

Exploring Ways of Acquiring to Become Competent Social Work Supervisors: A Study Based on the Social Work Supervisor Training Program in DG City

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Abstract: With the development of social work professional services, the vigorous promotion of social work education practice, and the transformation of social work service management methods and management contents such as result-oriented, competence-oriented, goal-oriented and accountability principles. Social work supervision, as an important guarantee of professional service quality, has become increasingly important in the process of social work education and social work management. Social work supervision plays a very important role in enhancing the professional competence of social workers, improving the quality of professional services and the effectiveness of social work services. Based on the practical study of the social work supervision program in DG city, this paper explores the problems and challenges of role transformation, capacity enhancement, and relationship coordination faced by supervisors in front-line social work positions, especially those social workers who have just become social work supervisors in the process of becoming competent social work supervisors. Based on the analysis of the connotation of competent social work supervisors, this paper proposes the way options in establishing a clear social work supervisory role, giving full play to the supervisory functions of the three aspects of social work, establishing a harmonious and trusting supervisory relationship, and being good at supervisory reflection.

1. Introduction

Since October 2006, China has proposed to build a social work talent team with a large scale, reasonable structure and good quality [1]. With the vigorous promotion and development of social work education practice in China's PRD, the construction of social work professionals and the quality of social workers' services have received increasing attention, and social work supervision, as an important means of ensuring the quality of professional services, has shown a surge in the demand for social work supervisory talents in the process of social work professionalization, and

the requirements for effective social work supervisory talents and supervisory effectiveness have increasingly higher [2]. In the West, social work supervision has become an important feature of the social work profession as an important part of the social work education process and social work practice. And with the development of social work professional services, the vigorous promotion of social work education practice, and the transformation of social work service management methods and contents such as effectiveness orientation and accountability principles, the importance of social work supervision as an important guarantee of social workers' capacity enhancement and professional service quality has become increasingly prominent. However, under the current social work development and social work professional education environment as well as the cultivation path of local supervisors, due to the late start of social work professional education in China and the slow construction of social work supervisory personnel, many social work supervisors who undertake supervisory work, and many of them have not received relatively systematic and comprehensive training and effective guidance on supervisory work, are prone to carry an overload in this position. The supervisors themselves need to go through a process of internal growth in response to the various challenges of supervision practice that come their way. Therefore, how to acquire to become a competent social work supervisor can be explored in depth in terms of the role of social work supervisors, the function of supervision, the relationship of supervision, the way of supervision, and the reflection of supervision [3].

Social work in DG has been developing rapidly, with the institutional foundation gradually consolidated, the pilot scale steadily expanded, the service effect gradually revealed and the development model gradually taking shape. DG has started the selection and cultivation of social work supervisors since 2011, and currently there are about 300 social work supervisors in employment, including three levels of junior supervisors, intermediate supervisors and senior supervisors. All social work supervisors are distributed among social organizations engaged in social work services in the city. The average working experience of social work supervisors in social work services is close to ten years, all of them have bachelor's degree or above and hold intermediate level or above social work certificates [4]. Since the start of the social work supervision program in DG city, several periods of supervisor selection have been carried out, and social work supervisor training activities with different themes are carried out regularly every year. The professional level of supervisors who cannot be tiered has been improved through different ways, and good results have been achieved. This paper attempts to explore a new way of acquiring to be a competent social work supervisor by taking the DG city social work supervisor program as an example.

2. The Importance of Social Work Supervision

2.1. Promote the Growth of Social Workers' Professional Skills

Social work supervision is an indirect service approach in social work. It is a system and practice of regular or continuous guidance and supervision of new social workers, frontline social workers, and interns in the areas of ethical beliefs, professional conduct, professional knowledge, service skills, work attitudes, working relationships, and team dynamics by supervisors who have received professional education in social work and have senior practice and management skills in social work service organizations [5]. It is a system of work and practice in which new social workers, frontline social workers, and interns are regularly or continuously coached and supervised to improve their professional skills, reduce burnout, promote their growth, and ensure service quality [5]. From this definition, it is clear that social work supervision plays a very important role in promoting the growth of social workers' professional skills, preventing and alleviating burnout, etc.

2.2. Improve the Quality of Social Work Services

Social work supervision, although used as an indirect service approach in social work, plays the most effective way to guarantee the quality of services in practice. Especially, it plays a mentor-apprentice role for junior social workers with short years of service and little experience [6]. The establishment of a supervision system in social work service organizations, under the educational guidance of supervisors, can effectively guide social workers to grasp the needs of service recipients, develop reasonable service plans, and assist social workers in timely reflection and improvement of service content during the service to achieve the goal of providing the best quality service to service recipients.

2.3. Guarantee the Normal Operation of Social Work Service Agencies

Social work service organizations are the main vehicle for providing social work. Social work service agencies, regardless of their size, need to establish an organizational structure to ensure the normal operation of the agency. Social work supervisors are employed by social work service agencies and are equivalent to being the middle management of the agency and need to perform the function of uploading and bridging [7]. Therefore, social work supervisors can effectively carry out the purpose and administrative requirements of social work service agencies and help the implementation and successful completion of the agencies' work.

2.4. Promote the Professional Development of Social Work

The social work profession is a very applied profession [8]. Only when social workers continue to provide better quality services to their clients and have more ability to solve social needs and social problems, this profession can gain social recognition. And social work supervisors, as the best of social workers, can promote the development of the social work profession by establishing a scientific and reasonable supervisory system, so that more social workers can get training in social work knowledge and skills, master the ability to do their jobs competently, and gain the recognition of the whole society.

3. Common Problems Faced by Traditional Social Work Supervisors

3.1. Unclear Positioning of the Role of Social Work Supervisors

Social work supervisors mostly emerge from within social work service organizations and often go through the process from frontline social workers with little work experience to team leaders with some work experience to supervisors with some years of work experience and some work experience. Therefore, social work supervisors often take on multiple roles such as supervisor, manager, and service provider. Role conflicts often arise between these roles. For example, the supervisor is not only the supervisor of the social worker, exercising the supervision of the service and the accomplishment of the project goals, but also the "master" of the social worker, exercising the care, education and support for the growth of the social worker. The need for rigid management on the one hand and flexible supervision on the other [9] often confuses the role of supervisors and causes greater distress.

3.2. Single Form of Social Work Supervision

Social work supervision often uses both individual supervision and group supervision to carry

out supervision. Individual supervision focuses on the individualized needs and problems of social workers. The advantage of individual supervision is that it can provide a deeper understanding of the cognitive and emotional problems faced by social workers, but the disadvantage is that it can take a lot of the supervisor's time. Group supervision focuses on the common problems faced by social workers. The advantage of group supervision is that it consumes less of the supervisor's time and can meet the needs of most of the supervisees, and the disadvantage is that it does not provide timely attention to the individualized needs of the supervisees [10]. In the actual supervision work, supervisors are prone to fall into the phenomenon of valuing group supervision at the expense of individual supervision. Supervisors also often regard group supervision as a process of "teaching" and "learning" and consider training, teaching, and assignments as group supervision, neglecting the interaction and communication with supervisees in the supervision process [11].

3.3. The Effectiveness of Social Work Supervision is Not Obvious

Social work supervisors are prone to carry out supervision without fully understanding the needs of the supervisee because of their role orientation and self-perception. The supervisees always expect the supervisors to give answers to their questions when they receive supervision. If the supervisors do not establish a good supervisory relationship with the supervisees, it will lead to the supervisees receiving supervision with emotions and eventually affect the effectiveness of supervision. In addition, some supervisors are not updated with the latest practical knowledge and content because they have been away from the front-line social work service for too long, and often explain the old knowledge, which does not allow the supervisees to gain valuable new knowledge, and over time they lack trust in the supervisor, resulting in the ineffectiveness of supervision.

4. The Connotation of Acquiring to Be a Competent Social Work Supervisor

4.1. Selection Paths of Social Work Supervisors

Social work supervisors mainly come from the following ways: first, experienced social work supervisors or senior social workers from Hong Kong and Singapore, for example, Shenzhen and Dongguan hired Hong Kong supervisors from service organizations such as the Hong Kong Council of Social Service in 2008 and 2009, respectively, as supervisors of social work services in the region [12]. Secondly, social work faculty from higher education institutions, especially social work service organizations or public service organizations founded by social work faculty themselves, mostly hire social work faculty from that school to supervise social work services. Third, they are senior practitioners from traditional social service agencies. Fourthly, they are supervisory talents cultivated from the senior and excellent social work talents who have engaged in social work services in the region for many years. Taking Shenzhen and Guangzhou, where the training of local supervisors was first carried out, as an example, and radiating the surrounding cities, two types of training methods for social work supervisors can be summarized, namely, the apprentice follower method and the college training method [13]. These two ways of social work supervisor selection have their own strengths, present certain effectiveness, and gradually promote the construction of social work talents and the development of social work professional services in the region.

4.2. Educational Background of Social Work Supervision

A competent and capable social work supervisor has an important background in social work professional education. Competent supervisors begin with a systematic education in social work. For example, all social work supervisors in DG City have a bachelor's degree or higher. Supervisors

have mastered the basic knowledge of social work and have the relevant theoretical research level during their college years. Secondly, social work supervisors have basically acquired rich experience in supervisory practice work and mature personality and mentality through practical learning under systematic education. These traits not only enable supervisors to get along smoothly with supervisees of different personalities and states, but also have enough ability to inspire and promote supervisees to obtain changes and improve their professional skills while adhering to social work values.

4.3. Competency Orientation of Social Work Supervisors

First, social worker supervisors need to have the ability to understand social work professional ethics, professional ethics and service principles, the purpose and mission of social work service organizations, the social welfare system, policies and regulations and livelihood issues, and social service resources that can serve the professional development of supervisees. Second, social work supervisors need to have the ability to give beneficial supervision to supervisees, promote the awareness of active learning among supervisees, assist supervisees in mastering social work expertise and theories, teach practical skills, and help supervisees to improve their overall service level [14]. Third, social work supervisors need to have the ability to establish a good supervisory relationship with their supervisees. The supervisor needs to maintain good communication with the supervisee, be familiar with the supervisee's abilities, strengths, experiences and shortcomings, pay attention to and understand the supervisee's difficulties and stresses, provide timely educational and supportive support, and accompany the supervisee to achieve growth. Fourth, social work supervisors need to have the ability of self-reflection.

5. Options for Acquiring Ways to Become a Competent Social Work Supervisor

Acquiring to become a competent social work supervisor requires not only active and humble learning from senior supervisors, but also systematic training from different social work training institutions to improve oneself. The author also believes that in order to become a competent social work supervisor, one must have professional identity, professional autonomy, supervisory competence and self-confidence, grasp the differences and balance of various influencing factors in supervisory practice, discover the potential abilities and strengths of the supervisee, and accompany the supervisee to obtain growth and support. From this, it is possible to choose as well as the way to acquire.

5.1. Establish a Clear Role of Social Work Supervisor

The importance of social work supervision in social work education and practice has been known to everyone. However, for supervisors in frontline social work positions, especially for social workers who have just become social work supervisors, they often face awkward and confusing situations. For example, after being promoted from a frontline social worker to a social work supervisor, they will become a superior-subordinate relationship with their colleagues. How do social work supervisors handle the relationship after the role change? With the same educational background and practice experience, how do social work supervisors handle the professional and managerial challenges? How does a social work supervisor manage to effectively coordinate team strengths, integrate team resources, and build a sense of belonging and cohesiveness in the team? How can social work supervisors resolve conflicts with frontline social workers? How can social work supervisors balance the work within the supervisors' responsibilities and the frontline workload they need to undertake?

For this reason, a proper understanding and clarity of the role of the social work supervisor is one of the important elements of becoming a competent supervisor. Supervisors need to first clarify: why do they become social work supervisors? What do you think is the role of a social work supervisor? What conditions and qualities should this role possess? Are you ready to enter this role with the appropriate skills and mindset? What are the possible obstacles in entering the role? What factors will affect the supervisor's entry into the role? How to better enter the role and deal with the dilemmas that may be encountered in the process? The above questions and reflections will help supervisors who are ready to become or have already become social work supervisors to be mentally prepared in time. At the same time, social work supervisors need to realize that pressure and challenges are bound to come, but the key is their own mindset and attitude towards the challenges, and to make good use of various resources such as social work service organizations, senior supervisors and teams in the supervisory process to promote the rapid improvement of supervisors' abilities and experience.

5.2. Give Full Play to the Supervisory Function of the Three Aspects of Social Work

In the process of social work supervision, the administrative function, educational function and supportive function are in a three-pronged position. With the development of Chinese social work practice and the construction and improvement of the talent team mechanism, the selection and training methods for social work supervisors based on the actual development of social work in different regions also provide more specific guidelines and regulations for supervisors in terms of the three functions, roles and responsibilities of administration, education and support.

One is task-oriented and involves administrative supervision at the executive and management levels, exercising authority, reward and punishment. Supervisors focus on organizational barriers that affect services and provide supervisees with organizational structures and institutional resources that help them carry out their work, enabling them to enhance their sense of belonging to the social work service agency and their sense of effectiveness in the organization, in order to obtain more resources for service enhancement. This mainly includes recruitment and selection of social workers; placement and guidance of social workers to carry out their work; planning and assigning work suitable for social workers; work inspection and assessment and evaluation; work coordination and recognition; assisting social work service agencies to develop policies; and uploading and establishing communication and feedback channels [15].

Secondly, technically oriented educational supervision involving the knowledge level exercises professional power and authority, and supervisors pay more attention to the barriers affecting the services at the knowledge and ability level, and by guiding them to establish professional identity and uphold social work beliefs, they impart and teach supervisees some knowledge and skills necessary to carry out social work services, so that supervisees can enrich their experience, sharpen their skills, gain a sense of competence and self-confidence, and To enhance the effectiveness of their professional services [16]. Specifically, supervisees are taught about social work ethics, client groups, social service agencies, social problems and coping skills, social work services and procedures, and professional counseling and advice.

Third, and supportive supervision that is person-centered and involves emotional and expressive affective dimensions, exercises exemplary authority and is more concerned with the emotional aspects that affect the barriers to service [17]. By creating a favorable psychological climate and interpersonal environment, the supervisor alleviates the various stresses that affect the supervisee's performance and engagement status, so that they gain motivation and a sense of service accomplishment and work productively. This includes assisting supervisees to adapt to and correctly face the difficulties encountered in work and the various emotions arising from frustration,

anxiety, disappointment, anger, stress, etc., and providing timely attention and emotional support so that supervisees feel a sense of attention and security and are willing to continue to try and engage in work; expressing confidence in and appreciation for the efforts made by supervisees, assisting supervisees to discover the effectiveness of their work, so that they can regain their self-belief and We help supervisees to discover the effectiveness of their work, to regain their self-belief and motivation, to stimulate their morale, and to gain a sense of achievement and satisfaction in service; we help them to discover, enhance, and strengthen their inner resources and abilities, and provide them with a platform to show their abilities; we sustain their belief in the development of social work and promote their identification with the profession, etc.

The three major functions of social work supervision have their own focus and directional content, but they also influence each other, are interrelated and intertwined. Only through a correct understanding of the three functions of supervision can we make correct and timely responses and treatments for different situations in supervision practice.

5.3. Establish a Harmonious and Trusting Supervisory Relationship

The establishment of a good supervisory relationship between social work supervisors and supervisees is an important channel for effective implementation of the supervisory function and the active growth of the supervisees. In a good supervisory relationship, the supervisee identifies with the supervisor and is willing to take the initiative to accept social work supervision and use it in practice, so that professional services can be developed and personal improvement can be achieved. To establish a good supervisory relationship, the supervisor first needs to make the supervisee feel an atmosphere of companionship and support, so that they can feel the supervisor's concern and support for their state, which lays the foundation for the establishment of a trusting relationship between the supervisor and the supervisee, so that the supervisee is willing and confident to face and solve difficult situations after the interview with the supervisor. Second, the supervisor needs to clarify mutual expectations and supervision goals with the supervisee, understand the supervisee's abilities, strengths, and weaknesses, etc., share the supervisor's style and approach, and improve mutual understanding and communication [18]. Again, a supportive working atmosphere needs to be established, including guiding supervisees to actively share their work dilemmas and service feelings, encouraging them to actively participate in supervision discussions and service innovations, providing them with a platform to develop their personal talent abilities, focusing on strengthening group building and cohesiveness within the team, and using a variety of ways such as face-to-face meetings, phone calls, and the Internet to convey this concern for work and personal development in a timely manner to Under this good supervision relationship, supervisees can trust, feel at ease and enjoy to carry out professional services and promote personal growth.

5.4. Good at Supervisory Reflection

In addition to paying attention to the above mentioned supervisory roles, responsibilities, functions and skills, actively learning and applying them to supervisory practice, social work supervisors also need to strengthen their professional service reflection and frequently reflect on whether their roles, abilities, approaches and handling skills in social work supervisory practice are appropriate and effective, whether they have handled the situation and situation of different supervisees differently and according to their abilities, and whether they have responded to the needs or requirements of different supervisees in a timely manner and whether they have affected the development of social work services and their professional image. Whether there are timely responses to the supervision needs or requirements of different supervisees, and whether there are situations that affect the development of social work services and the image of the profession. As a

result, social work supervisors need to have a dialogue with themselves all the time and reconstruct their practices in the face of various supervisory practice situations in order to better improve their supervisory practice experience and ability, help supervisees to grow rapidly, and promote the development and effectiveness of social work practice.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, using the DG City Social Work Supervision Project as a research platform, the author's participatory observation and research revealed that social work supervision plays a very important role in promoting the professional growth of social workers, safeguarding the quality of social work services, and promoting the professional development of social work. Social work supervisors need to become competent supervisors by clarifying their own roles, playing administrative, educational and supportive supervisory functions, and reflecting on their supervisory work in a timely manner. Of course, social work supervisors still face many challenges in the process of supervisory practice, and more scholars are needed to continuously research and innovate in practice to explore new ways of social work supervision.

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