover of staff, is that supervisors do not feel equipped in this area. They recognise it as important, and they all recognise that supervisors should be skilled in this area. However, many of them felt they did not know how to contract, and the organisation did not provide a format for a contract. This is seen in the participants' comments: *"I don't have an example, or format, of a contract. It would be beneficial to have one"* (SUP6) and *"I did a contract, which I had to make up myself, I don't know if it's right but I use it"* (SUP2). Supervisors need more support in this area to build up their competence in being able to effectively formulate and implement a contract for supervision.

(c) Category: Performance evaluation

The final phase of the supervision process is performance evaluation. This phase is the opportunity for the supervisor and supervisee to appraise the supervisee's learning needs, growth, personal development plan and the outcomes of supervision (Corey *et al*., 2010; Engelbrecht, 2014b). As Newman (2010) states, a competent supervisor should be able to identify supervisees' strengths and learning needs, and encourage the growth of these areas through supervision. The participants were asked to comment on performance evaluation and if this should be considered as an essential professional competence for social work supervisors.

Table 7.25: Performance evaluation in the supervision process

Subtheme	Category	Supporting excerpts from narratives
Implementing the supervision process	Performance evaluation	• *"It's really important to do it regularly. It's important for your own development and your own growth."* (SW11) • *"They are really beneficial for personal encouragement and professional growth."* (SW10)

		• *"It's <u>really important</u> to do, but we don't have time. It focuses on admin work, not personal development goals."* (SUP5)

The above narratives of the participants show that the social workers and supervisors recognised performance evaluation as an important part of the supervision process and an area in which supervisors should be competent. The SACSSP (2007) also expects of supervisors to be skilled in conducting performance evaluations with their supervisees. The social workers could comment on the benefit of performance appraisals, even though they did not participate in them frequently: *"The evaluation really helps, it gives me acknowledgement that I know what I'm doing and that I'm improving. My supervisor is good at it"* (SW15).

However, as is the case with the previous phases of the supervision process, although the participants recognised the importance of the appraisal, the majority of them do not participate in a frequent appraisal. The majority of the participants said that they have an annual audit in which the case work files are reviewed, but this is primarily for administrative control and not concerned with the supervisees' functioning, fulfilment of outcomes or achievements.

> *"The audit is not a personal performance appraisal, it's all focused on our work."* (SW12)

> *"We should do a progress report every six months, but we don't usually get to it. There is no evaluation of me achieving goals or my own professional outcomes."* (SW13)

> *"I should do performance appraisals, but I just don't get to them. Sometimes it's been a few years before I realise that I haven't done one for a while."* (SUP10)

There appears to be a lack of priority placed on the annual audit, and even less so on performance appraisals. There are two reasons why there is such low motivation to do performance appraisals. The first is that social workers do not understand the reason and benefit of a performance appraisal. This makes them resistant to the process and negatively effects the supervisors' motivation to follow an appraisal through. For example:

> *"We don't do performance appraisals; the social workers don't like them."* (SUP4)

> *"The social workers don't want to evaluate themselves, they just think it's more admin work."* (SUP6)

> *"I hate performance evaluations; I don't get the point. I don't have time for all that introspection."* (SW4)

The second issue that acts as a barrier to this part of the supervision process is that, again, supervisors do not feel that they are sufficiently equipped or skilled at carrying out appraisals. This is mainly due to a lack of training and a lack of resources. This can be seen in some of the supervisors' responses:

> *"There isn't clarity about expectations or how to do performance evaluations. I need help with them, no one has ever taught me."* (SUP9)

> *"There is no assessment tool for us to use with the social workers."* (SUP7)

> *"I had to come up with my own evaluation form, it works for me, but I don't know if it's what head office expects."* (SUP6)

These two barriers highlight even further the importance of supervisors being competent in this area of the supervision process. Having the right skills and knowledge would help them to know how to practically carry out an appraisal. Furthermore, if they could clearly communicate the value of an appraisal and encourage a positive attitude in their social workers, the benefit of an appraisal would be appreciated and achieved. These findings correspond with the literature (Corey *et al*., 2010; Engelbrecht, 2014b; Jacques, 2014; Tsui, 2004) and support the need for supervisors to be competent in this area.

(d) Category: High turnover of social workers

It is clear from the discussion on the phases of supervision that many of the phases are not carried out completely. One of the factors contributing to this is the lack of training and resources, and the other factor is the pressure to prioritise and keep up with the high workload. Many of these structural issues are also identified by Engelbrecht (2013). One of the main factors for high workload is the high turnover of staff, as can be seen in the narratives in Table 7.26 below.

Table 7.26: High turnover of social workers impacting on the supervision process

Subtheme	Category	Supporting excerpts from narratives
Implementing the supervision process	High turnover of social workers	• *"We don't have time to focus on specifics, <u>every time we get a new social worker</u> we have to jump straight into the files."* (SUP3) • *"We have to skip steps in supervision, we <u>have to focus on all the staff coming and going</u>."* (SUP10) • *"<u>High turnover of staff is a problem</u> for supervisors, we need to know how to manage this carefully."* (SUP2)

All of the supervisors who participated in the interviews said that the high turnover of staff was a significant factor adding to their workload, and that it distracted from supervision responsibilities. The high turnover of staff, and particularly social workers leaving the profession, are recognised and confirmed by South African-based research (De Jager, 2014; Engelbrecht, 2006a). The literature (Bradley *et al*., 2010; Earle, 2008) also recognises that the high turnover of staff considerably affects the role of the supervisor. The orientation of new social workers and picking up the workload of social workers who have resigned are the two main factors that cause challenges for supervisors.

When a new social worker starts at an organisation, he/she should undergo a process of orientation in which the initial phases of the supervision process are included. However, from the narratives in Table 7.26 it is clear that supervisors do not have time for this. They immediately need to address the work that the social workers need to do: *"We don't have time for proper orientation, or supervision contracts, there are usually cases waiting for them (social workers). We just go straight into statutory stuff"* (SUP3).

The other side of the issue is when social workers leave an organisation; if there is not an immediate replacement, the supervisors are expected to pick up some of the urgent caseloads (Bradley *et al*., 2010). This adds to the supervisors' already full workload and distracts from their supervisory responsibilities.

"A real challenge for us is high turnover of staff. Sometimes you haven't even orientated the new social worker yet and they leave. Then I have to manage their whole case load. It's frustrating for office staff and office relationships." (SUP3)

"There are frequent vacancies, and a high turnover of staff. You [the supervisor] *need to know what to do in these situations and keep everything together."* (SUP7)

"We should do a performance evaluation once a year, but with people coming and going we have to focus on the new people. Doing orientation, assessments, and caseloads. Most of my offices have a high turnover of staff."

The frequent changing of staff, and the pressure this places on supervisors, appear to be a real concern and an area on which supervisors have placed emphasis. All of the supervisors identified this as an area in which supervisors should be competent in terms of orientation, following the supervisory process and managing high workloads.

7.5.2.3 Subtheme 2.3: Competencies for supervisors in the NPO sector

The social work supervisor working in an NPO is typically on a middle management level and has to engage in tasks associated with both supervision and management (Bradley *et al*., 2010; DSD & SACSSP, 2012; Engelbrecht, 2010). Their management responsibilities place additional pressure on them and can distract from their supervisory role, as seen in some of the narratives already given, and supported by the literature (Engelbrecht, 2010; Engelbrecht, 2013). Ideally, supervisors should be able to devote their full time and attention to their supervisory duties and not be distracted by managerial responsibilities. However, in reality, supervisors are expected to perform a number of managerial responsibilities, which affect their position as supervisor, and they thus need to be competent in the identified areas. It therefore is important for supervisors to be competent in the identified areas, not only so that each task can be completed at a high level to the benefit of the organisation system, but also so that they can focus their attention on the supervisee, their primary responsibility.

All of the participants stated that structural work issues related to the managerial role of the supervisor play a significant factor in adding to the workload, taking from supervisor-supervisee time, and increasing stress for the supervisor. This is supported by research conducted by Engelbrecht (2013), who found that structural issues affect the supervision

offered by supervisors, as well as adding tremendously to their workload. This can be seen in some of the participants' comments:

> *"The challenge is the multiple responsibilities that we have, old age homes, crèches, social workers, the board, all these things take up my time and energy. Supervisors don't just need to understand social work, they need to understand management as well."* (SUP9)

> *"Some of them (supervisors) have so many things to do. In the NPO they are used for so many other things, and they can't always be there for the social workers. Are they a supervisor or an office manager?"* (SW19)

The participants all agreed that supervisors need to be competent in balancing their managerial and supervisory responsibilities. They identified four key areas in which supervisors need to be competent, namely the management of non-social work staff, involvement with the managerial board, financial responsibilities and human resources. These categories are discussed further below.

(a) Management of non-social work staff

All of the participants commented how the management of non-social work staff, or non-social work projects, is a big responsibility for the supervisor and an area in which they need to be competent. The participating supervisors have a varying number of non-social work staff whom they manage, some far more than others. Some of the staff or projects that the supervisor is responsible for managing include community workers, volunteers, staff at crèches, staff at old age homes, staff at children's homes and staff at community service centres. This is over and above the office, or branches, that they manage and where the social workers are based, plus social auxiliary workers. The management of non-social work staff and projects is recognised in the literature (Bradley *et al.*, 2010; Earle, 2008; Engelbrecht, 2010) as playing a significant role in the responsibilities and work pressures of a supervisor.

Table 7.27: Management of non-social work staff

Subtheme	Category	Supporting excerpts from narratives
Competencies for supervisors in the NPO sector	Management of non-social work staff	• *"It's a lot of <u>extra responsibility</u> overseeing crèches."* (SUP10) • *"It <u>adds a lot to my load</u>."* (SUP7) • *"Supervisors are <u>stretched too thin</u>, they have so many extra people to look after. They have to be <u>really clever to manage all of it</u>."* (SW2)

From the above narratives it is apparent that many supervisors are involved with the management of non-social work staff. The management of such staff contributes significantly to the supervisors' workload and job pressures. This can be seen in the comment by SUP2: *"I manage three more social workers than what we have funding for. Then I also have to manage community workers, early childhood development centres, service centres, and old age homes. The people I manage is too much!"*

Besides the amount of work that is placed on supervisors and them being stretched in their capacity, they also have the pressure of learning and understanding all the aspects of the areas that they are managing. For example, they need to understand all the legislation and best practices for crèches or old age homes. This is reflected by SUP1: *"The amount of things we need to know: crèches, old age homes, finances, all our social workers' stuff, it's so much stuff to learn and know."* The management of non-social work staff and projects places additional pressure on supervisors to have the necessary knowledge for them to be able to carry out the skills of managing the various non-social work activities.

Competence in this area appears to be really necessary, and supervisors need to possess the knowledge and skills in order to manage this part of their responsibilities effectively. Not only is competence important for the benefit of the associated person or project, but also for the benefit of the social worker. A supervisor who is not competent in this area is most likely to spend more time on it and take longer to resolve issues that arise. Social workers feel that the management of non-social work staff and projects detracts from the time that they have with their supervisors. For example, *"my supervisor is very involved with the crèche, it adds to her workload, and sometimes affects our time with her"* (SW17), and *"there's lots of pressures,*

they [supervisors] *have to divide their time between us and the crèches"* (SW6). Supervisors need to be competent in this area for the benefit of the whole organisational system, and this was supported by all of the participants.

Competence in the management of non-social work staff definitely fulfils the theoretical definition of competence (Chapter 3) in that these are skills that the supervisor can learn and that can clearly be applied, with outputs and results being easily observed and measured (Kaslow, 2004; Parry, 1996; Stoof *et al*., 2009). Based on the above discussion it is clear that supervisors in NPOs need to be competent in the management of non-social work staff.

(b) Human resources management

The DSD and SACSSP's (2012) Supervision Framework identifies human resources as part of the supervisor's management functions. This is supported by De Jager (2014), who affirms that human resource tasks are part of the supervisor's responsibilities. These responsibilities could include, for example, recruitment and selection procedures; formulating job descriptions; retention of staff; appraisals; and the management of volunteers. The participants' responses confirm that this is a relevant issue for supervisors, and one in which they need to be competent. All the supervisors emphasised the importance of human resource skills, and many of the social workers could also identify this as an area of necessary competence. Some of the participants' responses are captured below.

Table 7.28: Human resources responsibilities

Subtheme	Category	Supporting excerpts from narratives
Competencies for supervisors in the NPO sector	Human resources	• *"Human resource skills are really <u>important</u>. Supervisors must know what they are doing."* (SW2) • *"HR is <u>important</u>, I have to do a lot of stuff."* (SUP10) • *"Supervisors <u>must be good at HR</u>, it's a big part of their job."* (SW19)

Human resources management is critical to NPOs if they want to improve their social service delivery, and supervisors are central to this (De Jager, 2014). The importance of supervisors in

human resource management is reflected in the participants' responses above, showing that this is an area in which supervisors need to be competent. As discussed above, the management of non-social work staff forms a significant part of the supervisor's responsibilities and includes human resources management of non-social work staff, for example "*there's a lot of staff issues in the crèches, I have to get very involved"* (SUP4).

The supervisors' human resource management responsibilities are broad, and include the description of responsibilities given by De Jager (2014). The scope of responsibilities can be seen in the participant's responses:

> *"Supervisors must have training in human resources. They have to deal with the law, disciplinary hearings and such. It can cause damage if they don't know what they are doing."* (SW2)

> *"I haven't had any training in HR. We are involved with hiring, firing, labour issues, it's tough."* (SUP10)

The above narratives also indicate a need for supervisors to be trained in human resource management. If they are to be truly competent in this area they need to have suitable knowledge so that they can apply the necessary skills and achieve the expected outcomes of good human resource management. This is in accordance with the given theoretical definition of competencies in Chapter 3 (Kaslow, 2004; Parry, 1996; Parry, 1998; Stoof *et al*., 2009).

(c) Involvement with the management board of the organisation

One of the main areas that the participants identified as important for supervisors to be competent in is involvement with the managerial board of the organisation. Not only did all the participants emphasise this point, but they also mentioned it several times throughout the interview, and again upon reflection at the end of the interview. Along with the management of non-social work-related staff and programmes, involvement with the board is one of the most demanding responsibilities of the social work supervisor who is working in an NPO. For this reason, all of the participants said that this was an essential area in which supervisors should be competent. Their responses are captured below.

Table 7.29: Involvement with the management board

Subtheme	Category	Supporting excerpts from narratives
Competencies for supervisors in the NPO sector	Management board	• *I have to support both sides, and explain both sides. <u>It's really important</u>."* (SUP3) • *"My supervisor's mediation between us and the board is good. <u>This is a really important skill</u>."* (SW14) • *"<u>This is a critical area</u>. If you don't manage it properly you can do damage to your staff or the organisation."*

One of the identifying attributes of an NPO is that it has a fully functioning managerial board (RSA, 1997b). The organisational structure, as discussed at the beginning of this chapter, shows that supervisors, as middle managers, are required to interact with the board and attend board meetings at a time that is agreed upon. This role of supervisors is supported by the literature (Bradley *et al*., 2010; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014) and, as motivated above, it can also be generalised to other NPO welfare organisations. With this in mind, the narratives of the participants in Table 7.29 stress the importance of the supervisors' involvement with the board. All of the participants – social workers and supervisors alike – stated that this was a vital area for supervisors to be competent in. There are a number of aspects of this part of the supervisors' responsibilities that appear to be challenging to manage, and this places greater emphasis on the need for competence in this area so that supervisors can overcome these challenges successfully.

One of the most common challenges that was mentioned repeatedly throughout the interviews was supervisors' workload and the amount of time that additional responsibilities take from their supervisory role. Understandably, this is also the case when it comes to responsibilities in the management board of the organisation. One participant responded: *"the board takes up an extraordinary amount of my time"* (SUP2), and these responsibilities also take away from the time available for supervision, as indicated by the comment by SUP3: *"sometimes I can't give enough time to my social workers because I have to keep the board happy. They take up my time."*

It appears that one of the main reasons why supervisors spend a lot of time with the board is because of the limited knowledge and training of the board members. As indicated by the organisational profile, the board is made up of volunteers, as is the case with many NPO welfare organisations (De Jager, 2014). The volunteers typically are untrained in the field of social work and they offer their time from a managerial perspective. However, the supervisors and social workers found that the management board members' lack of knowledge of the social work profession and poor understanding of the legal weight of social work interventions had a negative impact on the staff-board relationships and interactions:

> *"Social work has developed into a highly specialised practice; it's not cake sales anymore. But the board are volunteers, they don't understand what we are doing, they don't have the knowledge." (*SUP2)

> *"The board are volunteers, they don't understand the work."* (SW11)

This lack of understanding of the social work profession can lead to a power struggle between the board and the supervisors. The supervisors feel responsible for the social workers' work, in accordance with South African policy documents (RSA, 1978; SACSSP, 2007), but it appears that the management board can interfere with the social workers, affecting them on an intervention level:

> *"The management board are difficult. They need to understand that they have responsibility as employers, but not over the actual social workers' work."* (SUP6)

> *"The board need to understand that they are an employer, not the social workers direct boss. I* [the supervisor] *am overseeing their work, and understand all the legal stuff. It's a fine line knowing when to keep them away from my staff."* (SUP1).

> *"As a middle manager there are certain decisions I can't make, the social workers don't understand it. They don't understand why I am in control of their work, but not in control of the office."* (SUP10)

Involvement with the management board of the organisation is a key area in which supervisors are involved, and because of the weight of their middle management responsibilities and the power struggles that can arise from the supervisor-board relationships, it is essential that supervisors have the appropriate competencies to act meaningfully, professionally and

effectively in this area, whilst still prioritising the social workers for whom they are responsible.

(d) Financial management

The responsibility for funding often falls on supervisors because of their presence and authority as middle managers (Bradley *et al*., 2010; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; RSA, 1997b). Financial management was the final area that the participants identified as an important competence for supervisors. Their responses are reflected in Table 7.30 and in the discussion that follows.

Table 7.30: Financial responsibilities

Subtheme	Category	Supporting excerpts from narratives
Competencies for supervisors in the NPO sector	Finances	• *"I* [supervisor] *need to deal with the huge <u>financial pressures and strains</u> of a social work office."* (SUP6) • *"Supervisors <u>must be good at finances."</u>* (SW6) • *"She* [the supervisor] *has to deal with all the financial stress. <u>It's important that she understands finances."</u>* (SW15)

The narratives of the participants highlight the importance of supervisors being competent in managing the financial responsibilities that they have within the organisation. The supervisor's position as a middle manager puts him/her in a position of responsibility for overseeing and reporting on funding (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014). Some of the funding responsibility is general office fund management that the board expects of the supervisors. For example: *"The board expects me to sort out funding things in the office. I need to keep track of what's going in and out"* (SUP2). Other responses, such as *"supervisors have to report for funding, and help us put together all the info for the reports"* (SW6), indicate that supervisors are also responsible for reporting on funding. The supervisor needs to ensure that funds are used appropriately, that outcomes are achieved and that an appropriate report is compiled upon completion of a funding period. This corresponds with the literature (Bradley *et al*., 2010; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014;

Lewis *et al*., 2012), which points out that the supervisor's role in managing and reporting for finances is critical in the NPO setting.

The management and overseeing of finances is an evident expectation placed on supervisors; however, as with many of the other areas of competence discussed above, it does have potential to divert time and focus away from their supervisory responsibilities. Participant reactions, such as *"there are so many financial matters, I feel like I am neglecting my social workers"* (SUP3), as well as *"finances are hard, it can take away from my time because I don't always know what I'm doing"* (SUP1), give substance to the fact that the additional responsibilities that are placed on supervisors, particularly financial responsibilities, can affect their role as supervisor.

A considerable number of social worker participants identified this as an important area for supervisors to be skilled in, and all of the supervisors confirmed that competence in managing finances is essential for supervisors. Despite the importance of this, many supervisors felt that they did not have sufficient skills or training to carry out their responsibilities effectively; for example, *"I have no clue regarding finances, I have no financial skills, and I just wing it"* (SUP1). Another response, *"if I didn't have my finance background I wouldn't be able to do my job"* (SUP2), stresses the importance of supervisors being trained and competent in order to manage their financial responsibilities well, whilst not compromising on the time for and quality of supervision.

7.5.3 Concluding remarks

From the above discussions it is clear that there are areas that supervisors and social workers think are absolutely essential for supervisors to be competent in. Although there are many challenges for supervisors to overcome, some of which have a negative impact on the supervisory relationship, the overall consensus from the interviews is that supervision is valuable and plays a significant role in the professional development and success of the supervisee. All the participants agreed that there are areas in which supervisors need to be more competent, which were all highlighted and discussed above.

In the concluding remarks, the participants accentuated the importance of supervisors being competent in their position:

> *"It's not fair on social workers if you don't have a supervisor who is <u>competent.</u> They must be supportive, friendly, encouraging, but also firm and guiding."* (SW4)

> *"Supervisors must have the training and experience, they must be <u>competent</u>! They have an important role to play with social workers, and there is a lot of responsibility."* (SW13)

> *"She* [the supervisor] *is very accessible, responsive and <u>competent</u>. I know she will always be there for me."* (SW12)

Furthermore, the social work participants emphasised that supervision is a valuable and necessary professional interaction that guides them and shapes them as social workers:

> *"As a social worker, the role of supervisors is <u>really very necessary</u>."* (SW14)

> *"I get <u>value out of my supervision</u>. It makes me want to do better, it makes me feel like I have someone there who can back me up."* (SW4)

> *"I find <u>supervision very valuable</u>. It helps me to work on a positive level and not to burn out."* (SW13)

These comments confirm that social work supervision is much needed for social workers. The benefits of growth, support and guidance far outweigh the challenges that many social workers and supervisors deal with daily. Supervisors must be competent to overcome the challenges of social work in the NPO setting, and they must be competent to carry out supervision effectively to the benefit of the supervisee, but also of the organisation and the service user.

7.6 CONCLUSION

The purpose of Chapter 7 was to discuss the investigation of essential professional competencies of social work supervisors in a non-profit welfare organisation through an empirical study. The literature reviews of Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5 provided a contextual framework and theoretical reference for the questions that were formulated and posed to the participants during the interviews. Chapter 6 provided a methodological framework in which the research design was comprehensively presented and motivated.

Chapter 7 thus provided an integrated presentation and analysis of the research findings from the interviews based on the aforementioned chapters. Firstly, an organisational profile was presented based on the case study used for the research. This was followed by a participant profile and a profile of supervision, giving insight into the participants, their working environment and their context of supervision.

Following the profiles was the empirical analysis, which focused on two main themes, namely foundational and functional competencies. Through analysis of these themes, subthemes and categories were identified, discussed and verified by the literature in the literature review chapters. This chapter successfully explored the competencies of social work supervisors and highlighted areas in which supervisors need to be competent in order to be most effective in their position.

The following chapter will present the conclusions and recommendations for the professional competencies that can be regarded as essential for social work supervisors.

CHAPTER 8
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of the study was to empirically investigate what professional competencies are essential for social work supervisors who are working in a non-profit welfare organisation. The purpose of this was to promote supervisor competencies in order for supervisors to offer effective supervision to supervisees, and ultimately for the best services to be rendered to the service user. The aim of this chapter is to draw conclusions from the findings of the empirical study presented in Chapter 7, and then to present appropriate recommendations. The recommendations will serve as guidelines for individuals, groups or organisations to aid them in working towards the development and promotion of supervisors' competencies, for example social workers aspiring to become supervisors can focus on developing these competencies; supervisors should work on achieving a balance between all of the identified competencies; organisations can look for these competencies when employing or promoting a supervisor; organisations and educational facilities can consider these competencies when developing training programmes; and finally the SACSSP and DSD could also consider the findings when developing supervision frameworks and training programmes and in their discussions on the specialisation of supervision in social work.

The conclusions and recommendations fulfil the sixth and final objective of the study, which was *to offer recommendations for the promotion and acquisition of essential professional competencies for social work supervisors within non-profit welfare organisations*.

The other objectives for the research, as stipulated in Chapter 1, were achieved as follows:

i. *Objective 1*: This objective was achieved in the first literature review chapter, Chapter 2. The contextual framework was synthesised by means of considering a definition of supervision, as well as theories, models and perspectives that underlie supervision. In order to provide more insight into the South African context and the influences on South African supervision, trends in international supervision were discussed, followed by a review of the South African supervision context. The South African history of social work and supervision was discussed along with South African policy documents that provide depth to the contextual framework for understanding supervision in NPOs.

ii. *Objective 2*: Following from the contextual framework, Chapter 3 presented an analysis of the competence model by considering various approaches to developing competencies. This led to a discussion of the definition of competence as relevant to social work and supervisors. Parameters for the definition were provided, which laid the foundation for defining foundational and functional competencies in the following two chapters.

iii. *Objective 3*: In Chapter 4, the essential foundational competencies for social work supervisors were explored. The main competencies that were identified in the literature study were emotional intelligence; anti-discriminatory supervisory practices; building and maintaining professional relationships; communication; and ethical practices and legal knowledge. The foundational and functional competencies were contextualised based on the definitions and framework from Chapter 2 and Chapter 3.

iv. *Objective 4*: The functional competencies followed on from the foundational competencies. Functional competencies are related to the processes, methods, activities and techniques that are employed during the process of supervision. The functional competencies that were identified as essential based on the literature review were the functions of supervision; the process of supervision; and specific management competencies for the NPO setting.

v. *Objective 5*: The fifth objective was to investigate the essential professional competencies of social work supervisors by means of an empirical study. This was achieved in Chapter 6, the methodological chapter, and Chapter 7, the empirical investigation. Chapter 6 presented the research design and methodology that was used to conduct the research study. In Chapter 7 the findings of the empirical study were presented using themes, subthemes and categories that emerged from the data.

These five objectives contribute to the final objective, the presentation of the conclusions and recommendations, which is the purpose of this last chapter. The conclusions and

recommendations are related to the aim and objectives of the study, and fulfil the first four objectives of the study, as summarised in Table 8.1.

Table 8.1: Conclusions and recommendations as evidence of meeting the objectives of the study

OBJECTIVE	CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
Objective 1: To synthesis a contextual framework for understanding competence based supervision within a non-profit welfare organisation	8.2.1 Participant profile 8.2.2 Supervision profile
Objective 2: To analyse the competence model and the definition of competence within the parameters of supervision within a non-profit, social welfare organisational context	8.2.3 Theme 1: Essential foundational competencies for social work supervisors 8.2.4 Theme 2: Essential functional competencies for social work supervisors
Objective 3: To explore and synthesise essential foundational competencies regarding the inherent knowledge, skills and values of supervisors for supervision of social workers	8.2.3 Theme 1: Essential foundational competencies for social work supervisors 8.2.3.1 Subtheme 1.1: Emotional intelligence 8.2.3.2 Subtheme 1.2: Anti-discriminatory supervisory practices 8.2.3.3 Subtheme 1.3: Professional relationships 8.2.3.4 Subtheme 1.4: Ethical practices and legal knowledge
Objective 4: To explore and synthesise essential functional competencies of social work supervisors related to the utilisation of processes, methods, activities and techniques for social work supervision	8.2.4 Theme 2: Essential functional competencies for social work supervisors 8.2.4.1 Subtheme 2.1: Balancing and implementing the three supervision functions 8.2.4.2 Subtheme 2.2: Implementing the supervision process 8.2.4.3 Subtheme 2.3: Specific management competencies for the NPO setting

8.2 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

Overall, the research findings were rich and comprehensive. Large components of the empirical findings consolidated the existing literature by supporting certain competencies as being essential for supervisors, such as emotional intelligence. However, there were also areas in which the research findings were unique and went beyond the literature review, particularly the emphasis on specific management competencies in the NPO setting, as well as how structural issues impact on the supervisor and supervisory relationship.

The following conclusions and recommendations are based on the findings of the empirical investigation. The conclusions and recommendations answer the research questions as identified in Chapter 1, which were:

- What professional competencies are essential for a social work supervisor to possess in the NPO context?
- What foundational competencies are essential for social work supervisors?
- How are foundational competencies implemented or experienced?
- What functional competencies are essential for social work supervisors?
- How are functional competencies implemented or experienced?
- What aspects influence the development and implementation of essential professional competencies?

The conclusions and recommendations will be presented in a similar format to that of Chapter 7, the empirical study, hence also following the sequence of the interview schedule. The conclusions and recommendations will thus be presented according to the two main themes identified in the empirical study, namely essential foundational and essential functional competencies for social work supervisors. The participant profile and supervision profile will also be considered because of the impact they have on supervision, and more specifically on the supervisor. Where applicable, the recommendations will be presented according to the level of who it affects as identified through the research and above. For example, the findings and recommendations might be more appropriate for supervisors (microsystem), the organisation (exosystem), training institutions or legal and ethical bodies (macrosystem) such as the SACSSP or the DSD.

8.2.1 Participant profile

The participant profile reveals that there are no significant differences that separate supervisors from their supervisees. There is relative homogeneity in terms of race, and all of the participants, excepting for one, were female. The supervisors, on average, were marginally older than the supervisees, and the impact of generational gaps was discussed further in the research. The factors of age, race and gender all correspond with the findings in the literature review.

Of interest is that the profile reveals that many supervisors had limited years of experience as social workers before they were promoted or appointed to the position of supervisor. This research finding is confirmed by the literature review. Limited years of experience as a social worker negatively affect the supervisor's knowledge and field experience. Experience and knowledge are important parts of the definition of competencies, and need to be considered carefully. In terms of knowledge, the findings reveal most supervisors did not receive any training in supervision prior to their appointment, but that most of them received some sort of training after their appointment as supervisor.

From this it can be concluded that many supervisors have insufficient experience as a social worker before their appointment as supervisor. Thus their knowledge of the social work field, and their ability to empathise with their supervisees, is limited. It can further be concluded that, when supervisors are appointed, they have no training in supervision and are appointed to a position for which they have inadequate knowledge.

Based on the above discussion of the participant profile, it is recommended that:

- Factors of experience and training be considered as an indispensable component of essential professional competencies. More specifically, it is recommended that:
  - **Supervisors** need to take personal responsibility to enhance their professional knowledge in the field of supervision. Whilst they need to go on training courses, they also need to remain on top of current practices and changing legal policies. Furthermore, they need to stay aware of current social work issues, problems and challenges.
  - **Organisations** need to consider the experience and training of potential supervisors before they are appointed. Newly appointed supervisors should undergo in-depth and practical training in all aspects of supervision, regardless

of whether they have been trained previously, as updated practices and policies need to be understood. In terms of experience, organisations should only consider potential supervisors who have a well-rounded experience and understanding of the social work field and profession.

- **Training institutions** need to provide more training in supervision, particularly at an undergraduate level, so that all social workers receive basic training in this field.

- **Legal and ethical bodies** should consider making training in supervision compulsory at an undergraduate level. It is also recommended that supervision be considered an area of specialisation for social workers, thus implementing a compulsory requirement for number of years of experience in social work as well as training in supervision.

8.2.2 Supervision profile

The supervision profile provided information on how often supervisors meet with their supervisees, what methods of supervision they employ, and if they have any other supervision-focused activities. Supervisors need to be competent in implementing various methods of supervision, as indicated in the research findings and the literature study. Supervisors engage in individual and group supervision on a frequent basis with their supervisees. The findings also show that some supervisors do not have frequent or scheduled contact with their supervisees. This means that supervisees can go for extended periods without any accountability, guidance or support. This places supervisees at risk, not only in terms of their ethical and legal work, but also in terms of their professional development and emotional well-being. It can be concluded that supervisors need to be competent in the methods of supervision, but also in determining the need for frequency of supervision. Newer supervisees might need weekly supervision, whereas experienced supervisees might function well on a less frequent consultation basis. Supervisors need to be competent in tailoring supervision to the individual needs and level of experience of each supervisee.

A further factor in terms of varying methods of supervision is that many of the participants in the research indicated that they participated in additional supervisory activities that fulfil part of the supervisory function and process. These activities include debriefing sessions, team building and foster care supervision groups. It is apparent that these supervisory activities are

largely beneficial to the social workers. From this it can be <u>concluded</u> that supervisors practise a variety of methods and activities for supervision and need to be competent to choose approaches that meet the professional needs of their supervisees.

The final aspect revealed by the findings was that the majority of the supervisors and social workers were not geographically located in the same office, and this can have a considerably negative impact on the supervisory relationship. Supervisors who have to travel long distances tend to see their supervisees less frequently, have less quality time and interaction with their workers, and it is far more challenging for them to provide support on an emotional level. From this it can be <u>concluded</u> that the office location of the supervisor in relation to that of their supervisee can present many challenges for the supervisory relationship. Supervisors need to be competent to manage these challenges and still meet the supervisory needs of their social workers.

Based on the above discussion of the supervision profile, it is <u>recommended</u> that:

- The methods of supervision be considered as an important component of essential professional competencies. Furthermore, supervisors need to be competent in managing the challenges that come with working with multiple offices and social workers, sometimes at a considerable distance. More specifically, it is <u>recommended</u> that:
    - **Supervisors** ensure that they are seeing their social workers on a frequent basis, taking special care to schedule supervision according to the supervisees' needs and level of experience. Supervisors also need to be competent in managing multiple offices and offering support over long distances. It is recommended that supervisors make use of video conferencing, for example Skype, to have more frequent contact with their supervisees, as this would aid them to manage remote supervision. It is also recommended that supervisors are competent in using a variety of supervision methods, and that they need to have knowledge to practically carry out supervision in a manner that meets the supervisees' needs.
    - **Organisations** should recognise the importance of supervision, monitor how often supervisors and supervisees are meeting, as well as what methods they are using. If social workers are not seen on a frequent basis they are being put at risk for legal or ethical issues, as is the organisation. In addition, it is recommended that organisations consider the practicalities of supervisors

having to travel long distances to see their supervisees, as it places unprecedented pressure on the supervisors and social workers to maintain an effective supervisory relationship. Ideally, the number of supervisors should be increased so that they can see their supervisees on a more frequent basis, travel less to various offices, and offer meaningful individual and group supervision.

- **Training institutions** should provide training in the various methods of supervision, highlighting to supervisors the necessity and role of each method. Workshops discussing various supervision methods would be beneficial, as supervisors would be afforded the opportunity to discuss practical ways of supervising.

- **Legal and ethical bodies** need to recognise the importance of supervision and the constraints placed on supervisors because of their high workload in terms of number of social workers and office location. The government needs to subsidise supervision positions in NPOs sufficiently so that supervisors can have a manageable workload and truly focus on achieving competence instead of constantly managing work related crises.

8.2.3 Theme 1: Essential foundational competencies for social work supervisors

As previously establish, foundational competencies are the underpinning of what supervisors do, and how they can do it successfully. While these competencies are more covert, they still fulfil the definition of competence, which allows for them to be learnt and observed, and for outputs to be seen in supervisory behaviours and interactions. Four subthemes were produced from the research findings in terms of foundational competencies, namely emotional intelligence; anti-discriminatory supervisory practices; professional relationships; and ethical practices and legal knowledge.

Based on the empirical study and the literature review, it is clear that supervisors need to be competent in all of the foundational competencies. There should be a balance between each of the foundational competencies in order for the supervisor to work in an optimal manner, benefiting the organisation, supervisee, client and themselves.

8.2.3.1 Subtheme 1.1: Emotional intelligence

The first subtheme that was identified for foundational competencies was emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is central to social work supervision, and was identified during the interviews as one of the areas in which supervisors should be competent. Supervisors are the primary people offering professional support to social workers as they deal with challenging cases, workload pressures and staff issues. Supervisors thus need to be skilled to deal well with emotions in the workplace. They need to be able to recognise, utilise, understand and manage emotions appropriately so as to promote emotional intelligence in the supervisee, but also in themselves. High levels of emotional intelligence lead to reduced levels of work-related stress, higher productivity and greater job satisfaction. These factors play a significant role in the retention of social workers. For these reasons, emotional intelligence cannot be overlooked by supervisors and they need to be competent in this area.

The first category that was identified during the interviews was *the importance of supervisors being able to manage the emotional intelligence of the supervisees*. All the participants were in agreement that this is an essential competence for supervisors, which supports the findings of the literature review. Social workers need help in learning how to use their emotions to the benefit of themselves and their client. The supervisor plays a critical role in helping them reflect on an experience or an emotional reaction, and to grow from this professionally.

Despite the critical need for supervisors to foster emotional intelligence in their supervisees, it was also found that emotional intelligence is seldom the focus of supervision sessions. The participants felt that availability of time was the largest constraint, but also the supervisors' lack of knowledge or inability to effectively guide the process of developing emotional intelligence. The need for supervisors to receive more training in this area was emphasised by both social workers and supervisors.

From the empirical study it can be concluded that emotional intelligence is an essential professional competence for social work supervisors. From the findings it can be deduced that there is a great need for supervisors to play a role in helping social workers to manage their emotions and to develop their emotional intelligence. Furthermore, supervisors need more training in this area, as many of them lack the basic skills and understanding of how to foster emotional intelligence.

The second category that was found to be important was that *supervisors need to be emotionally intelligent* themselves. Supervisors act as role models to social workers and they need to be able to model good emotional control and understanding in the workplace. Supervisors are also faced with challenges in the workplace such as stress, emotional strain and high workload. It is essential for supervisors to possess the skills to manage their own emotions, to reflect on their experiences, and to use their emotions appropriately in the workplace. An emotionally intelligent supervisor creates a platform for learning in the organisation, and particularly in the supervisory relationship. It can be <u>concluded</u> that emotional intelligence is not only an important competence for supervisors to be able to practise with their supervisees, but also a competence that they first need to apply to themselves as professionals in order to be effective supervisors.

Based on the above discussion on *emotional intelligence*, it is <u>recommended</u> that:

- Emotional intelligence be considered an essential professional competence for social work supervisors, and all systems that interplay with the supervisor should focus on developing emotional intelligence and emphasise the importance of it. More specifically, it is <u>recommended</u> that:
    - **Supervisors** should focus on using their knowledge of emotional intelligence to offer support to their supervisees, and also to foster the emotional intelligence of the supervisees. Emotional intelligence should play a central role in the supportive and educational functions of the supervisor. In addition, supervisors need to focus on their own professional development, with emotional intelligence being one of the core focuses of their professional growth.
    - **Organisations** need to prioritise emotional intelligence and be mindful of how structural managerial issues might affect the supervisors' opportunities to foster their own and their supervisees' emotional intelligence. Furthermore, organisations should prioritise emotional intelligence as an essential competence for supervisors, and this could be achieved by creating training opportunities, including these in the supervisors' inventory of job-specific competencies, as well as including them as an essential criterion when appointing new supervisors and evaluating current ones. Additionally, organisations could provide opportunities for supervisors to develop their

emotional intelligence more intentionally through, for example, meetings with other supervisors and peer group discussions and support.

- **Training institutions** need to develop more specific courses focusing on emotional intelligence and how the supervisor can develop this competence in order to promote optimum practice. The development of emotional intelligence as a supervisory competence should be part of the theoretical content on supervision that is offered to undergraduate social work students.

- **Legal and ethical bodies** should recognise the value and importance of emotional intelligence in the retention of social workers and place priority on supervisors being competent in this area. National frameworks and guidelines for supervision would be meaningless if emotional intelligence is not valued and practised. National development programmes aimed at enhancing supervisors' emotional intelligence would counteract the dormancy of nationally enforced frameworks and guidelines.

8.2.3.2 Subtheme 1.2: Anti-discriminatory supervisory practices

The participants all agreed that supervisors need to be competent in anti-discriminatory supervisory practices. Diversity in the workplace takes on many different forms, and supervisors need to have the skills to accommodate factors of diversity whilst not creating any barriers or tension in the workplace because of differences. Although there was relative homogeneity in the participant profiles, it was still found that anti-discriminatory practices were considered an essential professional competence for social work supervisors by all of the participants. Factors of age, gender and race were considered to be the most significant areas of anti-discriminatory competence for supervisors.

Age, or generational differences, was a noteworthy aspect for the participants during the interviews. Age can influence the supervision process in relation to how the supervisor and supervisee react to change, correction and guidance. Supervisors need to be competent to work with supervisees at different life stages, but also should be aware of how their own life stage might influence the supervision relationship and the supervisees' perceptions of them. The supervisors' own life phase might influence their working style, knowledge of the profession and knowledge of the practical field, hence they need to be mindful of generational differences and be competent to consider these in practice. It can be concluded that generational differences

are an important factor during supervision, and that the social work supervisor needs to be competent to work with generational difference so as to encourage supervisees from various life phases and not to allow age to become a barrier within the supervisory relationship.

Another category that was found to be important for anti-discriminatory supervisory practices was *gender*. The study revealed that, although the majority of social workers and supervisors are women, there is still a great need for supervisors to be competent in working with different genders. This is even more relevant since the dominance of women in the social work field could make men feel isolated or feel forced to work in the same way as women. The supervisors found that social workers of different genders approach work differently, with the one approach not necessarily better than the other. The findings revealed that the two genders have different strengths and challenges in the workplace, of which the supervisor needs to be mindful, show support for and display the ability to use the differences as a strength in practice. It can be concluded that supervisors need to be competent in anti-discriminatory supervisory practices, particularly as linked to gender, as it is a relevant and important issue that supervisors need to deal with in practice.

The final category that was identified as an area in which supervisors should be competent was that of *race*. The findings reveal that supervisors need to be actively aware of racial issues or differences in the workplace. They need to be mindful of how race might influence the supervisory relationship, and be competent to practise in a way that is culturally sensitive and reflects cultural friendliness. In addition, supervisors should be competent to utilise cultural difference as strengths for the supervisees, particularly with regard to their client systems. It can be concluded that racial and cultural factors play a significant role in supervision, and the supervisor needs to be competent to manage these factors accordingly and use them to the strength of the supervisee and the organisation.

Based on the above discussion on *anti-discriminatory supervisory practices,* it is recommended that:

- Anti-discriminatory supervisory practices be considered an essential professional competence for social work supervisors, and that all systems that interplay with supervisors should focus on developing them and emphasise their importance. More specifically, it is recommended that:
    - **Supervisors** need to be aware of how age, gender and race impact on the supervision relationship, and display the competencies to be conscious of these

differences and use them as strengths in the practice setting. Supervisors need to be aware of factors that might lead to discrimination and have the skills to practise in an anti-discriminatory manner.

- **Organisations** should focus on encouraging anti-discriminatory practices throughout their organisation. They should recognise that the supervisor, as a middle manager, plays a significant role in creating the organisational culture. Anti-discriminatory practices should be embodied in organisational policy documents, and this will aid the supervisor to have a foundation for good practice. In addition, organisations could promote learning opportunities in this area by encouraging formal training, or more frequent peer learning groups for supervisors to share their experiences and knowledge in a practical and meaningful setting.

- **Training institutions** should focus on training courses that emphasise anti-discriminatory supervisory practices. Supervisors need knowledge and equipping in order to work meaningfully with differences in the workplace. Theoretical components of training in supervision should include specific references to anti-discriminatory supervisory practices, with particular reference to the South African context.

- **Legal and ethical bodies** need to recognise the importance of supervisors being competent in anti-discriminatory practices. Supervision-focused documents and frameworks should not only focus on the procedural and theoretical aspects of supervision, but also the competencies of supervisors, particularly the importance of anti-discriminatory supervisory practices. These anti-discriminatory supervisory practices should be assimilated, and expressed in detail in ethical codes of conduct.

8.2.3.3 Subtheme 1.3: Professional relationships

All of the participants agreed that supervisors need to be competent in professional relationships. Supervision is a relationship-based activity, and the supervisors must have the skills and knowledge to prioritise, build and maintain professional relationships.

The first category of professional relationships that was identified during the research was *interpersonal relationships*, which focus on building effective relationships in the workplace.

The findings reveal that not all supervisors are competent in this area of interpersonal relationships. The participants claimed that supervisors who focus more on administration and work outputs placed less focus on building and maintaining interpersonal relationships. The research findings indicate that the participants felt that supervisors need to be competent in practising listening skills as well as non-verbal communication. In addition, a large majority of the participants said that supervisors should be competent in professional boundaries, as this can significantly influence the supervisory relationship, as well as office dynamics. From this it can be <u>concluded</u> that supervisors need to be competent in interpersonal relationships. They need to place value on relationships, and possess the skills and knowledge to be able to appropriately maintain and build interpersonal relationships.

In addition to interpersonal relationships, *interdisciplinary relationships* were identified in the literature review and the empirical study as another aspect of professional relationships in which supervisors need to be competent. The study shows that many supervisors do not participate in interdisciplinary relationships, and less so for the benefit of their supervisees. Many of the social workers have to build interdisciplinary networks without the support and connections of their supervisor. The definition of competence includes aspects of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that, when combined, make up a competence. In this matter, many supervisors appear to have the knowledge and skills to build interpersonal relationships, but they do not see the value in them being involved and have a negative attitude towards helping their supervisees in this area. In <u>conclusion</u>, interdisciplinary relationships are critical for social workers, and help and support from their supervisors would make this much easier for them; however, many supervisors do not value their role in networking and offer little to no support to their supervisees in this area. Supervisors need to be competent in building interdisciplinary relationships.

Mediation was the final category identified under professional relationships as an area in which supervisors need to be competent. Competence in mediation means that a supervisor is able to follow the stages of the mediation process by guiding the parties involved to discuss their differences and reach an agreeable resolution. The participants said that supervisors need to be competent in mediation between social workers and clients, and also in dealing with staff issues. In a profession in which emotions and stress run high, it is essential for supervisees to receive support from their supervisors in the form of mediation to aid them in resolving conflict. This is essential so that staff conflict and conflict with clients do not cause unnecessary stress, adding to the already high work pressure facing social workers. From this it can be

<u>concluded</u> that social workers need their supervisors' help in mediating difficult situations related to their work or office setting, and that it can be considered an essential part of professional relationship competencies for supervisors.

In the light of these categories it can be <u>concluded</u> that social work supervisors need to be competent in professional relationships and that competence should be reflected primarily through interpersonal relationships, interdisciplinary relationships and mediation.

Based on the above *discussion on professional relationships* it is <u>recommended </u>that:

- Professional relationships be considered an essential professional competence for social work supervisors, and that all systems that interplay with the supervisor should focus on developing this competence and emphasise its importance. More specifically, it is <u>recommended</u> that:
  - **Supervisors** need to prioritise networking as a supervisory responsibility. It is recommended that supervisors help new social workers in building professional relationships, and also use group supervision as an opportunity for building professional relationships.
  - **Organisations** should appoint supervisors who reflect competence in professional relationships in their practice. Professional relationship competence should be promoted and emphasised in the workplace, and supervisors should be urged to develop their competencies in this area. Organisations should explicitly compile codes of conduct for professional relationships.
  - **Training institutions** should provide training courses focusing specifically on mediation in order to equip supervisors with the necessary tools for the mediation process. Furthermore, training institutions should integrate material on the essence of professional relationships in all their learning material, but should also include an exit-level learning criterion in relation to the development of students' professional relationships and the operationalisation of this in supervision.
  - **Legal and ethical bodies** need to emphasise the important of professional relationships and include them in ethical codes of conduct. At present there are limited guidelines on professional relationships in policy documents and codes of conduct. This does not just refer to social worker-supervisee relationships,

but also to the importance of interdisciplinary relationships. These aspects need to be prioritised.

8.2.3.4 Subtheme 1.4: Ethical practices and legal knowledge

Whilst exploring the foundational competencies, the final subtheme that was identified was competence in ethical practice and legal knowledge. Social work has become highly specialised, with social workers very involved in statutory work and the legal system. In welfare organisations, social workers are dealing with legal documents on a daily basis and they rely on their supervisors to guide and instruct them in legal and ethical matters. Besides offering guidance, supervisors can also be held liable for the misconduct of social workers, thus supervisors are obliged to oversee their workers legally and ethically, encouraging best practice that is within the boundaries of the profession. It therefore is essential that supervisors are competent in ethical practice and legal knowledge.

The research findings reveal that supervisors need to be competent in the area of *knowledge of ethical, legal and professional standards and guidelines*. Supervisors are required to aid social workers in legal and ethical issues, and are the main point of support, information and deliberation for social workers. The participants in the study indicated that this is a critical role played by supervisors, and that it makes up a large portion of their daily work, thus going hand in hand with their responsibly to oversee *statutory reports*. The supervisors play a crucial role in the impartation and application of legal and ethical knowledge for the social workers with regard to report writing. The social workers rely on the supervisor's guidance and input in the legal aspects of their reports, and they expect their supervisors to be knowledgeable in this area. It is necessary for supervisors to be able to think critically in terms of legal and ethical issues in order to aid the social workers in the legal decisions that they make. The findings indicate that overseeing statutory reports, feedback on reports, corrections and guidance is one of the main tasks of supervisors and make up a significant portion of their workload. This can add a lot of pressure, as each social worker has his/her own deadlines that the supervisor needs to accommodate, and the supervisor needs to bear responsibility for making ethical and legal decisions and recommendations.

From this it can be concluded that supervisors need to have competence in legal and ethical practices, particularly with regard to knowledge of ethical, legal and professional standards and guidelines, as well as statutory report writing. Supervisors are the final point for legal and

ethical decisions, they need to be competent to think critically, and apply and defend actions that are taken. If supervisors are not competent in this area, the social worker, client and organisation are jeopardised.

In addition to these two categories, *virtue ethics* was also identified by the findings and the literature review as an essential element in which supervisors should be competent. Virtue ethics defines morality and is the basis upon which actions are considered good or bad. The research findings reveal that virtue ethics is vital for supervisors, as the ecosystem of supervision relies on the supervisor making ethically sound and moral decisions. The findings indicate that social workers rely on their supervisors to be their moral compass. Furthermore, the social workers also felt that their supervisors need to possess and practise the qualities and basic principles of social work, even though they have moved into a middle management position. Supervisors need to model virtuous behaviour that values people and treats them justly.

From this it can be concluded that it is essential for supervisors to show competence in virtue ethics. Virtue ethics, together with having knowledge of ethical, legal and professional standards and guidelines and competence in legal statutory reports, combines to make up the competence of ethical practices and legal knowledge and, based on the findings, these aspects can be considered an essential professional competence for social work supervisors.

Based on the above discussion on *ethical practice and legal knowledge*, it is recommended that:

- Ethical practice and legal knowledge be considered an essential professional competence for social work supervisors, and that all systems that interplay with the supervisor should focus on developing these factors and emphasise the importance of them. More specifically, it is recommended that:
    - **Supervisors** need to prioritise their own professional development in legal and ethical knowledge and practices. It is important for supervisors to balance their managerial role and position, being mindful of their position of authority, so that virtue ethics and the basic principles of social work remain at the core of their practice. Furthermore, legal and ethical guidance needs to be viewed as part of the three supervision functions (education, support and administration) so that they lead to growth and learning in the supervisee, and are not merely activities of giving instruction.

- **Organisations** could provide structured opportunities for supervisors to meet frequently with their peers, to discuss legal and ethical issues and to engage in peer learning. Ethics cannot easily be taught in a lecture setting, and thus practical peer learning is the ideal situation for supervisors to grow in this area of competence. In addition, it is recommended that this area of competence is carefully considered and screened for when supervisors are appointed.

- **Training institutions** need to provide frequent training in legal matters, policies and legislation so that supervisors can remain informed of relevant and recent documents. Furthermore, training or workshops that focus on ethics, ethical behaviour and virtue ethics could be offered as accredited short courses. This is beyond the standard ethics of the profession as set out by the SACSSP, but a more practical application and operationalisation of ethics that is relevant to the supervisors' setting in an NPO.

- **Legal and ethical bodies** once again need to consider that supervision-focused documents and frameworks should not only focus on the procedural and theoretical aspects of supervision, but also on the competencies of supervisors. Supervisors need to be competent in ethical practice and legal knowledge in order to successfully fulfil their role, and this should be set as a legal requirement for organisations when appointing supervisors.

8.2.4 Theme 2: Essential functional competencies for social work supervisors

Functional competencies are complementary to foundational competencies, and it is important for the supervisor to strike a balance between each domain of competence. The functional competencies are related to the processes, methods and activities that are employed during the supervision process. The research produced three subthemes in terms of functional competencies, namely balancing and implementing the three supervision functions; implementing the supervision process; and specific management competencies for supervisors in the NPO sector.

The empirical study and the literature review both support that supervisors need to be competent in all of the functional competencies. The functional competencies contribute to the smooth running of the supervision process and tasks. Once again it is important that there be a

balance between each of the functional competencies, and they also need to be in harmony and balance with the foundational competencies.

8.2.4.1 Subtheme 2.1: Balancing and implementing the three supervision functions

The three supervision functions, namely administration, education and support, underlie all the activities and interactions of the supervision process. The three functions enlighten all the activities and processes of the supervisory relationship. The research findings indicate that there has to be balance between all of the functions, with each of the functions being considered and equally applied throughout the supervisory relationship. The participants strongly agreed that this should be an essential competence for social work supervisors.

The three functions, however, are not always equally balanced, as revealed by the discussion of the first category, namely the *administrative function.* The literature study and empirical investigation distinctly concur that the administrative function is an essential competence for supervisors, and the one function that takes precedence over the other two. Administrative control is a large part of the supervisors' workload, and is tied to report writing, as discussed previously. Supervisors and social workers are required to record all interactions, and this places significant pressure on supervisors to oversee and regulate all the administrative documents. The social workers identified the need for administrative support and instruction as a vital role of the supervisor. Due to the high demand for administrative support, guidance and control, this function tends to overshadow the other two functions, and this is another reason why supervisors need to be competent in this area so that they can carry out the administrative functions effectively and efficiently, allowing time and space for the other two functions to be prioritised. From this it can be concluded that supervisors need to be competent in implementing the administrative function due to the high administrative workload of social workers, and the need for supervisors to support and guide their social workers administratively.

The *supportive function* is the second category that was identified for supervisors to be competent in for the subtheme of balancing and implementing the three supervision functions. This function plays an essential role in helping social workers cope with job-related stress to help prevent burnout and encourage growth in emotional intelligence. The findings and literature study agree that this is an essential function for supervisors, and that supervisors need

to be aware of the support needs of their supervisees and tend to them appropriately. The responses show that the support function is seldom fulfilled due to the high administrative workload, but also due to the fact that supervisors are not in the same office as their supervisees, thus less aware of crises or needs that require attention. It can be <u>concluded</u> that supervisors need to be competent in the support function, as it is essential for social workers to have the professional care, encouragement and help that comes from the supervisor. It is also clear that the support function is not fairly balanced with the other functions, and that there is a distinct need for the supportive function to be implemented more effectively.

The final category that was identified was the *education function*. The education function is concerned with the learning and development of the supervisee. It is not just about teaching new facts, procedures and policies, but also a more in-depth approach to teaching. This includes aiding supervisees to translate what they learn and apply it in practice, and the education function is also about identifying opportunities in practice to help the supervisee to learn or grow. The research findings indicate that the education function is highly valued and much needed by the supervisees, and this corresponds with the literature review. As with the support function, the education function is overshadowed by the administrative function, and the findings show that there is little time for the education function to be achieved fully. Nominal education takes place during individual supervision, and group supervision only allows time for generic and basic training. Supervisors place little emphasis and priority on education, and many lack the skills to implement the education function meaningfully. The research findings show that education is not tailored to any of the individual supervisees' needs, and there is little focus on individual learning goals. From this it can be <u>concluded</u> that the education function of supervision can be considered an essential competence for supervisors. However, it also is a significantly overlooked function that is not balanced fairly with the other functions, nor prioritised.

In <u>conclusion</u> it is apparent that the three functions are fundamental to the supervisory relationship and process, and that supervisors need to be competent to implement the three functions. Furthermore, the supervisors need to be competent to balance the functions appropriately to meet the learning, emotional and work-related needs of the supervisee. It can be concluded with assurance that the functions are not fairly balanced, and that administration dominates the supervisory relationship. Supervisors need to be competent in all three the functions in order to serve their supervisees to the best of their ability.

Based on the above discussion on *balancing and implementing the three supervision functions,* it is <u>recommended</u> that:

- Balancing and implementing the three supervision functions be considered an essential professional competence for social work supervisors. It is recommended that all systems that interplay with the supervisor should focus on developing this and emphasise its importance. More specifically, it is <u>recommended</u> that:
  - **Supervisors** need to balance the three functions more in practice. Emphasis on the administrative function neglects supervisees' learning and emotional needs and ultimately affects their functioning. Supervisors need to create opportunities that tend meaningfully to all the needs of the supervisees through the supervision functions.
  - **Organisations** need to prioritise the balance of the three supervision functions. This needs to be reflected in the supervisor's job description and expected outcomes, as well as on an evaluative level for supervisees. It is important for organisations to be mindful of the administrative pressure that is placed on social workers and supervisors, and not to increase this pressure with organisational administrative control.
  - **Training institutions** ought to offer training that identifies practical ways in which the three supervision functions can be implemented meaningfully and effectively. Many supervisors know the theory behind the functions, and it is thus recommended that training moves beyond just theoretical training, but also considers the practical setting and pressures that supervisor's face.
  - **Legal and ethical bodies** should be mindful that the retention of social workers will only be successful if they receive holistic support from their supervisors. This support should not only consider the practical aspects of their work, but also the emotional strains and their need for professional development. It is recommended that these three functions are prioritised in policy frameworks on supervision, with specific emphasis being placed on the education and support functions.

8.2.4.2 Subtheme 2.2: Implementing the supervision process

The second subtheme that was identified as forming part of the functional competencies was that of implementing the supervision process. The supervision process is a continuous cyclic interaction that constantly adjusts to accommodate the professional growth and needs of the supervisee. The literature review indicated that there are six phases in this process, namely engagement, assessment, planning, contracting, implementation and evaluation. However, the research findings reveal that, in practice, the supervision process does not successfully follow this cyclic process, with many of the phases overlooked.

From the research findings, the category of *professional development* was identified as needing to be considered as a functional competence for social work supervisors. This competence was overlooked by the majority of the participants in their supervisory interactions. Social workers need the opportunity to set specific work goals and personal development plans, as it helps them to work towards goals, see improvement in their professional growth and stay motivated. The findings show that there are no set outcomes, no inventory of job-specific competencies, and no personal development plans in place for the supervisees. The research findings indicate that the social workers desire greater focus on professional development with specific outcomes, as this would help them measure their professional growth. As with many aspects of supervision, structural and administrative issues take priority in the process and supervisors do not make time for the professional development of their supervisees. However, social workers and supervisors alike stressed that professional development needs to take place in supervision, and that it is critical for supervisors to be competent in this area. In conclusion, a focus on professional development does not feature in the supervision process, and there is a dire need for supervisors to be competent in this area so that it can be implemented and evaluated more successfully.

The next phase in the supervision process that was identified by the literature review and the empirical study was *contracting*. The research findings and literature review support that contracting plays an essential role in the supervision process by setting expectations and boundaries, and that supervisors need to be competent in contracting so that the supervisory relationship can benefit from the contract. A vast majority of the participants said that contracting did not take place as part of the supervision process, but only as part of the employment process. As a result, there were no contracts on supervision to guide the process and to use when there are discrepancies in the professional supervisory relationship. From this

it can be <u>concluded</u> that contracting is viewed as an essential part of the supervision process and that supervisors need to be competent in implementing and making use of the contract in supervision.

The final phase of the supervision process that was identified was *performance evaluation*. The purpose of performance evaluation is to appraise the supervisees' growth, based on the personal development plan and outcomes set for supervision. As is evident from the above discussion, personal development plans and supervision outcomes were not used by many of the supervisors in the supervision process, and this consequently has a negative effect on performance evaluation, as no standards for evaluation have been determined. The findings show that performance appraisals are focused only on supervisees' overall work, with no focus on specific work-related goals, a personal development plan or individual learning goals. Furthermore, the study shows that there is low motivation to do performance appraisals, and that supervisors place little priority on evaluations. Despite this, the participants emphasised a need for performance evaluations and for supervisors to be competent in this area, as it can contribute significantly to the positive professional growth of the supervisee. From this is can be <u>concluded</u> that performance evaluations are essential for the supervisee and are a critical part of the supervision process, but performance evaluations are not done. Not much priority is placed on performance evaluations, regardless of the clear need and desire for them to be used, thus is it essential for supervisors to be competent in this area.

The *high turnover of social workers* was identified as the final aspect that makes an impact on the supervision process. Although this is not part of the actual process, it has a negative effect on the process and affects the competencies of the supervisor. The high turnover of staff adds to the supervisor and supervisee workloads and distracts from supervisory responsibilities. Supervisors need to be competent to balance their daily supervisory responsibilities with that of orientating new social workers and managing the caseload of social workers who have left. The findings indicate that a high proportion of social work offices experience a high turnover of social work staff, and thus many supervisors are dealing with staff changes on a frequent basis. Due to the high turnover of social workers, and the high caseload of social work offices, supervisors seldom have time for thorough orientation, personal development plans or contracting, as they need to address client issues immediately, particularly legal issues or reports. In <u>conclusion</u>, supervisors need to be competent to manage the high turnover of staff in the NPO sector. They need to be skilled in the orientation of new workers, and in the

evaluation of workers who are leaving, whilst still following the supervision process and not neglecting critical steps.

In <u>conclusion</u> it is important for supervisors to be competent in implementing the supervision process. If social workers are to truly grow professionally and excel in the work they do, then need to follow the full cyclic process of supervision under the guidance, instruction and support of their supervisor. Understandably, work pressures and high turnover of staff divert supervisors from seemingly less critical steps, such as personal development plans or contracting, but in the long run this has a negative effect on the professional growth and motivation of the social worker.

Based on the above discussion on *implementing the supervision process*, it is <u>recommended</u> that:

- Implementing the supervision process be considered an essential professional competence for social work supervisors. It is recommended that all systems that interplay with the supervisor should focus on developing the process and emphasise its importance. More specifically, it is <u>recommended</u> that:
  - **Supervisors** need to prioritise the full supervision process with all of their social workers. They need to follow all the phases of the process in order for their social workers to achieve maximum growth and effectiveness. It is recommended that supervisors use pre-established templates for parts of the supervision process, for example writing up personal development plans, contracting and performance evaluations, to aid them in the process.
  - **Organisations** need to recognise the importance of the supervision process by emphasising it and placing priority on it. This can be done by including expectations for or measurements of the supervision process in the supervisor's job description or performance areas; or by implementing compulsory contracting, personal development plans and performance evaluations for social workers. Furthermore, organisations need to be mindful of the impact of high turnover of staff on the supervisor's workload and establish a protocol to support and relieve the supervisor during this transition period, so that the delegate can be thoroughly orientated and execute the first phases of the supervision process whilst managing the caseload of the departed social worker. In addition, it is recommended that organisations provide templates for

supervisors to use for contracting, personal development plans and performance evaluations in order to guide the process and aid the supervisor in assessing and gathering the appropriate information.

- **Training institutions** should place more emphasis on the supervision process, particularly emphasising the importance of each phase and the benefit of each for the social worker and organisation. Realistic and practical means of following the supervision process need to be taught so that the process can be carried out practically and implemented by the supervisors. This training should focus on theorising the supervision process, but also on means to operationalise the process to fit a specific context.

- **Legal and ethical bodies** once again need to recognise that the supervision process plays an important role in the retention of social workers, but also in their motivation, effectiveness and efficiency. There has to be an emphasis in documents and public events on the supervisor's role in the development and care of social workers as a whole, and not just on the legal and administrative aspects of supervision. To employ supervision through a specific process should be regarded as part of the ethical conduct of a supervisor, and should be included in documents on the ethical practices of supervision in social work.

8.2.4.3 Subtheme 2.3: Specific management competencies for the NPO setting

The last subtheme that was identified under the theme of functional competencies was specific management competencies for the NPO setting. Supervisors are typically in a middle management position, which means that they have to fulfil both supervisory and managerial responsibilities. These managerial responsibilities can place added pressure on supervisors, and sometimes can serve as a distraction from the important and core supervisory responsibilities they need to fulfil. The specific managerial responsibilities that were identified in the research findings as impacting on the supervisor and as an area in which supervisors need to be competent were the management of non-social work staff, human resource management, involvement with the management board, and financial responsibilities.

Supervisors manage a number of social workers and auxiliary social workers, who each manage a large caseload. This work alone is a considerable workload for supervisors to manage, particularly because of the ethical and legal weight of the work that is being overseen.

However, supervisors cannot devote their time solely to social workers, as they also have to manage a variety of non-social work staff. The *management of non-social work staff* was identified in the research findings as a significant part of the supervisors' workload and responsibilities, requiring skills and knowledge that go beyond the typical expectations of a social work supervisor. The findings reveal that supervisors are involved in managing a variety of staff from community workers, volunteers, staff at crèches, staff at old age homes and staff at children's homes to staff at community service centres. Supervisors thus need to be knowledgeable and skilled in each of these areas, understanding each field's legislative requirements and best practice protocol. From this it can be <u>concluded</u> that supervisors need to be competent in the management of non-social work staff. Although this is not typically part of the definitions or theory surrounding supervisors, the findings indicated that this is the reality for many supervisors and it needs to be considered as essential for supervisors to be competent in this area.

In addition to the management of non-social work staff, supervisors also have to make *human resource-based* decisions for all the staff they manage. The findings specify that supervisors are central to human resource activities in NPOs, particularly with regard to recruitment procedures, formulating job descriptions, retention of staff, appraisals, and the management of volunteers. The participants' responses show that supervisors do not have sufficient training in human resource management, and this places additional pressure on them, as they have to make decisions that are legally sound and fair. In <u>conclusion</u>, supervisors need to be competent in the area of human resource management. Most supervisors have no training in human resources management, even though it is a substantial part of their work. Supervisors need the right skills and knowledge to make appropriate human resource decisions that benefit the staff they manage, as well as the organisation.

Involvement with the management board of the organisation was another category that was identified under the subtheme of specific management competencies for the NPO setting. NPOs are governed by a voluntary board and, as the supervisor is in middle management, they are usually involved with the board and serve as the middle person between the board and frontline staff. This category was strongly emphasised throughout the research findings as being one of the most demanding responsibilities of the supervisor, as well as highly time consuming. Due to the board members being volunteers and untrained in social work, the supervisors have to spend a large amount of time educating board members and advocating for the social workers. In addition, supervisors spend more time than what is formally agreed upon with the board by

attending extra meetings and writing reports. From this is can be <u>concluded</u> that supervisors need to be competent and skilled to work at this level of management. They need knowledge of how managerial boards function, and how to advocate for staff and social work issues, and this is an important aspect in which they need to be competent.

The final specific management competence for supervisors is in the area of *financial management*. The research findings and literature review indicate that supervisors are often responsible for overseeing and reporting on funding. The organisational board places a high expectation on supervisors to be competent in this area, and many of the organisational financial reports are the responsibility of the supervisor. However, despite the weight of financial reports, supervisors are untrained in this area, as shown in the research findings, and the supervisors emphasised a need for training to increase their level of competence in this area. From this it can be <u>concluded</u> that supervisors need to be competent in the field of financial management, as they have a significant amount of financial work and reports to oversee.

In <u>conclusion</u>, the research clearly indicates that supervisors need to be competent in specific managerial competencies in addition to their supervisory roles and tasks. They need to be competent to manage and balance the additional managerial responsibilities that come with the position of middle manager in an NPO setting.

Based on the above discussion on *specific management competencies for the NPO setting*, it is <u>recommended</u> that:

- Specific management competencies for the NPO setting be considered an essential professional competence for social work supervisors. It is recommended that all systems that interplay with the supervisor should focus on developing them and emphasise their importance. More specifically, it is <u>recommended</u> that:
  - **Supervisors** need to become competent in balancing managerial and supervisory responsibilities. They need to attend training in managing finances and human resources, and, where necessary, also receive training or information on the non-social work staff and programmes that they are involved in. Finally, supervisors should resolve to work within their agreement with the board, and avoid taking on additional responsibilities and tasks lest they neglect their role as supervisors.

- **Organisations** should carefully consider how additional management responsibilities impact on the supervisors and their main role of being social work supervisors. Board members should not place additional responsibilities and pressures on supervisors that are above their work agreement. It is further recommended that, when recruiting supervisors, managerial skills are considered carefully, including human resource and financial skills and knowledge. In addition, financial management and human resource responsibilities that are placed on supervisors should be aligned to their level of training and competence in these areas.

- **Training institutions** need to provide training in these aspects of managerial competencies that are specific to the position of the supervisors, their role and responsibilities. Training in human resources and financial management is of particular importance and relevance for social work supervisors.

- **Legal and ethical bodies** need to include these aspects of human resources and financial management, as well as interaction with voluntary board members, into supervisory frameworks in the NPO setting. Such documents should not only consider the theoretical aspects of supervision, but also the practical and realistic pressures that supervisors face and in which they need to be competent. It is critical to note that the main brief of someone who is appointed to the position of supervisor is to focus on supervision-related tasks and functions, and not to divert their focus with a range of managerial tasks. This will limit the effectiveness of social work supervisors. Competencies ideally should focus on supervision, and not on other managerial tasks. Legal and ethical bodies, as well as organisations, need to understand the distinction between supervision and management, and be cautious not to allow managerial activities to interfere with the important tasks and functions of the supervisor.

8.3 FURTHER RESEARCH

In the light of the results of the research on the essential professional competencies of social work supervisors in the NPO setting, the following areas of research have been identified to explore this topic further:

- Since there is a lack of local research and literature on supervision, particularly with regard to competencies, it is suggested that further research is conducted on supervision in South Africa that considers the fundamental indigenous aspects of supervision, laying the groundwork for future research.

- Further research could be done on the foundational competencies of supervisors, particularly on how these competencies can be operationalised for practical use and implementation by supervisors.

- Two specific aspects of supervision in terms of the functional competencies that require further research are the three functions of supervision and the cyclic process of supervision within a South African context. Although these aspects are explained theoretically, there are many challenges to implementing them in practice.

- The specific managerial responsibilities and competencies of supervisors need to be researched further, as there is minimal research in this area and these factors significantly impact and shape the supervisor and the process of supervision.

- Further research could be done specifically on how the competencies of supervisors are learnt, implemented and measured, in accordance with the definition of competencies.

- Research could be undertaken on the development of a curriculum for training courses or workshops that focus on the foundational and functional competencies of social work supervisors.

8.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Supervision is not just about intervention and legal procedures, but also about the care and development of the social work profession. If the focus remains on legal and administrative control, it is inevitable that other aspects will be overlooked, for example the education, support, performance evaluation, professional development and growth of social workers. Organisations and legal bodies need to recognise the importance of supervision as it was meant to be, focusing on developing social workers, supporting them and guiding them to produce work of a high quality. For this to happen, supervisors need to be competent to fulfil their role in a meaningful way that truly nurtures social workers. This means a balance of foundational and functional competencies that consider all aspects of the supervisor and social worker relationship, and that consequently benefits the organisation and the service user.

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ANNEXURE 1

INFORMED CONSENT FOR SOCIAL WORK PARTICIPANTS (PHASE 1)

Consent from social work supervisees to participate in the research on the essential professional competencies of social work supervisors in a non-profit welfare organisation

You are requested to participate in a research study conducted by Lorién Parker, a doctoral student, from the Department of Social Work at Stellenbosch University. The results will contribute to the abovementioned thesis. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are a social work supervisee in a non-profit welfare organisation.

1. Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to gain an understanding of what professional competencies are essential for social work supervisors, in order to offer effective social work supervision to supervisees and ultimately lead to the best services being rendered to the service user.

If you volunteer to participate in the study you will be asked to do the following:

1. Be available for a 45-minute face-to-face interview, to be conducted at a convenient time determined and agreed upon by you and the researcher;

2. Grant permission for the interview to be audio-recorded;

3. That you indicate if you feel any discomfort during the interview and may leave at any time during the interview if you wish to do so;

4. That you answer the questions honestly and openly with the understanding that you may pose questions for clarification at any time;

5. You may withdraw consent at any time of the study without providing any reason if you wish to do so.

2. Potential risks and discomforts

No harm is foreseen during or after the research. The research is not highly personal, and it is considered low-risk in terms of ethical considerations. All the interviews be regarded as confidential and no names or personal details of participants will be included in the research.

3. Confidentiality

The information that will be obtained during the study will not be connected to your personal details in any way. Participant's names will not be used in the research report. The data will be stored in a locked cabinet at the home of the researcher, thus ensuring confidentiality as no one else will have access to it.

4. Participation and withdrawal

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you volunteer in the study you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind to you or the organisation. The researcher may withdraw you from the research if circumstances warrant doing so. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact Ms Maléne Fouché (mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622) at the Division for Research Development.

5. Identification of investigators

If you have any questions or concerns about the research please contact the researcher's supervisor, Prof. Engelbrecht (021 808 2073), at the Department of Social Work, Stellenbosch University. Should you require any further information about the research you can contact the researcher via email at lorienduplessis@hotmail.com or telephone on 021 852 3139.

6. Payment for participation

The cost of the research will be carried by the researcher and no costs will be expected from the participant or the organisation. Furthermore, participants will not receive reimbursement from the researcher for their participation in the study.

Signature of research participant (social work supervisee)

The information above was described by Lorién Parker to …………………………… (name).

I …………………………. (name of participant) was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

I hereby consent to voluntarily participate in this study

_____   _____

Full name of participant   Signature of participant

Signature of investigator

I declare that I explained the above information given in this document to ……………………………. (participant). He/she was given sufficient opportunity to ask any questions.

_____

Signature of investigator

ANNEXURE 2

INFORMED CONSENT FOR SUPERVISOR PARTICIPANTS (PHASE 2)

Consent from social work supervisors to participate in the research on the essential professional competencies of social work supervisors in a non-profit welfare organisation

You are requested to participate in a research study conducted by Lorién Parker, a doctoral student, from the Department of Social Work at Stellenbosch University. The results will contribute to the abovementioned thesis. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are a social work supervisor in a non-profit welfare organisation.

1. Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to gain an understanding of what professional competencies are essential for social work supervisors, in order to offer effective social work supervision to supervisees and ultimately lead to the best services being rendered to the service user.

If you volunteer to participate in the study you will be asked to do the following:

1. Be available for a 45-minute interview, to be conducted at a convenient time determined and agreed upon by you and the researcher;

2. The interview will be conducted telephonically or face-to-face depending on your availability and location;

3. Grant permission for the interview to be audio-recorded;

4. That you indicate if you feel any discomfort during the interview and may leave at any time during the interview if you wish to do so;

5. That you answer the questions honestly and openly with the understanding that you may pose questions for clarification at any time;

6. You may withdraw consent at any time of the study without providing any reason if you wish to do so.

2. Potential risks and discomforts

No harm is foreseen during or after the research. The research is not highly personal, and it is considered low-risk in terms of ethical considerations. All the interviews will be regarded as confidential and no names or personal details of participants will be included in the research.

3. Confidentiality

The information that will be obtained during the study will not be connected to your personal details in any way. Participant's names will not be used in the research report. The data will be stored in a locked cabinet at the home of the researcher, thus ensuring confidentiality as no one else will have access to it.

4. Participation and withdrawal

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you volunteer in the study you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind to you or the organisation. The researcher may withdraw you from the research if circumstances warrant doing so. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact Ms Maléne Fouché (mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622) at the Division for Research Development.

5. Identification of investigators

If you have any questions or concerns about the research please contact the researcher's supervisor, Prof. Engelbrecht (021 808 2073), at the Department of Social Work, Stellenbosch University. Should you require any further information about the research you can contact the researcher via email at lorienduplessis@hotmail.com or telephone on 021 852 3139.

6. Payment for participation

The cost of the research will be carried by the researcher and no costs will be expected from the participant or the organisation. Furthermore, participants will not receive reimbursement from the researcher for their participation in the study.

Signature of research participant (social work supervisor)

The information above was described by Lorién Parker to …………………………… (name).

I …………………………… (name of participant) was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

I hereby consent to voluntarily participate in this study

_____   _____

Full name of participant   Signature of participant

Signature of investigator

I declare that I explained the above information given in this document to
…………………………… (participant). He/she was given sufficient opportunity to ask any questions.

_____

Signature of investigator

ANNEXURE 3

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE – SOCIAL WORKERS (PHASE 1)

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY - DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

ESSENTIAL PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES OF SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISORS IN A NON-PROFIT WELFARE ORGANISATION

INTRODUCTION TO COMPETENCIES

Competencies can be understood as the skills, knowledge and values that help to make a professional person more effective in their position. Supervisor competencies are related to those factors which aid the supervisor in offering the best support to their supervisees. There are foundational competencies, which are the more internal, personal aspects, and functional competencies, which are related more specifically to the tasks and processes of supervision. This research does not focus on incompetence, or lacking of skills, but rather on what supervisor competencies can be identified to best serve the supervisee, supervisor and organisation, and ultimately the service user (clients).

SECTION 1

IDENTIFYING DETAILS OF PARTICIPANTS

The following identifying details are asked in order to determine diversity factors within the supervision relationship. Diversity can affect how problems and relationships are understood and approached.

1.1 Gender:

1.2 Race:

1.3 Age:

1.4 Number of years of experience as a social worker:

1.5 Have you received training in supervision? Specify where and what type of training.

1.6 Frequency of supervision:

1.7 Method/s of supervision:

SECTION 2
FOUNDATIONAL COMPETENCIES

Foundational competencies, as indicated by their name, are the underpinning of what supervisors do and how they can do it successfully. They are intrinsic to the supervisor, and play a critical role in the supervision process.

2.1 Would you consider **emotional intelligence** as an essential competency for a social work supervisor? Explain why, and which aspects are important. Reflect on at least one example. *(Probe: how does your supervisor help you to manage and identify your emotions? How emotions affect behaviour; modifying and regulating emotions; problem solving; recognising, using, understanding and management).*

2.2 Do you think **anti-discriminatory supervisor practices** are important? Explain why, and which aspects are important. Reflect on at least one example. *(Probe: factors such as race, culture, gender, religion, sexual orientation, age and disability; problem solving styles and communication barriers).*

2.3 What forms of **communication** play a significant role in the supervision process and are essential for the supervisor to practice competently? Explain why, and which aspects are important. Reflect on at least one example. *(Probe: verbal and non-verbal communication such as interpersonal relationships, interdisciplinary communications, emails, written reports, phone calls).*

2.4 Describe what you would consider to be essential competencies in maintaining and building **professional relationships**? *(Probe: interpersonal relationships, interdisciplinary communications, networking, conflict resolution, mediation).*

2.5 What is your view of the supervisor being competent in the area of **legal and ethical** concepts and issues? Reflect on at least one example. *(Probe: direct legal and ethical issues, but also critical thinking, statutory reports, virtue ethics).*

FUNCTIONAL COMPETENCIES

Functional competencies are related to the processes, methods, activities and techniques that are employed during the supervision process. Functional competencies can be understood as the combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes that make the processes and tasks of supervision run smoothly.

3.1 Do you think it is essential for the supervisor to balance and implement the three **supervision functions (support, administration and education)**? Explain why, and which aspects are important. Reflect on at least one example of each function respectively. Please also reflect on one example of the integration or non-integration of the functions.

3.2 What steps/phases of the **supervision process** do you consider essential for the supervisor to be able to implement competently? Explain why, and where possible please make use of examples. *(Probe: the engagement, assessment, planning, contracting, implementation, and evaluation).*

3.3 What unique pressures does the **NPO setting** place on supervisors that they should be competent to manage? Reflect on at least one example. *(Probe: involvement with the board, human resources, financial management, non-social work responsibilities).*

3.4 Are there any **other foundational or functional competencies** that you think are important for a supervisor to possess?

ANNEXURE 4

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE – SUPERVISORS (PHASE 2)

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY - DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

ESSENTIAL PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES OF SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISORS IN A NON-PROFIT WELFARE ORGANISATION

INTRODUCTION TO COMPETENCIES

Competencies can be understood as the skills, knowledge and values that help to make a professional person more effective in their position. Supervisor competencies are related to those factors which aid the supervisor in offering the best support to their supervisees. There are foundational competencies, which are the more internal, personal aspects, and functional competencies, which are related more specifically to the tasks and processes of supervision. This research does not focus on incompetence, or lacking of skills, but rather on what supervisor competencies can be identified to best serve the supervisee, supervisor and organisation, and ultimately the service user (clients).

SECTION 1

IDENTIFYING DETAILS OF PARTICIPANTS

The following identifying details are asked in order to determine diversity factors within the supervision relationship. Diversity can affect how problems and relationships are understood and approached.

1.1 Gender:

1.2 Race:

1.3 Age:

1.4 Number of years of experience as a social worker:

1.5 Number of years of experience as a supervisor:

1.6 Have you received training in supervision? Specify where and what type of training.

1.7 Frequency of supervision:

1.8 Method/s of supervision:

SECTION 2
FOUNDATIONAL COMPETENCIES

Foundational competencies, as indicated by their name, are the underpinning of what supervisors do and how they can do it successfully. They are intrinsic to the supervisor, and play a critical role in the supervision process.

2.1 Would you consider **emotional intelligence** as an essential competency for a social work supervisor? Explain why, and which aspects are important. Reflect on at least one example. *(Probe: How do you help your supervisees identify and manage their emotions? How emotions affect behaviour; modifying and regulating emotions; problem solving; recognising, using, understanding and management).*

2.2 Do you think **anti-discriminatory supervisor practices** are important? Explain why, and which aspects are important. Reflect on at least one example. *(Probe: factors such as race, culture, gender, religion, sexual orientation, age and disability; problem solving styles and communication barriers).*

2.3 What forms of **communication** play a significant role in the supervision process and are essential for the supervisor to practice competently? Explain why, and which aspects are important. Reflect on at least one example. *(Probe: verbal and non-verbal communication such as interpersonal relationships, interdisciplinary communications, emails, written reports, phone calls).*

2.4 Describe what you would consider to be essential competencies in maintaining and building **professional relationships**? *(Probe: interpersonal relationships, interdisciplinary communications, networking, conflict resolution, mediation).*

2.5 What is your view of the supervisor being competent in the area of **legal and ethical** concepts and issues? Reflect on at least one example. *(Probe: direct legal and ethical issues, but also critical thinking, statutory reports, virtue ethics).*

FUNCTIONAL COMPETENCIES

Functional competencies are related to the processes, methods, activities and techniques that are employed during the supervision process. Functional competencies can be understood as the combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes that make the processes and tasks of supervision run smoothly.

3.1 Do you think it is essential for the supervisor to balance and implement the three **supervision functions (support, administration and education)**? Explain why, and which aspects are important. Reflect on at least one example of each function respectively. Please also reflect on one example of the integration or non-integration of the functions.

3.2 What steps/phases of the **supervision process** do you consider essential for the supervisor to be able to implement competently? Explain why, and where possible please make use of examples. *(Probe: the engagement, assessment, planning, contracting, implementation, and evaluation).*

3.3 What unique pressures does the **NPO setting** place on supervisors that they should be competent to manage? Reflect on at least one example. *(Probe: involvement with the board, human resources, financial management, non-social work responsibilities)*

3.4 Are there any **other foundational or functional competencies** that you think are important for a supervisor to possess?

ANNEXURE 5
MEMBER CHECKING OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

Dear participant,

Thank you for participating in the research into the **essential professional competencies of social work supervisors in a non-profit welfare organisation**.

I have analysed all the data that I collected from the interviews and have compiled the empirical study. From the data I was able to identify themes, subthemes and categories that were prominent throughout the interviews. Please assist me in verifying the accuracy of your responses by reviewing the themes, subthemes and categories. They should be a fair and correct representation of your responses. Member checking is a way in which to ensure the correctness and intention of your verbatim response has been captured.

Should you *confirm and endorse* the themes, subthemes and categories based largely on the responses that you have provided then no explanation or reason need to be provided. However, should you *negate or contradict* the themes, subthemes and categories from the empirical study please provide reasons so that I am able to review the original transcriptions and make the necessary amendments accordingly.

Please note that your responses are confidential, and will be treated with the same confidentiality as the original data that was collected. This thesis has not been internally or externally examined yet. Your member checking role forms part of the verification process to ascertain the accuracy of the information provided.

Below you will find the main themes, subthemes and categories which emerged from the empirical study. I have also emailed you the full empirical study for you to review. Supporting excerpts from narratives are included, as well as the supporting literature. Please email your responses to me at lorienduplessis@hotmail.com. Should you require any further information I can be reached on 021 8523139 during office hours.

Thank you for your cooperation,

Yours sincerely,

Lorien Parker

EMERGING THEMES, SUBTHEMES AND CATEGORIES

Theme	Subthemes	Categories
1. Essential **foundational** competencies for social work supervisors.	1.1 Emotional intelligence	(a) Managing emotional intelligence of supervisees (b) Emotional intelligence of supervisors
	1.2 Anti-discriminatory supervisory practices	(a) Age (b) Gender (c) Race and culture
	1.3 Professional relationships	(a) Interpersonal relationships (b)Interdisciplinary relationships (c) Mediation (d) Effective skills
	1.4 Ethical practices and legal knowledge	(a) Knowledge of ethical, legal and professional standards and guidelines (b) Statutory reports (c) Virtue ethics
2. Essential **functional** competencies for social work supervisors.	2.1 Balancing and implementing the three supervision functions	(a) Administrative function (b) Education function (c) Support function (d) Supervision games
	2.2 Implementing the supervision process	(a) Professional development (b) Contracting (c) Performance evaluations (d) High turnover of social workers
	2.3 Specific management competencies for supervisors in the NPO sector	(a) Management of non-social work staff (b) Human resources (c) Involvement with the management board (d) Financial management

ANNEXURE 6

ETHICAL CLEARANCE

UNIVERSITEIT·STELLENBOSCH·UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

Approval Notice
New Application

19-Nov-2015
Parker, Lorien L

Proposal #: SU-HSD-001700

Title: ESSENTIAL PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES OF SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISORS IN A NON-PROFIT WELFARE ORGANISATION

Dear Mrs Lorien Parker,

Your **New Application** received on **04-Nov-2015**, was reviewed
Please note the following information about your approved research proposal:

Proposal Approval Period: **19-Nov-2015 -18-Nov-2016**

General comments:
The applicant is required to add her telephone contact details besides her e-mail details to the informed consent forms. She is furthermore reminded that the consent forms should also be completed by participants taking part in the pilot study.

Please take note of the general Investigator Responsibilities attached to this letter. You may commence with your research after complying fully with these guidelines.

Please remember to use your **proposal number** (**SU-HSD-001700**) on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your research proposal.

Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

Also note that a progress report should be submitted to the Committee before the approval period has expired if a continuation is required. The Committee will then consider the continuation of the project for a further year (if necessary).

This committee abides by the ethical norms and principles for research, established by the Declaration of Helsinki and the Guidelines for Ethical Research: Principles Structures and Processes 2004 (Department of Health). Annually a number of projects may be selected randomly for an external audit.

National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) registration number REC-050411-032.

We wish you the best as you conduct your research.

If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the REC office at 218089183.

Included Documents:
DESC Report - Williams, Rochelle
REC: Humanities New Application

Sincerely,

Clarissa Graham

REC Coordinator
Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities)

Investigator Responsibilities

Protection of Human Research Participants

Some of the general responsibilities investigators have when conducting research involving human participants are listed below:

1.<u>Conducting the Research.</u> You are responsible for making sure that the research is conducted according to the REC approved research protocol. You are also responsible for the actions of all your co-investigators and research staff involved with this research. You must also ensure that the research is conducted within the standards of your field of research.

2.<u>Participant Enrollment.</u> You may not recruit or enroll participants prior to the REC approval date or after the expiration date of REC approval. All recruitment materials for any form of media must be approved by the REC prior to their use. If you need to recruit more participants than was noted in your REC approval letter, you must submit an amendment requesting an increase in the number of participants.

3.<u>Informed Consent.</u> You are responsible for obtaining and documenting effective informed consent using **only** the REC-approved consent documents, and for ensuring that no human participants are involved in research prior to obtaining their informed consent. Please give all participants copies of the signed informed consent documents. Keep the originals in your secured research files for at least five (5) years.

4.<u>Continuing Review.</u> The REC must review and approve all REC-approved research proposals at intervals appropriate to the degree of risk but not less than once per year. There is **no grace period.** Prior to the date on which the REC approval of the research expires, **it is your responsibility to submit the continuing review report in a timely fashion to ensure a lapse in REC approval does not occur.** If REC approval of your research lapses, you must stop new participant enrollment, and contact the REC office immediately.

5.<u>Amendments and Changes.</u> If you wish to amend or change any aspect of your research (such as research design, interventions or procedures, number of participants, participant population, informed consent document, instruments, surveys or recruiting material), you must submit the amendment to the REC for review using the current Amendment Form. You **may not initiate** any amendments or changes to your research without first obtaining written REC review and approval. The **only exception** is when it is necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants and the REC should be immediately informed of this necessity.

6.<u>Adverse or Unanticipated Events.</u> Any serious adverse events, participant complaints, and all unanticipated problems that involve risks to participants or others, as well as any research related injuries, occurring at this institution or at other performance sites must be reported to Malene Fouch within **five (5) days** of discovery of the incident. You must also report any instances of serious or continuing problems, or non-compliance with the RECs requirements for protecting human research participants. The only exception to this policy is that the death of a research participant must be reported in accordance with the Stellenbosch Universtiy Research Ethics Committee Standard Operating Procedures. All reportable events should be submitted to the REC using the Serious Adverse Event Report Form.

7.<u>Research Record Keeping.</u> You must keep the following research related records, at a minimum, in a secure location for a minimum of five years: the REC approved research proposal and all amendments; all informed consent documents; recruiting materials; continuing review reports; adverse or unanticipated events; and all correspondence from the REC

8.<u>Provision of Counselling or emergency support.</u> When a dedicated counsellor or psychologist provides support to a participant without prior REC review and approval, to the extent permitted by law, such activities will not be recognised as research nor the data used in support of research. Such cases should be indicated in the progress report or final report.

9.<u>Final reports.</u> When you have completed (no further participant enrollment, interactions, interventions or data analysis) or stopped work on your research, you must submit a Final Report to the REC.

10.<u>On-Site Evaluations, Inspections, or Audits.</u> If you are notified that your research will be reviewed or audited by the sponsor or any other external agency or any internal group, you must inform the REC immediately of the impending audit/evaluation.