

# **Supervision for more than just the Service Provider, and, as a Transformative Process within a Learning and Development culture**

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Kia ora/welcome from Aotearoa/New Zealand, South Pacific.

## **Introduction**

This paper is written from a practitioner's perspective.

It emphasizes the principles of **mutuality of interest and benefit**, and **dialogical interaction**, and, ideally, a **dynamic and reciprocal** interaction between the three pivotal components of organisation, practitioner and the child/student and Parent.

Expanded on from the literature of Schein, E., Hawkins, P. & Shoheit, R. and Brown, A. & Bourne, I., this presentation will conceptualise what is meant by mutuality of interest and benefit, and dialogical interaction from within a values mindset as it relates to the organizational components of strategy, structure, a learning and development culture and supervision

Whether managing, providing or receiving human services, it is a **learning and development opportunity for all three participants** –the child/student and Parent, the practitioner and the organisation.

The **managers and the practitioners are interdependent partners for the benefit of the child/student and Parent and thereby the organisation as a whole** –thus, the importance of mutuality of interest and benefit through dynamic and reciprocal interaction.

In order to be a **learning and development culture it needs to be a formalised transformative-focussed process for the benefit of all stakeholders** –especially the child/student and Parent and the practitioner as they interface with the organization, and link with professional bodies, research, legislation, society and culture and international projects as they grapple with the complexities and contradictions in the field of human services, and, in this case, vision disability.

What would be the aspects of a model to create and maintain a transformatative-focussed process?

**Internal and external supervision is essential for all staff** –from the Chair of a Board and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) through to all staff by the nature of their position “in the midst of the market economy and measurement by tangible outcomes” (in Brown & Bourne, 1996: xii) when “organisations are at the confluence of the individual distress flowing upwards and the political, economic and social stressors flowing down” (in Brown & Bourne, 1996: xi). The culture of an organisation affects how workers think, more than just what they think –not to mention feelings!

The rationality of a business management mindset needs to match the ethos of the helping professions and, therefore, ...needs to facilitate the processing of the degree of match and mismatch between an organisation and staff in terms of “distress, disturbance and dis-ease, and, understand and respond adequately to change” (cited in Brown & Bourne, 1996: xi). **Internal supervision, or line-manager supervision as it is commonly called, is by of its context more operationally focused while external supervision, or consultancy as it is sometimes called, is more professional practice focused.**

External supervision is like a professional practitioner insurance while internal supervision is like organizational insurance –interdependent partners for the benefit of the child/student and Parent. The former leans more towards ‘a supportive or learning focus’ while the latter has more a “reporting format” (Hirst, V., 2001: 146).

I invite managers to make a paradigm shift and perceive their role as one of interdependent partnership, and, learning and development as a career and life-long process instead of one of control and competence monitoring. If not, learning and development is just an individual practitioner process, which has no formal influence on the culture of the organisation as a whole.

**Supervision is an investment in the practitioner for the benefit of the child/student and Parent, staff, the organisation and the human services profession and society as a whole.**

It allows for the processing of misalignments of values between managers and practitioners, practitioners as colleagues and the organization, and, between the organisation as a provider of human services and a market economy .

**Supervision is an insurance approach that allows for the processing of misalignments of values and in so doing ensures greater engagement of, recruitment and retention of staff.**

**Supervision is a professional prerogative.**

**For supervision to be transformative, the contractual agreement between the supervisor and supervisee/organisation is pivotal** in making explicit and bringing to life the principles of mutuality of interest and benefit and dialogical interaction that is dynamic and reciprocal in relation to all stakeholders.

**There needs to be a clear policy and model in place that ensures the transfer of intellectual property, in terms of operational and professional practice knowledge back into the organisation.**

## **Organisational Culture**

What is organisational culture?

Schein (1985) refers to culture as “a pattern of assumptions, invented, discovered or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems”, Hawkins (cited in Hawkins & Shoheit, 2000).

Furthermore, Hawkins makes reference to other writers who refer to “organisational culture as representing the unconscious of the organisation, and it is embedded in the ways of (our) experiencing what happens; thus they see culture as less to do with what is done and more to do with how it is viewed and experienced” and adds that “organisational culture is: ‘what you stop noticing when you have worked somewhere for over three months’ ” (Hawkins & Shoheit, 2000: 169, 175).

McLean and Marshall (1988, cited in Hawkins & Shoheit, 2000: 169, 165) refer to the ‘low profile symbols’ “in language, relationships, paperwork (or the lack of it) , physical settings ... how meetings are called and conducted, who sits next to whom, who interrupts, what time different topics are given, what lines of reasoning prevail and so on”.

### What are the major types of Organisational Cultures?

- \* the individual pathology culture (problems are perceived in terms of the individual cp group dynamics, systems etc.)
- \* the bureaucratic culture (task orientation cp personal relatedness; monitoring, checklists)
- \* the watch your back culture (prevalent in politicised and competitive climates)
- \* the reactive/crisis driven culture (the focus is the intensity of the moment; self-fulfilling dysfunction)
- \* the addictive culture (addictive and co-dependent patterns; unwilling/unable to face the truth, difficulties and therefore rationalize, defend dishonesty and bullying/abuse)
- \* the corporate culture (“talk the talk” with an emphasis being on obtaining funding and contracts and the type of interaction that goes with such cp “walk the talk” from a place of philosophy, ethics and values)

All of above have aspects of being dysfunctional/unhealthy  
An alternative is a **learning and development culture**.

It is imperative that **organisational culture is considered in terms of its influence on not only learning and development but also in terms of its influence on the practitioner and child/student and Parent that qualitatively changes over time and is of benefit, first and foremost, to the child/student and Parent.**

From within a learning and development culture a basis for transformative learning has the potential to take place which in turn benefits all of the above components as well as professional bodies, research, legislation and our society and culture as a whole – double and triple loop learning.

**Supervision that comes from a body of professional knowledge and training is a professional relationship at the micro level for the safeguarding of professional practice and the establishing, maintaining and evolving of a learning and development culture at the macro level –individual experience affects professional practice and thereby the intellectual property of the organisation and beyond.**

Let us pause and make some conceptual shifts.

**Management/managing pertains to strategies, infrastructures and systems while leadership/leading pertains to people, processes, values and culture.**

**All staff within an organisation have clients** –the CEO is a client of the Chair of a Board, divisional leaders are clients of the CEO, line leaders are clients of the divisional leaders, practitioners are the clients of the line leaders, and, the child/student and Parent are clients of the practitioner.

Lest we forget, we are all clients of the human services profession, directly or indirectly, and at some time in our lives!

Of course there are many subcultures within an organization and in terms of how the organization works with other outside organizations and agencies, but, hopefully, you will start to see patterns unfolding that put you on alert in a new way.

## **Values**

What are values? **Values are concepts pertaining to what is important to an employee and organisation. “Values are the sum of our preferences and priorities”.** Values can be categorized as goal, means, espoused and aligned values (2006, Henderson et al: 19).

How can an organisation develop greater behavioural congruency of all staff, from the Chair of a Board through to practitioners in terms of decision-making, actions and communication –the interactions where values come alive?

Leadership with an aligned values base has the potential to make explicit, model and facilitate the bringing to life of values while both external and internal supervision safeguards the adherence to such as the organisation is buffeted by external and internal managerial variables.

Transformative learning is dependent upon making explicit the values of an organisation as well as the processes for making such values aligned.

**Table 1: Strategy in terms of control-inherent, development-inherent and a relational-inherent values are three mutually inclusive aspects facilitated by leadership with a values mindset and complemented by a learning and development culture and line leader supervision**

**VISION  
MISSION Statement**

<b>V A L U E S</b>	<b>STRATEGY –Control- inherent Values</b>	<b>STRATEGY – Development- inherent Values</b>	<b>STRATEGY –Relational- inherent Values</b>	<b>V A L U E S</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Key Value Indicators (KVIs), Key Behaviour Indicators (KBIs), Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) within Performance Appraisal Agreement</li> <li>-monthly data printouts</li> <li>.....</li> <li>-Monthly Reports from practitioners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Mission Statement</li> <li>-Strategic Plan</li> <li>-Business Plan</li> <li>-Discipline Plan</li> <li>-Service User Survey</li> <li>-Study Leave Reports</li> <li>-Performance Appraisal Agreement</li> <li>.....</li> <li>-yearly Practice Meetings</li> <li>-three monthly discipline teleconferences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-monthly regional Team Meetings</li> <li>-fortnightly discipline meetings</li> <li>-Monthly Reports from practitioners</li> <li>-three monthly discipline teleconferences</li> <li>-yearly Practice Meetings</li> <li>-Performance Appraisal Agreement</li> <li>-CEO forums, twice yearly</li> <li>-ad hoc managerial meetings</li> <li>-CEO Newsletter, monthly</li> <li>-Chairman of the Board Newsletter, monthly</li> <li>.....</li> </ul>	
<b>SUPERVISION</b> –internal line-manager and external supervision consultant with contractual agreement back with the organisation				
<b>LEARNING and DEVELOPMENT CULTURE</b>				

How can greater alignment of values be developed organizationally in terms of Mission Statement (Vision) for the child/student and Parent, strategies, the (infra)Structures, and the culture, and, in so doing, all staff?

I suggest that the developing of a learning and development culture mindset and a deliberate identification and implementation of values in terms of control, development and the relational are of paramount importance.

### **How does an organisation go about identifying aligned values?**

A possible starting place, without the expertise of an external consultant, would be for the practitioners as individuals and as a group of a particular discipline to identify key values under the three headings of control, development and relational and then ascertain the degree of alignment between these values personally for the practitioner and in terms of the organisation as a whole in terms of the Mission Statement/Vision.

The challenge is how to have all the goal and means values aligned with the child/student and Parent, the practitioner and the organisation (the Mission Statement (Vision) and the variables beyond –an organisation process for all.

Other than the inability to recruit and retain staff and reduced performance and productivity, what are some other indicators of incongruency and mis-alignment ?

The following questions will alert you to such:

- Do leaders give greater emphasis to strategic, development or relational decision making, action and communication?
- Do leaders relate to you as a role model for how to relate to a child/student and Parent?
- ***N.B:*** Literature suggests that disempowered staff results in disempowered children/students and Parents!
- Do leaders refer back to a historyline that they have developed over time, and, in so doing acknowledge developmental change and closure of previous behaviours?
- Do leaders relate primarily face-to-face or electronically?
- Do leaders talk or listen more?
- Do leaders communicate congruently in terms of the non-verbal component?
- Do leaders maintain competency pertaining to managerial knowledge and experience?
- Do leaders acknowledge your contribution and how often?
- Do leaders come from a systemic and socio-economic mindset in terms of disability?.

I emphasise that the identified values of the staff and their degree of alignment with the Mission Statement (Vision) Strategy and Leadership are of paramount importance –you cannot provide quality service without quality staff.

By making values explicit, decision-making, actions and communication within an organisation become more transparent and negotiable.

If nothing else, the principles of **mutuality of interest and benefit**, and **dialogical interaction**, and, ideally, a **dynamic and reciprocal interaction** between the organisation, practitioner and service user will nurture the soul of all staff, the organisation, with the child/student and Parent being our overriding priority.

Thus, a learning and development culture contributes to organizational strategy, development and beyond –social change and social justice.

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