

[**Special Topic: *Counseling Supervision in Chinese Communities***]

**Editor's Introduction**

S. Alvin Leung

The Chinese University of Hong Kong

In the past two decades, there has been an abundance of literature on counseling and clinical supervision. Early conceptualization tended to view supervision as primarily a process to enhance the professional functioning of counselor. For example, Loganbill, Hardy, and Delworth (1982) defined supervision as “an intensive, interpersonally focused, one-to-one relationship in which one person is designed to facilitate the development of therapeutic competence in the other person” (p. 4). Since then, along with the development and maturity of the counseling profession, counseling supervision has been viewed more complexly as a systemic professional intervention process (e.g., Holloway, 1995) that has multiple roles and functions, as reflected by a more elaborative definition on supervision by Bernard and Goodyear (2004):

Supervision is an intervention provided by a more senior member of a profession to a more junior member or members of that same profession. This relationship is evaluative, extends over time, and has the simultaneous purposes of enhancing the professional functioning of the more junior person(s), monitoring the quality of professional services offered to the

clients that she, he, or they see, and serving as a gatekeeper for those who are to enter the particular profession. (p. 8).

Today, counseling supervision is widely recognized as an important training and learning experience in the lifelong professional development journey of a counseling and mental health professional (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004). Supervision is also a mechanism for training institutions or experienced members of the profession to monitor the progress of trainees, as a way to evaluate if he or she has the required competence to enter the counseling profession. For instance, in counselor training, trainees have to enroll in supervised practicum so that supervisors and teachers have an opportunity to observe their work before they are allowed to graduate from the academic training program (e.g., Neufeldt, 1999). Supervised experience is often required before an individual is allowed to practice independently after they have completed formal academic training. In the United States, the accumulation of substantial supervised practice (e.g., number of supervision hours received) is often one of the requirements for licensure in counseling and psychology (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004). Meanwhile, ongoing supervision is encouraged to sharpen counselors' skills and conceptual knowledge.

Indeed, at a time when there is an explosion of counseling-related training programs in Hong Kong (Leung, 2003), supervision should be used more widely to strengthen professional capability and to facilitate the growth and development of counseling professionals. Supervision is a way to increase professional accountability, to ensure that the professional work of counselors is up to established standards. Supervision is also an interactive mechanism for counselors to observe and reflect on their professional work, and to consider ways that they could grow and function at a higher level. Supervision could be used to meet the professional development needs of beginning as well as

seasoned counselors. Expanding the role of supervision, and articulating the functions of supervision for counselors at different stages of development, are important tasks confronting the professional counseling community in Hong Kong.

In order to promote the development of counseling supervision in Hong Kong, several initiatives have been organized — a Supportive Supervisor Scheme spearheaded by the Hong Kong Professional Counselling Association (HKPCA) (see Chan, 2004), a scholarly conference with supervision as the major theme, several articles about supervision published in the *HKPCA Newsletter* (e.g., Chan & Leung, 2003), and this special issue of *Asian Journal of Counselling* which is devoted to counseling supervision in Chinese communities.

This special issue of *Asian Journal of Counselling* brings to you three articles related to counseling supervision in Hong Kong. As a whole, I hope that this special issue in counseling supervision will accomplish three objectives. First, I hope that this collection of articles could offer innovative conceptual frameworks in supervision that are grounded in the current literature as well as in the Hong Kong Chinese cultural context. Second, I also hope that these articles could provide illustrative examples on ways to enhance the professional capacities of counseling professionals through the use of supervision as systematic interventions. Third, I hope that these articles could stimulate further professional efforts to promote and expand counseling supervision in terms of theory, research, and practice.

The first article by Tsui (2004) is based on a qualitative study of supervision in a social service context. This article summarized research findings on how supervision is practiced and conceptualized among social work and counseling practitioners in Hong Kong. It also offers important insights on cultural adaptations that are necessary in

conducting supervision in a Chinese cultural context. In addition, Tsui also offered a culture-specific conceptual framework on supervision that could guide both research and practice.

The second article by Chan (2004) discussed the need to implement a systematic process of training supervisors in Hong Kong, and proposed a model of supportive supervision that is grounded in the current supervision literature. The Supportive Supervision Scheme is aimed at training and qualifying counseling supervisors who could then offer supervision to counseling practitioners in the field. This is an important initiative because through this scheme there will be a continual mechanism to train qualified supervisors to provide much needed supervision to counseling professionals in different settings. The rapid increase in counseling-related training programs in Hong Kong has almost ensured that there will be a sizable number of graduates annually in the foreseeable future. These graduates would need continual professional development experience before they could mature into a more independent mode of practice. The Supportive Supervision Scheme will fill in this very important gap of the counseling profession.

The third article by So, Yau, and Leung (2004) presented a model of supervision based on the Ackerman approach. This is an example of a theory-based approach to counseling supervision. Given that family therapy has become increasingly popular in Hong Kong, the model described by So et al. will serve as a concise practical framework to guide practitioners involved in supervising trainees who work with families using a family systems approach.

Even though there is a rich volume of literature in counseling and clinical supervision in the past two decades, I think that these three articles are unique in that they provide clues to understanding how supervision is viewed and practiced in the local cultural context. In order

for counseling supervision to develop a root in Chinese communities in Asia, and to meet the needs of local counseling professionals, more efforts are needed to develop global as well as culture-specific supervision models and methods.

## References

- Bernard, J. M., & Goodyear, R. K. (2004). *Fundamentals of clinical supervision* (3rd ed.). Boston: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon.
- Chan, C. C. (2004). Taking supervision forward: The beginning of a new curriculum on supportive supervision in counseling. *Asian Journal of Counselling, 11*(1&2), 57–77.
- Chan, C. C., & Leung, S. A. (2003, December). What kind of supervision do we need in Hong Kong? *Newsletter of the Hong Kong Professional Counselling Association, 2–3*.
- Holloway, E. (1995). *Clinical supervision: A systems approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Leung, S. A. (2003). Counseling training in Hong Kong: Challenges and possibilities. *Asian Journal of Counselling, 10*(2), 235–248.
- Loganbill, C., Hardy, E., & Delworth, U. (1982). Supervision: A conceptual model. *The Counseling Psychologist, 10*(1), 3–42.
- Neufeldt, S. A. (1999). *Supervision strategies for the first practicum* (2nd ed.). Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association.
- So, S., Yau, S., & Leung, E. (2004). Clinical supervision for family therapy: The Ackerman approach. *Asian Journal of Counselling, 11*(1&2), 79–99.
- Tsui, M. S. (2004). Supervision models in social work: From nature to culture. *Asian Journal of Counselling, 11*(1&2), 7–55.