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Practicum is a critical element in social work education that prepares students for field work and makes an important contribution to supervisors' professional development by exposing them to new theory and reflective practice (Barton, Bell, & Bowles, 2005; Lee & Fortune, 2013). The practicum field supervisor enhances the student's clarification of roles and purposes, provides orientation to the agency, and ensures that the student's performance expectations are clear and realistic (Knight, 2001). It is the practicum supervisor that is responsible for helping students to acquire practice skills and social work education knowledge (Hewson, Walsh, & Bradshaw, 2010; Lee & Fortune, 2013; Unger, 2003). In the practicum setting, students learn how to apply knowledge and theoretical concepts that they have learned in the classroom to real situations, social problems, and concerns. Qualified and experienced supervisors assess whether students are able to meet educational objectives and also bear responsibility to ensure that students meet not only professional and curricular requirements but that they exhibit personal qualities that represent professionalism (Chui, 2010). It can be postulated that practicum field supervisors ultimately control a student's entry or failure to enter into the social work profession (Chui, 2010). In addition to serving as gatekeepers, practicum field supervisors provide guidance, mentoring, and a safe environment in their supervisory roles (Everett, Miehl, DuBois, & Garran, 2011). Furthermore, they also serve as a facilitator in encouraging students to examine their level of self-awareness about their personal and professional values within professional practice. The practicum field supervisor plays a significant role in supporting the learning experience and social work education of students by helping them to become

competent, professional, and knowledgeable practitioners (Everett, Miehl, DuBois, & Garran, 2011; Hewson, Walsh, & Bradshaw, 2010).

Inherent in the process of developing competent social workers is the use of the signature pedagogy of the field experience in social work education. The practicum field supervisor is integral to the development of the social work student through demonstration and teaching of the core competencies outlined by the in the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) Council on Social Work Education (CSWE, 2008). One role of the practicum field supervisor is to demonstrate and model appropriate behavior and to bring greater clarity to the classroom learning experience through practical experiences in the field setting. The EPAS outlines competencies that social work programs are instructed to follow in an effort to assure that students are prepared and ready to function as professional social workers. Practicum field supervisors demonstrate how the social work student becomes not only an effective practitioner, but also a competent leader in the profession. Practicum field supervisors who use a paradigm of transformational leadership promote four dimensions or characteristics of leadership that teach and guide the social work student. These dimensions include inspirational motivation, idealized influence, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation.

Fisher (2009) opines that the tenets of transformational leadership are conceptually congruent with social work principles including valuing individuals and empowerment. The practicum field supervisor acts as this transformational agent by empowering students and engaging them through idealized influence and inspirational motivation. Idealized influence in the leader speaks

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to his/her ability to generate enthusiasm and draw people around a vision through self-confidence and emotional appeal (Gellis, 2001). The practicum field supervisor can influence by showing excitement for the practice of social work and encourage the student's desire to be an effective professional social worker. Inspirational motivation further prompts the student toward action by building his/her confidence and generating belief in self and in the cause of social work. The transformational practicum field supervisor must set high expectations for students that will assist them in understanding the professional nature of social work. The tenet of intellectual stimulation in transformational leadership is exhibited by a leader who stimulates creativity and problem solving in a student. Particularly, in the application of the standards of the NASW Code of Ethics, students are not only drawing on personal values but on the skills of reasoning and decision making to resolve ethical conflict. Finally, through individualized consideration the practicum field supervisor can treat the student with respect and concern (Bass & Riggio, 2010) while getting to know them and training them as a generalist social worker in the skills of critical thinking. The activity of supervision and consultation presents an ideal opportunity for the practicum field supervisor to assist the social work student in these processes.

Jung (2001) posits that leaders create a situational context and conditions where those considered followers engage in creative efforts to accomplish their goals. Relationship-oriented leadership expresses the degree to which the leader shows concern and respect for followers, looks out for their welfare, and expresses appreciation and support. Transformational leadership advances this relationship between leader and follower (Bass & Riggio, 2010). Transformational leaders empower followers and nurture them in change (Northouse, 2013). The transformational leader has a strong set of internal values that make him/her effective in motivating followers to act in ways that support this greater good (Bass & Riggio, 2010). Instead of focusing on the personalized needs, these leaders focus on raising the consciousness of individuals by encouraging them to transcend their own self-interest for the sake of others (Northouse, 2013).

Transformational leaders serve as role models to their followers by motivating and inspiring others while paying special attention to the individual's needs (Bass & Riggio, 2010). Transformational leadership theory acknowledges the importance of power and influence and involvement of active and emotional relationships between leaders and followers (Jung, 2001; Deluga, 1990). This recognition of power and influence is essential to the way that the practicum field supervisor engages the social work student. Thus, the practicum field supervisor uses identified tasks specific to their setting but are able to assist students to meet the level of competency necessary for proficient social work practice through the supervision process. The transformational leader/practicum field supervisor who engages in active emotional relationships with students contributes to the enhancement and development of a competent professional social worker. This relationship is enhanced through modeling appropriate professional behaviors and conveying the importance of core social work competencies to students in practicum.

In the context of the field practicum, supervisors can encourage students to achieve competencies and practice behaviors in the field that equal the performance in the classroom. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the significant role that practicum field supervisors play in teaching practicum student's knowledge, values, and skills within the practicum setting. Additionally, the importance of professional image is also discussed. Included is a case study that is aligned with the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS), the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE, 2008) core competencies, and practice behaviors that apply the principles of transformational leadership in supervision.

Addressing Competencies in Field Practicum

Although social work has emphasized competencies to some degree in the past, the 2008 EPAS shifted the entire emphasis of social work education to competence-based learning. (Sherr & Jones, 2014). The Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) Council on Social Work Education (CSWE, 2008) states:

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In social work, the signature pedagogy is field education. The intent of field education is to connect the theoretical and conceptual contribution of the classroom with the practical world of the practice setting. It is a basic precept of social work education that the two interrelated components of curriculum—classroom and field—are of equal importance within the curriculum, and each contributes to the development of the requisite competencies of professional practice. Field education is systematically designed, supervised, coordinated, and evaluated based on criteria by which students demonstrate the achievement of program competencies (p.8).

Particular attention is paid to the first three competencies: (2.1.1) Identify as a professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly; (2.1.2) Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice; and (2.1.3) Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgment. Unless the student meets these three competencies, it appears very difficult to show progress in the other areas. They are the necessary foundation to support learning and growth in the other competencies.

Recognizing the importance of the field experience, meeting the competencies, and the role of the practicum field supervisor, the case study that follows is used to give practical examples of their incorporation. Some consideration will be given to competencies in the context of the transformational model to make the connection between content and practice by the field practicum supervisor.

Inspirational motivation

A key component of inspirational motivation is vision (Austin & Hopkins, 2004). As the supervisor has a vision for the practicum experience and the student, he or she can direct the student in their vision development. The supervisor is also responsible for setting high expectations for the student. Grace began by inspiring the student's confidence with requiring tasks she knew Susan

could achieve. The biggest task at this time was for Susan to shadow Grace to observe the role modeling she provided and to study how a competent, ethical social worker performed her duties throughout the day. By observing the interaction and relationships between the social worker and her clients, the student was provided with opportunities to watch professional development as addressed in Competency 2.1.1, "identify as a professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly," measured through practice behavior "attend to professional roles and boundaries."

After the first few weeks at the agency, Grace, the practicum field supervisor, was surprised at the seeming lack of knowledge. Susan brought to the agency (Grace and Susan are pseudonyms). Since Susan had completed her first year of studies, the expectations were she had obtained general social work 101 knowledge. However, it was not apparent. Susan was struggling. Some of the competencies were met at an acceptable level of evaluation. However, there were several competencies, for which she failed to show the level needed to earn a passing evaluation, and move on to an advanced practice agency. Her supervisor recommended she attend some assertiveness training as she had difficulty connecting with clients due to her introversion. The supervisor reported at times she would stay with clients a short time, then go to the office and work on her school assignments. Susan was not given immediate direction or feedback at the time, but these things came up later in her evaluation. Grace began to employ the use of inspirational motivation to give Susan an opportunity to develop a vision for herself and the confidence to use the information she had learned in class, as was evident by her achievements in the classroom.

Idealized influence

A certain amount of time needs to be spent in the beginning with the supervisor modeling the expected behaviors and processing this in supervision, before expectations are placed upon the student. Any problem areas need to be directly

addressed, which leads us to then next phase of transformational supervision: idealized influence. According to Bass (1998), a transformational leader serves as a role model who is admired, respected, and trusted. The application of idealized influence leads to the supervisor being a role model and displaying social work behaviors that the student will admire and appreciate in a way that will easily influence the performance of the student. Even in the supervision time, Grace was identifying as a professional social worker and applying critical thinking skills to develop further her professional judgment (Competency 2.1.1 and 2.1.3).

Susan struggled with many areas of the expectations of her by the agency and supervisor. During the supervision time, Grace continued to model in such a way that Susan continued to trust and respect her. She also respected the way Grace worked with her clients and the other staff. Even during the supervision time, Grace functioned out of a position of potency and not power, helping Susan to see her interest truly was in giving Susan the opportunity to develop into a competent social worker. This included some honest conversations about her performance, but even that was delivered in such a way as to encourage Susan. As Grace developed Susan's learning contract, Grace considered not only the competencies that needed to be met, but also several different factors before deciding the practice behaviors needed to meet the competencies. The level of Susan's knowledge was factored in as well as her strengths and weaknesses. The student completed a Professional Development Inventory (PDI) in the field seminar. This was completed at the beginning of the school year and measured self-awareness, personal development, autonomy, goals and direction, and identity formation. The student discussed the results with their supervisor and this information was factored into the development and review of the learning contract. This indicator was also administered at the end of the year, allowing for discussion for the changes over the year. By taking time to discover more about the student, the supervisor was able to develop a practicum experience

around this information to make a more successful practicum experience. Grace also used her ability to recognize the strengths and weaknesses of the student. Combining the knowledge Grace brought to the situation and supplementing that with the information from the Professional Development Inventory, a more comprehensive practicum experience were developed.

Individualized consideration

It is also during the practicum that students make considerable progress in developing self-awareness and come to a better understanding of their particular strengths and limitations as well as the influence of their personal values, attitudes, and life experiences on their practice (Garthwait, 2008). The practicum field supervisor is ultimately responsible for guiding the development of the student and the practicum. By listening to the student's story and asking reflective questions, the student is permitted to develop and practice critical thinking skills that are vital to Competency 2.1.3, "apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgment." These opportunities help students to connect the knowledge to practice and give specific skills to perform as a competent social worker. This way, Susan can be given opportunities to develop those practice behaviors when working with clients. In supervision, she can bring her own strategies and the practicum field supervisor can provide feedback from her observations.

As Susan was transitioned into being an active participant with the clients and not just an observer, Grace noticed immediately areas of weakness the student needed to practice to become more successful. Susan was still bound to the information she learned in her classes and was not able to put that information into practice. Grace developed some exercises to practice with the student to help her gain confidence. Through supervisor feedback and direction in developing her critical thinking and communication skills, she forced the student to practice what she was learning. Role-playing was a successful exercise for this situation. With immediate feedback, both for her strengths and weak-

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nesses, the supervisor was able to give direction and allow for improvement before the student was given her own cases. A review of cases, along with some open-ended questions, allowed the student to work on developing her critical thinking skills. When the cases were assigned, there was an expectation of success as set forth by the supervisor and a reminder to integrate her knowledge into skills. A review of the visits when they returned to the office helped the student, as the events were still fresh on her mind.

Intellectual stimulation

The transition between the skills class and the practice/internship is a critical time in which the student prepares for applying what was learned to the real world. "If the student has been doing his or her work all along we still cannot in good faith reassure you that he or she will be ready" (Brew & Kottler, 2008). Part of the role of the supervisor is to provide opportunities to apply the knowledge the student has gained. It is of utmost importance to provide a transitional phase when moving students from observers to active participants, allowing them to continue their professional development (Competency 2.1.1.) An important practice behavior at this phase is the student actively engaging in the process of supervision and consultation to prepare for the autonomous practice leading to advanced practice as a social worker. Intellectual stimulation involves encouraging the student to be innovative, creative, and to develop critical thinking skills as needed to guide professional practice (Competency 2.1.3). The quality of every practicum experience can be enhanced if students are provided with guidance in identifying and making use of learning opportunities. Structure that helps students to examine and analyze their settings in ways that build on prior classroom learning is also of critical importance (Garthwait, 2008). This is not only a focus of the supervisor at the practicum site, but also the faculty field liaison and the professor of the field education seminar. The seminar is used to learn, question, review, and discuss how to apply the competencies for the evaluation. As students enter their practicum with

this knowledge and understanding, and have discussed the competencies and possible practice behaviors in the classroom, they are equipped to begin to make that transition from knowledge to skills and practice.

At the final evaluation of Susan, Dr. Smith, the faculty field liaison, was amazed at the difference in the improvement of the student. In discussing what made the difference for her, Susan stated that this was the first time she had known exactly what the behaviors were expected of her as well as an opportunity to practice those with her supervisor. As the student shadowed the supervisor for a few weeks, she also developed a trust and relationship with her that motivated her to earn the trust and respect from her clients as displayed to the supervisor. Susan was also able to reach the point in her practicum that she came up with new ideas for practice behaviors to supplement those they developed at the first of the semester.

At the end of the year meeting between Susan and Dr. Smith, Susan felt she trusted her enough to ask some questions she did not feel free to ask earlier in their relationship. Susan noticed some of the social workers in the office and her practicum field supervisor were dressed more casual than she expected. Being aware that some of their clients had a history of sexual abuse in their past, Susan was especially surprised to see some social workers wearing very low cut tops, and at times bending over in front of the clients. Susan asked if the agency had a written dress code. This question presented Dr. Smith with an opportunity to elaborate on the "unspoken" expectations of social workers. The first competency stresses identifying as a professional social worker and the professional demeanor includes appearance. It may not always specifically state personal hygiene and dress, but that always needs to be priority for the professional social worker. Even if the norms of society change, the standards for social workers do not. An important part of meeting clients where they

are is also showing them respect, and this is one way of showing them the respect they deserve. Susan expressed her appreciation to Grace for modeling how a professional social worker needs to present, both in the agency and out in public.

Modeling the Importance of Professional Image and Dress

While learning practice behaviors is essential to successfully navigate the practicum setting, field practicum supervisors must also examine their professional image. The practicum field supervisor provides not only fundamental principles about the social work profession but also afford opportunities for students to develop self-awareness, which can include helping students to reflect on their perceived professional image and manner of dress.

As dress codes have relaxed in society, it appears that some students and practicum field supervisors give less attention to how they look. A professional image, which includes how an individual is dressed, is part of the package that is presented to others and can influence the impressions formed by clients and those in the workplace (Okoro & Washington, 2011; Peluchette, Karl, & Rust, 2006). The relationship between practicum students and practicum field supervisors is critical in providing the level of positive feedback, critique, and evaluation to improve students' success and future performance as social work practitioners.

Accordingly, practicum field supervisors have an important role to play in supporting students to examine professional perceptions of their outer appearance, including dress. The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) 2008 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) defines ten core competencies (Educational Policy 2.1.1-2.1.10), and accompanying practice behaviors that describe what knowledge, values, and skills social workers must know and be able to do to practice effectively. Educational Policy 2.1.1 delineates that social workers should identify as a professional and conduct oneself accordingly (CSWE, 2008). An accompanying practice behavior is to demonstrate professional demeanor in behavior, appearance, and communication. Scholar (2013) suggests that dress is an important way in which social

workers demonstrate social work values in actions.

The primary role of the practicum field supervisors is to teach the skills, knowledge, and values of social work within the practice setting (Knight, 2001). Conversely, a valuable practicum experience embodies a practicum field supervisor who both supervises and mentors. Supervisors in human service agencies design practicums for future social work students to integrate academic and practical experience that trains social worker students in crucial skills of communication, reflection, and self-assessment, which should also include an exchange of ideas about professional dress. Scholar (2013) adds:

Appropriate dress for social work is a form of dress that appears 'professional' yet does not erect barriers between worker and service user; that is not ostentatious or extreme; that does not emphasize [*error corrected*] differences in affluence between worker and service user; and that allows workers to engage safely in the practical aspects of social work; and does not draw attention to one's sexuality. . . . Social workers should be aware of the significance of dress and presentation in all these areas, and where student social workers 'get it wrong,' this may raise legitimate concerns for practice educators about their understanding of the complexity of practice. (p.377)

An important question for field practicum to ask social work students is "What does the student's manner of dress say about the individual as a professional and the image of the organization or profession?" (Scholar, 2013). The last thing a student should want to create is any doubt about his or her competence, knowledge, or performance because their professional image or dress says something negative. It is commonly accepted that people form instant opinions upon seeing a person, even before any words are spoken.

Consequently, the practicum field supervisor plays a major modeling role in the lives of students and assumes a critical role in preparing students to understand the significance of appropriate dress in maintenance of a professional social work identity and the projection of professional

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credibility to clients and other professionals (Peluchette, Karl, & Rust, 2006).

Conclusion

Although this article is limited to discussion and application of the first three competencies, the authors do not mean to diminish the importance of the other competencies. Just as an athlete must first spend time learning the fundamentals of any sport before he or she move on to the next level, so it is with the profession of social work, especially for students. The supervisor for the field education experience becomes one of the first examples to the social work student of professional social work practice and leadership. Supervisors who use the transformational processes of inspirational motivation, idealized influence, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation empower students for practice. Transforming leaders model positive relationships and the ability to think critically. Supervisors who are transformational challenge students to utilize technical skills, people skills, and conceptual skills by fostering a relationship with the student that transcends their own self-interest for the sake of the student. In turn, feelings of apprehension can be alleviated so that conversations and evaluation of progress become a motivational encounter. The supervisor models positive communication and professionalism, but most importantly models how to form relationship based on care and concern for others.

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