

THE EXECUTION OF INDIVIDUAL REFLECTIVE SUPERVISION SESSIONS: EXPERIENCES OF INTERMEDIATE FRONTLINE SOCIAL WORKERS

by

Nyasha H Chibaya

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Supervisor: Prof L Engelbrecht

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DECLARATION

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SUMMARY

Existing literature on supervision has failed to make provision for comprehensive information in regard to social work individual reflective supervision sessions and how to subsequently execute them. Reflective supervision has over the years received less and less attention on a global scale. This has been a consequence of neoliberalism with its sole focus on effectiveness and efficiency of management. Social workers all over the world have increasingly expressed concerns about the diminishing availability and poor quality of supervision inter alia. Consequently, protests by social work professionals have been witnessed in different parts of the world, demanding better working conditions inter alia. Against this background, this research study was aimed at understanding the experiences of intermediate frontline social workers in regard to the execution of social work individual reflective supervision sessions in South Africa.

A qualitative research approach was utilized in order to capture detailed accounts of intermediate frontline social workers in regard to their experiences of the execution of individual reflective supervision sessions. Descriptive and exploratory research designs were used to substantiate the capturing of various narratives from the participants. A snow-ball sampling method was utilized for the purpose of this study. Twenty participants were interviewed utilizing semi-structured interviews. Data gathered was analyzed using a thematic content analysis approach.

This research document contains two literature chapters. The first literature chapter attempts to formulate a conceptual framework for individual supervision of intermediate frontline social workers. The second literature chapter details various reflection tools and techniques that can be used in executing individual reflective supervision sessions. Chapter four of this research study contains the empirical study. The results from data collected from participants and literature are presented in an integrated manner. Chapter five contains the conclusions and recommendations of the research study.

The main conclusions drawn from the findings established that social work professionals are working under unfavourable conditions where they are expected to continuously meet organisational targets and manage heavy caseloads. Social work professionals continue

to receive less frequent and poor quality individual supervision. Alternatively, "on the run" supervision which is only available for urgent matters that require the supervisor's attention has become more common in social service organisations. There is little to no practice of reflective individual supervision in the present social work context which consequently thwarts the professional and personal development of supervisees. In light of the prior mentioned conclusions, it is recommended that supervision, as a specialist field in social service organisations, be specifically and substantially subsidized by the South African government; and that the practice of reflection in supervision be promoted through workshops as part of supervisors' Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

OPSOMMING

Bestaande literatuur rakende supervisie maak tans nie voorsiening vir omvattende inligting in verband met individuele reflektiewe supervisiesessies in maatskaplike werk nie, sowel as vir die uitvoering daarvan. Oor die jare heen is daar al hoe minder aandag gegee aan reflektiewe supervisie op 'n globale skaal. Hierdie is 'n gevolg van neoliberalisme met die uitsluitlike fokus op doeltreffendheid en effektiwiteit van bestuur. Maatskaplike werkers regoor die wêreld het onder meer toenemende kommer uitgespreek oor die afname, beskikbaarheid en swak gehalte van supervisie. Gevolglik is daar talle protesaksies in verskillende dele van die wêreld geloods, wat onder meer aandrang op beter werksomstandighede van maatskaplike werkers. Teen hierdie agtergrond is die navorsingstudie daarop gemik om 'n beter begrip te verkry van intermediêre eerstelinie maatskaplike werkers se ervarings van individuele reflektiewe supervisiesessies in maatskaplike werk in Suid-Afrika.

'n Kwalitatiewe navorsingsbenadering is benut ten einde gedetailleerde inligting vanaf intermediêre eerstelinie maatskaplike werkers te verkry in verband met hulle ervarings rakende individuele reflektiewe supervisiesessies. Beskrywende en verkennende navorsingsontwerpe is benut om die insameling van verskeie narratiewe vanaf die deelnemers te staaf. 'n Sneeubal proefnemingsmetode is benut vir die doel van hierdie studie. Onderhoude is gevoer met twintig deelnemers en daar is gebruik gemaak van 'n semi-gestruktureerde onderhoudskedule. Die data wat ingesamel is, is geanaliseer deur gebruik te maak van 'n tematiese inhoudsanalise-benadering.

Hierdie navorsingsverslag bevat twee literatuurhoofstukke. Die eerste literatuurhoofstuk poog om 'n konseptuele raamwerk vir individuele supervisie van intermediêre eerstelinie maatskaplike werkers te formuleer. Die tweede literatuurhoofstuk beskryf verskeie reflektiewe hulpmiddels en tegnieke wat benut kan word in individuele reflektiewe supervisiesessies. Hoofstuk vier van hierdie navorsingstudie bevat die empiriese studie. Die resultate van data wat ingesamel is vanaf deelnemers en literatuur word op 'n geïntegreerde wyse aangebied. Hoofstuk vyf bevat die gevolgtrekkings en aanbevelings voortspruitend uit die navorsingstudie.

Die hoof gevolgtrekkings wat gemaak kan word vanuit die bevindinge, is dat professionele maatskaplike werkers werk onder ongunstige omstandighede, waar daar van hulle verwag word om deurlopend organisatoriese doelwitte te bereik en groot gevalleladings te bestuur. Maatskaplike werkers ontvang steeds minder gereelde en swak gehalte individuele supervisie. As 'n alternatief het informele ("*on the run*") supervisie, wat net beskikbaar is vir dringende sake wat die supervisor se aandag verg, meer algemeen geraak in maatskaplikewerk-organisasies. Daar is min tot geen toepassing van reflektiewe individuele supervisie in die huidige maatskaplikewerk-konteks nie. Gevolglik benadeel dit onder andere die professionele en persoonlike ontwikkeling van maatskaplike werkers. In die lig van hierdie gevolgtrekkings, word daar aanbeveel dat supervisie in maatskaplikewerk-organisasies as 'n spesialisveld, spesifiek en substansieel, gesubsidieer word deur die Suid-Afrikaanse regering. Dit word ook voorgestel dat reflektiewe supervisie bevorder word deur werkswinkels as deel van supervisors se Voortgesette Professionele Ontwikkeling ("*CPD*").

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1. PRELIMINARY STUDY AND RATIONALE

There exists a myriad of primary international and local literature that has attempted to connote meaning to the concept of supervision (Austin, 1981; Botha, 2002; Hoffmann, 1987; Kadushin, 1976; Munson 1993; Shulman, 1993). For instance, Kadushin in his first edition (1976) and fifth edition (2014), describes social work supervision as a process whereby a supervisor performs administrative, educational and supportive functions whilst interacting with a supervisee in a positive relationship. The objective of this interaction between the supervisor and the supervisee is to deliver the best possible services both quantitatively and qualitatively to service users.

In one of the first official endeavours to define supervision in South Africa, the New dictionary of social work, in a South African context, describes supervision as a process whereby a supervisor performs educational, supportive and administrative functions in order to promote efficient and professional rendering of social services (Terminology Committee for Social Work, 1995:64). A more recent endeavour, the Supervision Framework for social work in South Africa (DSD & SACSSP, 2012:11) views supervision as an interactive process in a positive and non-discriminatory relationship, that hinges on various models, theories and perspectives of supervision. A social work supervisor guides a supervisee through performing educational, supportive and administrative functions in order to promote effective and reliable social worker services.

However, in an attempt to extend meaning to the concept of supervision, in a contemporary South African context, it is fundamental to note the views of Engelbrecht (2014). He points out that there exists a correlation between a given definition and its context. Social work in South Africa functions within a developmental paradigm. Hence, developmental social work can be viewed as an integrated and holistic approach to social work which acknowledges the links between persons and their environment, the connections between micro and macro practice, whilst utilizing strengths based and non-

discriminatory models and approaches to promote social and economic inclusion and well being (Mayadas & Elliot, 2001; Patel & Hochfeld, 2008).

Hence, prominent authors involved in the research of supervision, having different standpoints in regard to defining what supervision is, suggest that the goal of supervision is to enable supervisees to deliver effective, efficient and appropriate service to service users (Engelbrecht, 2014; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; O'Donoghue, 2003; Tsui, 2005). The goal of supervision is operationalised through the execution of particular supervisory functions. These functions are administrative, educational and supportive in nature (Bradley & Hojer, 2009; Engelbrecht 2014; Hair, 2013; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; Kadushin, Berger, Gilbert & St. Aubin 2009; Tsui, 2005).

The prior mentioned supervisory functions are carried out in a succession of pre-determined and deliberately selected activities which manifest in a supervision process. Kadushin and Harkness (2014:11) suggest the supervision process includes a beginning, middle and an end phase. Tsui (2005:42) is of the opinion that the supervision process consists of three main components which are: the supervision contract, an appropriate method of supervision and a developmental plan. In light of developmental social work, Engelbrecht (2014:144) suggests a cyclical supervision process consisting of engagement, assessment, planning, contracting, implementation and evaluation phases.

It is fundamental to note that the nature of supervision sessions is different in each of the prior mentioned phases of the supervision process (Engelbrecht, 2014). Moreover, it is also essential to understand how individual reflective supervision sessions are executed. This is so because it is in the implementation phase that the supervisor and the supervisee reflect on intervention with different service users. The implementation phase according to Tsui (2005) relates to the execution of supervision sessions and documentation. Supervision sessions can be viewed as structured learning situations, which are executed according to a set agenda (Engelbrecht, 2014:148; DSD & SACSSP, 2012). Though the prior mentioned studies attempt to describe the concept of a supervision session, it is however not sufficient, owing to the fact that supervision sessions should also make provision for the development of strengths and competencies of the supervisee by means of critical reflection (Franklin, 2011). This is implicated, but

not discussed by authors of international textbooks on supervision, such as Engelbrecht (2014), Kadushin and Harkness (2002) and Tsui (2005).

Conversably, Sicora (2017:8) describes reflection as a process towards a deeper understanding and awareness that continuously guides action and focused thought towards becoming a more competent professional in the interest of service users. Reflective supervision can thus be considered to be an approach to supervision that encourages not only attention to the content of the work, but calls on supervisees to look deeper into their own reactions and processes as they relate to their experiences with service users (Franklin, 2011:205). Hence, the social work supervisor may want to use an array of reflection tools, techniques and principles specifically adapted to the implementation phase when executing reflective individual supervision sessions. Engelbrecht (2014:148) postulates that reflection tools are used to develop the supervisees' insight and understanding in professional work related matters. Some of these reflection tools include the Johari Window, Karpman Drama Triangle and the Transactional analysis (Connor & Pokora, 2007).

Reflection tools should be operationalised by means of adult education principles within the implementation phase of supervision (Engelbrecht, 2014). Adult education principles are based on the primary work of Knowles (1971). These principles were adapted to social work supervision by authors such as Kadushin and Harkness (2002). The relevance of the prior mentioned principles to supervision is propelled by all three functions of supervision. Furthermore, given South Africa's multicultural society, it is fundamental to take into consideration the learning styles of different supervisees as primarily identified by Kolb (1973) in facilitating reflective supervision. In addition, adult education principles also facilitate the understanding and managing of learning blocks through acknowledging how different supervisee's learn. The prior mentioned principles and reflection tools are popular in coaching and mentoring as activities of supervision and have been adapted to fit the social work supervision context (Engelbrecht, 2014).

The concepts of coaching and mentoring have been increasingly used interchangeably with that of supervision in the present social work context (O'Donoghue, 2014; Tsui, O'Donoghue & Ng, 2014). This may be ascribed to the influences of managerialism as a

result of neoliberal discourses. Harvey (2010:2) describes neoliberalism as a theory of political economic practices that believe in the supremacy of the market with minimal government involvement. Present social work contexts are increasingly influenced by the globalization of economies and communication networks (Dempsey, Halton & Murphy, 2001:631). This has seen social service organisations being managed in the same way as business entities. Consequently, the use of concepts such as coaching and mentoring which were previously not associated with management and supervision of social service organisations, are being used interchangeably with that of social work supervision. Coaching and mentoring however seem to share some similarities with social work supervision and may be regarded as activities of supervision (Tsui, 2005:77).

The core elements of coaching include provision of instruction, feedback and guidance of practice skills (Perrault & Coleman, 2005). Coaching like social work supervision follow the same process which includes exploration of intervention experiences, reflection, linkage with formal knowledge and evaluation of responses (Perrault & Coleman, 2005). Collins (1994:414) defines mentoring as an interpersonal helping relationship between two individuals who are at different stages in terms of their professional development. Mentoring can also be viewed as a formal or informal transmission of knowledge, skills, attitudes, psychosocial support and professional development (DSD & SACSSP, 2012: 27). According to Cloete's (2012) investigation on the characteristics of mentoring as an activity of social work supervision, mentoring shares and follows the same processes, techniques and methods as supervision. This has led to the adaption of particular aspects of coaching and mentoring sessions to supervision in social work. Cloete (2012) postulates that coaching and mentoring like social work supervision are usually conducted in individual sessions.

Similarly, various authors establish that the most common forum for supervisory conversations is through individual supervision (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; Kadushin et al., 2009; O'Donoghue, 2003). These individual supervision sessions usually take up to one and one and half hours (Cooper, 2006; Egan, 2012; Hair, 2013; Nguyen, 2003; O'Donoghue, 2003; Tsui, 2004). The frequency of the sessions range between weekly and six weekly sessions, decreasing as the supervisee becomes more

experienced (Egan, 2012; Hair, 2013; Nguyen, 2003; O'Donoghue, 2003). The Framework for Supervision in South Africa, (DSD & SACSSP, 2012:35) states that the supervisor and the supervisee determine the duration and the frequency of supervision basing on the supervisee's level of experience, complexity of work and the number of hours spent in intervention. Prominent studies in supervision suggest that the individual supervision process mirrors that of a social work interview (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; O'Donoghue 2003; Tsui, 2005).

In addition, Kadushin and Harkness (2002) refer to the individual supervision session as a dynamic process that has a beginning, middle and an end phase. According to Johnson and Yanca (2010:160), the beginning phase in any process is concerned with setting the tone for the supervision session between the supervisor and the supervisee. The middle phase is where the agenda of the session is presented and pursued. The end phase is characterised by summarizing and terminating the session. Though the structure of individual supervision sessions is similar for all social work professionals, the nature of individual supervision sessions however depends on the developmental stage of the supervisee.

The developmental theory in the context of supervision describes progressive stages of the development of a supervisee's professional identity from a beginner through intermediate to an advanced level (Stoltenberg, McNeil & Delworth, 1998). However, existing literature on supervision seems to overly focus on beginner and advanced social workers (Davys & Beddoe, 2009; Engelbrecht, 2012; Franklin, 2011; Laufer, 2004). In addition, an analysis of the primary definitions of supervision seem to be more suited for the intermediate social worker (DSD & SACSSP, 2012; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; Tsui, 2005). This is because these definitions overtly point to professional identity. In terms of the developmental stages of professional identity, an intermediate social worker is a practitioner with fluctuating motivation for supervision owing to practice realities, demands and the complexity of social work intervention (Engelbrecht, 2014:131). Moreover, the intermediate practitioner is ambivalent about the need for supervision and has confidence to fulfill work requirements (Laufer, 2004:155). This practitioner according to Engelbrecht (2014:131) is also aware of work-related strengths and challenges as well as

opportunities for continuing education. Within this context, a frontline social worker is a practitioner who works directly with service users addressing identified needs (Fook, 2002). Based on the above exposition, intermediate frontline social workers are practitioners who have been practicing social work for 2 years and more (Fook, 2002). Hence, since it is evident that the execution of individual reflective supervision sessions of intermediate frontline social workers may be a neglected area in social work research, this study seeks to examine the experiences of intermediated frontline social workers.

1.2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

In spite of the research done on supervision thus far, existing literature on supervision fails to articulate how individual reflective supervision sessions are executed. Prominent studies in the field of social work supervision such as Davys and Beddoe (2010), Engelbrecht (2014), Hair (2013), Kadushin and Harkness (2014) and Tsui (2005) all refer to particular aspects of supervision. For instance, Kadushin is renowned for articulating the significance of supervision (Kadushin, 1992). Engelbrecht (2014) and Botha (2002) are arguably the leading scholars within South Africa to articulate management and supervision of social workers within South Africa's developmental paradigm. O'Donoghue (2009; 2012) substantially investigated the impact of culture on supervision. None of these esteemed authors however examine how supervisors should execute reflective supervision sessions.

In the instances where studies articulate the execution of supervision sessions it has been beyond South Africa's developmental context (O'Donoghue, 2014) or in the context of student supervision (Davys & Beddoe, 2009). For example, O'Donoghue (2014) explored the interaction of supervisees and supervisors during supervision sessions. This study was however conducted in New Zealand, a context markedly different from South Africa's developmental context. Davys and Beddoe (2009) investigated the execution of supervision sessions for students. Be that as it may, student supervision cannot be equated with supervision of qualified social workers as the dynamics and circumstances surrounding these supervisees are markedly different. Moreover, Davys and Beddoe (2009:919) substantiate this assertion by establishing that the ability to reflect by social workers depends on their level of competence and experience. Exploring how individual

reflective supervision sessions are executed will elucidate information regarding what actually takes place in the supervision session. Furthermore, it will aid in creating a conceptual framework which social work supervisors will be able to utilize in executing these reflective supervision sessions.

Existing studies that have attempted to describe what the supervision session is, fail to make provision of how to conduct these supervision sessions. Engelbrecht (2014:148) describes the supervision session, establishes its purpose and makes provision of reflection tools, which the supervisor can make use of. This is however not sufficient as he fails to detail what actually takes place in the supervision session and how to conduct these individual reflective supervision sessions. The Supervision Framework, for supervision in South Africa, (DSD & SACSSP, 2012:50) makes provision for how supervision sessions should be structured, how they should follow a personal development plan and be executed according to a set agenda. However, like Engelbrecht (2014) the Supervision Framework fails to make provision for guidelines on how to precisely carry out individual reflective supervision sessions.

Clark, Gilman, Jacquet, Johnson, Mathias, Paris and Zeitler (2008), Fook (2002) and Pack (2011) in their respective research studies established that supervisees and supervisors personally constructed and understood supervision in light of their experiences. This serves to initially justify the proposed studies' focus on the experiences of intermediate frontline social workers. Intermediate frontline social workers have arguably acquired a significant volume of experiences in the delivery of social services. A specific focus on the experiences of these professionals has the potential to lead to the construction of a well-informed conceptual framework regarding how individual supervision sessions are executed. Further need to explore the experiences of intermediate frontline social workers is warranted by the understanding that how supervision is constructed depends on and is influenced by contexts (Fook, 2002; Tsui, O'Donoghue & Ng, 2014). Exploring the experiences of intermediate frontline social workers within a social development paradigm will therefore aid indigenous literature on supervision, creating a conceptual framework of individual supervision that is relevant to the South African context.

Reflective supervision has increasingly received less attention over the years (White, 2015:251). Hair (2013) attests to this, by claiming that on a global scale, social workers and supervisors have collectively expressed growing concerns about the diminishing availability and decreased quality of supervision. This has been due to social work contexts being increasingly influenced by the globalization of economies, communication networks and a neoliberal discourse resulting in managerialism (Dempsey, Halton, Murphy, 2001:631; Engelbrecht, 2015). Consequently, social service organisations have resorted to management and supervision mainly focused on effectiveness and efficiency in order to obtain and maintain financial funding. Engelbrecht (2015:320) substantiates Dempsey's et al. (2006) assertion by noting that there is a growing pre-occupation with norms, standards and procedures in the present social work context. Undertaking the proposed study on the execution of individual reflective supervision sessions therefore seeks to initially revitalize the field of reflective supervision and re-direct the focus from the administrative function of supervision to include educational and supportive functions.

In the present neoliberal context where emphasis is on efficiency and effectiveness of management and supervision (Engelbrecht, 2015), a study on the execution of individual reflective supervision is vital in order to ascertain whether intermediate frontline social workers are delivering services which uphold the goal of supervision. Intervention with service users can arouse emotions, which if not explored in supervision can negatively impact further interactions with service users (Sicora, 2017:105). According to Sicora (2017:105) in order to maintain the required quality and standard of service delivery, which enhances the overarching goal of supervision, reflection is fundamental. The goal of supervision as prior mentioned, is to enable supervisees to deliver effective, efficient and appropriate service to service users (Engelbrecht, 2014; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; O'Donoghue, 2003; Tsui, 2005). It is therefore fundamental to explore how intermediate frontline social workers experience the execution of individual reflective supervision within the South African context.

1.3. RESEARCH QUESTION

What are the experiences of intermediate frontline social workers regarding the execution of social work individual reflective supervision sessions within South Africa?

1.4. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

1.4.1.Goal

The goal of this research was to gain an understanding of intermediate frontline social workers' experiences regarding the execution of individual reflective supervision sessions.

1.4.1.1. Objectives

- To construct a conceptual framework for individual reflective supervision of intermediate frontline social workers.
- To describe the tools and techniques for execution of individual reflective supervision sessions within the implementation phase of the supervision process.
- To empirically investigate social workers' experiences regarding the execution of individual reflective supervision sessions.
- To make recommendations to supervisors regarding the execution of individual reflective supervision sessions.

1.5. THEORETICAL POINTS OF DEPARTURE

The main theoretical undergirding for this proposed study was that of reflection in supervision. The study drew on the conceptualizations of the concept of reflection by Donald Schön (1983) and John Dewey (1910). Reflective supervision can be considered as an approach to supervision that encourages attention to the content of social work intervention, asking supervisees to look deeper into their own reactions and processes as they relate to their experiences with service users (Franklin, 2011:205).

Various reflection tools, techniques and principles utilized within the implementation phase of the supervision process were explored. Some of the reflection tools that were explored drew on the expositions of Connor and Pokora (2007). In addition, the study elucidated adult education principles as extrapolated primarily by Knowles (1971) and also by Kadushin and Harkness (2002) in order to complete a conceptual framework of reflective individual supervision sessions.

1.6. CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

Description of the following concepts is necessary in aiding conceptualization of this research study.

1.6.1. Supervision session

Supervision sessions can be viewed as structured learning situations, which are executed according to a set agenda based on a supervisee's personal developmental plan (DSD & SACSSP, 2012;Engelbrecht, 2014:148).

1.6.2. Individual supervision

Kadushin and Harkness (2014:102) refer to an individual supervision as the individual supervisory conference consisting of three phases, a beginning, middle and an end. Individual supervision can be considered as a one on one method of supervision between a supervisor and a supervisee (DSD & SACSSP, 2012:37).

1.6.3. Reflective supervision

Reflective supervision can be considered as an approach to supervision that encourages attention to the content of social work intervention, asking supervisees to look deeper into their own reactions and processes as they relate to their experiences with service users (Franklin, 2011:205).

1.6.4. Intermediate frontline social workers

A frontline social worker is a practitioner who works directly with service users addressing identified needs (Fook, 2002). In terms of the developmental stages of professional identity, an intermediate social worker is a practitioner with fluctuating motivation for supervision owing to practice realities, demands and complexity of work (Engelbrecht, 2014:131). In light of autonomy they are ambivalent about the need for supervision and confidence to fulfill work requirements (Laufer, 2004:155). They are aware of work-related strengths, challenges and opportunities for continuing education (Engelbrecht, 2014:131). Based on the above exposition, intermediate front line social workers are practitioners who have been practicing social work for 2 years and more (Fook, 2002).

1.7. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section briefly details the research approach, research design, sampling methods, data collection and data analysis.

1.7.1. Research approach

A qualitative research approach was utilized to reach the research objectives. De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delport (2011:65) are of the opinion that qualitative research in its broadest sense refers to research that motivates participants' accounts of meaning, experience or perceptions. For Creswell (2007:37-39), qualitative research is a form of inquiry in which researchers make an interpretation of what they see, hear and understand.

This study sought to explore the experiences of frontline social workers in regard to the execution of individual reflective supervision. Utilization of a qualitative approach elicited important data as the focus was on the "voices" of the participants and their discourses. Moreover, conducting face-to-face interviews provided the researcher with an opportunity to probe for in-depth information regarding the participant's experiences of the execution of individual reflective supervision.

1.7.2. Research design

In line with the qualitative approach, descriptive and exploratory research designs were utilized to reach the objectives of the research study. A descriptive research design according to Kreuger and Neuman (2006:23) presents a picture of the specific details of a situation or a social setting and focuses on "how" and "why" questions. For Rubin and Babbie (2005:125) a descriptive design refers to an intensive examination of phenomena and their deeper meaning, yielding thick descriptive accounts of given variables.

Exploratory research is conducted to gain insight into a situation or phenomenon in order to answer a research question (De Vos et al., 2011:95). Kreuger and Neuman (2006:23) put forward that exploratory research is usually utilized to build on descriptive research, going further to establish why something occurs.

In order to explore and describe the experiences of frontline social workers regarding the execution of individual reflective supervision, exploratory and descriptive research

designs were both deemed appropriate in that they yielded in-depth information and thick descriptive accounts, as well established the "why" and "how" in these accounts respectively.

1.7.3. Sampling

Snowball sampling was utilized for the purpose of this study. Alston and Bowles (2003:90) suggest that snowball sampling is usually utilized when there is lack of knowledge or information of the sampling frame and limited access to appropriate participants for an intended study. It involves approaching a single case that is involved in the matter to be researched to gain information on other similar matters. Grinnell and Unrau (2008:153) forward that the researcher is referred by one participant to another similar case. By so doing, the sampling frame is selected consisting of people who can possibly make up the sample until the required number of cases have been reached.

This research study on the experiences of intermediate frontline social workers regarding the execution of individual supervision was regarded as arguably a relatively unknown area of study, which rendered the snowball sampling method desirable. The criteria for inclusion of participants included being:

- An intermediate frontline social worker.
- A professional who had 2 years or more of experience in rendering social services.
- Employed in either State or private welfare organisations in the Cape Metropole.
- Receiving professional supervision from a social work supervisor.
- Proficient in English.

The sample for the study constituted 20 participants, who were regarded as experts of the subject matter, as they were supervised by supervisors in their respective organisations, as mandated by the Supervision Framework for the social service professionals (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). Ritchie, Lewis and Elam (2003) suggest that qualitative samples are generally small because there is a point of diminishing return. This implies that as the study progresses, more data does not necessarily lead to new information. This is so because a single occurrence of a piece of data is all that is required to ensure that it becomes part of the analysis. Bertaux (1981:35) suggests that in

qualitative research, 15 participants in a sample is the smallest acceptable sample size. A sample of 20 participants thus arguably resulted in saturation of results in the proposed study.

The researcher started by contacting and collecting data from participants fitting the criteria of inclusion. All participants fitting the criteria of inclusion were contacted in their personal professional capacity through email and by telephone. Hence the researcher did not require permission of the organisations from which participants were recruited from as the study is about the social workers' experiences regarding the execution of individual supervision sessions, and do not focus on particular organisations. After obtaining the first participant, the researcher made use of the snowball sampling method, by asking individual participants for references of additional social workers, adhering to the criteria for inclusion. Interviews conducted did not interfere with the participants' respective work environments. The empirical study was conducted in the Western Cape, South Africa, from 1 July to 31 August 2017.

1.7.4. Instrument for data collection

The study was qualitative in nature, thus semi-structured interviews with open and close ended questions were utilized. A tape recorder was also utilized for the collection of data. Researchers make use of semi-structured interviews in order to gain a detailed picture of the issue being investigated (De Vos et al., 2011:351). Semi-structured interviews provide flexibility between the researcher and the participant allowing for the full exhaustion of a given issue. Open and closed ended questions allow for descriptive and specific responses respectively.

Making use of the semi-structured interviews with open and close ended questions allowed for the exploration of the frontline social workers' experiences regarding the execution of individual reflective supervision sessions. The flexibility of semi-structured interviews allowed for deep probing, resulting in rich data. Some of the themes of the interview schedule that were explored related to biographical information, for instance the participants' gender and years of experience as a social worker. The researcher also probed for information relating to the supervision process theme, for instance what supervision meant to the participant, frequency and duration of individual supervision as

well as the main focus of supervision sessions. The last theme that was explored relates to the execution of individual reflective supervision sessions, for instance describing a typical individual supervision session, reflection and techniques utilized during these sessions inter alia. The themes of the semi-structured interviews were based on the literature study. See annexure 1 for an example of themes identified from the participants' narratives.

1.7.5. Data analysis

Data analysis is a process whereby the researcher inspects, transforms and models collected data with the aim of discovering useful information, suggesting conclusions and making recommendations (De Vos et al., 2013:246). Tables and figures were utilized to profile participants. This did not make the study a quantitative study. Data to be analysed was carried out by making use of thematic content analysis. Thematic content analysis according to Braun and Clarke (2006:79) emphasizes examination and the recording of data patterns or themes within collected data. Themes refer to patterns across data sets that are important to the description of a phenomenon and are associated with the research question (De Vos et al., 2013:248).

Thematic content analysis was performed through a process of coding in six phases to create and establish meaningful patterns. The six phases included familiarization with collected data, generating initial codes, searching for themes among codes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and producing the final report. De Vos et al., (2013:246) put forward that in order to analyse data collected, the researcher should tabulate aggregated data in order to establish whether or not the responses answer the study's research question and reflect the validity of findings. The data the researcher recorded was transcribed manually to text format. A denaturalized approach as discussed by Oliver, Serovich and Mason (2005) was utilized during the data transcription process, as the focus of the interaction was more on the content other than how it was said.

1.7.6. Data verification

A research study should have a criteria established with which one can ensure the quality of data collected. Validity and reliability are important constructs in verifying the quality of researched data. Validity refers to the extent to which an empirical measuring instrument

adequately reflects the true meaning of the concept which is supposed to be studied (Babbie, 2007:146). Reliability occurs when a selected instrument measures the same construct more than once and acquires the same results (De Vos et al., 2011:177). With regard to qualitative studies the norms of credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability should be discussed in order to assess the validity and reliability of the respective study (De Vos et al., 2011:419).

- Credibility

Credibility of a research study refers to the accurate identification and description of the subject within the parameters of the research participants' views and the researchers' reconstruction and representation of them (De Vos et al., 2011:420). The researcher managed credibility of the research study by establishing primary and secondary theory (Chapter 2 and 3) and indicating the parameters of the participants (Chapter 4).

- Transferability

Transferability refers to whether the research findings of a given study can be transferred from a specific situation to another (De Vos et al., 2011:420). With respect to qualitative research, transferability is problematic in that results from one study cannot be accurately generalised for a different population due to factors such as differing contexts. Alternatively, the researcher can refer back to the original theoretical framework to show how data collection and analysis will be guided by certain concepts (De Vos et al., 2011:420). Researchers conducting studies within the same theoretical parameters can then determine if respective cases can be generalised and transferred to other settings. The researcher managed transferability by establishing descriptive and exploratory theoretical chapters (Chapter 2 and 3) and a detailed research methodology which clearly showed how data was collected and analysed.

- Dependability

Dependability refers to whether the research process is logical, well documented and audited (De Vos et al., 2011:420). It is shown by establishing detailed reports about the research process such that a different researcher can easily follow the same process

even if they were to get different results (Shenton, 2004: 71). The researcher managed dependability by clearly and concisely extrapolating the research process of this study (Chapter 2,3 and 4).

- Conformability

Lincoln and Guba (1999) suggest that conformability means findings of a given study could be confirmed by findings in a different study. The researcher managed conformability by corroborating findings from the research study with the literature control in the discussion of the findings (Chapter 4). However, there may be limitations in ensuring real objectivity as questions that were used in the study were designed by the researcher which creates risk for biases. A key criterion for conformability is the extent to which researchers acknowledge their own predispositions (Shenton, 2004: 72), which were done in a section on the limitations of the study (see point 1.7.8).

1.7.7. Ethical clearance

Confidentiality, anonymity and informed consent are the main ethical considerations. Informed consent was provided for all participants. The informed consent provided an exposition of the purpose of the study, how the data would be collected and the potential benefits of the proposed study to the society. See annexure 2. Informed consent also serves to show that participants willingly took part in the study. Confidentiality was observed by not recording any personal identifying information of the participants. This was done to ensure the anonymity of the participants. Data collected from participants was stored on a password protected computer and hard copies were stored in a locked cabinet.

Ethical clearance for this study was provided by the Department of Social Work at the University of Stellenbosch. This is a low risk study because the study sought to explore how intermediate frontline social workers experience the execution of individual reflective supervision. The suggested research topic is arguably not controversial as it involved the exploration of the experiences of intermediate frontline social workers. The participants in this research were therefore adults who shared and made known their experiences in regard to the execution of individual supervision. As such there was little potential for

discomfort on the part of the participants as they were qualified social workers who have been in the field for 2 years and more and were not regarded as a vulnerable population in terms of research.

1.7.8. Limitations of the study

De Vos et al. (2011) forward that limitations in a research study are important elements which the researcher needs to be aware of, recognise, acknowledge and present clearly. This research study had the following limitation. The sample size of this research study was not large enough to make generalisations. The prior mentioned limitation is accentuated when one considers that the research study was only focused in the Western Cape. The researcher however meticulously described the research process which can be adopted to other areas in South Africa as well with a larger sample size.

1.7.9. Presentation

This research is made up of five chapters. Chapter one serves as an introduction to the research topic. Chapter one gives an overview of the rationale behind the study, the problem statement, describes the aims and objectives of the study and discusses an overview of the research methodology utilized in the study. Chapter two and three are literature review chapters. Chapter two elucidates and discusses a conceptual framework for individual reflective supervision of intermediate frontline social workers. Chapter three describes the various tools and techniques for the execution of individual reflective supervision sessions within the implementation phase of the supervision process. Chapter four of this research study pertains to data collection and data analysis. Chapter five discusses the conclusions drawn from the analysed data and respective recommendations.

Chapter 2

A conceptual framework for individual reflective supervision of intermediate frontline social workers.

2.1.INTRODUCTION

The execution of individual reflective supervision sessions of intermediate frontline social workers seems to be a neglected area in social work research. Existing literature on supervision seems to overly focus on other aspects of supervision but reflective supervision (DSD & SACSSP, 2012; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; O'Donoghue, 2014). The focus seems to be more on efficiency and effectiveness of management and supervision. Reflective supervision is however fundamental in ensuring that the overarching goal of supervision is upheld (Sicora 2017).

The first objective of this study aims to construct a conceptual framework for individual reflective supervision of intermediate frontline social workers. This will enable the reader to fully comprehend what individual reflective supervision of intermediate frontline social workers pertains to. This chapter will explore the concepts of social work supervision, reflection and reflective supervision as a whole.

2.2. DEFINITION OF SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISION

Supervision has been defined in various ways at different times (Barker, 1995). Kadushin in his first edition (1976) and fifth edition (2014), describes social work supervision as a process whereby a supervisor performs administrative, educational and supportive functions whilst interacting with a supervisee in a positive relationship. The objective of this interaction between the supervisor and the supervisee is to deliver the best possible services both quantitatively and qualitatively to service users. The New dictionary of social work, in a South African context more than two decades ago, describes supervision as a process whereby a supervisor performs educational, supportive and administrative functions in order to promote efficient and professional rendering of social services (Terminology Committee for Social Work, 1995:64).

The Supervision Framework for social work in South Africa, presented an updated definition of social work supervision within a local context (DSD & SACSSP, 2012:11), and views supervision as an interactive process in a positive and non-discriminatory relationship, that hinges on various models, theories and perspectives of supervision. A social work supervisor guides a supervisee through performing educational, supportive and administrative functions in order to promote effective and reliable social worker services. It is of the essence to note that how one defines social work supervision is both context-dependent and context-specific (Engelbrecht, 2015). Hence, there is no universally accepted definition of supervision as this definition would depend on whoever sets the program. For the purpose of this study, however, the definition of the Supervision Framework for social work in South Africa is acknowledged (DSD & SACSSP, 2012:11).

2.2.1 Goal of supervision

Research by Engelbrecht (2012) concluded that some supervisors in South Africa view the primary goal of supervision as developing supervisees into independent and autonomous practitioners. The prior mentioned goal of supervision is useful in a context where supervisees vary greatly in terms of their readiness levels for practical interventions (Engelbrecht, 2014). It is however important to note that this view of supervision shares similarities with ideas of managerialism and neoliberal notions in which effectiveness and efficiency in managing costs is a determining driver for social work (Bradley, Engelbrecht & Höjer, 2010). The goal of promoting independence of supervisees risks the omission of qualities of supervision that cannot be quantified such as being person centred inter alia (Noble, Gray & Johnston, 2016). Alternatively, a myriad of literature suggest that the primary goal of supervision should be directed towards enabling supervisees to deliver effective, efficient and appropriate service to service users (Engelbrecht, 2014; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; O'Donoghue, 2003; Tsui, 2005). This goal correlates with the principles of a social development paradigm within which social work in South Africa functions from. This goal of supervision is operationalised through the execution of supervisory functions.

2.3. FUNCTIONS OF SUPERVISION

The functions of supervision are considered to be administrative, educational and supportive in nature (Bradley & Hojer, 2009; Engelbrecht 2014; Hair, 2013; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; Kadushin, Berger, Gilbert & St. Aubin 2009; Tsui, 2005). Hawkins and Shohet (2000) discuss various functions of supervision. Some of these functions include supporting and validating supervisees as workers and as people, developing understanding and skills in intervention, ensuring quality of work and receiving content and work process feedback inter alia (Hawkins & Shohet, 2000). An analysis of the functions of supervision suggested by Hawkins and Shohet (2000) in fact describe either subsidiary functions or extensions of administration, education and support functions of supervision (Noble et al., 2016).

A social work supervisor guides a supervisee through performing educational, supportive and administrative functions in order to promote effective and reliable social worker services. It is fundamental to note that the unique value of the supervision functions does not lie in any of the functions in particular, but in their combination and integration into a meaningful whole (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). Hence, though the functions are discussed separately, they should be executed as an integrated package.

2.3.1. Administration function

Internationally, the origin of social work has its roots in its administrative function (Shulman, 1995; Tsui, 1997). It can be traced back to the Charity Organisation Societies movement in North America and Europe which began in 1878. During this time, the administrative function involved the recruitment, organisation and overseeing of volunteers and paid workers (Pettes, 1967). The aim of administrative supervision is to establish accountability of the supervisee to the organisation and that of the organisation to the supervisee in the best interests of the service users. The administrative function has gained great significance in the current neoliberal context of organisational accountability where emphasis is on efficiency and effectiveness (Engelbrecht, 2014; Lewis, Packard & Lewis, 2007). This accountability is initially to the organisation but ultimately to ensure positive outcomes for service users and communities.

There is almost a universal agreement of the four main management functions based on the primary work of Fayol (1949) within the context of the administrative function of supervision. These functions include planning, organising, leading and control. Planning refers to deciding what the organisation wants to accomplish and how these goals are to be achieved. It is considered the primary function of management and contributes fundamentally to performing other functions (Botha, 2000; DuBrin, 2012; Gatewood, Taylor & Ferrell, 1995; Schermerhon, 2005).

Organising is important in order to implement any plan. It involves making sure that both human and physical resources are available to implement the plans in order to achieve organisational goals (Engelbrecht, 2014:16). Stoner, Freeman and Gilbert (1995) define organising as the process of arranging and allocating work, authority and resources among employees of an organisation so that they can achieve the goals of the organisation. Botha (2000) views organising as the act of the structuring of the pre-determined tasks of the social work manager. It is the synthesis of people and resources in an acceptable pattern to execute specific activities.

Leading entails influencing others to achieve organisational objectives. The leading function requires special skills to motivate, communicate, direct and create vision (Engelbrecht, 2014). This function is arguably the most demanding on supervisors since it determines the quality and quantity of work executed by staff (Botha, 2000). Control involves measuring the real work performance of employees against a predetermined standard with the purpose of taking corrective action if there is significant difference (DuBrin, 2012). Although controlling is an important management function, it seems that it is specifically this management function, which detracts from the utilisation of reflective supervision, when emphasized in supervision sessions (Engelbrecht, 2014).

2.3.2. Educational function

After the establishment of Charity Organisation Societies in 1878 (in an English context), casework practices became more complicated as the numbers of people requiring assistance grew and the nature of problems continuously evolved. Moreover, demands of paid workers grew and pioneers for people's rights like Mary Richmond (1899) all came to the fore. International literature on supervision as subject in social work developed

following Brackett's (1904) book, *Supervision and Education in Charity*. This then led to supervision acquiring an educational purpose in 1911 Burns (1958) and which was accepted as meaning in a South African context by the seminal work of the Botha (2002).

The educational function is directly concerned with the education of social workers regarding the knowledge, skills and attitude required for effective social work service rendering (Botha, 2002; Carroll & Gilbert, 2005). The educational function is directed at teaching social workers what they need to know in executing their duties and to be of assistance in this learning process (Botha, 2002). Furthermore, the education function is concerned with teaching social workers how to deliver services that comply with the needs of the client system efficiently, that are in keeping with the organisational goals, that are reconcilable with professional values and reflect responsibility toward society (Botha, 2002). Engelbrecht (2014:163) refers to the educational function as continuing professional development which he asserts as one of the basic tenets of best practice supervision.

A significant component of this educational process is reflective practice, without which the social worker becomes enmeshed in reactive approaches that tend to be responsive to external pressures such as demands of service users or the organisation (Ruth, 2000). It is of the essence to note that in Africa, educational supervision is at times subsumed under the guise of administrative supervision with the supervisor telling the worker what to do in an effort to fulfill the mission of the organisation. This then results in the dilution of the objective of developmental enhancement of professional staff and social service organisations (Engelbrecht, 2014).

2.3.3. Supportive function

Botha (2000) establishes that social work is work-intensive and that productivity is to a great extent determined by the motivation and dedication of the personnel corps. Botha (2000), Kadushin (1992), Kadushin and Harkness (2002), put forward that supportive supervision is fundamentally concerned with increasing the effectiveness of the social worker through managing or decreasing stress that adversely impacts performance, increasing motivation and intensifying commitment that enhances performance. Kadushin (1992), established that in implementing the responsibilities of supportive supervision, the

supervisor relieves, restores, comforts and replenishes and also positively, inspires, animated and exhilarates. Botha (2000), puts forward that supervisors have the task to create an organisational milieu that is conducive to and acknowledges professional attributes and values. An environment of this nature subscribes to the ethical code of the social work profession, supports continuous education, acknowledges and appreciate the contributions by social workers and encourage interdependent and independent creativity of social workers.

Supportive supervision should appreciate that emotional competence is an essential contributory factor to effective practice (Engelbrecht, 2014:165). Emotional competence is important in both practice and supervision. Trevithick (2008) established that emotional competence can be observed in accurate assessment, helping people experiencing difficulties, relating intuitively to self and others, advocating in cases of discrimination, achieving containment of anxiety in times of crisis and transition, and creating a solid foundation for capacity building. This highlights the importance of reflection in supervision.

2.4. THEORIES, MODELS AND PERSPECTIVES OF SUPERVISION

Theories, models, and perspectives underlying supervision depend on a given organisation's school of thought in management (Engelbrecht, 2014:130). There exist so many theories, models and perspectives, so much that studying them may potentially end up in "supervisory jungle" (Tsui & Ho, 1997:182). This is because different terminology is used to refer to the same concepts and vice versa - all to accommodate a myriad of influences over time. It is fundamental to note that no one theory or model fits all the factors that impact supervision (Engelbrecht, 2014:130). These factors include the environment, organisational dynamics, values, inter alia. Hence, a thorough analysis of all possible theories, models and perspectives underlying supervision is therefore almost impossible. In order to fit the principles of a social development paradigm within a supervision context, this study will discuss a relevant practice framework. This practice framework includes the developmental theory of professional identity, the competence model and a strengths perspective.

2.4.1 Developmental theory of professional identity

This theory is based on the work of Erikson (1968). Viewed in a social work supervision context, this theory is seen as contributing to the aim of supervision (Kaufman & Schwartz, 2003). In a supervision context, the theory defines progressive stages of the development of a supervisee's professional identity from beginner through intermediate to advanced level. The focus of this study is on intermediate social workers. In terms of the developmental stages of professional identity, an intermediate social worker is a practitioner with fluctuating motivation for supervision owing to practice realities, demands and the complexity of social work intervention (Engelbrecht, 2014:131).

Moreover, the intermediate practitioner is ambivalent about the need for supervision and has confidence to fulfill work requirements (Laufer, 2004:155). This practitioner according to Engelbrecht (2014:131) is also aware of work-related strengths and challenges as well as opportunities for continuing education. Within a supervision context, a frontline social worker is a practitioner who works directly with service users addressing identified need (Fook, 2002). Following the description of an intermediate frontline social worker, these are practitioners who have been practicing social work for 2 years and above (Fook, 2002).

2.4.2. Competency model

Shardlow and Doel (2006) define a model as a structured and adaptable exposition of reality. A competency model of supervision focuses on the outcomes of supervision as well how the outcomes are reached (Engelbrecht, 2014:131). The supervisor adopts a facilitating role, helping the supervisee to achieve and demonstrate anticipated outcomes. Botha (2002), Engelbrecht (2004), Page and Stritzke (2006) forward that a competency model can be linked with a strengths perspective on supervision and that it gives relevant, meaningful and tangible context to supervision within a social development paradigm. Guttman, Eisikovits and Maluccio (1988) identify certain content categories, according to which competencies are differentiated. The authors distinguish between intellectual competence, performance competence, personal competence and consequence competence. These competencies could all be enhanced by reflective supervision (Engelbrecht, 2014).

The competence model of supervision furthermore correlates with outcomes-based supervision, and is thus in line with the South Africa's Qualifications Authority's (SAQA) requirements to meet specific learning outcomes in academic training (Lombard, Grobbelaar & Pruis, 2003).

2.4.3. Strengths perspective

A strengths perspective on social work practice emphasizes the strengths and capabilities of the client system and the resources within the service user's natural environment (Johnson & Yanca, 2010:442). Within a supervision context, this perspective is aimed at promoting the supervisee's participation in the supervision process, motivation, autonomy and self awareness. In South Africa, many organisations maintain the strengths perspective in all their interventions, fitting the parameters of developmental social work (DSD, 2006). New theoretical developments also concur with a strengths-based perspective on supervision, in that this perspective is an integral part of a competence model of supervision, which is proposed to empower social workers (Engelbrecht, 2004; Page & Stritzke, 2006).

A strengths perspective, competencies and empowerment are all concepts peculiar to a social development approach to social welfare (RSA, 2006) and could therefore be essential in constructing an appropriate theoretical conceptual framework for supervision in South Africa.

2.5. SUPERVISORY RELATIONSHIP

In order to bring out the best in each social worker, every supervisor should focus on culturing a non-discriminatory relationship with the supervisee, making provision for constructive criticism in a non-threatening way and clearly and positively conveying expectations (Brody, 2005; Davys & Beddoe, 2010; DSD & SACSSP, 2012; Hawkins & Shohet, 2006). Establishment of an effective supervisory working relationship between the supervisor and the supervisee is essential in making a positive difference to practice (Engelbrecht, 2014:160). The supervisor-supervisee relational characteristics found to promote supervisee growth and development include empathic understanding, trust, openness to change, commitment, communication, genuineness, support and respect

(Bernard & Goodyear, 2009; Cremona, 2010; Eketone, 2012; Falender & Shafranske, 2004; Hair 2014; Itzhaky & Rudich, 2003; Nerdrum & Ronnestad, 2002; Pack 2011).

The supervisory relationship is perceived as the major context for social work supervision (Fox, 1989; Kadushin & Harkness, 2002, Noble et al., 2016). This relationship has three components which are power and authority, shared meaning and trust (Kaiser, 1997). The three prior mentioned components of a supervisory relationship will be further discussed below as these components are important in reflective supervision (Sicora, 2017).

2.5.1. Power and authority

Engelbrecht (2014), Hair (2014), Kadushin (1992) and Noble et al., (2016) describe power as the ability to influence or control people and authority as the right to do so. Kaiser (1997) suggests that power and authority is the most salient element in a supervisory relationship due to the supervisory relationship having a built in power differential by definition. Power and authority is essential in the supervisory relationship (Munson, 2002 ; Tsui, 2004a). Patel (2012) differentiates three forms of power that may exist in a supervisory relationship which are role, cultural and individual power. Role power refers to the inherent difference in power between the supervisor and the supervisee (Patel, 2012). Cultural power denotes power specific to perceived ethnic grouping whilst individual power refers to power associated with the personality of the supervisor (Patel, 2012).

The power differential arises from the fact that the supervisee is administratively accountable to the supervisor (Hair, 2014; Kaiser, 1997; Patel, 2012; Tsui, 2004a). Although a myriad of literature on supervisory relationships in social work acknowledge the power and authority of supervisors, there are differential views regarding whether the hierarchical nature of the supervisory relationship should be praised or minimized (Kadushin, 1992; Munson, 2002). Postmodern thinking however challenges some of the assumptions underlying power differentials, suggesting that the supervisor should be a co-author and facilitator other than an expert on which the supervisee leans on for guidance (Cooper & Lesser, 2002).

2.5.2. Shared meaning

Shared meaning refers to the mutual understanding and agreement between the supervisor and the supervisee. The use of a supervisory contract is a way to verbalize and visualize this agreement (Tsui, 2004b). Kaiser (1997) suggests that the main feature of shared meaning is clear communication between the supervisor and the supervisee. Clear communication is challenging in any kind of relationship and the challenge is aggravated when the people in a given relationship share vast differences. For instance, Kaiser (1997) discusses how in cross-cultural supervision, factors such as values, norms and cultural specific meanings, can lead to misunderstanding between a supervisor and a supervisee.

2.5.3. Trust

Trust comprises respect and security (Kaiser, 1997). Respect safeguards the self-esteem of supervisees; they feel important and valued when they are respected as professional practitioners. A sense of security encourages autonomy in professional practice. Self-esteem and autonomy are important elements of the supervisory relationship because they are related to job motivation and satisfaction (Bunker & Wijnberg, 1988; Kadushin & Harkness, 2002; Munson, 2002; Shulman, 1993). In order to realize and uphold the goal of supervision, social work practitioners follow an established supervision process.

2.6. SUPERVISION PROCESS

Different authors refer to the supervision process differently. For instance, Tsui (2005:42) is of the opinion that the supervision process consists of three main components which are: the supervision contract, an appropriate method of supervision and a developmental plan. Kadushin and Harkness (2014:11) suggest the supervision process includes a beginning, middle and an end phase. The supervision process for O'Donoghue (2017) is progressive, moving through phases of preparation, engagement, planning, working and ending. In keeping with the principles of a social development paradigm. Engelbrecht (2014:14) proposes a cyclical supervision process operationalised by means specific tasks.

The cyclic supervision process proposed by Engelbrecht (2014) begins with an engagement phase where the supervisor creates an inventory of job specific

competencies for the supervisee. An assessment phase then follows where a complete personal development register is completed. Based on specific outcomes, activities and methods regarding defined competencies, the supervisor then designs a personal development plan for the supervisee in the planning phase. The supervisor and supervisee furthermore sign a contract which stipulates the nature of the supervision relationship activities and methods that will be employed in the course of the supervision.

The implementation phase, which is the focus of this study, then follows where the execution of supervision sessions and documentation takes place. The supervisor engages the supervisee in reflective supervision utilizing various reflection tools and techniques simultaneously acknowledging and making use of various adult education principles. The final phase, evaluation, pertains to the performance appraisal and launch of the process to a new cycle. Despite the different terms used to define and describe the supervision process, what is common to all these descriptions is that the supervision process is formal and mirrors the social work helping process (Granvold, 1978; Kadushin, 1992; O'Donoghue 2014; Rushton & Nathan, 1996).

2.6.1. Methods of supervision

Supervision can be conducted in either group or individual setting. Supervisors utilize the two methods interchangeably in order to focus on personal needs in individual supervision and also to benefit from group efforts (Engelbrecht, 2014:151).

2.6.1.1. Group supervision

Group supervision is the supervision of several supervisees by a single supervisor. It is described as a mentoring relationship between a supervisor and more than two supervisees (Newgent, Davis & Farley, 2004). In group supervision, the supervisor has the duty to find a balance between individual and group development. Group supervision is often used to supplement, rather than to substitute, individual supervision (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). The size of the group is determined by the number of supervisees for whom the supervisor has administrative responsibility, generally four or five Kadushin and Harkness (2014) or more within a South African context (Bradley, Engelbrecht & Höjer, 2010).

2.6.1.2. Individual supervision

A plethora of authors in social work supervision establish that the most common form of supervision is individual supervision (Grant & Schofield, 2007; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; Kadushin et al., 2009; Milne & Oliver, 2000; Noble et al., 2016; O'Donoghue, 2003). Individual supervision can be viewed as a one-on-one method between a supervisor and supervisee (DSD & SACSSP, 2012:35). This form of supervision is aimed at promoting the growth of the supervisee. Cooper (2006), Egan (2012), Hair (2013), Kadushin and Harkness (2014), Nguyen (2003), O'Donoghue (2003), and Tsui (2004a) establish that intentionally, individual supervision sessions are usually between one and one and half hours long. These individual supervision sessions often occur between weekly and six weekly sessions (Egan, 2012; Hair, 2013; Nguyen, 2003; O'Donoghue, 2003).

The Framework for Supervision in South Africa, (DSD & SACSSP, 2012:35) states that the supervisor and the supervisee determine the duration and the frequency of supervision based on the supervisee's level of experience, complexity of work and the number of hours spent on intervention. Prominent studies in supervision suggest that the individual supervision session mirrors that of a social work interview (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; O'Donoghue 2003; Tsui 2005). Moreover, Kadushin and Harkness (2002) refer to the individual supervision session as a dynamic process that has a beginning, middle and an end phase. According to Johnson and Yanca (2010:160), the beginning phase in any process is concerned with setting the tone for the supervision session between the supervisor and the supervisee. The middle phase is where the agenda of the session is presented and pursued. The end phase is characterised by summarizing and terminating the session.

2.6.2. Supervision activities

The concepts of coaching and mentoring have been increasingly used interchangeably with that of supervision in the present social work context (O'Donoghue, 2014; Tsui, O'Donoghue & Ng, 2014). This may be ascribed to the influences of managerialism as a result of neoliberal discourses (Engelbrecht, 2014). Nevertheless, the concepts of coaching and mentoring share subtle similarities with social work supervision, so much that they are now regarded as activities of supervision (Tsui, 2005:77). An exposition of

coaching and mentoring follows next, as these activities are characterised by its reflective nature, and link with the goal of this study.

2.6.2.1. Coaching

Coaching can be described as a professional, collaborative and outcomes-driven method of learning that seeks to develop an individual and raise self-awareness so that the person may achieve specific goals and perform more effectively (COMENSA, 2010). Coaching supervision is an emerging development in coaching practice (Grant, 2012). Conor and Pokora (2012) and Clutterbuck (2003) establish that coaching has a set duration, is short term, concrete and focused on precise and specific developmental areas. In a social work context, the core elements of coaching include provision of instruction, feedback and guidance of practice skills (Feltz, Chase, Moritz, & Sullivan, 1999; Perrault & Coleman, 2005). Moreover, coaching like social work supervision follows the same process which includes exploration of intervention experiences, reflection, linkage with formal knowledge and evaluation of responses (Perrault & Coleman, 2005).

2.6.2.2. Mentoring

Collins (1994) and Healy and Weichert (1990) defines mentoring as an interpersonal helping relationship between two individuals who are at different stages in terms of their professional development aimed at promoting the career development of both. Mentoring can also be viewed as a formal or informal transmission of knowledge, skills, attitudes, psychosocial support and professional development (DSD & SACSSP, 2012: 27). The mentor who is more professionally advanced, facilitates development and advancement of the mentee. The mentor carries this task out by serving as a source of social support beyond what is required on the basis of the professional relationship.

Cloete's research on the features and use of mentoring as an activity of supervision supports the extension of the supervisory relationship to include mentorship qualities. According to Cloete's (2012) investigation on the characteristics of mentoring as an activity of social work supervision, mentoring shares and follows the same processes, techniques and methods as supervision. Hence, this has led to the adaption of particular aspects (especially some tools and techniques) of coaching and mentoring sessions to

supervision in social work. Cloete (2012) postulates that coaching and mentoring like social work supervision are usually conducted in individual sessions.

2.6.3. Supervision sessions

Despite of the plethora of social work literature on supervision that has been published up to this present date, few social work studies have attempted to detail what takes place in supervision sessions (Mallinckrodt, 2011; O'Donoghue, 2014). Moreover, the number of studies about supervision published annually, according to Mallinckrodt (2011) has actually dropped. In spite of the dearth of literature on supervision sessions, a number of studies have attempted to describe and explain what these supervision sessions are and will be elucidated next.

Kadushin and Harkness (2002) describe the supervision session as a dynamic process that has three phases, a beginning, middle and end. The journey through these phases comprises of the supervisor and supervisee preparing for the session, the supervisor teaching and offering feedback to the supervisee and the session being summarized and brought to a conclusion by the supervisor with an eye towards the next meeting (O'Donoghue, 2014). Supervision sessions can be viewed as structured learning situations, which are executed according to a set agenda (Engelbrecht, 2014:148; DSD & SACSSP, 2012). For Shulman (2010), a supervision session comprises of four stages which are preliminary, beginning, middle, and ending and transition stages. A more detailed account of the dynamic process that takes place in the supervision session will be discussed in the next chapter.

Despite the above authors' differing views on what the supervision session pertains to, they all nonetheless suggest that supervision session mirrors the social work interview with the supervisee-supervisor interaction being described as being isomorphic or a parallel process to the client-worker interaction (Kadushin & Harkness 2002; Morrison 2005; Shulman 2010). In supervision sessions, the supervisor engages the supervisee in an interactive reflective problem solving process. O'Donoghue (2017) encourages social work practitioners to acknowledge social, cultural, ethnic differences in the supervisory relationship and in executing supervision sessions. Furthermore, he encourages to make use of techniques such as summarizing, questioning and listening in executing

supervision sessions (O'Donoghue, 2017). These techniques will however be discussed in full detail later in this study.

2.7. REFLECTION

Supervision sessions should make provision for the development of supervisee strengths and competencies by critical reflection. The concept of reflection has been muddled and ill-defined so much that it prompted, Cotton (2001:513) to remark that, "reflection can mean all things to all people". A plethora of terms are used interchangeably to represent the practice of reflection. For instance, reflection, critical reflection, reflective practice, reflective practitioner are common terms which one may constantly encounter in relevant literature (Cushion, 2016). The meaning of the prior mentioned terms however differs depending on the context they are used in, as well as how one chooses to define them (Hébert, 2015). The different terms are widely used, more often with absence of any real comprehension of what the different connotations on the terms really pertain to (Cropley, Hanton, Miles, Niven & Peel, 2010, 2012).

In keeping with the principles of a social developmental paradigm, Sicora (2017:8) describes reflection as a process towards a deeper understanding and awareness that continuously guides action and focused thought towards becoming a more competent professional in the interest of service users. In addition, this study will make use of and build on the conceptualizations of the concept of reflection by primary authors, such as Donald Schön (1983) and John Dewey (1933), which will be discussed next.

2.7.1. Roots of reflection

Authors interested in a historical approach to the development of reflective practice generally stretch back to the work of the philosopher, John Dewey (1933, 1938), who wrote in an inter-war period (Knott & Scragg, 2007). This study will articulate the work of the prior mentioned author and also revisit the work of the adult educationalist, Donald Schön (1983), who wrote about the reflective practitioner.

2.7.2. John Dewey: reflection as a chain fed by troubles

Dewey's (1933) view was that people only begin to reflect when there is a problem to be solved. Knott and Scragg (2007) attest to the sheer resemblance of the latter assertion to

present day social work. Dewey (1933) believed that thoughts could be defined as a chain and that the description of the genesis of reflective thought came from a state of unrest. A thought is everything that “goes through our heads”. Reflection however involves a consequence-consecutive ordering such that each determines the next as its outcome, while each in turn relies on its predecessor (Sicora, 2017). Reflective thought according to Dewey (1933:6) constitutes, “active, persistent and careful consideration of any beliefs or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support”.

Dewey (1933) believed that there are two processes involved in reflective operation. The first process being a state of perplexity, hesitation, mental difficulty and doubt. The second process involving an active search, hunt and inquiry aimed towards illuminating further facts, which serve to substantiate or invalidate the suggested belief. Dewey (1933) believed that the urge to find a solution and egress from the state of perplexity is the most powerful factor on which the process of reflection hinges on. For Dewey (1933), reflection is the continual re-evaluation of personal beliefs, assumptions and ideas in the light of experience and the generation of alternative interpretations of those experiences (Knott & Scragg 2007; Sicora, 2017).

2.7.3. Donald Schön: The reflective practitioner

Schön (1983) forwarded that there is a crisis of confidence in professional knowledge. This implies that knowledge and information gathered from a range of educational institutions serves only as a guide for professional action. Life situations however are unique and are from the descriptions provided by theory. Schön (1983) explains that social work among many professions, faces situations which are difficult to place into a predetermined scheme. Botha (2002), one of the pioneers of social work supervision in South Africa, also attests to this forwarding that the social work practice is unpredictable, non-standardized, imperceptible in nature and highly individualized. In addition, Schön (1983) established that applying some of the accredited rules and procedures vigorously, would give poor or no results. This is then the rationale behind the need to reflect on action and learn from it.

Schön (1983) advocated two types of reflection, namely reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action. Reflection-on-action involves recalling and describing what happened during a particular session. Reflection-in-action on the other hand, is a move to a fuller examination of the experience, making use of who, what, were, when, why and how type questions (Knott & Scragg 2007). The aim of this process is for the practitioner to search for and find meaning of given phenomena that are beyond the interpretation of the capability of technical rationality (Knott & Scragg 2007; Sicora, 2017).

2.8. REFLECTIVE SUPERVISION

Reflection and reflection theory can be operationalised in the supervision of social workers (Sicora, 2017). Reflective supervision is an approach to supervision that encourages focus on the content of the supervisor and the supervisee's work as well as asking both professionals to examine their respective reactions and processes as they relate to their experiences with service users (Franklin, 2011). Reflective supervision involves more than merely analyzing personal experiences and judgments. It also asks the supervisee to utilize reflection to influence practice (Knowles, Gilbourne, Borrie & Nevill, 2001; Knowles, Tyler, Gilbourne & Eubank, 2006; Taylor, Werthner, Culver & Callary, 2015; Scaife, 2010). Reflection necessitates looking back and determining how a particular point was reached. Honest reflection demands the courage to examine personal beliefs and challenge the assumptions and traditions underpinning beliefs (Mezirow & Associates, 2000; Rogers, 2001). Reflective supervision requires supervisors to form collaborative relationships with their supervisees that facilitate reflection and analysis throughout the supervision process (Parlakian, 2001).

Other than focusing on task or instructional models of supervision, reflective supervision promotes a collaborative and emotionally supportive atmosphere (Franklin, 2011). A study conducted by Gibbs (2001) on child protection workers concluded that the lack of emotional processing regarding the pressures of this particular field resulted in externalizing of blame to service users, high burn-out rates and low job satisfaction. Gibbs (2001) established that the supervisees sought a place to process the emotional content of their respective cases rather than the task aspects of these cases. Implicit to reflection is the concept of emotional intelligence.

2.8.1. Emotional intelligence

Gibbs (2001) forwards that one requires a certain level of emotional intelligence in order to be able to effectively reflect on one's own interactions with peers and service users. Salovey and Mayer (1980:189) define 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 actions. Morrison (2007:247) and Sicora (2017) suggest that utilisation of emotional intelligence is at the core of social work practice, influencing engagement, observation, assessment, decision making, planning and intervention and most importantly reflection. Despite the qualifications of social work practitioners, the ability to monitor one's feelings and emotions *inter alia*, mistakes in the delivery of social services are not uncommon.

2.8.2. Mistakes

In order for effective reflection to take place, Sicora (2017) establishes that a mistake would have to occur. Henderson, Holloway and Millar (2014) forward that making mistakes and "not knowing" are in fact necessary prerequisites for learning. A mistake according to Sicora (2017:44) is a reality of any human activity. Dillon (2003:14-15) regards a mistake as an attitude, behaviour, feeling, communication, response or strategy for work that fails to attain the stated purpose of a given attention. Building on Dewey's (1933) assertion of reflection as a chain fed by troubles, mistakes cultivate fruitful reflection. Mistakes produce negative emotions which in turn creates an urge to search and find answers in order to contain feelings of uneasiness (Sicora, 2017). For any professional, it is inevitable to lead a mistake free life.

Social workers have ethical ties and responsibilities towards their service users, and thus they cannot afford to make damaging mistakes (Sicora, 2017). Ethical dilemmas are common in social work. For instance, when faced with a decision to either remove a child or not. In many situations the borderline between what is right and what is wrong is controversial. Learning from mistakes is thus ethically important in order to uphold the "doing no harm" principle which according the most recent definition of social work (IFSW & IASSW, 2014) is one of the overarching principles of social work.

Maintaining the quality of one's practice therefore requires reflection. Intervention with service users can arouse strong emotions which if not contained and explored in supervision, can generate defence mechanisms which impact directly on interactions with service users (Sicora, 2017). Reflection is therefore critical for social workers in development, renewal, and self-correction of practice (Culver & Trudel, 2006; Cushion, Armour & Jones, 2003; Rodgers, 2001).

2.9.CONCLUSION

This chapter sought to provide an overview of supervision, reflection and reflective supervision. A social work supervision definition is context dependent and context specific. Social work in South Africa functions within a developmental paradigm. The goal of social work supervision is to deliver effective and efficient services to service users. This goal is operationalised through execution of administrative, educational and supportive functions in a supervision process. Due to neoliberalism and a resultant managerial inclination, social work has been diluted with particular concepts from mentoring and coaching.

The social work profession is unpredictable and non-standardized. This necessitates constant reflection on the practice. Reflection in the context of social work supervision can be considered as a process towards a deeper understanding that guides action towards being a competent practitioner. Mistakes are viewed as necessary and “normal” in order to facilitate the process of reflection. Reflective supervision can be considered as an approach to supervision that encourages focus on the content of the supervisor and supervisee's work as well as both the professional's reactions and processes as they relate to their experiences with service users. Reflection is fundamental for social workers in development, renewal and self-correction of practice.

The next chapter will explore the various tools and techniques, which a supervisor can utilize when executing individual reflective supervision sessions within the implementation phase of the supervision process.

Chapter 3

Tools and techniques for the execution of individual reflective supervision sessions in the implementation phase of the supervision process

3.1.INTRODUCTION

The second objective of this study aims to describe the tools and techniques for the execution of individual reflective supervision sessions in the implementation phase of the supervision process. This will enable the reader to comprehend the full spectrum of tools and techniques that can be made use of when conducting individual reflective supervision sessions. Conor and Pokora (2012) and Engelbrecht (2014) postulate that reflection tools can be used to develop the supervisees' insight and understanding in professional work-related matters. Engelbrecht (2014) suggests that reflection tools should be utilized under the guide of adult education principles. This chapter will explore and discuss the process of individual supervision within the implementation phase. Furthermore, this chapter will discuss various adult education principles which should guide the utilisation of different reflection tools and techniques associated with the execution of individual reflective supervision sessions.

3.2. SUPERVISION SESSIONS

In the previous chapter, it was established that the supervision session is a dynamic process that has three phases, a beginning, middle and end (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002; Henderson et al., 2014; Page & Woskett, 2001). Furthermore, it was established that the journey through these phases comprises of the supervisor and supervisee preparing for the session, the supervisor teaching and offering feedback to the supervisee and the session being summarized and brought to a conclusion by the supervisor with an eye towards the next meeting (O'Donoghue, 2014). The views of Shulman (2010) who suggests that each individual supervision session consists four significant stages, which are preliminary, beginning, middle and ending and transition stages, will be discussed.

According to Shulman (2010), the preliminary and beginning stages involve the supervisor and the supervisee tuning into the process of supervision, creating a work alliance and a contract for the session. The middle phase of the supervision session is

where the subject matter is discussed and explored (Shulman, 2010). The ending and transition phase involve both the supervisor and the supervisee reviewing and concluding the supervision session.

In a study conducted by O'Donoghue (2014), he established that there are five stages involved in each individual supervision session which are preparation, beginning, planning, working and ending. The preparation stage involves the supervisee making a list of recurring issues that warrant discussion with the supervisor as well reflecting on one's self before meeting the supervisor (Henderson et al., 2014; O'Donoghue, 2014). The preparation stage suggested by O'Donoghue (2014) shares similar characteristics as the preliminary stage suggested by Shulman (2010). The beginning stage involves social engagement and orientation to the supervision session at hand (O'Donoghue, 2014). Social engagement or in Johnson and Yanca's (2010) view, climate setting, has three dimensions which are empathy, genuineness and non-possessive warmth. Empathy involves understanding the supervisee intellectually, culturally and emotionally (Hepworth, Rooney, Rooney & Storm-Gottfried, 2013; Johnson & Yanca, 2010). Genuineness refers to the synchronicity of the supervisor's verbal, non-verbal and behavioural expressions whilst non-possessive warmth refers to the capacity to communicate concern to the supervisees, which allows them to have both negative and positive feelings and feel worthwhile (Johnson & Yanca, 2010; Rogers, 1961).

The three prior mentioned dimensions of climate setting allow for the building of a supervisory relationship between the supervisor and the supervisee, which is itself a fundamental factor in any process of reflection (Noble et al., 2016). Orientation in the beginning stage focuses on the interaction between the supervisor and the supervisee to the subject matter that warranted the supervision session. The planning stage involves setting the agenda, identifying key areas of discussion for the supervision session and ordering them in terms of priority (Shulman, 2010; O'Donoghue, 2014). The supervisee informs the supervisor of the list of issues emanating from service delivery and personal issues, and both practitioners mutually order these issues in terms of priority. The working stage involves working through identified issues, mutually exploring and discussing solutions to the respective issues (Henderson et al., 2014; O'Donoghue, 2014).

The ending stage involves summarizing and reviewing what occurred during the session, and planning for the next meeting (Henderson et al., 2014; O'Donoghue, 2014). The supervisor highlights the main talking points of the meeting and re-iterates respective conclusions or the way forward. Both practitioners then plan for the next supervision session, establishing a meeting time and date as well as an agenda (O'Donoghue, 2014). Overall, as was established earlier, the process followed in supervision sessions parallels the social work interview in terms of structure or format and the interaction between practitioners (Bogo, 2006; Kadushin, 1997; Shulman, 2010). It is fundamental to note that supervision sessions should be executed based on the supervisees personal development plan.

3.2.1. Personal development plan

A personal development plan is tool that indicates learning needs in order of priority based on a personal development assessment of the supervisee (Engelbrecht, 2014; Mittendorff, Jochems, Meijers & Brok, 2008). The personal development plan defines what the supervisee will learn, how this learning will take place in the supervision session as well as well as how it will be assessed (Engelbrecht, 2014). All supervisees should have developmental plans designed to meet their respective needs, owing to the fact that supervision sessions among other things should make provision for the development of strengths and competencies of the supervisee (Franklin, 2011). Outcomes of supervision sessions based on the personal development plan of the supervisee should be articulated in supervision reports.

3.2.2. Report writing

Supervision reports capture the supervisee and the supervisor's reflections on the outcomes of a particular supervision session (Tsui, 2005). Engelbrecht (2014) describes supervision reports on supervision sessions as evidence-based information sources with the end purpose of achieving specific outcomes. Moreover, he forwards that supervision reports should show factual objectivity, logic, inter alia, corresponding with the supervisee's personal development plan.

3.3. ADULT EDUCATION PRINCIPLES

Intrinsic to the process of executing supervision sessions are adult education principles. Adult education principles are based on the primary work of Knowles (1971). Knowles (1971:39) distinguished between four underlying premises in relation to adult education. He forwards that as person matures, his self-concept moves from having a dependant personality to being self-directing; he accumulates a growing reservoir of experience that becomes an increasing resource of learning. Furthermore, the person's readiness to learn becomes oriented to developmental tasks of his social roles and his perspective moves from postponed application of knowledge to immediacy and his orientation becomes problem-centred other than being subject-centred. These principles were adapted to fit social work supervision by authors such as Coulshed (1993), Kadushin and Harkness (2002), Ingalls (1973), and Memmott and Brennan (1998).

Consequently, Botha (2000) suggests that the adult's self-concept changes from being dependent to autonomous and they now determine to a large extent their own activities. In light of the education function of supervision, this then means that the educational climate should be supportive and co-operative and that adults should feel accepted and respected. Primary authors like Austin (1981), Engelbrecht (2014), Kadushin (1992), Hilgard and Bower (1975), Noble et al. (2016) and Wilson (1981) describe various learning principles and techniques that when utilized selectively in accordance with the adult's needs, will result in successful education and eventually in effective service delivery.

Summarily, the following are the more important points of departure to use in line with adult education. Supervisors should keep in mind that supervisees are autonomous and self-directed, that they want to exercise choice and learn best when they are motivated and enthusiastic (Engelbrecht, 2014; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014). This means that the supervisor should explain the usefulness of the content to be taught to the supervisee. Supervisors owe supervisees some explanation as to why it might be important for them to know the material being taught. Wilson (1981) asserts that the motivation for learning by the supervisee increases as usefulness of the content becomes clear. For instance, the supervisee may be highly motivated to help the service user but indifferent to the

content the supervisor is attempting to teach e.g. family counselling (Worthen & Lambert, 2007). The supervisor can then demonstrate that family counselling outcomes permits the supervisee to be more helpful to the respective service users, which may consequently motivate the supervisee to be motivated to learn ways to do it (Worthen & Lambert, 2007).

Engelbrecht (2014), Kadushin (1992), and Kadushin and Harkness (2014), suggest that supervisees have accumulated a foundation of life experiences, knowledge, skills and values which they want to be acknowledged, respected and included in their learning experience. This implies that the supervisor should encourage the supervisee's participation in agenda planning as well as in planning the agenda for the supervisory sessions (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014). Consequently, this ensures the supervisee's active involvement in the learning process. Moreover, it increases the probability that content of primary interest and concern to the supervisee will be discussed. The supervisor can ensure greater active involvement of the supervisee in learning by encouraging and providing opportunity for the supervisee to question, discuss, object and express doubt (Austin, 1981; Kadushin, 1991; Wilson, 1981).

Engelbrecht (2014) suggests that supervisees learn best when they enjoy the learning process, learning material and learning methods. In keeping with this, the supervisor should praise professional accomplishments of the supervisee. Praise, according to the primary work of Skinner (1938) is a psychic reward that reinforces the behaviour that prompted the commendation. Kadushin and Harkness (2014) caution against giving indiscriminate praise as this might result in the supervisor losing credibility in the supervisee's eyes. The supervisor should thus praise through positive feedback. Such reinforcement is most effective if offered while the learning situation to which it applies is still fresh and vivid (Evans & Wolfson, 2006).

Supervisees are relevancy oriented and must see a reason and usefulness for learning something (Engelbrecht, 2014). Supervisors should therefore select content that interests supervisees as they want to know what will help them to deal with the problems they are having with a given service user. The supervisor should present content within a theoretical framework (Kadushin, 1991). Content is meaningfully presented if it fits into

some general theoretical framework. For instance, in social work, the subject matter is people, supervisees thus require a cognitive map that makes sense of why people do what they do in the way they do it (Kadushin, 1991; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014).

Supervisee's are goal oriented, set their own goals and learning pace and know what, when and how they want the learning to take place (Engelbrecht, 2014). The supervisor should thus consider the supervisee's pace of learning and individualize teaching according to differences in the pace of learning. Kadushin and Harkness (2014) suggest that being asked to absorb too much, too quickly, threatens internal coherence and stability which might lead to early burn-out of the supervisee.

Though discussed separately, the various adult education principles discussed above should be taken account of in an integrated manner in supervision and should accommodate the supervisee's learning styles. It is fundamental to take into consideration the learning styles of different supervisees as primarily identified by Kolb (1973) in facilitating reflective supervision.

3.3.1. Learning styles

In order to individualize social workers, the different learning styles and learning abilities of each social worker should be considered (Botha, 2000). Rosenberg (1973) described a learning style as an individual's characteristic pattern of behaviour when confronted with a problem. Botha (2000) established that there is a positive correlation between the maturity of the social worker and the type of learning style. The more mature and developed the social worker is the greater the need for an independent learning style. Learning styles in supervision are usually based on the primary work of Kolb (1973) though a myriad of literature on learning styles can be distinguished. Austin (1981), Dublin (1989), Engelbrecht (2002), Kadushin (1992), Munson (1983), and Rogers and McDonald (1995) differentiate between a variety of individual learning styles of social workers.

Kolb's (1973) model of learning preferences can be interpreted in a supervision context as follows. There are convergers who prefer practical applications; divergers who prefer seeing things from different perspectives; assimilators who prefer abstract conceptualizations and theoretical models and accommodators who prefer to engage

actively with the world and reality. Fleming and Mills' (1992) VARK model depict learning styles in terms of Visual, Auditory, Read-writing preferences and Kinaesthetic learners. In addition, the Reichmann's Learning Style Scale alternatively typifies learners as avoidant, participative, competitive, collaborative, dependent or independent. Although these examples are expositions of just some of the adult learning styles available, adult education principles are always facilitating and substantiating the understanding and managing of learning blocks of adult learners through acknowledging how different supervisee's learn.

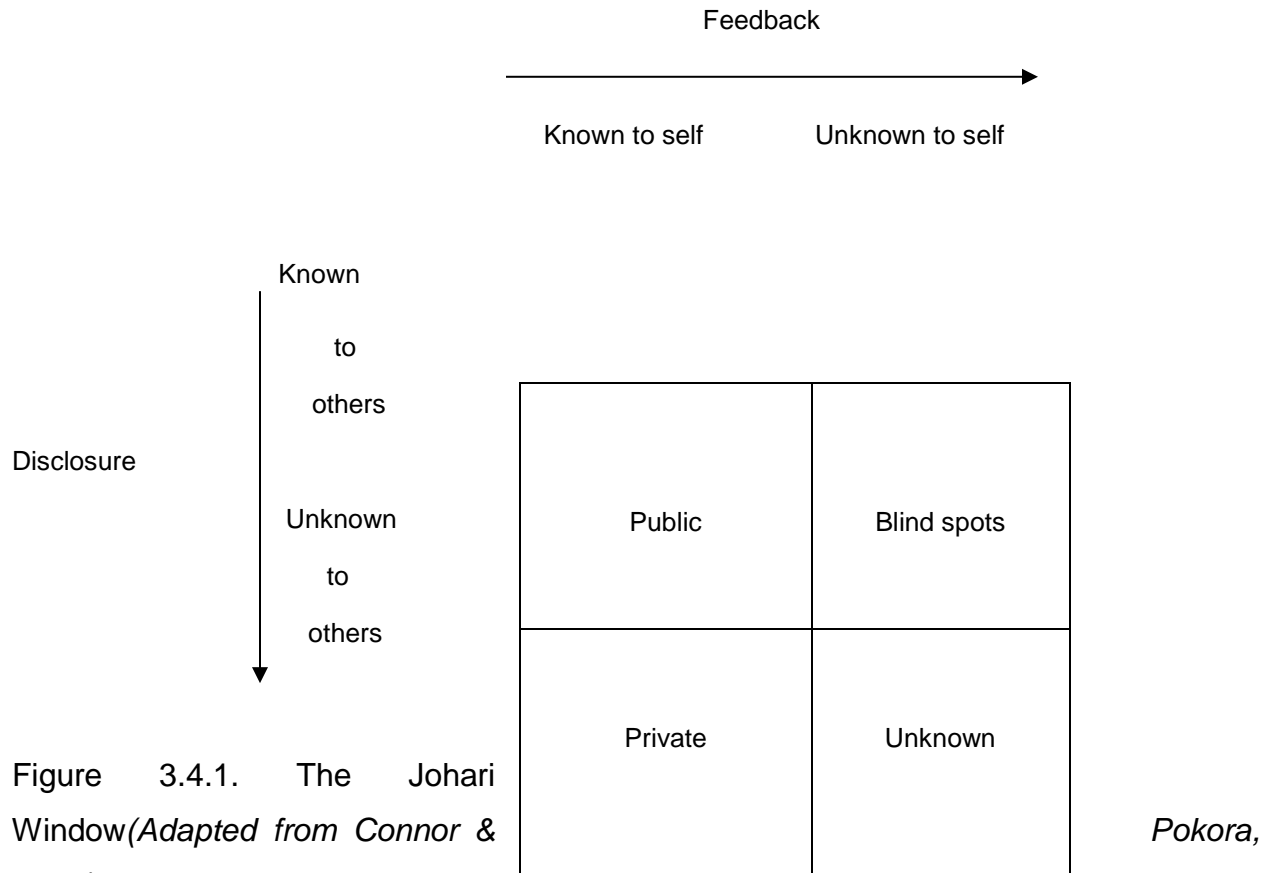
3.4. REFLECTION TOOLS

As indicated in the introduction to this chapter, Connor and Pokora (2012) and Engelbrecht (2014) postulate that reflection tools can be used to develop the supervisees' insight and understanding in professional work related matters. The following section will now explore selected reflection tools that the supervisor can make use of during the execution of individual reflective supervision sessions. The reflection tools that will be explored seem to fit the context of supervision in South Africa and the principles of a social development paradigm (Engelbrecht, 2014). The Johari Window, Transactional Analysis, The Karpman Drama Triangle, Brainstorming, Visualization and Role Reversal are presented as mere relevant examples of reflection tools fitting the context of supervision in South Africa based on the work of Connor and Pokora (2012), thus they are not offered as an exhaustive list of tools.

3.4.1. The Johari Window

The Johari Window is a tool for increasing a person's self-awareness and understanding of how they interact with others (Connor & Pokora, 2012, Luft & Ingham, 1955). In the context of supervision, this is a reflection tool utilized to enhance supervisees' awareness of themselves in order to help them understand the impact of self-awareness and disclosure on how they deliver social services (Engelbrecht, 2014). The window which represents a person, has four quadrants (Luft, 1970). Each quadrant represents an element of personal awareness. The public quadrant represents what is known by a person about themselves and which others also know about them. The blindspots quadrant represents things a person is not aware of about themselves, although known

to others. The private quadrant stands for things a person knows about themselves which they do not reveal to others. The unknown quadrant represents things about a person that are unknown both to themselves and to others. See Figure 3.4.1.



It is important to note that quadrants can change overtime and in different situations (Connor & Pokora, 2012; Engelbrecht, 2014). For instance, when supervisees seek information by asking for feedback, the size of their public quadrant increases whilst that of the blindspot decreases. The Johari Window can thus help supervisees to reflect upon how they see themselves in relation to service users as well how they communicate with them (Engelbrecht, 2014; Saxena, 2015; Verklan, 2007). The prior mentioned reflection tool can encourage supervisees to consider for instance in light of the blindspot if there is any mismatch between their view of themselves and how service users, fellow professionals inter alia, see them.

The Johari Window is operationalised by inviting a supervisee to draw their window and discuss in as much detail as they wish about each quadrant and the links between the quadrants (Connor & Pokora, 2012; Engelbrecht, 2014; Luft & Ingham, 1955). Supervisees can further discuss changes they would like to make in the relative sizes of the quadrants. The supervisor needs to explain the Johari Window and prompt each supervisee to consider the relative sizes of each quadrant and their contents (Connor & Pokora, 2012). Consequently, this assists supervisees in increasing their self-awareness and how they deliver social services. Despite the insight that can be gathered from making use of this reflection tool, supervisors should bear in mind that there exists a risk of inappropriate disclosure which might not fit the boundaries of supervision (Connor & Pokora, 2012; Engelbrecht, 2014).

3.4.2. Transactional analysis

Transactional analysis is a way of understanding a relationship by looking at the transactions between people (Berne, 1972; Connor & Pokora, 2012; Solomon, 2003). The theory states that in any communication with another person we may operate from any of three ego states: parent, adult or child (Connor & Pokora, 2012; Erskine, 2003; O'Reilly-Knapp & Solomon, 2003). The supervisor can use this reflection tool to help the supervisee understand why certain relationships will work whilst others will not work (Engelbrecht, 2014; Tudor, 2002). The transactional analysis tool illustrates that patterns of interaction that are self-limiting can be perpetuated in any professional relationship (Connor & Pokora, 2012, Solomon, 2003). Hence, this reflection tool can then be used to indicate patterns of interaction that are self-limiting and alternatively, practise different responses which make both professionals understand each other (Connor & Pokora, 2012; Erskine, 2003; O'Reilly-Knapp & Solomon, 2003). It is important to note that specific situations trigger relapse to certain patterns of behaviour and ways of thinking. To change the respective behaviour, insight is required into these patterns and one needs to want to change them (Engelbrecht, 2014).

Each person is able to operate or move between ego states in any transaction (Connor & Pokora, 2012, Solomon, 2003). If person A is operating from a parent state it may induce in person B the child state. In a parent state, a person can either be nurturing or

critical (Connor & Pokora, 2012; Engelbrecht, 2014, Solomon, 2003; Tudor, 2002). In both cases, the interaction between person A and person B does not allow for the autonomy of an 'adult' transaction in the other person. The manner in which person A interacts with person B, may produce in person B, a 'child' response either overly adaptive and conforming or rebellious. A certain comment can trigger a certain reaction in line with the prior mentioned ego states. For instance a difficult supervisee can trigger a 'critical parent' in a supervisor. The task is to help the supervisee to be aware of what is happening and to practice different responses which are not self-limiting. See Figure 3.4.2.

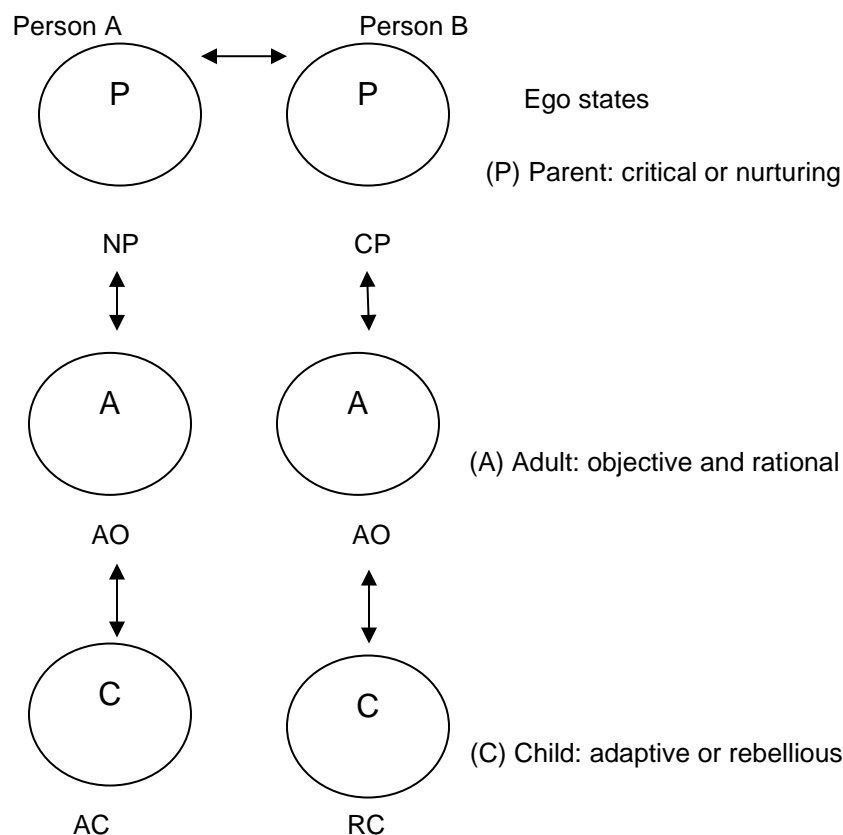


Figure 3.4.2. Transactional Analysis (Adapted from Connor & Pokora, 2012)

When using this reflection tool, the supervisor needs to be able to actively listen and identify recurring themes from the interaction with the supervisee as well as be able to explain the parent, adult and child ego states (Connor & Pokora, 2012). Transactional Analysis is a quick way of helping supervisees to make small changes in behaviour that can produce different ways of communicating with respective service users (Connor &

Pokora, 2012; O'Reilly-Knapp & Erskine, 2003). Insights gathered from understanding transactions in given relationships can be used in individual, group and social interactions. Supervisors should be aware that when making use of this reflection tool, supervisees may develop insight into interaction patterns but be unable to change them in a short period of time (Connor & Pokora, 2012; Solomon, 2003). Consequently, the respective supervisees may require counselling in order to manage any stress or discomfort that may rise due to the inability to change given interactional patterns (Connor & Pokora, 2012).

3.4.3. The Karpman Drama Triangle

The Karpman Triangle is another way of looking at interactions between people (Karpman, 1968). The Karpman Triangle describes a set of unhelpful interactional patterns that can occur in a professional relationship (Connor & Pokora, 2012). There are three roles which are associated with this reflection tool, which are prosecutor, rescuer and victim. These roles refer to different states of mind. Moreover, the roles are also interdependent, which implies that when one person breaks out of an established pattern of interaction, the other roles consequently change (Connor & Pokora, 2012; Engelbrecht, 2014). See Figure 3.4.3.

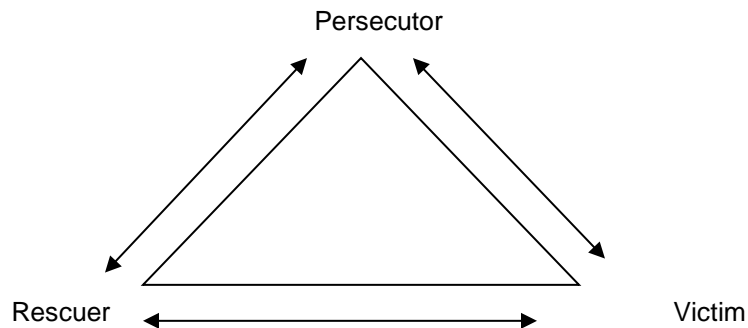


Figure 3.4.3. The Karpman Triangle (*Adapted from Connor & Pokora, 2012*)

This reflection tool can help supervisors and supervisees to become more aware of patterns of interaction that they may unknowingly fall into, limiting their behaviour and their potential in line with conducting effective supervision sessions (Connor & Pokora, 2012; Engelbrecht, 2014). The supervisee can notice and come to the realization that, in a particular context which proves to be rather challenging, they are habitually stuck in a

role, and respond to the supervisor in a predictable way (Condon, 2014; Connor & Pokora, 2012). Supervisees may discover that they interpret experiences through a particular role, essentially making it a self-fulfilling prophecy (Connor & Pokora, 2012). For instance, supervisees may have a pattern of feeling helpless and powerless ("victim") and looking to the supervisor to help them ("rescuer"). In other instances, supervisees may view themselves as left out of important decisions or blamed by "the prosecutor". The supervisor should thus challenge the victim mentality in order to help the supervisee to reclaim their personal power and become more assertive as a professional (Connor & Pokora, 2012).

Connor and Pokora (2012) suggest that supervisors should carefully time when to make use of the Karpman Drama Triangle. Untimely, the use of this reflection tool can catch supervisees off guard making the already difficult task of changing established unhealthy patterns of interaction more challenging (Connor & Pokora, 2012; Engelbrecht, 2014). Moreover, supervisors should exercise great caution and sensitivity, balancing support and challenge when executing the Karpman Drama Triangle in order to assist supervisees in liberating them from old internalized behaviour patterns of interaction which often interfere with effective delivery of social services (Condon, 2014; Connor & Pokora, 2012). Supervisors should be aware that established patterns of interaction or scripts can play out in the supervision session.

3.4.4. Brainstorming

Brainstorming can be regarded as a technique that facilitates creativity and lateral thinking by stimulating the creative right hemisphere of the human brain (Connor & Pokora, 2012; Krone, 2017). It focuses on the future and possibilities, other than current reality and present facts at hand. The supervisor can use the brainstorming tool to help the supervisee describe their ideal future in relation to some aspect of the present situation (MacLennan, 2017). When utilizing this reflection tool, the supervisor explains the process of brainstorming whilst creating the conditions for successful brainstorming (Connor & Pokora, 2012). Krone (2017) suggests that when using brainstorming, it is handy to categorize concepts into groups, then brainstorm within each group separately. For instance, the supervisee may brainstorm on only the mechanical solutions to a given

problem, then all biological, chemical solutions, all the while limiting one's self to the solutions that can be achieved by those means. Consequently, reviewing solutions systematically assists in reducing the chances of getting to solutions that are short sighted (Krone, 2017).

Botha (2002) establishes that social work practice is unpredictable. Given this instability of the social work profession, brainstorming is an effective way of encouraging supervisees to overcome problems and blocks which could not have been possibly anticipated. Moreover, brainstorming can help supervisees to reframe their ideas and think laterally and to access the elements of the future which in turn partially liberate them from their respective present reality (Conor & Pokora, 2012). Krone (2017) and Connor and Pokora (2012) caution against leaving supervisees high and dry in the face of a gap between their ideal reality and their present reality. It is therefore fundamental that supervisors balance support and challenge in order to avoid leaving supervisees hopeless.

3.4.5. Visualization

Visualization or guided imagery is a way of helping the supervisee to envisage an ideal future (Brouziyne & Molinaro, 2005; Conor & Pokora, 2012). It is an alternative to brainstorming which was discussed in the previous section. Visualization can be used by the supervisor when the supervisee seems to be stuck in a particular situation (MacLennan, 2017). When utilizing this reflection tool, Brouziyne and Molinaro (2005), Conor and Pokora (2012), and Krone (2017), suggest that the supervisor should explain the process to the supervisee and ask to see if they will find it helpful. Supervisors should utilize visualization by inviting the supervisees to make sure they are comfortable and then to close their eyes and relax (Conor & Pokora, 2012). The supervisee is then urged to imagine his or her ideal future. When the supervisee has built a complete picture, the supervisor asks him or her to keep their eyes closed. The supervisor then guides the supervisee from relaxation and begin debriefing the visualization.

The visualization exercise should lead to a critique of what will be realistic from fantasy in order to shape it into a goal (Conor & Pokora, 2012; MacLennan, 2017). When utilizing the visualization tool, the supervisor should appear relaxed and calm in order to foster

these attributes into the supervisee (Brouziyne & Molinaro, 2005). The process should be explained clearly and the supervisee should be asked if they would like to take part in the activity. As with brainstorming, appropriate timing and debriefing is fundamental in order to avoid leaving supervisees hopeless. Supervisors should keep in mind that some supervisees may find imaginative work difficult.

3.4.6. Role-reversal

The supervisor utilizes role-reversal as an opportunity for the supervisee to develop new perspectives on a problem by role-playing it (Conor & Pokora, 2012). As prior mentioned, Botha (2002) forwards that the social work practice is highly unpredictable and often supervisees encounter situations which are difficult to manage. Role reversal is useful in these situations in order to facilitate the development of new perspectives by the supervisee and to challenge blind spots in light of a given conundrum. Conor & Pokora (2012) suggest that when executing this reflection tool, the supervisor asks the supervisee to describe a typical scenario with a person X, where there has been difficulty. The supervisor then role-plays the scenario with the supervisee. The supervisor then debriefs the play, and checking what the supervisee has learned. It is fundamental that the play should be re-run, shuffling roles, and trying out different responses in order for the supervisee to be able to empathise with the person X (Conor & Pokora, 2012).

The supervisor requires role playing skills such as the ability to give clear instructions, assuming different roles as the situation demands and sensitivity. This reflection tool is a quick way of creating a frame of reference regarding what goes on in a difficult situation (Conor & Pokora, 2012). This reflection tool should be used sparingly as role reversal can evoke unpleasant emotions which might affect future interaction between the supervisor and the supervisee.

3.5. TECHNIQUES

Questions and narratives, feedback, active listening, exploration, summarizing, paraphrasing, reflection of feeling and interpretation are presented as examples of techniques that can be utilized in the execution of individual reflective supervision sessions. The prior mentioned techniques are common in the execution of social work interviews, hence this is presented within the context of supervision. It was established

earlier that the supervision session structure parallels the social work interview (Bogo, 2006; Kadushin, 1997; Shulman, 2010). With the necessary moderations, techniques utilized in social work interviews can be made use of in supervision sessions (Bogo, 2006; O'Donoghue, 2014).

3.5.1. Questions and narratives

The role of questions is important in any process of reflection (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; Pines, 2000; Sicora, 2017). The choice of appropriate questions is fundamental in order to orientate the eye of the mind in the most fruitful direction and consequently bring the person's attention to some selected and crucial aspects of the event under scrutiny (Sicora, 2017). Questioning is an important technique the supervisor can make use of in executing reflective supervision sessions (Pines, 2000; Veeneman & Denessen, 2001). Asking useful questions and proceeding with a discussion prompts the supervisee to think further and deeper and to draw from their own inner knowledge.

3.5.1.1. Open and closed questions

Open questions are questions that cannot be answered with a neither a 'yes' nor a 'no' (Johnson & Yanca, 2010). Open questions give the supervisees the responsibility and opportunity of selecting their answers from a large number of possible responses. Closed questions on the other hand are questions that restrict the scope of the answer a supervisee can offer (Johnson & Yanca, 2010). Supervisors utilize these questions in order to make provision for a greater clarity and focus when conducting supervision sessions. They help to narrow the scope of the interview and limit production of superfluous and irrelevant content by supervisees who talk a lot.

3.5.1.2. Probe questions

Probe questions are successive approximations to the detail supervisors need or require in order to be helpful to the supervisee (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014). Probing by the supervisor ensures that significant but general statements are not accepted. Moreover, probe questions seeking additional, more precise information, may be necessary because the initial response provided by the supervisee is inadequate, blurred or incoherent with information that may have been offered previously (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014).

3.5.1.3.Guidelines in question formulation

The best questions when conducting reflective supervision are those that arise purely and almost spontaneously out of the interaction between the supervisor and the supervisee (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; Pines, 2000; Sicora, 2017; Veeneman & Denessen, 2001). The interaction between the supervisor and the supervisee should be responsive to stimuli emanating from the discussion. Facts and feelings should not be actively sought after as much as they are permitted to emerge (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; Pines, 2000; Sicora, 2017; Veeneman & Denessen, 2001). Consequently, this shows that the supervisor is following the supervisee and listening attentively.

Corey, Corey and Corey (2014), Johnson and Yanca (2010), Kadushin and Harkness (2014), Pines (2000), and Sicora (2017) discuss various pointers when formulating questions. Summarily, according to the prior mentioned primary authors, the following are important points to consider when utilizing the questioning technique when conducting reflective supervision. Questions should be clearly phrased and focused; they should be phrased with regard to the supervisee's frame of reference and vocabulary level and the social psychological accessibility of content. In addition, supervisors should be convinced of their prerogative to information and communicate a sense of confident expectation that the supervisee will respond to the question rather than being hesitant or apologetic.

Many authors caution that the questioning technique should be used sparingly (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; Pines, 2000; Sicora, 2017; Veeneman & Denessen, 2001). Reflective supervision sessions that overly focus on a question-answer format tend to reflect a relationship between the supervisor and the supervisee that contradicts the required cooperative and mutually participative kind of relationship.

3.5.2. Feedback

Feedback is an important technique that the supervisor can use when conducting reflective supervision sessions. A myriad of literature discusses various guidelines that supervisors among other social service professionals should use in order to provide effective and efficient feedback. Evans and Wolfson (2006), Freeman (1985), Henderson et al. (2014), Kadushin (1992), Latting (1992), Sicora (2017), and Veloski, Boex, Grasberger, Wheeler and Richards (2007) for example, established that feedback should

take place systematically, following the interaction between two professionals in order to make it more objective, precise and consequent. The prior mentioned primary authors forward that such kind of feedback is more reliable and not subject to prejudices. In addition, feedback should be effected as soon as possible after the action is completed as it enhances the social worker's motivational level and interest in learning (Evans & Wolfson, 2006; Hawkins & Shohet, 2006; Sicora, 2017; Wheeler & Richards, 2007).

When giving feedback the supervisor should be specific in order for the supervisee to understand it. Vague or general remarks from the supervisor do not make provision of enlightenment (Evans & Wolfson, 2006; Hawkins & Shohet, 2006; Kadushin, 1992; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014). Kadushin and Harkness (2014) establish that feedback should be offered in a constructive and descriptive manner. As such, feedback given by the supervisor should be directed to the performance of the supervisee as a social worker and not as a person. Feedback is arguably by far, more valuable when presented as an alternative consideration other than as a final resort. Botha (2002) asserts that when feedback is offered in such a manner, it upholds the cooperative and mutually participative relationship which is keeping with the standards that social work in South Africa strives for. Furthermore, Botha (2000) suggests that the importance of feedback is that it should keep the change process dynamic, relevant and reciprocal.

3.5.3. Active Listening

Active listening is a social work interview technique that enables service users to feel understood and heard (Johnson & Yanca, 2010). With respect to reflective supervision, active listening according to Cournoyer (2013) involves a combined act of talking and listening skills to show the supervisee that the supervisor is an active and collaborative professional. Moreover, active listening conveys empathy and sensitivity which as discussed earlier, is fundamental in conducting reflective supervision. The active listening technique, requires supervisors to utilize mirroring techniques in order to summarize and reflect back to the supervisee what they are saying. Cournoyer (2013) suggests that responses tailored to what the supervisee is saying demonstrate that the supervisor is indeed listening and engaged in the interaction at hand.

3.5.4. Exploration

Exploration is a technique that shares similar characteristics with probe questioning or clarification. According to the primary author Thomas (1960), the supervisor utilizes the exploration technique if he or she is unsure as to why a supervisee emphasizes a particular aspect of a given subject of discussion. The process of reflecting on one's experiences whilst interacting with service users requires both the supervisee and the supervisor to explore aspects that seem to recur during the supervision session. This exploration can be done through questioning and interpreting a given subject matter. Consequently, the supervisee develops insight into the given subject matter.

3.5.5. Summarizing

Summarizing is a technique where the supervisor restates the main ideas recurring in a reflective supervision session to the supervisee in as minimal words as possible (Marzano, Pickering & Pollock, 2001). The summarizing technique enables the supervisor to pull together key ideas and themes regarding the most important aspects of the supervisee's issues and provides focus and continuity to the reflective supervision session (Johnson & Yanca, 2010; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; Marzano, Pickering & Pollock, 2001). The restating of main ideas recurring in the reflective supervision session communicates to the supervisee that the supervisor is actively listening which in turn facilitates trust, allowing for effective reflection to take place.

3.5.6. Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing involves the use of new words to restate the supervisee's message clearly and concisely (Hepworth et al., 2013). The paraphrasing technique focuses more on the content and cognitive portion of the supervisee's message rather than feelings (Hepworth et al., 2013). The supervisor stresses the content of the message as a way of communicating understanding as well as ascertaining clarity of what the supervisee is trying to say. Research on the use of paraphrasing in a social work interview, which shares similar traits with a reflective supervision session, confirms that paraphrasing assists supervisees with developing new insights by simply hearing back a subject matter (Marzano, Pickering & Pollock, 2001). Hence, the use of paraphrasing by the supervisor

during reflective supervision sessions, may well assist the supervisee to develop new insights which is part of the reflection process.

3.5.7. Reflection of feeling

Reflecting on feelings can be viewed as repeating or rephrasing a supervisee's message, explicitly identifying the supervisee's feelings (Hepworth et al., 2013; Johnson & Yanca, 2010). As discussed earlier, reflecting on one's practice and interaction with service users can produce strong emotions which require effective management. The supervisor reflects on feelings that the supervisee may have stated or may need to infer the feelings from the supervisee's non-verbal behaviour and content in the supervisee's message as well the context (Hepworth et al., 2013). The process of reflecting on feelings leads to the establishment of empathy and understanding between both the supervisee and the supervisor.

3.5.8. Interpretation

Interpretation is a technique that allows for the supervisee to further probe for more information on a given subject matter (Hepworth et al., 2013). The supervisor should caution against using this technique prematurely and jump into uninformed conclusions or making connections that are not related (Hepworth et al., 2013). Hence, this technique should be utilized when the supervisor has gathered sufficient information on a given subject matter. Interpretation facilitates the process of reflection in that the supervisor makes connections that might not have seemed clear to the supervisee, providing the supervisee with an alternative view on the respective subject matter.

3.6. CONCLUSION

This chapter sought to discuss the process of individual supervision sessions within the implementation phase, adult education principles, various reflection tools and techniques all associated with the execution of individual reflective supervision sessions. Various authors have differing views on the structure and process of individual supervision sessions. The individual supervision session parallels the social work interview which consists a beginning, middle and an end phase. The supervisor and supervisee tune in and establish the agenda of the supervision session in the beginning phase. Both

practitioners work through identified issues and conclude them in the middle and end phase respectively.

In executing individual reflective supervision sessions, supervisors have an array of reflection tools they can choose from. Each reflection tool requires particular skills unique to it as well as guidelines which if followed correctly yield positive results. Apart from reflection tools, supervisors can also aid the execution of individual reflective supervision sessions by utilizing various techniques. Reflection tools and techniques should be executed within the ambit of adult education principles, all the while observing and acknowledging that supervisees have different learning styles.

Chapter 4

Empirical study on the experiences of intermediate frontline social workers with regard to the execution of individual reflective supervision sessions

4.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter relates to the third objective of this study which is to empirically investigate social workers' experiences regarding the execution of individual reflective supervision sessions. Chapter one provided a concise literature background on this research topic by exploring what supervision is and consequently establishing a goal for the research study. The goal of the research study is to understand the experiences of intermediate frontline social workers regarding the execution of individual reflective supervision sessions. Chapter two built on the background of this study by constructing a conceptual theoretical framework for individual reflective supervision. Fundamental points of departure in chapter two included establishing how social work in South Africa functions within a developmental paradigm. Another important point of departure established was how constant reflection is necessary when practicing social work due to the unpredictability and non-standardized nature of the profession.

Chapter three expanded on the research topic by exploring the supervision session in detail and articulating various reflection tools and techniques that can be utilized for the execution of reflective supervision sessions. Furthermore, it was established that these tools and techniques should be executed under the guide of adult education principles inter alia. This chapter will present the findings on the experiences of intermediate frontline social workers with regard to the execution of individual reflective supervision sessions. The findings will be presented in the form of graphs, tables, themes and sub-themes where applicable.

Section A

This section serves to provide a concise reflection on the research methodology that was utilized for this research, in order to contribute towards a coherent grasp on the research methodology. The research methodology was discussed in more detail in chapter one.

4.2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section will discuss the research approach, research design, sampling methods, data collection and data analysis employed in this research study.

4.2.1. Research approach

The research approach utilized in this study was qualitative. De Vos et al. (2011:65) forward that qualitative research in its broadest sense refers to research that motivates participants' accounts of meaning, experience or perceptions. The prior mentioned approach was selected because the research study sought to find out and understand how intermediate frontline social workers experienced the execution of individual reflective supervision. Consequently, making use of the qualitative approach resulted in in-depth descriptions by participants about their diverse experiences in regard to how individual supervision sessions are executed.

4.2.2. Research design

The research design for this study was exploratory and descriptive. A descriptive research design according to Kreuger and Neuman (2006:23) presents a picture of the specific details of a situation or a social setting and focuses on "how" and "why" questions. An exploratory research is used to further and supplement descriptive research (Kreuger & Neuman, 2006:23). Descriptive and exploratory designs were utilized in order to gather as much information as possible from the intermediate frontline social workers. Exploratory and descriptive designs were further used in order to probe for in-depth information as the variables of experiences of intermediate frontline social workers and the execution of individual reflective supervision sessions have not been researched in South Africa. As a result, the researcher managed to get rich and thick, descriptive narratives regarding the execution of individual reflective supervision sessions from the participants who took part in this research study.

4.2.3. Sampling methods

A snowball sampling method was utilized for the purpose of this research study. Alston and Bowles (2003:90) suggest that snowball sampling is usually utilized when there is a lack of knowledge or information of the sampling frame for an intended study. The prior mentioned sampling method was rendered appropriate because there is no research that

has been done on how intermediate frontline social workers experience the execution of individual supervision sessions in South Africa.

The criteria for inclusion of participants included being:

- An intermediate frontline social worker.
- A professional who had 2 years or more of experience in rendering social services.
- Employed in either State or Private welfare organisations in the Cape Metropole.
- Receiving professional supervision from a social work supervisor.
- Proficient in English.

The sample for the study consisted of 20 participants. Bertaux (1981:35) suggests that in qualitative research, 15 participants in a sample is the smallest acceptable sample size. A sample size of 20 participants was thus regarded as sufficient. Ritchie, Lewis and Elam (2003) suggest that qualitative samples are generally small because there is a point of diminishing return. This implies that as the study progresses, more data does not necessarily lead to new information. This is so because a single occurrence of a piece of data is all that is required to ensure that it becomes part of the analysis. The researcher managed data saturation with the sample size of 20 participants. This so because narratives from participants became repetitive, adding no new information. Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) suggest that data saturation is reached when no new data, themes and coding can be obtained by conducting more or additional interviews.

Participants in this research study were contacted in their respective personal professional capacities via telephone and electronic mail. All participants who took part in this research were briefed prior to the interview about the purpose, benefits and potential risks of the research study. All participants were informed about how the research is an attempt to understand their experiences, their rights to refuse to answer questions if necessary or withdraw from the study at any stage. See annexure 2 for the complete informed consent form. Interviews were conducted in the private places of the participants, therefore it was not necessary to obtain permission from the respective participants' organisations. The duration of interviews ranged from 30 - 60 minutes.

4.2.4. Data collection

The research study was a qualitative study, thus semi-structured interviews with open and close ended questions were utilized to collect data. Semi-structured interviews were chosen because they allowed for flexibility between the researcher and the participant as well as deep probing yielding rich data. Open and closed ended questions allowed for thick descriptive accounts and specific responses from participants respectively. All participants granted the researcher permission to audio tape the interviews. The semi-structured interviews were conducted following a series of pre-established questions. See annexure 1 for a general overview of the interview schedule. It is important to note that interviews were not religiously conducted in the manner the interview schedule is set out. Rather, interviews were conducted in a fashion that answered and covered the structure of the interview schedule in general. All interviews were transcribed during or shortly after the respective interview. Findings from the data collection will be presented in this chapter.

4.2.5. Data analysis

Data analysis is a process whereby the researcher inspects, transforms and models collected data with the aim of discovering useful information, suggesting conclusions and making recommendations (De Vos et al., 2013:246). Data analysis began after all twenty participants were interviewed. Data collected was analysed using thematic content analysis. Thematic content analysis according to Braun and Clarke (2006:79) emphasizes examination and the recording of data patterns or themes within collected data. The data the researcher recorded was transcribed manually to text format. A denaturalized approach as discussed by Oliver, Serovich and Mason (2005) was utilized during the data transcription process, as the focus of the interaction was more on the content other than how it was said. In light of this, silence, involuntary actions, pauses, word repetition and stutters, which all seem habitual, were removed from the transcribed data. Moreover, the researcher corrected grammar where deemed necessary in order to give a clearer comprehension of the information provided by the participants. It is important to take note that grammar correction was done with extra caution to avoid changing the meaning and interpretations altogether of what the participants were communicating about their situations to the researcher.

The findings of the research will now be presented in the sections that follow.

Section B

This section serves to present specific characteristics of the participants that were examined during the empirical study.

4.3. PARTICIPANTS PARTICULARS

The profiling of the participants who took part in this research study will be done in terms of their home language, length of time as a social worker and work tasks.

4.3.1. Home language

The participants home language will be presented in the pie chart below. See Figure 4.3.1.

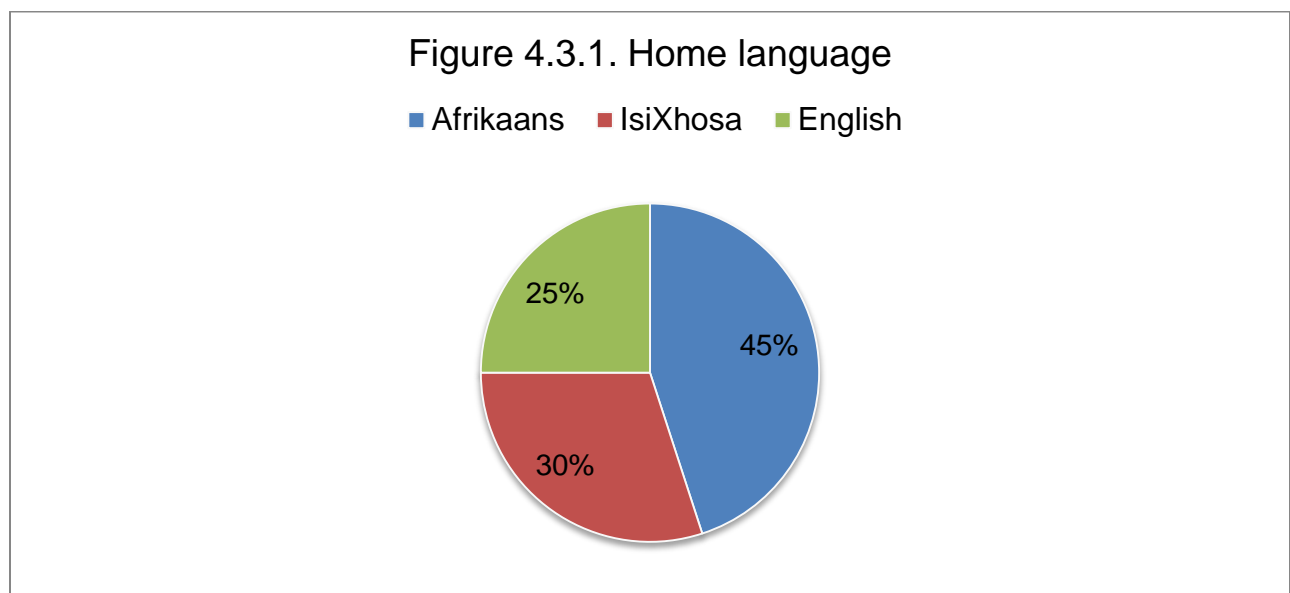


Figure 4.3.1. Home language of participants (N=20)

The figure above shows that the majority of participants who took part in the research study were Afrikaans. This can be attributed to the fact that the study was conducted in the Western Cape which is predominantly Afrikaans. Of the participants who took part in the research study, 30% have IsiXhosa as their home language and 25% of the participants being English. Interviews were conducted in English in order to accommodate the participants' different cultures.

4.3.2. Length of time as a social worker

All participants who took part in this research study were intermediate frontline social workers. Fook (2002) describes an intermediate frontline social worker as a practitioner who has been in the social work field for 2 years and more, directly working with service users, addressing identified needs. In terms of the developmental stages of professional identity, an intermediate social worker is a practitioner with fluctuating motivation for supervision owing to practice realities, demands and the complexity of social work intervention (Engelbrecht, 2014:131). Moreover, the intermediate practitioner is ambivalent about the need for supervision and has confidence to fulfill work requirements (Laufer, 2004:155). This practitioner according to Engelbrecht (2014:131), is also aware of work-related strengths and challenges as well as opportunities for continuing education.

This research study focused on intermediate frontline social workers in order to eliminate the variables of a newly qualified social workers in supervision, as well as those of seasoned social workers who may be on consultation. In addition, existing literature on supervision seems to overly focus on beginner and advanced social workers (Davys & Beddoe, 2009; Engelbrecht, 2012; Franklin, 2011; Laufer, 2004). Moreover, an analysis of the primary definitions of supervision seem to overtly suit intermediate frontline social workers (DSD & SACSSP, 2012; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; Tsui, 2005)

4.3.3. Work tasks of participants

The participants' work tasks are presented below. See Table 4.3.3

Table 4.3.3. Work tasks of participants	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual counselling • Facilitating adult life skills group • Assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster care placements and supervision • Family reunification • Intakes • Statutory work

Table 4.3.3. Work task of participants (n=20)

The table above shows the different tasks that participants who took part in the study indicated to perform at their respective organisations. Indicating these tasks is essential in order to understand the work context of participants which will aid the interpretation of the participants' narratives.

Half of the participants indicated that they work at an organisation focusing on crime prevention whilst the other half work at an organisation focusing on child protection. This occurrence can be ascribed to the sampling method utilized in this research study. This study made use of the snowball sampling method. A pertinent feature of this sampling method involves approaching a case that fits the criteria of the study and then exploring other similar cases. When utilizing this sampling method, the researcher is referred by one participant to another participant who fits the selection criteria (Grinnell & Unrau, 2008:153). It is therefore plausible that participants at a given organisation would know of other participants working at a similar organisation though not necessarily in the same geographical location.

Section C

This section serves to present appropriate themes and sub-themes relating to the data collected from participants who took part in this research study.

4.4. THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

A total of five themes, subsequent sub-themes and categories were identified. Below is a table summarily showing all the themes, sub-themes and categories that were identified from the participants' narratives.

Table 4.4. Themes, sub-themes and categories

Themes	Sub-themes	Categories
1. Individual supervision	1.1. Conception of supervision	
	1.2. Frequency of individual supervision	

	1.3. Duration of individual supervision sessions	
	1.4. Focus of individual supervision sessions	
2. The supervisory relationship	2.1. Power and authority	
	2.2. Shared meaning	
	2.3. Trust	
3. Description of supervision sessions	3.1. Preparation	
	3.2. Beginning	
	3.3. Working	
	3.4. Ending	
	3.5. Absence of formal structure	
4. Reflection	4.1. Conception of reflection	
	4.2. Opportunities and operationalization of reflection during individual supervision	
5. Tools and techniques used to facilitate reflection	5.1. Tools used to facilitate reflection	5.1.1. Brainstorming
		5.1.2. Visualization

		5.1.3. Role reversal
	5.2. Techniques used to facilitate reflection	5.2.1. Questioning
		5.2.2. Feedback
		5.2.3. Listening
		5.2.4. Interpretation

Table 4.4. Themes, sub-themes and categories

The researcher did not make use of categories as sub-themes of respective identified themes were deemed exhaustive and descriptive in the analysis of the participants' narratives, except with the last identified theme regarding tools and techniques used to facilitate reflection. A table summarily presenting each respective identified theme and its related sub-themes will now be provided before discussing the respective theme in detail.

Theme 1: Individual supervision

Theme	Sub-themes
Individual supervision	Conception of supervision
	Frequency of individual supervision
	Duration of individual supervision sessions
	Focus of individual supervision sessions

Table 4.4.1. Individual supervision

4.4.1. Theme 1: Individual supervision

In this section participants were asked to indicate what supervision meant to them, the frequency, duration and the focus of individual supervision sessions.

4.4.1.1 Conception of supervision

Participants were asked to describe what supervision meant to them. Most participants described supervision as guidance and constant directive from a social work supervisor in terms of work related matters. Some of the narratives from different participants are presented below.

Participant 3 "I do not know, writing my reports and they correct them"

Participant 9 "Supervision for me is a chance to sit with your supervisor to discuss whether it be cases, work flow progress and processes"

Participant 11 "From my experience in the field, its more about where is the worker at? How is the worker filling, how are you coping and managing caseloads"

Participant 16 "Supervision to me means guidance and help with my work. You know when I have done everything I can possibly do on a case then I require someone with more expertise to assist me"

The narratives above are general representation of what most participants described supervision as. An analysis of the narratives provided above shows that the participants understood and comprehended supervision in terms of its administrative and educational functions. Before discussing the implications of the narratives above, it is fundamental to reiterate that various research studies established that social work professionals construct and understand supervision respective of their experiences (Clark et al., 2008; Fook, 2002; Pack, 2011). Consequently, these narratives can be arguably considered as a true representation of how supervision is presently conceptualised in social service organisations.

The administrative function of supervision aims to establish accountability of the supervisee to the organisation among other things (Engelbrecht, 2014; Lewis, Packard & Lewis, 2007). Most of the participants described supervision as writing reports and mainly

managing caseloads with the help of their respective supervisors as indicated above. On the other hand, the educational function of supervision is concerned with the education of social workers regarding the knowledge, skills and attitude required for effective social work service rendering (Botha, 2002; Carroll & Gilbert, 2005). This is clearly illustrated by the narratives above, which show that supervisors do indeed assist supervisees with the development and refinement of their intervention techniques and skills. However, one can only speculate whether or not the rationale behind teaching and equipping supervisees with all the necessary intervention skills is aimed at making supervisees more efficient and effective in reaching organisational targets.

The function of support seems to be neglected in many social service organisations. This can be attributed to the notion of neoliberalism where focus is on effectiveness and efficiency of social service management. Supervision has become an administrative feature in the management of social service organisations, neglecting the function of support all together. To this end, Hair (2013) rightfully claims that on a global scale, social workers and supervisors have collectively expressed growing concerns about the diminishing availability and decreased quality of supervision.

A few participants interviewed described supervision as a means of support, guidance, learning on both personal and professional paradigms from a social work supervisor. Some of the narratives from the participants are presented below.

Participant 7 " Supervision for me means for the supervisor to get on par with what I am doing, my progress, do I need improvement, do I need further training, how I cope personally and professionally, that is it"

Participant 17 "Supervision to me means support as a professional and as a person. It also means professional guidance, monitoring and debriefing in regard to my work as a social worker"

An analysis of the narratives above illustrates that the participants understood and comprehended supervision in light of its administrative, educational and support functions. These participants understood supervision as involving professional and personal development of strengths and weaknesses. This correlates with the definition of

social work found in The Supervision Framework for social work in South Africa. Supervision is described as an interactive process where a social worker guides a supervisee through performing educational, supportive and administrative functions in order to promote effective and reliable social worker services (DSD & SACSSP, 2012:11). However, there were no narratives that mentioned anything related to reflection which might suggest that the function of administration is emphasized in social service organisations.

4.4.1.2. Frequency of individual supervision

Participants who took part in this research study were asked to indicate how frequent they had individual supervision. Most participants indicated that they did not have quantifiable individual supervision. Rather, they had what they described as an "open door policy" with their respective supervisors. Some of the narratives recorded from the participants are presented below.

Participant 4 "There is no set time, the supervisor has an open door policy"

Participant 15 "We really do not have one on one sessions. We only see the supervisor at the main office where we discuss any challenges that might require her insight. She however has an open door policy"

Participant 17 "Not that frequent, it happens but it is not religiously followed. I have more of impromptu sessions when I have a number of cases that I am failing to resolve"

Participants indicated the lack of set times for individual supervision and the adoption of an "open door policy". An analysis of the narratives presented above shows that individual supervision does not occur as frequent as various literature sources suggest. A myriad of literature forwards that individual supervision sessions often occur between weekly and six weekly sessions (Egan, 2012; Hair, 2013; Nguyen, 2003; O'Donoghue, 2003). Most participants indicated that they had frequent impromptu individual supervision which they described as an "open door policy". An "open door policy" according to the participants meant that they could walk in and quickly discuss whether it be a case or a work related matter that required the immediate supervisor's guidance or attention. The notion of an

"open door policy" can be equated to what, Noble and Irwin (2009:351) call "on the run" supervision.

"On the run" supervision is a reality in many social service organisations because supervisors are too busy with various management tasks (Engelbrecht, 2013; Noble & Irwin, 2009). Kadushin's (1992: 230-231) analogy of supervision of social workers being like making music or just being random sounding of notes, rightfully fits this discussion. One can therefore ask the question, if this can be considered as supervision as prescribed by the South African Supervision Framework? With the emergence of new public management in social service organisations, the focus is now on efficiency and effectiveness in managing social services. This then begs the question, is the goal of supervision where supervisees are supposed to be equipped with skills to deliver effective, efficient and appropriate service to service users being upheld?

Less than half of the participants interviewed indicated that they had individual supervision once a month. Some of the narratives of the respective participants are presented below.

Participant 8 "I think twice a month on paper. In reality however it can be once a month or once in two months..."

Participant 18 " Right now I am having supervision once a month"

The narratives above show that some participants who took part in this research study had supervision at least once a month. An analysis of the narratives above shows similarities with the assertions of various literature sources on supervision. Egan(2012), Hair (2013), Nguyen (2003) and O'Donoghue (2003) forward that individual supervisions frequents between weekly and six weekly sessions. On the other hand, the narratives above also seem to suggest that individual supervision might not be consistently taking place once a month. This is so because for instance, participant 18 indicated that currently he or she was having supervision once a month as if to suggest that in other months it does not occur at all. This line of argument is substantiated by participant 8's narrative which shows that supervision occurs once a month or once in two months.

4.4.1.3. Duration of individual supervision sessions

Participants were asked to indicate how long their individual supervision sessions usually lasted for. Most of the participants indicated that they had more of an open door policy which was discussed in the previous section. Furthermore, the participants indicated that these sessions usually lasted for five to twenty minutes depending on the issue to be discussed. Some of the narratives recorded from the participants are presented below.

Participant 4 "They are usually short and concise, so yeah, 3 or 5 minutes max"

Participant 13 "It will depend on what I have to discuss. So anything from 5 to 20 minutes"

Participant 15 "Maybe 5 or 10 minute sessions"

There seems to be a positive correlation between the participants who indicated that they had "on the run" supervision sessions in the previous section and the participants who indicated that their supervision sessions were short and concise. The participants above described their respective individual supervision sessions as ranging from 3 to 20 minutes. "On the run" supervision sessions as prior indicated cannot be defined as supervision. These narratives do not seem to link with literature on supervision. The main proponents of literature on supervision such as Kadushin and Harkness (2014), O'Donoghue (2003) and Tsui (2004a), suggest that individual supervision sessions usually last for one to one and half hours long. These short individual supervision sessions lack the construct of a supervisory contract and a supervisee personal development plan. According to Engelbrecht (2014), a personal development plan defines what the supervisee will learn, how this learning will take place in the supervision session as well as how it will be assessed. The supervisory contract forms part of the development plan. It defines and establishes the agreement between the supervisor and the supervisee in regard to supervision outcomes, tasks, roles, scope and context of supervision inter alia (Engelbrecht (2014).

Less than half of the participants that took part in the research study indicated that they had individual supervision sessions falling between thirty to sixty minutes long. Some of the narratives of the respective participants are presented below.

Participant 6 "Maybe 45 minutes to an hour"

Participant 7 "Usually an hour"

Participant 14 "That depends, sometimes we will go through the whole caseload and then there are times when we will discuss certain cases. So anything from 30 to 60 minutes"

The narratives above seem to link with what some of the prominent authors on supervision suggest. Kadushin and Harkness (2014), Nguyen (2003), O'Donoghue (2003), and Tsui (2004a) all forward that individual supervision sessions are usually between one and one and half hours long. There is also a positive correlation between the participants who indicated that they had individual supervision once a month in the previous section and those that indicated that their individual supervision sessions lasted for thirty to sixty minutes.

4.4.1.4. Focus of individual supervision sessions

Participants who took part in this research study were asked what the main focus of their individual supervision sessions was. Most of the participants indicated that the main focus of their respective individual supervision sessions was work or their caseloads. Some of the narratives of the respective participants are presented below.

Participant 4 "The focus is obviously work. For me it is when I am frustrated with a case and I know I have done all I can possibly do. So yes, the focus is work"

Participant 6 "It's about work more than anything. It is more of administrative kind of supervision"

The participants described work (meaning administration) as the main focus of individual supervision sessions instead of a balanced kind of supervision that focuses on the personal and professional well-being of the supervisee, reflection and the development of intervention skills amongst other things. Participant 6 also described the focus as being on the administrative aspects of work. An analysis of the narratives above seem to confirm the recurring notion of new public management and its influence in social service organisations. In order to acquire and sustain funding, social service organisations have had to adopt new public management skills that focus more how effective and efficient

services are managed (Dempsey, Halton, Murphy, 2001:631; Engelbrecht, 2015). Other than facilitating the provision for the development of strengths and competencies of the supervisee through critical reflection as suggested by Franklin (2011), supervision sessions have now become an administrative feature solely focused on closing cases and reaching targets.

However, a few participants indicated that the focus of their respective individual supervision sessions was work and support. Some of their narratives are presented below.

Participant 7 "So usually work, what I did and what I plan to do in regard to my caseload. Also how I am doing personally and professionally"

Participant 10 For me it is my well-being, how I am coping with the work load and generally how I am handling my cases"

An analysis of the narratives above represents a balance in focus between work and the well-being of supervisees during individual supervision. Consequently, this is the kind of supervision that enables supervisees to flourish, deliver effective, efficient and appropriate service to service users (Engelbrecht, 2014; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; O'Donoghue, 2003; Tsui, 2005). However, it should be emphasized that the main focus of the supervision sessions seems to be work and the administration revolving around work.

Theme 2: The supervisory relationship

Theme	Sub-themes
The supervisory relationship	Power and authority

	Shared meaning
	Trust

Table 4.4.2. The supervisory relationship

4.4.2. Theme 2: The supervisory relationship

In this section, participants were asked to describe the nature of the supervisory relationship they shared with their respective supervisors in terms of power and authority, shared meaning and trust.

4.4.2.1. Power and authority

Participants were asked to describe the relationship they had with their supervisors in terms of power and authority. Most participants indicated that they had a good relationship, were they acknowledged the supervisors power and authority but were free to voice their opinions. Some of the narratives of these participants are presented below.

Participant 16 "I have a good relationship with my supervisor. She is older than I am and has more experience in the profession. I therefore value her guidance and respect her as much as she respects me. We have an open relationship in which we both constructively argue and discuss work related manners. It is a good relationship"

Participant 20 "I would say we have a fairly good professional relationship. We share the same vision and mission of this organisation which is great. Though on all levels she has more power and authority than I do, she still relates to me like an adult and a qualified professional. She has a way with people that at times I actually forget that she is my 'boss'"

Most participants who took part in this study indicated how their supervisors had clear and definite power and authority compared to them. The narratives above confirm that power and authority is the most salient element in a supervisory relationship as suggested by Kaiser (1997). Most of the participants indicated that inspite of the clear power and authority of their supervisors, they shared a good relationship with their respective supervisors. This can arguably be ascribed to some of the relational characteristics such

as openness to ideas and change, support and respect that these supervisors had (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009; Cremona, 2010; Eketone, 2012; Falender & Shafranske, 2004; Hair, 2014; Itzhaky & Rudich, 2003; Nerdrum & Ronnestad, 2002; Pack, 2011).

A few of participants indicated that they had rocky relationships with their respective supervisors which were hierarchical with clear cut power complexes. Some of the narratives of these participants are presented below.

Participant 6 "The kind of relationship I share with my supervisor, I do not know hey. I would say it is very hierarchal, I am at the bottom and she is at the top and that is it."

Participant 12 "I do not know hey, I do not know if we actually have a relationship. We do not have a supervisor here because we are a satellite office. We all get supervised by one supervisor who we rarely see here. So generally the relationship is not good. I do not know if it is also a racial thing as well. My supervisor is white and I am colored. I do not want to get into that right now though"

Participant 17 "We have a rocky relationship. Maybe it is just me but I feel like all we do is discuss work and how she wants me to handle specific cases. She listens to what I say but her actions are not in sync with this. She is basically my boss and I have to do what she says"

An analysis of the narratives above shows that the kind of supervisory relationships between the respective participants and their supervisors deviates from the kind of supervisory relationship suggested to bring out the best in social workers by prominent authors in supervision. Brody (2005), Davys and Beddoe (2010), DSD and SACSSP (2012), Hawkins and Shohet (2006), all suggest that in order to bring out the best in each social worker, social work supervisors should culture non-discriminatory relationships with their supervisees, making provision for constructive criticism in a non-threatening way. Further analysis of the narratives above shows a lack of acknowledgement of adult education principles which facilitate the formation of good working supervisory relationships. Engelbrecht (2014) and Kadushin (2014) suggest that supervisors should keep in mind that supervisees are autonomous and self-directed, that they want to exercise choice and learn best when they are motivated and enthusiastic.

A critical examination of the narratives above also clearly indicates the existence of role and cultural power by different supervisors. Patel (2012) describes role power as the inherent difference in power between the supervisor and the supervisee whilst cultural power denotes power specific to perceived ethnic grouping. Given South Africa's pluralistic cultural composition and the Apartheid history, social work supervisors ought to give and acknowledge the significance of various cultural dimensions on the supervision of social workers (Hofstede, 2001). Patel (2005:306) suggests that social service organisations should implement anti-discriminatory practice which is integral in keeping with the principles of a social development paradigm and promoting equality in societies. Engelbrecht (2014), Hair and O'Donoghue (2009) describe anti-discriminatory social work as critical and reflective practice that provides a context to challenge oppression and social injustices which affect practitioners and service users.

One participant that took part in the study refused to answer the question regarding the nature of the supervisory relationship in terms of power and authority. One can arguably speculate that the supervisory relationship between the respective participant and the supervisor is not a good relationship as one would not have a problem describing a positive aspect of a given relationship. This then arguably implies that this participant and the respective supervisor do not implement the practice of reflection in their supervision sessions. The practice of reflection, among other things, requires the supervisor and the supervisee to share a relationship in which both practitioners can mutually think back and examine their respective reactions and processes as they relate to their experiences with service users (Franklin, 2011).

4.4.2.2. Shared meaning

Participants were asked to describe the relationship they had with their supervisors in terms of shared meaning. Most of the participants described their supervisory relationships as mutually fulfilling with a lot of shared meaning. Some of the narrative from the respective participants are presented below.

Participant 7 "It is very comfortable, very easy to connect with her. I mean there are boundaries, she has more authority than I do. But we share a common vision and mission which is important I think"

Participant 14 " ...Though we might have differences here and there most the times we are sync in regard to the vision and mission of the welfare organisation"

Based on the narratives above, one can arguably discern some form of shared meaning between participants and their respective supervisors. Participants indicated how they shared the same vision and mission of their respective organisations with their respective supervisors. Tsui (2004b) describes shared meaning as the mutual understanding and agreement between the supervisor and the supervisee. Most of the participants interviewed expressed how they would for example disagree on how to go about a certain intervention or some work issues but would always reach a mutual understanding at the end of discussion. This clearly correlates with Tsui's (2004b) suggestion that shared meaning in a supervisory relationship involves mutual agreement between the supervisor and the supervisee.

Kaiser (1997) suggests that the main feature of shared meaning is clear communication between the supervisor and the supervisee. Engelbrecht (2014), Hair (2014) and Pack (2011) forward that clear communication is characterised by being assertive, direct and being frank. The participants' narratives in this section therefore corroborates the previous section on power and authority where most of the participants described their supervisors as firm, giving constructive criticism among other things. Though analysed separately, power and authority in a supervisory relationship discussed in the previous section, seems to share intricate connections with shared meaning.

A few of the participants indicated that they did not have any form of shared meaning with their supervisors. Some of the narratives of these participants are presented below.

Participant 6 "...She has power over me, whatever she says I do. I do not think we have a shared meaning at all but I will not get into that"

Participant 17 "... She listens to what I say but her actions are not in sync with this. She is basically my boss and I have to do what she says"

An analysis of the narratives above shows the lack of shared meaning between the participants and their respective supervisors. The narratives presented above do not

reflect the quality of mutual agreement or understanding which characterizes shared meaning as suggested by Tsui (2004b). Consequently, supervisory relationships that lack shared meaning are a barrier to the process of reflection. Parlakian (2001) suggests that in order to facilitate reflective supervision, supervisors should form collaborative relationships with their supervisees.

One participant that took part in the study refused to answer the question regarding the nature of the supervisory relationship in terms of shared meaning. One can speculate that the supervisory relationship between the respective participant and the supervisor is not a good relationship as one would not have a problem describing a positive aspect of a given relationship. This has a negative impact on the practice of reflection, as the supervisory relationship is perceived as the major context for social work supervision (Fox, 1989; Kadushin & Harkness, 2002; Noble et al., 2016). A supervisory relationship which lacks shared meaning is therefore a barrier to the practice of reflection.

4.4.2.3. Trust

Most of participants who took part in the study described their supervisory relationships as being characterised by mutual respect which arguably translates to trust. Some of the participants' narratives are presented below.

Participant 13 "I think it is a very mature relationship, there is mutual respect. It is a good relationship"

Participant 16 "I have a good relationship with my supervisor. She is older than I am and has more experience in the profession. I therefore value her guidance and respect her as much as she respects me. We have an open relationship in which we both constructively argue and discuss work related matters. It is a good relationship"

Participant 18 "We have a good relationship. She is obviously more experienced than I am so I have great respect for her. She treats me like an adult and qualified professional which I really appreciate. She encourages me to voice my opinion all the time. I have the best supervisor"

Kaiser (1997) suggests that the trust component in supervisory relationship means the supervisor and the supervisee mutually respect each other among other things. Respect in Tsui's (2004b) view, safeguards the self-esteem of supervisees which consequently makes them feel important and valued. The narratives above have a common feature of mutual respect in the respective participants supervisory relationships. The narratives above also seem to share a link with adult education principles. Engelbrecht (2014), Kadushin (1992), Kadushin and Harkness (2014), suggest that supervisees have accumulated a foundation of life experiences, knowledge, skills and values which they want to be acknowledged, respected and included in their learning experience. Furthermore, as discussed in the previous section, in order to facilitate reflective supervision, Parlakian (2001) forwards that supervisors should form collaborative relationships with their supervisees. The narratives presented above clearly show the existence of trust in the respective supervisory relationships which is fundamental in order for the supervisee to be able critically reflect on practice during supervision sessions.

A few of the participants interviewed indicated the lack or absence of trust in their respective supervisory relationships. Some of the narratives are presented below.

Participant 6 "The kind of relationship I share with my supervisor, I do not know hey. She has power over me, whatever she says I do..."

Participant 12 "We all get supervised by one supervisor who we rarely see here. So generally the relationship is not good."

The narratives above show the absence of trust in the respective supervisory relationships. As indicated before, Kaiser (1997) describes the trust component in a supervisory relationship as mutual respect between the supervisor and the supervisee. Moreover, there seems to be no acknowledgement or use of adult education principles in the narratives presented above. It has been a recurring theme in this study that supervisees are autonomous and want to be respected among other things (Engelbrecht, 2014; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014). All this translates into supervisory relationships that thwart the process of reflection and ultimately the delivery of services that is beyond par.

One participant that took part in the study refused to answer the question regarding the nature of the supervisory relationship. One can arguably speculate that the supervisory relationship between the respective participant and the supervisor is not a good relationship as one would not have a problem describing a positive aspect of a given relationship. As with the case with power and authority and shared meaning discussed above, this kind of relationship has a negative impact on the practice of reflection. The supervisory relationship is perceived as the major context for social work supervision, where the supervisee and the supervisor should be able to mutually and positively interact in facilitating the process of reflection.

Theme 3: Description of supervision sessions

Theme	Sub-themes
Description of supervision sessions	Preparation
	Beginning
	Working
	Ending
	Absence of formal structure

Table 4.4.3. Description of supervision sessions

4.4.3. Theme 3: Description of supervision sessions

Participants were asked to give an in-depth description of a typical supervision session of them. From some of the participants narratives, four distinct stages were identified as common. These stages were preparation, beginning, working and ending. Most of the participants however described their supervision sessions as lacking any form of structure.

4.4.3.1. Preparation

A few participants indicated that they prepared for their supervision sessions before the scheduled time. This preparation involved supervisees listing discussion points for the supervision session and sending them to the respective supervisor prior to the supervision session. The content of discussion points participants mentioned mainly included work issues and caseloads. Some of the narratives from the participants are presented below.

Participant 7 "So I prepare crucial things that I want to discuss, whether cases or anything that is work related"

Participant 14 "So I will plan and write a list of the things I will want to discuss. I will have to give in the cases I would want to go through so that my supervisor acquaints herself with them"

Participant 20 "I would have to compile a list of issues I would want to discuss with the supervisor and email it to her a day or two before the actual meeting"

The narratives above are arguably a general representation of what a few of the participants who took part in the research study indicated to take place when they were preparing for an individual supervision session. This preparation stage correlates with what most primary authors on supervision establish to be happening in the preparation stage. Henderson et al. (2014), O'Donoghue (2014) and Shulman (2010) all make reference to a preparation stage wherein supervisees formulate agenda points or recurring issues they would wish to discuss during a scheduled supervision session. What seemed to be a common denominator in a few of the narratives was how the preparation was all about work and work related matters. The participants did not seem to be concerned or inclined to discuss issues surrounding support, working conditions or any emotional reflection resulting from their work, suggesting that administrative work was the only area they were lacking or required attention in.

4.4.3.2. Beginning

A few of the participants described the beginning stage of their supervision sessions as being characterised by social engagement and tuning in. The participants indicated that

they would exchange greetings with their respective supervisors. Some of the participants indicated that the social engagement phase also included giving feedback on respective points of departure agreed upon during the previous supervision session. Tuning in was described by most of the participants as transitioning from greetings to the main reason that warranted the supervision meeting. Some of the narratives from the participants are presented below.

Participant 8 "So as I walk in the meeting, we greet each other and she gets to ask a 1000 questions, you know how are you doing, how is work, she notes it down even if you say you have a flu. From there we move on to discuss work..."

Participant 10 "We usually just have small talk for about 3 or so minutes, you know asking me about my day and how I am doing at the organisation"

Participant 19 "...you go to the session then greet each other. We make small talk for a bit, she usually checks how you are doing personally and professionally. We then get to discuss my caseload..."

The narratives above show that participants who took part in this study exchanged greetings with their supervisors, made small talk and moved on to discuss caseloads among other things. The narratives above seem to corroborate the beginning stage as discussed by Kadushin and Harkness (2002), O'Donoghue (2014) and Shulman (2010). The prior mentioned authors establish that the beginning stage of a supervision session is characterised by the supervisor and the supervisee exchanging greetings and generally checking in. The exchange of greetings is then followed by tuning in or switching to the subject matter that warranted the supervision session (Shulman, 2010).

4.4.3.3. Working

Some participants described the working stage of the supervision session as the main focus where actual work was done. For these participants, this stage involved comparing agenda points then discussing caseloads, problem cases and any other work related matters. These participants indicated that before discussing anything, they would compare agenda points and list them in order of priority. Participants explained that prioritizing was done to avoid not discussing matters that might be more important than

others. Other participants described the working stage as mainly involving the discussion of caseloads, problem cases and work challenges keeping the participants from reaching targets or having low statistics. Some of the narratives from the participants are presented below.

Participant 8 "From there we move on to discuss work, you know the caseload, how many cases I have, how far I have progressed with the them, do I have any back logs and what is my plan moving forward. We go on to discuss how we are going to reach targets for the month if we have not reached them yet"

Participant 9 "Then we discuss cases. Most of the times, we have similar agenda points you know things like backlog cases, challenges with implementing respective programmes"

Participant 10 "We then begin to discuss caseloads. I give her an update on how I am managing my caseload, whether or not I am on track with meeting targets. Apart from that we also discuss my statistics and she always checks my monthly and weekly planning"

The narratives above are arguably a general presentation of what some of the participants indicated as happening during the working stage. From the narratives above, participants' individual supervision sessions seem to mainly focus on controlling as a management function. In other words, to check if the participants are complying with organisational standards. The working stage in an individual supervision session is when the subject matter or the agenda of the meeting is discussed, explored and examined (Johnson & Yanca, 2010; Kadushin & Harkness, 2002; O'Donoghue, 2014; Shulman, 2010). Similar to the preparation stage prior discussed, participants seemed to describe the working stage as involving the discussion of work issues and caseloads.

Supervision sessions according to Franklin (2011) should make provision for the development of strengths and competencies of the supervisee. Intricate to this, is the supervisees personal development plan which indicates the learning needs of the supervisee, how the learning should take place as well as how it will be assessed (Engelbrecht, 2014; Mittendorff, Jochems, Meijers & Brok, 2008). The participants

narratives do not seem to reflect implementation of a personal development plan. Supervision sessions seem to be a place to discuss administrative work matters as well as checking compliances in regard to reaching and maintaining pre-set targets. The component of critical reflection which is suggested to facilitate the development of strengths and competencies of the supervisees, seems to be neglected all together. One of the participants made the comment presented below.

Participant 6 "However, from the supervisor's side it has always been the same procedure, same questions and I will be providing the same answers. Hence I am saying supervision has become more of administration procedure"

4.4.3.4. Ending

Some participants described the ending stage as the last part of their supervision session. The participants indicated that the ending stage involved reaching mutual agreements on interventions to implement with regard to respective cases, summarizing and planning for the next session. The participants indicated that the supervision sessions mainly involved discussing and managing caseloads. Usually the cases that would be brought up for discussion required the insight of the supervisor. During the working stage, both the supervisor and the supervisee would discuss ways to manage cases presented. Before terminating the session, the participants indicated that they would agree on a course of action to manage issues discussed.

Summarizing was described by the participants as recapping the various discussion points that would have been on the agenda of the individual supervision session. Planning for the next session involved choosing and setting a date and time for the following supervision session. Some of the narratives from the participants are presented below.

Participant 2 "After discussing the cases, we come to a mutual agreement, the way forward with respective issues. We also prioritize cases and do the planning"

Participant 9 "Once we discuss everything then we recap what we would have discussed and just plan for the next session"

Participant 18 "When we have reached an agreement she will then summarize the session and ask if I still have anything to discuss. Then when it is all said and done, we conclude the meeting"

The narratives above seem to share clear links with what most studies on supervision suggest to be taking place in the ending phase of a supervision session. Kadushin and Harkness (2002), O'Donoghue (2014) and Shulman (2010) forward that the ending phase of a supervision session is characterised by reviewing and summarizing discussion points as well as planning for the following supervision meeting.

4.4.3.5. Absence of formal structure

Most of the participants described their supervision sessions as lacking any form of structure. These participants re-iterated the notion of an "open door policy" that they worked with and the time constraints associated with it. These participants described their supervision sessions as "walk in sessions" where they would discuss whatever case or emergency that required the urgent attention of the supervisor and concluding the meeting. Some of the narratives recorded from these participants are presented below.

Participant 3 "So I will walk in her office, I will see that she is busy. I will ask if I can see her, she will never say no. I will stand and I will ask her a question then she will assist me then it is done"

Participant 5 "So I go to my supervisor with a file and ask If I can speak to her quickly and then she always welcomes me and listens as I present my case to her. We then discuss the case, the options, possibilities. I leave then report back after I have executed whatever tasks we would have agreed on. There is really no introductions, you just go straight to the point because there is no time for structured sessions"

Participant 17 "Right now there is no time for debriefing as I said earlier, we have not been having frequent supervision because we have one supervisor for three different offices. So basically, what we do is just discuss the cases. So if we discuss the cases and I know what interventions I am going to further do and my planning then the session ends"

An analysis of the narratives presented above shows a lack of any formal structure of the supervision sessions some of the participants described. Supervision sessions are regarded as structured learning situations, which are executed according to a set agenda (Engelbrecht, 2014:148; DSD & SACSSP, 2012). There seems to be a link between these participants' narratives regarding the absence of any structure in regard respective supervision sessions and the participants who indicated that they had short, infrequent supervision sessions.

A personal development plan was earlier described as a tool that indicates learning needs of the supervisee among other things (Engelbrecht, 2014; Mittendorff, Jochems, Meijers & Brok, 2008). The notion of an "open door policy" does not allow for the formulation and implementation of a personal development plan due to the short duration of the supervision sessions among other things. Furthermore, there seems to be little or no practice of reflection basing on the narratives above. Consequently, the development of the participants strengths and weakness is stalled, if it does happen at all. Above all, "on the run" supervision cannot be considered as supervision basing on the South African Supervision Framework.

Theme 4: Reflection

Theme	Sub-themes
Reflection	Conception of reflection
	Opportunities and operationalization of reflection during individual supervision

Table 4.4.4. Reflection

4.4.4. Theme 4: Reflection

In this section, participants were asked to describe what reflection meant to them. Participants were further asked if they got any opportunities to reflect during individual supervision as well as how this reflection was operationalised.

4.4.4.1. Conception of reflection

Participants were asked to describe what reflection meant to them. All participants had a general idea of what reflection denotes to. Participants used phrases such as, "looking back, self-examination, self-introspection, self-evaluation and internal interrogation" to describe reflection. Interestingly, what stood out was how most participants described reflection in terms of work and their respective cases. Some of the narratives recorded from the participants are presented below.

Participant 3 "For me it means that I have to look back on my cases and think about why I did particular things in that given time"

Participant 4 "Reflection for me, in respect to supervision, is to measure performance appraisal. Obviously you are supposed to do this every quarter. There you put your strengths, shortcomings, future plans and your expectations. Reflection for me would then be when I go back to that and say this is what I have achieved, this is what I need to work on. So it is about where I am and towards what I aiming for"

Participant 8 "Reflection to me means to look back, you know reflecting on your work. Looking at the steps I have taken to where I am. How did I do it, how could I have done it differently. It is important to reflect on your work to actually grow as a person and as a professional"

The participants above described reflection as looking back and thinking about the interventions they carried out with respective service users. Participant 4 described reflection as a measure of performance appraisal where one looks at their strengths, shortcomings, future plans and expectations. An analysis of the narratives presented

above displays a general understanding by the participants regarding what reflection entails. Most of the participants interviewed however described reflection as examining themselves solely on the grounds of work. Gibbs (2001) establishes that reflection however entails more than intently looking at the task aspects of a given case. Conversely, reflection involves an analysis of one's personal experiences, interactions with services users with the aim of generating alternative interpretations of those experiences (Knott & Scragg, 2007; Sicora, 2017).

Fook (2002), Pack (2011), Paris and Zeitler (2008), and in their respective studies established that supervisors and supervisees constructed and understood supervision in light of their experiences. It is arguably plausible, that participants involved in this research study described and understood reflection in terms of their experiences both in the field and in terms of the supervision they get. This can be substantiated by the fact that in this present neoliberal context, focus is on effectiveness and efficiency of management. It then makes sense that participants would describe reflection solely as involving an analysis of their work and caseloads in order determine what they did right or wrong.

A few of the participants gave more general descriptions of what reflection meant to them which were not necessarily linked to work. Some of the narratives of these participants are presented below.

Participant 6 "Reflection to me means that you get or are given an opportunity to look back on what you are doing, to internally interrogate. Also try to fit that in a picture and see if it is in line with what I am expected to do"

Participant 14 "It means I sit back and I have to look at what I have been doing and see if I am still in touch with myself. See there are cases that leave a mark on you and it might affect how you interact with other clients, so you need to sort that out in order to ensure that you do not harm others in the process. You identify your strengths and weaknesses in order to be able to communicate when you need support"

The participants above seemed to have a more general understanding of supervision which was not necessarily linked to administrative work or caseloads. The narratives

above seem to display a more comprehensive picture of what reflection denotes. Dewey (1933) described reflection as the continual re-evaluation of personal beliefs, assumptions and ideas in light of experience in order to generate alternative interpretations of those experiences. Reflection is certainly not tied to examining one's self in respect to work. Sicora (2017:8) describes reflection as a process towards a deeper understanding and awareness that continuously guides action and focused thought towards becoming a more competent professional in the interest of service users.

4.4.4.2. Opportunities and operationalization of reflection during individual supervision

Participants who took part in this research study were asked if they got any opportunities for reflection during individual supervision sessions. Participants were further asked to explain how the process of reflection was operationalised during these individual supervision sessions. Some participants indicated that they did get opportunities to do some form of reflection during individual supervision sessions. These participants described this reflection as looking back at cases with their respective supervisors and establishing why they took long to close as well generating more effective ways to manage caseloads. Some of the participants narratives are presented below.

Participant 10 "Yes because normally you have to look back at the arrangements and plans you agreed on with the supervisor in the previous meeting and ascertain whether you will be able to meet and achieve them. You obviously have to justify why and how you were able to achieve all the tasks or the opposite. What were the challenges and stuff"

Participant 16 "I do not know hey. I think indirectly yes, because we get to discuss problem cases, I will have to think back and get the supervisor up to speed with all the interventions I have done thus far. In that manner, I am forced to think back. I don't know if that counts for reflection. We do have formal reflection sessions once every 6 months where we complete a form that basically asks to do some reflection on a number of topics"

Participant 19 "So it is not reflection in the true sense of reflection I would say. It is more about looking back and establishing the reasons why some cases take so long to close. Coming up with more effective and efficient ways to handle cases. I really reflect on my

own in my own time. That is when I sit down and just take time to think back say on my days work/ interventions with different client systems. Sort of just thinking how I was handling myself with respective clients"

The narratives presented above are a general representation of how participants described reflection to be facilitated by their supervisors during individual supervision sessions. What seems to stand out from the narratives above is that reflection was operationalised by asking participants to give feedback on their progress in meeting targets and managing caseloads. This would then warrant the participants to think back and establish reasons for either meeting or failing to meet required targets. This however can be considered as an anti-thesis of reflection as it is solely grounded on making the participants more efficient and effective above anything else. True reflection on the other hand entails more than intently looking at the task aspects of a certain case (Gibbs, 2001). Critical reflection involves an analysis of one's personal experiences and interactions with services users with the aim of generating alternative interpretations of those experiences (Knott & Scragg, 2007; Sicora, 2017). The aim of this process is for the practitioner to search for and find meaning of given phenomena that are beyond the interpretative capability of "technical rationality" (Knott & Scragg, 2007; Sicora, 2017). Consequently, practitioners can then identify and develop their weaknesses and strengths in order to deliver the best possible services to services users.

Most of the participants interviewed indicated that they did not get any opportunities to reflect during individual supervision sessions mainly because of time constraints. Narratives from some these participants are presented below.

Participant 4 "Listen, the thing is there is really no time to delve into comprehensive reflection. It is all about the numbers now. So you obviously you talk to your supervisor about whatever cases you are finding challenging and we figure out what to do in a space of three or so minutes"

Participant 6 "What is written down by the supervisor does not allow me to look at what I have done as social work practitioner. I mean there is an agenda already set for me even if I come to the supervision with my talking points"

The participants above indicated how there was no time for comprehensive reflection as primary focus is on closing cases and reaching targets. In order to achieve this, supervisors pre-establish the agenda of the supervision sessions which is usually aimed at enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of supervisees. "On the run" supervision does not allow for reflection. Time was singled out by some of the participants interviewed as a barrier to the practice of reflection. As has been recurrently mentioned throughout this study, the focus of management is on effectiveness and efficiency in the delivery of services. The narratives above seem to confirm Hair's (2013) analysis regarding social workers dissatisfaction of working conditions at their respective work places. Hair (2013) concluded that on a global scale, social workers and supervisors collectively expressed growing concerns about the diminishing availability and decreased quality of supervision.

Sicora (2017) establishes that for one to maintain the required quality and standard of service delivery which enhances the goal of supervision, continual reflection is necessary. The goal of supervision as prior mentioned, is to enable supervisees to deliver effective, efficient and appropriate service to service users (Engelbrecht, 2014; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; O'Donoghue, 2003; Tsui, 2005). The long term effect of neglecting the practice of reflection is the eventual burning-out, and externalization of blame to service users by social work practitioners (Gibbs, 2001).

Theme 5: Tools and techniques used to facilitate reflection

Theme	Sub-themes	Categories
Tools and techniques used to facilitate reflection	Tools used to facilitate reflection	Brainstorming
		Visualization
		Role reversal
	Techniques used to facilitate reflection	Questioning
		Feedback
		Listening

		Interpretation
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Table 4.4.5. Tools and techniques used to facilitate reflection

4.4.5. Theme 5: Tools and techniques used to facilitate reflection

In this section, participants were asked to indicate whether or not their supervisors made use of any reflection tools and techniques to facilitate the process of reflection. Furthermore, participants were asked to describe how these reflection tools and techniques were used to facilitate the reflection process.

4.4.5.1. Tools used to facilitate reflection

A few participants indicated that their supervisors made use of some reflection tools to facilitate the process of reflection. The main reflection tools that stood out from the participants' narratives were brainstorming, visualization and role reversal. Most of the participants indicated that their respective supervisors did not make use of any reflection tools due to various factors which will be explored in this section.

4.4.5.1.1. Brainstorming

Participants made reference to the use of brainstorming during their individual reflective supervision sessions. Participants indicated that brainstorming would be used in the manner of thinking of alternative interventions regarding for instance a problem case. The participants also described the use of brainstorming as involving the supervisor and the supervisee coming up with alternative solutions to increase the effectiveness and efficiency in managing caseloads. Some of the narratives from the participants are presented below.

Participant 14 "We look at a case and think about it. Usually we are discussing problem cases. So we will think about different ways to manage the problem we will have at hand"

Participant 20 "Oh, then yes she would brainstorm solutions with me and we would discuss the pros and cons for each solution. In that way she would actually be teaching me how to manage cases in future with similar traits"

The narratives above seem to capture the concept of brainstorming described by Connor and Pokora (2012) and Krone (2017). Brainstorming is described as a tool that facilitates creativity and lateral thinking by stimulating the creative right hemisphere of the human brain (Conor & Pokora, 2012; Krone, 2017). What is however strikingly different is how the participants described the use of brainstorming compared to how authors on reflection describe the same concept. Participants who took part in this study described and narrowed down the use of brainstorming to solving problem cases above everything else. Conversely, Connor and Pokora (2012) and MacLennan (2017) discuss the use of brainstorming as helping the supervisees to describe their ideal future in respect to their present situation. Certainly, the latter description of brainstorming does not only refer to solving cases which a supervisee might find challenging. On the other hand, it points to the aspect of continual development of the social work professional through establishing an alternative reality then working towards it.

4.4.5.1.2. Visualization

Participants made reference to the use of visualization during their respective supervision sessions. These participants described visualization as them and their supervisors sitting down and noting down many possible outcomes regarding a given intervention. Furthermore, the participants described visualization as envisioning how a suggested intervention for a given client system would possibly go. Some of the narratives from these participants are presented below.

Participant 5 "I mean she asks you questions like what about this? Have you thought about why the child is this way? Have you exercised all possible alternatives? You know like brainstorming or trying to visualise alternatives and stuff"

Participant 13 "So we will think about different ways to manage the problem we will have at hand. At times we have to sort of play out possible outcomes so that we assess if that planned course of action will be beneficial and if it will be long term"

The narratives presented above seem to capture the working concept of visualization as described by Brouziyne and Molinaro (2005), Conor and Pokora (2012), MacLennan (2017). The prior mentioned authors describe visualization as an alternative of

brainstorming which is used when the supervisee seems to be stuck in a particular situation (MacLennan, 2017). Similar to the case with brainstorming discussed above, the participants narratives in regard to the use of visualization seems to be solely focused on solving challenging cases in order to reach pre-set targets at their respective organisations. Authors such as Connor and Pokora (2012) and MacLennan (2017) certainly did not prescribe the use of this reflection tool to solely solving problem cases. Conversely, visualization is described as tool that helps the supervisee to imagine an ideal future which is debriefed and shaped into a goal (Conor & Pokora, 2012; MacLennan, 2017). The rationale that underlies this, is the continual development of the social work professional who will consequently deliver the best possible services to service users.

4.4.5.1.3. Role reversal

One participant made reference to the use of role reversal in order to facilitate the reflection process during individual supervision. Role reversal was described by the participant as involving the supervisor and the respective participant assuming particular roles and attempting to replicate a scenario similar to a given problem case. Furthermore, the participant indicated how reproducing a given problem case would be done in order to create a context for understanding the client system and coming up with interventions that serve the best interest of the service user. See the narrative below.

Participant 18 " The one time we actually did a short rehearsal where she had to pretend to be a client and me being the professional. She is really intuitive and a great teacher"

The description and narrative of the participant presented above seems to correlate with Connor and Pokora's (2012) views on role reversal. Role reversal according to Connor and Pokora (2012) is used in order to develop a new perspective on a problem by role-playing it. Role playing is done in order to help the supervisee empathise with the service users among other things.

Most of the participants interviewed indicated that their supervisors did not make use of any reflection tools to facilitate individual reflective supervision. These participants gave a few reasons for this occurrence. The participants indicated that they did not get the

actual opportunity to reflect because they had an agenda pre-set for them which often did not include any form of reflection. The nature of the supervision sessions which were described as short and there for crisis management was established as another reason for the lack of use of any reflection tools by the participants. Some of the narratives from these participants are presented below.

Participant 6 "No, because there are no opportunities for reflection to begin with"

Participant 17 "Well there is no time to look back on cases or check in with me. I basically go to a supervision session then I am told what to do and it is done"

The narratives presented above are a general presentation of what some of the participants established as reasons for the lack of use of reflection tools during individual supervision. Factors such as time limitation and the general lack of opportunity for reflection reaffirm how present social service organisations are primarily concerned with meeting targets with the goal of serving the best interests of service users being secondary. Quantity in terms of how many cases are closed in a given year or quarter seems to be prioritized over the quality of services delivered.

4.4.5.2. Techniques used to facilitate reflection

Few participants indicated that their supervisors made use of some techniques to facilitate the process of reflection. The main techniques that stood out from the participants' narratives include questioning, feedback, listening and interpretation. Most of the participants interviewed indicated that their supervisors did not make use of any techniques to facilitate the process of reflection due to various factors which will be explored in this section.

4.4.5.2.1. Questioning

The participants indicated that their respective supervisors made use of questioning to facilitate the reflection process during individual supervision sessions. The participants described how their supervisors would ask them questions which would prompt them to think of descriptive answers. Participants indicated that the questions from their supervisors prompted them to think back which is how the process of reflection would begin. Some of the participants' narratives are presented below.

Participant 13 "Yes, questioning by pretty much asking prompting questions which then make you think deeper than usual"

Participant 20 "I don't know. Maybe questioning. I think any process of reflection depends on being asked questions which make you think back and re-examine different interventions and so forth"

The narratives above corroborate Kadushin and Harkness (2014), Pines (2000) and Sicora's (2017) views on the role of questions in facilitating the process of reflection. The prior mentioned authors suggest that questioning is a fundamental technique in facilitating any process of reflection. Sicora (2017) further establishes that appropriate questions are pivotal in orientating the supervisee to a certain event under scrutiny. What seemed to be common with most of the participants' descriptions regarding the use of questioning was how it revolved around work more than anything else. Basing on the participants' narratives, the technical use of the questioning technique in itself seems to be fundamentally correct. The focus of the questioning technique solely on work however does not seem to warrant for critical reflection that involves more than looking at the task aspects on a given case (Gibbs, 2001).

4.4.5.2.2. Feedback

Some of the participants who took part in this research study indicated that their supervisors made use of feedback in order to facilitate the process of reflection. These respective participants described the use of feedback as involving their supervisors sending them updates through email in regard to a given case or during the individual supervision session. The participants narratives are presented below.

Participant 1 "However, when we do discuss cases and I explain how I went about particular sessions, the supervisor does make use of feedback and questioning. She will sort of ask why I went about a case the way I did and try to give me feedback during that session regarding my chosen course of action in regard to a particular case"

Participant 4 "She will, when she manages, send you feedback through email about the final decision on a particular case"

An analysis of the narratives above seems to, in some instances link with literature on feedback and in other instances lack any real connection with established literature. Evans and Wolfson (2006), Sicora (2017), and Wheeler and Richards (2007) suggest that feedback should be given as soon as practically possible after an action has been completed. The narrative from participant 1 seems to be in line with the latter assertion from different authors commenting on feedback. The narrative from participant 4 seems not be in keeping with giving feedback as soon as possible after a supervision session. Evans and Wolfson (2006), Sicora (2017), Wheeler and Richards (2007) establish that failure to provide swift feedback thwarts the social practitioner's motivational level and interesting in learning.

Wheeler and Richards (2007) establish that feedback should take place systematically, following the interaction between two professionals in order to make it more objective, precise and consequent. The narratives above seem to link with the latter assertion by Wheeler and Richards (2007). It is however crucial to indicate the continual recurrence of work being the centre of everything based on the participants narratives. Instead of facilitating critical reflection, various techniques are being utilized by respective supervisors to make social workers effective and efficient with the main goal to reach and meet pre-set targets.

4.4.5.2.3. Listening

Some of the participants who took part in this study indicated that their supervisors made use of the listening technique to facilitate the process of reflection. These participants explained how their supervisors would intently listen to the participants when they for instance explained all the different interventions they would have attempted to implement in regard to a given problem case. The participants indicated their supervisors would pose follow up questions in regard to what they would have explained showing that the supervisor would have been listening. Some of the narratives from the respective participants are presented below.

Participant 5 "She also listens a lot, I do not know if that is a technique but yes. She also gives feedback when she can"

Participant 12 "Yes a lot of questions and she does listen a lot"

An analysis of the narratives above seems to confirm and link with what various authors have established in regard to the listening technique. Cournoyer (2013) suggests that active listening involves a combined act of talking and listening skills in order to demonstrate to the supervisee that the supervisor is an active and collaborative professional. Furthermore, active listening requires supervisors to summarize and reflect back to the supervisee in regard to what they are saying (Cournoyer, 2013). This links with discussion on the structure of supervision sessions, particularly the end stage which most participants indicated as involving supervisors reiterating what would have happened in the respective supervision session.

4.4.5.2.4. Interpretation

Some of the participants indicated that their supervisors made use of interpretation to facilitate the process of reflection. These participants described how their respective supervisors would for instance explain what would be going on between the participant and the respective service user which would be preventing a certain intervention from working. Some of the narratives from the respective participants are presented below.

Participant 18 "Well she will ask me questions and she explains to me what is maybe going on between me and a certain client. She will then suggest an alternative way of handling the case which usually works"

An analysis of the narrative above shows clear links with what Hepworth et al. (2013) describe interpretation as. Interpretation facilitates the process of reflection in that the supervisor makes connections that might not have seemed clear to the supervisee, providing the supervisee with an alternative view of the respective subject matter (Hepworth et al., 2013). Though the narrative above corroborates literature on reflection techniques, it should however be kept in mind that participants indicated the use of these techniques to be solely focused on primarily increasing cases closed and not facilitating critical reflection.

Most of the participants interviewed indicated that their supervisors did not make use of any techniques to facilitate individual reflective supervision. These participants gave

legitimated reasons which are similar to those explored in the previous section for this occurrence. The participants explained how the short nature of the supervision they were receiving as not permitting for any form of reflection, let alone utilisation of techniques to facilitate the reflection process. Some of the narratives from these participants are presented below.

Participant 6 "Again, no because there are no opportunities for reflection in the supervision session"

Participant 13 "None because there is no time for that during supervision"

The narratives above illustrate some of the participants' reasoning behind the lack of use of techniques during individual supervision. Similar to the section on reflection tools previously discussed, factors such as limits in regard to time expandable during a supervision session and the general lack of opportunity to do any sort of reflection reaffirms the notions of neoliberalism and its link to new public management in social service organisations.

4.5. CONCLUSION

This chapter sought to address the third objective of this study which is to conduct an empirical study on intermediate social workers' experiences regarding the execution of individual reflective supervision sessions. This chapter began by analysing the research methodology that was implemented in this research study. A detailed account regarding the profiling of the participants who took part in this study followed the analysis of the research methodology. Finally, five themes and subsequent sub-themes and categories were established and thoroughly examined. These themes included individual supervision, supervisory relationships, descriptions of supervision sessions, reflection and tool and techniques utilized to facilitate reflective supervision.

The next chapter will present various conclusions drawn from the empirical study. In addition, appropriate recommendations following established conclusions will be presented.

Chapter 5

Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study has been to understand the experiences of intermediate frontline social workers regarding the execution of social work individual reflective supervision sessions in South Africa. There has been little or no studies undertaken in South Africa regarding how individual reflective supervision is executed. On a global level, studies on the supervision process have increasingly received less and less attention over the years (White, 2015). Authors of international textbooks on supervision such as Engelbrecht (2014), Kadushin and Harkness (2002) and Tsui (2005) all implicate the importance of critical reflection during individual supervision sessions but fail to make provision for further discussion of this concept.

Against the above background, this study has thus attempted to formulate a conceptual framework for individual reflective supervision of intermediate frontline social workers in South Africa. Furthermore, this study has made provision of a discussion regarding various tools and techniques for the execution of individual reflective supervision sessions within the implementation phase of the supervision process. An empirical study on social workers' experiences regarding the execution of individual reflective supervision sessions was done. Data was collected from twenty participants by means of semi-structured interview schedules. The findings of the empirical study were presented and analysed meticulously in the previous chapter.

This chapter serves to answer the forth objective of this study, which is to conclude and make appropriate recommendations regarding the execution of individual reflective supervision sessions.

5.2. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusions made will be based on the findings from the empirical study and recommendations subsequently based on the conclusions made. Key findings from the literature and empirical study will be presented in an integrated manner. The conclusions will follow the same structural format as the themes and sub-themes identified in the

previous chapter. Specific recommendations will be subsequently provided following the conclusion on each respective theme identified.

5.2.1. Profiling participants

The majority of the participants who took part in this study had Afrikaans as their home language followed by IsiXhosa and English respectively. All participants who took part in this study were intermediate frontline social workers. Intermediate frontline social workers can be described as social work practitioners who have been directly delivering social services to service users for 2 years and more. Half of the participants worked at an organisation focusing on crime prevention whilst the other half work at an organisation focusing on child protection. The respective participants' work tasks included individual counselling, assessments, facilitating groups, intakes, statutory work, family reunification and foster care placements.

The profiling of the participants is fundamental in creating a context for the interpretation of the conclusions and recommendations with regard to the identified themes in this research study.

5.2.2. Individual supervision

The majority of the participants interviewed understood supervision in terms of its administrative and educational functions. A minority of the participants on the other hand conceptualised supervision in terms of its administrative, educational and supportive functions as prescribed by the Supervision Framework. Interestingly, none of the participants made reference to reflection or reflective supervision in their conceptualisations of supervision. It is important to indicate that various research studies established that social work professionals construct and understand supervision in respect to what they experience.

The majority of the participants indicated that they did not have regular supervision. Instead they followed the practice of an "open door policy" at their respective organisations. An "open door policy" according to the participants meant that they could walk in and quickly discuss whether it be a case or a work related matter that required the immediate supervisor's guidance or attention. An "open door policy" can be equated to

"on the run" supervision. The minority of the participants interviewed indicated that they had individual supervision once a month.

The majority of the participants indicated that their respective individual supervision sessions lasted for about five to twenty minutes depending on the issue they had to discuss. The short nature of these individual supervision sessions correlates with the notion of an "open door policy" described by participants above, which is only available for matters that require the immediate attention of the supervisor. The main proponents of literature on supervision however suggest that individual supervision sessions usually last for one to one and half hours long. This is clearly not the case within the present social work context in South Africa.

The majority of the participants who took part in this study pointed out the discussion, resolving and managing of cases and caseloads as the main focus of individual supervision sessions. Authors on supervision establish that in order to acquire and maintain funding, social service organisations have adopted new public management measures that are primarily concerned with the effectiveness and efficiency of social service management instead of the delivery of the best possible services to service users. The minority of the participants on the other hand indicated a more inclusive focus on work and support during their respective individual supervision sessions.

Based on the above findings, the following **conclusions** can be made. The present practice of supervision in social service organisations is neglecting the function of support, which consequently affects the quality of service delivery by social workers. Individual supervision in the present social work context is not being held as a regular as it should, due to various factors such as time constraints and the lack of sufficient supervisors at a given organisation. Individual supervision sessions in the present social work context are not lasting as long as they should, due to the same factors accounting for the lack of regular individual supervision. Lastly, Individual supervision sessions seem to be now available for the sole discussion of caseloads and reaching targets other than focusing on ensuring the constant development of the social work practitioners' weaknesses and strengths through critical reflection.

Recommendations

- The Department of Social Development should make provision of a substantial subsidy for individual supervision in order to ensure that all social workers receive optimum and quality individual supervision in their respective organisations. This consequently ensures continual professional development of supervisees and the subsequent delivery of quality services to service users.

5.2.3. Supervisory relationships

Most participants who took part in this research study described their supervisory relationships as being characterised by good and appropriate use of power and authority by their respective supervisors. Conversely, a few of the participants described the use of power and authority by respective supervisors as defamatory, discriminatory and lacking acknowledgement of adult education principles. Authors on supervision suggest that social service organisations should implement an anti-discriminatory practice which is integral in keeping with the principles of a social development paradigm and promoting equality in societies.

Most of the participants described their supervisory relationships as being characterised by shared meaning. Shared meaning can be described as the mutual understanding and agreement between the supervisor and the supervisee. The main feature of shared meaning is clear communication between the supervisor and the supervisee. A minority of the participants described their supervisory relationships as lacking any form of shared meaning. However, in order to facilitate reflective supervision, it is fundamental for supervisors to form collaborative relationships with their supervisees.

Furthermore, the majority of the participants described their supervisory relationships as being characterised by trust, which manifested in mutual respect between the participants and their supervisors. A minority of the participants described their relationships as lacking any form of trust due the lack of mutual respect. The trust component in a supervisory relationship can be described as mutual respect between the supervisor and the supervisee.

Based on the findings above, one can generally make the following **conclusions**. Social work supervisors in the present social work context are using their supervisory positions to facilitate respective supervisees' professional development. On the other hand, there are some supervisors who require more training and directive in the use of their power and authority. Most supervisors and supervisees in social service organisations seem to share a common understanding and mutual agreement. This collaborative feature in a supervisory relationship facilitates the process of reflection. However, there are supervisors and supervisees who lack a common understanding, which subsequently thwarts the process of reflection. In spite of a small proportion of supervisors who fail to facilitate supervisory relationships characterised by mutual respect, a large proportion of supervisors manage to cultivate trust, which breeds respect in their respective supervisory relationships.

Recommendations

- It should be made mandatory by the SASSP that all social work supervisors receive constant training in respect to the management of supervisees. Implementation of adult education principles should form part of this training.
- Supervision should be accredited as a field of specialization by the SACSSP, for registration purposes and to enhance the quality of supervision in South Africa.
- The SACSSP should perform regular audits, which involve supervisees evaluating their supervisors in terms of the use of power and authority as well as general relational abilities.

5.2.4. Description of supervision sessions

From the narratives of the minority of the participants who took part in this study, the researcher identified four distinct stages common to these respective participants. These stages were preparation, beginning, working and ending. Participants indicated that preparation for a supervision session involved formulating a list of aspects to discuss during the actual supervision session and sending it to their supervisors prior to the scheduled meeting. A substantial number of studies on the supervision process make reference to a preparation stage wherein supervisees come up with their own agenda for the meeting before attending the actual supervision. The beginning stage was described

by participants as involving the exchange of greetings between them and their supervisors and transitioning to the reason that warranted the supervision session. Authors on supervision describe the beginning stage of individual supervision as involving checking in with the supervisee and switching to the focus of the supervision session.

The minority of the participants mentioned that the working stage mainly involved the discussion of work. The discussion of work involved going over caseloads, discussing the challenges encountered in closing cases and meeting targets. Most studies on the supervision process speak of a working stage wherein the subject matter of the individual supervision is explored. However, the content and main focus of the working stage described by participants does not seem to match with what most studies on the supervision session articulate. Various authors in social work supervision establish that supervision sessions should provide for the development of the supervisees' strengths, weaknesses and competencies, based on the supervisees' personal development plan.

The minority of the participants described their supervision sessions as ending by reaching mutual agreements, summarizing and setting a date for the following supervision session. This seems to correlate with various research studies on supervision. The ending phase of a supervision session is characterised by reviewing and summarizing discussion points as well as planning for the following supervision session. It is important to note that a large proportion of the participants who took part in this study described their supervision sessions as lacking any form of structure. These participants reiterated the notion of an "open door policy", which does not allow for any kind of structured supervision, as supervisors are only available for urgent matters.

Based on the above findings, the following **conclusions** can be made. Supervision sessions have four distinct stages which are preparation, beginning, working and ending. The preparation stage involves listing all the issues the supervisees want to discuss during their respective individual supervision and sending it to the supervisor. The beginning stage mainly involves checking in between the supervisor and the supervisee and switching to the working stage. The working stage involves the discussion of the listed agenda points, which usually revolve around work. Apart from discussing work issues, the latter stage should follow a personal development plan of the supervisee and should

be executed in a way that allows for the professional development of the supervisee through critical reflection. The ending stage of a supervision session involves reaching mutual agreements, summarizing and planning for the following individual supervision session.

Recommendations

- All supervisors should conduct personal development assessments and formulate personal development plans of their supervisees and implement them during individual supervision sessions. If these stages are not executed, the interaction between the supervisor and supervisee should not be defined as supervision *per se*.
- It should be mandatory by the new (to be amended) Social Service Professions Act that all supervisees receive frequent, structured individual supervision sessions at their respective social service organisations as indicated in the Supervision Framework, as "on the run" supervision does not qualify as typical a supervision session.

5.2.5. Reflection

The majority of the participants presented a general understanding of what reflection means. Participants used phrases similar to, "looking back, self-examination, self-introspection, self-evaluation and internal interrogation" to describe reflection. Furthermore, the minority of the participants indicated that they got opportunities for reflection during their individual supervision sessions, with the majority indicating that they did not receive any opportunities for reflection. These participants described this reflection as looking back at cases with their respective supervisors and establishing why they took long to close as well as generating more effective ways to manage caseloads. The kind of reflection described by participants who took part in this study however deviates from reflection as described by primary authors on reflection.

Reflection can be described as the continual re-evaluation of personal beliefs, assumptions and ideas in light of experience in order to generate alternative interpretations of those experiences. In addition, reflection can be viewed as a process towards a deeper understanding and awareness that continuously guides action and

focused thought towards becoming a more competent professional in the interest of service users. True reflection entails more than intently looking at the task aspects of a certain case as in the case of the participants who were interviewed for this study. Critical reflection thus involves an analysis of both one's personal experiences and interactions with services users, with the aim of generating alternative interpretations of those experiences.

Based on the above findings the following **conclusions** can be made. The majority of the participants seemed to know what reflection entails. The practice of reflection however facilitated by supervisors in present social service organisations seems to be administrative work related more than anything else. One can certainly describe this as an anti-thesis of reflection as these supposed individual reflective supervision sessions seem to be more of an administrative feature for social service organisations wherein supervisees are trained to be more effective and efficient in their delivery of social services. Most of the participants were not accorded the opportunity for reflection during supervision sessions, owing to factors such time as limitations, which do not permit for comprehensive supervision.

Recommendations

- Reflection during individual supervision should be incorporated and promoted in the Supervision Framework of the DSD and SACSSP in order to guide and develop supervisees into competent professionals in the interest of service users; this specifically entails that supervisors should develop and implement supervisee personal development plans, with a focus on reflection, and not just administrative accomplishments.

5.2.6. Tools and techniques used to facilitate the reflection process

The minority of the participants indicated that their supervisors made use of particular reflection tools and techniques to facilitate reflective supervision sessions. Some of the tools the participants made reference to include brainstorming, visualization and role reversal. The main techniques that the researcher identified from most of the participants' narratives include questioning, feedback, listening and interpretation. The majority of the

participants indicated that their respective supervisors made no use of neither reflection tools nor techniques, owing to the absence of any opportunities for reflection to begin with as well as time limitations.

The participants described the use of brainstorming as involving the supervisor and the supervisee seating down and thinking of various ways to manage a problem case or increase the efficiency of the supervisee in closing cases. Though the descriptions of brainstorming by participants match up with literature on reflection tools, subtle differences can be identified. Primary authors on reflection tools describe brainstorming as a tool used to facilitate creativity and lateral thinking by stimulating the creative right hemisphere of the human brain. Furthermore, other than using brainstorming to come up with alternative solutions, they discuss the use of brainstorming as having much to do with enabling the supervisees to describe and pursue their ideal future in respect to their present situation.

Visualization was described by participants as involving them and their supervisors envisioning how a suggested intervention would unfold in order to determine if it would be worth implementing or not. Primary authors on reflection tools establish that visualization is an alternative to brainstorming and is used to enable supervisees to imagine an ideal future, which is debriefed and shaped into a goal. As in the case with brainstorming, visualization involves more than thinking of alternative solutions to solve a case or reach organisational targets.

Role reversal was also indicated as a tool supervisors used to facilitate the process of reflection. Participants described the use of role reversal as involving the supervisor and the supervisee adopting given roles that replicated a real situation in order to create a context for understanding a given problem from the service user's perspective. The participants' descriptions of role playing match up with literature on reflection tools. Role playing involves taking roles that share similarities with a presenting situation in order to help the supervisee empathise with the service user.

The minority of the participants indicated that their individual reflective supervision sessions were facilitated by the use of questioning by the supervisor. The use of

questioning was described by participants as being executed by the supervisor asking a lot of prompting questions. These prompting questions were described by participants as warranting them to think back to a particular session, which in turn made up the process of reflection. The role of questions in any process of reflection is described by many authors as fundamental. The process of reflection is facilitated by asking questions that orientate the eye of the mind to an event under scrutiny.

Feedback was described by participants as another technique that supervisors used to facilitate individual reflective supervision sessions. Participants described the use of feedback as involving their supervisors reporting back to them in regard to respective outcomes of an intervention via email or during a follow-up supervision session. The descriptions provided by participants corroborate literature on the use of feedback. Various authors suggest that feedback should be given as soon as practically possible after an action has been executed.

The minority of participants indicated that their supervisors made use of the listening technique during their respective individual reflective supervision sessions. The use of listening was described by participants as involving their supervisors actively paying attention to the participants' narrative regarding their respective interactions with different client systems. Follow-up questions posed by supervisors were described by participants as an indication that their supervisors indeed listened whilst they talked. Listening involves the supervisor balancing talking and listening in order to communicate to the supervisees that they are being heard. Moreover, active listening involves the supervisor summarizing and providing feedback to a supervisee.

Interpretation was also indicated as a technique supervisors utilized in order to facilitate the process of reflection. Participants described the use of interpretation as involving supervisors explaining or debriefing what would be going on between the participant and a given service user in light of a given case. Interpretation facilitates the process of reflection in that the supervisor makes connections that might not have seemed clear to the supervisee, providing the supervisee with an alternative view on the respective subject matter.

Based on the findings above, the following **conclusions** can be made with regard to tools and techniques used by supervisors to facilitate the process of reflection. Supervisors in social service organisations (consciously or unconsciously) seem to be making use of certain reflection tools to facilitate individual reflective supervision sessions. However, these tools seem to be solely focused on the administrative work dimension of supervisees in order to improve and increase their effectiveness and efficiency in managing caseloads. The same can be said for the use of techniques. Supervisors seem to be making use of an array of techniques that indeed ultimately facilitate the process of reflection. However, as with the case of reflection tools, these techniques seem to be focused on developing the supervisee in terms of managing heavy caseloads. Conversely, respective authors on reflection prescribe the use of reflection tools and techniques for the professional and personal development of supervisees into the best social workers they can possibly be.

Recommendations

- Continuing education of supervisors should not just focus on the basics of supervision, but should also focus on sophisticated tools and techniques in order to facilitate reflective supervision of social workers.
- Supervisors should incorporate other tools and techniques not mentioned in this study - for instance, tools using different forms and platforms of social media.

5.3. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This research study was aimed at understanding the experiences of intermediate frontline social workers regarding the execution of social work individual reflective supervision sessions within South Africa. In order to make provision for this understanding, this study attempted to formulate a conceptual framework for individual reflective supervision of intermediate frontline social workers. Moreover, the study articulated a myriad of reflection tools and techniques for the execution of individual reflective supervision sessions within the implementation phase of the supervision process. Findings from the empirical investigation showed the need to employ critical reflection during individual

supervision sessions inter alia. It is fundamental that the following areas be further explored:

- A quantitative study establishing the significance of critical reflection with regards to social work practiced within South Africa.
- Barriers or challenges associated with implementing the practice of critical reflection during individual reflective supervision sessions, as most participants voiced concerns about individual supervision sessions that focused on administrative work more than anything else.
- A survey on the advantages and disadvantages of implementing an "open door policy" in social service organisations, instead of structured individual supervision sessions.
- A more in depth study on the tools and techniques supervisors may employ to facilitate individual reflective supervision sessions, as the ones articulated in this study were based on the interpretation of the researcher from the participants' narratives. A study on the use of social media as platform for reflective supervision (specifically in rural areas and distant supervision) should be promoted.
- A qualitative study on social work supervisory relationships, specifically the use of power in supervision and its impact on service delivery, as some participants voiced concerns about supervisors who practiced an authoritarian kind of supervisory style within respective organisations.
- This research study should be replicated in other provinces in South Africa in order to generalise the results, as this study only investigated the experiences of intermediate frontline social workers in the Western Cape. The study should also be expanded to include newly qualified social workers.

5.4. KEY FINDINGS AND MAIN CONCLUSIONS

The research question of this study was demarcated to and aimed at understanding the experiences of intermediate frontline social workers with regards to the execution of individual reflective supervision sessions within a South African context. A number of factors were established as reasons that warranted this study to be carried out. Some of these factors included the absence of any studies on the execution of individual reflective supervision sessions having being conducted in South Africa. Research studies on the

supervision process have also gradually received exceedingly less attention on a global scale.

The researcher interviewed, transcribed and meticulously analysed twenty participants' narratives to come up with the following key findings and main conclusions. Social workers are operating under extreme harsh conditions, where supervisors have the burden to ensure that supervisees meet organisational targets. This has resulted in the lack of frequent, structured, quality individual supervision sessions. Instead a practice of "on the run" supervision is being implemented in social service organisations, which is available for prompt and short discussions regarding the challenges supervisees encounter in managing caseloads among other things.

In the event that supervisees receive structured individual supervision, administrative work seems to be the main focus with no acknowledgement whatsoever of the supervisees personal development plan. Supervisors are failing to facilitate critical reflection during these supervision sessions which ensures the development of supervisees' strengths and weaknesses. Supervisees do however receive substantial administration and educational support in order to make them more efficient and effective in closing cases. Nevertheless, supervisors should be commended to be doing their best to guide supervisees in their professional development given the unfavourable working conditions that have become an everyday ordeal in social service organisations, and which is being normalised in South Africa.

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Annexure 1

Themes for interview schedule for social work supervisees

1. Biographical information

- Gender
- Years of experience as a social worker
- Home language

2. Supervision

- What does supervision entail to you
- Frequency of individual supervision
- Duration of individual supervision sessions
- Main focus of individual supervision sessions

3. Execution of individual supervision

- Describe a typical supervision session
- Opportunities for reflection
- Reflection tools utilized during individual supervision
- Techniques utilized during individual supervision



Annexure 2

Informed consent for participants

Consent for social work supervisees to participate in the research on the execution of individual reflective supervision sessions: experiences of intermediate frontline social workers.

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Nyasha H Chibaya 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 an intermediate frontline social worker and are deemed eligible to participate in the study. You will take part in this research in your personal professional capacity therefore not representing your organisation.

1. Purpose of study

The purpose of the study is to gain an understanding of intermediate frontline social workers' experiences regarding the execution of individual reflective supervision sessions.

If you volunteer to participate in the study you will be asked to do the following:

- Be available for the conducting of an interview at a convenient time determined and agreed upon by you and the researcher.
- Should you require any further information about the research you can contact the researcher via email at 17682185@sun.ac.za.

2. Potential risks and discomforts

No harm is foreseen during or after the research. The research is considered low risk in terms of ethical considerations. All interviews are regarded as confidential therefore no personal details of participants will be included in the research.

3. Confidentiality

Interviews will be conducted in private and the researcher will not record any personal identifying information of the participants. Data collected from participants will be stored on a password protected computer and hard copies will be stored in a locked cabinet at the researcher's home.

4. Participation and withdrawal

The participants involvement in this study is completely voluntary. If you volunteer to take part in this study, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences. You may refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and still remain in the study. The researcher may withdraw you from the research study if the circumstances warrant doing so.

5. Identification of investigators

Should there be need to further information regarding the research study, you may contact the researcher through telephone 0604025034 or via email at 17682185@sun.ac.za. If you have any questions or concerns about the research study, feel free to contact the supervisor, Prof L. Engelbrecht, Department of Social Work, Stellenbosch University via email at lke@sun.ac.za or by telephone 0210802073.

6. Payment for participation

The cost of the research will be carried by the researcher and no costs will be expected from the participant. Participants will not receive remuneration from the researcher for their participation in the research study.

Signature of research participant

The information above was described to me by Nyasha H Chibaya. 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. I have been given copy of this form.

Full name of participant

Signature of participant

Signature of investigator

I declare that I explained the above information given in this document to (participant name). He/she was given sufficient opportunity to ask any questions.

Signature of investigator



Annexure 3

NOTICE OF APPROVAL

REC Humanities New Application Form

15 August 2017

Project number: SW-2017-0419-480

Project Title: The execution of individual reflective supervision sessions: Experiences of intermediate frontline social workers

Dear Mr. Nyasha Chibaya

Your REC Humanities New Application Form submitted on 1 August 2017 was reviewed and approved by the REC: Humanities.

Please note the following about your approved submission:

Ethics approval period: 14 July 2017 - 13 July 2020

Please take note of the General Investigator Responsibilities attached to this letter. You may commence with your research after complying fully with these guidelines.

If the researcher deviates in any way from the proposal approved by the REC: Humanities, the researcher must notify the REC of these changes.

Please use your SU project number (SW-2017-0419-480) on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your project.

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.

FOR CONTINUATION OF PROJECTS AFTER REC APPROVAL PERIOD

Please note that a progress report should be submitted to the Research Ethics Committee: Humanities before the approval period has expired if a continuation of ethics approval is required. The Committee will then consider the continuation of the project for a further year (if necessary)

Included Documents:

Document Type	File Name	Date	Version
Research Protocol/Proposal	CHIBAYA final research proposal	27/06/2017	
Informed consent	CHIBAYA Informed consent	27/06/2017	
Data collection tool	CHIBAYA THEMES Annexure 1	31/07/2017	

If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the REC office at cgraham@sun.ac.za.

Sincerely,

Clarissa Graham

REC Coordinator: Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities)