Reference:

Available at: [http://scholar.google.co.za/citations?user=YUORtfMAAAAJ](http://scholar.google.co.za/citations?user=YUORtfMAAAAJ)
RATIONAL

• Social work’s traditional and future agenda is by its very nature primarily focussed on intervention with the most vulnerable people of society.

• These interventions should however be managed and supervised within public and private organisational contexts.

• In addition, social work management and supervision occur at distinct organisational levels, which are globally being progressively transformed by neoliberal policies in order to ensure evidence-based practices.
Contradictory viewpoints emerge when some scholars resist managerialism and others advocate increasing control over management and supervision practices in social work.

Moreover, in many international social work texts, management and supervision are depicted as two separate practices, remote from policy implementation, narrowly country-specific and operating merely within a clinical context, and not compliant with objectives of social development.

Such conflicting tendencies are seldom accommodated as mainstream topics in social work deliberations, resulting in the notion of management and supervision as a neglected agenda, which may contribute to the profession’s potential condition of crisis.
RESEARCH AIM

• The state of affairs prompted research with the aim to delineate contemporary issues in social work management and supervision within a social development paradigm.
CONCEPTUALISATION
(DSD & SACSSP, 2012)

Within the context of this research:

• Social work supervision
  …is an interactional and interminable process within the context of a positive, anti-discriminatory relationship, based on distinct theories, models and perspectives on supervision whereby a social work supervisor supervises a social work practitioner by performing educational, supportive and administrative functions in order to promote efficient and professional rendering of social work services.

• Social work management
  …refers to the performance of tasks, such as planning, organising, leading and controlling in terms of functions relating to programmes, work load, human resources, etc.
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

• The South African social work fraternity was selected as a case study, because professional statutory regulated public and private social work, and management and supervision practices are operationalised within the country’s circumscribed social development approach towards social welfare services.
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY continue...

- Approach: mainly qualitative – also quantitative elements
- Design: exploratory
- Sampling: purposive
  - criteria for inclusion
    - Facebook group for registered social workers in SA
- Instrument: questionnaire
  - Posted on Facebook group’s wall
  - Close ended and open-ended questions
- Participants: 1\textsuperscript{st} 60 questionnaires returned
  - Analyses reached a saturation level
QUESTIONNAIRE

• Determine:
  – Years participants were registered as a social worker
  – Participants’ work position: social worker or supervisor/director etc.
  – Contentious issues in supervision
  – Contentious issues in social work management
## Quantitative Analyses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Workers</th>
<th>Supervisors/Managers/Etc</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants: 31 (52%)</td>
<td>Participants: 29 (48%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range: 1-25 years registration as sw</td>
<td>Range: 6-40 years registration as sw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average: 10 years</td>
<td>Average: 24 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median: 8 years*</td>
<td>Median: 24 years*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode: 2 years #</td>
<td>Mode: 20 years #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total average years registration as sw: 17 years</td>
<td># number occurs most in frequency distribution</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*middle number in the sequence of numbers

# number occurs most in frequency distribution
QUALITATIVE ANALYSES

• No significant discrepancies between responses of social workers and supervisors were evident
• Therefore qualitative findings are presented as an integrated whole
QUALITATIVE ANALYSES

- Qualitative data was analysed into:
  - Themes
  - Sub-themes → issues
  - Categories → challenges
  - Excerpts of participant narratives
QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

• Themes: supervision + management
  – Sub-theme 1: Issues in training of supervisors
  – Sub-theme 2: Competency issues of supervisors
  – Sub-theme 3: Issues in support of social workers
  – Sub-theme 4: Issues in education of social workers
  – Sub-theme 5: Issues in administration of social workers’ work
  – Sub-theme 6: Issues regarding work load
  – Sub-theme 7: Structural supervision issues
  – Sub-theme 8: Attitude issues of social workers towards supervision
  – Sub-theme 9: Leadership issues
  – Sub-theme 10: Issues of counterproductive working conditions
Sub-theme 1: Issues in training of supervisors

• Challenges regarding supervisors’:
  – formal supervision training
  – continuing education in supervision
  – training in terms of current theories and ELOs of social work graduates

• “Supervisors are not trained as a specialist (in supervision) and rely on their own experiences of being supervised and there practice (social work) experience”
Sub-theme 2: Competency issues of supervisors

- Challenges re supervisors’:
  - relevant social work experience
  - understanding of:
    - the local and global social work context
    - a social development approach to social work
    - differences between mentoring, coaching, consultation and supervision
  - theoretical underpinning of supervision
  - ethical supervision practices such as confidentiality
  - performance evaluation of supervisees
  - specific competencies ito:
    - communication
    - conflict resolution
    - cultural sensitivity
    - transformation management

- “Is a competent social worker necessarily a competent supervisor or manager?”

Dr Lambert K Engelbrecht
Dept. of Social Work, University of Stellenbosch, South Africa
Sub-theme 3: Issues in support of social workers

• Challenges re Supervisors’:
  – understanding of the frame of reference of beginner social workers
  – debriefing of social workers
  – engagement with clinical aspects of supervision
  – refrainment from therapeutic interventions with social workers

• “When we debrief once a month, it involves eating out at a restaurant – there is no awareness of debriefing…”
Sub-theme 4: Issues in education of social workers

- Challenges re supervisors’:
  - construction of personal development plans for social workers
  - education of social workers in integration of theory into planning, interventions, evaluation etc.
  - eliciting of social workers’ strengths

- “Is there anybody out there who can help me? I’m young, inexperienced and scared!”

Dr Lambert K Engelbrecht
Dept. of Social Work, University of Stellenbosch, South Africa
Sub-theme 5: Issues in administration of social workers’ work

• Challenges re supervisors’ focus on:
  – deadlines
  – control
  – statutory cases
  – making changes in reports

• “Supervision becomes an administration session in order to deal with day-to-day operations in the office, instead of focussing on the professional development of the social worker”
Sub-theme 6: Issues regarding work load

• Challenges re supervisors’:
  – roles as manager, supervisor of social workers and (in some cases) social worker
  – integration of supervision functions
  – workload management
  – demanding documentation
  – sustainable in-depth, structured and frequent supervision of social workers
  – availability to social workers

• “I am so busy with management tasks and front-line work, I do not have time to supervise”
Sub-theme 7: **Structural supervision issues**

- Challenges re:
  - Supervisors who have to report to non-professional managers
  - Non-social work managers who do not understand supervision and intervention processes
  - Confusion between the role of supervisor and manager
  - Insufficient supervisor posts
  - Geographical distances between supervisors and social workers in rural areas
  - Absence of organisational supervision policies
  - Social workers who stay forever on an a supervision level, with no migration to a consultation level
  - norms and standards for supervision

- “Can a supervisor also be a manager?”
Sub-theme 8: **Attitude issues of social workers towards supervision**

- Challenges re social workers who resist:
  - authority
  - guidance

- “Supervision is outdated - no other profession does it…”
- “The word supervisor reminds of a supervisor in a supermarket and is not professional at all”
- “Supervision becomes a baby sitting…”
- “Social workers are reluctance to attend supervision for fear of being assessed as underproductive/wrong”

**Dr Lambert K Engelbrecht**  
Dept. of Social Work, University of Stellenbosch, South Africa
Sub-theme 9: Leadership issues

• Challenges re Supervisors’/ managers’:
  – with autocratic leadership styles
  – assertiveness towards top management
  – reactiveness rather than proactiveness
  – decision making
  – strategic planning
  – leading of teams, especially multi-professional teams
  – promotion of the mission, vision, strategic aims and objectives of the organisation
  – creation of resources
  – lead by example
  – creation of networks

• “They manage from closed doors…”
Sub-theme 10: Issues of counterproductive working conditions

• Challenges re:
  – resources
  – promotion opportunities
  – numeration
  – retention and recruitment
  – skills to generate viable financial means

• “I study to become a social worker, yet it is expected of us to do fundraising….it is expected of us to be the master of many professions”
CONCLUSION

• This research highlighted that it is imperative to include issues and challenges in a future agenda for management and supervision of social workers
  – consisting of distinct knowledge, skills and competencies
  – and based on a configuration of context-specific, structural-functional, organisational and interactive theories, perspectives and models
  – in order to fortify social work and social development.