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**The Model of Supervision and Evaluation in the Department of
Social Work of Athens: New Challenges and Perspectives.**

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During the last decades Greece has been characterized by major economic, demographic, political and ecological changes that have made serious claims to social work discourse; the formation of a multicultural society due to the high influx of immigrants and asylum seekers, the coexistence of diverse minorities, the crisis of the traditional model of Greek family and the increase of distinct vulnerable populations constitute only some of the moral and ethical challenges that social work has to respond. The contemporary profile of the new Modern Greek society, based on complexity and diversity makes additionally serious claims to the enhancement of social work education in Greece.

I. General Framework of Supervision and Field Placement in the Department of Social Work in Athens.

Social work education in Greece is provided from the three Departments of Social Work of Technological Educational Institutions in Athens, Patra and Iraklion and from the Department of Social Policy and Social Work of Dimokrition University in Thrace. The Department of Social Work of Athens¹ was founded in 1983 and has been operated since 1985. The education in social work in Greece lasts four years², while the fieldwork practice constitutes 45% of the training in the Greek social work curriculum.

The practice learning of students within supervision is divided in four developmental stages (Practice I, II, III, IV) with total duration of four semesters, two days per week (or 12 hours per week)(see table 1). In addition, students reach a ‘master’ level

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¹ For further information on the foundation of the Department of Social Work of Athens see www.teiath.gr/seyp/socialwork/gr

² According to the Greek Legislation (Degree 227/20-6-1995,/130) the studies in social work include seven semesters consisting of theoretical and laboratorial courses focused on Human and Social Sciences and Social Work Theories. and also a final semester in which students have to do their practice in specific social services in Greece or other EU countries. The Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity supervises the students’ practice and provides social work license after graduation.

characterized by personal autonomy and awareness of professional needs at the final semester (8th semester) which lasts six months, full-time, and in which students are not provided with supervision by the academic staff but from the responsible practice teacher of the fieldwork practice.

Table 1
Aims of Field Work Practice and Supervision

Practice I I <i>Semester 4</i>	<p><u>Aims of Field Work Practice I:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student’s adjustment in the field work setting • His/her familiarisation with the intake and interview process • Application of techniques, classification and evaluation of information • Participation-observation in administration procedures and committees <p><u>Aims of Supervision I:</u> Focus on student’s needs on social work theories and knowledge</p>
Practice II <i>Semester 5</i>	<p><u>Aims of Field Work Practice II:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deeper evaluation of the received information • Individual, family and group social work with limited responsibility • Participation in committees with limited responsibilities <p><u>Aims of Supervision I:</u> • Focus on student’s needs on social work theories and knowledge</p>
Practice III <i>Semester 6</i>	<p><u>Aims of Field Work Practice III:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More responsibilities in the field work practice and in the application of social work theories-more participation in the evaluation and intervention process <p><u>Aims of Supervision III:</u> • Analysis on students cases and intervention plans</p>
Practice IV <i>Semester 7</i>	<p><u>Aims of Field Work Practice IV:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiatives in interventions and plans that empower service users, group and agency • Participation in the administration and productive process of the agency <p><u>Aims of Supervision IV:</u> • Analysis of more complicated cases –connection with specialised knowledge</p>

During the education in social work there is emphasis in acquiring knowledge in all social work methods. For the development of professional competence, students of social work through supervision must acquire and apply a range of knowledge and skills, integrating theory, comprising an awareness of how to act and present when working with service users and an ability to reflect upon this. Students need to develop skills and to learn to analyze their practice in a manner that identifies strengths and learning needs and also to become able to transfer this knowledge and skill to other areas of professional practice. Also, the systematic integration of practical learning experience into theory and the elaboration of bias and feelings constitute an important part of the supervision process. The interrelationship of supervisor, practice teacher, school of social work/academic staff, students, service user and agency play a significant educative role in the practice learning process of social work students.

The content of field work practice is determinately influenced by the rapid development of social services in our country and is related with the number of social workers, the enlargement of many new fields in social work, the new social

phenomena, the organisational development of social services and their availability for students' field work practice.

For the better coordination of field work practice and supervision, the Field Placement Committee of the Department of Social Work of Athens- in which four members of the academic staff are occupied, has as main responsibilities the certification of field work placements, the placement of students in fieldwork practice and supervision groups and the coordination of supervision through the contact and meetings with supervisors for the provision of further assistance. During the last years, the Field Placement Committee in cooperation with the supervisors has promoted qualitative improvements on the supervision work of social work students due to the systematization of processes, enrichment of methodological tools and the specification of the evaluation standards on students' performance. Also, quite efficient has been proved the effort for the conjunction of supervisors' expertise with students' fieldwork placements.

During the winter semester 2007-08, 427 students were placed either individually or in small groups for supervision and fieldwork practice (practice I, II, III, IV) in 147 agencies in Athens³. This high number of students is based on the fact that an also high and non-stable number of students enter the social work education every year by national exams e.g. for the academic year 2006-07 were 180 students, while for the academic year 2007-08 are 90 students. Moreover, during the last decade the choice on social work education has become more popular in Greece due to the youths' preference on social sciences (Prodromotis, 2007) and to the positive prospects and satisfactory outlets of social work profession (Katsanevas, 2004). Thus, the demands on fieldwork practice and supervision become more and more challenging.

Supervision is provided by professors of the School of Social Work of Athens and part-time educational staff, hired every year due to the increased number of students. For the current academic year the Department of Social Work of Athens occupies 24 group supervisors, out of whom two belong to the academic staff⁴. Supervisors must have a Bachelor degree in Social Work, a Master Degree in Social Work, proof of their ability to apply scientific knowledge and at least five years of professional practice in the field of social work. In case candidates do not fulfill the prerequisites required, vacancies can be occupied by experts in dominant fields of mainstream social work with further specializations. Nowadays, the current profile of supervision in the education of social work has shifted from psychosocial models largely influenced by North American social casework theories⁵ to a pluralism of different theoretical theories in social work. Also, supervisors can apply multi-dimensional teaching methods in supervision

II The application of group supervision in the Department of Social Work of Athens

Group supervision has been used for decades in the field of social work education. The School of Social Work in Athens has applied the model of group supervision in

³ Table of Fieldwork Practice, Department of Social Work , Winter Semester 2007-2008

⁴ Table of Fieldwork Practice, Department of Social Work , Winter Semester 2007-2008

⁵ for further information see Roberts R.W and Nee R.H (1970)“ Theories of Social Casework” University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London

the curriculum of social work education eighteen years ago. Group supervision consists of periodic group meetings of supervisees under the guidance of a supervisor and with the intention of advancing supervisees' understanding regarding themselves as professionals, the service users and the services they render to service users. Students join groups of 3-6 members once per week for supervision and each group supervision can last from 1 ½ -2 hours approximately according the numbers of students. The total number of group supervisions in each semester can reach from 12-14 meetings. Supervision takes place in a certified agency of fieldwork practice.

(a) Brief literature review on the theory of group supervision on social work education

The activities involved in the group supervision of students of social work as described in the literature have a variety of advantages. The interaction within the context of the group can provide an educative environment for the students and the opportunity to learn from others through sharing knowledge, hearing different perspectives and discussing issues, both common and unique to each group member (Bernard & Goodyear, 1993; Kadushin, 1985) as well as to learn about group dynamics and group work. Group supervision can aim at enhancing personal development for students in need of more public speaking experience (Ortner, 2005) and intervention skills by the verbalisation of the cognitive processes in the presence of a peer group (Hillerbrand, 1989, p.294). Group supervision aims at assisting supervisees to attain professional competence and identity (Proctor, 1994). The peer group furnishes an environment, which is once supportive and allows members to cope with conflicts, problems and dilemmas with the assistance of their peers. (Winnicott, 1989). Additionally the group reduces the sense of isolation experienced individually by heightening the members' perception of the universality of their experience (Bernard & Goodyear, 1993; Kadushin, 1985; Kasan, 1994; Sonnheim, 1995). Correspondingly, the hierarchical supervisor-supervisee relation of dependency is weakened (Abels, 1977).

Notwithstanding the broad significance that group supervision has for the education of social work professionals, few institutions of social work education have applied the aforementioned approach. A quite systematic model of group supervision in social work education based on Garlands' (1983) and Kasans' (1994) classification of groups is presented by the School of Social Work of the University of Haifa. Group supervision is provided for individual intervention in the second year and for group or community intervention in the third year. The model was devised in response to the generic needs of field-work. It attempts to integrate the phases of development of the supervision group with the content, process, and role of supervision and to broaden multiple-method skills of students. The model was evaluated as useful in encouraging a comprehensive and uniform framework that accommodates all supervisors and students (Arkin et al, 1999).

The literature does not offer substantial data on comparative approaches between methodology and models of group supervision applied in different countries. McCafferty (2004) provides an international comparison in-group supervision for

social work students on placement between the model of group supervision applied in a voluntary organization of Ireland (Partnership Care West) and the well established model for supervising students at the University of Haifa. Koskiniadou(2005) in the Ma dissertation makes a comparative research between the School of Social Pedagogues of Maastricht (Netherlands) and the Social Work Department of Athens highlighting issues on the use of group supervision model.. Also, there is no attention to the special problems students face in-group supervision apart from the issue of managing trust and competition in group supervision studied by Sussman (2004).

Greek literature is characterized by the lack of substantial data on supervision (Levidioti-Lekkou, 1996; Council of Social Work Education, 1962, 1981) and the complete lack of any data on group supervision in social work.

(b) The framework of Athens Model

The supervision groups can have in common the frequency and venue of meetings. The differentiating features consist of the study semester, the origin of participants and the fieldwork placements. During the last five years the proportions of group supervisors and supervisees is 1/13. These factors are indicative of the complexity of group supervision and can play a decisive role in its efficiency.

In the group supervision the responsibility for the definition of the content concerns all the group members. This also includes the process of planning, assessment and evaluation. In relation to the developmental phases of a group, every semester each group can be developed into three stages described below:

(1) In the initial stage that can last approximately from 1-4 meetings the members become acquainted and a contract based on supervision and fieldwork practice goals (e.g obligations responsibilities) is set. Students form their own portfolio made by the special forms given from the group supervisor; (a) a form for the student's presentation on supervision and field work practice, (b) 5 evaluation forms for interview, family, group, committee and community social work,(c) 3 forms for the final evaluation of the student. Students are also informed for the standards of their final evaluation. During the initial stage, students discuss problems from their adjustment in the new fieldwork placement as well as feelings (feelings of impotence, anxieties and self-doubt) regarding professional competence.

(2) In the second stage, which lasts approximately 6-8 meetings, the group has now assumed the character of a peer group within whose setting members contribute material from their fieldwork training to be worked out among peers and group supervisor. The material and content discussed in every group supervision can derive from (a) dairies of the fieldwork practice, (b) reports of casework, family work, and group work e.t.c. (c) application of research tools, (d) written or oral presentations on specific areas from bibliography, (e) problems or difficulties from practice. In this stage students start to know their abilities: (a) as caseworkers, group and family counselors and or social workers involved in community intervention, and (b) as members of a group. It is interesting that in this stage the group develops an important level of cohesion that motivates students to discuss issues concerned field work practice and supervision without the group supervisor.

(3) In the third stage which lasts approximately 2-3 meetings, there is focus on completing the field work assignment as well as separation from the agency, the group supervisor and the supervision group. An evaluation within the group can take place. Supervisee has an individual supervision at the last meeting focus on their evaluation.

The various stages of group development require a group supervisor to bring into play different skills with regard to the work and content of supervision. The functions of a group can be a useful tool for the supervisor which can support and empower students' critical and reflective thinking upon practice learning. Within the setting of the group, the practical experience of each student is discussed and further analysis on the topic can be triggered by the supervisor through the interaction of the peers' group. The group allows students to cope with conflicts, problems and dilemmas of the field of social work practice with the assistance and participation of peers.

Every supervisor can use a variety of techniques for the empowerment of the group and students such as role-playing, group exercises e.t.c. Quite useful are considered those techniques that support group interaction and peers' communication. A quite useful approach for the enhancement of group supervision is the definition of a group coordinator from the peers' group. Group supervisor inform the group for a suggested agenda based on issues derived by the correction of diaries, reports, ideas for exercises e.t.c. The coordinator of the group can discuss the suggested topics with the rest of the students and form a new agenda and schedule according to the students' needs. Time management becomes a responsibility of the group. With the termination of the meeting students evaluate the process and define further needs for the following group supervision.

Students evaluate positively their group experience defining all the positive aspects mentioned above such as the exchange of knowledge and practical experience with other students, the support offered by peers for coping with difficulties and anxieties, the emotional "holding" offered within group context. They consider important the existence of multi-dimensional approaches offered from different supervisors as it provides them with opportunities to discover "what approach matches them better" and to acquire more knowledge and skills for facing the complexity of Modern Greek society. Moreover, they consider supervision and fieldwork practice as the most important part in the social work education.

III. The Model of Evaluation

Evaluation of practice learning of social work students constitutes a core element within the educational process of the Department of Social Work of Athens. Evaluation is regarded as a continuing process by which the student receives feedback on his/her performance, knowledge, and attitudes and modifies or extends it as appropriate. Thus, evaluation is a formative process and learning tool, which appraises potential as well as diagnoses problems and it refers to provide opportunities for student to gain qualifications (Young 1979; Butler et al, 1985). Evaluation is linked with the achievement of identified goals in learning and thus evidence will be required as to whether these goals have indeed been reached. The ultimate aim should be for the student to gain the appropriate standards to monitor and evaluate his/her practice. The identification of strengths and weaknesses, of further

learning objectives and particular interests, which may be followed up, are the central activities in the evaluation process. If these functions are to be carried out effectively and bearing in mind the aim of enabling the student to become self-monitoring, then this aspect of assessment requires a high degree of student participation at all stages and discussion in evaluation to be as open as honest as possible (Butler et al, 1985).

Evaluation is divided in three main parts and consists of written and oral student's evaluation on social work practice by his/her practice teacher, student and supervisor as well as includes the preparation by the student of a portfolio with three final essays related on methodology or social work issues. The student's evaluation on social work practice by his/her supervisor constitutes of three main units (a) the qualitative evaluation of the student's work in relation to the agency (b) to the field work practice (Values, Knowledge, Skills), (c) to supervision. Each unit has standards of qualitative evaluation on student's improvement. Evaluation is also made on the basis of the number of cases students was responsible for in the micro (case social work), mean (Group social work, family work with families) and macro (community social work) level. Finally, the student is informed from his/her supervisor for the final evaluation of his/her performance. The above process is based on a partnership process between the student, the practice teacher and the supervisor and supports the active participation and co-operation of the student in all the aforementioned stages .It aims at the development of skills of self-evaluation, critical thinking and students' motivation to improvement

IV. Further Suggestions

For the improvement on the quality of supervision is necessary the decrease of the proportion students/supervisors, the planning of frequent meetings between supervisors and Field Placement Committee and the publication of manuals on group supervision.

Within the scope of new challenges in the discourse of social work education, it is also considered crucial the continuation of all efforts for the systematization, organization, evaluation of the experience derived by supervision and the exchange of valuable knowledge between schools of social work in Europe that could contribute to the development of a "common language and model».

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