

6th MENTORING & COACHING RESEARCH CONFERENCE

FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND PSYCHOLOGY OF ELTE
(EÖTVÖS LÓRÁND UNIVERSITY)
HUNGARY
6 – 7 July 2016

Editors: Zoltán Csigás
Irena Sobolewska

EMCC

*European Mentoring &
Coaching Council*



2016

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SELECTING A SUPERVISION PROCESS IN COLLECTIVE SUPERVISION

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Abstract: *The research question that we address in this paper is to decipher what drives the selection of a process during a collective supervision, which would best serve the system formed by the group, the supervisor, the supervisees and the context of the client.*

A key idea is that this process should amplify the collective intelligence within the group to help the supervisee who presents a situation to find the best response to his query.

Value of Research: *A review of the international literature shows that more than 100 processes exist to supervise a group of coaches. Selecting one is often an intuitive decision. Carey Morewedge & Daniel Kahneman (2010) have identified several pitfalls in intuitive judgment that might alter the quality of the selection. A better understanding of that selection process will be welcome.*

Keywords: *Supervision, collective, process, techniques.*

INTRODUCTION

In order to avoid confusion, let's define the following terminology: in a supervision group, we have the Supervisor, and the Supervisees. The supervisee who brings a situation is called the Presenter, the other supervisees are called Members (of the group). The Process is that which is chosen for a given Presenter, for instance the use of "Devils and Angels". The Selection Technique, or simply Technique, is how the Process is selected, for instance intuitively by the supervisor.

During our collective supervision practice and our supervisions of supervisors, we have identified over time more than 100 processes such as, for example: the Berne process, Devils and Angels, Gordon Law, Tag, Cascade, constellations, etc.

We have explored, with more or less success, several techniques to select the best process for a given situation, considering the demand, the profile of the group and the reference frameworks used by ourselves and by the participants.

Some of these approaches were not appropriate to our purpose but their weaknesses helped us to design new techniques, to identify hidden factors and to progress in our understanding of the effectiveness of a collective supervision.

Finally we have decided to perform a more systematic investigation of how to best select a particular process by using a simplified protocol where some of the factors are controlled.

At that stage of our reflection we are not ready to test a hypothesis. This piece of work is therefore still an exploration of the research domain. Our objective is to open new areas of investigation that could be studied with quantitative methodologies.

Research question, assumptions, factors and variables

The research question we are tackling is to uncover and understand what is at play when selecting a process during a collective supervision, which would best serve the system formed by the group, the supervisor, the supervisees and the supervisee's client context.

Our key assumptions are, first, that collective supervision is not at its upmost when the selected process is not fully adapted to that system and that, second, collective intelligence can be taken advantage of to amplify the effectiveness of collective supervision.

In our research protocol, we have considered the *technique used* as the independent variable and the *effectiveness of the supervision* as the dependant variable.

The *technique used* can take two values:

- The actual technique, namely the selection and deployment of a process for a particular case;
- The technique that could have been used otherwise. We have fixed it as the choice by the supervisor of a process consisting in several turns of clarification questions to which the presenter provides an answer.

One of the difficulties is the number of factors that can influence the relationship between these variables. We have identified the following factors and have reduced the data to consider a more controlled set:

- Dispersion of the themes and situations. Though we need more data to create consistent groups of themes, we have organised the data following the dominant themes that have already emerged so far: dilemmas, identity, conflicts, complexity, resistance.
- Supervision of external or internal coaches: we have analysed only situations of external coaching.
- Supervision of professional or life coaching: we have analysed only professional coaching.

- Supervision of "one to one", "one to several" and "several to several" (team coaching, several coaches coaching a team or an organisation): only "one to one" situations are considered here.
- Supervision of coaches acting independantly or coaches involved in a "coaching culture creation" project: only situations where the coach acts independantly are considered.

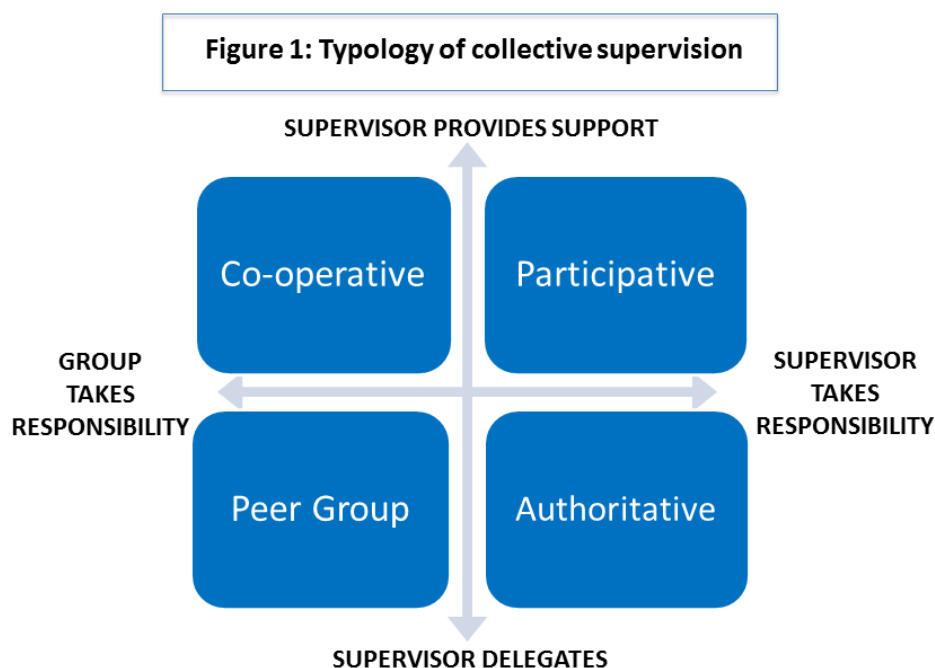
More factors will emerge as the data set increases with time.

We have thus eliminated the influence of some of the factors, but some remain. For instance, it appeared that the supervisees love the fact that the process will be different for each presenter, looking after not only the efficiency of the supervision process but also desiring to live something quite exciting.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A - Collective supervision processes

In this review of literature, we'll follow the typology of collective supervision established by Brigid Proctor (2000). It is summarised in figure 1.



In *Authoritative* and *Participative* processes, the supervisor takes prime responsibility for supervising each supervisee. In *Co-operative* and *Peer Group* processes, the members have a much more active role.

On another hand, in *Participative* and *Co-operative* processes the supervisor delivers more support than in the *Authoritative* and *Peer Group* processes.

Since the first publication of Proctor's book, many other processes have been invented and it is interesting to analyse how they fall into the four categories that she defined.

The *Authoritative* process is an inheritance from the psychodynamic or psychoanalytic supervision. The supervisor supervises one of the members while the other members observe and do not participate. Members are supervised one after another and possibly some time is allocated at the end for questions or wrap-up.

Supervisors who use this approach have different reasons to favour it:

- This is the best way to deliver full supervision power
- Some groups are not ready for a more delegative process
- Contrarily to current beliefs, let us note that this is a valid supervising style, like any other.

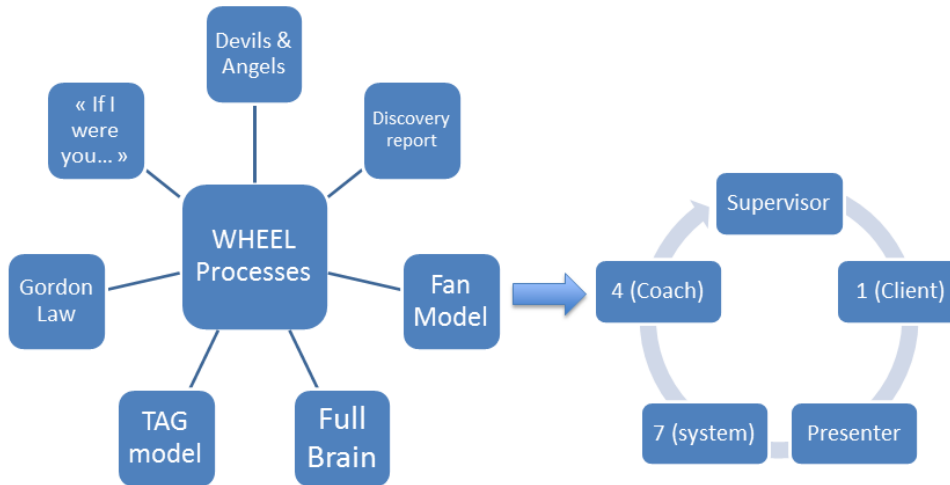
The *Participative* processes usually follow a pattern where the presenter presents his or her case and then there are one or several turns of clarification questions. At this point the supervisor proposes a process where the group will co-elaborate a solution to the presenter's problem. Usually members ask questions or make assertions in turns according to some model. As a part of the process and at the choice of the supervisor, the presenter may either provide an answer to the questions or just listen.

For example, in the "Fan model" (Hawkins, 2006) each member of the group is specialised in one of the 7-eyed modes and asks questions related only to this mode.

Or, in the "Discovery report" model, created by Florence Lamy (2015), and also briefly discussed later, each member makes an assertion starting with "*What surprises me in what you said is...*".

Let's call all those *Participative* processes "The wheels" (see figure 2). There are well-known processes in this family ("Fan", "Angels & Devils", "Gordon Law", etc...) and it is quite easy to create a new one on the spot. For instance, in the "Full brain" (Lamy & Moral, 2015) each turn of questions relates to one of the four quadrants of the HBDI model (Herrmann, 1992). All these new processes have a specific purpose and if for instance the demand relates to values, a "values related process" could be used where each of the 7 levels of consciousness (Barrett, 2006) are distributed to the members. Once such a new process is tested a couple of times it becomes a process useful for values related issues.

Figure 2: The Wheel processes



In *Co-operative* processes, the group has much more initiative and the supervisor acts as facilitator and/or an expert. Once the process is launched, it usually runs by itself and the supervisor can possibly “select the best time to...” if needed.

Examples of such processes are the “Cascade”, or Systemic Constellations.

Other examples are the processes developed by David Drake (Keynote on July 10th 2015 in Oxford-Brookes) and also Robin Shohet (Keynote on May 10th 2016 in Oxford-Brookes) to address the following question: « *How to put what is really in their head in the room?* ». Florence Lamy has also developed processes with the very same objective, like “Mode Coeur” (Lamy & Moral, 2015).

Finally, in *Peer Group* processes, the group takes full responsibility for the supervision process and the supervisor is taken as a resource.

In all the processes, there are some common questions that need to be clarified:

- How is the process selected?
- How is the facilitation carried out?
- How is the *meta* function organised?

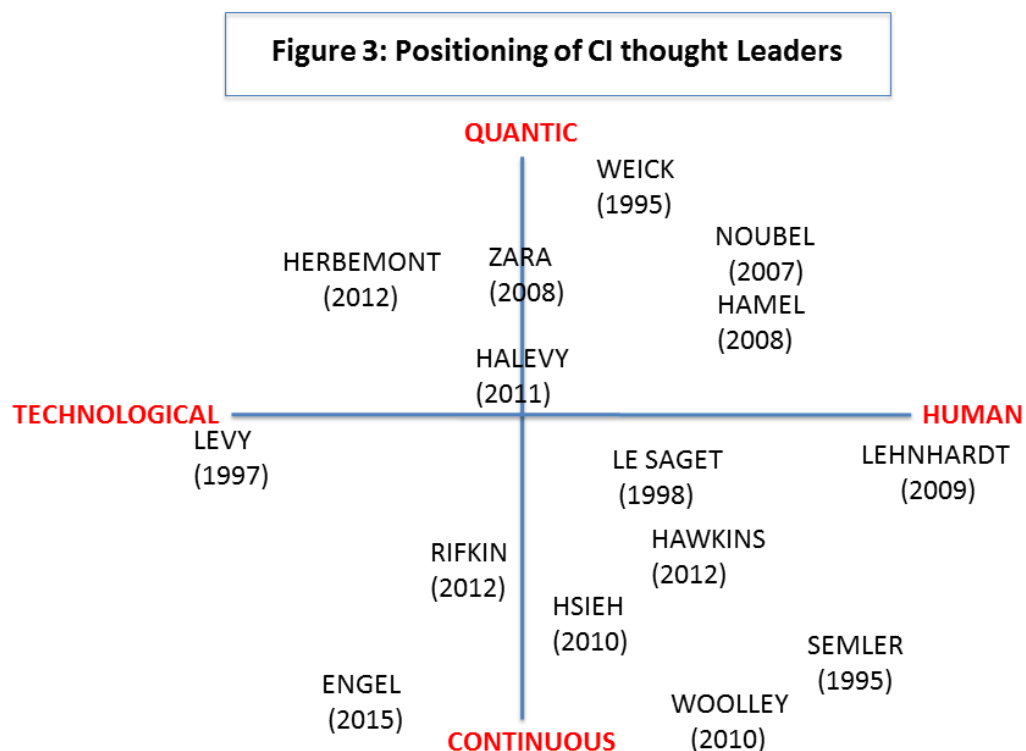
This last question is quite important, because the *meta* function is the basis for collective intelligence. In our protocol we have established two *meta* positions: Meta 1, focused on the facilitation but also on observation and this can be handled either by a supervisor or a member, and Meta 2, the one focused on the whole system.

B – Collective intelligence

Collective intelligence is still an unprecise construct. For instance, during a course that was part of the 2015 Post Master Collective Intelligence curriculum at the University of Cergy-Pontoise, we have proposed the following exercise to a group of students: collectively decide to place on a graph the thought leaders on collective intelligence, according to the following criteria:

- Collective intelligence is either 100% technological or 100% human, separated by the horizontal axis.
- Collective intelligence growth is either continuous or by jumps when some conditions are satisfied, separated by the vertical axis. In other words collective intelligence is either a continuum or quantic.

The results are as follows:



This graph shows how collective intelligence (CI) has multiple definitions in the literature. The definition we use in coaching is that CI combines performance, well-being in the group and attention to the future of the planet, though this might be too ambitious in the context of a collective supervision.

We have thus restricted ourselves in this study to the definition given by Anita Woolley (2010) in her quantitative research. She studied a total of 172 groups, to which a broad sample of tasks was given. She did a factor analysis on the results and the number one factor explained 44% of the variance. She called this factor **C** and defined it as Collective Intelligence.

Another part of Woolley's study was to identify the contributors to **C**, of which the following three were found to be predominant:

- The average social sensitivity of group members, measured by the "Reading the mind in the eyes" test, with a correlation with **C** of 26%.
- The variance in the number of speaking turns, with a -41% correlation with **C**. In other words, few people dominating the conversation kills collective intelligence.
- The proportion of females in the group, with a 23% with **C**. This was due, however, to the high social sensitivity of women in the studied population.

In collective supervision, the speaking turns are regulated by the supervisor or by the process itself. Sometimes, however, they are not. For instance, clarification questions are usually very short, but the answer given by the presenter could be endless. Processes where the presenter is not allowed to react offer a better distribution of speaking turns. Consequently, a way to improve the classical "Wheel supervision" could be to allow the presenter only a very limited amount of time and let the process "do the job".

The social sensitivity can be increased with some processes like for instance "Mode Coeur". It can also be decreased when the process heavily relies on the mind, like for instance when members have a turn of "*If I were you...*".

Of course the proportion of females in the group is not something we can alter.

More recent studies (Engel & al., 2014) are supporting Woolley's conclusions and show that the Theory of Mind can also be used instead of social sensitivity when social sensitivity is limited by the physical conditions of the meeting, for instance when communication is remote e.g. Through Text/Audio/Video teleconferencing).

METHODOLOGY

In one of our regular collective supervision groups, we make it clear that there will be some experimentation, which will be part of our research. In this particular group, we provide information in real time about what we think, do and try to do. As most participants either are or plan to become supervisors themselves, they are quite interested in being subjects of that research. This was our laboratory.

In order to insure consistency in the research, we established the following protocol, with all steps being recorded:

- The presenter presents his request during less than 8 minutes without any interruption from the supervisors or the members.
- Then the 2 supervisors discuss openly the strategy that they are going to adopt.
- A decision is made on the supervision process to be applied.

- Group supervision takes place during 20 to 25 minutes. One of the supervisors takes a Meta 2 position. The Meta 1 position is either taken by the other supervisor or by one of the members.
- An evaluation is done. We record only the situations where a “wheel process” is selected.

Each supervisee has a time slot of 30 to 35 minutes. At the beginning of the session there is an inclusion, always the same (Lamy & Moral, 2015). At the end of the session there is a deconstruction, fit to what happened during the session.

From the supervisor’s standpoint, one is facilitating and also holds a Meta 1 position, whereas the second one is in a Meta 2 position. This is a combination inspired from the Italian family therapy technique, where one of the therapist stays with the family and the other one is behind a one-way mirror. Still in the area of family therapy, Tom Andersen (1991) has developed methodologies where the therapists have an open discussion in front of their clients: *“What happens when the barriers between therapists and clients are removed, when they all participate in a dialogue about change, and when therapists and clients even trade places?”*. We use some of these methodologies in our practice.

The following inner protocol is followed by both supervisors: Lest call “supervisor” the one in Meta 2. This is what they openly discuss at the end of the presentation by the presenter:

Step 1: The supervisor listens, processes the information and analyses the request.

Step 2: The supervisor listens to both weak and strong signals and creates a mental map of what is being presented. Is there a parallel process? A paradox? An intrapsychic conflict? Transference? An explicit or implicit request? etc... Each supervisor has his/her own inner map, see for instance an example of inner map in figure 4.

Step 3: After a round of clarification questions (optional), the supervisor associates several hypotheses with the appropriate supervision processes.

Step 4: By:

- placing himself in self-observation of his or her own thinking process, thinking the thought in fact,
- and making hypotheses about the options as to what would be the best process to meet the request,

The supervisor will be able to identify how he will enable the collective « super body & mind », i.e. the greatest efficiency combined with the best ecology.

Step 5: For each hypothesis the supervisor selects the method that seems most relevant to meet the request.

After the discussion, the following steps are taking place:

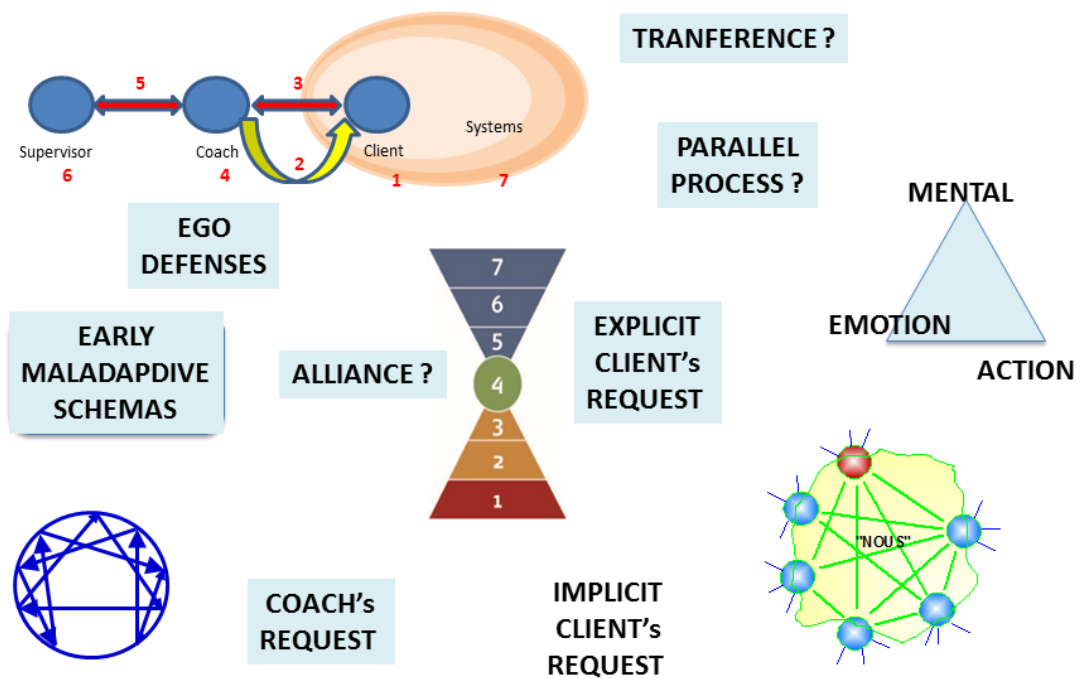
Step 6: The supervisor deploys the selected method.

Step 7: The supervisor in a Meta 2 position delivers his/her observation

Step 8: The evaluation is made by using two Visual Analogue Scales (VAS, Wewers & Lowe, 1990):

- The first one measures the actual *implication* of members compared to what it could have been in a supervision where the supervisors just decide what process is used.
- The second one measures the *satisfaction* of the presenter compared to what it could have been with a process limited to rounds of clarification questions.

Figure 4: Inner Supervisor's World



Example

Explicit Coach Request

« How can I be helped in this situation where I have to indefinitely « feed » the client and cannot stop doing it? » (Repetitive request of the client).

Implicit Request

The implicit request is related to the contradiction between the desire to help (be a “nice coach”) and the need to be assertive (be a “tough coach”). There is possibly the fantasy that assertiveness will cut the alliance.

Hypotheses

H1 => Transference

H2 => Client’s pathological request

H3 = > Presenter’s paradoxical request (magical solution: be nice and tough without cutting the alliance)

Methodology

- Amplify the weak signals in the supervisee’s presentation that are related to the paradox.

- Help the supervisee let the paradoxical loop reach consciousness

=> Two rounds with:

« **What surprises me in what you said is...** » (process = **Discovery report (Lamy & Moral, 2015)**).

⇒ After the two rounds the presenter integrates what was said and reconsiders the meaning of his or her question.

The supervisors deliver a Meta feedback.

RESULTS

When such a selection protocol was deployed, implication of the members and satisfaction of the presenter have improved in 90% of the cases. As the VAS scales are made of photographs, the improvement cannot be quantified precisely, but we can compare 2 groups of measures. For instance it appears that processes where the presenter should not react at all are more satisfactory.

This shows that some results of research related to collective intelligence can be used in supervision.

DISCUSSION

There are clearly two limitations:

- The first key limitation relates to the measurement of the dependant variable (effectiveness of the supervision). We face the classical problem of comparing actual vs “could have been”. But, as a supervision is something unique, it is not possible to use methodologies like “do then redo”.
- The second one is that the best process identified in Step 4 is often not a “wheel” process but, for instance, a cascade or a constellation. In that case, this is the process that will be deployed and this particular situation is not recorded.

On top of refining the analysis as our data sets expands, we can see several directions for future research:

- The application of Engel's (2014) results in supervisions performed using remote tools.
- The "serving of the system" which is not yet clearly appearing or measured in the way we have done the analysis.

CONCLUSION

Within helping professions, coaching is quite specific for the following reasons:

- Compared to other helping professions, coaching is very pluralist (a large variety of reference frameworks can be used) and extremely eclectic (a large variety of tools from different reference frameworks can be used during the same session).
- The methodology of coaching is such that time is limited. Note that some other helping approaches are also time limited (for instance behavioural or cognitivist psychotherapy).
- Professional coaching has 3-Way or 4-Way meetings to agree on the objectives and assess the results of the mission.
- It is usually not, or should not be, related to suffering but to better performing and well-being.
- The initial training of coaches is short compared to that of other helping professions.

Consequently, supervision of coaches is also specific compared to supervision of other helping professions. The supervisor needs to be able to help supervisees who use reference frameworks that he does not know well and to focus on development with beginners.

New approaches of supervision are therefore needed, based upon research if possible. The supervision competencies frameworks should thus also include what is provided by research. This is for instance, the case in the EC Vision supervision and coaching competence framework, where elements related to organisation and management are considered.

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