Analysis of Supervisory Style

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# Introduction

Supervisory style can be defined as one’s approach to managing, communicating, and managing employees that he or she have been tasked to manage. Every leadership style is accompanied with its very own set of strengths and weaknesses, each style has its own merits and demits. Thus, there is no leadership style where one style can be used for all methods. A good leader knows what style to use and when to increase efficiency of their team and to use the in a productive manner. In an effort to be a great several skills and traits are required. However, what you need to most is emotional intelligence, integrity, authenticity, and self-awareness above all else in an effort to be a great supervisor. Furthermore, a strong vision and the ability to be constructive in what you mean to say will also take you a long way and enables other to see what you envision (Friedlander & Ward, 1984).

# Discussion

Expansion of that idea leads to the concept of the supervisor’s role as assisting the supervisee in reaching a level of independence in which their relationship is one of peer-consultation rather than dependency. To create a situation where supervisees can say, “We did it ourselves” (as they provide quality service) seems the ultimate in the supervisory relationship. This conceptualization of the supervisory relationship is in contrast to the descriptive data which identified the traditional approach to supervision. On the other hand, the continuum of supervision is more associated with the type of supervisory practice which is appropriate to the “student’s level of knowledge, experience, and competence” (Lochner & Melchert, 1997).

## Stages of Continuum

The continuum of supervision is based on the assumption that professionals will be involved in some supervisory or consultative experience for the duration of their professional lives and that the expectations and needs of supervisees change throughout this period of time. The continuum is comprised of three stages (Brasseur, 1989):

* Evaluation-Feedback Stage
* Transitional Stage
* Self-Supervision Stage



The continuum mandates a change over time in the amount and type of involvement of both supervisor and supervisee in the supervisory process. As the degree of dominance of the supervisor decreases, participation by the supervisee increases across the continuum. As they move into the Self-Supervision Stage, the balance changes to an equal interaction of peers. Each stage and its appropriate style will be discussed briefly here with more detailed discussion to follow in succeeding chapters.

## Direct-Active Style

The Direct-Active Style of supervisor interaction is most appropriate for the Evaluation-Feedback Stage of the continuum. It embodies what might be thought of as stereotypical supervisor behavior: telling, criticizing, evaluating. In this style, the supervisor is in a controlling, superior position; the supervisee is in a passive, at best respondent, and subordinate position (Barrow & Domingo, 1997).

This style at its extreme embodies maximum control and responsibility in the supervisor’s role; dependence and minimal participation in the supervisee’s role. It may be appropriate, depending upon the needs of the supervisee in relation to the client or specific setting. The frequency with which it is used may depend upon the perceptions that both supervisor and supervisee have of their role in the supervisory process. Some supervisors may hold a firm conviction that direct behavior produces greater change in supervisees and, therefore, prefer this style.

Available time is perceived by some as the variable that influences the use of this style by the supervisor more than any other. Those who use this reasoning say that joint problem-solving, which is a characteristic of the Collaborative or Consultant Style, takes time that most supervisors do not have, especially today in settings where billable hour productivity is an important dynamic. Supervisors may feel that it is necessary to be more directive with supervisees in the interest of the client and the bottom line when time is limited. This assumption has not been empirically tested, however, and the ramifications of time in the supervisory process are unknown.

## Collaborative Style

The Collaborative Style is the appropriate style for moving away from the Evaluation-Feedback Stage through the Transitional Stage to Self-Supervision. This style is a dynamic, problem-solving process wherein supervisor and supervisee work together to achieve optimum service for clients as well as the professional growth and development of both participants. The supervisor’s role is less direct but not inactive. Both participants assume responsibility and provide input in varying degrees at different times about both the clinical and the supervisory process.

Objectives are established jointly. The supervisor provides feedback but also encourages input from the supervisee, accepts the supervisee’s ideas, problem solves with the supervisee, analyzes clinical behavior, encourages self-analysis and further planning by the supervisee, and recognizes and respects the worth of the supervisee as a professional and as a person. The supervisee, in turn, accepts responsibility for participation in the clinical and supervisory process, provides input, accepts suggestions, questions the supervisor, requests rationale and justification for supervisor statements, engages in self-analysis and problem solving, and works toward independence. The supervisor, though responsible for structuring and facilitating interaction, is not the only responsible individual within the interaction, does not make all the decisions, or provide all the information. Rather, supervision is seen as a joint process in which the supervisor and supervisee share responsibilities and interact as professionals to meet common objectives. As progression continues along the continuum, the amount of participation from each is altered (Ryska, 2009).

## Consultative Style

Following the continuum through to its conclusion of Self-Supervision, the burden of responsibility now shifts to the supervisee. Self-supervision requires a continuing search for professional growth through self–analysis. It suggests a peer relationship between supervisor and supervisee. This interaction has been developing throughout the previous stages of the continuum and the supervisee is now empowered to make decisions about his or her own needs and can proceed to find solutions. The pre-professional or professional who reaches this stage will be able to self-identify strengths or weaknesses, make appropriate behavioral modifications, and seek assistance or further knowledge when appropriate. Although this knowledge may come from other sources-peers, in-service or course offerings, readings, or creative problem solving-the supervisory relationship remains important, even though supervisees now have the major responsibility for initiating consultation, even it is not automatically made available to them (Dublin, 1989).

As with the other stages, Self-Supervision is not time bound, and therefore, the Consultative Style may be utilized at appropriate times in the educational program, the off-campus or CF experience, or the employment setting. The supervisor may serve in this capacity when the supervisee no longer needs continuous monitoring. This style may be used when supervisees are working with certain types of clients with which they have developed expertise while, at the same time, the supervisor may be utilizing a Direct/Active Style with the same supervisee while working with another client. In the employment setting where supervisors are probably less available, supervisees may find it necessary to be specific in their requests for help.

# Analysis of Supervisory Style with Examples (Dialogue)

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| **S. No** | **Dialogue** | **Affiliate Supervisory Style** | **Reason** |
| 1 | **Supervisor:** “Well, maybe I can give you some help. I’m sure that I can think of some strategies that would work with Johnny… After all, that is a part of my job… to help you so you can be more effective with Johnny.”**Supervisee:** “Oh good. It’s kinda hard for me because all this is so new to me.” | Direct/Active Supervisory Style | The supervisor, in this context, is directly telling the supervisee that if help in needed, it can be provided. There is no need for subtlety in this text. The conversation is straightforward and asks for a straight forward answer in response.  |
| 2 | **Supervisor:** “Not anything specific… I just know that I ought to be able to modify my plan so that I can increase the probability of getting correct responses.”**Supervisee:** “Um, I’ve shown him these pictures and asked him to say the words… But when I do that, he omits the final sound.” | Direct/Active Supervisory Style | Again, the question asked is to the point, conveying what is needed in the easiest of manner, with finesse so that the point of the conversation is clear.  |
| 3 | **Supervisor:** “Can you give me an example of informative feedback, so I know that this is clear to you?”**Supervisee:** “If I model the word *mice* and he responds “mi\_\_”, I could say, “No, Johnny, you forgot to say /s/ at the end of the word. Watch me say “mice”… You know, emphasize the /s/.” | Direct-Indirect/Collaborative Supervisory Style | This type of supervisory style is vastly different than the one before. Here, both parties are having a direct conversation, where information is being conveyed in a straight-forward manner. However, in the second have of dialogue, both parties discuss the matter at hand in a collaborative manner.  |
| 4 | **Supervisor:** “Okay. What kinds of strategies do you think might facilitate correct production of /s/ in final position words?”**Supervisee:** “I don’t know… I’ve tried everything that IU can think of. Do you have any ideas?” | Direct-Indirect/Collaborative Supervisory Style | Again, the dialogue shows how the two parties are coming together to find a solution to the problem. They are both clear with regard to what they want and just how they want it. The second half also present how different a direct and a collaborative supervisory style can be. |
| 5 | **Supervisor:** “I can tell you’re frustrated… and it is frustrating when you think you’ve got the super plan, and then for some reason things don’t quite work out the way you planned. Let’s see if we can figure out some things that might help Johnny produce /s/ correctly in the final position words.”**Supervisee:** “ I don’t know… I’ve tried everything that I can think of. Do you have any ideas?” | Indirect/Collaborative Supervisory Style | This is an ideal example of indirect/collaborative supervisory style because of the manner of conversation taking place the conversation is completely relaxed, with both parties finding common ground and a solution to the problem at hand. |
| 6 | **Supervisee:** “Well, I have shown him these and asked him to say the words. Um… but when I do that, he omits the final sound.”**Supervisor:** “Okay… so you know one thing about Johnny… You know that showing him a picture card and asking him to say the name doesn’t work at this point.” | Indirect/Collaborative Supervisory Style | Here, once again it is evident that a direct/collaborative supervisory style is being employed. This ensures that the matter is being taken care of in a manner that aids the entire process with both parties giving input.  |

# Analysis of Supervisory Style (Talk Time)

The three mentioned supervisory styles in this context i.e. direct/active. Direct-indirect/collaborative, and indirect/consultative all vary in terms of talk time. This is because as the style of supervisory, as the relative conversation changes, so does the number of words used and the time taken to convey the reason behind what is being said. The rule of the thumb states that if a conversation is direct, the process of communication takes a shorter amount of time, especially when compared to a conversation that takes place indirectly. This ensures that the various factors associated and involved in the conversation are being taken care of in a proper manner and the issues are being addressed.

## Direct/Active Supervisory Style

Given that this type of supervisory style demands that the supervisor is upfront, direct, and to the point with the supervisee, the conversation remains crisp. Such conversations tend to a lesser number of words, however, every word that is used in such a conversation counts and holds significance. If we use the appendix 2 provided at the end of the chapter, the supervisor asked questions or made inquiries around 15 times. On the other hand, the supervisee responded 14 times.

Furthermore, in this instance, both the supervisor as well as the one being supervised speak about the same amount, on an average. The questions being asked by the supervisor are interrogatory and exploratory in nature. Both parties are trying to get to the bottom of the subject being discussed in the most efficient manner possible.

## Direct-Indirect/Collaborative Supervisory Style

The Direct-Indirect/Collaborative Supervisory Style is one of the most used and most preferred of all three supervisory styles. This is probably because it allows the participants to be as efficient in their conversations as they would like to be. On the other hand, it is flexible enough to cater to the nuances of the situation and cater to it in a manner that produces constructive results. Considering the manner and the approach of speaking that is adopted in this style, the supervisor and the supervisee tends to hand a lot to say.

Each member, on the basis of the appendix provided, had 24-25 instances to speak in the particular manner. This shows that despite the fact that both parties were trying their hardest to be as direct with one another as possible, what remains is the fact that both parties were trying to collaborate to find a solution, instead of one part dictating the solution and other following it, which has made the conversation far longer than the one carried out in the earlier instance.

## Indirect/Collaborative Supervisory Style

The Indirect/Collaborative Supervisory Style is also a frequently employed style of supervisory, however it is time consuming and lacks the efficiency that the other two styles possess. This style is detailed, with both parties getting into the nuances of the subject in an effort to find a collaborative solution which bodes well with both the parties involved. However, it cannot be frequently used and be only employed when solutions customized to a situation are needed.

Here, both the supervisor and the supervisee spoke an equal number of sentences, however, the length of the sentences and the responses involved are far longer than the earlier styles, which adds to both the length and the time of the session being carried out. This type of conversation is more exploratory by nature and tends to be very detailed.

# Conclusion

Some supervisees may not reach the independence of the Self-Supervision Stage across the spectrum of age and disorders for which they must be trained to provide services, or they may not reach independence in relation to certain aspects of it despite the efforts of the educational training program. In other words, supervisors in all situations must be aware of the continuum as they determine the appropriate style for each supervisee. Additionally, they must possess the flexibility that will enable them to adjust their behaviors as they move back and forth on the continuum with their supervisees.

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