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## BRIEF REPORTS / RAPPORTS SOMMAIRES

### RECONCEPTUALIZING COUNSELLOR TRAINEE SUPERVISION

VANCE PEAVY  
*University of Victoria*

#### *Background of the Project*

Supervision of counsellor-trainees is considered essential in almost all training programs. Traditionally, supervision is given on trainee skills such as interviewing skills, group leading skills, client appraisal skills and so on. Supervision is usually provided by a member of the training institution and the trainee is placed in a host practice site which has been approved by the training institution. Traditional supervision is expert oriented and strongly focussed on *interviewing skills*.

In 1980, our Department<sup>1</sup> was authorized and funded to provide a distance education counsellor training program. The community of Kamloops, B.C., which is about 500 Km distant from the University of Victoria, was selected for this project. A group of 16 applicants was identified as eligible for admission to graduate study. All 16 of the trainees live in or near the community of Kamloops and all are employed either as school counsellors or teacher-counsellors at junior or senior secondary schools. Fifty percent of the instruction is being delivered to the community of Kamloops over a period of two years. Students attend classes on campus during two summer sessions for the other 50%. Supervision of counselling practice is being carried out in Kamloops at students' regular place of employment.

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Reprint requests should be sent to Vance Peavy, Department of Psychological Foundations in Education, University of Victoria, P.O. Box 1700, Victoria, B.C., V8W 2Y2.

#### *Need for Reconceptualization*

It has been necessary to reconceptualize supervision of trainees for this project since all applicants are employed as well as in training. It is the purpose of this report to briefly describe this reconceptualization and indicate the research which accompanies this reconceptualization.

A fundamental departure from traditional supervision seemed necessary for the following reason. In traditional supervision the trainee either is supervised in settings where the training institution exercises administrative control (for example, a clinic operated by the University) or else is *placed* in a host agency where the trainee is more like a visitor with limited privileges with little or no actual responsibility for client welfare. In contrast, trainees in our project are employed and work as fully responsible employees of an agency completely separate from the training institution. In other words, the trainees are both *trainees* in a graduate counselling program and *employees* of an agency which has full responsibility for client (pupil) welfare.

In order to adapt to this unusual situation, we made three important decisions. The first was to convert the supervisory process, at least partially, into a *consultative* process. The second decision was to use *peer* supervision as one aspect of the overall supervisory process. The third decision was to *broaden* the scope of supervision to include three categories of supervisory focus: client-centered focus, trainee-centered focus and structure-centered focus.

*Client-centered supervision.* The topic of this type of supervision is the client (pupil), or clients (group of pupils, parents). The trainee's dilemma is "How can I analyze and interpret this client(s)' problem in the most efficacious manner?" A primary goal for both supervisor and trainee is to formulate an interpretation and plan that will help the client(s) in question. A secondary goal is that the trainee will learn something through interaction with his or her supervisor on this problem which will add to understandings of similar cases in the future.

*Trainee-centered supervision.* In contrast with client-centered focus, here attention is directed toward the trainee's *counselling-competencies*. Counselling competency deficit is identified as lack of a) *conceptual knowledge*, b) *technical skill*, c) *self confidence*, or d) *professional objectivity*.

The supervisor's aim is to educate the trainee toward the goal of increased counsellor competency, both with the type of client problem at hand and in similar instances in the future.

*Structure-centered supervision.* In this type of supervision, the focus is upon aspects of the organization or administration which bear upon the effectiveness of counselling. Sample topics include: leadership ambiguity; conflict generating rules and regulations; staff-administration communication break-downs; lack of attention to the human factor; and so on.

*Modes of supervision.* Supervision is being carried out in four ways: 1) an assistant supervisor residing in the community of Kamloops makes on-site visits at the request of individual trainees and provides one-to-one supervisory tutorials; 2) a commuting Departmental supervisor provides both group supervision and one-to-one supervisory tutorials on each monthly visit; 3) the Departmental supervisor provides supervision by means of telephone and mail; and 4) peer supervision. Supervision by the Departmental supervisor is the main mode and incorporates the evaluative aspect of supervision. However, peer consultation is systematically incorporated into the supervisory process. Emphasis is placed upon trainee *request* for supervision — a procedure which contrasts with traditional supervision which is usually characterized by imposition of supervision on

trainees with reference to topics selected by supervisors.

#### *Research*

The original conceptualization (Peavy, 1981) was prepared as a document to guide both supervisors and trainees in the practical and research aspects of the supervisory project. The document was adapted from Caplan's (1964, 1970) studies on mental health consultation. The general research methodology is phenomenological and incorporates the *critical incident* procedure. Using detailed forms to document trainee and supervisor activities and appraisals of the three supervisory foci and the many procedures used to implement the supervisory process, case examples are being built up to both describe and evaluate the program of supervision. Trainees have been given instructions on documenting *critical incidents* which indicate how the supervisory procedures either provide benefit or go wrong.

*Status.* The training program is 50% completed. The supervisory component was initiated in September 1981 and will be completed in April 1982. A final research report is expected to be completed by September 1982.

#### *Reference Note*

1. The Department of Psychological Foundations in Education provides all counsellor training at the University of Victoria.

#### *References*

- Caplan, G. *Principles of preventive psychiatry*. New York: Basic Books, 1964.
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- Peavy, R. V. *Supervision of employed counsellors in training*. Department of Psychological Foundations in Education, University of Victoria, 1981, 35p., mimeo.

#### *ABOUT THE AUTHOR*

R. Vance Peavy is Professor of Counselling research and practice in the Department of Psychological Foundations in Education at the University of Victoria, B.C.