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ABSTRACT

The supervision of neophytes in all professional vocations is a complex and multifaceted process and not really achieved without adequate training and experience. This project's aim was to develop innovative, problem solving, teaching resources in the form of "case knowledge" episodes to provide "strategic knowing" activities for supervisors of professional learning and practice. This demonstration focuses on ways in which "The Supervision Casebook" provides those who are involved in the supervisory process with ways of understanding the characteristics and functioning of effective supervisory practice. It locates the project in its theoretical foundations and current developments in collaborative supervision and practicum contexts. The data gathering processes and the development stages of "The Supervision Casebook" resource are described. The Casebook contains 6 video vignettes, 30 narrative vignettes, readings on aspects of supervision, and workshop or inquiry focusing questions. The "stories" are drawn from early childhood, elementary, and high school contexts. They recount incidents of pre-preparation, midway and final stages in the field experience period. "The Supervision Casebook" does not set out to provide examples of exemplary practice and therefore suggest "easy-fix" solutions to concerns in the professional development of neophytes. It does, however, provide the means of challenging participants' existing "educational platforms" to encourage the identification of strategies and sources for relevant resolution of uncertainty and so enhance the continuous refinement of professional knowledge. Appendices provide a transcript of the dialogue in Case #6: Mutual Communication and Empathy, and a list of questions for focusing professional learning. (ND)

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TITLE: Partnerships in Professional Learning: The Supervision Casebook - An Action Learning Resource

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Abstract

The supervision of neophytes in all professional vocations is a complex and multifaceted process (Sergiovanni & Starrett, 1993; Richardson, 1990) and not really achieved without adequate training and experience.

This project's aim was to develop innovative, problem solving, teaching resources in the form of 'case knowledge' episodes to provide 'strategic knowing' activities for supervisors of professional learning and practice.

This demonstration will focus on ways in which The Supervision Casebook, action learning resource provides those who are involved in the supervisory process with ways of understanding the characteristics and functioning of effective supervisory practice. It will locate the project in its theoretical foundations and current developments in collaborative supervision and practicum contexts. The data gathering processes and the developmental stages of The Supervision Casebook resource will also be described.

The Casebook contains six (6) video vignettes, thirty (30) narrative vignettes, readings on aspects of supervision and workshop or inquiry focusing questions. The 'stories' are drawn from early childhood, elementary and high school contexts. They recount incidents of pre-preparation, midway and final stages in the field experience period.

The Supervision Casebook does not set out to provide examples of exemplary practice and therefore suggest 'easy-fix' solutions to concerns in the professional development of neophytes. It does, however, provide the means of challenging participant's existing 'educational platforms', to encourage the identification of strategies and sources for relevant resolution of uncertainty and so enhance the continuous refinement of professional knowledge. This demonstration will provide delegates with the opportunity to preview the Casebook and its theoretical grounding and evaluate its relevance as a teaching resource in their own professional context.

1.0 Introduction

The supervision of neophytes in all professional vocations is a complex and multifaceted process, (Sergiovanni & Starrett, 1993; Richardson, 1990) and not readily achieved without adequate training and experience.

This demonstration will focus on ways in which 'The Supervision Casebook', action learning resource provides those who are involved in the supervisory process with ways of understanding the characteristics and functioning of effective supervisory practice. It will locate the project in its theoretical foundations and current developments in collaborative supervision and practicum contexts. The data gathering processes and the developmental stages of The Supervision Casebook resource will also be described.

The Supervision Casebook does not set out to provide examples of exemplary practice and therefore suggest 'easy-fix' solutions to concerns in the professional development of neophytes. It does, however, provide the means of challenging participant's existing 'educational platforms', to encourage the identification of strategies and sources for relevant resolution of uncertainty and so enhance the continuous refinement of professional knowledge. The opportunity is provided to delegates to preview the Casebook and its theoretical grounding and evaluate its relevance as a teaching resource in their own professional context.

2.0 Aim of the Project

The project's aim was to develop innovative, problem solving, teaching resources in the form of 'case knowledge' episodes to provide 'strategic knowing' activities for supervisors of professional learning and practice.

3.0 Relevance of the Project

The relevance of this project rests on two current areas of concern relating to effective supervision. Namely, constructivist and cognitive dissonance theories of adult learning and the changing roles and responsibilities of school and university personnel that prompt the movement towards more collaborative supervisory practices.

Firstly, research based around constructivist beliefs is resulting in a better understanding of the processes of professional development (Lange & Burroughs-Lange, 1994; Brown, Collins & Duguid, 1987; Bodner, 1986). If professional growth occurs

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when learners are challenged to resolve incidents of uncertainty, then programs that can extend learning from experience are going to require resources designed specifically to support this transition.

While recent research-based knowledge of the supervisory experience has grown in volume and usefulness, practitioner examples and analyses remain a relatively untapped and minor part of the supervisor's information about the process in which they are involved. This project focuses on the development and production of teaching resources in the form of authentic 'case knowledge' episodes (Shulman, 1986).

By combining a research perspective and collected practitioner knowledge, the Supervision Casebook contributes to the growing body of case literature on practitioner experience. The episodes in the Casebook are the 'learning medium' for a personal and situation-specific response to a supervisory incident.

This practitioner research orientation to resource development is a way of responding to the need to focus professional learning on the entering knowledge base and learning style of the participant. The written and video vignettes and the associated workshop materials provide users with the opportunity for self-initiated and self-directed learning.

Secondly, one of the predominant features of educational reform proposals that have appeared in the 1980s is the establishment of the Professional Development Schools as the centres of inquiry and learning for prospective and practising teachers. What has become paramount for professional development in these schools is the provision of support resources for teachers so that they become confident about their ability to generate professionally sound ideas for their school and for the practice of teacher education as it occurs in the school.

This training focus for teachers in PDSs has clearly identified the need for professional development in supervisory roles and processes for those who are required to provide carefully articulated and consistent support for neophytes in collaborative problem solving activities. Even when the changes are not formalised in PDSs, closer collaborative arrangements are being established on many fronts (Pugach & Pasch, 1994).

To effectively carry out the new roles associated with these endeavours, appropriate training is required. Resources are needed which, whilst remaining rooted in realistic situations can allow collaborators to 'stop the action' in order to closely examine, reflect upon and learn from the process by 'reconstructing' their own experiences.

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4.0 Theoretical Framework

This section explores the theoretical assumptions underlying the development of the project. An acceptance of a constructivist view of learning and a recognition of the idiosyncratic nature of adult learning presents particular challenges for pedagogy, resource development and learning environments. As a consequence, professional development programs and their associated resources need to provide formats that allow 'personal' knowledge to develop, to be tested, and confirmed. The Supervision Casebook is such a response.

The assumptions underlying this project's development for resourcing the professional learning of supervisors can best be understood in relation to two identifiable directions within the research literature associated with teacher professional growth. Namely, change-oriented studies focussing on teacher behaviour and practices, and the 'learning to teach' research directed more at teachers' inner selves and cognitions as driving their actions. It is proposed here that these foci provide a fertile context for developing appropriate responses to supervisors' needs for professional development.

Recent policy in teacher education recognises the crucial role of thought and reflection, of cognition and meta-cognition in professional development (Shavelson & Stern, 1981; Clark & Peterson, 1986; Lange & Burroughs-Lange, 1994). Literature that focuses on the processes of learning-to-teach, explains teaching in terms of both contextual factors and personal teacher factors - beliefs, knowledge, attitudes and perceptions. For example, Richardson (1990) points out that the current learning-to-teach research as well as an increasing number of teacher development programs, have their focus on individual teacher cognition, beliefs and mental processes rather than on teaching behaviour 'per se'. Fenstermacher (1986) proposes that previously structured knowledge forms a set of empirical, value and situational premises that may be examined as justification for particular responses and classroom actions. There is, as Bodner (1986) argues, a need to recognise a constructivist view of how teachers attain their knowledge of teaching, rather than to follow the traditional view that has characterised many teacher education programs, namely, that knowledge exists out there, to be learned and then applied when needed in particular contexts. Bodner proposes that "each of us builds our own view of reality by trying to find order in the chaos of signals that impinge on our senses", (p.874). This perspective is also supported by Brown, Collins and Duguid (1989) when they argue that teachers gain their professional knowledge by authentic activity, which enables knowledge to be acquired in contexts that have meaning and purpose.

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Similarly, Palinscar and Brown (1989) use the idea of self-regulated learning. This notion suggests that teachers have some control over the processes of knowledge acquisition they use through their reflection on what they know about their own characteristics and the extent of the problem; through their use of meta-cognitive strategies to select, employ, monitor and evaluate their cognitive functioning; through motivation to direct their knowledge to similar situations of professional uncertainty.

This project took account of current insights into how teachers acquire their knowledge by looking at influences on their professional development. Handal and Lauvas (1987; 9) suggest that each teacher constructs a practical theory of teaching that is defined as "a person's (teacher's) private, integrated but ever changing system of knowledge, experience and values which is relevant to teaching practice at any particular time". They propose that what teachers do in their classrooms is underpinned by a framework of reasons for acting which are theory-based or practice-based, together with ethical and moral considerations as a basis for their decisions in relation to teaching and learning. In a study of experienced teachers, Lange and Burroughs-Lange (1994) found that as teachers went through the process of attaining professional knowledge, they developed strategies for getting comfortable with their image of themselves as effective teachers.

> "Experienced teachers preserve and build a sense of their own competence (and therefore confidence to act decisively) by developing a concept of professional practice which is both **knowledgeable** and **malleable** that is, firmly rooted in theory and experience whilst remaining infinitely adaptable to a situation which is conceived of having similarities to and differences from what is known" (Lange and Burroughs-Lange, 1994: 629).

Prescriptive training resources are not appropriate to this concept of teaching practice.

A teacher's 'educational platform' (Walker, 1971) provides a guiding system for decision making in responding to teaching and curriculum incidents. Besides the technical understandings that emerge from a blend of intuition and conceptual schemata, there is a floor of beliefs, opinions, values, and attitudes that provide a foundation for practice. A form of supervision is needed that attends to what the teaching episodes mean to teachers, how students interpret the activities of the teacher, what significance a teacher places on a supervisory intervention, rather than to a prescribed formula of teacher or supervisory behaviours (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1993;133). This supervisory model is based on intuitions from the multiform signals in any given situation and requires an educator who

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brings many frames of reference, conceptual blueprints and normative paradigms to bear on a reality that is immensely complex and therefore contains layers of intelligibility.

Hence, an educator's platform is rarely explicit. Neither is it static or uni-dimensional. It appears to be derived from a number of sources and strategies that have been used when confronted by a teaching and/or supervision episode that requires resolution. Life experiences, formal education and especially trial-and-error encounters in educational settings provide the elements of a responsive 'platform'. The Supervision Casebook addresses this complexity in supporting the professional learning of student teachers by providing 'episodes' not as exemplary practice, unlike many supervision protocol materials, but as a vehicle by which supervisors and their neophyte colleagues can test, evaluate and refine their individual understandings and hence their professional practice.

While recent research-based knowledge of the supervisory experience has grown in volume and usefulness, practitioner analyses remain a relatively small part of the supervisor's information about the process in which they are involved. By combining research and practitioner knowledge, the Supervision Casebook contributes to the growing body of 'case' literature with the vignette episodes providing the 'learning medium' for a more personal and situation-specific response to a supervisory incident.

'Cases' in this professional learning resource are not simply narrative accounts of an event but have a theoretical basis and represent a 'case of something' or an instance of a larger conception (Shulman, 1986).

The cases (in the Supervision Casebook) have been constructed in a way that indirectly reveals the knowledge structures and comprehension processes of the participants. The cases provide strategies for the student of the episode to make inferences about the participants' thinking and beliefs and to reflect on how they may have responded to a similar experience or context. The case method also provided unique opportunities for those who study supervisory experiences to examine their personal understandings and to reflect on their conceptions and evolving understandings of the supervisory process. The approach provides for professional learning of supervisory behaviour as both intervention and invention. Organised professional development experiences wherein professional literature is scrutinised, dissected and applied to supervision is necessary but may be an insufficient way for acquiring supervisory knowledge. To learn how to participate effectively in supervision may, for the individual, to have the opportunity to invent personal knowledge through 'experiencing' supervision as well as having access to practices developed through research. Supervision is increasingly viewed as an intellectual

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process by which successful practice is fundamentally founded on interpretation, problem-solving and reflection rather than simply on mastery of an assortment of supervisory skills.

The major theme that is evident in the current literature on supervisory knowledge is a theme of **complexity**. It would seem that professional development will be successful only to the extent that this complexity is recognised. The case method of presenting the 'stories' of supervision as used in the Supervision Casebook endeavours to reflect this complexity of supervision in the professional development of teachers.

5.0 The Project Development

The objectives of the resource development project were responded to in the following stages:

5.1 Interviews were conducted with a large number of persons who had involvement in the field experiences of student teachers, (administrators, co-operating teachers, university supervisors, and student teachers). A special feature of the collection of 'stories' about supervision was the consideration of practitioner knowledge from supervisory personnel at various stages in their professional lives.

5.2 From these recalled stories, thirty (30), narrative vignettes of 800-1000 words were written and six (6), four minute video episodes were crafted and professionally scripted to capture a range of 'realistic' interactions of participants in the supervisory context. These vignettes present brief accounts of the challenges, successes, and failures that are sometimes experienced by those involved in supervision by describing the circumstances of each event, its consequences, and the ongoing thoughts and feelings of the participants. In some vignettes, multiple perspectives of the situation are described. (See Appendix 1 for an example)

5.3 A set of questions to be used by individuals or groups to focus and reflect on the concepts and principles of the supervisory process inherent in the materials were developed and trialled.

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5.4 Position or exploratory papers and a number of short texts were researched and written to provide users of the resource with easy access to the descriptive, theoretical and research literature of supervisory models and practices.

6.0 Description of the Casebook

The Casebook contains six (6) video vignettes, thirty (30) narrative vignettes, readings on aspects of supervision and workshop or inquiry focusing questions. The package is designed to support the knowledge and skill development of those involved in the supervisory process, namely university and school personnel, and student teachers. The narrative and video vignettes, taken from real life incidents, provide contexts which demand active, problem solving responses to the many goals and concerns of the supervision of neophytes. The 'stories' are drawn from early childhood, elementary and high school contexts. They recount incidents of pre-preparation, midway and final stages in the field experience period.

The written vignettes which have been created from the 'stories' of school and university personnel describe the circumstances of an incident, its consequences and the ongoing thoughts and feelings of the participants. Unlike case studies, which are usually written by observers or researchers, these vignettes were presented as brief accounts about the challenges, successes, and failures that participants face as they are involved in supervisory experiences.

Readings are provided on 20 key areas involved in the supervisory process, which may be triggered by the stories in the Casebook. Also included in the support resources are 2 more-detailed papers: one on the collaborative processes of supervision; and one on issues of power and authority within the supervision relationship. Extensive suggestions are made for further reading resources.

The Casebook resources can be used by all participants, either individually or in group settings, for enhancing the quality and effectiveness of learning through practice. So the orientation is of self-directed and self-initiated learning. By this process, participants will be able to further enhance their own individual ways of responding to the issues, practices and processes of effective supervision.

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7.0 How to use the Casebook resources?

Although the resources inevitably have to be presented in some order within the package, no significance is attached to that order. The resources may be 'dipped into' at any point. The starting point is probably best determined in response to a felt need. The user(s) may focus on just one element of the package or range across the different materials according to a preferred learning pathway.

In trials the video or textual vignettes have raised questions which have prompted the users to seek out information from the support readings section - sometimes at the level of definition, sometimes leading to more in-depth reading. The scripts of the video vignettes were added to enable group members to take these away from their workshop to continue the reflective process.

The "Questions for focusing Professional Learning" (see Appendix 2) were developed for use with the video and written vignettes. Focusing on (at least some of these) questions prior to and following viewing the vignettes can provide starting points and support structures for the reflective process and enhance the learning links between the resource triggers and individual's own experiences.

The Casebook is presented in a loose-leaf format with the video case integral to the ring binder. Sections and pages may be easily removed and photocopied for use in workshops and professional development activities. The binder also allows for the possibility of addition of materials from other sources as users bring their own 'stories' into the reflective study process.

The character of the resource package with the variety of incidents described, the nature of media used and the generic focus questions provided enables an inquirer of supervision to enter and use the resource at any point that responds to their individual learning style or level of existing knowledge. The 'vignettes' have not been developed as protocol materials, nor as examples of the 'right' ways to respond to incidents and behaviours but as stimuli to focus participants' (teachers, university supervisors, and student teachers) reflections on their own experiences and knowledge.

The demonstration will have provided a brief preview of the learning resources to encourage delegates to evaluate the approach taken and its relevance as a teaching resource in their own professional context.

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Appendix 1

 # 6 : MUTUAL COMMUNICATION AND EMPATHY

[*SCENE : The setting is a elementary school classroom. Mr R, the student teacher supervisor, is seated at his desk engrossed in reading a textbook. The children have left for the day. Peter, his student teacher, returns from the library and enters the room laden down with books and other teaching resources.*]

Mr R: [*looking up from his book*] : How do you think you went in that last lesson you took today, Peter?

Peter : Oh, I think it went reasonably well.

Mr R : Really! I am surprised to hear you say that. I thought that the children were out of control for most of the time. The noise level was much too high.

Peter : I didn't realise it was that bad.

Mr R : Weren't you aware that many of the children were not on-task? Weren't you aware of the extremely high noise level in the room?

Peter : Well, yes. I did notice that a number of the children were playing around when they should have been working. Some were also inattentive and talking amongst themselves when I was talking.

Mr R : And what did you do about it?

Peter: [*unnappily*] : Nothing. I thought, if I said anything, they would either just ignore me or challenge my authority.

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Mr R: [*sternly*] : That's not good enough, Peter. At this stage, I certainly don't think I could take the risk of leaving you alone with the children. What are you going to do about it? Have you thought about how you could improve your teaching in the future?

Peter : I am sorry Mr R. I don't really know what to do! I get so confused and unsure of myself at times. Perhaps the fault lies with my preparation. Maybe what I plan is just not interesting enough for the children and so they find other things to do.

Mr R : I don't really think that's the main problem. There are lots of things in the curriculum that children have to learn that they don't find very interesting. However, you still have to be able to keep control. You still have to be able to have them sitting on the edge of their seats listening to you.

Peter : I guess so, but how do I do that?

Mr R : If you don't know by now, I doubt that you ever will. Look, Peter, I can only do so much for you. You are going to have to help yourself too. By the way, here is your mid-point evaluation report. You probably won't be very happy with it.

[*Mr R resumes reading his textbook.*]

Peter:[*reading his report*] : You have rated me at a "marginal performance". This is not very good, is it? That means I am "at risk" and the university will have to be notified.

Mr R: [*continuing to read his textbook*] : No. It is not very good.

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Peter : I don't think I am as bad as this. I have really put in a lot of time and tried very hard. I love working with kids and teaching is the only thing I have ever wanted to do.

Mr R : That's all very well, but I really have to mark you on your teaching performance.

Peter: [*reading*] : But you say here, "Peter needs to make greater use of group work". You told me last week that independent contract learning and group work were a total waste of time. You also write, "A lot more thought and attention need to be given to lesson preparation". Yet, a moment ago, you just told me that my preparation wasn't a major problem.

Mr R: [*standing, and moving towards door*] : Look, Peter, I can't discuss this with you now. I am really quite busy. I knew you would be disappointed, but I don't think you have done a very good job to date.

Peter: [*also rising*] : But this is my whole future. Can't you find the time to discuss this report with me?

Mr R: [*exiting the room*] : No, I'm afraid not. I have to return this book; then do some shopping; and then get to the Post Office before it closes.

[*Exit Mr R, leaving behind a disconsolate Peter*]

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Appendix 2 Questions for focusing Professional Learning

What has interested you most about this episode?

What seem to be the goal(s) of each participant in the supervisory context?

How were these goals articulated/ demonstrated in the episode portrayed?

What strategies were used by the participants to achieve their goals?

How effective do you believe they were in the achievement of their goals?

In what other ways could they have achieved their goals?

What were the professional learning outcomes for each of the participants?

Are you aware of a similar supervisory episode? What were the outcome(s) for participants? Could these have been changed?

How might the experience of the vignette, change your role/ participation in the supervisory process in the future?

Could you relate this episode within a broader model of supervision? What are the characteristics of this model? What are the perceived outcomes for participants who use such an approach?