TEACHING AND LEARNING IN SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE PLACEMENTS -

A STUDY OF PROCESS IN PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

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Abstract

Approximately half of the time on social work training courses is devoted to practice placements in agencies, where students practise under the supervision of a qualified worker. The supervisory relationship is a key component in the development of practice skills but it is under-researched. This study, of the teaching and learning processes in supervision, is essentially illuminative in nature and purpose.

It is a qualitative study from the perspectives of supervisors and students. It presents some illustrative experiences which can not be adequately explained using the traditional model of supervision. Following a review which shows the roots of this model in American supervision literature, the research problem is defined. The research task is seen to be the generation of descriptions and interpretations of teaching and learning in supervision which are meaningful to the participants themselves.

After reviewing some research into how adults learn, data gathered by a range of methods are presented as illustrative case examples, which point to **the importance of the conceptions which the supervisors and students have of the learning process as a factor in explaining the patterns of interaction seen in the supervisory relationship.**

These interpretations contribute towards a new, grounded, model of learning in social work education. Three levels of teaching-learning interaction in supervision are identified, which are derived from (and constrained by), students' and supervisors' conceptions of learning. The three levels reflect a focus on the content of learning, the process of learning, and meta-learning (ie learning to learn, and the transfer of learning).

These findings are congruent with other recent research into student learning in higher education.

Feedback to participants and other supervisors, tutors and policy-makers is described. The validity and usefulness of the findings, and implications of the research (including the need for further studies), are considered.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

For much of the twenty years or so before this study began, social work education appears to have paid relatively little attention to the teaching of professional social work in practice placements. Instead there was considerable concentration, especially during the first part of the period, on the content of the academic disciplines which social work students study during their training.

This was true not only in relation to the published literature, but also in relation to the focus of the requirements made by the validating body – the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work (CCETSW). Courses which lead to the Certificate of Qualification in Social Work (CQSW) are required to devote half of their total length to supervised practice in social work agencies (CCETSW, 1977), yet this part of the training has frequently been treated superficially in the curriculum material submitted to CCETSW for validation. The major part of these course submissions has been taken up with descriptions of the content of sequences taught in the colleges.

More recently implemented changes in the requirements for courses (CCETSW, 1981) specify areas of, but not levels of, students' knowledge and abilities which must be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the examiners.

This shift of emphasis away from the specification of what should be taught in the courses, and towards specifying required outcomes of

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training, is a response to criticisms (especially from employers) of the relevance of what is taught to the present practice in the agencies.

These changes concerning student assessment went alongside more explicit expectations that educational institutions and agencies should work more closely together in course planning, in the selection and assessment of students, and in relation to the practice component of the course. These regulations related to student intakes from September 1983, so at the time of writing, very few cohorts of students have passed through the revised courses. Further changes are planned with the publication of proposals for a new qualifying award in social work, to be granted after three years of training (CCETSW, 1987), which brings together existing CQSW courses and courses leading to the Certificate in Social Service (CSS). The proposals continue the shifts we have descibed above, and identify supervison as a key area for development work to lead to the new award. This research is intended to be a contribution to that process.

In the submissions prepared by courses for validation purposes, indications of the learning processes by which students will acquire the relevant knowledge and skills required of them is notable by its absence. Usually there is a list of teaching methods and resources which the course will utilise which are very rarely related to particular elements of the curriculum, or to specific learning objectives. They do not appear to take into account any individual differences in how students might learn or teachers might teach.

Social work training is essentially concerned with adults' learning, yet such explicitness about teaching and learning in curriculum material borrows heavily from traditional teaching models. Implicit

models also appear to reflect the authors' own experiences as learners, and/or appear to value the authority and status of the discipline rather than the experiences of the learner (Casson, 1982).

One of the major reasons for registering this research in an Institute of Education, rather than a University Department which offers social work training, was that developments in conceptualising the teaching and learning processes for adult learners in higher education have failed to penetrate very far into social work education - despite having direct relevance and potentially great value. Since this study began, two journals focussing specifically on social work education have provided a forum to begin this task. Only a small number of articles, most of which are related to a preliminary discussion of issues raised by the present study (Gardiner, 1984b), have so far been published in this area. This interest has very recently extended to the social work practice journals with a review of that debate (Whittington, 1986).

Those who are responsible in the agencies for teaching social work practice (the supervisors) have been increasingly concerned in recent years about the poorly-conceptualised and poorly-researched nature of supervision. A few studies have looked at assessing students' practice, (Morrell, 1979; Brandon and Davies, 1979). Others have identified the importance of close liaison between college and agency in making expectations of the practice element more explicit (Syson and Baginsky, 1981). Those which refer to the teaching and learning processes of supervision are relatively scarce.

Indeed, most of the contributions to the British literature in this area are more than twenty or thirty years old, and conceptualise the

learning processes in terms borrowed from American work based on the supervision of the psychodynamic approaches to social casework practice. This body of work is still influential (eg CCETSW, 1983), despite the fact that much of current social work practice in Britain bears little resemblance to American social casework practice of the pre-war, and immediate post-war, period.

Recent developments in training for other professions show that social work is not alone in having given relatively limited attention during that period to the **process** of learning rather than to the **content** or **outcome** of courses. In, for example, teacher training (Stones, 1984), in the vocational preparation of general practitioners (Cox, Kontianen and Robinson, 1977), as well as in basic medical education (Entwistle and Newble, 1986), there are similar kinds of problem.

The present study seeks to make a contribution to this area - clarifying and conceptualising the teaching and learning processes which demonstrably occur in the practice component of social work training. No comparable study has been found in the literature.

Attention is focussed on the ways in which supervisors and students teach and learn in their regular supervision sessions although, of course, it is acknowledged that students also learn from each other, from college-based teaching and from their clients. The results point to the importance of considering the understandings which both students and supervisors have of teaching and learning processes.

The collection and interpretation of such data presents a major challenge to the traditional literature in the area, (which is not research-based) because it begins to identify patterns of experiences

in supervision which are not easily accounted for by the explanations offered in the supervision literature. Thus the study begins the process of developing grounded theory as the basis of an alternative paradigm - one which can account meaningfully for the events described to those involved, and which is also useful to others in social work education.

The researcher knows the focus of work in this study from his own experience as a specialist supervisor running a student unit in the 1970s which involved supervising about fifty students from a dozen social work courses. Since that time he has worked as an education adviser for CCETSW with responsibilities which have included the development of policies concerning supervision in CQSW courses, and in the formulation of the course requirements described above. In no sense, then, could this present piece of work be considered as research undertaken by a detached, objective outsider - nor is it intended to be. The implications of this for the methodology employed in the study, and the validity of the findings, are considered at some length below.

This study, then, is essentially formative in nature. It sets out intentionally to inform and influence policy-makers, as well as offering social work teachers and students some tools to explain and account for their experience of supervision. Therefore the present thesis is written in a style which is intended to make its findings also accessible to a wider audience than the narrow community of scholars who might normally be expected to use such work.

1.2. Structure of the Thesis and an Overview of the Sections

The thesis is presented in what is essentially a chronological order, to show how the development of the interpretations and conceptualisations have an impact on the focus and method of subsequent data collection. It begins with descriptions of some illustrative events in social work education where the traditional explanations offered were found unsatisfactory in making sense of what had occurred. This chronological sequencing means that some of the earlier material, especially that in Chapters Two and Four, is presented in relation to the explanations used by those involved at the time. Insights which emerged later are not retrospectively overlaid onto earlier material.

Therefore, **Chapter Two** presents three descriptive accounts of the author's own experience in social work education at three points. It begins by describing the experience of supervision as a consumer, whilst a social work student; and early experiences as a student unit supervisor. It also presents(from an illustrative role play exercise) the kind of debates which experienced supervisors have about how to explain what happens, and what should happen, in supervision.

This material helps to identify and formulate the research problem, and provides evidence of preconceptions or bias of the researcher. Although they are not untypical, such experiences remain largely unreported and unrecorded. The literature on supervision is then reviewed. In it, supervision is seen as essentially the same activities as social casework with clients, and the model borrows the language and assumptions of the casework practice paradigm. Many features of that model are not consistent with the active involvement of students in their own learning, so a statement of the research problem is made, and

alternative conceptual frameworks and approaches are sought in response.

Chapter Three looks at methodological issues raised by a study of teaching and learning processes, and considers the limitations of traditional quantitative approaches to educational evaluation. The literature on qualitative approaches to educational research is considered and a rationale for the choice of methods of data collection is presented.

Chapter Four reports the first stage of data collection, and describes the major themes and issues to emerge. The first part was an open-ended questionnaire exercise intended to explore how experienced supervisors learnt and taught, and the problems they had in supervision with particular kinds of students. The second part of the stage was an in-depth case study of supervision of an entire placement through tape-recording the sessions. It became clear from these two exercises that students and supervisors approaches to learning seemed to be important factors in explaining what had occurred in supervision, especially the patterns of interaction between student and supervisor.

Therefore **Chapter Five** reviews some relevant literature describing research into adult learning, and considers how some of this work from Sweden, Britain and the United States could contribute to conceptualising teaching and learning processes in supervision. Particular attention is given to work on learning styles and to stages of development for adult learners. Subsequent data collection is planned in the light of this work, and the findings from stage one of the study.

Chapter Six describes the activities of main data collection stage, which comprised detailed interviews with supervisors and students, and the administration of a learning styles exercise to those who had been interviewed. It also reports the development of feedback to participants to check the accuracy of descriptions and interpretations, and to develop the conceptual framework to explain the patterns of the supervisory relationship.

Chapter Seven presents case examples, to provide fuller pictures of the placements, by bringing together data collected in various phases of the research. Some generalisations of the patterns are developed from these case examples. In **Chapter Eight** these elements are developed into schematic form, showing three levels of interaction between students and supervisors, derived from their conceptions of, and expectations of, the learning process. Some building blocks for a new paradigm of learning in social work education are described in the context of more recent research into adult learning in higher education.

There is also an account of the limitations of the study, and of attempts to address these concerns by using feedback to participants and others in social work education. The formative part of the study, with wider dissemination of the findings, is also reported, together with some implications for social work education.

Chapter Nine identifies areas of further work prompted by this research, in supervision and in social work more generally. The chapter is concluded by a full summary and overview of the process and findings of the research.

The **Appendices** provide (in Appendix A) a paper published during the study, based on its approach and initial findings, which has prompted a number of responses and developments in the social work literature. Appendix B gives the detailed data from an interview concerning Case Illustration II.

CHAPTER 2 - DEFINING THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

2.1 An Overview of the Chapter

This chapter formulates and defines the research problem and the tasks to be undertaken within the present study. It does so by considering three indicative experiences in very different roles within social work education - as a student, as a student unit supervisor, and as an education adviser looking at supervision with experienced supervisors at a national conference. In each of these roles, events are described which are not adequately explained by using explanations drawn from the traditional model of supervision. The nature and persistence of this model is described by a review of key texts in the social work education literature.

Section 2.2 discusses these experiences at some length, since they are at the root of the problems which this study seeks to illuminate and explicate. They reflect, from the inside, the kinds of learning difficulties which can exist between any teacher and learner. Because practice supervision in social work is a series of meetings between two people, over many months, there is considerable opportunity for differences between them and problems in teaching and learning to become magnified. This close, individualised, method of teaching and learning is distinctive of social work education and research into supervision is likely to provide detailed data on teaching-learning interactions in higher education.

Section 2.3 reviews key contributions to the supervision literature in social work education. Particular attention is given to how the teaching and learning elements of the supervision are dealt with. This

review of the major British texts identifies the debt owed to earlier American literature in social casework supervision.

After considering the indicative experiences, and the supervision literature, Section 2.4 articulates the research problem, and the ways in which this study can address those questions.

2.2. Descriptions of Three Indicative Experiences ,

Some of the thinking and experiences which contributed directly to the focus of this study have taken place over the fifteen years or so since the author was himself a student on a social work course. Three particular experiences stand out over that time, in roles variously as student, supervisor, and advisor. Each experience was unsatisfactory in some ways, because those involved did not always agree with others' perceptions and explanations of events, in particular the nature and purpose of supervision sessions, and the supervisory relationship.

Therefore they are presented here as examples of what Kuhn (1970) describes as the dominant paradigm in the field, and as examples of the need to challenge the explanations which that paradigm offers since they do not wholly explicate and give meaning to the experiences. Kuhn sees a 'paradigm' as commitments to beliefs, values and metaphors in a field as the basis of 'normal' work in the area defining both the kinds of problems to be researched, and the legitimate ways of undertaking that work. We shall attempt to develop the basis of another paradigm in social work education which is grounded in, and derived from, the experiences of social work education itself.

Each of the three episodes are presented here in summary form to highlight the issues raised which are most relevant for our purposes. We begin with an account of supervision experience as a student.

2.2.1 A Placement Experience as a Social Work Student.

In common with other students (Fry, 1977; Shaw and Walton, 1978) these experiences on placement were felt to be the most significant parts of the entire training course. What is recalled most vividly, and to some extent most painfully, was the feeling of being trapped in a Kafka-esque game where not only were the rules of conduct of the teaching and learning activity, and assessment, different from those which I had previously met in my first degree course, but also they seemed to have some rather strange features. These seemed to include some unspoken rules which apparently forbade the discussion of the rules themselves. Thus my supervisor was never able to be explicit about her expectations of supervision. The first person singular is used in this account.

> I started my social work training course in 1970, just after my 23rd birthday, and after only one year working in the Mental Health Department of a Local Authority. I was thus relatively new to social work, and one of the younger students on the course, male, married and with a reasonably good academic background as far as those in the social work department were concerned.
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> I was seen by the course staff (who were all female, single, and rather older than most of the students) as "intellectual, and needing to develop the feeling side of my work". I thought at the time I was quite sensitive, quite vulnerable as a young adult, and that my social work practice was marked by an ability to get on sympathetically with a range of my clients, regardless of their background. Such details provide a context for the placement experiences. The descriptions have a certain rawness, and echo how I felt at the time.
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> My first social work placement was in a Child Guidance Clinic in a large provincial city. The approach in that Clinic, like that of the social work course, was a traditional, psycho-dynamic one. My supervisor was (I believed) supervising for the first time, having trained on the same course a short while before.

I considered that I needed to use the first placement to get broader experience of social work, and in particular to develop my practice skills in this psychotherapeutic milieu. I also wanted to begin to conceptualise my practice, because until then I had been working intuitively and with rather limited supervision in my employing agency.

My supervisor and I began to run into some difficulties fairly early on in the placement because she seemed to believe that what I should write about in my reports, and talk to her about in supervision, were the feelings which I had during and after the interviews. When I persisted in trying to focus on making sense of what was going on in the families with whom I was working, and between them and me in the interviews, not wanting just to focus on my feelings, it was assumed that I was "being defensive", and that I had "some block" in my personality about the expression of feelings which required the help of my supervisor to overcome.

At first I first denied this, but later under considerable pressure from my supervisor, tried to respond to her demands. When I did so, I experienced her getting extremely anxious about this feeling-level discussion, and increasingly awkward and embarassed. I found that this inhibited me from talking in much depth about the feeling content of the interviews, since it seemed to make supervision sessions so difficult. The supervisor apparently found this situation very difficult, and this ´problem´ had apparently been the subject of discussions in a group of tutors and new supervisors at the University.

When I raised these issues with my tutor and supervisor, I said that I thought that the difficulty I had was in describing and expressing my feelings **with this supervisor** in the supervision sessions, because it seemed to get us very entangled. I believed that, **in my practice**, I could respond to and use the feeling components of the interviews at the time with the clients, and subsequently in my reflection on the cases. Saying this in a supervision session, to the supervisor, was taken as further evidence of ´my problem´. I vividly remember sitting in the office, and consciously deciding that there were ways in which I should try to appear to be different. I decided that, for the rest of the course, I would try to remember in my speech and writing to use phrases like ´I **feel** that ....´ rather than ´I **think** that ...´ when I was expressing an opinion or view in class or supervision sessions. I also decided that I would try to emphasise more of the feeling components of the interviews in my written reports, and similarly use ´feeling´ words rather than ´thinking´ words. I did not feel that I, nor my practice, should change in this respect - but the presentation to my teachers should be different.

But I also remember thinking that this was a kind of madness, and a game of deception, just like the problems which we were trying to treat at the clinic in the disturbed families we worked with. I felt I was being forced into a role which would confirm these others´ expectations of me and make me

act how they wanted me to be. There were hints that I might otherwise be considered as a borderline pass or might not pass the placement at all. I was highly motivated to pass the course, because without the qualification, I could not work in my chosen profession. Thus I felt pressured to go along with the game.

I recall getting angry at the suggestion that I might fail just because I apparently did not fit my supervisor's expectations of me: and when, later in the placement, I suggested that this anger had itself been an example of my ability to express feelings in the supervision sessions, the supervisor became very withdrawn and looked pained.

After a particularly demanding episode with a client, who had been bereaved (as I myself had also been), and whose child was being removed from her, the supervision discussion seemed to bring enormous relief at first to my supervisor, who felt that at last I was "getting into these feeling areas". I insisted firmly that this was not the case, since I had always been able to do such work, and indeed had done so before coming onto the course, as well as earlier in the placement. As soon as I had challenged the assertion of an apparent change in my work being more to do with my supervisor's perceptions, and her limited evidence for such a view, rather than how I knew myself to be, she appeared to me to retreat again. These matters were never properly resolved.

With the benefit of hindsight it is possible to see that my supervisor and I had very different expectations about the appropriate use of supervision, which we never made explicit. I felt I was being treated like a client. My supervisor was apparently vulnerable and unsure of herself in what for her was a new and demanding role - but she presumably had clear expectations of what she saw as the "right" way for supervision to be used. We did not seem to be engaged in the same enterprise, and had different expectations about how we should use supervision - especially about who should be responsible for the teaching and learning. Therefore, underlying all of these exchanges was a rather different but contributing dimension about power in educational relationships.

It was known on the course that I had previously been politically active in my undergraduate days; and with others I had stood up for the rights of the social work students to contribute to their course and to

their own learning during the period that the placement described above was going on. The context of those days of student radicalism in the late 1960s and early 1970s was very different from the context today. I often got the sense that those of us who stood out in this way were particularly subjected to the pressure of the game "your problem is known to us - but your problem is that you don't know that you have a problem". This underwrote the assumed authority of the teachers, as experts, and also reflected the way they related to their clients. It is a seductive and potentially powerful position to believe that there are right and wrong ways to understand and interpret the world - and it is threatening when others persist in challenging those assumptions (Gorer, 1966):

> "An important component in many schools of magic or esoteric knowledge is the employment of Words of Power; these Words give the user control over occult forces. For many people... some of the vocabulary of psychoanalysis and of general psychiatry... has acquired some of the characteristics of Words of Power. Many people appear to feel that when they have applied a psychoanalytic, or quasi-psychoanalytic term to a person or situation they have somehow gained control... (and) rendered it or him understandable, safe, innocuous."

Of course, it can be seen as a political act to attempt to own one's own learning. For a student to try to do so is a particularly powerful challenge to the authority of teachers, and their expertise - perhaps especially so for new and inexperienced supervisors.

These student experiences no doubt influenced my own approach to acting as a supervisor of social work students, and it was brought back vividly during or following some of the interviews in this study, or when listening to tapes of others' supervision sessions. For the present, we can summarise the account by saying that it was clear then, but is even more obvious with hindsight, that my supervisor and I were talking at cross purposes, and the frames of reference which we used were very different, offering apparently competing explanations of the

same events. It seemed that our expectations of **how** the teaching and learning would happen in supervision were at variance.

These kinds of experiences are much more commonplace for some of our clients when they are brought up in particular kinds of families. They find that important elements of their own experiences are denied or challenged by others around them, or misinterpreted. This is done in such a way that there is apparently no escape from the situation. Such patients and clients are told how they ´ought´ to be experiencing the world, whilst at the same time they are told that the experiences which they feel they are having are not how they feel them to be. They are left feeling powerless and misunderstood and, most importantly, so disabled by the situation that they are unable to escape from it. This well-recognised phenomenon is what social workers and psychotherapists call the "double-bind". Bateson et al (1956) have graphically shown how this kind of experience of tangled patterns of communication can lead to pathologies in vulnerable members of such families:

> "We hypothesise that there will be a breakdown in any individual´s ability to discriminate between Logical Types (ie levels of communication) whenever a double bind situation occurs. The general characteristics of the situation are the following:
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> (1) When the individual is involved in an intense relationship... in which he feels it is vitally important that that he discriminate accurately what sort of message is being communicated so he can respond appropriately.
>
> (2) And, the individual is caught in a situation in which the other person is expressing two orders of message and one of these denies the other.
>
> (3) And, the individual is unable to comment on the messages being expressed... ie he can not make a meta-communicative statement."

Such experiences can therefore be understood in ways which do not locate cause (nor, more importantly, responsibility and blame) within the individual who is the "target" of the attributions in such systems. These alternative kinds of explanations, which have also been developed

in relation to social work practice, are framed within a different paradigm from the classical psycho-therapeutic interventions, which focus more on individuals, rather than on the interactions between people, or the way systems as a whole operate. The ability to accurately discriminate orders of messages in learning interactions, and to comprehend meta-communication, is something to which we return later.

Despite that broadening of perspective in relation to social casework practice, it seems that in supervision responsibility can still be placed on one or more individuals, rather than on their interactions. These other frames of reference are often more concerned with meaning than cause, as Rycroft makes clear in his reinterpretation of Freud's contribution to the study of interaction and communication (1966):

> "What Freud did here was not to explain the patient's choice **causally** but to understand it and give it **meaning**, and the procedure he engaged in was not the scientific one of elucidating causes, but the semantic one of making sense of it. It can indeed be argued that Freud's work was really semantic... that neurotic symptoms are meaningful, disguised communications but... he formulated his findings in the conceptual framework of the physical sciences."

It is worth looking at the parallels in this formulation and the approach of the alternative paradigm of educational evaluation associated with Parlett and Hamilton (1971). Their concern to shift from quasi-scientific models of evaluation to those which are descriptive and interpretive echo both the shift Rycroft describes, and the intention of the present work to explore supervision from the perspectives of those involved – the supervisor and student.

2.2.2 Experiences as a Student Unit Supervisor - Differences in Approaches to Teaching and Learning

The first part of this section is based on papers which the author wrote about phases of development in Thamesmead Student Unit and which were originally written in 1976 and 1977. The Unit at Thamesmead was unusual in two main ways: first, it was not formally part of any agency; second it was established as part of an attempt to develop inter-professional, community-based training jointly for social workers, general practitioners, health visitors and others involved in community care (Adcock, Craig, Gardiner, Jaques, 1977; Jaques, 1982; Gardiner, 1983).

Although the papers on which this section is based were written for a rather different purpose, they do provide illustrative material for some of the matters under discussion here. They also have the advantage of not being coloured by subsequent reinterpretation. A description of the first period of the Unit's existence also reflects something of the author's stage of development as a supervisor at the time, in reflections on the first year of the Unit's functioning:

> "When I first started at Thamesmead, I was aware of the need to establish the credibility of the Unit with other professionals and agencies in the community. I was very aware also of my need to be seen as a "teacher" or "student unit supervisor". I had not previously supervised any social work students, though I had some limited experience as a secondary school teacher... I had also been a student on a social work course and had been supervised in practice placements..."

> "... I certainly needed "students" so that I could be the "teacher". I did a lot of "teaching", and with the benefit of hindsight I think that **there was probably a lot more teaching than learning going on at that time.** Some of the students seem to learn a lot, but I regret that others apparently learn very little from me..." (emphasis added)

This stage of development as a supervisor is characterised by a preoccupation with **teaching** which seemed to suit some students, to be

coped with by others, but for a few it was apparently not helpful at all. I was sure at the time that this was the **best** (indeed probably the **only**) way to supervise well.

> Subsequently I became increasingly aware of the dimension of the student group as a medium for teaching and learning. I experimented with joint supervision of the students in twos and threes, and with group supervision where about six to eight students might be involved. I discovered the hard way that whilst joint supervision, with a focus on the direct practice of students with their clients worked with small numbers of students, it did not work with more than about three, or occasionally four in the group...
>
> I began to see that students learned in very different ways, and that they used the supervision sessions differently. Some were open and readily talked about their feelings of uncertainty or delight, others were closed or private (at least to me) about their learning. During the same period, I came increasingly into contact with students from other professions, and began to come up against the expectations (which they brought from their own college-based teaching) of **how** they would be taught and **how** they would learn in the practice component of their training.
>
> I tried, in vain as it turned out, to distinguish characteristic patterns for medical students, for health visitor students, and for social work students – but at such a level of generality the categorisations were inappropriately broad, and imprecise. Instead I began to try to distinguish differences within the professional groupings of the students, as well as between them. I began, for example, to look for the differences between those social work students on post-graduate and those on non-graduate CQSW courses. This attempt was equally unhelpful. I began to recognise that students had different ways of learning which were not directly due to their intended profession, nor to the academic level of course they were on...
>
> This recognition that students learned in different ways occurred largely in parallel with the recognition that practice teachers might have distinctive or different ways of teaching. I realised in meetings of groups of supervisors at colleges, and even more so at group meetings of student unit supervisors in the region, that we did not all teach in exactly the same ways. On the one hand, some seemed better at it (or at least talking about it) than their colleagues, and on the other hand, I began to see that the way in which some supervisors related to their students was much more authoritarian than others. They seemed to be more traditional, and in a hierarchical relationship with their students...
>
> Next, I attempted to develop some other approaches to my teaching, and tried to begin to clarify some of the particular strategies which seemed helpful to some of the students. I began to realise that I could help students whose approach might be different from how I was teaching if I

managed to abandon what I had thought of as the <u>right</u> way to supervise. The students' learning was not synonymous with my teaching. I also began to see that congruence between my approach and how the student learned was not the only kind of successful fit between student and supervisor - just as many marriages work on the basis of the complementarity as the similarity of the partners so, apparently, did supervision.

A further stage in this process was the recognition that not only were there differences between students, but that some students might use different approaches at various stages in the same placement and/or for different learning tasks in the same time period.

This emphasised the need for those who were specialist supervisors to develop a range of approaches, and to provide a range of teaching and learning experiences for students. Similarly there was a need to provide formal and informal learning opportunities in the student group to make use of their combined experience.

The learning contract outline developed at Thamesmead was included in a paper for the Professional Studies and Qualifications Committee for the validating body (Gardiner/CCETSW, 1978). It includes the following sections:

"v) an indication of the student's stage of professional development and his current learning needs for this placement need clarification, as does the student's usual style of learning. If a student can be helped before and during the placement to identify his own learning processes then he can play a full and active part in the learning/teaching.

vi) the practice teacher's individual learning/teaching styles will need to be identified to either provide congruence with the student's learning styles, or to provide an opportunity to teach/learn in a different way..."

Although the terms **style** and **stage** were used in this contract they were not defined, and at that time had been developed independently of the work in relation to these concepts in the literature on adult learning. The notion of **style** was more to do with ideas like "prefers to read first and try things out later", or "usually gets some experience first and then tries to make sense of it", as well as "they do not seem to find it easy to share with me what or how they are learning".

Similarly, the term **stage** was related more to "the development of professional identity as a social worker" on the one hand, and to "a cycle of learning stages" on the other. These stages in the cycle included notions like "being open to new learning", "owning and internalising that experience", "making use of that learning in practice", "consolidating and being quite closed to new learning" in not very precisely-defined ways. The question of major developmental stages through which all adult learners pass (eg Perry 1970) did not impinge since at that time those processes were seen as more specifically related to professional training, rather than to learning more generally in higher education.

In summary, we can say that this section, like the previous one, highlights some features of placements and the dominant model of teaching and learning in supervision.

2.2.3 A Role Play - An Example of Alternative Approaches to Supervision.

Early in the 1980s, at a national conference for supervisors, the researcher took part in a role play with two other experienced supervisors, which highlighed some central issues of concern to this study. Because contemporaneous notes were made by two of the participants, it is possible to describe it in some detail. The notes describe the role play of a supervision session and the subsequent discussion by those who took part. Three supervisors took the roles of student, supervisor and observer. The notes made by the observer and the supervisor (in the role play) are reproduced here in an abbreviated form.

> The role play was of a first supervision session for a student in a residential placement with mentally ill clients.

There had been a problem in the first group meeting which the student had attended when she had shared a good deal of information about herself to overcome a long silence in the group. Other staff had been unhappy about this intervention.

The supervision session began with a good deal of questioning by the supervisor to elicit details of the incident, after which the supervisor asked the student about her reading in the area, and her understanding of group processes. Afterwards there was a discussion about how the student copes when she has problems, and about the timing of self-disclosure, especially with clients who have recently had considerable problems of their own, and lack emotional resources and support. The student agreed that these were important factors, and was beginning to acknowledge that there could be a different way of doing things.

The student acknowledged that although she had first claimed she had said things to make the clients feel comfortable, it was also intended to make her feel comfortable too.

The student said "You are saying I'm wrong, what should I do?", and "How can I face them again?". The supervisor did not respond by giving answers directly, but instead said he would respond by asking how the student learns best and came back to the questions in another way.

The student backtracked here and got fed up – saying that the supervisor hadn't dealt with her feelings. The supervisor said that if she were in role as a student she would not have said that. All three participants then came out of role and discussed the role play.

The supervisor said that he was quite consciously not dealing with the feelings of anxiety initially – and that although the student was getting annoyed at first, she was later able to begin to use what was being offered. The observer agreed with this. The supervisor said that he would have gone on by showing the student the connections between what she was trying to unload in the supervision (her feelings about being rejected by the group) and the pressure she felt to unload how she felt in the group session itself.

Both the student and the observer felt that they "would have tried to deal with the anxiety feelings first". The supervisor (in the role play) wrote:

"In the discussion I asked why I should deal with the anxiety first. There seemed to be four different answers given by the others:

(1) "to get it out of the way first"
(2) "to be where the student was"
(3) "it's what we are best at"
(4) "to look at their feelings about themselves and then at the (social work) task"

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It seemed to me that the educational process of supervision was being described as "emptying the bucket of anxiety which the student was carrying". I felt that if I were to try to deal with the feelings of the student first then I would probably be colluding with the student in what she had done in the group - I would be allowing her to spill out all of her feelings when that was not the primary purpose of the supervision session. I felt from her account of the group that she was not very good at holding off her own needs and was rather greedy for attention to her own feelings. I felt that she was trying to run supervision in the same way and I was not prepared to let her do this..."

I also said that I was reluctant to consider making students over-dependent since they were adults and I did not see it was my job to be "their emotional nursemaid".

Towards the end of the discussion I said that I thought that I had responded to, and acknowledged, the concerns of the student in other ways - by being interested in her experiences, by providing a structure and meaning for her experiences, and by acknowledging that we all have that kind of problem as beginning practitioners. In this way I felt that I was refusing to set myself up above her as an expert or paragon in opposition to her incompetence. I did not feel I have to verbalise acknowledging her anxiety nor focus the supervision on it. I had shown it in other ways."

There is some evidence here of at least two kinds of educational model. First is what could be called the traditional (and rather stereo-typical) social casework model of supervision. In this model, what goes on in the supervision session is seen to mirror what goes on in the client-worker interaction, with a primary focus on the feeling content of the interview, and the need to deal with this in supervision as one would in practice (which were the views of the student, and the observer in the role play).

Second, there is an attempt to acknowledge and contain those feelings in the context of a more equal teaching/learning relationship which does not turn the student into a kind of client who must depend on the supervisor to handle difficult and uncomfortable feelings. The latter

model looks towards providing a framework for teaching and learning which can act as a container of difficult feelings with which the student is faced in his work (the view of the supervisor in the role play).

This role play is a particularly useful example, because as often happens in practice placements, the student's problems in her practice are reflected in what she tries to do in supervision. In this case the student seems to be trying to get other people to cope with her feelings, rather than cope with them herself. This analysis of what is happening in the session can be the 'diagnosis' in both the models described. However, the responses of the supervisor are very different. It is apparently very tempting for social work supervisors to try turn their students into clients since (as the notes above indicate) the practice teacher can think it is a legitimate thing to be trying to do because "it is what we are best at". This means, of course, "what we are best at" **as practitioners**, not necessarily as supervisors.

In the next section, the literature on supervision in social work education is reviewed, so that these illustrative/indicative experiences can be seen in the context of the explanations which the literature offers.

We have seen that in the first episode there are very different expectations about the use of supervision sessions, as far as the student and supervisor are concerned, and some of this is echoed in the discussion after the role-play. Both of these incidents seem to suggest that for some there is a right, or indeed only, way to supervise, whilst others think there is diversity in teaching and learning. This issue is also reflected in the second illustration, where the Unit

Supervisor is struggling for models and concepts which encompass the diversity of teaching and learning approaches which he is encountering.

The literature review which follows therefore looks at, and tries to account for, the the dominant supervision paradigm having a focus (and using the language of) client-worker transactions.

2.3 Supervision in Social Work Education - A Literature Review

This section reviews the literature which has influenced thinking about student supervision in the United Kingdom, and in doing so, it identifies the roots of this work in American social casework.

In the main body of this literature, which extends from the 1940s to date, the focus is on supervising workers for a particular model of social work practice ie. social casework. The **practice** of social work in the UK has diversified substantially during the last twenty years or so and has moved beyond the confines of this social casework model. Thus the literature in connection with social work **practice** during this period can be seen as a series of attempts to develop alternatives to the predominant social casework approaches (Whittington and Holland, 1985). The essential elements of the traditional practice paradigm are a psycho-social, dynamic interaction in a fieldwork agency, between two unequal participants, with the purpose of helping the client's social adjustment through his emotional growth.

The changes in social work practice have come about as a series of challenges to various elements of the model: by extending the number of practitioners (ie. working in teams), or the number of clients (ie. working with groups, working with marriages and families) or by changing the interventive processes in which the social worker is engaged (ie. to include advocacy and other indirect work on behalf of the client). These changes are reflected in different explanations of client behaviour, different patterns of service delivery, and differences in the power relationship between worker and client.

Thus, challenges to this dominant practice paradigm have come from a

radical-political perspective (eg Illich, 1970; Illich et al, 1977), from family therapy (eg Minuchin, 1974), systems theory (eg Pincus and Minahan, 1973), from patch-based approaches (eg Hadley, 1984), and in residential work (eg Hudson, 1984).

Despite these changes in relation to the conceptual base of social work **practice**, the social work **education** literature continues to be dominated by models derived from the traditional one-to-one model of social casework practice. Some illustrations of the general features of the model are given below and critically addressed, together with illustrations of their occurence and persistence in the social work **education** literature.

The major UK research into practice placements in the last ten years is commented upon. That research overlaps very little with the focus and purpose of the present study because it gives limited attention to teaching and learning processes: it concentrates instead on arrangements for practice placements and on the assessment of student performance. We shall see that this body of research work is also reliant on concepts and terminology drawn from social casework.

2.3.1 The classical literature on supervision

Clearly, in the space available, it is not possible to review the entire supervision literature in the English-speaking world, nor is it appropriate for present purposes. Therefore, it was decided to identify key elements of the most influential of the British texts, and to trace the roots of the model in the earlier British and American contributions cited in these key texts. Where work to follow up is listed, or a debt to others is acknowledged, this has been pursued. This section is shaped by the selection of a key contribution to the British literature, and looking in turn at the work on which it is founded, and later work which cites it as an important influence.

The text chosen is by Young (1967), whose book on student supervision was published only a couple of years before she took up the post of Director of CCETSW. She continued in that post until the end of 1986, so her ideas have been at the centre of policy debates and discussions for the past twenty years. Her stance can be illustrated by extracts which embody the features of what we shall term the 'classical' model in social work supervision. The major features of her model seem to be:

> (i) that there is a hierarchical relationship between teacher and learner,
>
> (ii) that there is a body of theory, learned in college which is to be applied in practice,
>
> (iii) that all students' learning will have specific arrival points and paths of discovery and these will not be distinguished for individual students
>
> (iv) that a naive, inexperienced student is taught by an experienced expert teacher,
>
> (v) that there are right answers and right ways to do things
>
> (vi) that assessment involves only the teacher, who evaluates the progress of the student towards the required position.

There are a number of important features of any educational model which may be implicit in writings about its operation. However, we are fortunate when examining this literature that the authors are admirably explicit. The essential elements of this model of professional educational process will be considered in turn.

We can illustrate the hierarchical relationship between teacher and learner, as Young sees it:

> **"The personal relationship** which is established between the individual student and his supervisor... must be based on the **acceptance by both the people involved that one is in the role of teacher and the other a learner."**

> "The student knows that **the supervisor has this authority...** if both of them accept this fact and the inevitable difference in status which it brings, **it will leave the supervisor more free to teach and the student to learn..."**
> (emphases added, throughout this section)

We can see how Young sees the relationship of college-based teaching to field practice:

> "Field work placements provide experience of a live situation, in which **the student can apply his theoretical knowledge** (of organisation and structure)... **in the same way as he tests out the casework teaching in the classroom against his experience with his own clients.**

> "The **knowledge which the student must be able to apply in practice** will be in three main areas."

In this model, there are specific destinations, known to the teacher, and there are specific ways of reaching them:

> "A supervisor must help a student towards the first, and probably tentative, ´**arrival point**´, and throughout the case will hold him to continuing along ´**the path of discovery**´"

All new supervisors, like students, are assumed to be naive:

> "...(new) supervisors tend to provide the student with work, and to offer some advice and guidance gleaned from their own experiences, but **have only vague ideas about what the student has to learn, and even less definite plans about what they have to teach."**

Control and ownership of the learning process, and the assessment process rests firmly with the teacher:

> "The student who is **made to think for himself**, from the very beginning of his training..."

> "The written report... must be the responsibility of the supervisor, and opinions vary as to whether the student should be given the document to read... The supervisor must give an honest assessment of the student's performance, even when there is a risk of discouraging the student... **Occasionally a student will ask for a copy of his evaluation** to keep. **Before a supervisor agrees to this, the course tutor should be consulted...**"

Problems in supervision are related to 'anxiety' on the part of the student or supervisor:

> "Common **Anxieties**

> 1. ... **One of the common anxieties** among students and new supervisors is...

> 2. The client's reaction... this perhaps has something to do with **the implied anxiety** sometimes expressed that a client will suffer if the worker changes...

> 3. The supervisor's uncertainties... **This anxiety** sometimes results in a new supervisor feeling..."

This series of points amply demonstrates not only specific components of the model, but also (perhaps even more importantly) the **use of language and terminology derived from the practice of social casework with clients** to describe what happens in the supervision relationship, and in the supervision sessions themselves.

The literature of the period includes many contributions about whether supervision is actually therapy, or whether it should be; even at the beginning of the 1970s, when the present author was a student, the debate persisted. This debate is derived from the psychotherapy literature of the period, and has resurfaced recently in the literature on supervision in family therapy training, which is undertaken by social workers (amongst others) and is taught by many who had first trained as social workers twenty or more years ago. This preoccupation

with questions of 'isomorphism' between the teaching system and the client system is well-demonstrated in a recent dissertation at the Institute for Family Therapy in London (Gray, 1986) which discusses the recent family therapy literature:

> "Liddle and Saba (1983) discuss the principle of the isomorphic nature of training and therapy, which specifies that 'form, pattern, content, affect are recursively replicated in the inter-related domains of training and therapy'. They suggest that trainers would do well to understand and to intentionally utilise with their trainees the same basic principles of change employed in therapy... They also suggest that 'over-emphasis... of the isomorphic relationship could lead to the erroneous conclusion that training is simply therapy with one's students'."

Young expresses a debt to a number of authors, including Garrett (1954), Deed (1962), Howarth (1961), Towle (1954), Austin (1952), and Heywood (1964). She points the reader to their work for further study. By following this suggestion, we can explore in more detail how a number of key features (of terminology, educational model, focus, and purpose) of the British model of social work supervision have been shaped. It is perhaps worthy of comment that more than half of the works Young cites are American, and that more than half of the references (not the same half) were published before 1955.

The paper by Deed was one of a series of contributions about training in the (British) Journal "Case Conference" in 1962. The author reflects on her long experience of supervising, going back before the second world war. Of particular relevance here is the explicit way she describes moving from assuming that **all** students were essentially the same to distinguishing their learning needs by the type of course they were on. At first, she says:

> "I thought, as everyone else did at the time, in terms of 'students' without attaching any particular labels to them relating to the stage of their training or to the kind of course they were taking... I assumed they all came to me to learn roughly the same kind of things... neither I nor the tutor thought in terms of different stages of learning, nor of degree, or certificate, or post-graduate course."

She goes on to explain that **stage** meant the difference between taking a pre-professional or a professional course:

> "As a result of this distinction students in the first group, no matter whether they were taking degree or certificate courses, were thought of as being at a much earlier stage of training than the second group."

She cautions against making too rigid a distinction between the stages, and describes a "natural but continuous growth of learning" which is related to the type of course the student is on. In this, she evidently distinguishes stages of learning between students on non-graduate, undergraduate, or post-graduate courses. In this, she was attempting what the researcher himself described earlier (in section 2.2.2), although no such generalisations were possible amongst the Thamesmead students.

Deed makes no other distinctions between the students, and, indeed, explicitly generalises about **all** students by the use of the terms "they", "their" and "them" in an undifferentiated account of "their" learning:

> "**All students**... enter their first placement with great enthusiasm but with some naivity... **Their need at this stage** is to do rather than to observe as soon as possible. **They do not know enough** to observe intelligently or to appreciate what a good caseworker is doing when she sees her clients... **The student's first need is**... **His learning at this stage consists of**..."

She goes on to describe the problems she and her colleagues ran into when the first group of students were finishing the seventeen-month course:

> "Up till this final six months in the field **he has been able to remain intellectual in approach and he is unused to thinking and speculating imaginatively about actual individual people** (sic)... still able to make foolish and unexpected mistakes which **we normally do not expect at such a late stage of training**...

> "...but in spite of all these fears... all made good use of the final placement... but they were a puzzle to their supervisors in the penultimate stage. This may well have been

> our fault... These post-graduates did not fit to our
> accustomed labels and **supervisors were obliged to consider
> each one very individually**... (and) **allow for the differences
> between students taking different courses"**

The material presented by Deed is revealing. Because she seems to recognise individual students´ different learning needs only by her definitions of stage (from the type of courses they are on), she sees problems occuring when students behave in ways which are different from the teachers expectations of how they should be learning. There seems to be little recognition that this lack of understanding of individual differences might be why the supervisors had such difficulties.

The Deed paper is also explicit about some other key elements of the casework model of supervision, which we identified above, including the relationship between theory and practice:

> "During this **they are taught all the theory they will ever
> get**... and they also get the only opportunities they will
> have as students **to apply this theory in practice** under
> supervision."

In her account of the model (like Young), theory is taught by teachers, in college, to students who will apply it, in practice situations in agencies. There is no recognition that students (and indeed workers) might need to build up generalisations from their own practice to generate practice wisdom (Hardiker and Barker, 1981) or to transfer that learning to other, different practice situations which they will meet in their professional lifetime (Gardiner, 1984b).

To Deed, and Young, teachers are the experts, the repositories of theory, and the student begins as an empty vessel. Deed describes this naive student:

> "He has, as yet, no theory and very little knowledge of
> social legislation or the social services and... though
> relatively mature after three or four years in a University,
> **his maturity is not likely to stand up well to some of the
> experiences he meets in social work.** Intellectual in
> approach, he is unlikely to have foreseen how his own

feelings and attitudes will be involved."

> "It can be really harmful when the student, thrilled and
> excited by this new experience for which he is ill-prepared,
> cannot stop looking at himself and his own motives to the
> extent that he, or she **comes very near to a nervous breakdown**
> (sic)"

This last point, besides emphasising the educational model being used,
also further demonstrates the parallels between supervision and therapy
in the model. Another of the articles referred to by Young is that by
Howarth (1961), where, in a paper intended to be an introduction to
casework supervision, she also takes up this isomorphism issue:

> "The understanding and use of personal relationship, both in
> casework and in supervision is here taken to be fundamental
> to the purpose of social workers in whatever setting they
> have chosen to work. If individuals are to be helped solve
> their problems, or students aided in learning to practise
> casework, it is best achieved within constructive
> relationship. **The two situations are different, but**
> **sufficiently alike to cause misunderstanding and**
> **difficulty...**"
>
> **"Turning to the ways in which students learn in supervision**
> **there is the perennial question of whether casework is**
> **therapy**... The methods of supervision must have a good deal
> in common with those of casework; there are also important
> differences but there is no need to stress these if the value
> in the similarities is appreciated... **The ways in which**
> **teachers behave with their students cannot be basically**
> **dissimilar to their casework behaviour**... The student is,
> however, always different from a client. He is preparing to
> perform an honourable part in a profession and he brings a
> strength of purpose and a wealth of experience to the task...
> learning to be a caseworker demands that a student should
> himself change and he **may sometimes feel as bewildered and**
> **anxious as he perceives his client to be"**

Austin (1952) makes clear the roots of this continuing debate in a
further paper cited by Young:

> "Social work has drawn on psychoanalytic theory. The
> contribution of Freud and his followers... have been
> incorporated into social work teaching as well as into
> practice."

This continuing debate about whether supervision is the same as therapy is both a historical and a cultural hangover. It is a historical hangover in the sense of being derived from earlier conceptions of supervision as the process by which analytically-oriented therapists were themselves trained, in a training analysis (where they were indeed both the student and the "client"). Recently, at an international conference in Yugoslavia on "Supervision in the Human Services" those Eastern Europeans who were psycho-analytically trained assumed that the conference was about precisely this activity, whereas other participants defined supervision more broadly, using the term almost as a synonym for all aspects of staff management. For both groups this present study generated considerable interest, which we describe later.

The isomorphism debate is a cultural hangover in the sense of the continuing influence of American thinking and writing on British social work. American psychiatric social workers originally used psychiatrists and psycho-analysts as their supervisors - until there was a sufficient number of trained social workers to begin to take on the task themselves. This is well-demonstrated in the 1954 American texts to which Young refers us (Garrett, 1954; Towle, 1954) and more recently, Suboda (1986). Garrett's book has an introduction by a psychiatrist which includes the following:

> "It is of comparatively minor importance to cite that the present individual supervisor-student method of instruction is but a reactivation of the old **physician-medical student apprenticeship system or that it has borrowed heavily from the more modern psychoanalyst-analytic control student approach.** The fact remains that this device... **has been brought to its highest order of excellence by educators in social work.**"

As we might expect, Garrett emphasises the same relation of theory to practice in the model we have seen earlier:

> "But professional people whose life's work is the **application of knowledge to real persons...** must acquire knowledge in the richer and more vital sense: Skill in **applying abstract**

> **theory to the complexities of practice** in a way which will produce the desired results... **theory is learned in the first instance in the classroom...** but under able supervision the student comes to experience the exhilaration that comes from **recognising in field work individual examples of what has been learned in class."**

Garrett here assumes that ´knowledge´ is "applied to real persons", and seems to see it as synonymous with ´abstract theory´, which is a set of generalisations the student must apply to particular situations. The key element is that the generalisations do not come from the student´s experience, but from someone else. They are therefore not part of the student, and critically, they are not owned by him. They belong to the teacher, who will instruct the student in their "application". The making, and ownership, of generalisations from practice is a theme we explore further in the data we collect, and its interpretation. We also discover later that the views which Garrett and others have of learning, teaching, and the relation of theory to practice reflect limited conceptions of learning (Van Rossum, Deijkers and Hamer, 1985).

Like Deed, Garrett has a sense of stages or rates of development, though she equally does not distinguish between students except in so far as they differ from her expectations of normal progress:

> "(The faculty supervisor) may see that some of the student´s needs are being neglected... she may notice in other areas the student is being pushed ahead too rapidly and may suggest a slow-down..."

This shows that Garrett has a view about what is too fast or too slow, although she does not offer criteria designed to help agency supervisors to recognise this problem. Instead, she goes on to explicitly describe her view of learning difficulties:

> "Together she (the faculty supervisor) and the supervisor may achieve **insight into the emotional difficulties through which the student is working** and thus help to **overcome blockings which stand in the way of further growth."**

We can see here other features of the model - again, learning is equated with the emotional growth of the student, and learning problems

are the fault of the student because of his assumed emotional difficulties.

It is worth reflecting on what some of this might mean for the teacher-learner relationship: the student is expected to learn in a particular way (in supervision, using the supervisor both as an instructor-teacher, and in a way which at least parallels how clients use him); and at a particular rate (determined not by him, but by his college-based teacher). If he does not match these expectations of others, he is assumed to have some emotional difficulties which are causing him to go too quickly or too slowly.

It is by making these things explicit that we can begin to disentangle some of the knots which were described earlier in the supervision experience of the author as a social work student. It seems, with the benefit of hindsight, that the supervisor (who had herself been trained in this classical model) was seeking to apply it in turn to her student. The complicating factor was that none of these elements of the model was ever made explicit, and attempts to do so by the student were interpreted as further evidence that he was not learning in the ´right way´, and therefore he must have some learning pathology.

Individual variations in a student´s learning, for Garrett, are not variations to do with style of stage of learning, nor of motivation and ability:

> "But as these individual differences come to light, some
> **hinted** between the lines, others **more or less concealed,**
> either **consciouly or unconsciously** in original material.
> Knowledge of these individual variations is gained slowly and
> often can be **discovered only by painstaking diagnosis...**"

The use of language and concepts here is striking - "hinted", "concealed", "consciously or unconsciously", "painstaking diagnosis".

Similarly, Austin (1952), in considering the factors to be taken into account in making an educational diagnosis suggests:

> "...evaluating the **nature and degree of his anxiety** and **the capacity of the ego to master anxiety** and to engage in creative learning...
>
> **Defenses** – their character as well as their fluidity – offer important clues to a preliminary educational diagnosis.
>
> Because considerable range and variation in abilty to learn exist within any pattern of behaviour, **a differential diagnosis** is important."

Austin here is talking about what to do routinely in relation to **all** students; she is not only suggesting what should be done with students who have demonstrable learning problems, or whose performance is marginal.

We have to remind ourselves here that Garrett and Austin are both talking about the relationship between the supervisor and the student, not about the therapist and the client. The use of such language and concepts reinforces the notion of isomorphism, but it does more as well. It also confirms the extent to which the language of the psycho-analytic consulting room has taken over what is happening in social work supervision.

The notion of "concept-leakage"

It is helpful to consider this problem as one of **"concept-leakage"** from the practice situation into the teaching and learning context. It could be said that **concept-leakage lies at the heart of the classical paradigm of supervision in social work education**. But it did not happen by chance – it was, as we have seen earlier, explicitly thought that the processes were essentially similar or that differences didn't matter (Howarth, 1961) and that the teaching and learning would come about as a result of the close matching of the therapeutic process with

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supervision.

Without a recognition of concept-leakage, how else should we read the earlier quotations from this literature, and then Garrett's description of the role of the faculty supervisor (the college tutor, in Britain), where the student apparently does not have responsibility even for making sense of his own learning, in his own individual way ?:

> "The faculty supervisor's role is to be certain that the supervisor-student relationship is operating at its maximum as an enabling process to further the student's professional learning. She **senses blockings on either side, sorts out reality and transference situations,** and directs her attention toward **converting the student's experiences into constructive learning.**"

Garrett's book is divided into sections to describe what should be covered in each of the termly visits of the tutor to the student and supervisor in the agency, and echoes in a different way the material above about expecting **all students to go through the same stages at the same time:**

> "**Beginning students are characteristically involved in emancipation problems... They are struggling in the marriage versus career dilemma...** Since the way they eventually solve these conflicts often bears a direct relationship to their success as a caseworker, they come up for consideration on each successive visit...
>
> "(In the Winter visit)... the primary factor that is involved... is, however, the fact that **both students and their cases are now arriving at the point** where more than beginning skills are needed... **the student... becomes frustrated and discouraged...** She **tends to belittle the skills she has acquired...**
>
> "(The Spring visit)... **almost all students now show miraculous progress... the finishing student has acquired** a method of self-study so that she can proceed to minimise her weaknesses and develop her strengths..."
>
> "(about assessment) Supervisors sometimes take on the student's discouragement and wonder whether she will ever become a caseworker. Forty nine times out of fifty, she will; but **the forty nine students are usually sure they are the fiftieth, and the fiftieth is the least aware** that there is any question about her performance, even when it has been repeatedly discussed with her."

The over-generalisations here would be surprising, were it not for the certainty which pervades this literature that there is a right way to go about things, and (implicitly) the teaching task is to instruct (all) students how to do things in this right way. Garrett also gives a detailed account of how she sees student-supervisor problems:

> "As a student becomes more deeply involved in psychological material, she often becomes unable to see her supervisor as a real person... The degree of emotion and a personal emphasis in her discussion **reveal the degree of her transference manifestation... (students') complaints usually centre on her (the supervisor's) method of working with them, thus revealing their desire to have her gratify all of their needs.**"

So, apparently, if students wish to learn in their own way, or for the teacher to teach in a way which might match this, the students are "revealing their desire to have her gratify all of their needs". In other words, it can be seen as a learning pathology. However, Garrett acknowledges:

> "Students have an uncanny way of sensing or uncovering a supervisor's **weak spots**. There is often an **element of truth in a student's complaint**, although her feelings may be **highly exaggerated projections.**"

Thus, students may be right in challenging how they are taught as being unhelpful to them, but this is described in terms which echo the problems of clients. What is important to recognise here is that the model of pathology imported from the therapy-practice situation is applied not only to the student, but also to the supervisor who has "weak spots" which can only be overcome when "agency and school supervisor can work together objectively" - which, as we have seen earlier, involves the faculty supervisor telling the agency supervisor and the student what is "real" and what is "transference."

In this way, the hierarchical relationship of therapist and patient is super-imposed not only onto the student-supervisor relationship, but also onto the tutor-supervisor interaction as well. This hierarchy of

hierarchies also has its roots in psychoanalytic training, and is still taken as the model of choice in psychoanalytic, and in family therapy training (Gray, 1986):

> "The role of the supervisor-of-supervision in the therapeutic or training system... The hierarchical nature and structure of the relationship between consultation, supervision and therapy (Burnham and Harris, 1985) has been described. They have developed a schema which addresses the multi-level nature of supervision and consultation."

Almost all writers in this classical literature on casework supervison refer to the work of Towle (1954). Indeed Young (1967) describes it as a "standard work on the subject ... and repays careful study, but for practical purposes, most fieldwork teachers will find it too long and detailed." (There may be a British demonstration of the way tutors see supervisors implied in this formulation, and an element of the supervision-of-supervisor role being reserved for the tutor). Not surprisingly, Towle articulates (and may be the source of) most of the points we have identified above:

> "... I can honestly say that **when I turned my hand to teaching social work I was consciously using largely my psycho-analytically oriented casework learning**...

> "...it has become clear that some of the **initial anxiety** in social work learning stems from not knowing rather than from the threat of change implied in learning... **He (the student) is frequently helpless, confused, and fearful out of the lack of the know-what, know-how, and know-why**... at such moments he feels helpless...

> "... the essential differences between client and student... have been first, that the client does not recognise social casework treatment as a learning process, even though, when skilfully conducted, it is one... **The needs and wants which drive a client** to seek help are seen and felt as 'a problem'... In contrast to a problem, **the needs and wants that motivate the student** are seen, felt, and regarded by others as a goal."

For Towle, then, the language is essentially similar for clients and students, although we should not overlook the further hierarchical distinction - that between between students and clients. Clients are "driven" by "a problem" but students are "motivated" towards a "goal". She also introduces the remarkable notion of the "uneducable student":

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"... **if the student is rigid in defending his point of view when instructor and colleagues take issue with him, serious question as to his educability arises... perhaps he persists in fitting facts into theory rather than applying theory to facts.**"

Leaving aside, for the moment, questions about what are "facts" and who determines what is "fact", we can see further evidence that there are clearly specified things to learn, and it is not expected that students will challenge their "instructor's" views about these. If a student persists in asserting his own divergent views, and tries to build his own theory, he runs the risk of being seen as rigid and uneducable. Not only is there a single right way in this model, all such diversity is frowned upon.

We are indebted to these American authors in contributing such clear and explicit accounts of how they see the supervision process. Reading them thirty or more years later brings us up against some assumptions and assertions that today we might find difficult to sustain. But their influence on the British literature is undoubted. Even when we make allowances for the subtle shifts in meaning across the Atlantic, and through time, there can be little doubt of their continuing impact. Heywood (1964), a British social work tutor, dedicates her book "To Charlotte Towle, a great and beloved teacher":

> "Supervision means giving knowledge quickly and as fully as the student can understand. Before seeing a case the student should be well-briefed in everything he needs to know to get started: what the situation is; what difficulties may be expected to arise and why; how such difficulties may be handled."

There is one further area of work in this literature which is of interest in the present study which both Young and Towle allude to. It concerns the way in which students learn to practise in situations which are different from those which they have met in their practice placements.

In other words, how students transfer their learning from the context in which it arose to other situations in which they will be called on to intervene in their professional careers. The model described in the literature, of applying theory to practice does not easily allow students to generalise from their own experiences, and to begin to learn how they learn. This issue is developed, in some detail, later.

2.3.2 The 'Classical' Social Work Supervision Literature - An Overview

In taking an overview of this classical literature, it is immediately obvious that there is little direct reporting of what actually occurs in supervision. Interpretations of events in supervision are referred to at such a level of generality that individual differences between supervisors, and students, are largely ignored, and the expectation of the learning process is essentially the same for all students, (save only for those who are "not educable" or who are seen to suffer from some other learning pathology).

It is also evident that most of the contributions are from college-based teachers, not from those who are currently involved in supervision, and these contributions are overlaid with the implicit hierarchical relationship between tutors and supervisors. Most college-based teachers will themselves have trained some while ago when the practice model as well as the supervision model was still casework-based.

The descriptions of the supervision process are couched in the language, concepts and terminology of social casework practice. The activity of supervision has two main components: one, instruction and direct teaching of social work "theory"; the other is the emotional

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growth of the student in ways which at least parallel, if not directly overlap, the therapeutic relationship in casework practice. Thus, there is continuing preoccupation with whether supervision _is_ therapy, or should be.

We can summarise the classical literature on supervision in social work education by trying to make explicit the major features of the model, and to explicate this dominant paradigm. In doing so, we may be making this explicit in the supervision literature for the first time, and therefore may not, at this stage, be giving a full account of its features. The lack of explicit statements about the nature of a discipline's dominant paradigm elsewhere does not, of course, mean that it does not really exist, as Kuhn (1970) reminds us:

> "(Scientists can) agree in their identification of a paradigm without agreeing on, or attempting to produce, a full interpretation or rationalisation of it. Lack of a standard interpretation... will not prevent a paradigm from guiding research."

Kuhn describes how the identification of anomaly can challenge existing theories and interpretations in the natural sciences, and can lead to the establishment of other frames of explanation than those previously existing in a discipline. These anomalies can be either (or both) of the following. One kind could lead to the refutaion of a theory eg. if the theory held that all swans in the world are white, the finding of a single black swan would refute the theory. The second kind of anomaly is one which would challenge the dominant paradigm which underlies all prevailing theories in an area of study.

Thus, for present purposes, the existence of views which do not explicate experiences in supervison would lead us to look closely at the limitations of the dominant paradigm. The indicative experiences reported earlier in this chapter provide exactly this kind of data,

since in none of them did the existing class of explanations make the interactions meaningful to all of those involved - nor could they agree on the meanings and interpretations of the experiences.

The classical social casework supervision model is a model which purports to describe educational processes and activities, but it does so by using the same explanations as those derived from a practice paradigm. This need not be in itself a disadvantage. However in the present case, a number of the major features of the **paradigm of teaching and of practice** are unhelpful and may conflict with attempts to value the contribution of students to supervision, and to take responsibility for their own learning.

The prime feature of practice paradigm in supervision is concept-leakage, which underlies the concepts and assumptions which comprise the classical model:

(1) an assumption that **student learning is synonymous with emotional growth;**

(2) **a focus on the individuals** involved, and on what one (the teacher/therapist) is doing to/with the other (the student/client) **rather than on the interactions between them;**

(3) **problems are seen and described as pathologies** in the growth/development of individuals which require skilled casework-type help for their resolution - **rather than a focus on the expectations and interactions of those involved;**

(4) **a hierarchical, traditional teacher-learner relationship** and a similar pattern **replicated in the relative status of tutors and supervisors;**

(5) **the authority of the discipline** itself, and an emphasis on what is to be taught, **rather than on student learning;**

(6) **the practice arena is an illustration** of college-based teaching, and an **opportunity to apply previous instruction/theories in practice;**

(7) that **students are assumed to be relatively homogeneous,** in style and stage of learning, so there is no account taken of individual differences between teachers and learners except when there is evidence of ´learning pathology´;

(8) that there are **no significant differences between teachers in HOW they teach.**

Implied in these assumptions is the belief that there is a right way to do social work and a right way to supervise, as well as a right path which students must follow in order to become competent practitioners. This 'Right Path' moves from an assumed naive, immature student to a professional worker through a maturation process. Thus there is an expectation of generating and dealing with the anxieties of the student by an activity not unlike casework with clients.

We shall see later, reviewing the research into how adults learn, that an early, immature stage of development (Perry, 1970) is where the adult believes that there are "Answers", and right ways to do things, and that there are "Authorities" who know these things, and can instruct their pupils into this knowledge. It is perhaps arguable that this entire classical supervision literature represents a stage of development - not only for individual learners, but for an entire profession or academic discipline.

It is possible to discern, in this classical literature, some further concept-leakage - from traditional models of education which have a number of similar features to social casework practice. These include a hierarchical relationship between teachers and learners (with considerable role distance between them), together with valuing of the expertise residing in the teacher and his discipline rather than the student and his experience.

In summary, then, we can describe the traditional approach to **supervision as a paradigm of practice, and of teaching (ie instruction)** rather than a **paradigm of education, and of learning.**

The next section, in considering more recent British work, will suggest that many of these later works can be considered as neo-classical contributions to this literature.

2.3.3 The British Literature since the Classical Period

Since the works discussed above, relatively little work on supervision has appeared in the British literature. What has falls into two major categories: a small group of these contributions is largely derivative of the traditions and work we have already identified; there are other contributions on the practice component of qualifying training, but they focus on arrangements for placements, the status of supervisors, the funding of practice placements, and the assessment of students' competence in practice. The paucity of recent work is shown in a report "Research in Practice Teaching" (CCETSW, 1983) where, in about one hundred references, there are none later than 1979. We shall consider first those publications which seem derivative of the body of work rooted in American social casework traditions. Illustrative of this neo-classical group are Danbury (1979), Kent (1969), and Pettes (1979). Their inclusion within the classical tradition is readily demonstrable.

Kent devotes the major part of her book to reproducing, then commenting upon, the written record which a supervisor had made after each supervision session with a particular student. She also reproduces some of the student's notes of his work with clients. It is clear that she (Kent) is acting as supervisor-of-supervision during this placement, so

we are given rather more evidence of her relationship with the supervisor through the latter´s records than might otherwise be the case. It is revealing that there are no records of the student´s experience of supervision, nor are there any direct quotations of the interaction in the supervision sessions. What we do have is consistent with the classical literature, and refers directly to Towle, Heywood, and Young, whose work we have reviewed above. Two indicative quotations demonstrate her reliance on the assumptions and language of the traditional model:

> "Thus the (beginning) student social worker **usually needs help and support initially** so she is able to take the plunge... Initially... **he is self-conscious and uneasy** in interviews, **constantly trying to assess whether he is doing the ´right´ or ´wrong´ thing,** and **driven by his anxiety to activity and talking... His anxiety at the start** may cause him to appear more competent than he is, he may initially resist making use of the supervisor or become over-dependent... he **begins to develop some slight capacity to look at himself objectively and critically in the casework situation."**

Kent perpetuates an assumption that all students are the same, and that all students will begin as incompetent, and immature. However, more than half of all social work students have at least two years experience in paid social work jobs before entering training courses (Gardiner, 1985) and less than a quarter of social work students have no paid experience and begin training as new entrants. Thus, generalisations about all students being immature and inexperienced are likely to be problematic.

Pettes, in a 1979 revision of her earlier (1967) text writes in terms which American social work educators thirty years before would recognise:

> "**Supervision may be described as one of the many methods or processes in social work.** To describe supervision thus... will avoid the old fear of **supervision as an attempt to ´casework the caseworker´."**

> "**Nearly all students are anxious...** Sometimes anxiety may be

masked by apparent complacency, and **the supervisor may need to point out deficiencies in order to bring the anxiety to the surface, or to arouse sufficient anxiety to stimulate learning."**

It is not surprising, then, that we discover Pettes referring to Towle, Young, and Kent. Danbury (1979) is also concerned about the anxiety of the student, and we can be forgiven for believing that the prime purpose of supervision is to help to cope with the student's anxiety. This preoccupation perhaps explains events in the role play reported earlier, where two of the supervisors wanted "to get the anxiety out of the way first".

Turning our attention to those which are not simply derivative of the traditional model, they can readily be divided between those published by the validating body, and the rest. CCETSW has published four main contributions: a report on student units in social work education (Curnock, 1975), a research report into practice placements (Syson and Baginsky, 1981), a study of the structure and content of CQSW courses (Casson, 1982), and the Workshop Report referred to above (CCETSW, 1983).

The first of these, by Curnock, is a survey of the role of student units, but there is no section on the teaching and learning processes, and only a small element looks at the content focus of supervision sessions. The Syson and Baginsky study provides a further example of concept-leakage, since although neither of the authors has practised nor trained as a social worker, the research report is couched in the very terms of casework and casework supervision and the authors are clearly looking for evidence of the issues which recur in the classical literature:

> "The role of therapist was not acceptable to nearly all practice teachers. However, while the use of therapy might relate to the student's own problems and be considered

outside the scope of the placement, **discussion of 'feelings' was regarded by most supervisors and many tutors as a legitimate and desirable focus of discussion**. Confusion as to which feelings supervisors were wishing to discuss may have existed."

"**Whether or not a supervisor took a therapeutic role towards the student,** differences in viewpoint or values could affect the content of the discussion, particularly in the placements where one of the parties was psycho-analytically oriented but the other was not... (in one case) the student then had to decide whether to try a supportive, psycho-analytic or a social learning approach according to whether the client was dim, depressed or simply lazy. She disliked her supervisor's interpretation."

"**It is not of course necessary to be friends in order to discuss feelings,** but a fairly relaxed, comfortable relationship is essential."

We see here Syson echoing the language of social caseworkers in her descriptive accounts of supervision. She also has an expectation, like those she quotes (Towle, Young, Pettes et al) that there are right answers, and proper ways to do things, so she looks for them:

"**The proper relationship between the student and supervisor** was difficult for some to define, and in a few cases, to establish."

The concept-leakage is particularly interesting here, since the qualitative methodology (and a researcher who was not herself a social worker) could have allowed a different interpretative frame to be developed. She makes a brief reference to styles of supervision, by which she means means things like accessibility of the supervisor to the student. She recognises that "direct observation of relationships in a placement may be the only technique for obtaining such information." We do exactly this in the first stage of data collected in the present study.

The Casson study represents the most substantial attempt from within social work education to address developments in educational thinking and relate these to social work courses' content and structure. Although not intended to look at the practice component directly, there

are many implications of the work which social work educators seem slow to respond to. Certainly, when it was published, it had a mixed reception, not least because of the unfamiliarity of the language and the concepts being used.

It will be recalled that the written style and language of this work is intended to address such concerns, and to increase its accessibility and usefulness. Casson, like Syson and Baginsky, was not a social worker, and has perhaps paid the price for challenging traditional conceptualisations in social work education without explicitly offering alternatives, nor a justification for the language and concepts which he does use. Young, in the introduction to Casson's work says:

> "Its value lies not only in its distinctive content, but also in providing a framework within which some of the earlier material can be encapsulated."

She is referring here to CCETSW's earlier publications, but there is no published evidence of the use of this framework either for that purpose or to inform the review of CCETSW's policies for qualifying training and its proposals for a new award (CCETSW, 1987).

The final CCETSW publication in the field is misleadingly entitled "Research in Practice Teaching", since it is not a research report at all. In fact it is the report of a workshop intended to allow pairs of college and agency-based teachers to develop the integration of their work by means of joint projects. None of the reported projects focusses on teaching and learning processes in supervision, although some do report progress in college-agency understanding and collaboration.

The misleading title suggests that it is worth reflecting on the use of the language and terminology in the 1980s. "Practice Teaching", "Practice Learning","Practice Placements" are all terms used in papers

for CCETSW Council meetings (CCETSW, 1985; 1986). However, they seem to be used in confusing ways, and sometimes (apparently) as synonyms. "Practice learning" is a term used in relation to funds in support of providing practice placements, rather than **what** is to be learnt during the placement (if "learning" is taken to be a noun) or **how** it is to be learnt (if "learning" is taken to be a verb).

We also find one of the few Professors of Social Work struggling in this area (Parsloe, 1982) when in an article entitled "The Learning Process" we can find no explicit reference to learning either as a noun or a verb.

In this thesis, therefore, we have carefully considered the use of language. The terms "practice learning" and "practice teaching" have been avoided - partly because of the confusion in their use elsewhere, but mainly because an emphasis on **practice** and **teaching** is in danger of reinforcing the limitations of the classical model, and reinforcing concept-leakage. Thus we use the terms **supervisor** and **supervision** throughout.

To turn to the other, non-CCETSW, literature produced during the last ten years or so, there are three main elements: arrangements for placements; the assessment of students' performance; and the funding of placements, linked with the status of the supervisor. Only two contributions focus on the style or approach of supervisors. West (1984) uses a Jungian model of personality types to look at supervisory relationships which work, and those which do not. Michael (1976) describes styles of supervision which are close to practice styles, and also seem to be rooted in the traditional model.

Since none of the other work is central to our present concerns, they are not considered in great detail here. It is sufficient to note that the two research-based contributions concern student assessment. One is a Masters thesis (Morrell, 1979); the other is joint work between a research student and her academic supervisor (Brandon and Davis, 1979). Practitioner-research (ie. by those who are currently supervisors) in the field is significant by its absence from the published literature even though some small scale activities are known to have been undertaken.

It is on the funding of supervision and practice placements that more supervisors have concentrated their attention. This is perhaps unsurprising in the present economic climate, with cuts in both higher education and the personal social services. Sawdon (1986) is the most substantial work here, and represents a well-marshalled defence of the funding of his student unit in a voluntary agency. His work is the best example of writing about practice placements by a current supervisor to be published in recent times, and he attempts to recognise the work of Knowles (1972, 1978) in using an andragogical design for learning – in the way placements are set up, and in the general approach to supervision. None of the research on adult learning in Sweden or Britain is referenced in his work, and Sawdon is better on presage factors than the interactions of supervision. This is perhaps related to Knowles' unfortunate tendency to prescription, and not to distinguish between approaches of individual learners (Knowles, 1972):

> "...when working with mature people who are problem-centred
> in their orientation to learning... would see as much more
> relevant a curriculum the problem areas with which social
> work deals, perhaps with a different but sequential set of
> problems each year..."

What is striking in this more recent literature is the persistence of the model and the concepts of social casework long after the practice

model upon which it is based has been supplanted, both in terms of what social workers actually do in the 1980s and how they describe or conceptualise their work. The persistence of the classical supervision model thus challenges concepts of isomorphism, or congruence between teaching and practice methods and concepts.

In an overview of this literature over more than forty years, we can see that some things stand out repeatedly. We have a large number of contributions to the literature which frame and reinforce the ways in which social work educators, social workers and their students see their educational activities. But what is most marked is the reliance of this work upon concepts leaked from the practice of social casework into accounts of the supervisory relationship. This creates a continuing problem which leads to a preoccupation with whether or not supervison is, or should be, therapy. The literature does not show supervision sessions being recorded, teaching-learning transactions being reported, nor interviews with students and supervisors about how they construe the meaning of those transactions, so there is no direct challenge to the generalised, second hand interpretations of events which supervisors and tutors describe.

It may be, of course, that for some the isomorphism reflects a kind of metaphor of the transactions, which has somehow become reified (Gardiner, 1972). Such dead metaphors, and their impact on learning are are described by Pratte (1981, in Tiberius, 1986):

> "a dead metaphor is one which we use as though it were literal... Its inference is so shrouded in custom and habit, its comparison so covered over by by the blind convention of everyday thinking that the metaphor controls what we think... frequently obscure useful questions... and force us to frame our investigations within unnecessary limits."

Clearly, we need to look at what demonstrably occurs in supervision sessions, and how students and supervisors try to make sense of it, if

we are not to fall into the same traps. The next section articulates this research problem, and outlines some ways of responding to it.

2.4 A Brief Statement of the Research Problem and the Aims of the Study.

It can be seen from the three experiences recounted at the start of this chapter that supervision sessions in social work education are important and powerful inter-personal exchanges which may be critical in the development of social work practice skills - and which may be the single most important element in the development of the student's professional identity.

The meanings attached to the student's experiences, as a practitioner and as a learner, are formulated in an intensive and enduring, usually private, relationship including regular weekly sessions of at least one and a half hours throughout the many months of its duration. Such a close, intensive relationship is, of its very nature, likely to prove stressful to both parties at various times, especially since the supervisor has the responsibility for assessing the competence of the student at the end of the placement. Because of the inter-personal nature of much of social work practice, a judgement that a student should fail a placement is in some senses (students have said) akin to failing as a person. There is therefore immense pressure on the student to conform to the expectations of the supervisor in how he should learn, in what he should learn, and (most important of all) in the meanings he should attach to his own experience in practice and in the supervision sessions.

Such close, one-to-one teaching and learning experiences are relatively rare in much of higher education today, and for the participants they may be some of the most important experiences in which they are involved during that period, and for some, in their entire professional and personal lives.

This study is an attempt to illuminate what happens in supervision, and to describe and formulate those patterns and generalisations which give meaning to the experience of those involved. It does not rely on the traditional approaches, and it tries to develop descriptions, interpretations and explanations as the basis of other frames of reference grounded in the activity itself, rather than described by concepts derived from social casework practice.

The components of the research problem include:

(a) despite half of the total time spent on social work training courses being in supervised practice placements, the practice component in general, and the the supervision process in particular, is under-researched;

(b) the literature on the supervision process is dated, and derived from an American model of social casework supervision;

(c) American-based social casework has been largely supplanted as a model of practice in British social work agencies, so an isomorphic model must not be casework-based;

(d) the language, concepts and terminology used to describe events in supervision, and give meaning to them are illustrations of concept-leakage from the practice arena to the teaching/learning arena;

(e) the literature generalises about **all** teachers, and **all** students;

(f) the literature reflects a traditional, hierarchical model of teaching and learning, which values the knowledge of the teacher and the discipline, rather than the experience of the learner;

(g) the classical model also establishes a hierarchy of hierarchies, with clients and students at the bottom, agency supervisors in the middle, and college based tutors at the top;

(h) the literature sees teaching and learning problems as the outcome of learning pathologies, related to the anxiety of students about change and emotional growth, and does not take account of interactions in the supervisory relationship;

(i) the model emphasises instruction as the teaching mode, rather than the facilitation of student learning;

(j) the educational task is seen as the acquisition of knowledge by the student, from his teachers, and its application to 'real life' practice.

Some of these components overlap others, and this is not an exhaustive list. However, it provides sufficient justification for the focus and purpose of the study.

It can be seen, therefore, that the study is not simply an attempt to add to the detail of knowledge in a particular field, nor only to provide data in a new area of study. Instead, it faces a challenge of producing explanations which are meaningful to those being studied, and useful to others in social work education. To the extent to which it is successful in this intention, the study will also have implications for the college-based tutor/student relationship, and more widely for the teaching and learning activities throughout social work training, and perhaps for other professional and vocational training - especially where they are also rooted in models which are teacher and discipline-centred.

The Research Task

In addressing these aspects of the research problem, we must be able to produce some or all of the following:

(a) **descriptions of the events in supervision derived from direct evidence** of actual supervision sessions and current placements, not second-hand, nor subsequent, reporting of past experiences at a level of generality which obscures what is happening in individual supervision sessions;

(b) **accounts of the interpretations and meanings which those involved attach to their experiences**, in supervision sessions themselves, and subsequently;

(c) **the recognition of patterns in these experiences, and the building of concepts and frameworks** which account for these where existing explanations are inadequate or misleading;

(d) **offering, to those involved, explanations and interpretations derived from the recognition of these patterns;**

(e) **the development of generalisations from case illustrations** as the **basis of a new model of learning in social work education,** and which could be useful to others in social work education and elsewhere;

(f) **influence, directly and indirectly, upon developments in social work education,** through the publication of findings at professional conferences and in the literature, and through contributions to the developing policies and practices of the validating body (CCETSW).

Such a range of aims for the research study is ambitious, and requires the development of methods of enquiry to produce the required data. Such methods of data collection, to allow the identification of individual experiences, and the generation of new meanings and new interpretations, are not currently widely used in social work education. However, they are necessary if we are to find out "how anybody at all learns how to distinguish the true from the generally accepted" (Ryan,1987), and equally, in supervision, we shall endeavour to distinguish the true from the generally accepted.

The next chapter discusses the issues of methodology for such a study.

CHAPTER THREE - METHODOLOGY

Section 3.1 An Overview of this Chapter

This Chapter considers methodological issues by discussing (in Section 3.2) various approaches to educational evaluation in a review of the literature on qualitative evaluation methods relevant to the concerns of this study. The Chapter also describes (in Section 3.3) the range of methods to be used here, and raises (in Section 3.4) some other related methodological issues.

3.2 Qualitative and Quantitative Methods of Educational Evaluation - A Review of Relevant Literature

3.2.1 Methodological Problems Posed by the Study

This study could be described as a kind of insider-research because the researcher is experienced in the teaching and learning roles being examined. The culture, language and assumptions of supervision are known, and have been contributed to because the author has been involved in some of the developments in supervision in recent years through working as a specialist supervisor, and in a developmental role in relation to supervision for the validating body.

Whilst those experiences allow an informed, insider's understanding of the culture of practice supervision, it also has the potential for the author's own misperceptions and preconceptions to be compounded or to remain unchecked. The study was therefore designed and developed in ways which could maximise the value of being within a particular culture, but which would also ensure that bias and evaluator-effects

could be directly addressed, both with the subjects of the study, and with others in social work education.

There are similar problems described in the literature where educational evaluators have undertaken research into their own institution, course or department (Adelman and Alexander, 1983). Similarly, experiences of the educational evaluator being part of the project which he has been evaluating have been described (Jaques, 1982), and the problems which arise when the role of the evaluator was unclear, or different from the expectations of those who were being evaluated, have also been reported (Gardiner, 1984c).

The political and other contexts of the evaluation are critical, since one can legitimately ask "Who is the evaluation for?". In the present study, the answer is multiple: for the teachers and students being studied, for others in social work education, for the evaluator, and so on. No evaluation is neutral (Macdonald and Walker, 1975). It was made clear to all who took part that this research was not being undertaken by CCETSW, but was personal research by an individual researcher.

Since Parlett and Hamilton's paper on illuminative approaches (1971), considerable attention has been given to the style and methodology of educational evaluation. Attempts have been made to match the evaluative approach to the subject of the study. In particular, much has been made of the limitations of traditional quantitative approaches which consider what can be quantified, along pre-determined dimensions. Similarly, it is argued that such traditional approaches are more concerned with the measurement of changes brought about by the education process, in a quasi-medical/treatment model, than in the teaching and learning processes themselves.

The strength of the traditional approach to educational evaluation is the claim to reflect what is thought to be scientific and rational. It therefore is presumed to have credibility and status with those who do not know intimately what has been evaluated, but who know and value the scientific paradigm as a medium of investigation.

This scientific paradigm, described also as the agricultural-botany paradigm (Parlett and Hamilton, 1971) is essentially concerned with problems of cause and effect. However proponents of the newer illuminative paradigms would argue that what is needed is to go beyond quantities and the quantifiable, and to address issues of cause and meaning in a descriptive and interpretive study. Therefore, attention can be given to the nature of teaching and learning, and the meanings those involved ascribe to their experiences.

This kind of naturalistic enquiry has two advantages which concern us here: it allows whole areas of educational activity to be studied, not partial, quantifiable elements; and teachers and learners can be studied in their ordinary, everyday experiences of teaching and learning - not only in laboratory-type conditions where a number of factors are held constant, so that the quantities measured can be attributed to the variables being studied.

None of this, of course, is unique to educational evaluation. In other disciplines, including the natural sciences, similar developments have also been made to move away from the simple models of explanation of **cause and effect** to those of **meaning**; and away from those looking at **events** to those which look at **process** ie. "relations" (Elton and Laurillard, 1979). The social sciences have persisted in using a

traditional scientific paradigm to frame research long after those within the natural science disciplines had recognised its limitations; and long after it had been accepted there that the notion of a detached objective observer was an unrealistic aim even in the kinds of research which involves inanimate objects (eg Russell, 1921):

> "The traditional conception of cause and effect is one which modern science shows to be quite fundamentally erroneous, and requiring to be replaced by a quite different notion, that of **laws of change.**"

Furthermore, natural scientists have realised for more than half a century now that the **things** and **events** which they study are not simply **objects** at all. This followed the discovery after two thousand years that the atom (previously believed to be the smallest unit of matter in the universe) was not only divisible and composed of smaller particles, but at its core was a series of complex processes. This, of course, has profound implications for those who seek to utilise the classical scientific methods of enquiry into the relationships between objects, since there is a need to develop the language and concepts of **process** rather than those of **events,** and of **transactions** rather than **things.**

There are direct parallels outside the natural sciences. In many other academic disciplines there is evidence of the abandonment of the traditional scientific paradigm. To take just two examples, in psychotherapy and in the sociology of deviance, the importance of a focus on interaction and process are recognised as part of a search for interpretation and meaning rather than simply cause and effect. We may recognise these paradigm shifts as indications of the maturity of a discipline which can give up the borrowed respectability and status derived from traditional scientific models, and begin to develop theory which is grounded in the processes observed and described.

Rycroft (1966) has described the way in which psychoanalysts have

sought to defend the scientific base of their discipline against criticisms from Eysenck (1965) and others by stressing its value as a causal theory. However, Rycroft recognises that both parties in this argument make the mistake of:

> "assuming that it is only the physical sciences which are intellectually respectable. It is perhaps relevant here that ... both psychology and medicine are faculties which suffer from an inferiority complex in relation to science."

Rycroft also recognises the implications here of Szasz's attack on the very concept of mental illness itself being a kind of myth (1962), and that psychoanalysis is not a causal theory, but a semantic one. Rycroft continues:

> "What Freud did here was not to explain the patient's choice causally but to understand it and give it meaning, and the procedure he was engaged in was not the scientific one of elucidating causes, but the semantic one of making sense of it. It can be argued here that much of Freud's work was really semantic and that he made a revolutionary discovery in semantics ... that neurotic symptoms are disguised communications, but that, owing to his scientific training and allegiance, he formulated his findings in the conceptual framework of the physical sciences."

This distinction between cause and meaning is a very helpful one for present purposes because it identifies the limitations of the scientific model of cause and effect in accounting for the **content and process** of the interactions between two people. Thus it is helpful later, in looking at teaching and learning processes in supervision, to bear this in mind. There are parallel lessons in thinking about the methodology to be employed in a study of meaning rather than of cause, and Rycroft again identifies an important corollary:

> "If psycho-analysis is recognised as a semantic theory, not a causal one, its theory can start where its practice does - in the consulting room..."

By formulating what he was doing in terms which gave scientific credibility and which were derived from his own experience as a physical scientist, Freud could be said to have obscured what was actually going on in his consulting room. Perhaps this is an earlier

example of the problems which follow from concept-leakage - in that case from the natural science to the psychoanalytic consulting room.

We must be wary in general of such dangers in educational evaluation, and in this present kind of study in particular. We have seen earlier the problems of using explanations derived from psychodynamic theory limiting our understanding of supervision. Rycroft and Szasz both extend the analysis into the roots of the psychoanalytic model and terminology. The lesson to be learnt is that any study of meaning in supervision in social work education must focus upon the equivalent of the consulting room - the supervision session itself. In that way, it would be possible to study the teaching and learning processes of supervision in their own natural context - and we should remember that all behaviour taken out of the context in which it arises can become meaningless.

Similarly, developments within the discipline of sociology in the 1960s can be seen as a reaction against the drive for scientific (and academic) respectability of the 1950s when sociologists had tried to establish a discipline which was value-free and objective/scientific. In the sociology of deviance there was a shift away from earlier sub-cultural theories (which were essentially individual-pathological theories, in locating cause and blame within an individual and his associates) towards an interactionist theory which looked at the transactions between the individual and the labelling processes of society in which he lived. This shift of perspective has gone alongside developments in methodology to gather such data. Thus, there has been a major increase in participant studies, participant observation, and anthropological studies within the social sciences over the last twenty years.

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These developments, in the natural sciences, in psychoanalysis, and in the sociology of deviance can be seen as indications of an essentially similar shift of paradigm which educational evaluators have embraced in the last decade or so. However, it could be argued that just as those paradigm shifts in other disciplines have been challenged and (to some extent at least) have been subsequently supplanted, so too the illuminative paradigm in educational research may be seen as closely connected with the intellectual and social climate of the 1960s and 1970s. It was congruent then with a philosophy of liberal and democratic education and with a formative, developmental role espoused not only by professional researchers in the field but also by validating bodies and those responsible for the allocation of educational resources during that period (Cornwell, 1984).

In the latter part of the 1980s and the early part of the 1990s the climate within which educational evaluators operate will be significantly different. Already in the early years of the National Advisory Body, and of a University Grants Committee with reduced funds, together with an increasingly interventionist role for Her Majesty's Inspectorate it is clear that harder-edged economic and political realities may determine the focus and methodology of future evaluations. Developments in this field may in future be governed as much by developments in validation strategies as contributing to them.

Accordingly, the rest of this Chapter is to be seen within the context of a different intellectual, political and economic climate from that which originally spawned illuminative and qualitative evaluation. The importance of insider- or practitioner-research, of internal monitoring and evaluation of courses in higher education, and of the pressures on

social work education to be increasingly accountable to employers of social workers, to central government and to validating bodies (Gardiner, 1987), as well as to the public at large (Blom-Cooper, 1986) is considered later.

3.2.2 Qualitative Methodologies - A Discussion and Review of Relevant Literature.

This section is composed of two main elements. The first critically discusses the work of British and American evaluators in higher education. In looking at these contributions, consideration will be given to questions of data presentation as well as to methods of data collection.

The second element is a brief discussion of qualitative approaches to research in social work education (eg. Michael, 1976 ; Syson and Baginsky, 1982; Miller, 1983) alongside the development of a body of work which stresses the quantifiable, the measurable, and outcomes of social work (eg. Sheldon, 1986).

Lawton (1980) provides an overview of educational evaluation which helps us to locate the contribution of a number of British and American evaluators along some key dimensions. Although this is not the place to rehearse the debate in detail, it is worth seeing the overlap between **models** which Lawton describes as essentially one arising from the fact that some of them appear to address different aspects of evaluation, and therefore any particular evaluation (including this study) might include elements drawn from a number of these approaches. The value of this categorisation for our purposes is to identify some key aspects of methodology which clarify the design of the present study.

Lawton begins by describing the classical experimental model of evaluation as essentially the same as an experiment in agriculture or botany, where before and after measures could test the efficiency of a new fertiliser in promoting plant growth. He draws attention to the limitations of the approach, including the fact that human beings tend to act differently when observed, and that they respond in individual ways which may not be susceptible to large-scale, averaged results. The effects of educational programmes may have long timescales in both implementation and effect, which makes the isolation of independent variables very difficult.

There are, of course, similar criticisms of the use of these kinds of metaphors in teaching (Tiberius, 1986), as well as in evaluation. Paton (in Smith, 1977) challenges the components of the pottery and gardening models of education. The pottery model sees the teacher as forming, or moulding the child. The gardening model rejects this approach, and much of the child-centred approaches have likened the teacher's role to a gardener, co-operating with the child to stimulate its growth by providing nourishment and appropriate conditions. However, this model sees the child as like a plant, but whilst children can change and grow, plants stay plants, and do not turn into gardeners. Thus there is a basically unequal, hierarchical relationship between teacher and learner.

The model also misleadingly emphasises the individualised nature of teaching and learning since whilst plants don't learn from each other, learners do (as well as from the teacher-gardener). Crucially, as well, the model relegates learners to a passive role, not an active one, in their learning. We have already seen earlier echoes of these problems

whilst reviewing the literature on supervision, which has a number of these problems. In mainstream education, too, there would appear to be questions about the value of isomorphism – in this case between the teaching models and the research/evaluation models. There is a further warning here of the problems which stem from inappropriate concept-leakage. In this case it is from botany into teaching and learning. Such metaphors can illumine, but they can also obscure, by importing unhelpful concepts and assumptions as well.

If we wish to promote the effectiveness of supervision, in helping adult learners to be active, more equal, and to learn from others, then andragogical models (eg Knowles, 1972; and Sawdon, 1986) rather than pedagogical models are required. In the same way, for present purposes, we need to develop methods of studying such experiences which are sensitive to the nature of the processes we seek to study.

Lawton identifies a second model, which he calls an industrial factory model, which concerned with improving or testing a product. Typically, the evaluator will be trying to translate broad aims into measurable, specific objectives, and to devise and administer tests to measure the effects. There are obvious limitations to this model, which include the specifying of objectives in behavioural terms, and the problems of representative samples, together with the exclusion of potentially useful formative material. There is also a more general criticism of this model – that the context of the educational institution itself is excluded from the focus of the evaluation.

Objections to these first two models lead to other perspectives, which can contribute more directly to the areas excluded from traditional evaluations, and particularly, to respond to the problems of sample

size needed to produce statistically valid outcomes. Thus the Parlett and Hamilton work on illuminative evaluation (1972) can be seen as a helpful contribution to the literature on research design and methodology more generally, as well as in relation to the evaluation of curriculum innovations.

An important factor here, which bears attention in the present study, is the question of the state of knowledge in a particular subject area, and the need to map out broad areas descriptively first, even when more detailed or quantifiable work might usefully follow (Lawton, 1980):

> "Bob Stake has suggested that what was needed at that stage
> of evaluation was a panoramic view rather than a microscope.
> Stake was not criticising the use of empirical methods, but
> simply asserting that many evaluators had moved to detailed
> measurement much too soon: they should first have acquired a
> better means of describing the full picture of an evaluation
> situation."

This may also be a good description of the present state of knowledge about supervision, so that out present research, with its concerns to map, describe and interpret the field could be followed by more detailed or quantitative studies.

But the illuminative approach is not without its difficulties, and its critics. Particular attention has been drawn to the problems of collecting such data, and the skills required. Thus, there has been debate about the extent to which evaluators are participants or observers in the events the describe, and their relation with those the are engaged with (both in the programme, and those who have set up the evaluation). There have also been debates about the skills required for such work. We have, elsewhere (Gardiner, 1984c) described the difficulties in an educational evaluation project where the involvement of an external evaluator skewed the inter-professional training programme in the community:

> "(The evaluation project) ... did **not** observe, describe, record and offer interpretations of inter-professional work and learning, which is my understanding of what such evaluation is about. It did **not** look at examples of joint practice that naturally arose, nor did it observe or record supervision sessions based on such practice. In short, it only gathered up data from sessions which the evaluation project itself set up."

> "I believe that what the Thamesmead Project did was to evaluate and focus on **its own impact** on inter-professional work and learning in the community, rather like a pebble measuring ripples in a pond only after it had been thrown in..."

These are important warnings for those of us who take on such roles, and there is clearly a need for such workers to be skilled interviewers, observers, and to have some knowledge and understanding of the culture and assumptions of those who are being researched if we are to study students and supervisors in the natural settings where their teaching and learning takes place. Lawton (1980) reminds us of the "danger of personal, subjective impressions being presented as objective data". What we need to be clear about, then, is not whether such data is **objective** so much as whether it helps, in the descriptions and interpretations, to illumine (for participants and others) what is going on in the educational activity under scrutiny.

It is in this connection that we must view the personal experiences reported in Chapter Two, since they served two main purposes. They provided data which allowed the articulation of the research problem and focus of initial gathering of new data; and they gave direct evidence of the biases and preconceptions of the researcher, derived from his previous experiences in similar situations to those now being studied. This responds to those who call for the value position and possible biases of a researcher should always being made explicit (MacDonald and Parlett, 1973).

Lawton's fourth model is the political one, based largely on the work

of Macdonald (1976) who identifies three ideal-types of evaluations. Objective, value-free evaluation is not possible because all evaluations take place in a real political context. Thus his bureaucratic, autocratic and democratic types are to do with their relation to funders and decision-makers. Of most relevance to our purpose is the democratic one, where the data collected must be reported in ways which are accessible to non-specialists, so that they are enabled to make judgements in the area under study. Whilst his formulation is an ideal-type, elements of this aspect of the present research have been explicitly acknowledged earlier (Section 2.4). This of course echoes Stake's notion (1977) that evaluations should be 'responsive' and take account of multiple audiences for the work, including those who have been researched, as well as the academic community, and funding bodies.

The fifth model which Lawton identifies is the practitioner-researcher model (which he calls the professional model, but this title is potentially misleading). In general terms, this is about researched-based practice, or practice-based research. Lawton suggests that this changes the emphasis from independent evaluation to self-evaluation, and the parallels with action-research modes in many of the social sciences are clear.

The sixth eclectic, or case study, model is a curious, residual category which seems to bring together case study approaches (to data collection, and/or presentation) and multiple method approaches. It would seem that there are possibly two models interwoven here — one which sees case studies as an opportunity for (w)holistic evaluations and interpretations, and the other which brings together multiple methodologies. This matching of the content or focus of the evaluation

with the methodology may be desirable, but it is not necessarily a single model since case studies are possible without multiple methods of data collection, and data gathered in that way need not be reported as case instances. We return to the discussion about case studies later.

There is some limited evidence of qualitative methods being used in social work education. Earlier, reference was made to the CCETSW study of practice placements (Syson and Baginsky, 1981) which collected data by interview methods from forty-one CQSW placements in some depth, paying particular attention to arrangements for setting them up, and the expectations of students, supervisors and tutors. They initially "hoped to identify the essential ingredients of a successful placement", but later realised that this was over-ambitious, given the limited resources of a part-time research officer, and a full-time research assistant. They opted to cover a broad range of issues, and recognised the dangers of being seen to be superficial.

In the present study resources are limited to a single researcher. Syson saw the possible alternatives as either a broad, impressionistic study, or a narrower one using "representative samples and statistical techniques". However, there are other ways of identifying research problems, including using the study to describe, illumine and clarify some of the key issues at stake, and to allow both the focus and methods of the study to develop in the light of the findings at each stage.

Miller (1983) has provided a guide to such evaluation research methods for those in social work, in which she describes a methodological approach with the following criteria (which are close to the pattern

adopted in this study):

> "- it is practitioner-oriented, that is, its chief function is to provide information and insight for professional educators and students;
>
> - it is problem centred, with 'problems' defined as issues and concerns arising from the particular teaching and learning setting being studied;
>
> - it has flexible methodology, which is not fully pre-specified by the researcher in advance, but is responsive to the situation as it is studied, and open to different methods in different contexts;
>
> - it is cross-disciplinary, being open to drawing on methods and concepts developed in different disciplines - not just in psychology for example, but also social anthropology (eg for approaches to field work research), sociology (eg participant observation), history (eg document analysis and interpretation).
>
> - it is heuristically organised, that is, the research issues are progressively redefined as the study goes on and new data emerges."

As we shall see in a discussion of the methodology of the present study (in the next section) this outline by Miller is helpful and apposite. From a rather different research tradition, Herbert (1983) in a contribution to the same workshop reminds us of the importance of being able to recognise and respond to the unexpected or inexplicable:

> "It seems necessary for the fortuitous event to happen to a person who is both a trained observer and has the necessary knowledge to appreciate its significance. Much Ph D research is so hemmed in with methodological constraints that it allows no real opportunity for serendipity."

Despite Miller's paper, and the limitations of research to which Herbert refers, there is very little evidence in the social work literature of the penetration of these ideas. Indeed, as Sheldon (1986) illustrates, there is still a strong swing of the pendulum towards more scientific and outcome-oriented studies, which could make social work more respectable as an academic discipline. It might be suspected here that some of the problems which social work and social workers have in this respect come as much from the lack of academic background and research experience of social workers. Dinerman (1983) has looked from

the perspective of American social work education at the faculty (ie the staff) of British social work courses, and found that almost 40% of the college-based staff (including those who teach on degree, and post-graduate courses) did not themselves have a first degree. Against that background, the attempt to establish credibility through following the well-trodden path of the scientific method perhaps becomes more understandable - but even so, such studies are not always used by practitioners and teachers.

We have to look to the grey literature, of unpublished studies, to discover other evaluations of social work programmes using qualitative methodologies, and some only appeared when this present study was being written up, eg Mallinson (1986) written to fulfil requirements for a Masters degree. It looks at the management component of CSS training. Whilst methodologically within an illuminative mode, it suffers from terminological inexactitudes and muddled interpretation of data. One earlier study (Michael, 1976) looked at content and method of fieldwork teaching, but within the traditional social casework paradigm, and it closely linked supervision method to practice method.

To summarise this entire section, then, we can say that the literature on evaluation methodology demonstrates the limitations of the traditional, scientific models of educational research, and points us towards methods which are more sympathetic to understanding educational processes, so that the subtle and complex interactions of teacher and learner in a particular context be made more meaningful. We turn now to the methods used and developed in this study.

3.3 Methodology and the Present Study

We have seen above the importance of matching methodology both to the kinds of data to be collected, and those it is collected from. Thus, it is necessary at this first stage, to identify the kind of data to be collected, and then devise sensitive ways of gathering it.

We have already indicated, through the reports of three indicative experiences of supervision, and from the review of the supervision literature, that the present state of knowledge of supervision is limited in amount, and (more importantly) by the language and assumptions used to describe the activity, and give meanings to it.

Therefore, there are two initial needs in data collection. One is to gather data directly from supervisors, to look at their current ideas about how they supervise, and why they do it in this way. The other is to gather data about what actually goes on in supervision sessions, to report them without re-interpretation, and then to look at the issues raised. These focal areas are not of the same order, and are therefore likely to require different methods of data collection, even though both are intended to generate qualitative rather than quantitative data.

Patton (1980) has described a number of situations in which qualitative evaluation approaches are appropriate. He includes:

> (i) where the focus is on **educational process;**
>
> (ii) where there are **individualised or widely diverse outcomes;**
>
> (iii) where the **intention is to be formative for the recipients of the evaluation;**
>
> (iv) where **unobtrusive methods** are necessary;

(v) where the **quality of outcomes is more important than quantity.**

Whilst any one of these conditions might suggest the use of qualitative methods of enquiry, in fact each of these conditions is relevant to the present study. The importance of using personalised methods in a field such as social work is important, since the practice of social work is about skilled, sensitive, inter-personal transactions. Thus, research methods must seem to those being studied able to take account of the nuances and subtleties of both social work and the supervision process.

Even if more quantitative research were desirable, the stage which has been reached in the study of supervision is not sufficient for specification of the dimensions and categories along which more quantifiable research could be pursued. Thus, the state of the art also points to qualitative methods.

The process of interviewing as a means of data collection, hypothesis building and testing out with those from whom the data have been collected, leading to refining and reformulating hypotheses, is the essential basis of working with every family we meet in social work practice. Thus, this form of evaluation is congruent and consonant with the experience of social workers in general and the researcher in particular. Feedback following the data collection phases suggested that, for those involved, the methods employed encouraged them to be open and free in their responses.

Similarly, a focus on the interactive process and on the impact of the worker on a situation, together with monitoring the impact of the situation on the worker, is commonplace in both social work and qualitative methodologies. However, the earlier review of the casework literature has shown that whilst these kinds of parallels exist, we

should be as wary of using the language of social casework in the evaluation situation as in supervision.

Since this study is also intended to begin the process of generating models grounded in the experience of supervision itself, data must be collected and then interpreted in ways which can contribute to this process. Glaser and Strauss (1967) make this clear:

> "The continual intermeshing of data collection and analysis has direct bearing on how the research is brought to a close. When the researcher is convinced that his conceptual framework forms a systematic theory, that it is a reasonably accurate statement of the matter studied, that it is couched in a form which is possible for others to use in studying a similar area, and that he can publish the results with confidence, then he has neared the end of his research...Why does the researcher trust what he knows?...They are **his** perceptions, **his** personal experiences, **his** hard won analyses. A field worker knows, not only because he has been in the field, and how our intervention can be used for good or ill and because he has discovered and carefully generated hypotheses, but also because ´in his bones´ he feels the worth of his final analysis. He has been living with the partial analyses for many months, testing them each step of the way, until he has built his theory."

We can extend what Glaser and Strauss tell us about what the researcher comes to know "in his bones" by recognising that there is also a need for effective evaluation to ´tell´ the participants what they ´know´ already but either had not put that ´knowing´ into words, or more particularly, it helps them to say what they already ´know´ about their own experience of supervision in different words and concepts.

Equally, these findings will be expected to influence policy makers in how they formulate course regulations and placement requirements. Almost without exception, the staff and members of the validating body are a considerable time away from direct experience of supervision as students or supervisors. The political process of policy formulation in such bodies is rarely made explicit or public, so there are clear advantages here to being an insider undertaking this piece of work. By

and large, CCETSW policy seems to have been made on the basis of assertion, assumption and anecdote, without explicit evaluation of existing programmes before deciding on the need for major programme change. For example, in deciding to bring together the two existing qualifying programmes into a single new award, CCETSW undertook no evaluative study of the quality and effectiveness of the existing programmes. Although it did assert that it would "build on the best of both routes" (CCETSW, 1987) no clarification has been offered as to what was meant by the phrase.

There are other general points about methodology which are detailed later in relation to particular elements of the study, and are presented here in summary. The confidentiality of all material was offered and agreed, so that no individual could be identified. Sometimes this has meant slightly disguising locations, or other identifying features, in the reporting of data. Questions like how to negotiate entry and how to enter situations were considered. The pattern in most cases has been to use known individuals to negotiate entry for interviews with those unknown. This was true in two senses - one was with supervisors initiating contact with their own students; the other was in supervisors setting up contact with their colleagues.

A further general question relates to how the focus and purpose of the research was presented, both in establishing contact, and in introductions. This was always done by saying that the research was about **how teaching and learning took place in supervision,** as opposed to **what was learnt,** or **how well** it had been learnt. The researcher also introduced himself as someone who had trained as a social worker, and who had supervised a large number of students. In a small number of cases, it was mentioned that in the role of student unit supervisor,

the researcher himself had also been on the receiving end of evaluative research (Kings Fund, 1986; Jaques, 1982) and that had not always been very easy (Gardiner, 1984c). This echoes a concern of Patton (1980):

> "Evaluation is too serious a matter to be done by someone who has never been a client in a program."

Patton also cautions about sampling strategies and the need to consider whether to distinguish between random, stratified random and cluster samples, and the dangers inherent in studying extreme or deviant examples if we expect to be able to generalise the findings to other situations. Therefore, in collecting new data, we shall avoid situations where the results would be dismissed because the source is recognisably special, deviant, or extreme.

The first stage, then, was to collect material about how supervisors viewed teaching and learning, and also to collect detailed material on supervision sessions. In relation to the former, it was decided to use the opportunity presented by a national conference of a practice teachers' organisation to ask all of those attending (usually 30 to 40) to complete questionnaires designed to elicit this material. At the same time, and to complement this breadth of focus, a 'not untypical' supervisor from amongst them was asked whether she would tape-record all of the supervision sessions for a forthcoming placement, and make these available week by week to the researcher.

Later in the study, as we shall see, sampling strategies were devised to encompass wide variation across certain ranges. For example, the geographical distribution of placements studied covered Northern Ireland, the north of Scotland, English urban, rural, and metropolitan areas; placements from both graduate and non-graduate courses were studied, and some attempt was made to include smaller and larger courses. Two pairs of interviews about CSS placements were added during

the study, to take account of the policy developments towards a single new social work qualification.

It should be acknowledged here that the overall sampling strategy was developed to ensure the breadth of coverage described, but that this was not done on the basis of statistical techniques to produce random targets. Instead, this coverage was achieved by utilising periods of travel to various parts of the United Kingdom which allowed direct contact with those from whom data was subsequently collected. This approach, besides being convenient and efficient in use of available time also allowed the use of contextual knowledge of an area/agency, and the possibility of continuing contact and feedback later.

The final general point about methodology considered here concerns time sampling. The story of the explorer who sought the magical taste of a rare fruit but was disappointed at the taste of the flower reminds us that what we observe will vary according to the time of the observation, and that unless we take time factors into account we can easily mistake the meaning of what we find. Thus in the initial data collection phase, an entire placement was studied, even though this was relatively costly in terms of time and resources; and in the questionnaire exercise, information was asked for about all students, as well as a particular individual student or placement.

3.4 Methodology - Multiple Perspectives and Holistic Cases.

Whilst we have seen the importance of qualitative methods of investigation, and of their particular relevance and usefulness for present purposes, some concerns remain. Predominant amongst these is the need to validate data which consists of both observations and interpretations.

There are two main ways in which this can be achieved. First is to check out with those from whom the data is collected that it is accurate, and that any selection of material, interpretations, and presentation of material confirms or adds to their understanding and experience of what is described. These checks, including feedback to those who participated in the study, are described in relation to specific elements of data collection and presentation as they occur.

The second way is to ensure multiple perspectives are brought to bear on experiences and meanings so that they can be illuminated in various ways. Initially, it was decided to use a variety of methods of collecting data and to be relatively unselective, at least in the early stages of the study, thus not limiting the focus prematurely. This kind of approach is often called triangulation because whilst each method might give relatively imprecise findings (like weak distress signals from a ship picked up by coastal stations), a more precise position can be plotted from several weak signals than from a single strong one.

Thus, in the first stage of data collection, we shall employ a broad beam covering a group of experienced supervisors, to look at how they say they teach and learn; and a more focussed spotlight to illumine the subtle interactions of supervision sessions throughout a placement.

The collection of data is intended to be sufficiently holistic to allow the presentation of data in a form which enables whole cases to be considered. This is especially important in the generation of grounded models, because the specific contexts in which the data were collected can also be considered. Accordingly, there is a discussion later of the results in case examples which bring together data collected at different points in the study, and by different methods. Case study approaches are discussed at greater length at that point.

We turn now to consider the first stage of data collection specific to this study.

CHAPTER FOUR - STAGE ONE: INITIAL DATA COLLECTION

Section 4.1 An Overview of this Chapter

This Chapter is concerned with the first stage of data collection. It reports, in section 4.2, the use of a questionnaire intended to explore the links between the teaching and learning styles of supervisors, and to explore issues of match and mismatch between supervisors and students in how they approach their teaching and learning.

It also reports, in Section 4.3, the results of a detailed study of a single case - the supervision sessions from an entire placement, based on tape-recordings of those sessions. Section 4.4 comments on the results of this first stage of data collection and raises issues of focus, methodology and interpretation for subsequent stages of the study.

Section 4.2 A Questionnaire for Supervisors

This exercise was the first data collection specific to the study. The earlier reports of the indicative experiences suggested that it was important to collect data about how supervisors expected to teach, and how they expected their students to learn. The exercise was intended to generate descriptions of how supervisors had themselves learnt, in what they considered to have been a significant learning experience. Equally, it was hoped to produce descriptions of how supervisors preferred to teach. It was also intended to explore whether there might be links between how the supervisors had learned, in this significant experience, and how they taught (or expected their students to learn) - thus, supervisors were asked about the kinds of students they preferred

to teach, and those with whom they had difficulty in supervision.

Subsequently, the exercise has been replicated with other groups of supervisors; and the first part of the questionnaire has been administered to a group of social work students; it has also been used with students and teachers in a family therapy programme.

In the first use of this questionnaire, 39 supervisors who were attending a national conference for supervisors were given two sheets. They were told that the primary aim in completing the first sheet was to help identify teaching and learning styles, and possible links between them. The second sheet was to look at the impact of teaching and learning styles in supervision.

They were also told that the researcher would treat all material in the responses as confidential, and that no individuals would be identified in any subsequent report of the exercise. To help to match the responses contained in the two sheets, respondents were told to use numbers or symbols if they did not wish to identify themselves by name. Of the 34 completed pairs of forms, 30 used their own names or initials, three used other symbols, and one person left the name box blank (but later these were matched by the similarity of the handwriting on the only unidentified sheets).

The questions on this first sheet were deliberately unspecific so that any kind of learning experience could be described. As a result a range of content areas were covered but there were some similarities in the components of the learning processes. What this exercise does NOT show, of course, is whether the learning styles or strategies reported are characteristic ones for these individuals. Laurillard (1979) has shown

that it would be surprising if this were the case, since her study points to the discriminating way adult learners adapt their learning to meet the requirements of the particular learning context. She says:

> "...it was possible to show that certain types of cognitive descriptors, namely forms of differences in learning style, were indeed applicable to the data collected, but not in the expected way. It was not possible to demonstrate that students exhibited consistent differences in their approach to a task, but it was possible to show that the differences were applicable to a student in a particular learning context. Thus the same students could exhibit different characteristics on different occasions."

Similarly, Saljo (1975) has demonstrated differences in the way students approach learning as a result of the learner's perception of the assessment of his learning:

> "It is quite evident from this study... that when subjects come to know the distinctive requirements of for instance different types of questions, they may use this knowledge to 'technify' their learning, ie. knowing the limitations and features of different types of tests they can, and very frequently do, technify their learning to become a mere search for this type of knowledge. This has a disastrous effect on learning..."

An attempt was made to leave the questions in this exercise open, and non-evaluative, therefore there is little evidence of respondents searching for what they perceived as the right or desirable answer. Indeed the diversity of responses suggests that there was no emphasis perceived by respondents in relation to the presentation of the exercise.

However what the data here demonstrate are the strategies which were actually used by the supervisors in what they described as significant learning experiences for them. Whilst it may be only one strategy within a repertoire of strategies for some people, for others it may be their only (or at least their usual) approach. Pask (1976) has shown that it is possible to increase versatility in learning approaches. It is easier to help those with some learning styles (holists) to become versatile than others (serialists). Saljo (1975) has similarly shown

that the ability to change learning strategies can be demonstrated, and even induced, by asking the same learners to do similar tasks but subsequently changing the ways in which their learning is assessed. Both of these studies and related issues are dealt with at greater length in the next chapter, which reviews research into adult learning.

Sheet One was completed and returned by 34 people. It was collected before Sheet Two was administered, and it asked respondents to:

> (i) Describe briefly an important learning experience for them
>
> (ii) Describe WHAT they had learnt from this experience
>
> (iii) Describe HOW they had learnt from this experience

The responses which were returned reported experiences as diverse as how the family in which one grew up affected one's personal development (no 1) and how someone had learnt to ride a bicycle as a child (no 3).

These experiences fall into four main categories of learning:

> (a) **personal development** - 1/7/10/13/16/21 (6 people)
>
> (b) **professional activities as a social worker** - 2/4/6/15/26/28/34 (7 people)
>
> (c) **being in a student/learner role** (not just in social work) - 3/14/17/18/23/29/31/32/36 (9 people)
>
> (d) **being in a teaching role** - 5/9/11/12/19/20/22/24/25/27/30/33 (12 people)

The third category is a little unsatisfactory, since it combines being a social work student with other more general learning tasks like learning to drive a car or to ride a bicycle. When broken down into these two sub-groups, there are four in the first, and five in the second, sub-group.

The experiences reported were:

> - how the family in which one grew up affected one's personal development (no 1)

- learning that failing, or being "not very good" was acceptable (no 2)

- learning to ride a bicycle as a child (no 3)

- working between groups which had different objectives and values (no 4)

- giving students space to do their own learning (no 5)

- the importance of personal rather than written contact to get desired responses (no 6)

- that there are no "absolutes", only "relatives" depending on values and choices (no 7)

- explicit, written aims and targets do not achieve themselves, just by being explicit (no 9)

- accepting depression arising from failure (no 10)

- that social work needs skill-training and academic knowlege, not just intuition and feeling (no 11)

- teaching styles with little positive feedback create problems with some students (no 12)

- learning from trade union work (no 13)

- a placement in a psychiatric hospital demanding different roles (no 14)

- working as a volunteer after experience in a statutory setting (no 15)

- looking after a brain-damaged child (no 16)

- a placement in a prison demanding working with stress (no 17)

- learning to drive a car (no 18)

- being in a supportive supervisor's group (no 19)

- using colleagues in the agency and college to disentangle group processes with a student group (no 20)

- being a patient undergoing tests for an unknown medical condition (no 21)

- developing skills in a participative teaching/learning course (no 22)

- returning to a student role after years as a teacher and supervisor (no 23)

- participating in a workshop for supervisors, and getting enthused by new ideas (no 24)

- learning about teaching approaches and trying to apply them (no 25)

- being scapegoated in a social work team (no 26)

- getting direct teaching and chances for reflection in a workshop (no 27)

- challenge about personality, in a team meeting (no 28)

- rewiring a flat with a new electrical circuit (no 29)

- planning a training programme with inadequate preparation (no 30)

- taking exams after a correspondence course (no 31)

- learning to drive, having been taught parly by a professional, and partly by a spouse (no 32)

- examining supervision problems in psycho-dynamic, not educational, concepts (no 33)

- learning to work in a multi-disciplinary context (no 34)

- an Open University post-experience course (no 36)

(nb numbers 8 and 35 handed in sheet two only)

Virtually all respondents indicated some common elements in the descriptions of how they learnt from these experiences, by including specific references to:

(i) the importance of a challenge and/or pain in the experience, and the motivation to overcome it;

(ii) the importance of the reflective process after an important experience to make sense of it - sometimes alone and more often with the help of a significant other person to help in that process;

(iii) the importance of a framework in which to locate experiences and make them meaningful.

Some people did not return this first sheet. Discussion subsequently with two of these supervisors suggested that they had used the opportunity to describe particularly painful personal experiences which they had found helpful to explore, but they did not wish to hand in the completed forms. One of these had described the recent loss of a close relative (no 8). It is therefore not unreasonable to assume that the content of the responses in all of these unreturned sheets was not very

different from the kinds of resposes in those which were returned - although it is likely that the proportion who described events related to personal growth and development are consequently under-represented in the returned sheets.

In reflecting on these findings it became evident that the descriptions offered by these supervisors echo some of the issues raised in the illustrative, indicative experiences. In particular, the use of a significant other, or the absence of some other person to prompt self-reflection, suggested that there might be different types of students and teachers ie. those who learned **privately**, alone, and those who learn **publicly.** When supervising students, the present author reported the difficulty of working with students who learned privately (ie. not in supervision) "Some of the students seem to learn a lot, but I regret that others apparently learn very little from me".

Similarly, when the author was himself a student, there were differences (with the supervisor) in expectations of certain kinds of learning taking place, and be seen to take place, in supervision sessions. The preliminary interpretation, at this stage of the work, is to suggest that these differences were differences of **type of approach**, though we shall see later that there are other interpretations which could suggest these differences as being related to **stages of development** in learning.

Sheet Two was returned by 34 people, which included two who did not return Sheet One. One person who completed Sheet One did not complete Sheet Two on the grounds that she "had only supervised students on observation placements up to that time", and she "did not feel that she could usefully comment on the questions raised there". This second sheet asked respondents to:

> (i) Describe briefly HOW they preferred to teach

> (ii) Describe a student they had found difficult to supervise

> (iii) Say why it had been difficult to supervise this student

> (iv) Suggest how the student could have been better supervised (either by themselves or someone else).

The responses in general appear to represent a statement of value position for this relatively experienced group of supervisors. Most said that they preferred to supervise in a way which valued the experience of the student, and which were not a reflection of traditional hierarchical relationships between teachers and learners. However, these were not always the terms used by the respondents themselves. Typical of the responses to question one (about HOW they preferred to teach) on this second sheet is:

> "Informal sessions where we both can feel relaxed. Start off from what the student has done/been involved in, and draw issues from that so it is based on discussion, exchange of ideas, experiences, etc. but I suppose I do a lot of the leading into the areas to be covered" (no 17).

There were some respondents who recognised the need for structures to work within, as well as having a mutually interactive relationship with the student:

> "Sharing obligations, experience, and expectations openly in an initial contract and subsequent sub-contracts" (no 3)

> "Within an agreed framework but with enough flexibility for either to add or subtract - it can be directive or non-directive for either if necessary" (no 4)

A little surprisingly, perhaps, the students these supervisors had difficulty in supervising were those who "needed direct teaching",

"lacked confidence", "wanted theoretical knowledge", "wanted me to be an expert" and most of all those who "split intellectual and feeling experience and denied failure". The supervisors reported that these problem students made them feel "frustrated", "angry and unsure", and "vulnerable". It is notable (again) that the language could also be used to describe interactions between workers and clients.

In describing such problems, some supervisors appeared to be teaching in a way which not was entirely consistent with their expressed position (of valuing the experience of the student), and seemingly they had some difficulty in teaching students who were unable, or unwilling, to take some responsibility for their own learning. Typically, these supervisors tended to deal with the situation by seeing a student they found difficult to supervise as having individual learning pathologies:

> "dull, unmotivated and difficult to engage" (no 20)
>
> "his ideas do not merit his selection as a student ... he is not keen to learn and unwilling to try things" (no 2)
>
> "(needing) everything spelled out... with a need for certainty and security" (no 16)
>
> "quiet, uncertain students who need a lot of babying" (no 12).

These terms and ideas used about problem students are in line with the notions of learning pathology being located within the student that we saw earlier, in the classical supervision literature. It seems, in some of these instances at least, that the supervisors are describing transactions between them and their students, but they use words and concepts which deny the interactive nature of teaching and learning. Instead they attribute responsibility to the student for the misfit or mismatch of expectations, or conceptions of the teaching and learning process.

This also suggests that there may be some differences between what

supervisors aspire to and what they achieve, although in some cases it was evident that the difficulty described was in the past, and the supervisors now saw themselves as better able to cope with such problems. It is worth speculating that the problems may have been easier to describe, and then to deal with, if they had not been expressed in terms which echo clients' problems.

Whilst the questionnaire allowed the gathering of the preliminary data in a non-constrained way from a relatively large group of supervisors, the exercise did not allow the immediate follow up of the responses in discussion. Issues raised by the responses suggested that in subsequent phases of the study it would be very important to build in some interviewing sessions, perhaps following up some of these particular respondents.

It is useful to consider illustrative examples of the replies from individual supervisors to this second sheet, and to contrast what they preferred with students they had difficulty with:

> (no 2) preferred students who like experimenting and being creative, yet found difficulty with a student who was (apparently) unmotivated and unable to risk making mistakes;

> (no 3) preferred to set joint contracts and to encourage mutuality, but had a problem with a student who needed direct teaching and help with writing skills – and thought that a more directive teacher might have helped;

> (no 4) preferred an agreed framework which could be amended and which allowed directive and non-directive teaching, but had difficulty with a student who was anxious to pass through acquiring 'knowledge' and who did not conceptualise easily – and thought that a less demanding supervisor might have been better for that student;

> (no 5) preferred reflection on live/recorded material, rather than written records as a basis for developing the student's ability to conceptualise, but had a problem with students who did not conceptualise well, and had difficulty in taking risks to provide evidence of their practice.

These examples demonstrate the problems which supervisors experienced

when faced with students whose conceptions of the learning tasks were different from their own, which tends to suggest that many of these supervisors were not versatile in their approaches to teaching, and did not readily discriminate between students´ approaches to learning in supervision.

This is an important finding, because it shows that supervisors in this group were able to describe the ways they preferred to teach, and could recognise that for some students there was a mis-match between this approach and how the student expected to learn, but the supervisors were either unable, or chose not, to vary their preferred teaching approach to respond to these differences. Indeed, some explicitly thought that it would need to be a different supervisor eg. a "more directive", or "less demanding" supervisor, to deal better with those students.

The connections between the material in the two sheets were in many instances obvious. They were even made explicit by the respondent who wrote a note on the back of her sheet:

> "Guess what - there is a link between how I learnt to ride a bike and my failure with this student. I tried to do it my way but she wanted pedagogic learning and I wasn´t prepared to ´feed´ in that way" (no 3).

Sometimes the respondent was less able to make these connections explicit even though the two sheets suggested a link between the significant learning experience and the problems associated with a particular student:

> "I learned that it was permissible - and what a relief - to say I don´t really do this job very well" (no 2: Sheet One)

> "He is unwilling to try things - to make mistakes - and to experiment or consider changing" (no 2: Sheet Two)

There may well be a link here between being able to take risks, and being able to acknowledge failure in oneself, and the difficulties (for

this supervisor) in supporting a student to risk failure. This supervisor was followed up in the interview part of the study, and he also completed a learning styles exercise. The findings in each of these various elements of the study seemed to reinforce this interpretation, and the connection has been accepted later, in an interview, by the supervisor himself. The point is elaborated upon, in case illustrations, where material from various phases of the study are brought together (in Section 7.4). Interestingly, given the references to "failure" in the questionnaire, this specialist supervisor chose to be interviewed about a student who failed, and left the course.

There were those (eg no 15) who preferred an "andragogical model", which allowed them and the students to jointly set objectives for the placement, and to jointly plan how to try to meet them. However, this supervisor also wrote, in response to a later question, that he had difficulty with a student who "intellectualised and denied feelings, thus blocking me from helping him in that area of his work with families", until the supervisor realised that the student might actually benefit from some direct teaching. This lead to the student, who "seemed to learn by thinking first and trying things out afterwards", being given some help in a way which was consistent with his preferred approach. The student's need to be at least temporarily dependent on the supervisor was also acknowledged and met. The supervisor here accepted that a traditional, hierarchical relationship is necessary for at least some students, for some of the time, even when his general preference was for a more equal relationship. The supervisor was thus demonstrating some evidence of versatility in his teaching approaches.

There were other supervisors who explicitly recognised the problems of

mismatch and realised with hindsight what they might alternatively have done:

> "It would have been better for this student to have gone to an apprentice-model supervisor" (no 34)

> "I could have jointly supervised this student with a colleague of mine" (no 5)

Reflections on the questionnaire exercise

This questionnaire exercise suggests that some supervisors seem to be relatively fixed in their teaching approaches. Despite wanting to value the experience of the learner and "start from where the learner was" this did not apparently extend to changing approaches to teaching. Amongst those supervisors in the group who were known to be experienced in the practice teaching role (especially the unit supervisors), there was considerable variation in the confidence with which they approached dealing with students they found "difficult".

Reflection suggested that regardless of the numbers of students who had been supervised by particular supervisors, and the length of time they had been supervising, there were other factors which affected how they saw the supervisory process, and therefore what happened in supervision. Certainly, there was evidence that teachers preferred to teach in ways which were essentially similar to the ways they had reported their own significant learning, and that they had difficulties with students who did not learn in that way. Since these difficulties had not been overcome simply by length or amount of supervisory experience, some additional attention should be given later in the study to **the supervisor's stage of development as a teacher**, as distinct from the length of time spent supervising, or the number of students supervised. Certainly in looking at the responses of those who were known to be relatively inexperienced as supervisors, some of them

seemed less thrown by difficult students than some of their more experienced colleagues. To test this out further, the next stage of data collection included the supervisor in this sample who had not previously supervised an assessed placement.

To summarise, then, the evidence in the questionnaire responses seems to indicate that some teachers might begin by thinking that there is only one right way to teach (and that is the way they themselves learn). Some have recognised that there might be other ways of supervising, but felt that students who learned differently would need to be supervised by someone else. A third group see that the supervisor might need to use other approaches to teaching than the usual one. We shall see that these differences in conceptions of teaching and learning in supervision emerge in all the data reported in this study.

It must be recalled, however, that this group of supervisors is not typical - they were self-selected by choosing to attend a conference for supervisors, and were therefore probably better motivated to develop their supervision skills than some others. They also included a larger proportion of specialist supervisors - student unit supervisors - than might be the case in a random group. Therefore almost the entire group were more experienced than, say, a group of supervisors for any individual CQSW course. However, the purpose of this part of the study was not to look for characteristics which would necessarily be applicable and generalisable to ALL supervisors. Instead, it was intended to see how supervisors actually learnt and taught, and some of the problems they saw themselves as having. In this way, subsequent stages of the study could pay more attention to some of these specific issues, both with supervisors drawn from this group and elsewhere.

Further reflection suggested that there might also be stages which learners go through, and the questions of match and mismatch (of supervisors and their students) might need to consider not only a teaching/learning style dimension but one which was also related to stages of development. It was decided that this should be explored more specifically in the next stage of data collection, and that any relevant literature on learning styles and developmental stages through which adult learners pass should be studied. This exploration of the literature is reported in Chapter Five.

One issue emerged from this data which had not been expected, and was interwoven with the other style and stage dimensions detailed here. This area was the extent to which the learning strategy described involved the use of some other person as teacher/friend who helped to make sense of the learning experience. There appeared to be two quite different groups - those who involved a significant other in the learning process, and those who learnt privately or individually. It was not possible from the data collected to distinguish situations when one or other strategy was used, because of the diversity of learning experiences reported, and because there was no direct association between the type of learning experience described and the use of significant others in making sense of that learning.

The finding is consistent with the author's own experience as a supervisor - earlier a description was given of students who seemed to learn despite what I was offering. There is certainly some evidence here that the teachers' conceptions of both teaching and learning varied, and that some had more sophisticated understanding of what might be described as levels, or stages, of learning (Saljo, 1979). This theme is returned to at greater length in Chapter Five.

Section 4.3 A Single Case Study: Supervision in an Entire Placement

4.3.1 Background

Whilst in the last section some diverse learning experiences, including learning outside social work, were considered through responses to a number of open-ended questions, this section reports on supervision in much greater depth. The broadly focussed questionnaire generated useful data about how supervisors view and describe their teaching and learning, but it did not provide first-hand data about what they demonstrably do. This was especially important given the apparent gap between how supervisors said they preferred to teach, and problems they had with some students.

This single case study of what actually occurred in the supervision sessions over an entire practice placement provides evidence of the kinds of transactions which demonstrably take place between a supervisor and student. It raises questions and issues which reflect back on the earlier data reported in this thesis and, in turn, contributes to the selection and focus for much of the material collected and methodology in the rest of the study.

This exercise involved a supervisor and student agreeing to tape-record their supervision sessions during a four month placement and to make the tapes available to the researcher on a weekly basis. In the original arrangement, negotiated with the supervisor, it was agreed that it would be inappropriate for the researcher to comment at any stage on aspects of the student's performance either in his practice with his clients, or his performance in supervision. The supervisor negotiated the agreement with the student, who raised no objections to making tapes, and sending them to the researcher. It was agreed that

the tapes were to be confidential to the researcher, and any reported material based on them would not include any identifying references to the supervisor or student.

Any comments made during the placement would be made only to the supervisor and would be related to helping her to identify her own style of teaching. Such comments were not intended to be evaluative of the quality of her teaching. There were no meetings planned to give this feedback in a systematic or formal way - instead there were occasional meetings with the supervisor in our usual work roles and a few telephone calls (prompted usually by the non-arrival of tapes for a couple of weeks).

It was felt, at that stage, that further contact might act as a 'contaminant' which could affect the nature of the materials gathered. It should be noted that the setting up of the original agreement pre-dated undertaking a full review of the literature on methodology in evaluative research. Subsequently, the supervisor was interviewed about the experience of tape-recording the sessions, and about her response to the questionnaire exercise described above - even though this had not been intended at the beginning of the placement.

In research in an illuminative paradigm, as distinct from more traditional scientifically-detached observation, such a contribution could be not only a legitimate part of the approach but could also contribute to the validation of the findings by checking that comments and interpretations were accurate, and/or helpful to the participants.

The only direct contact with the student was at an informal lunch

meeting at the end of the placement, when discussion included some feedback comments on his approach to learning during this placement, and on the teaching and learning which took place in the supervision sessions. At this point in the study, the emphasis was on looking at what supervisors do, and how they made sense of what went on in supervision sessions, to develop the work based on the questionnaire exercise.

As a direct result of the findings of this single case study, there was greater concern to include material about students, and to focus attention on the interactions between teachers and their students. The reasons for this shift of emphasis emerge in the commentaries on the supervision sessions.

The Placement

The placement studied was the first placement on a two year non-graduate CQSW course. It lasted about sixteen weeks, for two days each week, (with a small number of weeks in block placement). Supervision sessions were weekly, lasting one and a half to two hours. Tapes were to be made of each of them. Eventually, twelve tapes were actually made. One of these was of poor sound quality and is not reported here. Two of the four missed weeks were because the supervisor was on leave, on one week the tape-recorder was not available, and one week the supervisor had forgotten to bring a new tape to the session.

This placement was selected because it is is not untypical, and avoids extreme or unusual features (Patton, 1978). It is from a two-year non-graduate course, and takes place in a statutory social services department with a supervisor who has had a small number of professional students before. The office is used to having students placed there.

The method adopted was chosen because it was relatively non-intrusive method (ie. there was not the distraction of an observer intruding into a two-person discussion) and yet gave much fuller data than either notes made by the participants or subsequent interviews where they could be asked for their recollections of what had gone on in the sessions.

However, there was some indication that both supervisor and student found that they were aware of being taped in the early part of the first few tapes, but they clearly seemed less inhibited by it later in those sessions, and later in the placement as a whole.

The tape recordings were dealt with by playing them soon after they arrived, and making quite extensive notes during the first hearing. Key points, and particularly apposite quotations, were highlighted. The volume of material, together with the cost and time of doing so, militated against transcribing all of the tapes in full. They are edited here to indicate salient or typical features. The earlier supervision sessions are considered in more detail, to establish major themes and issues. The later sessions are dealt with more selectively by chosing some key themes and features which contribute to the focus of subsequent data collection, which highlight issues related to style and stage in teaching and learning, and which show the impact of assessment on the pattern of supervisory interaction.

The initial response to this material was to wonder at the richness and the depth of material collected, and to remember both students supervised in the Thamesmead Unit, and some of the researcher's own student experiences. Some sessions which seemed to struggle with issues

I had met before many times over were particularly evocative. However there was much that was new and particular to this supervisor and student, and to the cases they were working with. It is the balance of these common and unique elements which this account seeks to reflect.

Listening to the tapes, (especially on first hearing), sometimes prompted muttering or talking to the tape-recorder. On some occasions this was to point out things which the participants did not appear to realise themselves, such as one interrupting the other, whilst saying things like "I don't want to interrupt you, but..". On other occasions the tapes prompted the desire to help when they apparently talked past each other. These responses seem to be a kind of attempt to do the supervision at second hand, and to act as a kind of consultant to the supervisor. Neither, of course, was possible given the contract agreed in setting up this exercise. Tape-recording is therefore better than direct observation for reasons which go beyond intrusiveness and detail of the record, and which also include the opportunity for the researcher to react openly to the transactions.

The approach used has allowed the collection of relatively undistorted raw material from this placement. The next part of the thesis reports the data and comments upon it.

The Supervisor

The supervisor for this placement was female, and in her late thirties. She had been qualified for more than ten years before the placement began, and had previously worked as a supervisor in a small number of placements, including previously supervising for the course which this student was undertaking. She had a role as a specialist practitioner in a social services department area office, in a metropolitan area. There

was another student placed in the office, with another supervisor, over the same period.

The Student

The student was male, in his early thirties. He had previously worked in residential social work, and as an unqualified social worker for some years in a social services area team in a nearby authority.

The Contract

A contract for the placement was agreed between student and supervisor. It describes the work the student is expected to undertake and the commitments he should make, but indicates fewer of the obligations of the supervisor. It is interesting to note the language used, such as "you will (do...)", and the assumption that the supervisor and student had similar approaches to learning - although no evidence is offered in support of this assertion.

Key Issues to Examine in the Data

This material is best viewed in the light of the issues we have identified in the review of the supervision literature and earlier data:

(a) **the language used** by supervisor and student, and the extent to which it reflects social casework practice

(b) **the concepts each appears to have of the teaching and learning processes**, and the impact these conceptions have on the expectations they bring to the supervisory relationship, including the extent of 'fit' of these conceptions

(c) the **extent of hierarchy and directiveness in the supervisory relationship**

(d) any **changes in the patterns of interaction** in supervision

(e) the **impact of assessment on teaching and learning processes**

In short, we are interested in the QUALITATIVE features of the teaching and learning processes.

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The material from the placement is presented as follows: **Session One**, **Sessions Three to Five**, and **Session Six Onwards**. This allows more detail to be presented in the earlier stages of the placement, and extensions of the ideas developed there in subsequent selections from the data.

Each of these sections discusses the findings, and then they are considered together in an overview of the chapter.

4.3.2 The Single Case Study - Session One.

We shall give more attention to what took place in the first session since it not only sets the tone for what is to follow, but it also sows the seeds of the continuing pattern of interaction for much of the placement. Inevitably, with such a large amount of data collected, we shall be selective in what is presented here. Two factors have governed the selection: first is the need to make the volume of taped material manageable; second is a focus on the patterns of interaction in supervision.

The style of presentation is to describe some of the transactions of particular sessions, and to reflect on issues which they raise.

This session shows the supervisor establishing a pattern and ground rules for supervision. She is apparently clear about how she will teach, and how the student should work with his clients. The session includes substantial discussions about the area team in which the placement occurs, and about an essay which the student has to write.

There was a lengthy introduction from the supervisor, who spoke a great deal, with very brief responses from the student. This was the pattern for for the first half of the session. The first exchanges were rather awkward discussions about time, setting watches, and making arrangements for future sessions.

The supervisor asked the student whether he "had anything to bring to the session". The student said that he did not, and the discussion moved to the cases which the student was about to take on.

The first discussion of a particular case the student was taking on included the supervisor saying "I don´t think there will be anything to sort out.... it´s probably a question of making arrangements to meet people.... and I suggest making an appointment to see the school counsellor..."

The supervisor that said she "wanted to get the admin bits out of the way first". The student replied "mmm..." doubtfully. The supervisor said "There isn´t anything else is there?" in a tone of voice which suggested that she was expecting the answer ´No´. The student said "No".

When the student began to describe the first case passed to him he was very formal and rather stilted in his use of language - for example, he said "Mrs A **informed** Mr A...", and

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later he said he would "telephone Mrs A and **offer an interview**".

The discussion turned to the team meeting earlier that day where there had been a case presented by one of the team members for discussion. The supervisor said "What did you think of that case in the discussion this morning?". The student said "There are so many unknowns, aren´t there...?" and paused. The supervisor immediately said "John was picking up on...." and explained the situation. The student was silent...

The student introduced the idea of tape-recording his interviews. He felt that other kinds of reporting were not very satisfactory, and was concerned how the supervisor would know if there were any problems. He went on to say "I´m not used to all this writing" and then resisted the suggestion that if he taped his interviews he should make written comments for the supervisor as well.

The supervisor turned the focus again to the discussion in the team meeting. "What did you think was going on...?" The student said he felt "an outsider". The student used the word "introspective" three times when talking about how he saw this team, and said this was "very different from his own previous experience where the team he used to work in was not so preoccupied with talking about their own experiences and feelings". The supervisor went on at some length about "struggles for power in the team". The student thought "all this was at a deep level" and did not respond when the supervisor continued to talk about "the problems we have as a team". The student openly said "I´m not very interested in that kind of discussion" . The student here seemed to be trying quite explicitly to distance himself from discussion about the team, and how the team members relate to each other.

When pressed, the student made some comments about the "studious approach in this team", and twice described them as "serious". He made a link with his earlier experience – the previous team in which he had worked before coming to the course "made fun of themselves", and there was "socialising in the office". He observed that "there is not a lot of laughter here". The supervisor jumped in rather quickly to say that there had been an example of laughter in the meeting, but the student dismissed it as "manic humour" and "just a release". The student took responsibility for terminating this part of the session by saying "it has gone as far as is useful".

The next part of the session was focussed on discussing an essay about interviewing. The student said that one could choose one´s own title. The supervisor made some uncomplimentary comments about the College. The student said that he saw this essay as a "a bit of a warm-up". He saw interviewing "as a bit of an art and a bit of a science" although he might not use that as a title. He thought he "might use some quote" as a title. The supervisor muttered something which was difficult to catch, both for the student and on the tape about "what you bring and what you learn."

Despite the student trying to get in here she continued by reflecting on, and telling him about, the nature of practice teaching.

This was evident too in the next exchange in the course of which the student said he thought "knowledge was skills plus being". The supervisor said that it was important to consider "having, being and doing components of learning". The student asked about "being" and was told that it was "about the use of self in your work".

The student talked about what he had read in this field and it becomes clear that this material is not yet well-assimilated and not very connected with his social work practice. A great deal of anxious laughter punctuates the next few exchanges. The supervisor seems a bit lost, and finds it difficult to follow the student's arguments, but asks "Do you mean being where the client is and giving space to them?" and gave an illustration of this from her own work, which the student did not pick up on. He continues in the same way as before...

The supervisor says that "The model is about discovering new bits of self" but when she gets no response quickly says "I'm thinking out loud"...

The student continues in the same rather lofty tones: "When we are talking about self in modern psychology..." but this time the supervisor challenges whether the different points made were not distinct, but were in fact different levels of the same thing. The student continues, still in the same tone of voice, "In philosophy, the self is ONE, in many of the ancient traditions..."

The supervisor tries another challenge: "It sounds almost like a religion because you are so enthusiastic..." The supervisor is not sure of this ground at all and says rather defensively "I've looked at things too, but not necessarily in such well worked-out ways" (sic). She says "Social work is about staying with people while they are going through bad things..."

The supervisor says "I'd like to set the scene for the next session, and think about interviewing - how can we relate this to skills" (sic). The student replies by linking back to the previous discussion, and says "I actually believe there is **only one way** of interviewing, of being with someone... you are there and listening". The supervisor picks up on "only one way" by asking about "the doing bit of being". The student says "knowledge arises from being". The supervisor tentatively challenges this but a planned interruption occurs.

After this, the student says "They (clients) are different from other people... (and this legitimates) ... a more directive response". The supervisor challenges the student, and asks about integrating theory and practice. The student says that **"practice is the application of theory"**, but the supervisor says she thinks that "theories are not just descriptions of practice... they are conceptualisations".

The session finishes after an exchange in which the student said "I don't quite understand what is bothering you" and the supervisor responded in terms of him being able to generalise so that he can use his experience.

Commentary on Session One

This one supervision session contains within it rich material which is susceptible to many levels of description and analysis. Simply reviewing the content shows that it moves from initial scene-setting, and agenda building exchanges, to discussion of what the student should do in one of the cases he is being asked to work with, and to the longer discussions about the team, and the student's essay topic.

Reflecting on the two participants and their contribution to the process of the session, we can see that this content-focussed account is inadequate in understanding the subtleties of the interactions in the supervision session. The supervisor is concerned to appear as a good teacher, to be business-like, and to set the tone for the placement. The student is initially very passive, and does not respond very much, although after the discussion about how the team members get on he becomes more assertive. Subsequently, when he is given more opportunity to talk, he discusses his recent reading, which has clearly had an important influence on him.

But it is in the interaction between the two participants that some of the most revealing material emerges. At the beginning, the supervisor is clearly in control, and sets out the ground-rules, and her expectations. In doing so, she echoes the terms of the contract for the placement by emphasising what she expects to happen. Although the student is invited to say whether he wants to bring anything to the session, he apparently does not understand this to be a coded way of

valuing his contribution to his own learning.

The supervisor then tells the student what he should do in a case which she has passed to him, after which she seems to excuse this by saying that she wanted "to get the admin bits out of the way first". This seems to be very much a pattern of **instruction**, in a **hierarchical relationship**, which, despite two explicit comments by the supervisor, does not seem to start by identifying the student's competence, and what needs to be learned in the placement. Equally, even though the placement contract is explicit on the point, there is no attention given here to **how** the student might go about learning things on the placement.

The supervisor seems concerned to get her perceptions of the team meeting confirmed by the student, but despite considerable pressure, the student resists and eventually is explicit about his lack of interest in that discussion. Both the opportunities afforded by the case discussion, and the talk about social work teams include the student directly referring to his previous experience, but on each occasion, that experience is not picked up and developed by the supervisor.

The next part of the session, discussing the student's planned essay, includes the student trying to talk about his ideas and experience, but the supervisor tells him about the importance of valuing the student's previous experience, and what he can contribute to supervision sessions and to his own learning. The timing suggests that she recognises the importance of using the student's previous experience, but she does not actually do this.

It is possible to interpret some of the transactions as attempts to deal with the uncertainty which goes along with the establishing of a new supervisory relationship; but it is also possible to see the interactions as attempts by the supervisor to establish authority and power, in the supervisory relationship and in the area team as a whole. It is evident that the student does not go along with this entirely.

The purpose of their meeting is for the student to learn. The supervisor, though, seems concerned with her role as a supervisor, in which she sees **an emphasis on her teaching rather than on the student's learning**, and on her need to super-vise ie. to ´over-see´ his work on behalf of the agency.

The supervisor appears to be keen to establish this kind of pattern, but seems a little agitated initially which leads her into the trap of over-direction and over-teaching in the early part of the session. Later, after the student clearly will not support her in the team politics, she swings towards greater passivity and uncertain challenges to the over-generalisations, and lack of connection with his practice, which are contained in the student's comments in the second half of this session.

The student also appears to have a clear conception of learning, and of the relationship of theory to practice (which are emphasised in the account above); this has the effect of him not responding at all to invitations to "say whether he has anything to bring to the session". Elsewhere in the study, we shall find other instances where supervisors who tried inviting early involvement of students in defining their own learning needs found that their students were unable to respond to such a request early in the placement − often because students did not

expect that this would be how the teaching and learning was going to be conducted.

Some other interesting findings emerge from this first session, about the concept of social work practice each has - the supervisor appears to think that there is a right way to approach the cases she has passed on to the student, and gives him a clear indication of what this will be by advising in some detail what she expects the student to do. Similarly, the student believes there is only one way to work with clients (by "being" with them) though it is a different right way from the supervisor's. This difference is apparently at the root of the long discussion where they appear to talk past each other.

The supervisor is trying to make a good impression on her new student and on the researcher, so she acts in ways which she thinks are "right", but her clarity and directedness seem to be perceived by the student as controlling. He seems to respond in ways which challenge this control, either by encouraging the supervisor to have much more general discussions about ideas, or by using his previous experience to challenge the supervisor's perceptions eg what is happening in the area team meetings.

The main themes and issues which are evident in this first session become recurrent elements for the entire placement, although they were not so obvious to the participants at the time. These themes and issues are examined in the following sections, after which their contribution to defining the next stage of the study is described.

There was, during this placement, a shift in focus towards considering both teaching AND learning, and towards looking at teachers AND learners. This came about because it became evident that the interaction between the participants, and understanding their expectations and conceptions of the teaching and learning processes were more likey to illumine and explain their interactions rather more than the traditional teacher-centred model of supervision.

4.3.3 Sessions Three to Five

These next accounts are selected to illustrate and develop the issues raised in the first session, and some further issues, notably those concerning assessment.

In **Session Three**, the language used still seemed to be rather formal and stilted. An example of this is the awkward pronunciation of the term "in employment" rather than just "working" by the student when describing a client he had visited.

The supervisor continues, in this session, to offer direct advice on who to contact and what to do about the cases. Because this does not seem to fit with what the student is expecting she reiterates it, together with some generalisations to justify why she is doing so but the student does not respond. Eventually she asks "What would have happened to this case in your old office?" and is told, after a long pause, that "It would have been dealt with on a duty basis", and that "It is unlikely that it would have been allocated"...

This exchange is followed by a long and detailed ´rehearsal´ of the forthcoming interview. The supervisor asks very specific questions like "Is there anything you´d like to say to her?" and "Why is she unable to come in to the office...?" It appears that the student eventually acquiesces, and joins in with this rehearsal but he shows little enthusiasm for it.

The break caused by changing to the other side of the tape changes the tone of the discussion, which gives the chance to raise some other issues and the supervisor asks what the student has done since leaving school. The student says he "wanted to do something practical" and so dropped out of his degree course. He got a job, via an employment agency, to work with children in outer London; and then decided he "wanted to live somewhere more rural" and he moved to working in a large county authority. There he worked with handicapped children and later he moved to a hospital which was "more therapeutic". He then went into teacher training because he wanted to do "special teaching" in a residential school where

his role would be "not just educational but therapeutic".

He was asked why he had dropped out of that and after a long silence he suggested that "teaching was not enough". He went on to say that he had fallen out with someone who was "hot on the more formalised aspects". The supervisor asked a lot of questions about the kind of educational model which they used although the student didn't appear to understand exactly what it was she was asking about.

It seems during this discussion that the supervisor is trying to find out more about the student, but the history of his life experiences is gathered by asking the kinds of questions we would ask clients about their lives. This approach does not elicit very much about the student's expectations of learning in the placement. What is evident, however, is that he is not finding this supervisor very easy and she acknowledged in a telephone conversation shortly afterwards that she was becoming "increasingly bothered about him" and, because he didn't seem to respond to her teaching, that he "might be a failing student."

By **Session Five** these patterns seem to be well-established: the student at one point is talking about the cases he carried in his previous team and describes his work as "picking up the pieces" and he apparently means that his work was fragmented, and episodic, and included few opportunities for sustained work in depth. The supervisor responded a little differently, by seeing the problem as "coping with the bits and pieces left by others in the team."

Her preoccupation with what is going on in this present team draws the supervisor away from the problem the student is describing, and she does not make any use of the material he is providing. I began to wonder at this stage of the placement why an experienced and well-educated social worker, who was well-motivated and keen to improve her supervisory skills, was not managing to make effective contact with this student - and, conversely, why a student who was bright and experienced (by his pre-course social work) was not able to use what this supervisor was keen to offer. It seemed increasingly as though they were moving towards each other on parallel, but separate lines and missing each other.

One previous situation which the student described was a case

> where the mother "had been diagnosed as a schizophrenic"
> which the student seemed ready to talk more about, describing
> a focus in supervision on "practicalities... it didn't
> involve me making connections... there wasn't so much
> dialogue...as in this (placement) supervision"...

The supervisor was very concerned about how these cases were managed in his old team, rather than what the student did, or what he had learned from them.

> The student says he is "not used to clients valuing my
> existence as a worker", and that he felt his previous
> workload had been biased too heavily in that direction (ie.
> working with reluctant clients). The supervisor generalises
> and talks about "casework and change". She is doing some
> direct teaching but the student does not seem very interested
> in this. The student responds by saying that he is "not sure
> how to measure being helpful".
>
> A discussion about how people change continues until the
> supervisor challenges the student that if the model is good
> enough for him, why is it not equally so for clients. The
> student flounders, and the supervisor jumps into to explain
> further what she means... then she challenges again, rescues,
> explains and challenges again, but in a different way. This
> time she says "and..." after his comment and leaves a hanging
> silence which the student does not fill. The supervisor
> eventually comes in and asks directly "When were you last
> conscious of having changed?" and follows this by "Let's be
> specific".

This is the first major challenge during the placement which the supervisor sustains, rather than allowing more general and abstract discussions to distract her, as she did previously.

> She presses further: "Have you changed in the weeks you have
> been here?" and the student at last talks in detail about
> changes – although they are changes in his clients and not
> changes for him. This eventually drifts off again into a
> discussion about self-awareness when the supervisor asks "Why
> do you want to be good at it (ie. self-awareness)?" and the
> student replies "because it is about maturity."

Commentary on Sessions Three to Five

These sessions are characterised by a pattern of two well-meaning and well-intentioned individuals repeatedly failing to make effective contributions to supervision and having recurrent difficulties and misunderstandings. As we saw, the supervisor therefore begins to have doubts about whether the student will pass, and is further prompted

into directive teaching. This view was apparently based as much on his performance in supervision as with his clients, since she had no direct evidence of the latter. This raises some interesting side issues about the need for direct evidence in evaluating the performance of social work students. This resonates with the author's own experience with students, and the same confusion, between the student's performance in supervision, and with clients, was picked up at the end of the 1970s in debates concerning the assessment of students' practice competence. Both Morrell (1979) and Brandon and Davies (1979) explicitly refer to the need to distinguish between the student's progress in learning and in his performance in his work with clients.

Some of this becomes more explicable when we consider the concerns the supervisor has which lead her to emphasise her teaching role. The case discussions throughout the placement exemplify this, since the student describes events and experiences which could be raw material for helping him to recognise patterns in his work and in his learning, but the supervisor becomes more and more caught up in managing the cases from an agency point of view.

The supervisor acknowledged later, in a taped interview, that she clearly wanted to "teach", and to value his experience, but the response to her teaching made her concerned about his competence, and the cycle was repeated.

The student appears to respond to her unexpressed concerns by challenging the supervisor's control of the sessions. He has some awareness of what she expects from him, and as we shall see in the rest of the placement, he uses this cue-seeking ability to try to learn from her; but when the pressure of assessment is off, he feels able to take

some risks in admitting that he has been working with his clients with rather more freedom than the over-directive teaching and detailed rehearsals might have lead us to expect.

4.3.4 Session Six onwards

The selection of material in the remaining sessions continues to emphasise the themes identified and discussed above.

> In **Session Six**, there was a substantial discussion about a case the student was working with. The supervisor says that "it is important to be clear what is going on in this family". The supervisor asked what the student "felt about what was going on in the family" but was misheard and had to say it again.
>
> This happens several times in the course of the discussion – the student cannot "hear" what is being asked about his involvement in the family situation, and what he feels about it. He does not quite understand, it seems, why the supervisor should be very interested in this.
>
> There was another detailed rehearsal of what the student should do in a forthcoming interview. This seems largely about taking a social history from a client, and how to get other similar material... She goes on to make a link to the past experience of the student but then is a bit thrown by a very specific question from the student about "whether you should take a family social history whilst the daughter is in the room?"...
>
> The supervisor begins to develop some connections between the student's current cases and his past experience. However, the student appears to want to find out right and wrong ways to do things like taking a family history – he does not seem to feel that it might depend on certain contextual features eg the age of the daughter, the nature of the problem, the purpose of taking the social history and so on. In fairness to the student, it may be that he is responding to how the supervisor has been teaching, in terms of there being right ways to do things.
>
> They turn to a discussion about a possible new case, and the student says he would like to do "family work". The supervisor says rather quickly and defensively that there is a lot going on in the families of his existing cases.
>
> This reiterates the challenges and patterns from earlier in the placement, about what the student thinks of the cases he has been given (and which would apparently not have justified allocation at all in his last office).
>
> The session turned to considering a study day for supervisors and students locally which was going to be held in the area office soon. The purpose of the day would be to allow

discussion about interviewing skills and study skills. The supervisor talked about the teaching of social work at the college - which the student thought was superficial. He also said he could not see the relevance of the sociology teaching, but the discussion petered out because the supervisor seemed quiet and subdued during this. Her comments were closed and a little dogmatic. She seemed pre-occupied. It is clear that the session is almost about to end when the supervisor asks for feedback on how the supervision is going and on their supervisory relationship. The student is a bit perplexed and eventually says that he thinks the supervisor "blows hot and cold." It seems that the supervisor might have wanted to develop this discussion, about her view of his competence, but in the event does not do so.

The next two tapes focus on **Sessions Eight and Nine** which were primarily concerned with the interim assessment report on the placement which would be sent to the college. They cover much of the same ground and raise similar issues.

The student sounds noticeably more sure of himself in these tapes. There is still a considerable focus on a caseload-management type of supervision. By contrast the supervisor is more unsure of herself, is talking rather a lot, and intruding into what the student is saying, by cutting across him with pressure to emphasise her own viewpoint... Later, we see where some of this pressure is coming from, as the supervisor tries to set up a position where she can let him know her doubts in the interim assessment...

They begin to talk about assessment but it is not immediately clear that the student realises that the supervisor is talking about assessing **him** rather than **his** assessment of the family in this case. The supervisor does not let the student finish many of his sentences around this point, and often jumps into the pauses by finishing sentences for the student.

The rest of the session is an academic discussion about "insight," which is equated by both parties simply with an intellectual understanding of a situation. Neither of them suggests referring to the literature in support their view, and neither suggests that they could check this out for next time. This perhaps is typical of the insularity and introspection of what sometimes happens in supervision.

For the following session, also on assessment, the student has been asked to write something about his performance on the placement so far. He says "It is difficult to write about yourself...." but is interrupted and the discussion turns to being a debate about the relative merits of "being subjective versus being objective".

The student is talking much more about himself in describing his work in this session, which seems to have been prompted by writing a self-evaluative piece. He says that he is more relaxed than at the beginning of the placement. He linked

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this to his earlier rather unsatisfactory educational experiences and the problems he had had in them. The supervisor turned this into a discussion about her authority and how adults learn, which seems to deter the student from continuing in the same vein.

Throughout this discussion, my notes record a pattern of interruptions by the supervisor and shifts by her towards making more general points about how adults learn. She describes the "importance of helping them to value and use their own experience", but her interruptions and instruction (talking about learning) again make it difficult to use what the student is offering.

Over the next month, only two supervision sessions occurred, (because the supervisor took two weeks holiday as part of her annual leave) and only one of these was recorded. The patterns described above continued in this session, but without the pressure of the interim assessment the supervisor seemed less intrusive. Having not been explicit about her concerns, and the gap caused by her holiday has given the student a little more space to develop.

The **penultimate session** demonstrates this. This tape has a distinctly more relaxed tone for both supervisor and the student. The latter felt free enough to compare this supervisor with his previous one prior to coming onto the course. The differences seemed to be partly to do with the size of caseload and partly that the previous supervisor was "more supportive" whilst this one was "more challenging".

This session indeed shows the supervisor as more relaxed and supportive, but she clearly continues to attach a great deal of significance to the nature and quality of their supervisory relationship as an indicator of progress for the student.

The student had produced a good piece of written work for the final evaluation, and he himself made a good link betwen "use of self" with clients and in reflective writing. He began to talk about "the value of being human in your work", but the supervisor struck a cautionary note about "the importance of holding off your own needs with clients and not imposing", but the student pursued the point and ´admitted´ that there were times when he used his own life experience with clients. He gave an example of the impending birth of his own child which he had talked to clients about.

The student here has indicated not only his increasing confidence and competence, but also he gives evidence that some of his earlier responses in supervision indicate his cue-consciousness in responding to his supervisor´s lead. Now, nearly at the end of the placement, he is able to ´own up´ to what he has being doing with his clients, which includes some (appropriate) personal involvement in his work.

The student had also taped an interview with a family and brought it to the supervisor even though he felt it had not been a very good interview, and had offered it to the supervisor for comment.

The student demonstrably feels more able to take risks in supervision, and to be seen to involve himself in his work with his clients. The supervisor is supportive to these moves which certainly seem to be associated with the lifting of the pressure of assessment. The entire tone of the final sessions is in marked contrast to the early tapes in ways which reflect a different balance between student and supervisor. Some of this also seems to be associated with the student fending for himself whilst the supervisor was on leave.

Comments on Session Six Onwards

The selection of material from these sessions has been increasingly narrowed, in order that the issues discussed can be considered in more depth, and through the period of an entire placement. In this way, it is possible to discern those areas where there has been movement on the part of the supervisor and student.

Some of this selection has been informed by the initial sessions of the placement itself, but material has also been selected to give descriptive evidence of the persistence of the problems which we identified in reviewing the classical supervison literature. It is worth emphasising that if the underlying assumptions in the classical model still persist widely, then any part of supervision sessions should be susceptible to such an analysis, and certainly looking at placements as a whole we should expect to find some difficulties for the participants arising from the limitations of language and conceptualisations derived from the classical model. Here, this indeed turns out to be the case.

In looking at the performance of the supervisor, we can see that she was at a critical stage not only in the development of her supervisory skills, but more importantly, in her conception of the teaching and learning processes in professional education. As a result of being encapsulated at this point of transition, some of the limitations of

her approach are more starkly represented than if we had studied the previous or next placement in which she was involved.

It is relatively easy, by observation of the sessions, and in interpretations with the benefit of hindsight, to point to the limitations of the approach she was employing. Had she been less explicitly concerned with improving her **teaching** skills, and demonstrating these to the student and the researcher, she may have been able to relax and give the student the space he used profitably towards the end of the placement. After reading this account, she confirmed that view.

The next section will pull together a number of the points and themes to emerge from the single case study, and combine them with those which are derived from the questionnaire exercise, so that together they can shape the next stage of data collection.

4.4 Comments on the Questionnaire and the Single Case Study — an Overview

This chapter began with the intention of gathering data to look at the teaching and learning processes involved in social work supervision. We have seen that supervisors view supervision in particular ways, and that related to these conceptions of the teaching and learning processes, they had difficulties when working with students who did not learn in ways which they themselves expected.

There were some indications that the supervisors varied in how they saw the learning processes, but that this did not seem to be related to the length of time they had been known to have supervised, nor to the

number of students they had had, since some experienced unit supervisors still had relatively limited and traditional approaches to teaching and learning - which emphasised what they had to teach, and saw the task of they student to learn from them in the way that they were offering to teach them (even whilst espousing and valuing more liberal educational principles). These findings suggested that the matching of the styles, or approaches, of teachers and learners might be an important way to make supervision sessions more effective.

In turning to consider the single case-study of supervision during an entire placement, we found that these questions of the expectations of the teaching and learning processes seemed important elements in making sense of the material derived from the tape recordings. In addition to the issues of learning styles, and their match with teaching styles, there were some indications that the development of the way in which the supervisor conceives of her role affects the way in which she works with a student. That this supervisor began to question the competence of the student and to wonder whether he would pass the placement, during a period when she was finding him difficult in supervision, was a graphic example of the approach contained in the classical literature.

This, as we have seen, emphasises the importance of the teacher, and what is to be taught, so that when the student does not respond in the expected way, it is assumed that he is somehow failing, and the task of the teacher is to help him with these presumed learning difficulties.

We have seen that such a model of pathology locates the responsibilty for problems in supervision with the student, and no doubt in some instances at least there is a need for the teacher to look at the

uncertainty or fears which accompany significant learning (as we have seen in the supervisors' responses to the questionnaire), but this need not be necessary in every situation, with every student. The limitation of the classical model of supervision is that it focusses attention on the individual, not on the nature of the transactions between individuals. We should beware of making the same mistake when we look at the reports of this case study. It is not helpful to blame the supervisor for failing to do things differently when she herself was changing and developing as a teacher. Equally, to account for these experiences adequately, we need to look at the interactions between the supervisor and the student, at the patterns in these transactions, and then try to explain them in terms which illumine rather than obscure the interaction.

Thus, we need to develop some concepts which describe these events as interactions, and which can account for patterns which may be sustained over a considerable period of time. Similarly, without such notions, the supervisor (and other supervisors) will find it difficult to explain the processes without falling into using ideas 'leaked' from their experience of social work practice with clients. We explored this earlier, in considering the role play of supervision (where two supervisors would have "got the anxiety out of the way first"), and in the literature review which found the use of exactly the same terms as those used in direct practice to describe the supervisory relationship. We have therefore identified contradictions between elements of that model and effectively enabling students to take responsibility for their own learning; even so, there is evidence of the persistence of the classical model in current usage, and difficulties have resulted.

There are other questions which need further exploration in the study which emerged in this stage. Important amongst these is the relation of teaching and learning process to the assessment process which we shall follow up, both in the next chapter, when reviewing recent and current research into adult learning, and subsequently in the next stages of data collection.

It is appropriate here to reflect on the usefulness of the collection of material by tape-recordings. Its value, beyond using transcripts, notes, or subsequent discussions with the participants, is that it allows the tone of the transactions to emerge. An example was the way in which questions were asked, when the student asked about taking a family history with the daughter present, in a way which shows that he expects there are "right answers" and that there is a "right way" to do things in social work.

Thus, in summary, the data reported in this chapter have emphasised the importance of the key issues we identified on page 103 - the language used, learning styles and stages of learning, the conceptions of those involved concerning the learning process, the importance of assessment, and the significance of the duration of the supervisory experiences which allows development and change in the patterns of interaction between the student and the supervisor.

We turn now to consider the research into student learning in higher education to establish which of the findings might be useful for present purposes.

CHAPTER FIVE. ADULT LEARNING RESEARCH

Section 5.1 An Overview of this Chapter

The discussion of findings so far has suggested possible lines of
enquiry in subsequent data collection, and that, in searching the
literature relating to how adults learn, it would be worth pursuing the
elements of **learning style**, the **stages of learning** for adult learners,
and the **conceptions teachers and learners have of learning**. In
particular it was decided to consider further the nature of the
interaction between students and teachers - and not focus simply on how
supervisors teach.

Two areas of work were found in the literature: one with its roots in a
broader tradition of adult education, literacy and the importance of
education as a political tool; the other is derived from approaches to
the understanding the process of adults' learning in higher education.

The first of these is considered in Section 5.2, which looks at the
ways in which the educational process is conceptualised, and the
importance of the distinction between the teacher-centred (or
discipline-centered) and learner-centred models.

The political significance of control over the education process is
considered, and related specifically to the dominance and persistence
of the social casework supervision model. These educational issues are
related briefly to the ways in which professions establish power over
their clients.

Section 5.3 looks, in some detail, at relevant research in three countries - England, Sweden and the United States - in relation to understanding the learning processes in higher education. Particular attention is given to work focussed upon the implications of matching and mis-matching of teaching and learning styles, the relationship of the learning process to the outcome of learning, and to the learner's conception of learning.

In the present work we extend this focus to include the impact of the teacher's conception of learning on the patterns of interaction seen in the supervisory relationship. The section also looks at work on developmental stages for adult learners, and attempts to synthesise work on the content and context of learning.

More recent work in those countries, as well as in Holland and Australia, which had not been published at this stage of the study, is considered in relation to the findings of the present research in Chapter Eight.

It should be emphasised that the literature reviewed has been carefully selected for our purposes (ie its contribution to a study of professional education). Thus it does not attempt to present a comprehensive review of research in cognitive psychology relating to cognitive or learning styles - although much of that literature was searched and evaluated for its direct relevance here.

Thus, for example, the studies of Bruner on concept acquisition (1960); of Witkin (1977) on field-dependence/independence; Parlett (1977 on syllabus-bound and syllabus-free students: and Hudson (1966) on

convergers and divergers are not detailed here. Dahlgren and Marton (1978) reflect on this body of work:

> "Whether these various dichotomies refer to different phenomena or to different aspects of the same phenomenon is an open question. We favour the second alternative. All the dichotomies seem to relate more or less directly to two different conceptions of learning, namely learning as a transmission of unrelated 'bits of knowledge' on the one hand, and learning as a change in one's conception of some aspect of reality on the other."

Equally, we should note Saljo's more recent caution about adult learning research (1987):

> "Looking today across the various branches of research that deal with such essential human phenomena as thinking and learning, the uninitiated but inquisitive novice is bound to experience considerable confusion. A process of continuous proliferation of subcommunities of researchers with their own paradigms of thought and accompanying vocabularies characterises the development over past decades... (and we) can find that their glitter is fading when tested against the multi-faceted and complex reality of real-life cognitive activity."

It is with this comment in mind, and in the light of the value of such contributions to explicating our own findings, that we select work to be reviewed in the following sections. In doing so, we try to use the term "style" to mean a general cognitive approach, and the term "strategy" to describe the approach to specific task(s).

Section 5.2 A Review of Relevant Literature on Adult Learning -

(i) Some General Characteristics of Adults as Learners

We have earlier seen the ways in which social work educators have traditionally conceived of the teaching and learning processes of supervision, and we have described in the predominant model the emphasis given to the conceptions and terminology which have leaked from social casework practice into the teaching and learning situation.

We have also shown the limitations of the model in adequately explaining transactions and interactions in supervision, because of a focus on individual-pathological models in 'diagnosing' problems in learning, and in 'prescribing' treatment-type interventions by the supervisor or tutor. We have also seen that the practice and supervision models are explicitly hierarchical, and therefore it is problematic to use such a model to value the learning and previous experience of the student, and his contribution to the learning process - especially given the kinds of complex learning in which social work students should be engaged.

If the traditional model of teaching and learning in social work education values teaching, and what is taught, then this may in itself largely prevent the kinds of learning processes and outcomes which we would consider as desirable in social work. Carl Rogers (1961) stresses the importance of therapeutic relationships which are client-centred, and he goes on to consider learner-centred education:

> "It seems to me that anything that can be taught to another is relatively inconsequential, and has little or no significant influence on behaviour... the only learning which significantly influences behaviour is self-discovered, self-appropriated learning... (and) such self-discovery learning, truth that has been personally appropriated and assimilated in experience, can not be directly communicated to another..."

Eight years later, Rogers (1969) draws some conclusions from the speculations above, which he reports as dating originally from his writings in 1952:

> "Learning is facilitated when the student participates responsibly in the learning process. When he chooses his own direction, helps to discover his own learning resources, formulates his own problems, decides his own course of action, lives with the consequences of these choices, then significant learning is maximised."

If such learner-centred models seem to contradict the traditional approaches to supervision, then we have to account for the predominance and persistence of the latter in other terms. In particular, we must try to understand why social caseworkers and some in other professions see in the social casework supervision process a model which represents a level of refinement which others should follow. In the same year that Rogers was setting out the characteristics of student-centred learning, Austin (1952) began the first paper in a collection of papers on supervision with the following:

> "Supervision, as it has been developed in social work, is commanding respect in other professions as well as in social work education and training. Because in supervision the basic laws of learning have been applied in new and meaningful combinations, it is making a distinctive contribution to education methods. It has synthesised knowledge about intellectual processes from the educational field with knowledge about the emotional and social components in learning, derived from both psycho-analytic psychology and social work practice."

Here we see Austin describing "basic laws of learning" as though they are immutable, and apply to **all** students and **all** teachers, at **all** times. Their value, and this is part of their persistence in social work education, is that they address the affective and behavioural components of learning-for-action, as well as the cognitive components of learning. The social casework model of supervision is attempting to contribute to the same processes (the students' learning) as the models of student-centred learning espoused by Rogers but from a very different perspective - that of the teacher. Clearly, if we are to

account for significant learning, we do need models which synthesise "knowledge of the intellectual process... with knowledge about the emotional and social components in learning" but we have argued above that the synthesis in this classical model is a synthesis of educational and practice wisdom which brings together leaked-concepts and what, today, are seen as very dated and traditional understandings of educational process and practice.

But there are other factors which contribute to the persistence of this model beyond its time and place of origin - and these include the political and power dimensions of the model. Thus we can argue that besides the lack of challenge to the model in the literature, it persists because it is a politically powerful tool - because it values the experience and knowledge of the teacher above that of the learner. Such teacher-centred models are attractive and seductive to those who are relatively inexperienced as teachers, and who teach part-time, and infrequently (ie most social work supervisors) because they appear to bring order and control to what might otherwise be an unknown activity. We have seen earlier that in such teacher-centred models tutors are placed in similar hierarchical relation to supervisors as the latter are to their students.

Smith (1977) discusses these kinds of political issues in a review of ´alternative´ challenges to educational theory in largely unpublished or ´grey´ literature. He describes Paton´s challenge to Peters´ view of education as initiation into worthwhile activities. These counter-culture perspectives of the 1960s provide a radical challenge to the essentially controlling and conservative functions of education in society. This is re-interpreted in the third world recognitions of the importance of literacy and the education of adults if oppression is

to be resisted. Thus, Illich's notions of deschooling (1970) and Friere's radical prescription of liberation theology (1972) can be seen as general statements of the kinds of issues we can see reflected in a professional education which devalues the role that learners have to play in their own significant learning. Freire says (1972):

> "Liberating education consists in acts of cognition, not transferrals of information."

> "A careful analysis of the teacher-student relationship at any level... reveals its fundamentally narrative character. This relationship involves a narrating subject (the teacher) and patient, listening objects (the students)... Narration... turns them into 'containers', into 'receptacles' to be 'filled' by the teacher."

We find this view echoed in the literature on professionalisation which challenges the power relationships between professionals and their clients not only in their direct service relationship, but also in the ways that professionals control the definition of problems, and access to the professional classes to deal with problems they define (Illich, 1977):

> "Educators, for instance, now tell society what must be learned, and are in a position to write off as valueless what has been learned outside of school... Today, doctors and social workers - as formerly only priests and jurists - gain legal power to create the need that, by law, they alone will be allowed to satisfy...

> Professionals assert secret knowledge about human nature, knowledge which only they have the right to dispense. They claim a monopoly over the definition and the remedies needed."

It is in the light of such an analysis of professional power that we can view the moves over the last forty or fifty years to professionalise social work. In parallel, the resistance of supervisors and tutors to any challenge to their power and authority in the learning process of intending social workers (which is maintained by the existing and persisting dominant paradigm of casework supervision) is made more explicable. As Humpty Dumpty says: "The question is, which is to be master, that's all" (Carroll, 1877).

We saw in the earliest indicative account of supervision, in Chapter Two, control over the student's learning was an important source of the continuing problems, and that this finding was echoed in the single case study of an entire placement. We shall ensure, in later stages of this present study, that we look critically at the issues of power and control over the student's learning in supervision.

What Knowles (1978) has to say about adult learning is largely congruent with Illich and Friere in emphasising the importance of andragogical models of learning for adults, which give responsibility to the students for their own learning. Knowles (1972) also addressed these issues more specifically in relation to social work education when he addressed the Annual Conference of the Council on Social Work Eduation (broadly the American equivalent of CCETSW) in New York:

> "We have finally really begun to absorb into our culture the ancient insight that the heart of education is learning, not teaching, and so our focus has started to shift from what the teacher does to what happens to the learners."

We saw in the questionnaire exercise that those who were more experienced (the student unit supervisors) sometimes had conceptions of the adult learning process which aspired (implicitly and explicitly), to be andragogical models, but in practice they had difficulty coping with students who for a variety of reasons were unwilling or unable to learn in the way that was expected of them. Those supervisors seemed to assume that starting from the experience of the learner would inevitably allow students to make such a contribution. The questionnaire findings and the single case study show that this is an untenable assumption, since some students at least did not see this as what they were there for.

If we are to try to build conceptions and frameworks which arise from

the synthesis of newer educational theory and current social work
practice, as well as the political and institutional contexts of the
1980s rather than the 1940s and 1950s, then we need to consider more
recent insights of the research into adult learning, and see whether
they illumine the data which we have collected on teaching and learning
processes which we now see in supervision. This body of research
findings is focussed on how students approach learning, and the
relation of their approach to learning to the outcomes of learning.

It is therefore helpful to see Knowles work as primarily a contribution
to presage factors (Biggs, 1978, and 1985), and as pre-cursors of the
teaching-learning situation. In supervision this means setting a
climate/learning milieu for the placement, negotiating a contract, and
so on. As part of the context of learning they can pre-dispose the
possibility of active learning by the student, but they do not
necessarily bring it about. Six of the seven principles which Knowles
espouses are not directly related to teaching and learning processes.

To understand the relationship between teaching and learning, and the
influence of the context, we must look closely at the learner's
perceptions of the learning task in a particular context, and his
conceptions of the learning task he faces. For that, we turn to a
different tradition— of research into student learning in higher
education.

In turning to consider the research undertaken in Sweden, Britain and
the United States, we describe the work which had been published at
this point in the study, together with how it contributed to the
further interpretation of data already presented, and to deciding the
focus of the next stage of the study. This approach is used to enable
the developing conceptions of the teaching and learning processes to be
reported as they occurred, without reinterpreting them in the light of
subsequently-generated insights.

What is striking, in reading this literature as a social work educator,
is the way in which the nature and focus of such studies have changed
in the last ten years or so. In social work education we are used to
thinking about the need to individualise learning, and to look at the
individual student's learning - even if, as we have seen, that focus is
usually expressed in terms derived from psycho-social casework.

However, research into learning in higher education seems only recently
to have given substantial attention to the learner's own experience of
learning, and to his learning in natural settings. Thus, inter alia,
more attention has been given to the impact of the context of learning
(including teaching and assessment) on the quality of learning. This is
especially important for our purposes since a good deal of teaching and
assessment in higher education seems to induce passive, reproductive
types of learning even when the aims of the course (and the intentions
of the teachers) are expressly different.

There may also be considerable differences between what teachers say

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they intend, and the learning which the student actually does. We have
already some evidence of this in the present study in the questionnaire
completed by supervisors, where a number of them described problems
with some students who learnt in particular ways - even when their
expressed intentions were to teach students in ways which built on the
students own previous learning. A much earlier study (Entwistle, Percy
and Nesbitt, 1971) similarly reported "a lack of relationship between
intention and performance" for teachers. Thus we must ensure further
data collection addresses the need to see whether those who are
interviewed or who complete questionnaires are observably doing the
things which they claim.

Of course, much of the early learning research concentrated on
reproductive, memory-based learning (eg memorising nonsense symbols,
Ebbinghaus, 1885) rather than on significant, meaningful learning
(Rogers, 1969) or learning as a matter of constructing meaning
(Ausubel, 1968). More recent work has used rather different approaches,
but this is not just a shift of paradigm of methodology, but of
perspective (Entwistle, 1984):

> "The new research paradigm switches perspective and so
> provides insights for the teacher which are not only firmly
> rooted in real-life situations in higher education, but are
> also more illuminating. They present a description of student
> learning from an unusual perspective - that of the student."

The first stage of the present study echoes this shift by beginning
with a focus on supervisors (in the questionnaire and the single case
study) and moving towards increasing concern with the student's
learning, and its relation to the supervisor's teaching. This shift
allows the interpretation of the data as recognisable realities which
can have meaning to the students themselves, their teachers, and others
in social work education. This points towards the use of interviews in
subsequent data collection, to allow discussion and interpretation of

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the material with the supervisor and student at the time it is collected, and immediately afterwards.

The shift of paradigm in adult learning research also points us towards questions of rigour and validity of the data. We deal with these questions in Chapter Eight but for the present it is sufficient to say that we are concerned with validity that derives from the meanings attached to learning by those involved being accurately reported, and the interpretations of the findings being communicated to, and developed with, those from whom the data are collected.

In reviewing the research literature, we shall focus attention on various focal points which are of particular interest to us - the content of learning, the process of learning, the outcomes of learning, and the context in which the learning takes place. We begin by looking at the work undertaken in Goteborg (Gothenburg), Sweden, by Marton and his colleagues.

5.3.1 The Goteborg Studies

For more than ten years, the researchers at the University of Goteborg have been reporting their studies of approaches to, and outcomes of, learning for adult students. In the experimental studies (eg Marton and Saljo, 1976a, 1976b; Saljo, 1975) attention was given to how students had approached reading and answering questions on a set text. Marton and Saljo stress that they are interested in "differences in what is learned rather than differences in how much is learned". Wilson (1981) summarises their method succinctly, and we shall use his overview:

> "The materials used have included edited chapters of books, newspaper articles and home produced papers of similar complexity. Average length is 3000 words. Samples are small, consisting of around 30 first year students, mostly girls, who are paid volunteers. No background information, personality or intellectual correlates are reported. The procedure adopted is for the student to study the set text, without time limit, in a one-to-one tape-recorded situation with the experimenter. She then answers oral and/or written questions about her understanding of the text, and gives an introspective account of how she read it... Long term recall is tested between five and seven weeks later."

The students´ answers were assigned to categories by the experimenter and a colleague independently. Two main groups of responses, which seemed to be qualitatively different, were identified. In one group, there was concern to **remember the content** of the text. In the other, the was more concern with **principles and meaning**. These two levels of approach are qualitatively different - they are not simply ends of a continuum.

These two levels of approach are described by Marton et al as the **surface** approach, and the **deep** approach, respectively. In the former, there is what they describe as a focus on the **sign**, and the latter on the **signifier** (ie what is signified or meant by the text).

It is interesting that in an early paper (Marton, 1975) a distinction

is made between those who are active in their learning, and those who are passive and experience learning as something that happens to them:

"For some, learning is the grasping of what the discourse is about, ie. learning is learning **through** the discourse, and for others, learning is learning the discourse (ie. memorising it). The former appear to experience an active role (ie. learning is something they do); the latter appear not to do this (ie. learning is something that happens to them)."

This difference is a another way of interpreting our earlier findings in the questionnaire exercise that some supervisors described important learning experiences which required the involvement of a significant other person to help them make sense of the experience. It may be that this group are those who expect to learn passively. Equally, the group who learnt through reflection on their own may well have expectations that they should be active in their learning. This question will be explored further in the next stage of data collection.

If students characteristically expect to be either active, or passive, in their approach to their learning, there will be implications for the nature and pattern of the teaching and learning relationship which supervisor and student need to establish in order to promote learning. Thus, those supervisors in the questionnaire exercise who said they preferred to teach in an andragogical way, which valued the experiences of the learner, and which gave him responsibility for his own learning had difficulty in working with those who "required direct teaching", "spoon-feeding", or expected to be very dependent in the learning relationship.

In contrast, those who preferred to teach in a more traditional, hierarchical way had difficulties with those students who expected to learn in an active way, taking responsibility for their own learning. These issues were also graphically demonstrated in the illustrative

material in Chapter Two, when for example, in the role play of supervision there were considerable differences between the supervisors involved in how they would have dealt with the particular student, based on expectations about the nature of her involvement in the activity.

It may be, of course, that the two approaches described here are not differences of **type**, but may represent different **stages of development** for an individual learner as he moves to more complex conceptions of the activity of learning.

The implications of these interpretations are that we must pay attention in the rest of this study to the expectations of teachers and learners about their approaches to learning and the degree of responsibility each believes he has for the student's learning. This is particularly critical in social work where the language and concepts used to describe learning in supervision are very teacher-centred, and where supervision is an individualised, one-to-one learning situation.

The Goteborg work offers us much more than the simple distinction between "deep" and "surface" learners, useful though that distinction is. It goes on to show that the approach to learning is closely related to the outcome of learning. Thus a **decision to adopt a surface approach rules out the possibility of a deep outcome** (ie. understanding the meaning) simply **because it was not being looked for, and was not seen as the purpose of the learning**. Marton and Saljo (1976) make this clear:

> "...the between group differences point out the clear modifiability and context-dependence of a person's conception of learning. In other words, learning seems to be defined differently depending on, for instance, anticipated task demands."

"Students adopt an approach determined by their expectations of what is required of them."

Marton and Saljo also demonstrated that whilst none of those who had adopted a surface approach understood the author's argument, none of those who used a deep approach failed to achieve a good understanding of the argument.

This is a very significant finding for all learning in higher education, including professional and vocational training, because we expect students not simply to be able to reproduce ideas, but to be able to reflect on their usefulness, and make use of them in various practice situations. Thus, we would require students to have the capacity to use deep approaches which not only lead to understanding the intention and meaning of the author's arguments, but also to internalise them, and relate them to their own previous and subsequent learning.

If, however, deep outcomes are not intended (or, more importantly, students perceive them to be unintended because the assessment system and other contextual factors like the climate of the department emphasise surface learning outcomes) then it is less likely that deep approaches will be used. We shall return to this finding many times when we look at the patterns of interaction in case illustrations of supervision.

In the single case study, we saw the supervisor was concerned about the performance of the student, and was drawn into a good deal of directive teaching. The student, who perhaps responded to his teacher's cues, was thus drawn into more passive approaches to learning - learning which is derived from the knowledge and expertise of the teacher. The vital point which Marton makes, about the student not looking for "deep"

outcomes in his learning, because they were not asked for, can apparently be induced by teacher-centred, and directive, kinds of teaching.

These findings from the Goteborg work are made more accessible for present purposes in a study which looks at the importance of the learner's conception of the task in determining both his approach to learning and the outcome of learning (Saljo, 1975). That study looks at two questions which are of considerable interest to us: first, how to go about identifying and describing qualitative differences in learning ie what is actually learned, rather than a quantifiable measure of learning, like examination results. The second question is how these qualitative aspects of the learning process and outcomes of learning are affected by the nature of the questions which are used to evaluate that learning.

Saljo asked forty first year female students at University to read chapters from a textbook on education, and to prepare themselves to answer some questions afterwards. After each of the first two chapters, half of the students were asked one kind of question (the SL group), and half (the DL group) another kind. The first kind required close attention to the detail of the text, to induce reproductive, surface-level (SL) processing. The second kind of question was intended to induce deep-level (DL) processing by focussing upon the understanding of assumptions and ideas in the text which were the basis of the strengths and limitations of the author's arguments.

After reading the third chapter, both groups were tested with questions of both kinds, and were required to recall the text and summarise it in a few sentences. Saljo grouped the answers and the recall into

categories which reflected different kinds of comprehension. The most superficial level involves simply mentioning a fact discussed by the author. At the next level were descriptions of what was said in the text. The third level was relating the content of the text to its conclusions.

Saljo reports that his subjects tried to adapt their learning towards the requirements of the questions - the SL group were all induced to look closely at the text itself in the following chapter. The DL group used two main strategies - one sub-group adopted the intended deep level strategy; the other sub-group "technified" the task into simply producing the required skeleton summary without attempting any further analysis. Thus Saljo demonstrates a close connection between the approach to learning and the outcome of that learning, and he shows the direct influence of the methods of assessment on the approach to learning.

Clearly, the implication of this work for looking at teaching and learning in supervision, as well as how the learning is assessed, is to suggest that we should give considerable attention to these factors whilst looking at the contextual influences on the teaching and learning relationship. We should note Entwistle's (1977) comment:

> "...over half the Swedish first-year students were classified as surface-processors, and a similar proportion has been reported in England."

Other work in Goteborg (Svensson, 1976) has demonstrated essentially similar results from looking at everyday studying, as well as in the kinds of experiments described by Saljo - except, of course that differences between individuals in how they approached their learning reflected their conceptions of the everyday task without the experimental manipulation and consequent induction of approach.

An interesting finding from Svensson's work was the extent to which particular strategies related to academic success. Whilst we would expect his finding that those who chose strategies which closely matched the examination requirements generally do better than where there is a mis-match, Svensson also showed that the amount of work undertaken by students was related to the nature of the approach - ie. deep-level processors are better able to sustain high levels of study time throughout the term, whereas surface-level processing students showed a fall-off in the amount they worked as the term wore on.

The Goteborg work relates to other work in the field. Those students who are able to accurately identify the nature of the assessment task (eg cue-seekers - Miller and Parlett, 1974) may be better able than other students to adjust their learning strategies to fit those assessment requirements, because they are clearer about what is expected of them.

The possibility of making such changes in approach assumes that the learner has a choice of learning strategies. A pre-condition of such choice is to recognise that there are various ways of approaching learning tasks in the first place. Such recognition also relies on the ability of the learner to discriminate accurately different kinds of learning requirements, and this in turn is dependent upon the ability to conceive of **learning** as including very different kinds of activity.

In the questionnaire exercise, we asked supervisors to describe what for them were significant learning experiences, and we have described variations in the kinds of experiences reported. However, it is

possible to classify them on a rather different basis - one which relates to the learner's conceptions of learning itself. If learners have very limited conceptions of what is involved in "learning", then they are likely to see quite diverse learning tasks as requiring the same kind of learning, whilst others who have a range of conceptions of "learning" are more likely to be able to discriminate the requirements of a particular task accurately, and respond appropriately in their learning approach.

Marton reports that it is easier to induce surface learning amongst those students who can employ deep strategies than vice versa. This finding can be accounted for not only by concepts such as versatility in learning (and we shall return to this when considering the work of Pask, and of Entwistle later), but also by drawing attention to the levels and stages through which learners pass, by giving attention to the **approaches** to learning which they display.

Saljo has something further to offer in this connection, since he has reported work on levels of the learner's conception of learning (Saljo, 1979). By describing and categorising the replies he received to the question "What do you mean by learning?", he identifies five different conceptions:

> **"Conception 1: Learning as the increase in knowledge...** The main feature of this first category is its vagueness in the sense that what is given in the answers is merely a set of synonyms for the word learning...
>
> **"Conception 2: Learning as memorising...** the meaning of learning is to transfer units of information or pieces of knowledge, or what is commonly called facts, from an external source, such as a teacher or book, into the head...
>
> **"Conception 3: Learning as the acquisition of facts, procedures etc which can be retained and/or used in practice...**
>
> **"Conception 4: Learning as the abstraction of meaning...** compared to the two previous categories... the nature of what

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is learned is changed... learning is no longer conceived of as an activity of reproduction, but instead as a process of abstracting meaning from what you read and hear... The learning material is not seen as containing ready made knowledge to be memorised, but rather it provides the raw material or starting point for learning...

"**Conception 5: Learning as an interpretive process aimed at the understanding of reality...** very similar to the previous one... (but) a further distinction is that some subjects emphasise that an essential element of learning is that what you learn should help you interpret the reality in which you live..."

The differences here between earlier conceptions and the later ones raise issues which interest us. Conceptions Two and Three are essentially surface approaches, which see learning as external, and something which happens to the student, whilst the later conceptions (Four and Five) are deep approaches which involve the learner actively in the process of learning - which is a search for meaning. These conceptions are hierarchically related (1 to 5) and some of the Goteborg work shows students moving to more sophisticated conceptions in subsequent exercises (eg Marton and Saljo, 1976b). We shall follow up the development of students' conceptions of learning in the work of Perry (1970) later.

Thus, this body of work brings together a number of key questions for our purposes, and points us to an exploration of these aspects of learning in supervision in social work placements. These aspects include:

differences in approaches to learning (surface and deep processing)

the relationship of approaches to learning and outcomes of learning

the impact of the assessment of learning on the processes and approaches to learning

the importance of the learner's conceptions of learning in determining his ability to discriminate between various kinds of learning task, and his ability to use different approaches appropriate to the kinds of learning outcome required of him.

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The Goteborg work clearly has much that is of value in looking at learning that demonstrably occurs, and the inter-play between the learning processes and the context of learning (by which we include teaching and assessment as well as the institutional contexts within which the learning takes place). But we should remember that none of it is drawn from professional or vocational training programmes with a practice component. However, the conceptions of learning identified by Saljo certainly help us to identify the range of learning requirements imposed on students in the course of social work training. Indeed, in most courses, there is ample evidence of all of these kinds of learning being implicitly or explicitly required during the same time period. If we are to make best use of the time available on social work courses we shall require students who are already versatile in their approaches to learning.

One further marker needs to be put up in relation to the present study: the impact on teaching and learning if those responsible for teaching and assessing (and validating?) have conceptions of learning which do not include conceptions four and five in Saljo's categorisation - in such cases we might expect to find students whose conceptions of learning include such components running into learning and assessment problems. We shall see that we do indeed identify supervisory problems of precisely this kind in the supervision data collected subsequently.

5.3.2 Some British Research - The work of Pask, and of Laurillard

We have seen that the Goteborg studies look at natural or naturalistic learning based on the ways in which students approach complex reading tasks. Over the same period, work was going on in Britain which had a rather different base, and which had its roots in a different tradition. Pask has looked at ways of externalising the internal processes, or learning strategies, students use in complex learning tasks. Some of Pask's early work was in the area of man-machine interaction, and it is in journals of that field that some of the work is reported. In the educational literature there are a number of comments about the difficulty of understanding Pask's work, and papers by others to describe and explain it (eg Entwistle, 1977, and 1978).

The difficulty seems to come about for two main reasons - one, he uses terminology which has everyday usage and meaning (eg. "conversation") in quite special, and rather unusual, ways. The other reason is connected to the artificiality of the complex tasks he devised. Whilst these exercises are free from contamination by previous knowledge, they fit uneasily into a growing tradition of research into learning in its natural environment. Whilst their artificiality equips them well for research within a scientific paradigm, Pask's exercises are less accessible than even experimental presentations of everyday tasks like reading a set text. His exercises are also difficult to score, and therefore difficult to replicate (Laurillard, 1978).

Pask and Scott (1972, 1973) sought to find ways of "mapping" a student's learning strategies as he approached a learning task, by using a computer program which could record the patterns by which the student "interrogated" the available knowledge structure. Further work,

involving the learning of fictitious taxonomies reinforced the findings of two types of learning strategy, which Pask calls **holist** and **serialist.**

In these latter exercises some students seemed to focus on a small section of the overall taxonomy, and learn (ie. memorise) the information discovered in that area. They seemed relatively uninterested in the relationship of one sub-species with other sub-species. They seemed most concerned with "local" learning. These subjects are exhibiting the **serialist** strategy.

Another group of the students seemed more interested in an overall understanding of the structure of the taxonomy, and of the hierarchical relationships between sub-species, combined usually with only a fair knowledge of individual sub-species. This "global" approach to learning is described by Pask as a **holist** strategy. We shall explore in detail (in the next Chapter) one of Pask's experimental activities, the Clobbits exercise, because it was administered to supervisors and students in the next phase of the present study. A rationale for its use, despite its limitations, is given there.

Pask and Scott have demonstrated these strategies through a range of complex learning tasks, and have shown that the approaches are consistent for individual subjects across a number of tasks. This stability of approach is the subject of some discussion in the literature, but there is general acceptance of their findings that **when teaching is offered in ways which matched a preferred learning strategy, performance is much enhanced;** and **when teaching and learning approaches are mis-matched, there are significantly less good results** (Pask and Scott, 1972).

Pask made use of "teachback", where students are asked to teach the topic back to the instructor; and he says that when complete mastery of the subject is achieved, then the student can be considered versatile in his learning. There are aspects of versatility which remain unanswered in Pask's work which are of interest to us in social work education.

In particular, we may note that at any one point in a social work course, or in the course as a whole, we may expect our students to be able to demonstrate serialist stategies in relation to some parts of the curriculum (eg. legislative provision) whilst at the same time expecting them to demonstrate holist strategies (eg. to integrate a complex set of inter-disicplinary material with their practice experience in a single large case-study).

Thus we would need to pay attention in selection, in curriculum design and in our teaching to the kinds of learning strategies we expect our students to use, in order that they might accomplish the required learning tasks. As we saw above, there are levels of complexity in learners' conceptions of the learning task which impinge here. Pask's terminology, of **comprehension learning**, and **operation learning** reflects precisely these differences, and their relation to holist and serialist strategies:

> "...holist or serialist strategies... are thus insufficiently refined to account for learning in general. Holism and serialism appear to be extreme manifestations of more fundamental processes".

The extent to which students can be taught (or induced?) to change their characteristic approach to learning was considered by Pask (1976a, and 1976b) when he showed that learners can be taught to use particular strategies over short periods, but as Wilson (1981) reports,

it seems easier to induce serialist strategies for holists than vice-versa. These findings point towards the notion that operation and comprehension learning might be stage-related, rather than types, because it may be easier to revert (or regress) to an earlier strategy, than to induce the growth necessary to demonstrate a later one. These findings are not dissimilar to the Goteborg findings that it is easier to induce surface learning in those who have demonstrated deep approaches than vice versa. We shall return to this question when we look at the work of Perry in the next section.

Holist and serialist strategies are seen by Pask to be associated with the levels of uncertainty and ambiguity which the learner can tolerate during the learning task. Thus holist strategies are associated with being able to take risks and tolerate uncertainty, and to maintain a number of possible hypotheses during the interrogation of the materials. For those adopting serialist strategies, a narrower focus and single hypothesis is chosen. Thus certainty and security for the learner, without fear of failure are more likely to be conducive to the development of holist strategies. Supervisors who wish to encourage holist approaches will need to create a climate which is perceived as supportive to the taking of risks by students. We find evidence to support this in the case examples we report in Chapter Seven.

Equally, the context of learning, or at least the learner's conception of it, will constrain his learning. Laurillard's doctoral thesis (1978) reports a study of the relationship between some of the cognitive and contextual factors in student learning. She replicates some earlier research, including that of Pask, and of Marton, and tries to relate those methods to "real learning situations ie learning tasks that students engage in as part of their academic coursework." She considers

case-examples of individual students and demonstrates:

> "... that a student's approach to a task is partly dependent on his perception of that task, and on his perceptions of the circumstances in which he is doing it".

She goes on to describe the cognitive aspects of student learning as "the constituent activities of learning that have already been identified by some researchers", and contextual factors as "those aspects of teaching, assessment, and subject matter that are important for an understanding of student learning." These definitions are helpful to us later in the description and interpretation of data.

Her work demonstrates that deep and surface processing, and operation and comprehension learning, also describe characteristics of students' learning in their normal coursework, but they are not able to consistently discriminate between students - because they are seen to operate in different ways on different occasions. She endeavours to provide a model which summarises and accounts for her findings, and points to the importance of the learner's perception of the task as a factor in determining his approach to learning, ie that learning styles are both content- and context-dependent.

Whilst she is searching for a (w)holistic model of student learning she recognises, as we must here, that in an individual study, one must of necessity be selective in focus. She gives an example of what she means:

> "... Pask has identified two different styles of learning, comprehension and operation, but in order to make use of this, it is important to establish the conditions under which they occur, and the major factors that affect them. It is not sufficient to know that they exist - we must also discover under what circumstances they exist."

The value of her model for present purposes is that it suggests a way of integrating the work of Marton with that of Pask. Whilst there are those who assume that they may be describing much the same phenomena in

student approaches to learning, Laurillard helpfully distinguishes them:

> "...as describing different levels of the process of learning... A simple measure of of the amount of operation or comprehension learning a student uses is not a measure of his level of understanding. The two together are a necessary but not sufficent condition for understanding. Thus deep level processing is characterised by some form of productive thinking and probably relates to what Pask defines as ´versatility´."

Throughout the discussions of this research in Britain and in Sweden, we have raised questions about whether the differences described are differences of **type** or of **stage,** or both. We turn now to consider some American work which illumines questions about the developmental stages through which adult learners pass.

5.3.3 Some American Research - the Work of Perry

Perry´s work (1970) derives from interviews carried out at Harvard and Radcliffe, over three periods from 1954. It is based on unstructured interviews of about an hour in length, in each of the student´s four years at college. Perry´s methodology involves the reading of transcripts of the interviews, and looking for patterns and themes to emerge from them. His work is admirably composed of substantial amounts of this qualitative data, together with the developmental scheme he has adduced concerning the moral and intellectual development of the student. It is reassuring, to those of us who follow, that the initial study relates to only seventeen students who entered college in 1954, and that validation of the findings is based on a follow-up in 1962 and 1973 of a total of seventy students. Thus in the next stage of collecting data we need to ensure the quality and depth of our material, and its validity derived from the methods we use to interpret the findings, rather than simply being concerned with large samples.

Perry provides a detailed account of nine stages through which students pass, and provides examples which show the ebb and flow of movement in a scheme which allows regression to earlier stages, and for some, sidings from the main route. There has been debate about whether the nine stages are "normal" development for all students, and we can add to that debate by asking about the extent to which the model is context-specific, in Harvard, or in the United States - but to do so would not entirely challenge the usefulness of the ideas which lie behind the scheme. For our purposes, it is helpful to focus attention on some particular aspects of the work - students' conceptions of knowledge, their attitudes to authority, and to their ideas about their own role in their learning. These link closely, of course, to the work of Saljo that we have reported above, on levels of conceptions of learning.

Perry's scheme begins with a polarised view of Right and Wrong, at Position One, where it is believed that Right Answers exist, and that they are known to Experts who are in Authority. An example of such an educational position might be a spelling test. In Position Two, the student begins to recognise diversity of views, which he initially accounts for by poorly-qualified authorities who don't know the Answers, or as exercises "so that we can learn to find The Answer for ourselves". Position Three is where the student accepts that diversity exists, and sees uncertainty as legitimate, but only because Authority has not found the Answer yet. These first three positions are connected in the sense that belief in Right Answers, known to Authority characterises them, even in the face of increasing diversity.

The next three stages are about the student recognising that all knowledge and values are relativistic, and context-dependent. Position

Four sees the student either perceiving legitimate uncertainty as widespread - "everyone has their own opinion" - or he discovers qualitative, contextual reasoning, but only as a special case of "what They want". Perry calls position Five a stage of revolution where all knowledge is recognised as relativistic, and the interpretation of what is "known" is dependent upon context, and the frameworks used. Position Six is where the student realises that he needs to make some form of personal, individual commitment (as distinct from an unquestioning belief in Certainty).

The final three stages (Positions Seven, Eight and Nine) reflect the student seeing the need to make personal commitments to particular positions, to make them and take responsibility for them, and to see his mature identity reflected in the positions he has adopted.

Perry reported in 1977 that he could find fewer instances of students entering college below Position Five than in 1954, and Laurillard (1978) equally found that students in her sample "expressed implicit theories of knowledge which were relativistic", but she did find evidence of changes in the ways the students related to their teachers, by taking active responsibility for their own learning. She showed that although their general position might be at Five or beyond, in aspects of their development, some beginning students will not yet have reached that stage, especially in relation to taking responsibility for their own learning.

It is clear from Perry's scheme that students' conceptions of learning tasks will be influenced by their position on the scale. Those with conceptions of single, right answers known to the authority-teacher are more likely to use serialist-surface strategies, and to be relatively

passive in their learning styles. Those who see knowledge as contextual and relativistic can thus abandon the view of teachers as experts, and can take increasingly active responsibility for their own learning using deep-holist approaches.

The work of Pask and the Goteborg group strongly associates approaches to learning with stages of development in conceptions of the learning process. We turn now briefly to discuss the findings of these three strands of work (Swedish, British, and American), and to consider their implications for the rest of the study.

5.4 Implications of the Adult Learning Research for the Present Study

This chapter has looked at adult learning, especially in higher education. It is clear that some of this research is not to be seen simply as the study of learners in the 'natural' processes of learning during their higher education. Nevertheless, the importance of students' conceptions of the learning task, and their perceptions of the context of learning clearly affect their learning styles and the strategies which they use in facing any learning task.

Pask and Marton have endeavoured to deal with the problem of the large numbers of variables in learning by trying to hold some of the variables constant (ie. the task) so that they can externalise the learning process and the outcomes of learning. They have done this by identifying specific tasks which they ask the learner to engage with and then classifying the responses to those tasks. However, Laurillard has shown that some of these results are not easily replicated in rather different contexts of learning, and she found that students did not have single, characteristic approaches to learning which were

invariable. She found that students discriminated between different learning tasks, and used different approaches to their learning in response.

More recent research, reported after this stage of the study had been reached is considered in relation to the findings of this study, in Chapter Eight.

Throughout the research which we have reported in this chapter, we have indicated the need to consider carefully whether differences in approach to learning are indicative of differences in characteristic style, differences of strategy related to specific tasks, and/or differences of stage of development for learners.

What began as a study of the literature to explore the impact of matching and mis-matching of teaching and learning styles in supervision has shown that such questions can only be considered alongside the conceptions teachers and learners have of the learning process. Thus, in trying to interpret data in the following sections, we should look closely at the **inter-relationships of style and stage** in explaining the patterns of transaction between supervisors and students.

The data reported so far, in the three indicative experiences, in the questionnaire exercise, and in the single case study of an entire placement, have demonstrated the need for inter-active interpretations of the experiences. In collecting further data, we need to consider how we can get at, and discuss, the learning in supervision, and the conceptions which supervisors and students have of the learning process. This points to the use of interviews, to discuss these issues,

and follow up the kinds of points raised in the single case study and the questionnaire. We shall also need to leave open the possibility of gathering related data about each placement to confirm or develop the interview material.

It was also decided to use an external measure of learning style, based on well-established exercises or techniques, to use alongside the qualitative data in the interviews and supervision. The most easily accessible material at the time of beginning this part of the study was the Clobbits exercise developed by Pask which had the additional advantage of being virtually unknown in the social work field, so there would be little effect on the results arising from previous knowledge of some subjects. It was decided to administer the exercise to supervisors and students concurrently with interviews.

The next chapter reports on the further stage of data collection based on placements drawn from a variety of courses throughout the United Kingdom.

CHAPTER 6. FURTHER DATA COLLECTION

Section 6.1 An Overview of this Chapter

The next two chapters report the further, indeed major, data collection phase of the study. This chapter provides a rationale for the focus for the data collected, and for the methods employed. It begins in Section 6.2 by describing interviews with supervisors and students about placements which had just finished, or were about to do so.

In Section 6.3 a learning styles exercise (the Clobbits exercise), which was administered concurrently with the interviews, is described and reported upon. This exercise was developed by Pask and Scott. Its use here was originally intended as a way of getting an 'independent' measure of learning style, separate from material which was collected in interviews. However, as the section reports, it became much more useful as a tool for opening up discussions about learning style, and HOW people learn. It was less useful in producing an independent indicator of learning style.

In Section 6.4 there is a discussion of feedback to participants, which developed from an informal discussion at the end of the single case-study; through comments to those interviewed as a 'reward/thank you' for taking part; to more structured feedback to participants; and finally, to the checking out of interpretations and conceptual frameworks which comprised the formative element of the study.

6.2 Interviews with Supervisors and Students - The Development of the Approach

As we have indicated in the reports of the earlier data, and in the literature reviews, we need in this main part of the data collection, opportunities to follow up and question supervisors and students about teaching and learning. It had not been possible to clarify or debate the replies to the original questionnaire exercise, nor to discuss (at the time) the taped material in the single case study.

It was also decided to directly address the question of involving students as an additional focus in the study by interviewing students and their supervisors as pairs, to see two views of the supervision process. This approach also allowed the opportunity to check out, with students directly involved, whether the teaching and learning described by supervisors (for example, like those in the replies to the questionnaires) as having taken place was indeed how they had experienced it. It also gave an opportunity to address the issue of match and mis-match of learning styles/stages which might have affected events during the placement.

A problem immediately presented itself about the amount of time and resource available, and the ways in which the focus could yield useful material despite the limitations of a single researcher. We saw earlier the representation of this problem in relation to Laurillard's research, and in Perry's study. Both, in the end, demonstrated extremely valuable results with quite small samples. It was decided therefore to try to gather data from about twelve to fifteen pairs of students and supervisors, and to produce case examples to illustrate the kinds of data found.

The usefulness of the findings of the earlier single case study derived from the quality and depth of the material. The value of the questionnaire exercise came from the range of responses to general questions about teaching and learning as they related to the supervisor's own experience. The focus in this stage was to gather material in less depth and detail than tape-recording the supervision sessions from an entire placement, but to provide the opportunity to explore further the issues raised, and to begin to interpret that material in different ways.

The single case study had been selected on the basis of being not untypical, and avoiding extreme or unusual characteristics of student, supervisor and the context in which the placement took place. Here, the range of placements covered has been decided upon by ensuring coverage, by types of CQSW courses, and by spreading the gathering of data throughout the United Kingdom. There was no explicit attempt to randomise the selection, nor to seek representative cases. The particular selection which occurred comes from a range of contacts in person and in writing with teachers and supervisors who were told, or who found out, about the proposed study. They were asked whether they or their colleagues would feel able to take part. Thus, some of the interviews were with those supervisors who had already completed questionnaires in the earlier part of the study, but others were entirely unknown. All of the students were previously unknown to the researcher.

There is a bias, therefore, towards more experienced supervisors, although two were chosen because they were supervising an assessed placement for the first time. It is possible that a large range of

supervisors have been excluded, but the response to the case illustrations which have been shown to participants and others in social work education suggests that they succeed in depicting recognisable realities, and do not seem to have overlooked whole classes of supervisors. However, if the dominant supervision model is widespread, than we should expect to find examples of its influence (and, possibly) problems it may cause, in almost any sample if it is widely drawn along certain dimensions.

The interviews were therefore carried out over a period of eighteen months throughout the United Kingdom. About half were carried out in London and the Home Counties (where a little less than half of CQSW courses are located), and smaller numbers of interviews were carried out elsewhere in England, in the Highlands of Scotland and in Northern Ireland. The selection of those to take part included ensuring coverage of placements which are part of post-graduate, non-graduate and 4-year degree courses, although there was no attempt to ensure equal (or proportionate) numbers from each kind of course. Equally, courses in higher and further education were represented; and university and polytechnic courses were covered. The gender balance of students reflected the general ratio of three female to two males, but no students from ethnic minority groups were picked up, even though 9% of intakes of that period were students from minority groups (Gardiner, 1985). One physically handicapped student is included in the sample.

A later development was to begin to take account of the CCETSW review of its qualifying training policies and foreshadow developments in the future patterns of social work education by including some interviews with Certificate of Social Service (CSS) students and supervisors from schemes where there were already practice placements during the

training. The implications of this development for the study, and for social work education is described in detail in Chapter Nine.

The pattern adopted was to interview either the supervisor or the student whilst the other person completed the learning styles exercise, then the roles were reversed. At first, there was not a planned order in the interviews, but after a few had been completed, encouragement was given to the supervisor to be interviewed first, whilst the student completed the Clobbits learning styles exercise. This was partly because the interviews with supervisors gave more of the context and background to the placement, which seemed to emerge less clearly from the interviews with students. Partly it was because (especially in those interviews where previously there had been no contact with student or supervisor) it gave an opportunity to get a sense of the style of work in the team or agency, and thus of the context in which the student was undertaking the placement.

In all of the interviews early in this part of the study, the chance to talk together as a threesome after the formal part of the interviews was over was offered. Usually this was done by using a phrase like "I should like to offer some feedback on how you completed the learning styles exercise, and to comment on any connections between it and the teaching and learning processes on the placement which had emerged in the interviews". It became obvious very rapidly that this opportunity triggered, for students and their supervisors, the making of important connections between elements of learning, and between events on the placement. Therefore, these sessions were also tape-recorded. They generated some of the most important material of all that was collected in this phase, and were a major contribution to checking the accuracy of data and interpretations.

In these interviews there was not a laid-down, pre-planned schedule but a clear and consistent pattern evolved: they began with a sketch of the main purpose of the research as "trying to focus attention on teaching and learning during the placement" and that the researcher "was more interested in the processes of HOW people taught and learned rather than looking specifically at WHAT was taught and learned". It was usually suggested to the supervisors that they began by talking about the decision to have **this** student in **this** placement, and to continue chronologically from there. To the students, it was suggested that they talked about the first meeting with this supervisor, and/or from when they knew that this was to be the location of the placement.

This approach seemed a useful device since it allowed both supervisor and student to develop their own stories of the placement from its inception. They did not always attach the same weight to events, although on most occasions they were largely agreed on the major issues, episodes and experiences during the placement. In listening to the tapes subsequently the readiness, and openess, with which the overwhelming majority talked, and the lengths to which they went in order to be helpful in describing their own experiences of the placement, is striking.

Where it was appropriate, they were prompted either implicitly (more often) or explicitly (less often) that the researcher was a qualified social worker and a specialist supervisor. This often seemed to have allowed some short cuts in descriptions or language. However, on one occasion, despite clear and explicitly repeated comments during the interview, one student was determined to treat me as an independent

researcher and without knowledge of social work. She ´explained´ in great detail just precisely what she thought she was doing. This particular interview, and a number of related issues which it raises, is discussed in some detail later when she and her supervisor appear as illustrative case examples.

6.3 A Learning Styles Exercise (administered concurrently with the interviews)

6.3.1. The Clobbits Exercise

In this section, the use of the Clobbits learning styles exercise is described and reported upon. It was administered to students and supervisors on the same occasion as their interview. Whilst there were other occasions when the exercise was used, this section reports only its first usage, concurrently with the interviews. The decision to use such an exercise had originally been taken so that some external, additional indication or measure of learning style could be developed which was independent of the hypotheses and concepts emerging from the interviews themselves. Whilst a number of such approaches could have been utilised (eg Kolb, 1976, which is widely used in management education), it was decided to use the exercise developed by Pask and Scott known as "The Clobbits Exercise" for three main reasons.

First, it had been produced by those whose work had already been considered and which had contributed to interpreting the findings in stage one. Second, it was part of a developing research literature which brings together, and extends, the work of Marton, Perry and Pask. Third, the exercise was not known in social work education, as far

as the literature and the researcher's own experience was concerned, so it could safely be used without people already having completed it. Therefore, they would be less likely to seek ways of approaching the task which would reflect what they would consider as "better" ways to present themselves, or the right way to do it.

The version used was that included in the Open University Units 22/23 of course E 303 (Holloway, 1977) which was designed to allow the possibility of self-administration. The exercise attempts to externalise internal learning processes by mapping a number of routes towards completing a single learning task - that of learning a fictitious taxonomy - by looking at pieces of information presented on separate cards. The cards are grouped into various kinds of information. The exercise maps the routes taken by the subject to complete the task. The steps taken are seen as indicative of strategies of learning.

This exercise is not only unknown, but it is somewhat alien to some social workers, not least because of the unfamiliarity of the language used. However, of greater difficulty was the lack of familiarity with taxonomies (and, for a small number, even knowing what a taxonomy is). The use of Greek letters as suffixes also confused those who were meeting them for the first time. Indeed, when the researcher first completed the exercise, it took a little time to be clear precisely what the task entailed. Since Pask apparently designed this for science students at a local College, it may have included concepts and language which were generally more familiar to them than to those in the social and behavioural sciences.

In introducing the exercise in this study, the problem of the

unfamiliar language was always stressed, and participants were told that the researcher himself had taken a while to get into the exercise. This was done to make it a more acceptable and manageable task for all. It was emphasised that the exercise was not a measure of **how well** one had learnt the material, but was an indicator of **how** one approached the learning task.

Although some of the specific findings are described below, it is worth noting here that the value of the exercise seemed to lie as much in opening up issues of learning style in the three-way discussions (at the end of the interviewing sessions) as in providing ´objective´ external measures of learning strategy or style.

Initially in the discussions, and later as statements written on the back of the response sheets, participants were asked why they had approached the task in the way that they did, since this produced more usable material than simply looking in detail at the order of card selection. Laurillard (1978) and Holloway (1977) have, in commenting on the difficulty of scoring this material, emphasised the importance of asking the students to offer some description of how they approached the exercise. This echoes not only Pask´s methods, but also Marton and Saljo when they asked overview-type questions about the exercises they used to elicit learning strategies.

In setting up the exercise, it had been hoped (a little naively it seems, with the benefit of hindsight) that gathering such data would give an indication of preferred or characteristic strategies of learning. In fact, what the exercise does show is the use of a particular approach for this task. It does not measure the possibility that respondents are versatile in their approaches to learning, and

that they might use use only one of a range of strategies open to them. Laurillard's work on the importance of the learning context, and Saljo's work on the importance of the learner's conception of the task in influencing the approach a learner takes, both indicate the caution we should exercise in assuming that results of Clobbits-type exercises can easily indicate more general and characteristic learning strategies.

Its unfamiliarity for social workers might make extrapolating the findings to learning for the same individuals in other areas of their functioning (including their social work practice, or supervising a student) more than a little dubious. Indeed, it seems likely that the exercise would only indicate a characteristic learning style for those who had only a relatively unsophisticated conception of learning, and consequently a single approach to their learning (which they use for all learning tasks).

Equally, it soon became clear that a mis-match between the approaches of teachers and learners in the exercise need not necessarily reflect difficulties which they faced in working together in supervision, since one or both might be more versatile in their learning strategies than the Clobbits exercise demonstrates. Even if they were not, and a mis-match was identified, it might be functional rather than dysfunctional for learning in the same way that some marriages succeed through complementarity rather than similarity.

These more general points about using the Clobbits exercise, which emerged from its use, show the limitations of trying to look at learning styles and approaches to learning other than in natural learning environments. However, the use of the Clobbits exercise was

not entirely unhelpful, as we have suggested, because it introduced a number of ideas and terms that could be the basis of joint interviews with students and their supervisors could be conducted.

6.3.2 Findings from the Clobbits Exercise

In overall terms, we found a predominance of those who tried to map the taxonomy from the top down (holists), with these respondents starting at the most general, highest level in the taxonomy, and tracing out lower sub-divisions progressively. Rather less than a third of all respondents seemed instead to look at the pictures, or those cards which gave details of the lowest nodes of the taxonomy, from which they tried to make patterns of what they saw, and build up the taxonomy in this way. Whilst no-one completed the task in its entirety, more of the latter group said they wished they had been given more time to complete it.

There were some other strategies employed as well. One subject looked at all the cards from Al, A2... successively through to E5 because "I thought that was what I ought to do since they were numbered and lettered in order". (This supervisor is later described in some detail as a case illustration in Chapter Seven). Two versions of a random strategy were found. One was purely random, where one person sought to look at entirely random cards to build up the taxonomy, and a two others used a randomised strategy at first, to sample the kinds of information available in each group, before moving on to more focussed (and holist) strategies.

However two people failed to comprehend the task at all. One respondent (a supervisor) thought that the cards related to the Gandlemuller

taxonomy given in the materials as an example, and not the actual task at all. The other was a student who thought "the animals were all very sweet" but she didn't know what ´taxonomy´ meant so she "played with the pictures" until it was her turn to be interviewed.

Only one person has refused outright to do the exercise during the period of the study (in a workshop on teaching and learning in supervision). Having had three quarters of an hour reading the material and not establishing what she was meant to do, she wrote on her response sheet "Winston Smith started his diary on 4th April 1984. I think I now know why!". This reference the book "1984" (Orwell, 1945) was not only literally accurate but was also written on the exact day described in the book - she was indeed being asked to do the exercise on 4th April 1984!

6.4 Developing Feedback to Participants, and Others in Social Work Education

This section discusses the development of feedback to participants in the study, and to others more generally in social work and social work education. This feedback ranged from an informal discussion with participants, at the end of the single case-study, towards more structured feedback to establish the validity of the interpretations of experiences they had discussed in their interviews. The section also reports the checking out interpretations and conceptual models, as they developed, by presenting them to a range of colleagues and peers in social work education, which not only confirmed the usefulness of the findings to others, but also was part of the formative element in the study.

In the single case study there was no explicit plan to offer feedback: only occasional comments to the supervisor, together with the informal lunch discussion at the end of the placement gave any opportunity for systematic feedback. All three parties to that discussion felt, with the benefit of hindsight, that it might have been better to arrange other opportunities to meet during the placement. This could have allowed the supervisor and her student to make more use of the feedback, and it would have been less frustrating for the researcher, who found large numbers of questions prompted by listening to the tape recordings.

With the earlier questionnaire exercise no feedback at all was possible, because the questionnaires were handed in at a conference and read/analysed later. As names and other identifying material was not given by all respondents, individual feedback was not possible. There have been some reports of the early parts of this research at other conferences (eg Association of Teachers in Social Work Education, 1984), in the literature (Gardiner, 1984a, and 1984b), and in papers for the validating body.

The early interviews developed a pattern, following the second interview, of offering some comments to both participants, to offer feedback which might help in their teaching and learning.

This kind of discussion gradually became longer and, because of the richness of the material it generated, was also tape-recorded. It became evident that both teachers and students, separately and together, used the focus on learning processes in these discussions to reflect upon significant events and learning in the placement - either in relation to topics not discussed previously; or, more often, in

relation to the learning processes, rather than outcomes, which had been prompted by the interviews. Examples are given in the case illustrations in the next chapter.

The feedback session at the interview stage gave the researcher an opportunity to reflect on issues as the study developed, and the tapes of those sessions thus also reflect the development of the researcher's conceptualisations over the period.

These developing conceptualisations were also offered to a number of groups and individuals during the study. In part, this was to demonstrate the stage which the study had reached and to begin to trace out wider implications of the findings, and in part it was to establish whether the issues which were emerging, together with the developing conceptual base for the results were of use in addressing some fundamental issues at various levels in social work education.

These activities, and the response to them, have been discussed in the literature, in policy development in the validating body, and with various groups of teachers, courses, agencies and students.

Clearly, if some implicit assumptions underlie the explanations used in social work education are challenged and replaced, then the structures which were built on the earlier assumptions also need to be re-examined. One paper published at the time (Gardiner, 1984b) directly addressed the problem of the various systems and levels at which the implications of re-framing the conceptual base of social work education would need to be addressed. These include the levels of individual teachers and learners, course and programme design, and at the level of training systems as a whole (ie CQSW and CSS). At the time of writing,

that article has received about twenty citations in other work, despite having been only a preliminary report of the findings of the present research. That paper is reproduced as Appendix A.

In summarising this section, we must clarify the differences between the formative nature of the study itself (with its contribution to others and the training system as a whole), and the development and formulation of concepts during the study.

Finally in this section we must make explicit the parallels between elements of the learning processes, as they became clear in this stage of the study, and the process of developing grounded conceptual models, through establishing salience of some of the data, building up patterns and generalisations which could be the building blocks of new theory, derived from the experiences of social work education itself.

CHAPTER 7. SOME CASE ILLUSTRATIONS

7.1 An Overview of this Chapter

This Chapter presents, as case illustrations, data collected in this part of the study. These cases are not necessarily typical, nor representative of all placements, nor are they extremes. They have been chosen to illustrate some of the key themes which emerged, and to demonstrate the methods of data collection, extensions of focus, and the process of developing conceptualisations and models to make sense of the data. These latter points are developed further in commentary sections which are interspersed with reports of the data.

Section 7.2 discusses some methodological and presentational issues raised by these case descriptions by, considering the advantages and disadvantages of case study approaches.

Sections 7.3 onwards present case illustrations of supervisors and students, by reporting all of the data collected about some particular placements - including (primarily) interview-based material, and findings from the learning styles exercises.

Where it is appropriate to do so, other corrobative data (from the questionnaire exercise, from further tape recordings of supervision sessions, and in one case, from a follow up interview with the college-based tutor) are also reported.

7.2 Case Study Approaches

This section presents some arguments in favour of, and some against, case study aproaches in educational research before turning to consider the advantages of a case approach specifically in the presentation and reporting of data.

Macdonald and Walker (1975) say, when discussing case studies:

> "Problems like any qualitative research include possible over-involvement of the researcher... confidentiality of data... competition about the control of data... inadequate distinctions between description and interpretation..."

MacDonald and Walker go on to say that some aspects of the education system are particularly appropriate for case study-based evaluations:

> "... where there are problems of the researcher-practitioner relationship... where there are institutionalised mythologies designed to protect participants from the public gaze... Education has generated a reflective language which has theoretical, analytic and descriptive concepts which allow the case study to be presented in the language of those being studied..."

> "... case studies are selective in choice of focus and way of synthesising data by case rather than by issues... the single instance approach of the artist leading to an attempt to present universals through a unique image has to be fused with the need to reflect commonalities and similarities... "

Certainly, in relation to the former point, we are here trying to develop "a reflective language which has theoretical, analytic and descriptive concepts which allow the case study to be presented in the language of those being studied..." and supervision is usually a very private experience, as we stressed in an early report of this study. In response, Badger (1985) has commented:

> "As Gardiner himself points out, 'supervision is a very private experience' and, contributing as it does, the major element in practice assessment, is long overdue for detailed research."

MacDonald and Walker's second point helps us to consider whether to represent the data gathered in this stage at a level of generality, but

to include all placements studied, or to search for a single case to represent them all. We have chosen a middle road, and have selected two key cases to present in considerable detail, and some others in less detail. We have made this choice because there are common, and similar features in the patterns of the supervisory relationships which occur often, and which are exemplified, and well-demonstrated by these examples. However, these features arise in specific learning contexts or milieux, and with a particular method of data collection - thus we reflect these details and the specificity of individual placements.

It is worth contrasting the general optimism of Macdonald and Walker in 1975 with what amounts to an admission of relative failure and misunderstanding, in a subsequent article by Walker (1983), in which he sees case study approaches as:

> "...interventive and potentially disruptive in the lives of others... (and that) it provides a biased and distorted view of the way things were... it is essentially conservative..."

Our defence to such concerns is that this study has not restricted the collection of data to a case study mode in Walker's sense of the term. Indeed, we have collected a considerable amount of data not in this form. The case example is used in this chapter to maximise the benefits and, hopefully, minimise the disadvantages of case study approaches. Patton (1978) has also discussed the merits of case approaches, in the general context of offering a range of models which combine ways of collecting and representing qualitative data. Perhaps the most important argument here in favour of a case approach is that of its contribution to model-building and to theory-building. Not only are actual cases described and presented, but they can be the basis of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1976).

7.3 Case Illustration I - A Successful Placement

This placement is one of the earliest to be studied in this phase of the research. A number of general points about it help to set the scene. In some ways it is a typical placement, and in others it is probably quite unusual. It is the final placement for a male student on a two-year, non-graduate CQSW course in the maintained sector. It takes place in the area team office of a town in a large county social services department about thirty miles from the educational institution.

The student involved had substantial experience of social work, prior to beginning the course, in a neighbouring authority to the one where the placement takes place. He is a graduate in psychology, but did not choose to go to a course for graduates. **The supervisor** is supervising her first professional placement, having previously taken students only for observation placements - although she has indicated an interest in a possible future career in social work education. She had completed the questionnaire exercise, and is respondent No 1 there. She completed only Sheet One, since she had at that time not previously supervised an assessed placement. She was invited to be involved in the research because of that interest, and because it was her first placement as a supervisor.

The interviews were carried out on the day after the placement finished, and are (in comparison with all interviews carried out during the course of the study) two of the most coherent, and requiring the least intervention in the form of direct questioning or prompting by the interviewer. They also were amongst the most satisfying to carry out. This case illustration includes the first taped feedback session,

following the individual interviews with the student and supervisor. Some of the material included is very personal, and moving. I am grateful to these two participants in particular for allowing this material to be included here.

These interviews are reported in considerable detail for a number of reasons: first, because they illustrate (within a single placement) many of the features of the teaching and learning processes which emerged in this main phase of data collection. Thus it is useful to present this case study first, in detail, before presenting other case material.

A second reason is the clear evidence of movement and change during this placement, which allows the development of conceptualisations about stages, as well as styles, of teaching and learning - so it makes a considerable contribution to model-building. A third reason is because it gives a clear indication of the role and contribution of the researcher to the interviews, and allows a critical examination of his involvement. We have indicated above that in qualitative research, it is essential that the methods of collecting data, and the influence of the interviewer, as well as possible bias in selection of materials need to be addressed in this way. A fourth reason is the clear and explicit way that these participants describe events, the patterns of interaction, and the meanings they attached at the time (and subsequently) to their experiences - especially since these ideas were not rooted exclusively in the classical supervision model.

Finally, it allows others to consider the raw data, and offer other interpretations and conceptualisations. The almost total absence of such material, in detailed accounts, from the supervision literature is

a powerful argument for including it here in such detail.

The interviews are reported without comment first, and are followed by
a commentary section. In looking at them, it is important to note data
which illumine the kinds of issues which we have already considered:

> **the ways in which student and supervisor see the learning
> task,** and the **approaches to teaching and learning** which they
> use;
>
> the **impact of differences in approach** between student and
> supervisor;
>
> **indications of change and development** for learner or teacher,
> and consequent **changes in the pattern of the supervisory
> relationship** through the placement;
>
> the **impact of assessment** on teacher and learner behaviour,
> and their interactions.

7.3.1 The Interview with the Student

As in all reports of interviews in this stage, quotations are from the
student, except those indicated by (Interviewer) which are spoken by
the researcher. All names and places which could identify those
involved have been excluded. Additions in parentheses are included to
maintain the sense where intervening material has been left out.

> After an introduction about the focus and purpose of the
> research, with the intention to look at teaching and learning
> processes, the student was asked to begin by describing his
> expectations of the placement. There had been a College form
> to complete, for spelling out placement needs, to which his
> replies were "broad, vague and mechanistic... I wasn't
> encouraged to think it out... I left it to the last minute...
> If I am not going to be glib, I need someone to lead me into
> sophistication and subtlety... I didn't do this exercise very
> well..."
>
> "... (at the first meeting with the supervisor, in college)
> she'd take something I said simplistically... she'd say 'What
> do you mean by that?' and lead me down avenues to specific
> behavioural statements... the scene was set for specificity
> and explicitness... At the pre-placement visit to discuss the
> contract skeleton, we had to fill in the five sections –
> Knowledge to be learned; Skills to be learned; Linking'theory
> and practice; Work to be undertaken; Other..."

(Interviewer) "Looking back... **how** did you think you were going to learn these things?..."

"I passed it (responsibility) over to my supervisor. Now I'd be in a better position to talk about how I'd see myself learning... I'd give it a lot more thought... not glib, at the last minute... (there was discussion about going back to work at the end of the course)... I have got a meeting planned with this supervisor, my new supervisor and my college tutor..."

(Interviewer) "When you first started, what was it like?"

"It was like starting a new job... simple skills like learning to use the telephone, and who the bosses were... My supervisor thought I should be doing other things, and learning to use the telephone would come... I started by doing visits of observation to other agencies in the locality to see the philosophy of the district I was in..."

"There was a bit of a clash there... I was resistant... I'd been a social worker for three years... and done two other social services placements... I suppose I saw all (services) as being similar... (but now he says he is planning to do just this when he gets back from his course and starts work in a new area)..."

I did it because I was the student and she was the supervisor... that was another of the changes... students do what supervisors say, if they're sensible... If I had another placement, I'd now feel more confident, to speak my individual mind, rather than just go along with what the superior person is saying..."

"The power relationship was the thing, almost an obsession... we talked at very great length about her power... the pass-fail power... I thought if she says 'do placement visits', and if I want to pass, I do placement visits... My present supervisor has helped me to change in myself − I won't be a passive employee or passive student in future... "

(Interviewer) "How has that come about?"

"...My supervisor said, just the other day, she had the power over pass-fail, but I had the power to achieve it (the necessary performance)... I hadn't grasped that... I mean trust is there, about the not unreasonable use of power..."

"My other fieldwork supervisor did not want to talk me out of that frame of mind, that I did not have power. He was quite happy that I should think that... whereas my present placement supervisor said that up front... and said it was a bar to my development... and retrospectively she was wise in doing that..."

(Interviewer) "..how did you get this confidence, to move from this passive, responsive student kind of position, to having more responsibility?"

"Yesterday in the three-way (a discussion between him, his

tutor and the supervisor) she (the tutor) says 'It's a riddle with him, he can do this, this and this, but at the same time he's quite passive... He didn't have practice knowledge, it only really developed in this placement'... but now its different, out of this placement I have confidence in my competence... it's quite a nice feeling..."

"We sorted that out at quite a late stage (in the placement)... it was there, in the contract, we mentioned the 'lack of confidence' in the previous supervisor's report (of the earlier placement)... it was really a lack of competence... we had to work that one out."

"I'd take the risks that I knew I could handle, but I've been encouraged by my supervisor to do that - previously there was no support for techniques that weren't agency policy."

(Interviewer) "This supervisor gave you more space and support than the previous supervisor. How do you think she was doing this?"

"God moves in mysterious ways!... the (present) agency was more tolerant, but she (the supervisor) was dogmatic about the family approach so she'd encourage any students in that way... other people in the office weren't hostile... in my previous agencies they might well be... if they saw a student doing something special they are not able to do."

(Interviewer) "... and the supervisor, did she have a part in this?"

"My ongoing assessment of her was that she appeared to be a competent social worker... (which) was important to me, to command my respect... we really confined consultation to supervision sessions, weekly for two hours or so. We'd look at a case in detail, she would suggest, or provide a range of courses of action, and leave me to select (one) and then go away and get on with it... she was providing pretty general sorts of strategies..."

"If I took one up she'd give me more details... an example of that would be a sculpting (he described an incident with a family, after which he had got stuck)... after I'd done it I didn't know what to do next..."

(Interviewer) " She wasn't prescriptive, but allowed choice, but then she offered specific technical help and support?"

"Yes, and she'd present it in an acceptable way... if she'd been **telling** me what to do it wouldn't have worked... she'd probably got me sussed out quite well..."

(Interviewer) "Implied in that is that she'd got some idea of where you were at, as a learner... How do you think she'd done that?"

"One had the impression she was one step ahead of me in trying to understand my future needs, she'd be prepared for what I'd bring next time..."

(Interviewer) "How do you think she managed that?"

"How she made that assessment, mmmm... that would be a mystery to me... I don't really know, I couldn't begin to imagine..." (The interviewer started to prompt, to ask this again in a different way, but the student carried on) "No, I've had an idea, I think her own learning experience would be relevant... she would not give definite illustrations – she'd convey a pattern from her own learning ... I don't think (the supervisor) and I would say that this model was the correct one for (all) supervision. I would imagine it was how she was trained herself..."

(Interviewer) "What things have you learnt on the placement, or the single most important thing, about yourself?"

"I've learnt confidence in my competence (he pauses)"

(Interviewer) "How might I know that, if I were watching you practise?"

"...from the quality of my assessments, and actions I was taking on them... preparedness to reassess... (my intervention) was sharper at each stage of the process, and had a qualitative difference ... the systems approach, and the family therapy option is now a whole new possibility in my cases..."

"I've also discovered 'humanity' in my work, to bring in sensitivity and empathy in my work."

(Interviewer) "Can you tell me a bit more about this, about **how** this happened?"

"There was a death in the office... (one of the social workers, who had been ill) she was a friend of my supervisor... it was quite a shock to the whole office. That experience made me human in my dealings with my clients... I became a different sort of worker... and my supervisor, this high up, superior, pass-fail person with powers of pass-fail, she became human herself... she was upset, vulnerable, as did the whole office... I carved out a (special) role... in assisting these people with their grief... "

(Interviewer) "So you could give up being the office-student, the learner, and junior, you could also be a provider?"

"Yes, the release from that role... it improved my confidence and individual standing, I was not just the office-student... It was facilitated by the selection of my cases (around this time), they weren't just cases every student gets..."

(Interviewer) "So you weren't just the student, you could be different... and use your abilities as a person, (you had them) in your other life, but now you could bring them into your work, and it was OK to do that..."

"I wasn't like that previously, in my work I mean... they didn't expect you to be like that in (where he worked before coming onto the course)."

(Interviewer) "So you could give up being adult, and traditionally male, as well as being a student, and be vulnerable and caring?"

"Yes... (and he describes how he is like that at home, but had not before thought that it could be part of his professional role)."

(Interviewer) "Do you think that things were already changing, a bit, and (the colleague's) death just crystallised it out,.. I mean do you think it would have happened anyway, perhaps not quite so quickly?... Couldn't it have happened anyway, with a different kind of challenge?"

(There is an exchange about how other crises bring about change for different kinds of students).

"...I suppose I was at the mechanistic end of the continuum... this was the kick I needed... this sort of thing was never made clear by myself or my previous supervisors or my tutor, to my present supervisor that I was this sort of person",

(Interviewer) "(after a summary of the last exchanges)... I suppose that this shift had quite an impact on supervision, too?"

"Generally it facilitated it. I started to look at the power thing differently. I had some power of my own, too. I could use it in a caring way... I could use supervision as less of a management exercise... My supervisor would have had it that way all along and it was me who wanted it to be a management exercise... clear cut, mechanistic, and at the right end of the continuum... "

"The thing about the death, as a crystallisation, it only emerged yesterday, in the three-way, our final three-way meeting (between student, tutor and supervisor)... was when it publically emerged as a root of change."

(Interviewer) "Yes, maybe it's only with hindsight we can see the significance of those things... In summary, you've made significant progress, not just in the way you might have predicted?"

"There's no way I could have predicted this. I was a like a pioneer, an adventurer, (but)... I couldn't shape the adventuring journey to my needs. I was delegating that to somebody else. I don't think I'll do that again in the future..."

(Interviewer) "I had about fifty students, as a supervisor, and I think that, I remember with most of my students, and in my own course... I think it is pretty common, this shift in how you see yourself, in your professional role... of course, it doesn't always happen so dramatically... I remember that kind of shift with others, from trying out professional, technical-type skills, and realising that they didn't have to contain their feelings, their experience all the time, but

could make use of it... "

"Did you find there were there things, that were the equivalent, to a death... you can get that out of a case situation as well?"

(Interviewer) "Yes, sometimes a case; sometimes I think students were going through a very important crisis themselves... or a crisis with one of the other students in the group, like when someone leaves, or there was a failing student in the unit... things like that often seemed to bring about a crystallisation for others... yes, or sometimes it was a crisis in the supervision relationship itself..."

"I wanted to use the word 'paradigm' yesterday, in the report, but it wasn't a permissable word, so it wasn't included."

(Interviewer) "A shift of paradigm, in how you operate, and see yourself as a worker?" ("Yes") "I think that's a really good way of summing it up". (The student is thanked for his involvement and the interview ends).

Commentary on this Interview

These comments discuss issues raised by the interview. At the beginning, the student describes his approach to the placement, and emphasises that he did not feel that he was very good at specifying his own learning needs, nor at taking the initiative in relation to his own learning. He saw that as the responsibility of his supervisor:

"... I wasn't encouraged to think it out... I left it to the last minute... If I am not going to be glib, I need someone to lead me into sophistication and subtlety..."

"I passed it (responsibility) over to my supervisor. Now I'd be in a better position to talk about how I'd see myself learning... I'd give it a lot more thought... not glib, at the last minute..."

The student acknowledges that even when he did think about things, early in the placement, he still saw the supervisor as being in Authority, and her power to pass or fail him meant that he decided to fit in with her requirements:

"There was a bit of a clash there... I was resistant... I'd been a social worker for three years... I did it because I was the student and she was the supervisor... students do what supervisors say, if they're sensible..."

> "The power relationship was the thing, almost an obsession...
> we talked at very great length about her power... the
> pass-fail power... I thought if she says 'do placement
> visits', and if I want to pass, I do placement visits..."

However, the student later shows that things are somewhat different

now, and in a similar situation, he would act more assertively:

> "If I had another placement, I'd now feel more confident, to
> speak my individual mind, rather than just go along with what
> the superior person is saying..."

> "My present supervisor has helped me to change in myself - I
> won't be a passive employee or passive student in future... "

This change is due to his increased confidence, which has come in part

from being able to take risks in new ways of working, and from feeling

that his supervisor would support him:

> "I'd take the risks that I knew I could handle, but I've been
> encouraged by my supervisor to do that..."

The student believes in the supervisor, and trusts her judgement,

because she is a competent professional; but he also responds to the

fact that she presents him with a range of possible actions, and allows

him the choice:

> "My ongoing assessment of her was that she appeared to be a
> competent social worker... (which) was important to me, to
> command my respect... We'd look at a case in detail, she
> would suggest, or provide a range of courses of action, and
> leave me to select (one) and then go away and get on with
> it... she was providing pretty general sorts of strategies...
> If I took one up she'd give me more details..."

> "... and she'd present it in an acceptable way... if she'd
> been **telling** me what to do it wouldn't have worked... she'd
> probably got me sussed out quite well...

This is different from the way in which the supervisor in the single

case study placement earlier (in Chapter Four) had approached the

problem of how to intervene in a case:

> The first discussion of a particular case the student was
> taking on included the supervisor saying "I don't think there
> will be anything to sort out.... it's probably a question of
> making arrangements to meet people.... and I suggest making
> an appointment to see the school counsellor..."

The supervisor told him exactly who to contact, and had gone on to

rehearse the student in the right way to do things.

The student here goes on to describe how his supervisor has encouraged and allowed him to develop a wider range of interventive approaches than he was previously competent to offer:

"My (intervention) was sharper at each stage of the process, and had a qualitative difference ... the systems approach, and the family therapy option is now a whole new possibility in my cases..."

The student says he saw the supervisor as having expertise not only as a practitioner, but also as a teacher, and begins to articulate this by first stating the position he adopted at the beginning of the placement - but then making some connections for the first time, during the interview itself:

"One had the impression she was one step ahead of me in trying to understand my future needs, she'd be prepared for what I'd bring next time... How she made that I couldn't begin to imagine"... "No, I've had an idea, I think her own learning experience would be relevant... she would not give definite illustrations - she'd convey a pattern from her own learning ... I would imagine it was how she was trained herself..."

This explicit connection which the student makes, between how teachers learn and how they teach, echoes the results of the initial questionnaire survey, where many supervisors described a preference for teaching in ways they had used in their own significant learning.

The student goes on to describe the crisis in the office following the death of one of the team, and its impact on him in his relationship with his supervisor; and then, crucially, in his work as well:

"I've also discovered 'humanity' in my work, to bring in sensitivity and empathy in my work... There was a death in the office... it was quite a shock to the whole office. That experience made me human in my dealings with my clients... I became a different sort of worker... and my supervisor, this high up, superior, pass-fail person with powers of pass-fail, she became human herself... she was upset, vulnerable, as did the whole office... I carved out a (special) role... in assisting these people with their grief... I wasn't like that previously, in my work I mean... they didn't expect you to be like that in (where he worked before coming onto the course)."

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The student here is giving up his earlier ideas that there might be a single right way to practise social work to which he should aspire if he wishes to pass, and that his supervisor is someone with special powers and abilities (derived from her authority and expertise). Instead, he begins to recognise the importance of involving and using himself in his work, and not operating as a stereo-typical objective, detached professional. The p attern of supervision is also different, as a result of these changes:

> "Generally it facilitated it. I started to look at the power thing differently. I had some power of my own, too. I could use it in a caring way... I could use supervision as less of a management exercise... My supervisor would have had it that way all along and it was me who wanted it to be a management exercise... "

> "There's no way I could have predicted this. I was a like a pioneer, an adventurer, (but)... I couldn't shape the adventuring journey to my needs. I was delegating that to somebody else. I don't think I'll do that again in the future..."

There is then a part of the interview where the interviewer responds to the importance of the material he has just heard by helping the student to frame some of his experience on this placement by generalising, and indicating that although the death was a powerful precipitating factor, the kinds of changes (in practice and supervision) which the student describes are by no means unusual during placements:

> (Interviewer) "I had about fifty students, as a supervisor, and I think that, I remember with most of my students, and in my own course... I think it is pretty common, this shift in how you see yourself, in your professional role... of course, it doesn't always happen so dramatically... I remember that kind of shift with others, from trying out professional, technical-type skills, and realising that they didn't have to contain their feelings, their experience all the time, but could make use of it... "

> "Did you find there were there things, that were the equivalent, to a death... you can get that out of a case situation as well?"

> (Interviewer) "Yes, sometimes a case; sometimes I think students were going through a very important crisis themselves... or a crisis with one of the other students in the group, like when someone leaves, or there was a failing

student in the unit... things like that often seemed to bring
about a crystallisation for others... yes, or sometimes it
was a crisis in the supervision relationship itself..."

The student sums up by explaining how his understanding of these
experiences was made clearer, and explicit, during a joint discussion
with tutor and supervisor the previous day, and that this has
fundamentally changed how he sees himself, and his experiences on the
placement:

> "I wanted to use the word 'paradigm' yesterday, in the
> report, but it wasn't a permissable word, so it wasn't
> included."

> (Interviewer) "A shift of paradigm, in how you operate, and
> see yourself as a worker?" ("Yes") "I think that's a really
> good way of summing it up".

Many of the themes here recur in other interviews, and, as is indicated
in the interview itself, are resonant with the researcher's own
experiences as a supervisor. These themes and issues are developed
later, but we continue with a detailed account of the interview with
this student's supervisor, and a commentary on that interview.

7.3.2 Interview with the Supervisor

This interview is with the supervisor, who has previously supervised
one student on a short observation placement. It is her first assessed
placement as a supervisor. She qualified as a social worker four years
before the beginning of this placement, and has worked in her current
job as an area team social worker dealing with predominantly statutory
child care cases for the past two years. She is interested in
supervision, and has attended workshops and conferences on the subject.

> There was an introduction by the researcher about the focus
> of the study on teaching and learning, including the
> distinction between **what** and **how** things are taught and
> learnt. The supervisor was invited to talk about the
> placement chronologically.

> "It was to be his final placement, and he'd had three years

experience before the course, and other non-social work experience in the local authority... his previous placements had also been in social services... it seemed to me at that point he'd had a heavy overdose of Social Services... I wanted to establish what his own goals were for this placement... he didn't seem to have very clear ideas (about them)... he seemed quite reluctant to make definite statements... At that point I wasn't sure whether he didn't have any ideas – and that was how it was coming across to me... or whether for some reason he wasn't able to say..."

(Interviewer) "So what did you do about that?"

"I guess I started to talk to him about his previous experience, to get some understanding of the level at which he was, at that point in time, so I could get a kind of picture of the stage he was, when he was beginning his placement... and I married that up with my own expectations of where I thought he should have been... (and) where he should be at the end of the placement, and tried to discuss these with (him) and his tutor... Basically it seemed like everything was rather hazy, neither (he) nor his tutor had very clear ideas as to what it was that he was wanting to achieve in a final placement. (He) was very conscious of going back into social services, so he wanted to be proficient as a social worker in social services, and have a very sound knowledge of practice in social services that would equip him for when he went back to (his seconding agency)."

(Interviewer) "So you moved on to a placement contract... can you remember... **how** you thought you would try to meet some of those things that were in the contract... you must have had, kind of, a sense of **how** he was going to do that learning?"

"I had my own expectations, though they weren't married very closely with (the student's) expectations, nor his tutor's. Their side of it all seemed very hazy to me. I took a much more assertive role in laying out what I expected he should do... then (he) began to discuss that. I posed the framework... (and we) arrived at a mutual agreement... I felt that (he) didn't have any notion of the social work process, and that was one area in the contract... to work on the integration of theory and practice to do with the social work process... in a thorough and systematic way from when he first received the referral... It was quite structured, but it was necessary for me to get some guage of (his) ability, to get some sort of baseline for myself to know where he was... I also had a lot of anxieties about his actual level of competence, and therefore felt that I needed to be very involved as a supervisor, and probably if necessary quite directive."

"At the beginning of the placement I was extremely directive, and stated very clearly what my expectations were, and from that basis (we) began to discuss things... There were some things which he felt would offer him nothing in terms of a learning experience."

(Interviewer) "Do you remember what those things were?"

"Specifically, I felt that it was important as a new person to visit different agencies in the area, for one reason to see how they worked in our area, and two, to meet the various people he would be working with on this placement. (He) felt that this was a real waste of his time, because he had worked in Social Services for years and years, and thought he knew how other agencies worked, and didn't see any value in having personal contact..."

"I felt strongly that he should do that... so we agreed he would try it out and reassess, after a period of trial whether it was valuable... He decided himself it was valuable for him... I was very strong at the beginning that he must make a point of reading the theory to do with the social work process, and we talked a lot (about it) in supervision, trying to integrate it in a theoretical way, and then started that process with his clients... we discussed, very fully, each case and I structured his thinking about each stage (of the social work process)."

(Interviewer) "How did he respond to that degree of structure, or 'directiveness' was the word you used?"

"I think in some ways he really resented it, and felt that I was treating him at a lesser level than he felt himself (to be), and at the same time, because we had a contract (about this kind of work) and we discussed various ways of how to do it, and the possible outcome, and then we both came to a decision about how he would go about it. We didn't have any confrontations... but he felt that I had the power even if he'd wanted to rebel. He wanted to learn, as well... so he acquiesced... to try out what I was suggesting – on the basis that we would try it , and if it wasn't working, we would look at it again and do something else. I think that arose because (he) didn't come up with any other ideas... so I took the initiative."

(Interviewer) "So it would be fair to say that in that early part of the placement, the way that the teacher and learner interacted was that you were pretty directive, and he was pretty passive?" ("Yes") "Was that a pattern that stayed, throughout the placement?"

"No, no. I think it changed a lot... (he) increasingly became motivated to seek out his own learning, and became much more imaginative and creative in terms of his work... he was always very keen to follow up the literature... no-one had ever encouraged him to do that in the past... and that snowballed, as the placement went on, he took much more responsibility for initiating his own learning, and I think my role changed quite markedly."

(Interviewer) "How would you describe it then, towards the end (of the placement)?"

"Basically, at the end of the placement (he) made the decisions about how he was going to work, what he was going to do, and I encouraged him and supported him in what he was doing... if he had areas of difficulty, we discussed those in

depth... (how he could use) different ways of resolving a problem... so the relationship became much more balanced."

(Interviewer) "Can you remember, in terms of your assessment of his competence, when the change came about, from the beginning when you had said he was vague and woolly, and you some doubts about his competence, and the end when you'd passed him and thought he'd done pretty well, when did that change take place? Did it occur gradually, over a long time, or were there some significant turning points? Was there a point when you thought he was a passing student, not a possible failing student?"

"We had a midway assessment... and about two or three weeks prior to that I had decided his practice was up to passing level. At the midpoint assessment, in a meeting with his tutor, it was made quite clear that (if he) continued (like that), he would pass the placement."

(Interviewer) "Did that seem to affect how he related to you as well?"

"I don't think it was at the midpoint assessment... (he) and I had discussed it... it happened earlier, and may have been related to er, I don't know. (Pause) Coming at it the other way, early on in the placement, we had a discussion about trust. (He) said he found it difficult to put trust in me... (because of the power to fail him) but he made a conscious decision, we made an agreement... to try it out... That seemed to be a critical turning point, fairly early on, in the first month... From that point on, as far as I was concerned, the whole thing seemed to improve... I had the power to fail him, and that seemed to be a blocking mechanism."

(Interviewer) " (Restates this)...and this was prior to you feeling he was going to pass — was that in a way the opportunity for him to go out and demonstrate in his practice what gave you the assurance that he was going to pass?"

"Yes, I think that's absolutely right."

(Interviewer) (checks he is not leading the witness) "They were two quite distinct stages: one was the element of trust in the stage when you were the powerful authority figure, and he was the passive, student figure ("Yes"), and then that lead to something happening in his practice that reassured you about his level of performance in his practice?"

"Yes, that's exactly right, and one of the things we built into our contract was that (he) wanted regular feedback, and I was very conscious, right from the word go, to give him continuous feedback, both positive and negative... Anything that was done well I would praise, and things that I was critical of, I would criticise. That was an ongoing feature, right throughout the placement... (He) did not want to reach the end of the placement without knowing (if he was going to pass). I was very conscious of praising for things done well, not just being critical... Then he made the leap of faith, the conscious decision to trust me."

(Interviewer) "Later in the placement, the pattern was obviously very different. How would you describe the pattern?"

"Can you be more specific?"

(Interviewer) "(Restates, and adds) ...earlier, you used words like `acquiescent`, but at the end of the placement it wasn't like that... how was it, if it wasn't like that?"

"(She describes three areas of his work, with illustrations). He, with little guidance from me after planning the initial contact, planning the first visit... he made a plan which we discussed in supervision, and after that point he basically did his own planning and intervention... My role in supervision was mainly to praise what he had done, to encourage him, to broaden out what he had done and put what he had done into a more rounded picture... if he came to any areas where he was stuck, we would discuss those."

(Interviewer) "Could you give me an example of one of those... and how you responded to that?" (pause) "Can I prompt you with an incident (he) talked about in his interview (the interviewer gives details of the family sculpting exercise)".

"We then talked about the use of sculpting in general terms, and what had happened in this family, and I broadened out what he thought had happened into a more theoretical context, because his theory wasn't sufficiently developed... and planned (how he could use what he had done) on his next visit".

(Interviewer) "I can understand him being more explicit, and more focussed, but were there other qualitative differences in his work, between your initial fears, and what was happening at the end...?"

"By being very pedantic about the social work process, and stressing the importance of... (more structured) work gave him more direction in his work with his clients... That enabled him to have a basic framework from which he could be more creative and imaginative..."

(Interviewer) "Could you give me an example of that?"

"One of the things that really struck me, it was a quite simple thing, but a very important thing, was that one of his elderly men clients decided, after a great deal of discussion, and after being in Part Three (accommodation) for a holiday, to go in on a permanent basis. (The student) offered to help, and talked to him about the furniture and personal belongings he would like to take with him. One of the very important things he wanted to take was his own bed. (The student) measured the bed, and then measured up the room, to check it would fit. Then he planned with this man that he would take the bed on his car, he would transport the man and his bed together to the home, which was (the student's) way of signifying the importance of everybody was

going together, and his belongings were going with them. I thought that was a very thoughtful incident which illustrated the personal qualities which he could bring into his work. There were similar incidents with families... (which she recounted)".

(Interviewer) "They are good examples during the placement of shifts in his work with clients, but what about shifts in supervision, and in his relationship with you?"

"We went through that time of him trusting me, and following my instructions as it were, and then came another critical point, when my colleague (in the office) died. The whole office were extremely grief stricken about that... There were implications on several levels. One was that I didn't have the time, or the personal energy, to offer him anything much outside of supervision. The only time I saw him was during the supervision sessions, but even during that time, I didn't feel I was operating at my proper capacity, I was so preoccupied with my own grief. I felt I was almost like a client in a sense, because I was needing to be taken care of. I wasn't able to give him the time I would have liked, nor to give him anything extra. He was thrown onto his own devices. The whole atmosphere was of grief and sadness for at least a month. I was different, the whole office was different. He was very kind to me in terms of not making demands on me, and doing thoughtful things... and only asking me things if it was vital. I think that at the end of that time things had changed quite dramatically for both of us. That is something we talked about in (the final three-way meeting with the tutor yesterday). It was something we had not been able to make explicit until that point in time..."

(Interviewer) "Can you say a bit about the way it did affect him, and his role?"

"...Because of my extreme grief, and that of my colleagues... we were an office full of people grieving, rather than an office full of social workers... (he) saw me in this state of grief, and saw me so upset, that's when he changed, and responded to me on a human level, as anyone would with someone who was in grief rather than as his supervisor..."

"Because people were so open in the office, with their feelings, with their grief, that was transferred onto his work with clients, working on a higher emotional level... he really thought about how the clients were feeling... he introduced humanity into his work, rather than working by the book... it felt comfortable, and easier for him, and he has retained (this)... (He) thinks it has dramatically enabled him to increase his competence in practice, and to relate to me on a different basis."

(Interviewer) "... that came after his decision to trust you, but before you'd decided he'd pass?"

"I didn't realise it at the time... but in retrospect it was obviously very significant, yes. I thought at the time it was because he had been freed to get on with his own work... and he'd responded well to that independence..."

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(Interviewer) "...things had started before, but had crystallised out around that time" ("Yes") "Is it likely that things would have crystallised out, if there had not been that crisis in the office?"

"... (yes) it would seem that the same kinds of things would have happened, from what (he) said, but not at that pace... his rate of progress would have been more constant, not exponential growth... (he) is the kind of person who needs a crisis to respond to, otherwise he tries to play it safe..."

(Interviewer) "Is that how he was when he came...?"

"Yes, he wanted very much to pass the placement... he would do what was right, in order to pass. By his own admission, he had been doing that throughout the entire course... Having a contract gave him a target, it was a kind of mini-crisis, he'd never had one before... he was really anxious that he wouldn't pass..."

(Interviewer) "Were there any parallels between how he learnt on his placement, and how you learnt on yours...?"

"I think I taught him in a very similar way to how I had been taught by my supervisor, and my expectations, both of him and myself were based on me as a student. I think at the end of the placement there were a lot of similarities between how (he) and I learnt, but at the beginning we were quite different. I trusted my supervisors implicitly, and I didn't have a paranoia about passing..."

"(He) has been enabled to state his own attitudes now, and they seem similar to mine, but at the beginning, he was saying what he thought would be a good thing to say and what would get him through... We both work best from a structured framework, we both need the theoretical input as well as the practice, and are able to integrate the two... a little bit of practice, then a little bit of theory..."

(Interviewer) "Is there anything else, that we haven't covered?"

"Only that he used other people in my office, that I wasn't the only person... he made use of, and was used by, others in our Department (she gave an example relating to the new Mental Health Act)..."

(Interviewer) "Can you say how it came about?"

"At the beginning it was decided that he would do some work with elderly clients, and I didn't have any (clients, and expertise)... I suggested others in the office had a lot of experience and it would be better to discuss with them. That's a common theme running right through, I'd point something out, he was motivated to try it out... the team were helpful, but people felt he'd given as much as he'd gained, it was two way."

"Other significant things included the involvement of the

tutor... new things always came out in the three-way meetings..."

(Interviewer) "In rounding things off... I´d like to say something of the importance of the use people make of crises... we can never protect people from them, nor structure them in. What strikes me very much from the discussions with each of you was how hard both of you had worked to make use of the experiences... on the placement... (and that is why so much came out of it)"

"Sure, I think that´s absolutely right... we´re both determined and work hard and have the stamina to see things through right to the very end."

(Interviewer) "That´s probably a good point to end on... thank you very much."

Commentary on Interview with the Supervisor

This interview is striking for the clear and articulate way that the supervisor describes and accounts for events on the placement, which is all the more remarkable when one recalls that this is her first ´professional´ student. Her clarity in the interview is a reflection of the way she approached the placement, pushing both the student and the tutor into being more explicit about the purposes of the placement, especially when faced with the student´s lack of specificity:

> "I guess I started to talk to him about his previous experience, to get some understanding of the level at which he was at that point in time, so I could get a kind of picture of the stage he was, when he was beginning his placement... and I married that up with my own expectations of where I thought he should have been... (and) where he should be at the end of the placement, and tried to discuss these with (him) and his tutor... Basically it seemed like everything was rather hazy neither (he) nor his tutor had very clear ideas as to what it was that he was wanting to achieve in a final placement."

She decided that this vagueness and lack of clarity might push her into a more directive role, at least at first, to establish his stage of development:

> "I had my own expectations, though that wasn´t married very closely with (the student´s) expectations, nor his tutor´s. Their side of it all seemed very hazy to me. I took a much more assertive role... It was quite structured, but it was necessary for me to get some guage of (his) ability, to get some sort of baseline for myself to know where he was... I

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> also had a lot of anxieties about his actual level of
> competence, and therefore felt that I needed to be very
> involved as a supervisor, and probably if necessary quite
> directive."

This was a chosen strategy, and therefore not apparently the only one

which the supervisor had considered, in response to her perceptions of

the student's learning needs, and her expectations, derived from her

own student experience:

> "At the beginning of the placement I was extremely directive,
> and stated very clearly what my expectations were, and from
> that basis (we) began to discuss things..."

Some of the student's initial response was to reject her suggestions.

He felt visits to local agencies were a waste of time because he 'knew'

what all such agencies were like. There are two aspects of this which

are of interest - one was his denial of the value of personal contact

with other agencies (a view which he revised, following the recognition

of the importance of using much more of himself in his work by the end

of the placement). The other is his view of all agencies being the

same, no matter where they were located, which fits with his overall

position of vague generalisations in setting goals for the placement,

and (as we shall see in the joint interview, subsequently, that he

thought all client "contracts were boring, because they were all the

same").

The supervisor's early directiveness, and explicit contract goals for

the placement were something of a challenge for the student, but he was

highly motivated to pass, and had decided on the least risky way of

achieving that - by acquiescence, and following what his teacher

required of him.

The supervisor is able to see how this pattern, of directive teaching

and a passive student, had changed during the placement, and points to

the importance of a discussion about power and authority in

supervision, after which the student felt able to trust her, and take risks with her support. Thus, by the end of the placement, she describes the student as having considerable responsibility for his own learning, and for the choice of focus in supervision:

> "Basically, at the end of the placement (he) made the decisions about how he was going to work, what he was going to do, and I encouraged him and supported him in what he was doing... if he had areas of difficulty, we discussed those in depth... (how he could use) different ways of resolving a problem... so the relationship became much more balanced."

The turning points in the balance of the supervisory relationship arise from the student being able to trust the supervisor (and take risks in his practice) which were already showing signs of change prior to the point at which there was a death in the office. The supervisor describes the change from directive teaching and passive learning to a more consultative model:

> "He, with little guidance from me after planning the initial contact, planning the first visit... made a plan which we discussed in supervision, and after that point he basically did his own planning and intervention... My role in supervision was mainly to praise what he had done, to encourage him, to broaden out what he had done and put what he had done into a more rounded picture... if he came to any areas where he was stuck, we would discuss those."

As a result of this shift in the pattern of the teaching and learning processes, the student is able to be caring and creative in his work, as the episode involving the move of an elderly man into Part Three accommodation illustrated. This introduction of caring, into what previously had been a more mechanistic approach to practice, followed the period of grief and mourning in the office. There appears to be a close connection between how the student saw his learning task, and the need to be more actively involved in his learning, (with consequent implications for teaching and learning roles) and how he practised.

The student appeared to have undertaken the previous eighteen months of the course with a model of learning in which others (ie teachers) would

be responsible for his learning, by being in authority, and having expertise. This echoes some of the early positions described by Perry (1970) which we reviewed earlier, in terms of the student not yet having reached a stage of understanding of the importance of context, and the relativism of all knowledge, whereby learners have to take responsibility for their own learning - and, if they are to continue to progress, to develop increased autonomy in their learning.

The supervisor explicitly acknowledged in her interview the parallels between how the student learnt on this placement, and how she had learnt in her own placements as a student:

> "We both work best from a structured framework, we both need the theoretical input as well as the practice, and are able to integrate the two... a little bit of practice, then a little bit of theory..."

Finally, the supervisor stresses her role as part of a team of other potential teachers, to whom the student can turn for help, and to whom he has things to offer. This reciprocity is an extension of the two way nature of the supervision relationship itself:

> "... he used other people in my office, that I wasn't the only person... he made use of, and was used by others in our Department (she gave an example relating to the new Mental Health Act)... At the beginning it was decided that he would do some work with elderly clients, and I didn't have any (clients, and expertise)... I suggested others in the office had a lot of experience and it would be better to discuss with them. That's a common theme running right through, I'd point something out, he was motivated to try it out... the team were helpful, but people felt he'd given as much as he'd gained, it was two way."

In summary, this interview reveals a supervisor whose clarity and explicitness has set the scene for a structured and focussed use of supervision, and of intervention by the student with his clients. The supervisor chooses to be directive in the early stages, and does some direct teaching. The student was initially passive, and expecting his teacher to take responsibility for his learning, but he increasingly

takes responsibility for his own learning, and the relationship becomes more equal. These changes come about as a result of a shift in the supervision relationship, which allows the student to take more risks in his work and leaning, knowing that he will be supported by his supervisor. On her part, there is a shift from directive teaching, to a more consultative style of supervision, and preparedness to use others in the office to contribute to teaching and learning.

We shall find later, in conceptualising the findings of this stage of the research, that these interactive patterns are key elements in developing indicators of the **stage** of development reached by supervisors as teachers, and students as learners - and that they reflect the conceptions each has of learning itself.

7.3.3 Joint Discussion with the Student and Supervisor

After each pair of interviews in this stage of the research, an opportunity was offered to the participants to discuss the Clobbits learning styles exercise, and to relate the findings from it to the discussions in the interviews. That session was also an opportunity to offer feedback to the participants something of the research generally, and to clarify what had been generated by these interviews.

During the interviews with these two participants, it was decided to ask whether they would object to the further, feedback, session being taped as well. There were two reasons for this request: the first reason was that interviews undertaken earlier in this phase of the study had raised interesting issues, including the use of the session by the participants to discuss and reframe their understanding of some the events in the placement; the second reason was that the clarity and

articulate accounts of the placement which these two people had

presented suggested it would be particularly valuable to tape the

feedback session. They agreed to do so.

A further purpose of the feedback session, of clarifying some beginning

understandings and interpretations, and checking these out with the

participants is also well-demonstrated here.

> The feedback session began with a statement by the researcher
> that this was not a formal part of the interviews, and later
> a much lighter mood is evident than in the interviews
> themselves.

> The researcher began the discussion about the Clobbits
> exercise, and described how he had approached it. The student
> described how he had looked mainly at category D cards to
> start with, and had attempted to get an understanding of the
> taxonomy from them. The supervisor had begun by looking at
> all of the number one cards, especially Cl which she saw as
> "the starting point... I decided I'd follow through the Clobs
> and then the Bits, to get the sub-groupings... then onto each
> sub-grouping, but at the bottom it got complicated with
> alphas, and betas which seemed mixed... so I went to the BQs
> in the hope that it would clarify the BT sub-groupings."

> The student said that he had "reversed alpha TK to TK alpha,
> because he found that more helpful" but added "you've got to
> carry a whole load of things in your head" which he had found
> problematic, until he decided he could write things down.

> After some discussion about students the researcher had
> supervised, (about differences of expectations of how to
> approach learning between supervisors and students being
> further complicated by the hierarchical nature of the
> relationship, which can put pressure on the student to
> change, rather than the supervisor), there was an exchange
> between the student and his supervisor about aspects of
> learning on the placement.

> The student said "I think the learning style you expected me
> to possess was problem-solving, starting at the top and
> working your way down to specific behaviours, which you wrote
> down more than the higher order behaviours." The supervisor
> responded as she seems to have done from the earliest part of
> the placement: "What do you mean by that?", and got the
> reply: "You wrote down specific things more than general
> things... in setting up the contract".

> The supervisor said "I wanted specific entities as a basis
> for the contract, which could be worked on and evaluated at
> the end, rather than generalities that couldn't be defined or
> evaluated very easily." "Which was appropriate" replied the
> student.

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The researcher offered some input about the importance of
being able to generalise from specific examples and being
able to use generalisations in new situations, where they may
be appropriate, and that being able to sort out levels of
generality and specificity was very important, if you were
going to be able to make use of past learning in new
situations. It seemed that there was an intervening stage of
being able to generalise from earlier experiences, and try
out the relevance of those generalisations in making sense of
the new situation.

The student responded by indicating that at the beginning of
the placement he had felt that client contracts were boring
because they were all the same. The supervisor responded:
"That's because you needed to make them individual, and
specific to that client... (it was also) tied into assessment
and planning at a more general level, so the contract related
to the assessment and where you wanted to go", indicating
that progress had been made in that area.

The researcher went on to talk about the interview with the
student, and the discussion about how the supervisor "had
made a learning assessment of you and where you were, perhaps
using her previous experience as a learner and a student...
maybe we can ask her how she did it... and what were the
indications you used as evidence?" The supervisor said that
it was to do with "how clear he was (or wasn't) about his
expectations of the final placement... (laughing, in a
self-mocking kind of way) because I'd known what I wanted
for my final placement, and thought everyone else should as
well!" The researcher added: "and explicitly, and in specific
terms!" and got the reply "Absolutely!" with laughter.

She continued: "It was also his understanding of theory and
practice of the social work process - I thought he'd know
more..." The student asked "How, in the final placement, when
I'd done some visits, and we have supervision, I said
earlier, that you'd always seemed to be one step ahead of
me", only to be told by the supervisor "That's just 'cos I'm
smarter than you!" with more laughter. The student said: "On
what basis did you assess my learning need... did you say
perhaps we are going to broaden this, or... how did you work
it out. I'm suggesting you did it like the process you went
through."

The supervisor said "Yes, I guess modelling, that was part of
it, on what my own supervisors did for me... (but) some was
just sequential, in your work with a client (she describes
phases in the work, of initial contact, making an assessment,
making a plan and sharing it with the client, and so on)...
whatever we'd talked about in supervision, by the next time
you'd done it, you'd done it well and appropriately... so
that was step by step." The student said "I've gone from A to
B on this placement... (if that were) numbered one to ten,
when we'd got to seven, how did you know eight was next...?"

The supervisor said "Most of it was intuitive, I think... but
we had goals set for the end... in the contract... so that
was the direction... In terms of whether I generalised, it
was in terms of whether I **could** generalise, if I knew my

theory well enough. There were certain points at which you couldn't handle the generalisation because you weren't far enough on in terms of your practice, and your conceptualisations, so it had to be left. But as you did more work, and perhaps read about things, something else would come together so I could introduce it at that time, make more generalisations at the time... (she restates this in different terms)."

The researcher said that offering generalisations too early for students to handle rang bells for him, and he recalled times when as an inexperienced supervisor he had been "offering generalisations too early for the student to handle... (perhaps because they had met only one or two case examples) but later in the placement, I'd have the experience of them magically telling me, now they've had three, four, five families like that, exactly the same things that three months ago they had totally denied, dismissed or ignored, and now they were saying it back to me... I began to learn that really slowly! I had to get over my irritation that they didn't learn it just 'cos I told them it three months ago. I had to recognise that people learn things because they make the patterns for themselves, and that's where generalisations come from... they don't come just because I'm suddenly aware of what generalisations they could make from (the experiences)".

The supervisor said "I agree with that, and in the placement there was a combination of both. Sometimes you (the student) could handle that, and were aware of that... it was your ability to conceptualise that lead to progress. I just tried to round it out." The student restated this in his own words, then said: "That's why you were one step ahead of me! Because I had done these bits (the specifics) and you could help me generalise."

There was further discussion around these points, and in response to the researcher, the student stressed the importance of recognising salience in making patterns and generalisations from experience.

In a closing summary, the researcher thanked the participants for contributing in three areas - research data; some development, and validating, of the researcher's conceptualisations about supervision; and in allowing him to see that a good outcome could arise from what had been potentially a very difficult situation in the placement.

A final discussion, about the involvement of the tutor, and the use of the three way sessions during the placement lead to the suggestion that she should be interviewed as well, to get a further perspective on the placement.

The tutor readily agreed, and that material is reported next. This was the only placement in which the role and involvement of the tutor was raised directly as a contribution to teaching and learning. Because the

data gathered in the primary interviews was so clear and explicit, it was decided that using that material as a case study could be enhanced by interviewing the tutor. Thus, the next section reports that interview, and raises some general questions about the role of tutors in relation to supervision.

It is evident that many of the researcher's views on the teaching and learning being described were being expressed during the joint interview, therefore there are no additional comments offered at this point. Instead, many of the more general issues which were raised by this placement are discussed in the interview with the tutor, so they are covered in the next section.

7.3.4 Interview with the Tutor; and some general comments on the findings from this placement

This interview took place shortly after the end of the placement described above, at the College where the student had completed his course. The tutor, who was very experienced in social work education, was interested to contribute to the research. The interview itself lasted about one and a half hours, and was a mixture of discussion about the individual placement, issues raised by it, and by the research more generally. Thus the format here is to follow that pattern, with a report of the interview (included as indented paragraphs) interspersed by more general considerations, as they were prompted by the interview.

> The interview began with an invitation to describe the placement chronologically, from the tutor's point of view. She described considerable problems in setting up a placement for this student, with two prior arrangements falling through in other agencies before the training officer in the agency where the placement eventually was undertaken agreed at short notice to provide another placement for this student, who in his first year had been placed in another office in the same

authority. The student had been asking for a further placement in a social services department, after some criticisms of his work last year. The tutor described the student as "bright, very bright (ie intelligent), but incredibly backward, unaccountably backward... and needing (as a supervisor) someone who could cope with him intellectually." The tutor described the first three-way meeting at the college, "..when (the supervisor) came with a great many questions", including according to the tutor, questions about why the student was "so backward" (tutor's use of language), "why does he want another social services placement?... and by implication, are you landing me with a failing student?"

None of this problem about finding a placement had emerged in the earlier interviews, nor any suggestion that the student was under-performing, and had not done well on his previous placement. The supervisor and student had both pointed to a lack of specificity, and uncertainty on the student's and tutor's part about the purpose of the placement. In this connection, the attempt by the supervisor to clarify things at the beginning was an attempt to sort out some of this lack of clarity.

The tutor continued by saying "(The supervisor) was trying to tease out what (he) wanted to learn, and was trying to set objectives for the placement... (his) communication skills were horrible... (She) was writing a lot down... I was really rather impressed, thinking here's someone who might get to grips with (him), and I said so to her...(He)'s a puzzle to me... so many things didn't add up... the first successful ingredient in the placement was that (she) was totally puzzled and asked questions..."

The researcher asked what was the nature of the student's problems at that stage, and was told "he was very inarticulate in tutorials... I was making no progress in helping this student to clarify what he had to learn... we (the course staff) tended to blame the seconding department... (because of problems with a previous student from that agency)... he was a Level Two social worker, and he's bright, but he's incompetent. I was questioning his motivation for social work, wondering why he was in social work at all... did he have the capacity... he had his own frame of reference, and he rejected psycho-dynamic approaches... his first year placement, he had a very poor assessment, he had a social control model, there were some cases he closed very early... I think (this supervisor) underestimated how bad (he) was."

The researcher asked how he had passed the year one assessment if he was so limited, and was told "It's a good question... it was very short, only eleven weeks... no, he wasn't failing, but he wasn't quite achieving... I thought

> his first supervisor had done quite well in challenging, stopping him in his tracks... he wasn't that marginal, it was a poorly written report... I think a lot of our students in the first year are marginal... we've never had someone failed a first year placement... he's bright (and people say) he's a nice guy."
>
> The researcher said "I think it's often described as a learning, or developmental problem, in the first year rather than failing... it tends to be put off to the second year." The tutor said "I don't think you **can** fail a first year placement."

This exchange points to the more general problem of practice assessment - there is little clarity about what should be expected of students at the end of a first year placement. There are some extraordinary terms (derived from the classical model?) which the tutor uses to describe the student, like "incredibly backward, unaccountably backward" and "he was very inarticulate in tutorials" the tutor thought "no, he wasn't failing, but he wasn't quite achieving." and "he wasn't that marginal, it was a poorly written report." This, of course, is an assessment of the supervisor, not the student. It reflects a general criticism of practice assessment that students are passed unless there is evidence to fail them, rather than be failed unless there is evidence to pass them (Brandon and Davies, 1979). The interview continued.

> "(He) was a person not able to talk about himself... he didn't know what he wanted to learn." "I was put on my mettle. (The supervisor) was making demands on me, in a positive way. She was **quite anxious**, it was her first student... (as a result of her pressure) I had to deliver the goods but I didn't know what they'd be... "(She) wrote out the contract."
>
> At the three-way meeting in the middle of the placement, there had been a discussion about the student's lack of competence (rather than what his first year supervisor had described as a lack of confidence). After some pressing by the researcher, about the tutor's view of an adequate workload for a student, the tutor said "(the supervisor) **taught** him the social work process, which we had failed to do... she has an exceptionally good grasp, she must have been **well-taught**, I guess (her course) was better than ours." "She comes across in a way that she really knows what she's doing in a way that a lot of supervisors don't. She'd got it well together and **taught** it to him." The researcher asked "How?" The tutor said "By quite a lot of direct **teaching**, and analysis before (the student) went out in terms of where he was in the process." (emphases added)

The added emphases here make the point about use of language which we identified in the review of the traditional literature on supervision, where the focus was on **teaching and what was taught,** rather than on **learning and what was learnt.** The tutor described a change in the way the college had taught social work to this group of students, and acknowledged that perhaps students had not grasped essentials. Her model is to describe this student's learning in terms of the supervisor's **teaching** (positively), and college **teaching** (negatively). However, it would seem from the evidence of the individual interviews, and the joint interview, that it was the supervisor's attention to the student's **learning** processes, and particularly to the timing of her contributions in relation to her assessment of his stage of learning, that was a major factor in the outcome of the placement.

It is also worth considering how the tutor viewed this first time supervisor - there are some indications that she was surprised about the supervisor's competence in the role, and she ascribes this to the supervisor having been **well-taught** herself. The social work education literature after this placement took place gives some support for the view that it is a **learning** focus, rather than a **teaching** focus which is critical in helping students to learn effectively, and to learn how they learn, so they can take responsiblity for their own learning (eg Gardiner, 1984b; Gray, 1985). These ideas are discussed further and developed in Chapter Eight.

This interpretation is further borne out by the tutor's description of the student seeing his role as a passive learner, trying to meet the expectations of others:

> "He said at the end that he was playing games, trying to
> fulfil the expectations of others... in tutorials he was
> trying to meet my expectations... his approach was

revolutionised in the placement, by (the supervisor)
appearing human, real and in need... (he) could get out of
being the student, they were both out of role... (because)
she was a highly professional person and teacher (it lead to
him getting) his personal and professional side of himself
together... he said that the crisis forced him to adopt new
coping strategies ...(and) less direct teaching forced him to
work things out for himself."

There followed an exchange which was more discursive, and
involved the researcher reflecting on his experience as a
supervisor, and some of the findings of the present research,
which was offered to the tutor in a way which allowed her to
reframe some of her descriptions, especially in relation to
stages of development of students, and the importance of the
learning process. The tutor acknowledged the validity of
this, and began to relate them to the placement under
discussion. They are not detailed here partly because they
raise more general issues dealt with elsewhere, and partly
for reasons of maintaining the confidentiality of the course
and tutor.

In essence, some of the debate was about the ways in which students
view the learning expected of them, and the consequent role they expect
to play in that learning. In this instance, the student entered the
final placement still with a clear expectation that he should be the
passive recipient of teaching, and that his task was to fit in with the
expectations of his teachers. This had apparently been reinforced
during his previous placements, in college teaching, and in tutorials.

This is perhaps connected with how his instrumental and mechanistic
view of social work, without any personal involvement, had persisted
until the middle of this placement. As he became aware of the need to
be more involved in one domain (learning), so he was able to develop
similarly in the other (practice). The placement saw the development of
the student's conception of the learning process from one where he saw
learning as something external, which happened to him, towards learning
as something which involved him, and became part of him. This change
echoes the steps in the development of the learning process which we
have described earlier (Saljo, 1979); and is one which shifts the focus
of attention in learning from **content** to **process.**

In parallel, the supervisor allowed and encouraged this development, even before the death in the office crystallised and confirmed the process. At this stage in the research, it was becoming clear that if the supervisor had not herself already reached the stage of being able to conceptualise the learning processes in terms at least as far as the student was now reaching, it may seriously have hampered his progress. A very good example of this constraining impact of the supervisor's conception of the learning task is given as the next case illustration, where the supervisor's expectations throughout the placement described appear to be a mirror reflection of the expectations of the present student at the beginning of this placement – as we shall see, it was narrow, directive, and focussed on teaching, and what was to be taught.

At this point, we can see the need to pay attention to the stage which the supervisor has reached as a teacher (and that this is related to the stage they have reached in their conceptions and understanding of learning). The supervisor in this case study had a mature conception of the learning required of professional social work students, and thus was able to make an informed judgement about where the student had reached in his stage of learning, as well as his practice competence. Although she was very explicit about many aspects of the placement, it should be noted that this was one area where she described her response as "intuitive" and clearly based on an internalised understanding of conceptions of learning. She was not easily able to conceptualise these features after a single experience of supervising a professional placement. It was decided to follow her up after she had next supervised a student to see whether it was possible to find further evidence of these stages of development as a teacher. She did indeed show that she could be much less directive, and less prescriptive, with

a more able student.

In returning to the interview with the tutor, the discussion moved on to the point where the researcher offered a routine opportunity to say whether there were other things which the tutor wished to talk about which had not previously been covered. She said that she wanted to talk about the unjustified criticism of the first year supervisor, contained in this supervisor's placement report:

> "I want to say something about (the supervisor's) criticism of the year one supervisor..." The researcher said "Perhaps it was something to do with different styles of the two supervisors?" "Yes, (the other one) was much less intellectual than (this supervisor), **less able to teach** than (her)... if she had been the second year supervisor as well, they wouldn't have got much further..." (emphasis added).

This exchange reflects the tutor apparently contradicting herself, by at first thinking the criticism was unjust, but then giving the reasons why it could be fair criticism. During that exchange, I gained the distinct impression that the tutor felt that she too was implicitly being criticised for failing to confront the student, and then help him to move on. This view is reinforced by a later exchange in the interview:

> "He was very difficult... thank goodness I was his tutor for two years (normal practice was to change at the end of the first year)... It wasn't really until (the supervisor) came along... (it was) her really strong questioning of obvious things that didn't add up..." The researcher said "(The supervisor) had avoided over-teaching in the second half of the placement as (the student) took more responsibility for his learning, unlike some supervisors..." The tutor was reluctant to acknowledge this, feeling that as a new supervisor,"(she) was only forced out of a pattern of direct teaching by the death in the office, and by being forced out of pattern to be seen as a human being". The researcher said that there was enough evidence in the other interviews to indicate that the shift in teaching and learning, in the supervisory relationship, had already begun before the death, and that it had only crystallised out what was starting to happen anyway. The tutor said she thought "(the supervisor) was only not over-teaching intuitively."

This exchange shows the extent to which the researcher is not a passive, and detached observer, but is directly offering evidence to

the tutor about the placement (gleaned from the interviews) to challenge the tutor's conception of events. It is worth emphasising here that both student and supervisor had explicitly given permission for anything which had been covered in the interviews to be discussed both in the joint session, and in the interview with the tutor.

It is arguable here that the researcher got drawn into challenging the tutor's belief that her perceptions in such situations was inevitably more 'real' than those directly involved. This view, as we have seen, is characteristic of the classical model in the literature, where tutors have traditionally set themselves up to be arbiters of reality and fantasy in the supervisory relationship, even when they were not present (Garrett, 1954).

The interview with the tutor ended with a discussion of ideas about how students are enabled to generalise their experiences, and how they make use of generalised teaching from college when they are on placements. The ideas contained within this debate (and elsewhere) were shortly afterwards presented at the Annual Conference for the Association of Teachers in Social Work Education, and subsequently published (Gardiner, 1984b). This paper is included here as Appendix A. These ideas are also discussed at greater length in Chapter Eight.

Before moving on to other case illustrations, which are presented in less detail, the findings of the present case study are summarised in terms which take forward our thinking about the teaching and learning processes of supervision, and which begin the process of model building grounded in the data of this study.

7.3.5 Some Interpretations, and Key Themes - First Steps to Model Building

There are a number of themes derived from this case example which are of major importance to us. They contribute substantially to the theory-building process, and are considered here in some detail, to identify and generalise from features of this placement which recur elsewhere in the study. The data include evidence of the persistence of the classical model of supervision, of the movement and change in the patterns of the supervisory relationship, and of the use of the three way sessions for feedback and developing interpretations of the data which contribute to the beginning categorisation of students and supervisors. We shall consider these points successively.

7.3.5.1 The persistence of the classical model

The persistence of the language and concepts of the classical supervision model is demonstrated in the interview with the tutor, which shows a number of the central features of the model which we have earlier identified. These include the focus on teaching, the pathologising of the learner, and the limited expectations tutors have of new supervisors. This very experienced tutor seems to have internalised many of the assumptions and expectations contained in the classical literature:

The focus on teaching

"...the tutor said "(the supervisor) **taught** him the social work process, which we had failed to do... she has an exceptionally good grasp, she must have been **well-taught**, I guess (her course) was better than ours." "She comes across in a way that she really knows what she's doing in a way that a lot of supervisors don't. She'd got it well together and **taught** it to him." The researcher asked "How?" the tutor said "By quite a lot of direct **teaching**..." (emphases added).

The pathologising of the learner

"The tutor described the student as ´bright, very bright (ie intelligent), but incredibly backward, unaccountably backward... and needing (as a supervisor) someone who could cope with him intellectually... (his) communication skills were horrible... (She) was writing a lot down... I was really rather impressed, thinking here´s someone who might get to grips with (him), and I said so to her...(He´s) a puzzle to me... so many things didn´t add up."

Tutors´ expectations of new supervisors

"I think (the supervisor) underestimated how bad (he) was... (the supervisor) was forced out of a pattern of direct teaching by a death in the office... she was only not over-teaching intuitively..."

7.3.5.2 Movement and change in the supervisory relationship

Changes in the pattern of interaction between student and the supervisor during the various phases of the placement are evident. The term ´phase´ is used to here to describe periods during the placement, although they are not specifically defined in time. We shall use the term ´stage´ to reflect the conceptions of learning which students and supervisors have when we are trying to generate conceptualisations and frameworks which apply to other students and supervisors. These stages are now illustrated from the placement we have just described.

Students´ conceptions of learning - stages of development

At the beginning of the placement, the student was not very good at spelling out his learning needs, and he expected someone else to take the initiative and responsibility for his learning. He was a **passive learner** and saw **learning as something which would happen to him**. He saw his **supervisor as having expertise** (as a social worker), and **authority** (derived from expertise, and her power to pass or fail him). This position reminds us of some early positions in Perry´s scheme of development (Perry, 1970), and of surface conceptions of learning (Saljo, 1979). The student decided at that point that **he would do what**

the supervisor required of him in order that he should pass. He expected to **learn first and do things (ie. apply learning) afterwards**. This position seems also to be associated for this student with an **instrumental/mechanistic model of social work practice** which avoids involvement in and with his cases.

We might tentatively use these emphasised components as **Stage One** in a scheme we might derive from these data. This position seems to be associated with a belief in a single, Right Way to learn (and, in the practice domain, with the belief that there is a single, Right Way to practise) - both of which minimise personal risk and involvement in the process.

The student moved during the placement to seeing more **active involvement in his own learning** as important, and he now sees himself as better at this. He says that **he would not be passive in future, and would not give such responsibility to others**. This is evidenced by his preparations for returning to his employing authority. Some of this movement has come about as a result of explicit discussions in supervision about power and authority, and a decision by the student to trust his supervisor that she would not unreasonably fail him, and that she would give him continuous feedback on his performance during the placement. **The recognition that he had power** (to pass and fail) as a result of his performance seems to have contributed to his increased involvement in his learning and in his practice. The realisation that there might be **other ways to approach learning**, followed by the **attempt to use another approach** seem to be important features of **Stage Two.**

This stage also seems to have parallel changes in the practice domain - the student made important changes following his changed conceptions of

learning. First, he felt able to bring more warmth and caring into his practice, which meant that he was less detached from his clients, and did more sensitive work with them. Second, he began to develop **alternative frames of reference in assessment and intervention with his clients.**

In this second stage, the student was still reliant to some extent on his tutor and supervisor to reinforce and validate these changed approaches, so we can describe them as **increased involvement in his learning, and in his practice, but not complete autonomy**. A further feature seems to have been increased confidence for the student, and real enjoyment in his work and in his learning.

Supervisors' conceptions of learning – stages of development

Thus far in this section we have described the changes from the point of view of the student, but it is also possible to descibe them from the point of view of the supervisor. She began by looking for clarity and explicitness which she modelled in drawing up the contract. She appeared to expect that the student's **learning would arise from doing** things, whereas he expected a model of learning things first, and doing things afterwards.

These differences in their conceptions of the learning process also demonstrate the difference between active and passive learning. They were confirmed by the findings of the Clobbits exercise, where the student had difficulty in holding a large number of variables/hypotheses in his head, which Pask suggests relates to the lower risk-taking of serialist strategies. The supervisor used a holist approach, and was able to tolerate a higher degree of uncertainty in

her learning. Learning from one's own practice experience in social work is, in these terms, a holist, and active kind of learning activity which the supervisor sees as necessary if one is to build up generalisations from the patterns of one's practice.

The supervisor here made an assessment of the student's competence early on and, like the supervisor in the single case study, became more **directive in her teaching,** until she was sure that the student was able to function competently with clients. This pattern **allowed the student to be dependant** on the direction of his supervisor initially, but her demands for explicitness, and for specificity, seem to have produced a crisis, and lead to the debate about power in the relationship. Later in the placement, we saw the supervisor increasingly **encouraging the student to take responsibility for determining the use of supervision,** and for **making decisions in his cases.**

If we were to characterise the elements of the placement then we would see, in **Stage One,** a more traditional, directive teacher, taking responsibility to assure herself of the student's current level of functioning before encouraging him to be more actively involved in his own learning. In **Stage Two,** we see her demonstrating that there are other ways to teach, and other ways to learn, and she becomes less directive once she is reasonably sure of the student's competence.

In the second half of the placement, the supervisor demonstrated that teachers need to develop a repertoire of approaches to respond to differing needs of the student at different points - thus sometimes she provided direct teaching when it was required (eg. in relation to the sculpting incident) and sometimes helped the student to recognise patterns and to generalise his experiences (eg. in the discussion in

the feedback interview). The role of the supervisor in this placement and the interactive patterns confirm a more general point made by Entwistle (1987):

> "Lecturers thus play a crucial role, not just in transmitting information efficiently, but also in transforming ways of learning which would otherwise prevent personal understanding being attempted, let alone achieved. What students perceive as good ´teaching´ will, of course, depend on their own conceptions of learning..."

This will be true for teachers, as well as for students. Another feature of the supervisor´s teaching approach was the recognition that she was not an expert in everything, and therefore she was willing to encourage the student to learn from other members of the office team - especially in relation to those areas of her work where she was less experienced. Such an approach could be seen as a relatively early position in thinking about teaching and learning (using Other Experts as Authorities), but in this case it is associated with the encouragement of reciprocity, with the student contributing to the team in relation to new legislation which he had studied in college.

This valuing and giving status to the student is a further example of her empowering him, following the supervision discussion about trust and power. Her confidence in her role, and her lack of feeling threatened by the student is exemplified in the feedback discussion by her use of humour in responding to his questions about how she knew what the next steps in his learning should be "That´s just ´cos I´m smarter than you!" The supervisor in the single case study seemed to be more threatened at times by her student, and retained rather tighter control in supervision.

It would not be proper to leave this discussion about movement and change in the placement without reference to the impact of the death of the social worker who had been a member of the team until her illness.

Clearly it had a significant impact on the team, and on the placement. However, careful questioning in the interviews would suggest that although its impact was to crystallise out many of the changes which were in train rather more quickly than might otherwise have been the case, it is evident that it was not that crisis alone which precipitated those changes. The key discussions about authority, in supervision, and the changes (in how the supervisor and student seemed already to be operating) were underway at the time of the death.

The choice of teaching approach shown by the supervisor, and her response to her changing perception of the student's learning needs could be argued as merely substituting one right way for another (as the tutor appeared to believe). Therefore, later in the study, it was decided to follow up this supervisor when she next supervised to consider whether she could indeed demonstrate a repertoire of teaching approaches, and with more than one student, in other than the circumstances of this particular placement. This was done, more than two years later, after she had next supervised a student. It is reported in the next chapter, but here we can note that the diversity of approach was maintained, with some evidence of her increased confidence in less a directive, more democratic relationship from an early point in the placement. It is indicative of the difficulty of developing supervisory skills in social work education that this promising new supervisor did not have another student for more than two years after the end of the placement reported here.

7.3.5.3 The use of the feedback sessions and the extension of data gathering

The value of the feedback sessions after the initial interviews, and the importance of tape-recording such sessions is demonstrated in this case. The material shows that the researcher was able to check out some of the descriptions and interpretations, and extend them in the joint discussions:

> "The researcher ... went on to talk about the interview with the student, and the discussion about how the supervisor `had made a learning assessment of you and where you were, perhaps using her previous experience as a learner and a student... maybe we can ask her how she did it... and what were the indications you used as evidence?`"

The feedback sessions also allowed the development of the thinking during the study to be checked out with those who were interviewed immediately after their interviews. The interviewees were also able to contribute to the conceptualisations and interpretations in this way. A good example of this activity is the discussion about helping students to be less general and more specific/explicit at some points, and to generalise from their particular experiences at others. These two elements of the learning process - the generalisation of individual experience based on the recognition of patterns and commonalities in both work and learning, together with the application of those generalisations in new and different situations are key conceptual skills in helping to prepare students for professional practice (where the situations in which they will be called upon to intervene will be more varied than those they can meet during professional training).

Here the supervisor emphasises the importance of the timing of the help which a supervisor can offer in this process. At the beginning of the placement she helped the student to be less general, and more specific.

Later, she helped the student to generalise his experiences:

> "In terms of whether I generalised, it was in terms of whether I could generalise, if I knew my theory well enough. There were certain points at which you couldn't handle the generalisation, because you weren't far enough on in your practice, and your conceptualisations so it had to be left. But as you did more work, and perhaps read about things, something would come together so I could introduce it at that time, make more generalisations at that time..."

There is some evidence in the material gathered that this process did indeed enable the student to transfer his learning into different areas of practice - between client groups (working with the elderly and with whole families), with different methods of intervention (group work and residential work), and in his preparation for moving from the course back to his employing agency.

We have discussed above the value of extending the general method of collecting data to include the joint feedback interview, but this case example shows a further extension - both student and supervisor emphasised the importance of the meetings with the college tutor as providing important opportunities to extend their understanding of events in supervision, and this lead to the decision the the tutor should also be interviewed, even though such data were not originally included in the research design, neither are they collected in relation to other placements.

7.3.5.4 The impact of assessment on learning

We have seen, in the review of research into adult learning (Laurillard, 1978; Saljo, 1979) that assessment and other contextual factors can have a significant impact on the nature and quality of student learning. The placement just described, and the earlier single case study, give evidence of the constraining effect which the supervisors' doubts about the students' competence had on the teaching and learning processes by moving the supervisors involved towards more

directive teaching whilst the doubts remained.

We turn now to a number of other case examples (generally reported in rather less detail than this first one), and look at the extent to which the preliminary statement of **stages of learning** for students and supervisors outlined above can contribute to our understanding of the experiences described. The next case example is a particularly striking illustration of the reciprocal influence of assessment and learning processes, where an experienced supervisor with a traditional approach to teaching is supervising a student who fails.

7.4 Case Illustration II - A Failed Placement

This case illustration is of a very experienced supervisor in a placement with a failing student. It is presented here as an example of what happens when the problems for teacher and student in working together eventually contribute to a premature end to the placement, the student fails, and leaves social work altogether. Therefore, uniquely in this study, there is no matching interview of the student. This full-time supervisor had come to social work as a mature student, in a second career. The role involves supervising some students who are not working in the supervisor's own place of work.

The placement which is the basis of the interview had ended shortly before. The supervisor chose this placement to be interviewed about, even though he had other current placements which he could have discussed. This supervisor was one of those who had completed the questionnaire in Stage One of the study, and who was followed up as a result. His responses to the questionnaire are as No 2 in section 4.2, and he also completed the Clobbits exercise. The results of both exercises are discussed later. The student was undertaking an additional placement, having previously failed his final placement on a University post-graduate course. A full account of the data gathered in this interview is given in Appendix B. Here the interview is discussed in relation to the issues raised during and by it.

These comments are generally related to the sequence of points raised in the interview, but in some instances are clustered together to allow the development of more general points.

7.4.1 The student's "pathology" and the traditional approach to social work practice and supervision

The interview began with the supervisor describing the difficulties at the start of the placement. He had chosen to talk about this placement because he felt it had been an important learning experience for him, and had ended recently. He twice describes the student as **"a lad"**, even though he was thirty six years old. It perhaps indicates how the supervisor saw the student, and his role.

The supervisor begins to describe his early impressions of the student and then goes on to talk about things which "were particular difficulties for him (ie the student)":

> "Really, I felt, given the kinds of reports he came with, he did very well... yes, I can remember my words ´you are doing (pause) all right, you are doing very well´..."

> "The two things that I think were particular difficulties for him were the fact that he felt the kind of developmental, Freudian approach was meaningless, he couldn´t see that he needed that, that it was relevant to the work he was being asked to do..."

It is interesting to note that the supervisor is offering this comment as an indication of difficulties **for the student,** but is in fact describing a difference of view between himself and the student about the value of one particular approach to social work – the ´Freudian approach´. This kind of approach would, these days, be generally considered as a traditional, and very dated approach to social work, reflecting the traditions identified in the review of literature in social work education earlier.

However, leaving on aside the fact that this would, at the least, seem to be a matter for debate, it is difficult to see in the rest of the interview any examples of work he was to undertake where the student

could or should have employed such an approach. A large proportion of his workload seems to have been the preparation of reports on families for the courts, where a 'Freudian approach' does not seem to be especially appropriate.

It is possible, of course, to explain the exchange in a different way. The model used by the supervisor locates cause, and responsibility, for the 'difficulty' with (or within) the student. The supervisor clearly takes for granted the relevance of such an approach, and does not appear to offer the student any room to take alternative approaches, nor even to explore them. There is one right way to approach social work for this supervisor, and it is by 'the Freudian approach'.

The lack of space for diversity of practice approaches seems in sharp contrast with the position we described in the previous case example. There, the supervisor encouraged the student to take risks in trying out new approaches to his work, offered some alternative strategies when the student had made a client assessment, and offered specific teaching to back up the student's choice when he needed further help. There seems to be an important distinction here between a focus on the expectation that there is a single, right way to practise and the recognition (and encouragement) of diversity and some degree of student choice in response to his assessment of client need. This distinction between a single, right way and the recognition of legitimate diversity, reflected stages of development for the student in the previous case illustration, and we find other examples in our data.

However, this supervisor does not seem to have reached that stage himself as a learner, and we find overwhelming evidence of this in the multiple ways we have collected data about his views on supervision, and learning.

If one abandons the individual focus, and pathological/deficit model for clients, and for students, it is possible to see differences of approach between supervisors and students in a new light. Within an interactive, rather than one-person paradigm, it would be possible to describe these differences of approach to practice as a mis-match of styles or stages between the student and the supervisor. This point is developed further in a later section, but the interview shows how the mis-match in this placement lead the supervisor to wonder whether he himself might need a social worker:

> "...the team leader didn't provide this. I felt I almost needed a social worker there, to use that anger, and see why the student was so angry..."

The reliance on another, to help with his learning also seems to characterise this supervisor, and this reiterates the points we made about the questionnaire exercise where some supervisors needed another person to help them with significant learning.

7.4.2 Assessment of practice competence

The supervisor goes on to describe a further 'difficulty' in similar ways:

> "The other one was... the criterion 'practice must submit to the discipline of result' and this got him very worried, because he said 'what if my clients don't show any results'..."

The 'difficulty' here is of the same kind: the supervisor is asserting a position which he believes to be the right one. The student does not appear to agree, and this is seen as a difficulty the student has. There were examples of this kind of problem in the descriptions of the researcher's own student experience in Chapter Two. The previous case study showed that when such differences occurred, and they were given explicit attention in supervision, some agreements could be reached, with productive outcomes.

This issue, of the student's difference of approach being interpreted as pathology, is not at all uncommon anecdotally amongst groups of students, or their practice teachers, although the literature is scanty in this particular area. There are some published works which shed light on this kind of problem though. Whittington and Holland (1985) point to the difficulties which can arise from the student and supervisor having different implicit models and assumptions about the activity of social work itself. They see the making explicit of assumptions as "an objective of each student embarking on qualifying training" and they continue, later:

> "In making sense of situations we impose ideas or constructs on those situations... (and) it has long been plain that there is no theoretical concensus in social work. The absence of theoretical concensus disqualifies theoretical 'training' or apprenticeship; instead the plurality of theories in contemporary social work and the conflicts between them necessitate 'education' for students, and again, exploratory roles for the participants (ie tutors, supervisors and students)."

The kind of social situation in which this student and practice teacher find themselves can also be understood by beginning to disentangle some of the expectations each has about the situation. The supervisor knows that the student has failed, previously, and therefore sees him as different, or special. Similarly, the student knows that this is his last chance to pass and qualify for his chosen profession. Laing (1969) describes the ways in which people can be type-cast into playing particular kinds of roles in families and other social situations in this kind of way - by a mis-attribution or expectation of pathology which arises from one person acts differently from how others expect him to act. We have described this process in detail elsewhere (Gardiner, 1972), in relation to working with families, but there is little that explicitly addresses this kind of problem in the supervision literature. On the contrary, as we have seen, the classical literature tends to pathologise and attribute responsibility for any

mis-match of expectations to the student.

It may be in future that major contributions in this area will come from black students. At the time of writing there is concern about the assessment of black students, especially where the development of black perspectives on social work represent a fundamental challenge to prevailing orthodoxy.

The supervisor talked about the need for "practice to submit to the discipline of result" as though social work intervention had been demonstrably shown to have specific and quantifiable effects on clients. This is not the case, as recent research into the effectiveness of social work amply demonstrates (eg Sheldon, 1986), and there is widespread recognition that social work can have other beneficial outcomes in addition to client change - for example, care and maintainence of a situation which might otherwise have worsened.

The supervisor felt that if clients don´t change, then the social work input is "a waste of time", and that this would be an indication "that something was wrong" with the student. However, social work intervention in this placement seems to have consisted largely of assessing family situations and providing reports for courts. In such situations, client change might not be the best indication of the quality or effectiveness of the social work undertaken.

As the interview continues, the supervisor goes on to describe his expectation about **when it is possible to evaluate a placement**:

> "In the working agreement, it had been made quite clear, and
> I do see this as a general practice, that it would not be
> possible to say until fairly close to the end of it whether
> the student was passing it or failing the placement."

Later in the interview, his description of the process which is

actually gone through seems to contradict this assertion, as did a comment that the agency would only allow the supervisor to commit himself to a placement of sixty days, with an assessment then, before agreeing to a full one hundred and twenty day placement.

Clarity about the nature and methods of assessment is essential, not only in terms of fairness and justice for the students, but also in relation to the impact which the assessment of learning has on the student's approach to that learning. As we have seen, Saljo (1976) has shown the impact of the student's perceptions of the assessment process on how he sees the learning task, and therefore the approach which he uses. One can only conjecture the position the student feels himself to be in where he has already failed his final course placement, and now on appeal is allowed one further opportunity to pass the course, and to continue in his chosen profession. The timing of the assessment seems unclear, and the supervisor has a value position in relation to methods of working, and the outcomes of work which conflict with those of the student. It felt, during this description of events, that the cards were being stacked against the student before the placement had really begun - which led the interviewer to intervene for the first time at that point in the interview, and ask what the student was meant to be learning on the placement:

> "In the working agreement, we had spelt out the areas in which he was going to be assessed, and I really do that from the stages of the social work process, so I've really got eight stages... number one is that you have to show you can conduct interviews, gather information, and make relationships... number two, and here I would quarrel a little bit with the CCETSW Guidelines, because they don't seem to me to be in any logical order... (He continued with eight such areas).

The reference to the CCETSW Guidelines is an interesting one, because they describe a number of areas in which students must demonstrate competence during the course (CCETSW, 1981). In no sense can they be

construed as being in sequential order, because they describe things of very different levels of generality and specificity, and of overlapping focus. For example, some relate to knowledge about the law, and social welfare provisions, others describe core social work skills.

The search for order by this supervisor is by no means unusual - indeed we all try to order and frame our experiences. However, his comment about the CCETSW Guidelines is interesting when considered alongside his approach to the Clobbits learning styles exercise in which he (uniquely of those completing it during the present study) attempted the exercise in a completely sequential way. It should be recalled that this exercise involves selecting cards from sets of materials which provide information about a fictitious taxonomy, which the subjects are required to learn. This supervisor began by looking at card A1, then A2, A3, A4, etc, then at B1, B2, B3, B4 etc, right through to the final card E5, because he thought that the numbering and lettering of the cards in sequence showed that was the right way to do it.

In turning to the student's performance, the supervisor described how the student was progressing in relation to "the eight stages of the social work process", which the supervisor sees the student as needing to accomplish, and in order:

> "It seemed from the kind of feedback I was getting, that number one was OK, he was showing that he had certain skills... I tend to see knowledge as informing all of those eight stages, and that is how I try to link in his knowledge from his University course... (which includes) "the principles of casework that Butrym picks up from Biestek... he had some skill in it and was at least proceding satisfactorily for that stage of the placement..."

Here, the supervisor seems to assume that all cases will last to the end of the placement, and that the student's work will progress sequentially through the stages described. Unfortunately, perhaps, clients of social workers rarely act with such predictability, and

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circumstances change so that termination, and evaluation of work undertaken, might be necessary after only a small number of contacts. However, the student does not seem to be required to be able to evaluate his work until towards the end of the placement, because evaluation is apparently towards the end of the eight stages. He has, of course, previously worked in social services agencies before joining the course, and no doubt has previously terminated cases. What is happening here is the supervisor's adherence to a model of supervison, to a model of assessment and to a model of social work intervention which he considers to be right.

7.4.3 The learning and teaching processes

The supervisor said that the student apparently brought back a good deal of undifferentiated material in his reports:

> "We ran into difficulties straight away because he had a lot of difficulties separating what was relevant from what was not relevant, you'd just get a mass of material..."

This supervisor sees this as "difficulties" but the supervisor in the previous case study saw such material as an indication that the student needed help to recognise commonalities, and patterns in his work, so he could begin to generalise; and she described the importance of timing such teaching. It is also worth noting that in the joint interview in the previous case study, it was the student who pointed out to the researcher the importance of deciding on salience of material before making patterns and generalisations from experiences. This supervisor, with a focus on what was to be taught, did not see it as part of his role to help the student in the process of learning - by giving attention to salience, patterns, and so on, so that he could build up his own 'theory'.

The supervisor described the student as "demanding", and as he did so,

I reflected that there had been only one intervention to that point, (about ten minutes into the interview) and wondered whether this was how supervision was conducted, with the student as a passive listener for long periods:

> "I´m different here with this student, usually just an hour a week, but with this lad, I spent an hour and a half a week and other occasions as well - so he demanded a lot of time, he couldn´t understand why he was a demanding student..."

Again, a comparison with the previous case example is instructive - there was usually supervision for one and a half to two hours, and the supervisor felt that she was not pulling her full weight after the death of her colleague when she could **only** see the student during supervision sessions.

The next part of this interview illuminates the supervisor´s teaching approach:

> "So we had difficulties with the writing, I had to **rewrite** two social enquiry reports, and I was quite prepared to do that because I thought that **it is from this that he quite hopefully is learning**, and I was interested to see what he did learn... He produced a quite impressive list - of ten points - of what he did learn. He had other reports to do, and **those began to need less correction...**" (emphases added).

The supervisor has a model, apparently, of the teacher as an expert, and of the student as an apprentice, which is interesting in the light of Whittington and Holland´s view quoted above. There is also a little of the school-teacher here in the use of terms like "rewrite", and "need less correction". The student was even criticised for cue-seeking, using other social enquiry reports as a model, to get things ´right´ in the eyes of the supervior:

> "... He was trying to copy from previous reports, trying to get it right, but he hadn´t got the imagination..."

This point was evident in the next part of the interview:

> "So the writing work was improving. Aha, this was relevant here. He couldn´t write in a legible way, at least I couldn´t read it, it really was very poor. So he used to type, but because that was disturbing to the social worker with whom he

> used to share, so he used to type at home at nights... That
> was a real difficulty, but as he settled down, his writing
> improved, became quite legible, but that wasn't until after
> the first three months..." (and as an aside, almost
> confidentially) "I think that was a **measure of his
> disturbance"**. (emphasis added)

The supervisor again stresses that he thinks not only that there is

something wrong, but that **there is something wrong with the student**

which is **"a measure of his disturbance"**. It seems as if he sees the

student as a client, with "his difficulties", and "his disturbance",

and, later he and the tutor had wondered "is he mad?" This

pathologising of the student loudly echoes the model in the traditional

supervision literature, where any problem in supervision, or the

placement as a whole is assumed to be the responsibility of the

student, and raises doubts about his "educability" (Towle, 1954).

The special problems of students who are required to repeat part of

their course become graphically clear:

> "Then when I came back, the student said he was terribly
> tired, and I mean it really was an unhappy situation, because
> he hadn't got a course he could relate to, he was living in
> the University Hall, pretty much on his own, he didn't have
> friends here, he said I've got to go back (to his home
> town)."

But, despite these pressures, the student is expected to cope with some

addititional work, with short deadlines, and explicit threat of

failure. Not only do we see the supervisor acting as a traditional

teacher, but using his Authority in a controlling way:

> "(To see how he worked under pressure) I asked him to take on
> two more reports, he refused. I said if you don't, you'll
> fail the placement. He said that was an inappropriate comment
> after all the work he'd done. I did admit that... we got (the
> tutor) in to try to sort it all out, but I think from that
> stage, anger began to build up..."

The supervisor persists with his model of teaching, and seeks

reinforcement in this from the other social workers in the team:

> "(He did) two more reports, of these the first was not too
> bad, the next one was quite unacceptable, and I checked it
> out with three other seniors... so that I wasn't being

arbitrary, so we had a concensus. So I rewrote it."

"... they felt everything he did was in a learning stage, that there was no evidence of his applying learning and knowledge that he had. They felt his contributions in the team had been inappropriate (for example) he wrote up his views on a case that two other social workers had been discussing in the office. It made them very, very angry."

Again, it is possible to interpret these events in other ways than evidence of the student's pathology - the model of 'applying learning and knowledge' is a traditional one in education generally, and assumes a relationship between theory and practice which is close to the classical scientific one (ie that what one learns in theory, or in college, can be applied in the real world, in practice placements).

The relationship between theory and practice in social work is not really like that in terms of precision and fit, because the number of variables in real-world social situations is not encompassed in any social work theory. There is also, as we have seen, no clarity of assumptions in social work theory, and therefore no possibility of apprenticeship training (Whittington and Holland, 1985).

In other words, there is is no situation in which one can say that a particular theory can be applied, and generate a specific prescription for action. Instead, in social work, there is a need for practitioners to be able to generate their own practice theory which emerges from their own practice (Hardiker and Barker, 1981).

There is also the need to be able to use that theory, or at least generalisations derived from one's own practice experience, in new and different practice situations. Thus the ability to transfer learning derived from one practice situation (appropriately) to a new practice

situation is a core skill. This is demonstrated by the requirements for

CQSW courses (CCETSW, 1981) and in the literature (Gardiner, 1984b;

Harris 1985; Gray, 1985; Badger, 1985; Whittington, 1986).

The interviewer decided to change tack, in a way which directly

addresses some of the problems on the placement by trying to focus on

the possibility of doing things in other ways:

> (Interviewer) "If you had another student like that, again, what do you think you would do differently?"
>
> "Link into the team more... as a general practice, I´d want to be more in touch with the team, not so they were spying on him, just helping me with the assessment... I need to be more involved in the team, they only learn about me at team meetings, or through the student."

The interviewer decided that this isn´t what he was looking for, so

prompted much more explicitly, and began to offer direct help to the

supervisor in relation to some other ways of performing this role. The

decision to do so was taken because the supervisor in question is

employed as a specialist supervisor, and although he is quite

experienced in the role, it seems that he does not get much direct help

or feedback on his own performance.

> (Interviewer) "Do you think that if they have been involved, at least to some extent, in the assessment bit of the process, there might also be a way that you could involve them in the teaching process... they´d be part of the teaching range of resources there, not just part of the assessment... they´d be seen as positive by the student, and you and your activity might be more integrated in the team..."
>
> "Yes, yes in theory that is right. Yes. We have had that one a bit... could I as a supervisor make any direct input into the teams. It´s tied up with credibility, and I´m not sure that I would have anything to offer... there wasn´t really much I could offer in a teaching capacity".
>
> (Interviewer) "Yes, I was wondering what **they** could offer as a **teacher** to the student, as **co-teachers** with you, to the student."
>
> "Yes, yes, right (dubiously)"

The involvement, or lack of it, by the rest of the social work team in the office is in marked contrast to the position in the placement described above, where they were constructively involved in giving to (and receiving from) the student.

Therefore, any view which one takes about the extent to which an individual supervisor uses others as part of a teaching team to broaden what is offered to the student must also take account of the exrent to which the rest of the supervisor's colleagues feel willing or able to be involved in this way.

Similarly, it should not be assumed that others in the office are unable or unwilling to contribute in those situations where the supervisor does not see them as having any direct contribution to <u>his</u> teaching of the student.

The last point to emphasise in relation to this interview comes from the exchange about the involvement of others in the office as part of the teaching team - despite some prompting from the interviewer, it took a little time for the supervisor to grasp just what this might mean, and had never before thought through that kind of issue. This is perhaps related to the individualised model he has of supervision, and of his role as the teacher.

It is perhaps all the more surprising when one considers that this experienced, specialist supervisor routinely supervises students (as in this case), in offices other than the one which he works from, where the direct involvement of others might have been expected as the norm.

7.4.4 Some general comments on this case illustration

The starting position for this supervisor - that there is a right way to practise, and a right way to supervise - is also in marked contrast to the situation in the previous case illustration where the supervisor began from a recognition that there are various ways to supervise and (based on her initial assessment of the student) decides to begin in a directive way. A point which we have emphasised is about a repertoire of teaching approaches (or at least recognising there are various ways) of teaching is clearly not simply a direct result of longer supervision experience, and nor of having more students. The supervisor who has never previously supervised on a professional placement started with a recognition of diversity, (with a preferred way which reflects how she was supervised on her own course) whilst the full-time, specialist supervisor, who has supervised a large number of students, apparently does not see this same variety of approaches to practice, nor to supervision. Diversity is therefore more associated with the supervisor's conceptions of learning than amount of teaching experience.

The focus on a right way to teach, which as we have seen is not giving an emphasis to the student's learning, and how he learns, seems to be a corollary of the stage of learning identified by Saljo where learning is something which happens to the learner (ie reproductive learning), rather than part of him (ie learning as a result of the search for meaning). At that early stage of learning conception, the teaching role is a traditional one, based on authority and hierarchy, and is concerned with the transmission of what is to be learned. The supervisor teaches in this way because that is his conception of learning (and because he himself has never progressed beyond that stage

in his own learning) - indeed, his reliance on others, including seeing the tutor in the classical supervisor-of-supervisor role, is evident.

The interview concluded with a routine question from the interviewer about whether there was anything not covered in the interview, but the supervisor puts himself into a student-like position, making the interviewer into the expert-teacher:

> (Interviewer) "I wondered were there things we haven't covered? Or anything else you want to ask me?"

> "I'd like to take down, on a piece of paper, I would value the kind of things you would look for, (in a family), just the headings..."

In summary, then, we can see in this case illustration a supervisor who values individual teaching, who thinks that there is a single body of knowledge to be learned, about the right way to practise. This holding on to single, right ways to do things, in a step-by-step ways, is confirmed by his approach to the Clobbits exercise. Despite having substantial experience, as a specialist supervisor, some of the material here is in marked contrast to that gained from the previous case study where both student and supervisor recognised and valued diversity. The other striking difference between the two case examples is in the involvement of other members of staff in the team where the student is placed. In the former case their involvement was expected and encouraged; in the latter case, it seemed only to have been used as evidence to assess the student, and not to contribute to teaching and learning on the placement.

As we shall see, these kinds of features are precisely those which allow us to recognise stages of development for students and their supervisors seem closely related to the conceptions and expectations which the participants have of teaching and learning.

Inevitably, comparisons are drawn between the supervisors we describe, but all we can compare are the approaches which they are using in a particular supervisory relationship. For some, greater diversity might be possible. We should recall here the Goteburg findings that deep outcomes were not achieved because they were not sought, and not intended. For supervisors like the man in the failing placement, there is no expectation that students will be actively involved in their own learning, nor that his role might be to help the student learn through making personal meaning from his experience.

We now turn to explore these ideas further with some other, briefer, case illustrations.

7.5 Case Illustration III - An Experienced Supervisor, and an Experienced Student.

In this example, the supervisor is a specialist unit supervisor who has substantial experience of supervising students. She, like the previous supervisors described in this chapter, had completed the questionnaire exercise (she was No 21) reported in Chapter Four. She worked in a statutory agency, and had been there for some years, following her social work qualification. The student was experienced as an unqualified social worker prior to the course, and worked in a neighbouring agency, having previously trained as a mobility instructor for blind people.

The interviews took place almost at the end of the final placement in a two year non-graduate course in a University. Less detail of the interaction in the interview is reported here, and some commentary is inter-spersed.

> The placement had begun with a selection of work "intended to sharpen skills" already possessed by the student, since "she was seen as a very able student... I felt I needed to test her out in a number of areas. She had very limited experience of childcare and family work..." The early work "confirmed the impression that she was a very able student."
>
> The assessment report on the student at the end of her last placement had suggested that whilst she tends to make good, early assessments in her cases, this student was somewhat intrusive in goal-setting with her clients... the student "tended to steer, and sometimes direct, her clients in setting goals for her intervention... She has made a lot of progress in that... she is a very clear and logical thinker... she can see things so clearly that there is a tendency to go in and work with that."

Again, we see a placement where the supervisor is unsure of the competence of the student, and had decided to establish this early on. The student acted as a court agent, a traditional caseworker, and a broker of services within the first few weeks of the placement. This

demonstration of versatility and competence in her practice was clearly
reassuring to her supervisor, who felt that she was "very able". This
set the scene for a placement where the question of passing or failing
is not apparently going to be much of an issue. We can see in what
follows the impact that this has on the supervisory relationship, and
on the teaching and learning processes.

> The discussion centred on the work which the student had done
> with her clients, in some detail, including the work the
> student did with the family of a terminally ill cancer
> patient which demonstrated the sensitivity of her work...
> despite being not very sure about how to use the assessment
> she had made of the family..."

> The interviewer asked "What did you do in supervision about
> this?" The supervisor said "I suppose I did the same in
> supervision... as she did in the case... I gave her the
> chance to talk about her frustrations... and then tried to
> tie her down later".

Here we see two points which are of particular interest to us. The
first is the iso-morphism between supervision and practice, which we
identified in the classical supervision literature: the supervisor is
focussing upon the feelings of the student, and acting explicitly with
her as the student had with the clients. The second concerns the gap
between the student making an assessment of the family and being able
to use it in her work. This issue was a continuing focus in supervision
throughout the placement.

> The supervisor went on to describe an issue which emerged
> concerning her view (and the student's) of good practice, but
> which contradicted the existing agency priorities. However,
> the student was allowed to continue to work with the case as
> a result of the supervisor taking up the matter on behalf of
> the student with the agency managers. This management-of-risk
> by the supervisor seemed important in her work with the
> student subsequently.

The active support of the supervisor here, as in the first case
illustration of this chapter, not only in supervision but also in
legitimating the activities of the student even when they are not the
prority or policy of the agency is important. It seems to be associated
both with a positive outcome to the placement, and the security of the

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supervisor in feeling able to take and manage such risks.

> The supervisor was asked how she helped the student to deal
> with the problem of being over-directive with her families in
> setting goals. She was asked directly how she tried to get
> students beyond this stage by giving an example in the
> placement.

> The example she offered was a self-referred matrimonial case
> where the student "fell into the trap of sharing with the
> clients her perceptions of the case... it was probably quite
> accurate... but they just weren't ready". In the subsequent
> supervision session, the student had said "I know what I've
> done..." The supervisor said that the student had played
> back a tape of the interview and "it was so clear... so I
> said what are you going to do... she said she was going to go
> back and say 'I think I've set the goals, but I'm interested
> in what you think' - in fact they were able to do this, and
> they came up with a new plan... she came back and said that
> 'they were at a much earlier stage in understanding than I
> had realised'..."

> The supervisor said that the student had "helped the family
> to express their feelings about what had been going on, and
> had created a climate where the family believed that she was
> actually interested in them... AND that she listened even to
> the point that (she could tell them) she is not an expert,
> who would tell them what to do... helping them to build up
> faith in themselves, perhaps."

> The supervisor was asked how things had changed in
> supervision since the beginning of the placement. She said
> that "(The student) was prepared to use me, and was prepared
> to be quite open, but was still quite dependant on expecting
> me to criticise her work and tell her where she was going
> wrong... now she says things like 'I've listened to the
> tape... this is what we might do about it, or I'm not sure,
> can we talk about it...' She takes responsibility for
> identifying blocks and learning difficulties".

These exchanges show that although the student is now able to take

increased responsibility for her own learning, by identifying areas

which need attention, earlier she saw the teacher as having a critical

role in helping her to get things 'right'. Perhaps this is an echo of

the stage which Perry (1970) describes as exercises "so that we can

learn The Answer for ourselves" - so that although there is more

learner involvement in the learning activity, it is still seen to be

teacher-directed. This changed during the course of the placement.

The exchange also provides further illustrations of the language which

supervisors use to describe student´s learning reflecting pathological models, "leaked" from social casework practice. Her teaching-learning model seemed at first to be one which combines some iso-morphic work on the student´s feelings, together with instruction about the ´right way´ to practise.

> The interviewer said "You could begin to take risks... you have confidence now in her ability to do that, but did you have it before, at the beginning of the placement?" The supervisor said that she had confidence in the student - "she treats people in a mature way and as equal... there are times when the supervision relationship is equal... we started out already on the road... there have been times when I have felt safe enough to tell her that I´m not sure, and I think that´s taking a risk as a practice teacher".

> In response to the question "What have you learnt, how have you developed, during the placement?" the supervisor talked about the taking of risks with students, and on their behalf. She had, at one point in the placement "subcontracted work to a colleague... someone had doubts about my capacities, in a specialist team (fostering)... I had to come to terms with that...there is usually a policy of students not doing this kind of work (fostering) in the agency".

We have seen that traditional models of supervision emphasise instruction, and expertise, as the basis of the supervisor´s authority. However, those are features of a teacher-centred model. In a learner-centred model, the supervisor needs to value the contribution of the student to the learning process, and not to hold onto the authority which derives from expertise. Here, the supervisor demonstrates that she has been able to admit to the student that she does not always know The Answers, and can be unsure. This is associated with the pattern of the supervisory relationship being more equal.

> When asked "How does she learn best", the supervisor replied "I think like most students do... By deciding for herself what she needs to do work on... she values feed-back from me but is selective about how she uses it. Of course, there have been times when I´ve had to push learning points at her, and that´s been more difficult".

> The interviewer asked: "Where are you now, in terms of your development as a practice teacher...?" The reply was "Well, in group work I´m not an expert and not always confident about students in groups, and I´m very aware of the danger of damage to clients, ´cos I´m not sure the students know enough... In the past therefore I have been more directive in

my teaching about groups... whereas with this student I've been able to take risks and let her get on with it, to make mistakes, and take responsibility for it, without saying do this, this and this... it worked better than I could ever have expected."

The supervisor again demonstrates her increasing ability to take risks, in an area in which she does not have expertise (groupwork), and discovers that it can work well to let the student make her own mistakes. In the terms which we have used earlier, this supervisor has clearly reached the stage of recognising that she can not be an expert, and instructor to the student in all aspects of social work; and she can allow the student some responsibility to select a focus for learning in the supervision sessions. However, there is not clear evidence in this interview about whether the supervisor recognises that she might need to have (or indeed has) a repertoire of teaching/facillitating approaches which can respond to different student needs. Indeed, the last exchange confirms that she might not be very sure about these differences in the process of learning, and the need not to generalise about **all** or even **most** students, because when asked about how this student learns, the reply is "like most students do..." The next part of the interview also shows the supervisor's uncertainty about alternative ways to supervise.

> The interviewer said "There are a lot of positives which you have described, in this placement, and it all seems to have worked very well - but what have you get wrong on this placement?" The supervisor said "At first, it was (the student's) directiveness - it's the wrong word to use... perhaps it's too hard... but I wasn't always able to pick it up in a range of ways" ("For example?") "In the child care case... (she) was trying to focus on the mother's relationship with her husband, almost trying to persuade her to involve the husband... I didn't realise early enough that it was what the student was saying, rather than where the clients had reached..." She went on to give another example, in another case, and was then asked "How else could you have done it?" She replied "I don't know, I'm not sure... I felt surely that something obvious like that should have been picked up in the previous two placements..."

> "Not really, only that there was an amusing bit... after this group session when she was so upset after... she came and said 'you think I'd learn, wouldn't you' ... she felt that

she'd got to grips with it (the problem of speaking for
people, and urging them to accept her goals rather than their
own) in working with individuals and families, but with the
group it was like going back in time... she was working with
the group like it all over again... but she could laugh about
it too."

The researcher pointed out the direct parallel between not
always being able to bring about change in clients just
because you can make an early diagnosis and the difficulty of
learning how to use something which had been learned in one
context in a later, rather different one. The supervisor
reinforced this by emphasising that she and the student had
talked about the student being "keen to show that she could
transfer skills from one situation and use them in the new
situation... but that it is not quite as simple as that."

The importance of being able to transfer learning, in this case from
working with families to working in other groups, is the basis of
generic training for a social work qualification, because it is assumed
that there are enough commonalities in the practice of social work in
different contexts. However, commonality and similarity are clearly not
enough because although the student had learned to recognise her
intrusiveness and over-direction of her clients in a family situation,
she was not able to use this understanding in a subsequent piece of
practice where she repeated her earlier errors. This suggests that in
building up a theory of learning in social work education we must give
attention to the process by which learning takes place, and the context
in which it takes place, in order that the learning can be effectively
transferred and demonstrated in new and different situations.

The requirement about the transfer of learning between practice in
different areas is a requirement which was implemented in 1981 by
CCETSW, but remains poorly understood (CCETSW, 1984). Some of the lack
of understanding seems related to the confusion between the **content** and
process of learning. Certainly, since "learning" can be a noun or a
verb, it can relate both to the **content of what is learned,** as well as
to **how that learning occurs.** In this placement, the content of the
learning, whilst "learnt" by the student, is clearly not sufficient for

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it to be used in other situations.

This is connected with the student´s conception of learning, and the
stage she has reached in her understanding of learning processes (as
the supervisor describes it), because the student still expects the
teacher to take a key role in relation to her learning. Clearly in
Saljo´s terms (1979) she started the placement still seeing learning as
something which happens to her, rather than as a process of abstracting
meaning. We have used this account to further discuss and develop some
of the basic components of a model of learning in social work
education. We now turn to the student interview and report it
similarly.

In the **interview with the student,** after an introduction about the
focus and purpose of the research, the student was asked to describe
the placement chronologically.

> There had been a pre-placement meeting between student,
> supervisor and college-based tutor, about the student´s
> learning needs for the placement. She had wanted "experience
> in something to do with child care... and experience in
> psychiatric work." Previously she had considerable experience
> in working with "the physically handicapped and elderly, so I
> was trying to get out of that. (The supervisor) thought I
> should also do some more (of what she had done before) to
> show how I was doing it differently."
>
> "I was fortunate to get the kind of work I was looking for...
> a fostering assessment, an elderly confused client, and a
> psychiatric discharge, and groupwork... The fostering was an
> assessment... I hadn´t done one before... (and) there were
> two marital problems... In the first case, I saw the wife who
> thought the problems were the children... I couldn´t get
> husband involved. (In the second one) I got the husband
> involved sooner, so I learned from my earlier mistake...
> where the husband wouldn´t come because he thought I was on
> the wife´s side... so I tried to look at how she might cope
> better."
>
> "(In the latter) I had more a mediator role there...
> identifying things that led to arguments, so they could avoid
> it again... I´d taped the interview... I was coming in too
> quickly, to give them my ideas... I went back and started
> from scratch, it was more basic but more realistic, it was
> what they could manage... both felt at termination that they

> could come back and ask for help in future..."

> The interviewer asked "what was your task... after the
> formulation of the problem." The student said that she had
> "visited only 4 times... with longer gaps, things were
> getting better each time..."

Much of this discussion was about client groups, and cases, but what
was notable was that the student described her learning needs in terms
of the content of learning, with little attention to the process of her
involvement and interaction with her clients, apart from the early
imposition of her assessment of client problems. This focus on **content**
made the researcher wonder what supervision was like, and if this
interview was a reflection of the supervisory process. The same issue
had been evident in the supervisor's interview, so it was decided at
the end of the two interviews to ask them whether they would be
prepared to tape-record a supervision session and make it available.
They agreed, and the material in it strongly supported this assumption.

> The interviewer asked about the group, and was told that it
> was a single parent family group, set up by a student last
> year. "There was a core group... I raised the possibility of
> them carrying on after I went, we discussed the possibility
> of them becoming a Gingerbread group... the focus was on
> financial problems... initially they wanted speakers, about
> supplementary benefit... (there was) a lot of lack of self
> esteem... my role was to provide a kind of an overview, and
> let them talk about what they wanted... and allow others to
> speak... Towards the end, I tried to link with other systems,
> for support and resources, including talking to a local
> community worker..."

It struck the researcher at this point in the interview, because the
student seemed to be going into a lot of detail about the cases, and
perhaps was drawing the interviewer into a kind of supervisor role,
that it would be better to ask more questions about supervision, and
the student's learning, rather than about the nature of the student's
work.

> The researcher asked what they student had learned from this
> work: "I got a growth in awareness of their problems... (when
> I listened to the tape I was mortified at how much I was
> speaking, I said so much... the next week I was so aware, I
> tried to say much less... (The supervisor) gave me ideas by
> listening to the tapes and suggesting other things that I

could have done..." She was asked for an example. "There were problems of working with an open group... I was frustrated that I couldn't involve a new member... (the supervisor) gave me special advice... She told me that the first week I was the outsider, and the next week, with anyone new, I could say I felt like that last week."

The student was asked "Was that typical of how you used supervision?" and replied "Initially, for the first three months, it was process records rather than tapes, it was only tapes after Christmas... I did a court report about access in a matrimonial case, I felt I couldn't use tapes... after Christmas, it was tapes, mainly with the group... usually we had a process record or the tape... (at the beginning) she asked me for agenda items for supervision, at first they were mostly hers, but later they were more mine..."

The interviewer asked: "Was there a change of responsibility... a change of balance in supervision... and were there other changes?" The student said "I certainly felt that... it carried on and developed... from the beginning, they were quite mutual decisions, regarding my work, mutual agreement... (the only time it was different) was the fostering assessment (supervised by both the fostering line manager and this supervisor)... it was quite good... it went well... I was able to see what I was doing with the other team leader, but was looking at learning with (this supervisor)."

Again we see a change in the pattern of supervision, this time from the student's point of view. Supervision became a much more equal relationship, and the student had more responsibility for determining the focus and use of supervision.

In response to a question about what was the most important learning on the placement, the student replied: "Learning about myself... having been unqualified for a long time, you pick up a lot, but I hadn't realised how much I moved too rapidly, in my assessment of a situation... I learnt to slow down, and see when the client was ready to move... it had never been brought to light before, even in my other placements... it came out again and again... it came out in retrospect... for me that was the big thing, but now at least I know when I do it wrong... (I've also now got) a broader base, wider experience..."

The interviewer said: "It all seems to have gone very well, but what haven't you learnt, what have you got to do next?" The student said that she "still could do with more practical experience in child care, I've had a placement in probation and for a long time I worked with the elderly and the handicapped... I need more child care still... I've learned a lot, I suppose I could have done things better... but perhaps one case with a child, especially a child abuse case... I really couldn't feel much happier... I was saying to (the supervisor) that in two of the cases, it was good that I had a second chance..."

During these two interviews, and in the tape-recording of a supervision session between these participants, there is considerable focus on supervision from an agency-managing point of view, with the supervisor over-seeing the student's practice. Where there were shifts in the balance of the relationship, towards a more equal one, it did not seem to accompany a focus on the process of learning in any explicit way. Although there is clear evidence of diversity of approaches to practice, there is little evidence of diversity of approaches to learning.

The shift of balance is towards the student determining the areas in which the supervisor will teach. The exception to this pattern is where the supervisor recognises that she does not have to be an expert, and an instructor, in relation to group work.

However, it could be argued that the learning was still largely content-centred, because the student was not able to generalise and transfer the learning she had achieved in relation to families into the practice of groupwork.

A contribution to the literature shortly after this interview makes clear the distinction between the content and process of learning in supervision, and stresses the importance of learning how to learn, thus the processes of learning can be transferred in less familiar areas, even where the content and context of learning are apparently very different (Gray, 1985).

In summary, then, this placement is characterised by two phases: one where the supervisor was setting the agenda, and the student was dependent on the teacher; the second was where the acknowledgement of lack of expertise by the supervisor, went alongside the development of a pattern of more shared responsibility.

This is confirmed by the taped supervision of the final assessment session, which has a relaxed tone, with much of the agenda being set and controlled by the student, but with the supervisor appropriately confirming or reshaping this as necessary, and managing to avoid a feeling of cosiness by maintaining challenges to the student in some areas of her self-assessment.

We turn now to a case example with rather less positive features.

7.6 Case Illustration IV - A new supervisor, and a CSS student

This case illustration concerns a placement undertaken as part of a CSS scheme. Not all CSS schemes are required to have placements, and those which do are in the minority. During the period in which this research was undertaken and data were collected (1983 to 1985) CCETSW was reviewing its policies for qualifying training. At the time of writing, the Council had decided to implement a new system of qualifying training in social work, which will lead to a new single qualifying award (CCETSW, 1987). Both CSS and CQSW patterns of courses were expected to be lengthened (to a minimum of three years) and both routes would lead to the new qualification. The employment based route (currently the CSS pattern) would need to include a full-time year, and a placement away from the normal place of work. It was therefore decided to include some interviews in the present study based on existing CSS placements of this kind. Four such interviews (concerning two CSS placements) were included in the sample.

This placement is chosen as a case illustration because it demonstrates further features which we have identified as very early, reproductive conceptions of learning, for students and supervisors. It is also selected because the interviews were not amongst the best in the sample, and they illustrate some of the difficulties which the researcher faced. They thus provide a contrast with the open and more fluent material reported so far. It will be seen that there are many more direct questions in both interviews and the researcher is more active in gathering relevant information.

Here, a residential worker is undertaking a fieldwork placement in a social services department area team. The interviews took place towards

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the end of the placement, which was the final one in the course of
training for this student. The objectives had been previously agreed
with the study supervisor, whose role is to oversee the student's
practice throughout the CSS training. Normally, this would include
liaison with the student's line manager in the place of work, but here
(as with other CSS placements) there is a designated supervisor in the
office where the student is placed.

> In the **interview with the supervisor**, she was invited to
> describe the placement chronologically. She said that CSS
> placements were different from CQSW courses and contrasted
> this placement with her own on a four year degree CQSW course
> (which she had completed two years previously). She talked
> about the student's lack of experience in relation to social
> work, other than in residential units for children. The
> purpose of the placement was to give the student experience
> of working in an area team.
>
> The interviewer asked "What does she actually do, on the
> placement?" The supervisor replied "In terms of commitment on
> my part, it's been quite high. Obviously, with someone like
> (the student), who's had experience of working with children,
> but not their families, one couldn't let her loose, so to
> speak, on families, on her own."
>
> There were only two cases during the entire placement in
> which the student had direct contact with clients - one case
> was a child from a family which she had met in her usual work
> role (in the Childrens' Home), prior to the placement. The
> other case was a family in which she did "joint work" with
> the supervisor, "where she actively participates". She also
> joins in office meetings, but the low level of client contact
> was put down to the difficulty of assigning any cases to her
> when she was only working in the team on two days a week. "It
> is hard to structure work with families on only two days per
> week."

This amount of client contact seems very limited for an entire
placement, and the supervisor ascribes this to the problems of
placements for two days a week, AND to not being able to "let her
loose, so to speak, on families, on her own."

> There was a discussion about what the student actually does
> in her two cases. The supervisor said: "(the student) is
> enthusiastic, and has a lot of ideas... (and in her work with
> the girl in care) she is helping with her weight problem, and
> helping her to budget to pay back her debts - which she had
> incurred while she was in the Community Home... The case is
> really about whether the Care Order should remain in force...
> She spends a lot of time talking to her about the issues, (as
> I would do, but)... it is all a new role for (the

student)..."

> The interviewer asked "What do you think she has she learnt,
> on the placement?" "That it's quite difficult... (that) one
> can only help people if they are prepared to help
> themselves... (and that) being enthusiastic is not enough...
> And the difficulties of being a fieldworker... As a
> residential worker she had always thought that (field) social
> workers had the easier job, and that she hadn't always
> understood the decisions of field workers in relation to the
> children (in her Children's Home)... she would like to be
> more involved with the families..."

> "Hopefully she's more aware of the complexities of the work
> we do - that you can't just say 'Right, that's the problem,
> you go and sort it out'. She realises now that there is a
> resistance to making changes. I have the feeling that she
> feels that sometimes kids go into care because social workers
> don't try hard enough... that may sometimes be true, but not
> always, in all circumstances."

These exchanges begin to show that the supervisor's conception of

social work is relatively limited, and the student's conception is even

narrower - which is reinforced in the interview with the student. Such

limited views are not easily challenged by only two cases.

> The interview continued with the researcher asking "... Where
> does she think that change comes from, then, if it's more
> complex than just telling them - she has worked in the
> Children's Home for over four years now, she must have some
> sense about how people change?"

> "It's quite hard. In the family we are working with
> together... it isn't just the daughter... we are trying to
> restructure the marital relationship."

> (Interviewer) "(Because she doesn't seem to understand, the
> question is repeated) Residential work has lots of direct
> care, and containment, and is a rather different role from
> fieldwork, because you are in such close contact all the
> time... how does she think that change comes about in cases?"

> "I feel that she has been frustrated in residential work by
> her fellow colleagues - she isn't a typical residential
> worker - she feels that she should get to know the children
> (sic)."

The supervisor doesn't answer the question about how people change,

twice, and throughout does not seem to have a clear idea of social work

practice - nor, indeed, what the student is meant to be learning. The

supervisor has, however, internalised the classical supervision model,

and uses the language of pathology to describe the student:

"One of (her) problems... is her challenging personality... she needs to make it less challenging, so she can take people with her, instead of getting their backs up, or alienating them. I haven´t discussed it much with her... I´d like to discuss it with her... I´ve touched on it...She is like that with (my) colleagues... I was on leave for a week, and one of the team was doing a Section, a compulsory admission to psychiatric hospital, which the student challenged. The social worker involved gave her all the answers... but another social worker became quite angry at (the student) doing this... the student felt that it was part of her student role to be questioning... (but) social work decisions are usually hard... you have to balance things... it was a bit worrying..."

(Interviewer) "...Is it HOW she asks the questions that is the problem" ("Yes, yes.") "Does it have any impact on her work with her clients?"

"I think it could do, with certain families... in one case she knew the girl, in the other, I had already established trust... (this student) going in cold to a family... she could make them feel sagging. I feel she could become too familiar too quickly and this tends to put people off."

(Interviewer) "Sometimes, in social work, people need to be given space..."

"Yes, I think one of the problems I have had with (this student) is in terms of privacy, as a person... she tends to pass barriers... (she) asks direct questions about my private life... and of others... An illustration was this interview... (She asked) where did I know you from... via (her colleague). Then she asked how did (the colleague) meet you. If I didn´t, how did (my colleague) know you, to make the contact... I thought it was irrelevant."

It appears that the supervisor finds the student quite a problem, but does not feel able to challenge about her over-intrusiveness. The interviewer turns the focus towards assessment, and the structural problems CSS presents for the supervisor, as well as the problems faced by new supervisors.

"Well... I´ve been in a stressful period myself... I´m trying to decide if it´s from work, or having a very demanding student... Yes, I´d be quite concerned - I think she needs to change. I will say that to her tutor." (Clarification confirms that she means the study supervisor)... "I can´t recommend pass/fail... I can do a report, if I want to... it´s not expected... One has a certain amount of concern, because I´m sure the problems I´ve encountered, with (this student) others have... In three weeks time she´ll have gone (she sounds relieved at the prospect)."

(Interviewer) "Do you have contact with the study supervisor?"

"It's a bit difficult... (her only connection with the agency and the course is with this one student) we were going to work out objectives (for the placement,) but then they were worked out by (the student) and the study supervisor."

(Interviewer) "What have you learnt about supervision, yourself?"

"I haven't really structured particular times... we're together most of the day... She's got such a lot of ideas of her own, which it makes it quite hard for her to listen to other people (sic)."

(Interviewer) "That must make being the supervisor quite difficult?"

"She's not an easy student. I don't get much from her, she always seems to know already... She had a traumatic life (of her own), like some of the stuff in a social services file... (Sighs) She needs to be challenged... I'd very much like to say she needs another placement, toning down her approach, but whether I have the strength - I'd personally find it very difficult..."

(Interviewer) "If there are no clear guidelines for assessment, that makes it very difficult. Is there any way you could get support from the study supervisor?... (if you are not sure that) this is the level for a qualified worker?"

"I think she has some quite good ideas... (but) they need to be trained in the right way... (but) it could be totally disastrous if one (ie the student) tried to impose from authority (she is a Deputy Head of the Unit) one's personal belief that everybody else isn't doing a very good job, and should be doing it like them... She's going back to (her own work-place) now."

(Interviewer) "Should you write to her new supervisor there, with the information that you wished you'd had at the beginning of the placement?"

"mmmm... mmm...(uncertainly) In my relationship with (the student), I feel ambivalent about her.. it's difficult, one has to have a reasonable relationship, especially the amount of contact I have with her, we're together for two full days every week...

(Interviewer) "It must be pretty exhausting"

"It is. It is... She finds it hard to sit and read, she has to be doing something... she doesn't take account of the pressures on me, and she's just another one... normally, in CQSW placements they have a caseload, they go out, at least they (supervisor and student) can have a break from each other... (After a rounding off to the interview) I think I should go home and have a nice rest. I hope all this is useful to you."

The lack of support for this supervisor, and the way this is compounded

by the structure of the CSS scheme, and the isolation from the study supervisor all seem to be matters of considerable concern. Comments on this are included in the later section on the implications of the study for social work education. The supervisor is left wondering about many things, and uses the terminology of practice to pathologise the student, making an explicit comment that the student had had a traumatic life "like some of the stuff in a social services file", and apparently uses this as a reason for not challenging the student.

The supervisor also thinks that there is a right way to work, and the student needs "to be trained in the right way." Thus we have again shown considerable evidence of both the classical approach to supervision, and of reproductive conceptions of teaching and learning in this placement. There is some associated material about the student's directive approach to practice which causes the supervisor further concern.

In reading this account, and listening to the tape a number of times, it is evident that in this particular interview, the convention which has been generally adopted (ie. deleting "ums" and "ers" to tidy up the exchanges) has minimised the uncertainty and hesitancy of the supervisor. Many of her sentences are interspersed with "sort of", and she interjects the word "hopefully" into a number of her replies, especially about the student. The tentativeness and passivity of the supervisor, and her not taking active steps to get the information she needed, and not pursuing meetings with the study supervisor, are reflected in the generally flat tone to the interview.

No doubt this is a contributory reason for the present study developing a language, concepts and terminology which could give inexperienced

supervisors some tools and ideas, to help them describe and interpret events with the course staff and the student. We turn now to the interview with the student.

This interview was probably the most difficult to carry out during the entire study. Just before the tape was switched on the student said that she did not understand the learning styles exercise, so she didn't do it, and "anyway the animals had such funny names" she didn't see how it would help her to learn. The interviewer explained again that it wasn't intended to help her to learn, but to give an indication of **how** she learnt. She said that she had just played with the cards (for almost an hour). She seemed offhand, and gave the impression that she was doing me a great favour by being there at all.

> The interview began with a further statement about the purpose of the research, and its focus on how people learn, rather than what they learn. The student said: "I've had lots of supervisors in the past but they have never made it clear what or how to learn."
>
> She described the purpose of the placement in very general terms, which sounded as though she were reading them from a set of guidelines. The tone of voice seemed to indicate surprise that I should be asking, and that I should know already. The interviewer asked for an example.
>
> "The initial objective that I had to do (sic) was to look at the intake and referral team, and weigh up the pros and cons, and do some written work (for college)... Intake teams are necessary, efficient and work well together as a team (sic)... they deal with the referrals... they decide that it is a long or relatively short term problem... a minimum of three months to a year maximum."
>
> (Interviewer) "How do they judge it, then?"
>
> "I've got the criteria that they use. They are upstairs - you should have said if you wanted them... There is a list of six points, six objectives."
>
> (Interviewer) "Don't you still have to make judgements, though?"
>
> "It is difficult, for example 'Is the family motivated to work with us?'... they may not even recognise they have a problem."

This early part of the interview shows that the student was surprised

that the interviewer did not know what the purpose of the placement was, and then described social work in rather simplistic terms. She was asked what she had found out on the placement, and describes social work in crude behavioural terms:

"They work quite closely with the families, but very often, you're only in an advisory capacity, not a very practical capacity, so you can only offer so much help or advice on how you feel they should be carrying out certain things within the family structure... If you can't be of any practical assistance, I think very often it is very difficult - they (clients) say yes, yes, yes, to you, and then don't do anything once the door is closed behind you. There are cases where you can give a bit of practical help to the family, then they are motivated to change or be helped."

(Interviewer) "Practical help? Can you give me an example?"

"A woman lost the wheel from her pram and rang the office. The duty social worker went to town to fix it... that was quite good."

(Interviewer) "Do social workers give any other kinds of help besides advice?"

"Sometimes you have to work in a sort of family therapy situation... trying to work out the relationships within the family."

(Interviewer) "How do you think they do this?"

"Well there are varying techniques, really, some people do it with intense interviews, and family sessions with all the family together. Other people interview the client separately and try to get them to talk about their problems."

(Interviewer) "What exactly do they do, in these interviews?"

"You try and work out what is the position of the problem in the family and how each of them can cope with it..."

(Interviewer) "OK, so that's a kind of diagnosis, or plan... how do you get to change what is going on?"

"(pause)... By making alternative suggestions like a bit of give and take" (This is said in a tone which seems incredulous that anyone didn't know that this was obviously how to do it).

(Interviewer) "For example?"

"If a child is truanting from school, and the reason is in the family, you make out some kind of incentive for the child to go to school, perhaps for reward to come from the mother... it needs a bit of give and take on both sides really."

(Interviewer) "Is that the kind of thing you did in your residential work?"

"It was in a Community Home"

(Interviewer) "What kinds of things were you doing?"

"It varies, from general basic caring needs, right through to individual counselling or therapy." (This feels like a lecture, about ´What goes on...´ rather than ´what she did´). "In my experience, if there is a problem, you tell them what the problem is and try to get them to solve the problem by a sort of reward system. If they do something then they get something for doing it."

(Interviewer) "Is this how to do it for all clients?"

"No, for some it is worthwhile to sit and chat with them to find out how they feel about something. For children, though you need a practical approach to their behaviour."

(Interviewer) "If there was a child in the Home, what would you do, if the child was in care?"

"There was a good instance last year, there was a girl who ran off with her boyfriend, he lived next door, he was married with three kids. They ran off to London together. Her parents reported them missing... They were picked up in London, (caught) shoplifting. She was received into care under a place of safety for her moral safety was what they called it. They tried to charge him with unlawful sexual intercourse. She was in care for 28 days, so we tried to work with a contract for the individual and the family... It only took two to three days to realise there was an absolute breakdown in the relationship between the parent and child which initiated her running away from home. We worked on this contract for 28 days. Just before the 28 days, the parents decided they weren´t quite ready to have her home... because there were certain areas that were still untouched by the work... There was two months intensive work, the residential workers went round to the family at the weekends, and if there were problems, they would sort them out."

(Interviewer) "On this placement, tell me a bit about your work"

"We have been working towards revoking the Care Order. With the client I knew, the family have always had money problems, so I thought I would work with (the daughter) to help her pay her debts off... I´m succeding, but it´s a very slow progress compared to residential work... You are in a stronger position, (in residential work) to do something about it... you can´t control them as much in fieldwork. You have to entice her or encourage her..."

This model of practice is to do primarily with authority and instruction of clients, backed up by behavioural reinforcements. She sees two possibilities for intervening - practical help (which she

values) and "chat with them to find out how they feel about something".

There are many examples in this interview of the student answering questions at a level of generality, rather than about her own views/experiences, which was very disconcerting. She also seemed to use words in not very precise ways eg "The initial objective that I had to do..." The interview continued:

> There was an interruption here, with someone asking "Is that your car in the way?" to which the student replied in an offhand way "Oh I expect so, yes, is it a (make of car)." "Yes". The student went to move her car and the tape was turned over. There are about ten minutes more of the interview. However, the recording did not come out at all.

In the interview, the student was dominating, didn't always seem to listen to the questions, and seemed offhand. She treated the researcher as though he knew nothing about social work. Indeed, other research interviews had already been undertaken in that office, which she knew about. She made me feel very angry at the end of the interview, and clearly was causing a good deal of distress to her supervisor, as well as creating problems in the office.

She appeared to be authoritarian, demanding and judgemental in her practice. When, at the end of her interview, she was offered the routine three-way discussion with her supervisor, she stayed for a few minutes only, and was obviously bored by the discussion. She went off "to do some shopping", despite earlier having agreed to join us for lunch. She was not pressed very hard to change her mind, and part of the lunch was spent sympathising with the plight of the inexperienced, and unsupported, supervisor.

This chapter has gone into considerable detail in these case illustrations, to try to get at the subtleties and nuances of teaching and learning in placements, and the ways that teachers and learners understand the learning which goes on in supervision.

Each of the placements in this part of the research could have been included, but the selection we have given indicates a spread of the data collected, and gives the material necessary to begin to develop a grounded model of learning in supervision.

Chapter 8. TOWARDS A MODEL OF LEARNING IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

8.1 An Overview of this Chapter

This Chapter considers the findings of the study, and the interpretations developed during the collection and analysis of the data. It provides a unified account of the major results and links the developing conceptualisations from the separate activities in the study. It also discusses the dissemination of the findings, as a developmental/formative activity based on the research, and their implications for social work education. It considers the possible limitations of the findings and the interpretations through a discussion of the methods used, and the validity of the data generated.

Section 8.2 describes the process of recognising patterns and making sense of the data, and offers a consolidation of the interpretations which were reported separately in earlier sections. It begins to develop a model which can contribute to the establishment of a paradigm of learning in professional and vocational training. In Section 8.3 this work is discussed in the light of research into adult learning which has been undertaken and published since the beginning of the present study. It is shown that the findings and learning model of the present study are congruent with similar findings and models being developed elsewhere.

Section 8.4 considers some of the limitations of the data collected (including its generalisability) in this study and challenges to the validity of the findings and the interpretations. A defence to these points is offered both in relation to the range of ways in which the material was validated directly with those participating in the study,

and with a wider group of colleagues and peers.

Section 8.5 looks at the implications of this study for social work education.

8.2 Making Patterns and Making Sense

This section describes the process of recognising patterns and making sense of the data, by developing a model of learning in placements which can contribute to a new paradigm for social work education.

We began this study by describing some indicative experiences in supervision which were not easily, nor fully, accounted for by the prevalent explanations used in the literature, of which a review showed the roots of the model within American social casework supervision.

The terms and concepts which have "leaked" from the practice of social work into the teaching and learning arenas of social work education reinforce hierarchical, unequal relationships which value the knowledge of the teacher rather than the experiences of the learner.

Since professional competence is dependent upon the quality of student learning, attention was given to how students learn, in the context of how their supervisors see the teaching and learning tasks. The selective review of the adult learning research literature demonstrated that it was possible (and indeed preferable) to focus research attention on the approaches to teaching and learning which students and supervisors use, and some of the contextual factors which constrain those choices.

In this study, of learning within natural learning environments (which includes a complex network of intellectual, affective and value-based learning tasks), the data which have been collected represent a level of detail and focus which do not exist elsewhere in the supervision literature. They describe the teaching and learning processes of supervision from the perspective of those who were directly involved.

The features of the classical supervision model are seen to persist in the events and experiences of the material described and reported here. However, in addition, we have ensured that data in the main part of the study have been collected and presented in ways which reflect the interactive nature of teaching and learning processes, and we have generally not collected nor reported data which fail to provide detailed evidence of the contexts in which the experiences arose, and of the ways in which the data were gathered. This material therefore is susceptible to different explanations and analyses from those offered by the traditional model. We have also attempted to retain an interactive focus in the development of conceptualisations and interpretations arising from this wealth of material through feedback to participants and others in social work education.

We turn now to dealing with the various issues to emerge from the traditional model and the statement of the research problem, and offer an alternative perspective based on these findings. At the end of Chapter Two we described the research problem, and identified six objectives for the present research. These included producing some **descriptions of supervision sessions**, as they occurred, in a placement; and accounts of the **interpretations and meanings which those involved in supervision attached to their experiences** of supervision. We also emphasised the importance of **recognising what was salient** in those

accounts, and **identifying patterns, explanations and interpretations with those involved**. We envisaged **developing those generalisations into models of teaching and learning in supervision**, and **contributing these findings to policy makers, teachers, and students** in an ongoing way, in an attempt to influence and change future practice in ways which build on evaluative studies of what demonstrably occurs in supervision.

Now, having described supervision sessions, reported questionnaire data about how supervisors teach and learn, and having presented case illustrations of some placements studied, we are in a position to begin to attach meanings, and try to make more sense of the data. These meanings, as we have seen during the interviews and feedback sessions, are likely to be fuller explanations than those offered by the traditional model, since they begin to **take account of the interactive nature of the teaching and learning, and the context in which those interactions take place** – rather than describing them in the language and assumptions of social casework practice.

8.2.1 Some Preliminary Conceptual Frameworks

At the beginning of the study the focus was on the ways in which supervisors taught and learnt, and the impact of their styles of learning on their teaching. The focus was also on the effect of match or mis-match of teaching styles and learning styles which suggested that it might be possible to develop a schematic typology of teachers and learners, and to explore the impact of match and mis-match.

The matrix in Figure One is intended to show that in Boxes A and D, "fit" or "match" of styles occurs, whilst in Boxes B and C styles are mis-matched. The earliest material, in the questionnaire responses, confirmed that supervisors had difficulty in supervising those students

who apparently did not learn in ways which the supervisor was expecting to teach – which were themselves related to how the supervisors preferred to learn. No clear measures of "style" were used at that time, although some features of the approach teachers used were identified.

Figure One – A Teaching and Learning Styles Matrix

Learning Style

	(i)	(ii)
Teaching Style (i)	A	B
(ii)	C	D

Figure Two – A Learning Style and Stage Matrix

	Stage I	Stage II	Stage III
Surface/Serialist Approach	A	B	C
Deep/Holist Approach	D	E	F

What became clear, in trying to assign responses to the matrix, was that some supervisors seemed to have changed their approach through time, or with different students. Thus an element of "stage" was included, and the model was refined during the collection of data in the single case study. The matrix devised is shown in Figure Two, and is intended to reflect stages of development for teachers and learners – thus it would be possible to consider a match by superimposing the matrix for the student onto that of the supervisor.

This revised matrix also caused difficulties - the boundaries between the stages were unclear, so that whilst some supervisors could readily be assigned (eg Box B) others might have been on a boundary (eg between B and D) whilst yet others could be in more than one Box (eg B and D) during a single placement. These early attempts at classification were premature and, with hindsight, can be seen to have been devised as a conceptual frame **into which data could be fitted**.

The frame had not been built around and from the data, so the model was simplistic. Elton and Laurillard (1979) help us to recognise that what we seek are not theories (with hypotheses to test against data), but models:

> "A theory, by its very nature, explains all phenomena within its region of applicability; hence a theory of learning should be relevant and valid, whenever learning takes place. A model interprets rather than explains, and whether it is applicable to a particular learning situation can only be verified by testing the model against the situation in each instance."

There was, however, an important outcome from these preliminary attempts to systematise the data - because teachers and learners could be assigned to more than one place, as they demonstrated either versatility of approach, or developed to the next stage, the categorisations could not be a typology of individuals; but it would reflect approaches to teaching and learning in the context of a particular placement. As such the model can account for patterns of interaction in supervision, and can generate ideal-types of the approaches which produced those patterns.

There are similar problems of categorisation in the literature. In describing the work of Pask, or Marton and Saljo, we have tried to avoid describing individual subjects who completed specific learning tasks as "serialists" and "holists"; or "surface learners" and "deep

learners" (as Entwistle and Hanley, 1977 do), when all that is evident is an approach used in a particular learning context. As we have seen, the work of Laurillard (1978), and more recent studies (Ramsden, 1979; Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983) confirm Entwistle's earlier work (1977) that approaches to learning are context dependent. The Goteborg work has also shown the importance of the conceptions which the learner has of the learning task varying in different contexts (for example in response to changes in the nature of assessment).

8.2.2 Some Building Blocks for a Model of Teaching and Learning in Supervision

If we are to develop a model based on the interpretations and meanings demonstrated in the data we report, then these must be built up from the findings. To do this, we shall select some of the main features of the placements reported to generate, and make explicit, the building blocks we require, before offering a unifying conceptual frame.

We have found, in a number of the case illustrations, examples of teaching and learning which value the contribution of the teacher, and what is to be taught. This pattern also seems to be associated with an expectation that there is a single, right way to practise, and that there is a single right way to teach and learn. Such a position also involves a clearly hierarchical relationship between teacher and learner, and locates responsibility for assessment largely with the teacher, who has authority, derived from his expertise. This pattern of interaction (or expectation of it) we shall call **LEVEL ONE**.

We have also found examples of teaching and learning interaction which see the student's contribution to his learning as central. What the student has to bring to the placement, and to supervision, is important

and he is seen to have an active role in developing and evaluating his own learning. There seems to be an association of this pattern with increased involvement by the student in his social work practice, which is not seen as instrumental and mechanistic. We shall call this pattern (or expectation of it) **LEVEL TWO**.

In some instances we have found a recognition that not all students learn in the same ways, or that the same student might learn different things in different ways at different times. Sometimes we have seen supervisors differentiating between teaching approaches with the same student, or recognising that the student might appropriately work with another supervisor as part of a teaching team. Equally, some students recognise the need to use different approaches for different learning tasks and contexts. This position seems also to be associated with diversity and versatility in the range of client problems dealt with, and with a variety of ways of intervening. We shall call this pattern (or expectation of it) **LEVEL THREE**.

We have also found examples in the data of changing patterns, which show movement between the levels for the same student and supervisor, and we have found examples of problems where their expectations of the teaching and learning processes differ. We shall consider these after articulating the features of the three levels of interaction which appear to reflect qualitatively different patterns of supervision.

8.2.3 LEVEL ONE - A Focus on the CONTENT of Learning

We have outlined some of the features of **Level One** above, which we now

illustrate more fully from the data gathered throughout the study to

refine and develop the scheme. We reported earlier, in 2.2.1, as one of

the indicative experiences, a placement where there were difficulties

between the student and his supervisor:

> My supervisor and I began to run into some difficulties
> fairly early on in the placement because she seemed to
> believe that what I should write about in my reports, and
> talk to her about in supervision, were the feelings which I
> had during and after the interviews. When I persisted in
> trying to focus on making sense of what was going on in the
> families with which I was working, and between them and me in
> the interviews, not wanting just to focus on my feelings, it
> was assumed that I was "being defensive", and that I had
> "some block" in my personality about the expression of
> feelings which required the help of my supervisor to
> overcome... Therefore, underlying all of these exchanges was
> a rather different but contributing dimension about power in
> educational relationships.

There is a similar example in the third of the indicative experiences -

the role play:

> Both the student and the observer felt that they "would have
> tried to deal with the anxiety feelings first." The
> supervisor (in the role play) wrote: "In the discussion I
> asked why I should deal with the anxiety first. There seemed
> to be four different answers given by the others:
>   (1) "to get it out of the way first"
>   (2) "to be where the student was"
>   (3) "it's what we are best at"
>   (4) "to look at their feelings about themselves and
>   then at the (social work) task"

In each of these examples are supervisors who see the activity of

supervision, and the concepts they use to describe and explain it, as

essentially the same activity as social casework with clients. We saw

later that as evidence of the persistence of the classical model.

However, in developing an alternative framework we can begin to see

that the classical model, with its emphasis on a right way to practise,

and to supervise, with a hierarchical relationship between teacher and

learner is, itself, a demonstration of much that we have described as a

Level One pattern of interaction. The emphasis on teaching and what is to be taught in the traditional model, and the indicative experiences referred to, are illustrations of a pattern which is concerned with the **CONTENT** of teaching and learning, and the transmission of a single right way to practise social work.

The language and assumptions of a 1940s model of American social casework imports into supervisory relationships the fundamental inequalities of the casework relationship, and thus precludes the precepts of effective active learning - responsibility for one's own learning, and active involvement in a search for personal meaning of experience.

The single case study also provided some evidence of Level One interactions, because the supervisor was concerned to demonstrate her teaching, and often involved the student in detailed rehearsals so that he could learn the right way to practise. The supervisor was concerned to use the experience of the student as a basis for his learning but she was unable to help him generalise from this in the early stage of the placement. Equally, her doubts about the student's performance in supervision lead her into more directive teaching. The student seemed rapidly to have taken account of his supervisor's expectations, as a cue-conscious student, (Miller and Parlett, 1973) and become a more passive learner. There is some evidence that he was not enthused by this role and, later, we saw him demonstrating more active involvement in his learning and his practice. It seems, then, that the student conceives of his learning task (with **this** supervisor, and in **this** placement) as reproductive and passive learning from his supervisor. The supervisor confirmed this in her mid-way evaluation:

> "(He) like all students, is anxious to pass and has been conscious of his assessment... He admits he saw fieldwork as

> a way of distancing himself from his 'total' experience of residential work... The distancing and concern about his assessment has shown in most aspects of his early work. His first recordings were factual, minimal with little indication of his involvement...Similarly, in supervision he has tended to talk about his cases rather formally which has not made it easy to judge where he is in relation to the client and what his assessment of the situation is... As the placement has progressed, he has relaxed considerably, and so have I... He must not be afraid to make mistakes nor be afraid to use himself more purposefully."

The supervisor made some telling observations here, identifying exactly the features of reproductive learning that the student thinks she requires - reinforced or prompted by his experience of her directive teaching, and her rehearsing him in the right way to practise. Of particular note is his distance from clients and supervisor, because he does not expect to be involved in his learning. They seemed in that period to be embodying a pattern of surface-reproductive learning, even though both were able to understand the need for more active, deep-constructive learning.

In the questionnaire exercise reported in section 4.2 we also found evidence of what we now describe as Level One interactions. We found a number of references to traditional patterns of teaching and learning (these were nos 12, 17, 26, 29 and 31). We also saw evidence of seeing the student's failure to learn as indicative of learning pathology, and the use of language derived from practice (nos 2, 10, 12, 16, 20). It should be noted that one supervisor (no 10) used that terminology to refer to her own failings as a learner.

There were also references to apprenticeship models of supervision which illustrate an expectation that the right way to practise can be learnt by watching others do it (especially in community work placements). There was also evidence of a gap between intention and performance for some supervisors - that whilst there were those who

recognised the importance of the learner's contribution to his learning, they were not always able to adjust their teaching strategies to meet the needs of students who were not able (at the time, or in that context) able to be active participants in their own learning. We develop these more general issues about match and mis-match of expectations below.

Turning to the further data collection, we can find many other examples of Level One patterns. The experienced supervisor with a failing student (Case Illustration II) exemplifies many of the features of this position, with his belief in a single, right way to practise, a preoccupation with teaching and his role in assessment (which he saw as an event, which would occur towards the end of the placement). He apparently found it difficult to conceive of others contributing to the teaching, in a team, (despite prompting by the researcher) and held on to a very traditional social work model which did not appear to be entirely appropriate for the bulk of the work which the student was expected to undertake.

This case illustration further demonstrated the importance of the supervisor's conception of learning in shaping the pattern of interaction in supervision - even when the supervisor was very experienced as a social worker and as a supervisor, he was apparently unable to see that students might need to learn in different ways, and that he might need to look at other approaches to his teaching. In that respect he also exemplified those features of the classical supervision literature which do not differentiate between students, and assume that they will all move at the same pace, and at the same times.

We also have shown that new and inexperienced supervisors and students

can begin at this position. The example drawn from a CSS placement (Case Illustration V) shows a heavy reliance on observation, and apprenticeship models, with the student literally sitting by her supervisor for two days a week. Neither appeared to expect the student to be actively involved in her learning, and they had not even arranged supervision sessions as discrete entities, where they could reflect on the student's experience.

Whilst we would certainly not wish to generalise on the basis of such a small sample, the other CSS placement also showed a new supervisor and an experienced student with similar expectations to the pair above which may be the consequence of the learning objectives approach in CSS. They had used a more structured approach to supervision sessions, and had discussed the student's work experience with his families, but used the sessions as opportunities for direct teaching by the supervisor.

Since the student had no previous experience of field social work, and had spent his three years in an adult training centre as an instructor working with elderly and mentally handicapped clients, this seemed an entirely appropriate model to adopt, and the pattern worked well. It is worth emphasising here that interactions at this First Level are not necessarily of lower value than higher level interactions. They can be entirely appropriate, because direct teaching might be precisely what is required - either for beginning students (as in this case) or where a supervisor is unsure of a student's competence (especially if he is new to a particular area of practice).

In the major case example (Case Illustration I) we also saw some of these First Level interactions where the supervisor felt that the

student's understanding of social work was at a very generalised level, and that he needed more specificity and some direct teaching. That case example illustrates another feature to emphasise here: whilst for some supervisors, Level One reflects the stage they have reached in conceptualising learning, and their role as teachers (the specialist supervisor with the failing student), for others it is a stage they are moving from (the supervisor in the single case study), and for yet others it is a pattern they will adopt in response to their analysis of the student's competence and his learning needs at that point (the supervisor in 7.3).

8.2.4 LEVEL TWO - A Focus on PROCESS in Learning

Having outlined some features of Level Two interactions above, we can now re-examine the data to look for examples which can be explained by these conceptualisations. The single most important feature we identified was the ability to conceive of the learning task in a way which recognised the PROCESS of learning, and that learners needed to be active in their search for meaning and interpretations of experiences. This recognition is akin to the Perry (1970) position of understanding that knowledge is contextual and relativistic, and requires the learner's involvement in the process. Level Two here also reflects Saljo's (1979) distinctions in conceptions of learning between a passive-reproductive position which sees learning as the transmission of facts or procedures, and the recognition that the learning material (experience) is the starting point for the process of learning.

We have suggested that a key feature of this position is the recognition that there is not a single, right way to teach or learn. We described this position in the second of the indicative experiences

where we reported a student unit supervisor recognising differences in students' approaches to learning, and teachers' approaches to teaching:

> "I began to see that the way in which some supervisors related to their students was much more authoritarian than others. They seemed to be more traditional, and in a hierarchical relationship with their students...
>
> A further stage in this process was the recognition that not only were there differences between students, but that some students might use different approaches at various stages in the same placement and/or for different learning tasks in the same time period."

In the questionnaire exercise there is considerable evidence of this level of interaction, in terms of giving up the role of an Expert (no 2), recognising the responsibility of students for their learning (nos 5 and 22), and seeing that there are stages in the development of learning (no 7). Parallels between the learning arena and the practice arena were also exemplified by the responses which described the importance of the active use of self in learning and in practice.

The questionnaire responses also reflected the distinctions between Levels One and Two in relation to the ability to distinguish between "what" and "how" questions. For those at Level One, unable to distinguish the content and process of learning, such confusion is explicable; those who did successfully distinguish the questions were also able to recognise the importance of process, and the learner's involvement in learning.

As we shall see in the discussion of this model, and the dissemination of the findings of this research, some social work teachers are concerned about an emphasis on process, and stress the importance of content (Badger, 1985a) whilst other contributions to the literature argue that the focus on process is functional for student learning in professional training (eg Gray, 1986).

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Towards the end of the single case study we found that the student exemplified the stage of involvement in his work and learning by 'admitting' to his supervisor that he had discussed some personal material (the birth of his own child) with his clients. The student was at that time taking more responsibility in supervision, and this was reinforced by his involvement in the assessment process, where he had written a useful self-evaluation at the end of the placement.

In the main case example of the next stage of the research (Case Illustration I), we saw a long period characterising the middle part of the placement where the student, having previously recognised the need to be more actively involved in his learning gets the chance (as the result of the death in the office) to act more autonomously with the rest of the area team, with his supervisor, and with his clients - and in doing so, he learned that it was acceptable to bring more of his experiences and feelings into his work.

He and his supervisor were able to distinguish (in the interviews) between more traditional educational models, with an emphasis on teaching (which characterised the first part of the placement) and more equal relationships, with the student taking on increased responsibility for his own learning and performance. Indeed, the student himself described this change as a shift of paradigm in his understanding of learning.

This shift would be characterised by the Gote borg work as a shift from surface to deep conceptions of learning, whilst Biggs (1985) would call this change one from surface-achiever to deep-achiever. His use of 'achiever' is essentially the same as Entwistle's 'strategic' approach (Entwistle, 1987).

In the case of the experienced supervisor and an experienced student (Case Illustration III) we also saw considerable evidence of Level Two interaction. As that placement developed, the student took increasing responsibility in determining the focus of supervision sessions, and in her contribution to the evaluation of the placement. In the tape of their supervision, which was a discussion about producing the final assessment report for the placement, the student took the initiative in the session for evaluating her work, and identifying what she still needed to develop after the end of the course.

The supervisor in this example showed how she was able increasingly to take risks with and on behalf of the student, and showed that she could see a role for herself even when the student was working in a way (groupwork with single mothers) which the supervisor felt she did not have much experience ie. it was not an apprenticeship, nor expertise-based pattern.

Some aspects of this level of interaction were found in about half of the other placements not reported as case illustrations. It is perhaps something of a surprise to discover that what was written as long ago as 1810, about the importance of reflection, and owning one's own learning is not routinely demonstrated in supervision sessions in social work (Watts,1810, in Entwistle and Hanley, 1977):

> "It is meditation and study that transfers and conveys the notions and sentiments of others to ourselves, so as to make them properly our own. It is our judgement upon them, as well as our memory of them, that makes them become our own property... By study and meditation we improve the hints that we have acquired by observation, conversation, and reading..."

The opportunity to use supervision for reflection, and to develop the student's conception of learning to include his active involvement in

seeking meaning, does not always appear to be taken - not least, it seems, because the conception of learning which supervisors have (or students perceptions that this is the case) may be an important constraint on that process.

8.2.5 LEVEL THREE - Metalearning and the Demonstration of Versatility

This position is a further development from the recognition of active, deep learning of Level Two interactions, and includes (for students) the recognition that different learning tasks might require different approaches to learning, and (for supervisors) that those approaches might be facilitated by different approaches to teaching. Thus an identifying feature of this level is the recognition **and** demonstration of versatility in approaches to teaching and learning. It may well be demonstrated in a shift from surface to deep conceptions of learning, and an increasingly equal model of supervision to a consultation model.

It also includes a recognition of learning to be about construing personal meaning, and making personal choices from amongst competing or contradictory value positions. As such, it represents a stage where students and supervisors use their own learning processes as the target (content) for further learning (process) of a higher order ie they are learning to learn, and to transfer the content and process of their learning to other learning contexts.

Only a few of the students and supervisors studied in this research demonstrated reaching this position. What is possible, of course, is not that some teachers and students were incapable of this kind of conception of learning, but more that contextual factors constrained them from it (eg a college/agency climate and/or teaching/assessment

methods which did not value such a conception).

The questionnaire exercise showed that some supervisors identified the need for a repertoire of approaches to teaching, to distinguish between the needs of students, although they did not all see that they might need to develop a wider repertoire of approaches themselves - some expressed this in terms of how another supervisor might have dealt better with a student with whom they had experienced difficulties (nos 4, 11, 25, 27, 32).

Case Illustration I showed that the supervisor was able to use her understanding of the learning process to take account of this position in determining her initial response to a student about whom she had some doubts. She demonstrated that she could encourage and tolerate more freedom for the student, and a more active role for him, which was reinforced by the crisis following the death in the office. She went on to distinguish his strengths and weaknesses in component parts of the learning process, so that she could give particular attention both to the student's ability to generalise from particular experiences, and to be more specific in the application of his more generalised understandings.

In doing so, she demonstrated that she recognised and could act on the twin elements (of generalising from particular experiences, and the application of those generalisations subsequently in new and different practice) as essential elements in the student developing the capacity to transfer his learning (Gardiner, 1984a). Biggs (1985) calls these higher order processes "metalearning".

The student's understanding of these elements of the learning process

was demonstrated by his comments to the researcher in the three way discussion about the need to establish what was salient in any given experience as the basis of recognising patterns which can be generalised. Since 1983, CQSW courses have required that students can demonstrate the capacity to transfer their learning, and use it in other practice areas - but the requirement had been poorly-understood (CCETSW, 1984).

This transfer of learning is at the heart of social work training for generic practice, because students can not rehearse in training all of the types of work which they will be required to undertake in their professional career, and some selection of learning experiences must be made. A paper discussing these issues, and reporting the preliminary findings of this research was published (Gardiner, 1984b); and it is included here as Appendix A. It has generated some discussion and debate in the social work education literature (summarised in Whittington, 1986) which we consider further in the next section.

Returning to Level Three interactions, it is worth reporting the only instance in the study where both student and supervisor appeared to begin the placement already in this position. The supervisor was an experienced team leader, but who had supervised very few students. The student was an experienced and bright student in her final placement. Their initial sessions established a contract which allowed the student to demonstrate her competence in a variety of interventions.

In supervision, she was able to show that she understood the distinction between reproductive learning and deeper, constructive learning. Sometimes she asked for help to find out more about a case she had encountered, which the supervisor offered, or she followed it

up herself in private reading and study. The example which she described in her interview concerned working with a depressed young mother. She followed up her initial contacts by asking for help in supervision about working with depressed people, then read widely about depression. As more of her caseload also reflected problems of depression in a very deprived community she eventually wrote a project essay for college on the subject.

Her supervisor was able to offer some direct input, but also to involve her with other professionals who were more experienced in the work than he felt himself to be. However, in relation to other kinds of work in her workload he offered a combination of some direct teaching, and some help in reflection with her on her learning from the work, and the development of her learning during the course. They shared responsibility for producing the final placement assessment report. The pattern of their final few supervision sessions was described as "consultation" by which they meant the student took the initiative in determining the amount and nature of their contact (not always in formal sessions), and the nature and focus of discussions in supervision. The experience of supervising a range of staff over a period had clearly given this supervisor the experience to recognise both the need for diversity and autonomy in learning - although he added that this student was the first where he had been able to act in this way.

This placement, like some others we have described above, shows the importance of the supervisor valuing team teaching as part of a repertoire of approaches. The direct involvement of the team in which the student was placed came up in a number of the interviews, but not always with a clear recognition of the contribution which others could

make to various aspects of the student's learning. However, even where there was some involvement of the team, it is necessary to distinguish between passing on the student to another, alternative expert (a Level One pattern) and encouraging the student to contribute reciprocally to the team as well - which we saw in the case example in 7.3 when the student was able to offer an input to the team on new legislation which he had studied in College.

He was just beginning to recognise the importance of diversity and versatility at the end of the placement. His supervisor had shown that she could not only assess what he needed to learn, but also that he needed to learn in different ways during the placement - and she responded differentially to this. In a subsequent placement with a student who was very bright, on a final placement in a four year degree course, she showed that she could be more relaxed, and less formal, with a student. She attributed this to the student's greater competence in both learning and practice.

There are other ways in which we can recognise this third Level - metalearning involves the ability to distinguish various orders of communication (meta-communication) and to ascribe accurate meaning to communications. We suggested earlier that, in the practice domain, the work of Bateson et al (1956) was an important contribution to working with families and groups who were unable to distinguish (or who deliberately confused) orders and levels of communication.

Thus, when we see in some interviews an interviewee asking "Is this what you want me to talk about?" and "What do you mean by that?" or "Is it OK to carry on in this way?" we are being given evidence of the ability to look at levels of communication, and discriminate the level

of the interaction. This was also demonstrated between supervisor and student in the three-way interview we reported in Case Illustration I.

No doubt other studies are required, of a longitudinal nature, with a larger (perhaps more stratified) sample before we can be sure about the proportions of supervisors who could work with students in this way. Equally, staff development programmes for supervisors would need to ensure that such meta-learning was seen as a legitimate (and central) part of the supervisory process in placements. Because this stage of versatility and a repertoire of approaches seems to be associated with diversity of practice styles, any further work should also take account of the parallels which we have identified, at each level, for learning and practice.

8.2.6 A New Model of Learning in Supervision - An Overview

Bearing in mind the kinds of developmental changes described by Perry (1970), and by Saljo (1979), we can begin to classify the three levels of our model along a developmental continuum related to the conception which participants have of learning in supervision.

In doing so, we can be explicit about the qualitative changes in the conceptions of learning which characterise these positions. **LEVEL ONE is a surface-reproductive view of learning, characterised by a predominant focus on the CONTENT of teaching and learning (ie facts or procedures).**

The second level is characterised by learning of a qualitatively different order: it is not quantitatively different, and can not be reached by incremental steps from Level One. Instead of seeing learning

as something which happens to the learner, both teacher and student recognise that learning is an active search for meaning over which the student has control. Others may help him to learn, but they can not teach him all he needs to know. Some significant learning can only arise for the learner himself reflecting on the meaning to him of his experiences. **This deeper conception of learning (LEVEL TWO) is characterised by a focus on the PROCESS of learning (ie. the active search for meaning and intention).**

Just as these first two conceptions are different orders of conception, so too is the third level. Whilst Level Two represents an ability to focus on the process of learning, and not simply on the content of learning, Level Three represents a further transformation - it involves reflecting on the process of learning, identifying preferred styles of teaching and learning, and the accurate discrimination of learning tasks (which will require the capacity to use a variety of approaches to learning).

This third order conception of learning is what some call 'learning to learn' or 'meta-learning' Biggs (1985). We have argued elsewhere (Gardiner, 1984b) that the transfer of learning from one practice area to another involves not only an exploration of the similarities of the content of the two situations, but also the capacity to conceptualise and reflect on learning processes and to use them in new and different situations.

Therefore the teacher (supervisor) has to develop a repertoire of approaches and strategies to promote the student's use of a range of learning strategies appropriate to the requirements of the learning task and the context of learning.

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LEVEL THREE conceptions of learning are characterised by a focus on meta-learning, and learning to learn (ie being able to use qualitatively different approaches for different learning tasks and contexts, together with the ability to monitor and evaluate the approaches to learning for their effectiveness in relation to specific learning tasks).

We shall turn to representing these features of the model schematically, but before doing so, it is worth reflecting on the way in which this model relates to the classical supervision model.

We saw earlier, in section 2.3.2, that the classical model of supervision was a model of instruction, described by practice concepts. We identified some key features of the model as:

> a) there was a focus on the characteristics of individuals rather than the transactions between them

> b) learning and teaching problems were seen and described as pathologies in growth, rather than related to the expectations and conceptions students and supervisors had of the learning in supervision

> c) supervision was hierarchical, and valued what was to be taught, rather than the quality of student learning

> d) the practice arena was seen as an illustration of college-based teaching, and an opportunity to apply previous learning in practice

> e) students are assumed to be homogeneous in how they learn, and their stage/pace of learning, unless they are 'ineducable'

> f) supervisors are also assumed to teach in the same way

We can represent this model schematically, and plot the positions represented by the illustrative data we have reported. Figure Three shows the final model which is derived from the data in this study.

Figure Three - A Model of Learning in Supervision

Conceptions of Learning	Level I	Level II	Level III
Teachers´ Conceptions	T1	T2	T3
Interaction Pattern	A	B	C
Students´ Conceptions	S1	S2	S3

Central to this whole scheme is the notion that the supervisor´s conception of learning will, like the student´s have a major influence on how he approaches the supervisory relationship. The intensity of supervision, with its close, one-to-one pattern sustained over many months is an arena where such conceptions will have an important impact.

We should recall, when we exemplify these positions, that individuals can (and indeed did) move to higher, and sometimes lower, levels of interaction during a single placement. We should also remember that each higher level conception subsumes the lower levels.

Maier (1984) similarly distinguishes first-order, incremental change and second-order, transformational change in learning which reframes a student´s experience. His first-order, "concrete, step by step learning" is a serialist-surface conception; his second-order "involves a paradigm shift so impactful that students can transfer their learning to corresponding situations..." This, we would argue, is about the transfer of the content of learning, not the process. A transformation

or paradigm shift relating to the process of learning is a third-order (ie Level Three) change, although Maier does not recognise this metalearning level.

Such distinctions are clarified by Russell´s Theory of Logical Types (Russell, 1910) which considers the discontinuity between a class and its members. There are some higher order classes which are not simply more general, but which frame and give meaning to the class below. This work is incorporated into practice areas (eg in family therapy, and in working with schizophrenics) but has not penetrated thinking in the teaching-learning domain. Further work here would be fruitful.

Figure Four

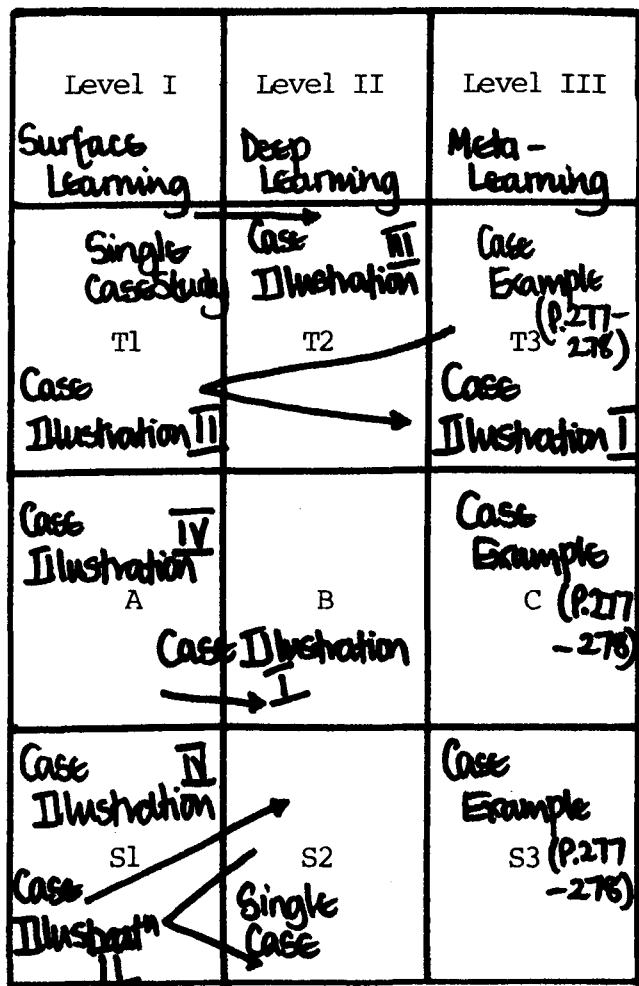| Conceptions of Learning	Level I Surface Learning	Level II Deep Learning	Level III Meta-Learning
Teachers´ Conceptions	Single Case Study T1 Case Illustration II	Case III Illustration T2	Case Example (P.277-278) T3 Case Illustration I
Interaction Pattern	Case IV Illustration A Case Illustration I	B	Case Example C (P.277-278)
Students´ Conceptions	Case V Illustration S1 Case Illustration II	S2 Single Case	Case Example S3 (P.277-278)

Figure Four shows our model with some illustrative examples of the placements we have studied. Three placements are used as exemplars or ideal-types to represent the three levels of interaction we have identified (in Boxes A, B and C). We have also traced the varying positions shown by some other supervisors and students as they adapted to each other (eg Case Illustration I and the single case study).

We can now return to the question of **match and mis-match of approaches to learning** in the light of the model. Clearly, using the level of conception of learning as the criterion to distinguish the developmental, or stage, dimension of the model makes it easier to explain the effect of mis-matched approaches to learning.

As we have seen, matching can produce the interactive patterns we have identified. **The effect of mis-matching, though, is dependent on the level at which the mis-match occurs.** Thus, if a student has a Level Two concept of learning (S2) whilst his supervisor has a Level One concept (T1) some choices appear to be open to him. He can change to a Level One approach, taking a more passive role, and letting his teacher take resposibility for the teaching and learning (as we saw with the student in the single case study), or he can persist in Level Two approaches and risk problems in the supervisory relationship, and ultimately, risk failure (as the failing student in Case Illustration II appears to have done).

Certainly in the researcher's own experience as a supervisor the early placements saw him emphasising his teaching role (T1) but, fortunately, many of the students seemed versatile, and well able to adapt to that approach, retain higher level conceptions elsewhere in the course, and to use them later in the placement when the supervisor began to develop

as a teacher (to T2 and T3).

The obverse of this is shown in the main Case Illustration (I), where the supervisor showed that her conception of learning (which as a learner seemed to be Level Three) allowed her to select approaches to respond to the learning needs of the student - initially for a Level One interaction, before later guiding him in a paradigm shift to Level Two. Case II, by contrast, shows the constraining influence on the student's learning of a Level One concept of learning held by the supervisor.

The questionnaire responses show that similar mis-matches can prove problematic if, for example, the supervisor persists in a deep approach with a student who does not construe learning in that way. The supervisor in Case Illustration III said in a later discussion that she found some difficulty in the placement following the one reported when, with two inexperienced students, she expected them to define their own learning needs, and styles of learning, but they were simply unable to do so.

The effect of mis-match of approaches to learning is therefore a direct consequence of the stage of learning reached, as reflected in the conceptions of learning held by teacher and student. In Levels Two and Three the accurate definition of the task, and the clarification of approaches to meet that task, can obviate the problems of mis-matched approaches. The biggest problems seem to arise from either student or supervisor (especially the latter) having Level One conceptions of learning, and assuming that there are single right ways to teach and learn.

This might be generally true in higher education, but it is a particular problem in social work for two reasons: one, the classical model of supervision reinforces Level One approaches; and two, most supervisors are relatively inexperienced as teachers, so may be relatively constrained from developing their conceptions of teaching. We have shown that new supervisors with a high level conception of learning may move through those stages as a teacher quite quickly, but the problem for supervisors is compounded by their perceived lower status than college teachers in the classical model, and by the fact that the latter are themselves extremely limited in their experience of higher education **as students** (Dinerman, 1983). Their educational experience is limited to school, and a social work course (when, for many of them, the social casework paradigm was dominant in both practice and teaching).

If our model has anything to offer teachers in social work education it must be to prompt further evaluative studies and staff development programmes aimed at their conceptions of teaching and learning processes. However, it should be borne in mind that this model is presented in a preliminary form, on the basis of an illuminative study of a relatively small sample of placements. We turn, therefore, to other research undertaken or published during the course of this research, and consider whether our findings, and the tentative model, are congruent with more substantial work elsewhere in the higher education system.

8.3 The Model and its relation to Other Recent Research

This section considers the findings of this study, and the model which explains and accounts for the data, in the light of other research into how adults learn undertaken or published during the same period. It should be recalled that the earlier review of research findings were those published prior to the beginning of the study. We shall select work to be considered here on the basis of its relevance to the focus of our study.

Our model is derived in large measure from the patterns of teaching-learning interaction in supervision, and we have seen that these can be explained by looking at the conceptions of learning which students and supervisors have. The distinctions between deep and surface learning, and their relation to conceptions of learning is well-established in the Swedish work described in Chapter Five, and in extensions and developments of the work in Sweden, Holland, Australia and England.

Entwistle and Ramsden (1983) have shown, through correlational and factor analyses, that personality traits are associated with comprehension or operation styles of learning; and that a deep approach involves the ability to think logically and flexibly, combined with the personality characteristics "sceptical intellectual autonomy". Biggs (1985) confirms the relation of intelligence to deep approaches, and "below a certain level of ability, the factor structure disintegrates" (Entwistle, 1987). Saljo (1987) says:

> "It has become evident that there is a functional relationship between the mode in which people subjectively construe learning and the way they go about dealing with learning tasks (Marton and Saljo, 1984; Van Rossum and Schenk, 1984)... An absolutist conception of learning (and knowledge) has been found to be associated with... a surface

approach."

Of particular interest is work by Van Rossum in Holland (eg Van Rossum, Deijkers and Hamer, 1985) which confirmed the Swedish findings of five qualitatively different levels of conception of learning. Their work also relates the conceptions of learning with other associated concepts like (good) teaching, understanding and insight, the application of knowledge, and the distinction between active and passive learning. Van Rossum shows that the various levels of conception directly affect how these related ideas are seen, in qualitatively different ways. For our purposes, this level of detail can help to distinguish sub-divisions within our levels, but the sample size, and the lack of focus specifically on such concepts means that our data at present do not support such fine distinctions, although they are congruent with the more general distinction Van Rossum draws between those who use surface or deep approaches to studying.

Follow-up work from the present study into learning in social work education will address these more detailed conceptions and their relation to observable processes and outcomes of learning. Plans have been drawn up to extend the present study in this direction with groups of supervisors, tutors, and policy-makers as a contribution to developmental work required for the introduction of proposed changes in qualifying social work training.

Whilst the work in Holland confirms our basic distinction between Levels One and Two in our scheme, we also must look at work elsewhere in relation to Level Three. Van Rossum (1984) also reports identifying a sixth conception: "learning seen as self-realisation" which seems similar to what Biggs (1985) describes as "metalearning" - "the rather specialised application of metacognition to the area of student

learning". He quotes Flavell's definition of meta-cognitive processes (1976):

> "...one's knowledge concerning one's own cognitive processes and products... (and) the active monitoring and consequent regulation of those processes in relation to the cognitive objects or data on which they bear."

Biggs confirms metacognition as a higher-order construct, and as such it is in essence what we have elsewhere called "learning to learn" (Gardiner, 1984a):

> "The ability to do this is what I mean by 'learning to learn' since it involves the recognition of one's own learning processes, and the ability to modify them."

The requirements of the validating body, that students demonstrate the ability to transfer learning from one area of practice to another requires just such skills, and Gardiner (1984b) has also defined the elements of the learning process which make up such a transfer:

> "In other words, the learning process is about changes in the way we see, and make sense of, the world... By the 'transfer of learning' I mean those parts of the overall learning process which I have described in detail above - ie. having an experience, recognising what is salient, the building up of patterns, making patterns of the patterns which become generalisations, and then the recognition in new situations that the earlier generalisations may be appropriate or relevant. Thus, both generalisations derived from particular experiences **and** the application of these generalisations are essential components of the transfer of learning."

This view of learning, as changes in the way we see and make sense of the world, is indicative of the focus of this study. We are interested in the ways students and supervisors construe the world through their conceptions of learning. Saljo (1987) discusses precisely these issues as a focus for study, and as a shifting of attention away from mental mechanisms and information-processing models, and towards conceptions of reality. He quotes Goodman (1978) about this complementary line of research being guided by "simply this: never mind mind, essence is not essential, and matter doesn't matter. We do better to focus on versions than worlds". In considering how to intervene, to improve learning in the future Saljo says:

> "Our basis for intervention will lie in our knowledge about
> what constitutes learning problems in our particular field...
> In other words it will be about how people succeed in
> expanding their intellectual repertoires to to encompass new
> and previously unseen 'ways of worldmaking'."

In the two published papers on the transfer of learning, and in

conference papers of that period, this researcher not only presented

some preliminary findings of this study, but also endeavoured to shift

attention away from teaching and instruction (a focus on content of

learning) and towards students' approaches to their learning (the

process of learning). It is reassuring indeed to see these very issues

(and in some cases the very language) being echoed in the concerns of

some of the foremost researchers in the field. Whilst our own study is

an illustrative and illuminative one in professional education, it is

clearly congruent with other lines of enquiry which (at the time the

data was collected and the development of the model was in process)

were unknown to the present author.

The publication of work in progress from this study triggered responses

in the literature, which we describe in detail in Section 8.4, but here

it is sufficient to stress that the distinctions between content and

process, and the need to consider both, has not always been a

distinction which some teachers were easy with – equally they did not

readily distinguish between using the term "learning" as a verb, rather

than as a noun, which highlights the same confusion. In particular,

Whittington (1986), in a review article of the literature spawned by

this debate, says:

> "(Badger) also notes that the concept of transfer lends
> itself to a pre-occupation with process and is concerned that
> the content implications of transfer might be neglected...
> Jenny Gray has no such concern. She argues from personal
> experience that the preoccupation with process is highly
> functional and that the degree of importance of the learning
> process over the original learning content varies in relation
> to the degree of difference between practice contexts: the
> larger the difference between contexts, the more important
> the learning process is in assisting social workers to

practise competently."

Because of the centrality of this debate for Level Three conceptions of learning, we also explored a number of more established pieces of work on transfer of learning, and more recent attempts to demonstrate it (including in professional education).

Traditionally, received wisdom has it that transfer is difficult to demonstrate, especially outside the discipline or domain of the original learning. Wollman (1984) gave students a solved prototype task and analogous tasks. Some were also given a conceptual model with the solved prototype, others were given a general procedure for applying the prototype model to the transfer items. The procedure helped considerably for the transfer items which were least like the prototype item. His definition of transfer echoes our own, by seeing two elements "the generation and/or application of a rule for solving a set of problems".

This suggests, as indeed some of our own data does, that attention must be given to **how** students attempt to transfer the content of their learning, and that this is especially helpful when the content items are very different. This confirms Gray's view about the focus on process being functional when the contexts are very different.

In Case Illustration I we saw both student and teacher focussing in the interviews on metalearning processes, by reflecting back on the processes utilised during the placement. Like Biggs (1985), we can therefore see one response to the problem of how to help students learn more effectively is to reject the study-skills approach (Gibbs, 1981) and focus instead on metalearning skills. He quotes Wagner and Sternberg (1984) in support "Emphasis on metacognitive training does

result in some degree of durability and transfer." Wollman (1984) also points in the same direction:

> "Minimal instruction enabled most students to acquire not only effective concepts for organising and transferring knowledge in a problem domain, but also a first introduction to the higher order concepts of organisation and transfer."

Indeed, more recent work might confirm some of this. Boreham (1985) reports improved transfer by "lowering fidelity of simulation" ie. making things not quite the same, so that intervening generalisation is required to transfer learning. The need to be able to generalise before transfer can take place, is reinforced in other ways, too. Kolb (1976) emphasises a four stage cycle of concrete experience, reflection, the formation of abstract concepts and generalisations, and hypotheses to be tested in future action - leading to new experiences which in turn generate further relection, and so on. Thus the notion of conceptual pyramids, which Badger (1985a) and Harris (1983) found helpful, in which higher orders subsume lower orders can be a tool in helping students to recognise different orders of generality and specificity (CCETSW, 1979).

Keane (1987) covers similar ground in relation to a cognitive theory of analogy, where he emphasises the importance of functionally related attributes and the higher order relations if analogies are to be of use. We can perhaps see this as a special case of transferring learning - here from the analogy to the target domain, via generalisations and higher order concepts.

Bruner (1960) echoes this:" a general idea... can be used as a basis for recognizing subsequent problems as special cases of the ideas originally mastered", but like Ausubel (1968) his focus is on the content of the transfer rather than the learning process.

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Much of the literature on transfer is content-focussed. For example Royer and Cable (1976) asked five groups of students to read pairs of passages to show transfer was more likely where pre-existing "knowledge bridges" existed from conceptual frameworks in the first of the passages. It is possible to reconsider their positive findings in the light of our model, and the Van Rossum work. The transfer tasks are content-related surface learning tasks, and the two passages which are less "relevant" and do not promote transfer seem, on the basis of the material given, to be broadly focussed, meaning-oriented pieces. If this is so, it may be that subjects were oriented to expecting the second passage and the subsequent questions to be of this kind (ie. deep learning) and thus the Royer and Cable findings may in fact represent a mis-match of level two expectations of learning induced by the passage, and a level one test of transfer.

Eysenck and Warren Piper (1987) emphasise how the conditions under which learning is tested may influence results, and cite Nitsch (1977) to show that the transfer of learning to new and different contexts produced better success in identifying concepts than in same-context groups. This ability to discriminate generalisations from examples, and vice-versa is central to our definition of the transfer of learning. Laurillard (1987) discusses these issues in the light of Marton and Saljo's work:

> "One common difficulty has been identified by Ference Marton and Roger Saljo. This is the inability to perceive the 'figure-ground' structure in a text. Many academic texts have this form, where the figure-ground refers to the principle-example, the main argument-evidence, the generalisation-instance... replicated studies... show that within any group, some students will report the text as being about the principle... others report the same text as being about the content of the example (Marton and Wenestam, 1979)".

Laurillard goes on to relate these differences to the differences between deep and surface learning, but for our purposes, they also

contribute to the steps we have identified in the learning process required to transfer learning – thus unless students (and teacher) can sort out various levels of generality and specificity. Badger (1985) says:

> "I do not find it easy to envisage what Gardiner had in mind when he wrote about some students needing extra help 'to make the necessary distinctions between levels of generality and specificity of concepts in order that they can transfer their learning from one area of practice to another. (Gardiner, 1984b)'"

It seems that some tutors and supervisors need such help as well. This, then, is the reason that we have dwelt for so long on the Level Three issues of learning to learn, metalearning, and the transfer of learning. Not only are they central issues in helping student to become versatile and effective learners, but they are also an area where staff development work needs to be concentrated within social work education. We defined the research problem in section 2.4, and the difficulties of getting beyond the constraints imposed by the classical model of supervision. The developmental and formative activities of this research are an essential part of the work, and we now turn to consider them further in the light of considering the usefulness and validity of the present study.

8.4 Validity, Methodology and the Dissemination of the Findings

This section reports how the question of the validity of the data was addressed, and considers the usefulness of the insights and interpretations generated in the study for others in social work education.

8.4.1 Some Limitations of the Study

In a study such as this, a level of detail in relation to individual placements, supervisors and students is necessary if we are to address the research problem. However, such a level of detail prohibits gathering such data from large numbers of placements. Therefore questions about generalisablity might need to be considered. We earlier considered some of these questions in selecting a focus for data collection, and in the selection of individual placements for study. However, Elton and Laurillard (1979) recognise that in essence such qualitative studies are likely to be "small scale investigations into particular situations... which stress process rather than product". Many of the research papers we have reported used samples around the same size as those in this research.

Mann (1987) has articulated a number of areas where we should know ourselves, as researchers in this kind of study:

> "1. What do I - the researcher - bring to the research situation in terms of knowledge and past experiences, attitudes, values and beliefs?
>
> 2. How do these personal contributions affect how I find out something and what I find out?
>
> 3. What can this tell me about how I - and others - learn?
>
> 4. What views do I implicitly express through my research approach about the people I am researching and about how they learn?
>
> 5. Is this a view I want to express...

6. What views are expressed by the theory and research in which I ground my work?"

It is to be hoped that answers to these kinds of questions have been presented throughout the thesis, explicitly and implicitly. We now turn to consider, chronologically, when this occurred. The first stage of the study provided both a range and depth of material. On the one hand, the supervision sessions from an entire placement were recorded to allow the detail of the interaction in supervision sessions to be considered. On the other hand, more than thirty experienced supervisors were asked to complete questionnaires intended to elicit their approaches to learning and teaching, the kinds of students they preferred to work with, and those with whom they had difficulties.

In subsequent data collection, the guiding principle was to avoid extreme or untypical placements, whilst maintaining a spread geographically, by type of course, and to include a range of experienced and inexperienced teachers and learners. Certainly the findings reflect a range of positions, in each of the data collection phases - though not always in expected ways, for as we have seen, it is not always the most experienced who are the most sophisticated learners or teachers; nor are the least experienced the most naive teachers and learners.

We described earlier a rationale for multi-method data collection (triangulation), and have indeed shown some consistency of findings between data collected in various ways. An example would be the experienced supervisor who described the placement with a failing student - he has Level One conceptions of learning in his original questionnaire responses, his Clobbits exercise, and in the interview material. Following up some of the most interesting questionnaire

responses in subsequent phases seems to have paid dividends.

We also recognised that data collected by such personalised methods as interviewing were susceptible to misinterpretation and misjudgement. Therefore the methods used were developed to explicitly check out, both in the interviews and in subsequent feedback sessions, the descriptions and interpretations of the researcher at the time data were gathered. The question of evaluator-bias is also addressed by presenting data relating to the researcher´s own earlier experiences in the roles being researched, to account for the initial focus of the study, and to identify possible biases which arise from personal experience. Evaluator-effects can be directly observed in the way that data are presented, by the detail of interaction reported from the interviews, so the involvement of the researcher in pursuing particular lines of enquiry can be seen. This approach also responds to Laurillard´s (1987) call for such reports:

> "Our problem is that at present cognitive psychology produces
> generalised, not content-specific principles and theories of
> learning... It would be better from the educationist´s point
> of view if some trace of the content were left there in the
> formulation of the principle... We need cognitive psychology
> to tell us, in a content-specific way, how a natural
> environment affords learning."

In summary, then, we can claim to have taken a great deal of care to ensure accuracy of the data and the interpretations based upon it with those from whom it was gathered, and with whom the conceptualisations were developed and refined. But there are other ways to evaluate the data collected - and these include reflecting the findings back into social work education more widely, at a number of levels and in a variety of places, and in a variety of ways, so that peers can evaluate the usefulness of the descriptions and conceptualisations being offered. We turn now to consider this process of wider dissemination of the findings, and the impact of this process on social work education

more generally. In doing so we should remember that this process was not one-way, and that there are many who have been involved who have also contributed to the further formulation and refinement of the conceptual frameworks.

8.4.2 Dissemination of the Findings

In describing the tasks to be undertaken in this research, we identified a need to:

> "influence, directly and indirectly, developments in social work education, through the publication of findings at professional conferences and in the literature, and through contributions to the developing policies and practices of the validating body."

The initial findings of the research were reported in a plenary paper at the Annual Conference of the Association of Teachers in Social Work Education (ATSWE) and published soon afterwards (Gardiner, 1984b). That paper was wide-ranging, and considered the initial findings of the research, together with a summary of findings from adult learning research, then drew some implications for individual students and teachers, for courses, and for training systems as a whole. These implications are reconsidered in the next section in the light of the further work now reported.

The paper contributed to a continuing debate in the professional literature, which included further papers in response in the ATSWE Journal (Badger, 1985a; Gray, 1985; Eames, 1986) and a summary of the debate in the British Journal of Social Work (Whittington, 1986). Other papers have acknowledged the contribution of this study (eg. Harris, 1983; Badger, 1985b) and the work has been cited in a number of other publications and conference papers (eg Parsloe, 1986; Barr, 1987; Evans, in press, 1987; Mathias, 1986; Gray, 1986; Whittington, 1986; Waterhouse, 1987).

These papers reflect a serious attempt by social work educators to take account of more recent work on adult learning, and in particular this qualitative study of teaching and learning in supervision. What they have lacked is an overall theoretical perspective which can frame the debate, identify the contributions of each separate author, and the need for further work. This work is not the result of a small, closely-knit group of researchers consciously deciding to develop work in this field, so inevitably progress has been piece-meal and not well-coordinated.

However, taken together, this body of work represents the most coherent set of papers on learning in the social work education literature in recent years. What they represent is a kind of stocktaking, of work and ideas in progress. What this present thesis and related publications may be able to contribute is the systematisation of developmental work, within a different theoretical frame, which could presage a fundamental re-conceptualisation of the basis of social work education as a whole - not just in relation to teaching and learning in supervision.

Such a reformulation, rooted in a different paradigm, and reflecting more contemporary concerns would also, if it is to be useful, have implications more widely than in the United Kingdom, and more widely in professional and vocational preparation. It was with these wider perspectives in mind that the findings of the study were presented in two plenary papers at an International Conference in Dubrovnik, Yugoslavia focussed on Supervision and Staff Development in the Human Services (Gardiner, 1986a, and 1986b). It drew an audience from North America, Britain, and Western Europe as well as Eastern Europe, and included those involved in the development of training and service

delivery in health, nursing, social work, psychology and psychotherapy.

The implications of a shift of perspective from that of the teacher and teaching, to the learner and learning, were discussed in relation to a number of those fields, and have lead to the development of the approach in specific training and practice initiatives. One example is a developing study which looks not only at matching teachers and learners along a stage dimension which considers their approach to learning, and also extends the methodology into the matching of workers and their clients in similar ways.

At this conference, as at a dozen others where material from the study has been presented, participants themselves have been asked to complete some of the exercises used in this research. Thus there are a large number of additional responses to the questionnaire and the Clobbits learning styles exercise which will be analysed in the light of the new model, and presented subsequently.

Here it is worth noting one significant finding in the questionnaire exercise which lead to a re-examination of the data reported in Chapter Four. This finding turned out to be a constant one in each use of the exercise – that in completing Sheet One (about a significant learning experience, **what** had been learned from it, and **how** had that learning occurred) respondents showed considerable confusion between WHAT and HOW they had learned. As many as a third of some groups (including the Dubrovnik participants) answered the WHAT question as HOW they had learned, and the HOW question by describing WHAT they had learned, or wrote "As Above" to refer to the HOW answer. Re-examination confirmed this to be the case in five of the responses we reported in Chapter Four.

This finding was also reproduced in a much smaller sample of family therapy supervisors and students were given a similar questionnaire. The findings of that dissertation (Gray, 1986) showed an even greater emphasis on Level One models emphasising hierarchy, and a belief in a single right way to teach and to practise, in a family therapy training programme. Thus our present methodology and findings seem capable of replication in other kinds of professional training. Psychotherapy has its roots close to medicine, so we are not surprised to discover that the training of doctors may suffer from similar problems.

Newble and Entwistle (1986) have considered the implications of recent adult learning research for medical education and have argued that a number of characteristics of medical scools "may hinder rather than assist the desired approach". They have not considered the level of individual teacher-learner transactions (like the present study) but have looked at the level of the design of the course, teaching, and particularly assessment. Nursing faces similar problems to social work and medicine. Duffy (1986) has reviewed the contribution of learning theories to the ward tutorial - but she makes no reference to the quality of learning in terms of process and outcome. Perhaps this is a reflection of the dominant pattern in nurse education of a national curriculum emphasising learning content.

In a range of other conference papers, seminars and staff development exercises in all four countries of the United Kingdom this study has been reported to tutors, supervisors and students in social work education, which has allowed further refining of conceptualisations; and has prompted others to use in their own work and learning. Some of this is reported in contributions to the debate in the professional journals. It includes re-designing some course elements to facilitate

the transfer of learning between field and residential work (Badger, 1985a, 1985b); and using the concept to illumine how those who have trained in one country can adapt and practise competently in another (Gray, 1985).

Another aspect of the formative component of this research is the contribution of the author's work to formulating policies and the associated developmental work for a new social work qualification. A large number of these papers are internal to CCETSW, but those which were for the Council are available (Gardiner/CCETSW 1984, 1985). The work for this study has has contributed to published papers about generic and specialist issues, and about the need to develop evaluative studies and self-monitoring and evaluations of the quality of student learning in courses (Gardiner, 1987a, 1987b). Therefore we can show that substantial efforts have been made to disseminate the findings of this research, and to incorporate the responses of others into the developing conceptual models. Finally, we should add that there has been substantial informal dissemination of the findings inside and outside the validating body, in meetings, conferences, workshops and seminars. One further piece of feedback was prompted by the work on methodology for this research, which was a response to being evaluated in an educational research programme (Gardiner, 1984c).

We can now turn to identifying the implications of this study for social work education. It is undertaken briefly, because the papers described above have articulated them more fully elsewhere.

8.5 Implications for Social Work Education

Although all families are in some ways unique, when social workers first visit a new case, they do not have to start from scratch in the first interview, and learn afresh about families' problems. Instead, they can transfer their learning and look at how earlier patterns and generalisations can help decide how to intervene.

We saw in the statement of the research problem that what actually goes on in supervision sessions is a critical element in helping students in that process, but in spite of the centrality of the supervision experience, little has been recently written about it in terms which give meaning to teaching and learning processes which contribute to the development of generic and transferable skills. There are key questions about how, given that multiplicity of variables, a selection of teaching material and learning experiences is made and then implemented.

The present study can suggest some aspects of social work courses which could usefully receive more attention. In doing so, however, we must make it clear that these are indicative and illustrative recommendations- they are not prescriptive - and we highlight areas of further work which might be of particular value to those planning or implementing policies for a new social work qualification. The following sections deal with these and related questions at three points - for individual teaching-learning interactions, for courses and for the training system as a whole.

8.5.1 Implications for Individual Teaching-Learning Interactions

Findings from research into how adults learn have failed to penetrate very far into social work education, despite the fact that we are clearly in the business of helping adults learn. Many recent contributions to debates about the future of social work education (eg CCETSW, 1987) stress the importance of shifting attention away from the content of courses and towards the assessment of student competence at the end of training. This is entirely proper in the context the political task of trying secure additional funds to lengthen and improve the quality of social work education.

There is relatively little evidence of an evaluative nature about CQSW and CSS programmes, and ways in which the quality of student learning can be enhanced. The research findings we have reported from higher education generally point to the significant impact of assessment (in focus and method) upon the quality of learning (in approach and outcome), though Saljo's work is largely unknown in social work (eg Saljo, 1976, 1979 and 1987). Assessment, though, is only one element of the context of learning and the approach of the teacher is also an important determinant in constraining the student's approach to his learning (Laurillard, 1978; Gibbs, Morgan and Taylor, 1982). We have gathered and presented evidence which demonstrates the impact of assessment on supervisors' approaches to teaching, and in turn on students' approaches to learning.

Questions which we pursued earlier in the study, about the importance of matching teaching and learning styles, to take account of the work of Pask (1976), and Marton and Saljo (1976) turned out to be important to maximise learning, particularly so in the context of the level which

students and supervisors had reached in their conceptions of learning. This finding demonstrates an important distinction in the work and implications to be drawn from it: students may well have "relatively consistent preferences... to learn in characteristic ways - their learning styles..." but we also need to look at "... the actual approaches to learning which they adopt in a particular context" (Newble and Entwistle, 1986).

Therefore if we discover Level One interactions in supervision, (or elsewhere on the course), we need to ensure that such surface learning is what is required, and that it represents a chosen strategy for teachers and learners who also have higher level concepts and strategies of learning. If surface approaches simply reflect the stage which teacher or student has reached, then attention needs to be given to a staff development programme for the teacher, and some direct help for the learner, about their conceptions of learning. Marton (1976) reminds us that the deep outcomes we desire might not arise simply because they were not intended or attempted.

There is a clear expression of value position here - that it is best not to be characteristically a surface-serialist learner in generic social work education, because we require more complex learning and metalearning, (with an associated diversity of practice approaches). Badger (1985) was worried about this:

> "My second concern about the theoretical base for Gardiner's research is that somewhere within it there is a value judgement as between serialism and holism... I am sure most of us left the hall rather hoping that we would not be discovered to be serialist learners... Gardiner points out the difficulty for social work educators in having students who are predominantly serialist learners..."

Serialist-surface (Level One) learning seems from this study to be dysfunctional for both supervisors and students, since it does not

promote the learning required to develop professional competence in social work placements (and subsequently). Therefore the value judgement about which Badger is concerned is defensible, given the evidence of this study.

If we are to maximise learning on placements, and as plans for a new social work award are formulated, we need to ensure:

> (i) That supervisors (especially those supervising the substantial final placement in an area of special emphasis) have recognised the importance of deep learning approaches, and thus be at least at Level Two (and preferably Level Three) in our model;

> (ii) That students (either at selection, or at some other key point in the course) have recognised the need for deep approaches to teaching and learning, and begun to develop some alternative learning approaches for the variety of tasks they will face in qualifying training.

Thus, matching of learning styles is less important than ensuring that both supervisors and students are not wedded to the notion that there is a single, right way to teach, and learn. Not least of the problems is that if student or supervisor do not recognise the importance of process in learning, and can not distinguish different approaches to different tasks, then they simply will not be able to achieve deep outcomes for student learning. Marton and Saljo (1976b) confirm that:

> "... students may need to refocus their attention on the underlying meaning of what they are required to study and that this process could be helped by ensuring that the assessment procedures demand deep-level processing."

Staff development programmes for supervisors need to promote the teaching and learning skills necessary to help students match learning approach to the learning task in a particular context of learning. This will be equally important for tutorials as well as supervision, since they are similar teaching-learning interactions.

Whilst this research was being written up, a qualitative study of the tutorial system in social work education was published (Bamford, 1987)

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which gathered data from tutors, students, supervisors and past students to explore the role of the tutor. His data demonstrate the overlap of roles between tutors and supervisors in helping students to make sense of their learning experiences, and he begins to identify some of the power and authority issues which have also interested us. His work does not refer to any of the research in adult learning on which we have drawn, and in consequence he is still constrained by a number of the assumptions and concepts of the traditional model - which is therefore shown to permeate thinking about tutorials as well as supervision. He is concerned with developing effective communication in tutorials, and stresses humanistic goals such as authenticity. We can use comments on his work to exemplify the relevance of the present study for looking at tutorials in social work education and elsewhere in the higher education system.

There are two areas of Bamford's work which are of particular interest. One is his finding about matching of students and supervisors "so that predictable clashes on personality or ideological grounds are avoided" which suggests an individualised model, rather than an interactive one; the other, about tutorials, extends the point by identifying problems in tutorial relationships as being derived in part from the perceived credibility of the tutor in relation to current practice. These two areas are first-order characteristics, and since Marton (1981), we should look at the second order characteristics in a "phenomenographic" way.

Bamford's data would be susceptible to re-analysis using the model we have developed here, and it would be a useful contribution to further work for some developments of this kind to take place. For example, his data point to the problems which arise when the teacher (tutor) simply

sees his role as teaching, and an extension of a didactic lecturing role. Our analysis of the examples Bamford describes would point more towards the tutor having a conception of his role which reflects the features of Level One, which mis-matches with what the student requires for the learning tasks. The credibility of the tutor, which Bamford expresses in terms of his recent practice experience, which emphasises teaching and apprenticeship-type models again suggests that teachers and/or students have a Level One conception of the teaching and learning approaches.

8.5.2 Implications for Courses and the Training System

Although we have concentrated upon the supervisory relationship as a focus for our research efforts, there are clearly much wider implications of the work in relation to curriculum design, and the structure of training systems, but we should note the general caution of Ramsden (1984) in reviewing recent research:

> "In spite of significant advances, too little is known about student learning processes to enable more than the most general statements about implications for teaching to be made... A lot of fundamental work is needed, particularly in explaining the patterns of results obtained."

Certainly the present study is illuminative rather than prescriptive in relation to course and system design, but we do need to take account of the findings and the model to give the greatest attention to the nature and quality of teaching and learning transactions which make up social work education and training. One thing we can be sure about is to avoid assuming that we need to improve students' study skills. Substantial work has shown that such attempts are likely to be ineffective unless they consider the nature and quality of the process of student learning (Gibbs, 1977).

In particular, then, attention should be given to **the impact of college**

and agency based approaches to teaching on how students perceive what is required of them, and how it contributes to developing the level of their conceptions of learning. Newble and Entwistle (1986) may have been describing some parts of social work eduction when they say:

> "We believe that a high proportion of medical schools have assessment schemes which fail to evaluate many of the most important curriculum objectives. All too often, examinations evaluate little more than the recall of factual knowledge. Where this is so, the habit of students who use a surface approach is likely to be reinforced, strategic learners will tend to adopt a surface approach and even students who prefer a deep approach may be forced to rote learn if the amount to be remembered is too great."

Innovative course structures, and progressive approaches to teaching and learning are unlikely to produce deep outcomes which contribute to professional competence if the assessment of that learning values (explicitly or implicitly, through the focus and form of the assessment) surface-reproductive learning.

This, then, is the central question facing course providers and the validating body in developing requirements for the new social work qualification - how to ensure a high minimum standard, by specifiying required student competencies, without making those outcomes difficult, or even impossible, to achieve if the mode of examinations and other forms of assessment induce surface-reproductive learning. The present state of affairs is that there is no systematic evidence about the impact of different forms of assessment on the quality of student learning in social work courses. Until and unless such evaluative studies are undertaken, using qualitative methodologies, notions like "building on the best of the existing programmes", and claims that longer training will improve standards (CCETSW, 1987) will remain at the level of assertion, assumption and anecdote.

This research has begun to identify some of the factors and methods

which could lead to such evaluations, and in doing so has also produced data which raise quite separate questions from those which we have thus far addressed. These relate to conceptions of what is **good enough** in all aspects of the courses. Recent policy decisions (CCETSW, 1987) suggest that CSS holders will be considered as fully qualified social workers, equal to CQSW holders and holders of the new, longer qualification. Is it right that the student who featured in the Case Illustration IV (the CSS placement) should now be considered as a fully qualified generic social worker?

Similarly, is it acceptable in the present systems, as well as in future, that supervisors should be as ill-prepared and ill-supported as the supervisor in that illustration? The variability of standards of supervision (and, according to Bamford, of tutorials) is a cause for concern which needs to be addressed urgently by those concerned to promote and maintain standards regardless of arguments about the length of training. We should do well to remember the work of Dearden (1976) which showed that after many changes in laboratory teaching, it was a small change in the way laboratory notebooks were assessed that brought about the desired changes in student learning. The centrality of the form and nature of assessment shown also by Saljo (1975) is confirmed by Elton and Laurillard (1979).

Finally, in this section, we can turn to the need to monitor standards not just in individual placements, but also in course sequences, and in courses as a whole (Adelman and Alexander, 1983; Gardiner, 1987b; Moody, 1986). The winds of change in higher education suggest that increased attention will need to be given to self-monitoring and self-evaluation by those providing the courses. The present research suggests that unless such evaluations take account of the process of

learning and teaching, and the impact of all aspects of the course (especially assessment) on the nature of students' perceptions of learning, then it will be difficult to justify a continuation of funding for social work education at the present level - let alone justifying the substantial cost of an extra year.

Underlying many of the debates about the future of social work education is the problem of the breadth and depth of the generic professional qualification. The findings of this work underline the need for generic preparation to be grounded in defined areas of competence and confidence, and for attention to be given to how students can generalise their learning from such an area, and transfer it effectively to other practice areas.

As we have seen, such abilities are likely to be associated more with Level Three conceptions in our model. The generic and specialist implications of this research have been discussed in two contributions to the literature (Gardiner, 1984b, and 1987b) so are not considered in detail here, except to say that unless students, teachers and validators can link learning processes to the preparation for generic practice, the conceptual confusion is likely to continue. Biggs (1985) quotes Brown (1984) about a parallel issue:

> "... some form of metacognitive theory could offer valuable contributions to the arguments about a core curriculum. Selection of problem-solving tasks... might then be based not only upon subjects deemed to be valuable in terms of their contents, but also on essential metacognitive skills... Metacognition may succeed where formal disciplines failed."

Those focussing on curriculum and assessment **content** in designing the new social work training would do well to heed this advice. We turn now to the final chapter where we provide a summary and overview of the study, and identify further research needed to extend and refine these data and the model of learning.

CHAPTER 9. SUMMARY OF THE THESIS, AND SOME AREAS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Section 9.1 An Overview of this Chapter

This Chapter provides an overall summary of the findings of the study, and identifies the need for further work. In Section 9.2 there is a restatement of the research problem. In the context of the findings and limitations of the present study, the need for further work is identified. Section 9.3 summarises the entire study, presents the main findings, and outlines the contribution of the insights and conceptualisations of the study to developing a paradigm of learning in social work education.

9.2 Restatement of the Research Problem and the Identification of Further Work Arising from the Study

At the start of this thesis, we described the centrality of the practice placement experience to the development of social work professional competence, but we highlighted the lack of research into the supervision process. The research problem was refined by looking at three indicative experiences which highlighted the limitations of the traditional model of supervision in fully accounting for those events. After a review of the literature on supervision, we described the components of the research problem as:

> placements in general, and supervision in particular, is under-researched;
>
> the literature on supervision is dated, and derived from American social casework in the 1940s and 1950s, yet social casework has been supplanted as the unique paradigm of practice in the UK;
>
> concepts have "leaked" from the practice arena to describing teaching and learning;
>
> there are generalisations about **all** teachers and **all**

students, an expectation of a hierarchical relationship between supervisor and student, and a hierarchy of hierarchies, with college-based tutors at the top;

learning problems are seen as the result of student pathology (especially 'anxiety');

instruction is the predominant teaching mode;

the educational task is seen as the application of college-based learning ('theory') to real-life practice.

We have seen subsequently that the classical model of supervision is essentially one which concerns Level One type interactions in teaching and learning, which emphasise surface-reproductive learning. The various components of this study have generated data which can be made explicable by looking at other levels of teaching and learning than this narrow and limiting conception contained in the classical model.

However, the present study, by being the first such research in this field in the UK is inevitably only a beginning contribution, identifying areas for further study, and more detailed investigation, after this illuminative and formative study has been completed. The preliminary account of the model, in the previous chapter, makes it clear just how limited a study of this kind is, and how much more work urgently needs to be done. In particular, further work should build not only on this study, but also on growth of other analogous research published and since the inception of this study.

Further work falls into five main areas:

replications and extensions, including studies of other practice areas besides those included here;

studies of other parts of social work courses, and courses as whole, to look at the value of this model of learning other than in supervision;

developmental work in preparation for the new social work award;

studies in other professional education and training programmes;

staff supervision in agencies.

In all of these areas there will be substantial implications for evaluated staff development programmes; and from each of these activities there can be conceptual development of this preliminary model, together with exploration of further facets of a paradigm of learning in professional education.

9.2.1 Qualitative Studies of Supervision

The first area is the need for further qualitative studies of supervision sessions, and of placements as a whole. Such work could be pursued by supervisors developing practitioner-research, to monitor, evaluate and develop their own understanding of teaching and learning in supervision. Wider, and more extensive, replications of the present work are required, to extend the sample of placements covered, and to refine the conceptualisations and interpretations offered here. In particular, further studies need to include many of the practice contexts not covered here - including probation, education welfare, residential and day services, and social work in health care settings.

More extensive work could also look more critically at possible differences between regions of the United Kingdom, between different routes to qualification (CQSW, CSS), courses at different levels in the education system (non-graduate, post-graduate, etc) and different amounts of previous experience for students and supervisors - even though we would expect that such features are unlikely to have as much impact on teaching and learning processes as the factors we have identified in the model.

In the present research, with a focus on teaching and learning

transactions, relatively little attention has been given to the characteristics of teachers and learners, other than in the ways they viewed the content and process of learning in supervision. This focus on "second-order" perspectives, of how people see and understand the world around them, and of the methodology of "phenomenography" to systematise the conceptions people have of (their) reality gives attention to precisely the kinds of areas we have studied. However, the relative lack of attention to "first-order" characteristics of teachers and learners does mean that some such features might get less attention. We give two examples of first-order characteristics from the research literature which could usefully be followed up in our own field.

We noted in Chapter Five that most of the subjects in Marton and Saljo's work were female; although generally the literature does not break down the findings about learning conceptions into sex-related categories, Van Rossum and Schenk's study (1984) does so, with the result that of the female subjects about twice as many (26) used surface learning approaches as deep approaches (14) whereas of the male subjects, more than twice as many (20) used deep approaches than surface approaches (9).

If findings of this kind were more general, it could point to the socialisation of girls into passive roles in school (and there is evidence of girls talking less in school class discussions than boys) whilst boys expect to be more active in their learning. None of this is connected by Van Rossum to the sex of the teacher, and whether female students are more passive with male teachers, in mixed classes, and so on. This is of particular relevance in social work given the historical importance of women in its development (Walton, 1972); and since about

sixty per cent of social work students are female, and a higher proportion of supervisors and tutors are female than might be the case in many other disciplines. Thus studies in social work education might need to be particularly sensitive to sex-related influences on approaches to learning.

The other example is raised in Biggs' work (1985) about the factor of ethnicity, which Biggs identified as a factor associated with deep approaches. He relates it to second-language English speakers, suggesting that bilinguality "with its ongoing search for clarifying meaning and monitoring one's own verbal output, facilitates the development of a deep approach". Social work courses have recruited substantial proportions of ethnic minority students in recent years (Gardiner, 1985), with more than ten per cent of the total CQSW intakes from minority groups. It would be important to look at the ethnicity factor in relation to deep approaches, with and without bilinguality, since the trans-cultural shifts for black students entering a predominantly white profession and training course might equally promote the development of metacognitive skills to clarify meanings. Courses might need to generate structures and patterns to facilitate this process.

9.2.2 Other Aspects of Social Work Education

The second need for further work is to extend the methodology and focus into looking at other components of social work education, including tutorials, classroom teaching and the course milieu as a whole. Although we have not developed the ideas here, many of the assumptions which underpin the activities of supervision in the classical model also permeate the course as a whole. Thus we need evaluative studies of

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the kind described by Entwistle and Ramsden at Lancaster (1983) to look at the impact of various aspects of the course structure, and the institutional contexts of the course (in college and agency) on the nature and quality of teaching and learning.

In this connection, Marton and Saljo's finding (1975) that deep learning outcomes never arose from surface level approaches (replicated more recently in Holland by Van Rossum and Schenk, 1984), and that full understanding came only from those using deep approaches, must be carefully considered in social work courses - not least because that seminal Goteborg work showed that deep outcomes were not possible often simply because it was not the intention of teacher or learner to seek them. Given our findings here (that some students and supervisors seemed stuck with surface and reproductive conceptions of learning) further studies are needed to demonstrate the value of extending those participants' conceptions of teaching and learning, and to evaluate the effectiveness of various interventions, to help them develop those conceptions to include active, deep learning, and to demonstrate versatility in their approaches.

Course level studies are also required to look at the impact of the learning milieu on teaching and learning, not just in supervision. They could also be related to earlier studies of the socialisation process in social work training. Shaw and Walton (1978) describe former students' attitudes to their course. They talk about the links between:

> "the distinctive pattern of tutorial and fieldwork instruction... (by which) students and workers are inducted into a traditional, conforming pattern of working, by the processes of supervision modelled on the traditional relationship of analyst and analysand... But if it can be shown empirically that social work education departs from this pattern there would be exciting implications not only for social work but for the whole study of professional socialisation...

"Yet, although one still occasionally hears of social work courses which reduce the criticism of ex-students to oedipal strivings for independence, to imply that this is symbolic of the general picture is a nonsense and a fiction."

Shaw and Walton show the weaknesses of theories of professional socialisation in relation to their course, but nine years later, we can still see the language and assumptions of the traditional model being used in relation to supervision. Certainly, the overt expressions of gross pathologising of students have (thankfully) all but disappeared. The covert assumptions persist not only in the use of language, because of the lack of a systematic and coherent challenge to the model from a different (learning-based) paradigm. More optimistically we can show that some supervisors and students can and do operate beyond the confines of that model - but evidently others are still stuck there.

Shaw and Walton remind us of the distinctive pattern of tutorials, as well as supervision. We saw above that the recent qualitative study by Bamford (1987) looks at tutorials, but we perhaps also need studies which look at the quality of the teaching and learning in individual and group tutorials, and how students´ approaches to (and outcomes of) learning in tutorials are affected by the tutor´s conceptions and expectations of learning.

It would be of considerable interest to the present author to look at the conceptions which social work students, tutors and supervisors have of learning, (good) teaching, the relation of theory to practice, and the differences between active and passive learning (following Van Rossum, Deijkers and Hamer, 1985). Preliminary data have already been gathered for such a study, to look at the relation of these conceptions of learning to both learning approaches in various aspects of social work courses, and to the outcomes of learning.

9.2.3 Developmental Work for a New Social Work Award

Overlaying these needs for further work at individual and course levels is the need for careful monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of new policies and requirements for social work training, to ensure that the nature of course developments which arise from the changes does not constrain precisely the kinds of learning we wish to encourage in professional training.

This will be particularly critical (as we saw above) in ensuring that greater emphasis on the outcomes of learning, and greater specificity in the content of assessment, are not interpreted by courses (nor seen by students) as requiring only surface-reproductive kinds of teaching and learning.

Great caution will need to be exercised by the validating body in relation to any detailed guidance it may give about the curriculum content of core elements and of special emphases, since a focus on content may constrain course providers, teachers and students into surface-reproductive learning – on the assumption that this is what CCETSW intends. This may be directly parallel to the student's conception, or expectation, of what his teachers or the assessment require.

The work undertaken by Hounsell about essays, suggests that "students' conceptions of what is involved in writing an essay for a particular course differ substantially" (Hounsell, 1983) and that their interpretation of such tasks, like reading for a seminar, taking notes, and doing projects also seem related to their general conception of learning.

Since social work courses are interdisciplinary in essence, the ability to accurately discriminate the requirements from teachers within a variety of disciplinary backgrounds further suggests the need for students to have meta-learning skills and Level Three conceptions of learning.

Findings of this kind emphasise the need for qualitative evaluations both of the present training programmes (CQSW and CSS) together with the implementation of policies to improve them, and to initiate a new social work award, so that we have a basis on which to judge the effectiveness of courses in improving the quality of student learning. We would also have, inter alia, evidence of the value of those policies so that the validating body could evaluate the impact of changes in policies on the quality and outcomes of student learning. Biggs (1985) suggests that we should look at two broad options for teachers (and validators?):

> "(1) To accept the student´s orientation as given, and match instructional objectives, teaching processes, and evaluation procedures... to maximise **content** learning;
>
> (2) To attempt to change the student´s orientation where it is seen to be maladaptive in order to maximise **process** learning"

In social work education, it seems, we require learning outcomes which can not arise from surface strategies, therefore we must direct our attention to the latter - which, as we have seen in data gathered in this study requires supervisors who themselves have conceptions of learning which allow them to comprehend and encourage a variety of levels of teacher-learner interaction.

9.2.4 Further Work in Professional and Vocational Training Programmes

We have suggested throughout that this work might have implications for other professional training, and that the insights generated here might be usefully extended elsewhere. Certainly the small scale extension, which we described above, in a family therapy training programme, generated data which confirmed an even greater focus than in social work on teaching and the teacher (Gray, 1986). Some of that work, in a multi-professional training programme, and recent discussions with supervisors, suggest that such a focus is reinforced by the medical model of practice and training. Thus it is instructive to see Entwistle and Newble (1986) beginning to consider the implications of recent developments in adult learning research for medical education in ways which are congruent with those we have outlined for social work.

A different line of development would be to extend the work into programmes which address issues of supervision in agencies, for qualified staff as well as for students. Certainly, in following up some of the supervisors who are included here, they offered anecdotal evidence which suggests that they now supervise staff in the ways they previously supervised students, and they sometimes run into similar difficulties.

In all of these further activities, there will be opportunities to test and refine the usefulness of the model we have developed here, so that we can be clearer about the links between students' conceptions of learning, their perceptions of the learning task, how they will be taught and assessed, and the quality of the outcome of learning.

9.3 A Summary, and An Overview

9.3.1 A Summary

Despite the practice component of social work courses taking half of the entire time, and despite the importance attached to the placement and supervision by students after their training (Fry, 1977; Shaw and Walton, 1978), it is poorly conceptualised and under-researched. With plans to develop and extend social work training under discussion throughout the 1980s, the competence of students, and the quality of their learning, is central to improving the quality of social work practice.

This research began with an examination of the researcher's own supervision records, as a student and as a specialist student supervisor. This led to the identification of a number of indicative experiences which were not wholly or adequately explained at the time. These experiences (as a student, a supervisor, and in a group of supervisors at a staff development exercise) suggested that prevalent explanations of supervision seemed close to those used to describe interactions between social workers and clients. They also suggested a need to distinguish between students in their approaches to learning.

The literature on supervision in the United Kingdom was reviewed (eg Young, 1967), and found to be heavily reliant upon the American social casework supervision literature of the 1940s and 1950s. The key feature of this literature was the "leakage" of concepts from the therapeutic arena to describing the interactions in the supervisory process, which lead to considerable debate about whether supervision was therapy. The form of teaching associated with this model is traditional,

hierarchical, and essentially focussed on the learning of right ways to practise. Students who did not learn in the expected ways were pathologised as "uneducable" (Towle,1954) and new supervisors were placed, in turn, in a hierarchical relationship with the college tutors. The review of later contributions to this literature shows the persistence of the language and assumptions - indeed, supervision is still termed "field instruction" in the United States, and supervisors are called "field instructors".

The research problem was articulated as gaining descriptive data, which could contribute to the formulation of other paradigms of teaching and learning in supervision, and the development of conceptual models and frameworks arising from the findings and grounded in them. A formative/developmental function for the study was also identified.

The literature on methodological approaches to educational research was surveyed, and the advantages of qualitative methods of collecting and presenting data were described. A rationale for the choice of methods was given, and the benefits of a triangulation approach (of multiple methods and multiple focal points) were seen. The design of the first stage of data collection reflected these perspectives, with a broad study of how supervisors viewed teaching and learning (using a questionnaire method), and a narrow, focussed study on supervision sessions throughout an entire placement by tape-recording those sessions.

These findings highlighted the issues of styles or approaches to learning, and the stage of learning reached by supervisors and students. Thus the literature on research into adult learning was reviewed, showing two broad areas of interest to us. One was the

general need for andragogical approaches in adult education; the other was the results of research studies published at that time (1983) in Sweden, England, and the United States, which gave attention to the differences between students in their approaches to learning.

The Swedish work related these qualitative differences in approach to the outcomes of learning, and to the conceptions students had of learning (Marton and Saljo, 1976a and 1976b; Saljo, 1979). Some of the English work identified differences in approaches, and looked also at the effect of match and mis-match of learning and teaching styles (Pask, 1976). Other English work showed the extent to which these differences in approach were dependent upon students' perceptions of the learning task, and the context in which the learning took place (Laurillard, 1978). The American work showed the developmental stages through which adult learners pass, especially from a polarised conception of absolutes, with rights and wrongs known to authorities, to recognising that knowledge is relative not absolute, and that personal values and commitment to them determine how one relates to knowledge and authorities (Perry, 1970).

In the light of this review, the major stage of data collection was designed, using interview methods to allow discussion and follow up of the material gathered in the first stage, and extension to other supervisors. Data were collected on learning styles alongside the interview material, and feedback discussions which checked the accuracy of descriptions and interpretations were included in the study. In some of the cases, additional data were gathered where this seemed appropriate, thus a tutor was interviewed in relation to one placement, and tapes of supervision sessions were gathered in relation to others.

The findings of this stage were presented as case illustrations, and were selected for their contribution to model building. Elements of the model were emphasised within each case illustration and then brought together in the development of a schematic model which could account for the teaching and learning interactions seen in supervision. This model is founded on the conceptions which both teachers and learners have of learning, and the impact that these conceptions have on the possible levels of interaction in teaching and learning they can utilise.

Three qualitatively different levels were identified. Level One was associated with a surface-reproductive conception of learning; Level Two was associated with a more active-deep conception of learning, and a search for intention and meaning through the learner's involvement in the learning. The difference between Levels One and Two was a focus on process of learning (Level Two) rather than a focus on the content of learning (Level One). Level Three interactions were characterised by meta-learning abilities to reflect on various approaches to learning, to choose from a repertoire of approaches in relation to the discrimination of the task, and crucially, the ability to learn to learn, and transfer the process as well as the content of learning.

Each higher order conception of learning subsumes the one below, thus problems of mis-match are more acute when one or other participant in the teaching-learning process of supervision has only reached the stage of Level One conceptions of learning.

The findings and the model were considered in the light of more recent research into student learning (Richardson, Eysenck and Warren Piper, 1987), including work in Australia (Biggs, 1985) and in Holland (Van

Rossum et al, 1984 and 1985) which emphasise the need to consider higher orders of learning, and to match these in evaluation studies with a focus on higher order conceptions of the world held by students and teachers. Considerable congruence between the findings of this study and the developments elsewhere in research into student learning was found, although the present study's focus on teaching-learning interactions as a part of professional training does not seem to have been a focus for other work. Thus it can be seen as a beginning contribution to that literature.

Questions about the value and validity of the findings of this study were considered, the development of feedback to participants, and the wider dissemination of the findings were discussed. Some debates in the literature prompted by reports of the preliminary findings and conceptualisations of this study were described, showing the need for developmental work, and further formative studies in social work education. The kinds of studies which need to be carried out were described, including work already initiated by the present author, to consider the relation between conceptions of learning, approaches to particular learning tasks, and the quality of outcomes of learning in social work education.

9.3.2 An Overview

This research began as an illuminative study of supervision intended to look at questions of match and mis-match of learning styles, but has developed a methodology and model to consider the impact on approaches to learning of conceptions of learning which teachers and learners hold. As such, it is in line with other developing work in student learning in higher education. However, we should recall that this wider field is, itself, in relative infancy and that we should be wary of prescriptive recommendations for action. Instead, we have shown the contribution of this study and have identified the need for many other areas of research within social work education, **from the perspective of those involved.** Such evaluative studies are badly needed, not only to establish what is currently happening in social work education, but also to identify what can and should be built upon in developing the social work courses of the 1990s. They in turn will need careful monitoring and evaluations of the quality of the students' learning.

Perhaps we should end with the words of Perry (1981) and of Saljo (1987). Saljo reminds us that for many people, (teachers, students and others), the quality of learning is not the prime reason for their presence in higher education, and that for all of the research effort to improve the quality of learning, Svensson (1976) found:

> "that the most decisive factor determining study success was if students actually read their text books or not. Those who did were more or less successful, while those who for some more or less acceptable reason chose not to, usually - though not always - ran into troubles in their examinations."

Richardson (1987) describes Perry's recognition that an analogous process to the scheme he devised for college students may be taking place in the conceptual developments and model-building of researchers into student learning higher education. If that is so, then we also

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need to produce alternative frameworks and paradigms to the classical supervision model to reach the equivalent of contextual, relativistic reasoning in his scheme.

Reflection at the end of the thesis suggests that this research has travelled a long way. Perry, above has helped to chart how far we have travelled, but Saljo reminds how far there is to go. It may yet be a difficult journey to make, to improve the quality of teaching and learning in social work education. But we owe it, in the end, to our clients, and to ourselves.

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Learning for Transfer*

Derek W.G. Gardiner

Abstract

This paper considers insights from research into the learning and teaching processes in social work education, which link to research into how adults learn. They are seen to relate to the transfer of learning from one area of practice competence to another. This suggests a way of sorting out problems related to the generic-specialist debate not only for considering an individual student's learning but also for course and training system design by emphasising that all training needs to be grounded in defined areas of practice competence. Professional level training would require not only such grounding in one area of practice, but also the ability to generalise learning, transfer it, and demonstrate competence in at least one other area of practice.

When social workers first visit families, they do not have to start from scratch in the first interview and learn afresh what they already know about marriages and families and children and problems. Instead, they go in through the door already having some ideas about the kinds of things which go on in families, and how some families have trouble handling the kinds of changes which other families can take in their stride.

When I trained as a social worker, on a one year postgraduate course, it was patently obvious that the training could not (even if that were desirable) give me direct experience of every situation in which I might be expected to intervene during my professional career. If my training had been for a rather different kind of activity — one which involved a clearly definable set of skills to be used in a very limited number of situations (for example if I was intending to become a watch-repairer) it would have been possible to encompass the range of tasks and skills which I might need in my subsequent working life and to give me some experience of them during training. However, when training is for a much more diverse set of tasks, and when the methods of practice vary in different situations, and when the agency contexts of practice are different from each other, then the course can only include direct experience of a limited selection from within that range of experiences which will be met in a professional lifetime.

The key question is how, given that multiplicity of variables, a selection of teaching materials and learning experiences is made, and then implemented, so that students are adequately equipped to begin professional practice in a wider range of situations than they have met during training.

There are several ways in which this question of selection could be dealt with. In the seven years that I have worked at CCETSW I have looked at a large number of course submissions which reflect very different kinds of answers. These have ranged from trying (unsuccessfully) to include a little of everything, to identifying broad and generalised concepts which are to be applied in practice.

* An earlier version of this paper was given at the ATSWE Conference in July 1984. The views expressed in it are the author's. They do not necessarily represent those of CCETSW.

During the past ten years we have seen the development of two parallel kinds of training for work in the personal social services. One (the CQSW) has been intended to provide a generic professional qualification for social workers; the other (the CSS) has been intended as an in-service and job-specific qualification for other social services staff. CCETSW is now reviewing these policies for qualifying training, and there is a widespread view that the existing distinction between the certificates is no longer tenable. My own view is that if we are to train people in a task-based training programme to equip them only to do their present job (and not to prepare them for other roles which they may later take on) then like the watch-repairers we can match the training closely to the job to be done after training. If, however, we wish to give professional training for a variety of roles within the personal social services, and to equip these workers to handle and promote change during their professional lifetime, then we have to find ways of managing the large number of variables not only in the design of courses, but also in the structure of our training systems as a whole.

This preamble is essentially a way of identifying the three levels at which we need to consider issues in social work education — that of the individual teacher or student, that of training courses and that of training systems. There is a need to develop a language and conceptualisations which connect all three levels.

This paper is therefore a preliminary attempt to outline a framework which can, on the one hand, identify the importance of learning styles, learning stages and the transfer of learning for social work education and, on the other hand, be used subsequently to evaluate developments in these areas. It considers four main areas:

a) some issues which emerged when I was a practice teacher and how these relate to the findings of research into how adults learn;

b) the approach and preliminary findings of my own current research which looks at teaching and learning processes in placement supervision;

c) developing conceptualisations about teaching and learning in social work — especially about the transfer of learning;

d) implications of this work for courses and for training systems as a whole.

Experience as a practice teacher and the finding of research into how adults learn

Findings from research into how adults learn have not penetrated far into social work education, despite the fact that we are clearly in the business of teaching adults. Over the past few years I have heard many contributions to debates which stress the importance of shifting attention away from the content of courses (what students are taught) and towards the assessment of student competence (what they have learnt) at the end of training[1]. But there is much less discussion about *how* students can be best helped to learn what we require of them. What in some courses is taught in lecture form to a group of a hundred students, in others is taught in small seminar groups, and in yet others is assumed to take place in practice placements. There is little evidence about whether particular methods and approaches to teaching are more effective than others. Most important of all, we have very little evidence about

which teaching is best for which kinds of students and at what stage of their careers. Each of our training courses is an experiment in adult learning, but most of these experiments are not evaluated, since we have not yet built up the conceptual frameworks which would allow us to begin this work.

Before I went to CCETSW I worked in a Student Unit where part of my time was spent in contributing to a research programme looking at practice-based inter-professional training. I soon began to realise that doctors and nurses had rather different expectations from social workers about how they would be taught or learn. They often seemed to be expecting direct, lecture-style teaching even in small seminar groups where the intention was to talk about their shared practice experience.[2]

During that period, I was also beginning to realise that some students in the Unit learned very well from the kind of teaching I was offering but others seemed to find it much less helpful, and only learned despite it. From bitter experience I realised that I needed to develop a broader repertoire of teaching strategies to respond effectively to the very different learning needs of my students. When I began my present research, therefore, I had some notions about the importance of matching students and practice-teachers. I was trying to explain difficulties in supervision in terms of teaching and learning processes rather than in terms of personality clashes. When I came to look at the research literature it was clear that some of these ideas are well-established, and better articulated outside social work education.

The approach and preliminary findings of my own current research, and its links with the research literature

I chose to register my own current research for a higher degree at the University of London Institute of Education. There were two main reasons for this: I wanted to look specifically at educational processes, and make links with research in other fields which could help to develop my thinking in relation to social work. I also wanted to view social work education from alternative perspectives rather than from within. This was particularly important given the research methodology — based on observation, on sound tapes and video tapes of supervision sessions, on interviews, on some learning exercises to provide some external indicators of learning style to supplement the qualitative material gained by this approach and on open-ended questionnaire material.

I decided to use a variety of methods to collect data so that I could be relatively unselective, at least in the early stages of the study, and not limit the focus too narrowly. This kind of approach has been called "triangulation"[3] since there is a danger that any one method or focus of data collection might give relatively imprecise findings (like weak distress signals from a ship). However, if the weak signals are picked up by three or more coastguard stations a relatively precise position can be plotted. The research approach is qualitative rather than quantitative, in that I am endeavouring to look in depth at a limited number of situations, to describe, and subsequently begin to interpret and give meaning to the educational experience. I am not making a large number of observations intending to show that practice teachers and students are necessarily more likely to demonstrate certain approaches to learning than others. This kind of research — using illuminative, or qualitative methodologies — is well established in research into higher education, though less

well known in our own field.[4]

I began, after looking through my own past supervision records of almost fifty students, by tape-recording the supervision sessions of an entire seven months placement to collect direct evidence of what actually went on in other people's supervision and how the sessions were used. This depth approach gave me a very useful yardstick for comparison with my own practice teaching since for most of us supervision is a very private experience. Both my own records, and these tapes pointed to the problems of teachers teaching in many ways which were not how the student expected to learn.

I also asked about forty practice teachers to complete two open-ended questionnaires about *how* they had learned in what was for them a significant learning experience, and *how* they preferred to supervise. They were also asked about students they had found difficult to supervise and to speculate why. Not surprisingly, despite descriptions of very different kinds of learning experiences, the practice teachers preferred to teach in ways that were close to how they learned and — equally unsurprisingly — they had difficulties in teaching those students who appeared to learn in different ways from them. I repeated the exercise later with a further sixty practice teachers. This produced very similar accounts of what worked, and what did not.

There are some good summaries[5,6,7] which provide an introduction to thinking about how adults learn, so I shall refer only to the main findings which are relevant to social work educators. The research in this area focusses either on learning strategies or on the outcome of learning. I shall here use the terminology of Pask[8]:

a) Students have relatively stable characteristic approaches to their learning[9], and learn best when the teaching they receive is congruent with their own preferred learning style. Problems occur with mis-matching of teaching and learning styles. Learning is less effective, and less enduring without such matching.

b) There are two main approaches which adults use in relation to complex tasks of learning: a *holist* approach is one which reflects a learning style where the learner is looking for the complete picture, the connections between elements of learning, and is actively searching for meaning in the learning task. The other is a *serialist* approach which is predominantly reproductive learning where remembering factual details is seen as more important. There is some correlation between these approaches or strategies and choice of both subjects at University and career. Thus serialists are found more often in science courses and the law. Holists tend towards the arts and the social sciences.

c) Some learners are *versatile* in that they can discriminate between different kinds of learning tasks, and use appropriate learning strategies differentially in a variety of situations which demand rather different kinds of learning.

It is worth remembering that holism, and serialism, are positions on a continuum and learners will not always be at the extremes of this dimension. Some of Pask's later work[10], and the work of Marton and Saljo[11] in Gothenburg shows that students can be trained into greater versatility. Both sets of findings, derived from

rather different kinds of studies, suggest that it is easier to get those who tend to be holists to develop serialist strategies than vice-versa.

In the questionnaire material there were some instances where there had been problems despite apparent similarities in approaches to learning. A more detailed analysis, together with further listening to the tapes of the supervision of the entire placement, showed that the early one-dimensional analysis based on the matchings of teaching and learning styles did not take into account either the value of a deliberate mis-match of styles to provide a complementary model, or the length of experience of practice teachers or students. What I came to recognise was that unless some assessment of the stage of development of the teacher as teacher, and the learner as learner, was made, matching or mis-matching of style was not in itself enough to account for the incidence of problems in supervision. Since that time, I have been trying to develop a matrix which plots learning styles against three stages of learning and allows the questions of matching to be looked at in more detail. I have also begun to develop criteria for assigning learners and teachers to appropriate boxes in this matrix. Research related to stages of development of adult learners has been not unhelpful,[12] since it indicates stages which college students go through in higher education generally, and these can be extended relatively easily into the professional/vocational training area. The description here is essentially over-simplified, and will be reported in detail subsequently.

The current part of my present study is based on interviews with students and supervisors towards the end (or at the end) of a placement and getting tapes of their supervision sessions. Besides being interviewed separately, and later together, about the learning on the placement, both practice teacher and student are also asked to complete a learning styles exercise. This helps them (as well as the researcher) to identify their own preferred learning strategies. The joint interview session includes some feedback on learning styles and the implications for teaching and learning on the placement. I began by seeing this final session as outside the scope of the study, and as a way of giving something back to those who had been prepared to be interviewed. However, it became apparent that this discussion was used by the interviewees to make links between this material and what had happened on placement. It was therefore central to the concerns of the study and is now part of the data collected. An emerging theme in this material has been how practice teachers help students to generalise and transfer their learning.

Developing conceptualisations about teaching and learning processes in social work

In a recent paper[13] I have explored what I meant by the terms "learning process", "learning how to learn" and the "transfer of learning", since they tend to be used with considerable lack of precision in the literature and in discussions.

"The learning process", as I understand it, is about changes in the way we see, and then make sense of, the world. There are a number of elements which go to make up this learning process, including the experiences which we have and the patterns which we begin to build up to help us to understand our experiences and the world we are in. These patterns come from recognising that some bits of an experience are more salient for a given purpose than others. By selecting such features and making patterns of them we move towards generalisations which can help both to explain

and (to a limited extent) to predict our world. Such patterns help us to give meaning to experience and to begin to own and internalise it. In new situations we may discover that the new patterns we are building up have things in common with the generalisations we have already made. Thus we might find it helpful to use the earlier patterns and generalisations in making sense of the new situations. In this way we do not have to start afresh in every new situation, but can make use of what we have already learned elsewhere. The learning process is therefore a series of inter-related stages involving the matching up of new experiences with earlier ones.

Effective learners are those who are able to recognise not only the similarities between such situations, but also the differences, and who can therefore amend the patterns they use to explain their world in a way which encompasses new and disparate experience. The ability to do this is what I mean by *"learning how to learn"* since it involves the recognition of one's own learning processes, and the ability to modify them.

By the *"transfer of learning"* I mean using those parts of the overall learning process which I have described in more detail above (having an experience, recognising what is salient, building up patterns, making patterns of the patterns which become generalisations, and then the recognition in new situations that the earlier generalisations may be appropriate or relevant) to make use of earlier experiences in new situations. Thus both the generalisations derived from particular experiences *and* the application of these generalisations are both essential components in the transfer of learning.

It is important therefore that we distinguish between the content of learning and the process of learning if we are to understand the transfer concept in the way that I use it. In this definition neither the application of theory to practice nor the application of the general to the specific are synonymous with the "transfer of learning". Similarly, being able to generate theory from practice experience is not an example of "transfer of learning" since it is only the generalisation half of the definition. Robert Harris[14], in a recent paper, seems sometimes to mean "transfer of learning" as I have defined it, but at other times to mean only the application component, or the connections between experiences. Watching me play squash and tennis might demonstrate the similarities of the skills required for the two activities, but it does not necessarily mean that I am transferring learning between the two experiences.

The importance of this distinction should not be overlooked since the recently implemented CCETSW Guidelines for CQSW Courses require that students have to demonstrate their ability to transfer learning. The Guidelines define this concept in a way which is consistent with the line I have taken, and specifically excludes seeing application alone as being synonymous with transfer: "5.8 (iii) is intended to test students' capacity to transfer learning from one area of practice to another and not only from the general to the specific".[15]

The definition which I use has many implications for teachers as well as learners since it clearly defines "transfer of learning" as a conceptual skill. It is one which might need to be separately taught to those students who are unable to make the necessary distinctions between levels of generality and specificity of concepts in order that they can transfer their learning from one area of practice to another.

During practice placements such concepts as the transfer of learning are vital since without the ability to make patterns and to generalise, a student would be unable to work effectively with his clients. This inability could show itself in a number of different ways and two examples make this clear. I remember one student who wrote an immensely long and literate account of everything he had seen in the house, fine detail about the design of the wallpaper, and almost verbatim accounts of the interview which consisted of a list of things the family had done in the previous few days. He was unable to decide what was salient, and was also unable to make any connections with what he had experienced in other families, including his own.

A second example shows the other extreme where a student, because his reports were so general, seemed to be visiting the same family each week in four different houses on the same estate. A further variant of this kind of problem is where a student has just met a new approach in his reading or at college and finds material to illustrate it on every home visit.

If there are, as the research suggests, two broad kinds of learning styles and strategies which adults use, and if one of them appears to be much more dysfunctional for some critical parts of the social work education process, then that is a vital finding. It is relatively easy to show that serialist learners have greater difficulty than holists in precisely that area of making links from one piece of learning to another. This could have important implications for the selection of students. It also highlights the need to identify students' learning styles at an early stage of a course in order that those students who use predominantly serialist or predominantly holist learning approaches could have the opportunity to become more versatile in their learning strategies. Robert Harris says that this understanding might help tutors with students who have "a particular learning problem".[16] Indeed it might, especially if it means that tutors are able to recognise that the problem is not necessarily to be seen as a personal difficulty of the student but arises from a mis-match of teaching styles used by the course and the characteristic learning style of the student.

Understanding learning strategies, and the stage of development as a learner, allows the possibility of understanding what goes on in placements (and elsewhere in social work education) within an interactive paradigm rather than one based on learning pathology being ascribed to one or other of the participants in the learning process. This might also indicate ways of matching students with practice teachers and tutors.

"Teaching for transfer" involves the recognition of the different styles and strategies which students use in their learning, and developing a repertoire of teaching approaches to respond to these different styles. It also involves helping students in their "learning for transfer" to recognise salience, to built patterns, to generalise and then to make use of the generalisations in new situations.

Implications for courses and training systems

Earlier I posed the problem of selection and choice for generic courses because of the range of diverse variables. Here, I want to stress the vital importance of the transfer of learning concept not only at the level of individual student and teacher

but also at the levels of courses, and training systems as a whole.

To restate the position, in slightly different terms, learning for transfer comes from:

i)   the grounding of knowledge and skills in a defined area of practice;

ii)   generalising from the patterns in these experiences;

iii)   recognising that earlier patterns and generalisations derived from other practice situations may be of help in understanding, or intervening in, the new situation.

"Generic training at a professional level" can then be seen as a course where knowledge and skills grounded in one area of practice competence and confidence are generalised and transferred into at least one other practice area — so that students can demonstrate generic skills in at least two areas of competent practice and the transfer of learning between them.

The debates about pre-professional training can also be simplified. If students (or workers) are competent in only one defined area of practice confidence and competence (and no less skilled than a professionally qualified practitioner in that area) they can be considered as "equipped for the job", and paid accordingly, even if they are not required to demonstrate their competence with other client groups or in different settings. There is a parallel here in dentistry — dental technicians are no less skilled than the dentist in making bridges or false teeth, but they may not have the range of skills that the dentist has in other areas as well. The analogy is useful in that it also helps to distinguish between those responsible for deciding on treatment and those responsible for undertaking the direct work. The links here with staff working in a residential care unit are obvious.

The nature of post-qualification training and its relation to qualifying training are clarified too. Training after qualification could be of two kinds:

further training to transfer knowledge and skills into a new area of practice;
or
the development of advanced skills and deeper understanding within an existing area.

This distinction between "further" and "advanced" training helps us to distinguish "more specialised" and "specialist" training. What I mean by "more specialised" are the defined areas of practice competence which are the basis (grounding) of qualifying training, or the focus of further training. I use the term "specialist" training to mean only advanced studies. These two meanings of "special" are key concepts if we are to be able to distinguish narrow and focussed studies ("further" training) from deeper "advanced" studies.

The approach outlined helps to clarify some of the course design problems posed in the 1970s, because just as not every practice situation can be experienced by a student during training, so college-based teachers are similarly unable to teach everything in two years. But if we accept the need to ground learning in discrete areas as a basis for transfer, then the courses could identify a small number of such areas which they could teach in college and through placements. This would not be a return to specialist training, but would be the grounding of the generic concepts in direct practice. Courses in a region or an area could, between them, provide coverage of

most practice areas, whilst a few courses might provide particular emphasis on a national basis. Agencies, in planning staff training, and students, in choosing courses, could make more realistic and effective choices about where to undertake training, based on knowledge of the practice areas in which courses offered grounding for generic training.

The mutual obligation of colleges and agencies to identify available resources in these areas of special emphasis is already established, and the new Section 3 of the CQSW Guidelines spells this out:

"Since students are required to demonstrate the ability to transfer learning . . . courses will need to identify those practice areas in which they can adequately prepare students to demonstrate such ability".[17]

The framework being developed in this paper is not inconsistent with some of the proposals of the Central Council's Working Group on the Review of Qualifying Training Policies since it includes both generic and specialist teaching in both qualifying training, and further, post-experience training. The Working Group says that "we expect that some degree of specialisation could be developed within the system of qualifying awards proposed"[18], and "the introduction of two levels of education and training in social work . . . would allow holders of the first level award to consolidate and develop practice skills in relation to some client group(s), methods or settings, without being expected to cope with the full range of complexity. We consider it important that both level courses should contain a common core and specialist elements."[19]

This suggests some definitions:

(a) *"equipped for the job"* would be a level of training less than a full professional qualification based on knowledge and skills grounded within a single area of practice competence.

(b) *"generic training at a professional level"* would be based on courses where knowledge and skills grounded in one area of practice competence and confidence are generalised and transferred into at least one further practice area. There are thus three elements in generic training: two areas of practice, and the generalisations (including contributory discipline teaching) and transfer of learning which link them. A system of exemptions in qualifying training could take account of previous studies in "equipped for the job" level of training.

(c) *"post-experience training"* would be further training at a qualifying level with a focus on an additional single area of practice.

(d) *"post-qualifying training"* would be advanced training, of a more complex and deeper nature.

In such a framework, the same module of training could be used as the single practice area of an equipped-for-the-job training programme, as one practice area in generic qualifying training, and as the practice focus in post-experience training.

Summary and Conclusion

This paper considers insights from research into the learning and teaching processes in social work education, which link to research into how adults learn. They are

seen to relate to the transfer of learning from one area of practice competence to another. This suggests a way of sorting out problems related to the generic-specialist debate, not only for individual student learning, but also for course and training system design, by emphasising that all training needs to be grounded in defined areas of practice competence. Professional level training would require not only such grounding in one area of practice, but also the ability to generalise learning, transfer it, and demonstrate competence in at least one other area of practice.

In conclusion, I would like to leave us with some of the questions addressed in this paper:

(i) Can we develop ways of identifying learning styles and stages of development for students and teachers which would help to maximise the return from the time and resources devoted to social work education — especially in practice placements?

(ii) Can we develop ways in which we can help extreme serialist or holist students and teachers become more versatile, and include other strategies within their repertoire?

(iii) Can we develop ways of evaluating learning in professional and vocational training, and relate such learning to teaching styles and strategies?

(iv) Can we grasp the implications of this work in sorting out the generic and specialist issues in qualifying courses?

(v) Can we design and structure our training systems as a whole in more consistent (and rational) ways based on this kind of framework?

I believe that we can, and I hope that this paper is a beginning contribution to answering these central questions for social work education in the United Kingdom and elsewhere.

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This appendix gives the detail of the interview commented upon in Case Illustration II.

The interview was undertaken in the supervisor's own office. A time limit of forty-five minutes was requested by the supervisor, agreed and adhered to.

The supervisor was asked to begin by describing the placement chronologically.

"(This student) was a very difficult student.. he had completed his academic side satisfactorily... he appealed his failed second year placement, which meant that the University had to offer him another placement... This was a lad who had been a trainee, and who really had quite a lot of experience... (He had) a variety of jobs before social work... and was a van driver in the six months after the course, and before the repeated placement..."

I wrote to one of the local teams, giving full details of this lad... (At the beginning of the placement) we were quite thorough, and went through his last (placement) report... He said that his religious beliefs had changed, in fact he had given up his zealous religious beliefs which had been really quite intrusive... in fact he had given up his faith, at least, the inappropriate bits... (and) he felt he could now be more dependent on others... one of the conditions (set by the agency) was that the first 60 days were a trial, not a commitment to the whole 120 days (of the additional placement)..."

"I write the notes up of the supervision in a book and leave them out for him to add his comments, so we do have a detailed record. Really, I felt, given the kinds of reports he came with, he did very well... yes, I can remember my words 'you are doing (pause) all right, you are doing very well'... The two things that I think were particular difficulties for him were the fact that he felt the kind of developmental, Freudian approach was meaningless, he couldn't see that he needed that, that it was relevant to the work he was being asked to do..."

"The other one was... the criterion 'practice must submit to the discipline of result' and this got him very worried, because he said 'What if my clients don't show any results?' and I tried to answer that by saying it's perfectly in order to have one client, or two clients, or even perhaps three or more clients that show no response to your input, but if you have a whole series of clients, and we were certainly aiming at around an average of 9-12 clients, if, in all of them it just seems as if your work has been a waste of time, then it would appear to indicate that something was wrong."

"I had good support from the tutor, we had a long (written) agreement, which included that the tutor would visit monthly, which was adhered to... not that there were any particular problems... In the working agreement, it had been made quite clear, and I do see this as a general practice, that it would not be possible to say until fairly close to the end of it

whether the student was passing it or failing the placement."

(Interviewer) "Sorry, but can I stop you and butt in..." (This was the first comment in the interview after the supervisor started his account) "I'm now pretty clear about the mechanics of the placement, but what I'm not so sure about was what the student was going to be learning on the placement... I don't have a sense of what he wasn't very good at."

"In the working agreement, we had spelt out the areas in which he was going to be assessed, and I really do that from the stages of the social work process, so I've really got eight stages... number one is that you have to show you can conduct interviews, gather information, and make relationships... number two, and here I would quarrel a little bit with the CCETSW Guidelines, because they don't seem to me to be in any logical order... is to bring that information back, put it down on paper, look at it. You make an assessment - that is the third stage..." (He continued to detail eight such areas).

"It seemed from the kind of feedback I was getting, that number one was OK, he was showing that he had certain skills... I tend to see knowledge as informing all of those eight stages, and that is how I try to link in his knowledge from his University course... (which includes) the principles of casework that Butrym picks up from Biestek, or the empathy, the acceptance, etc... he had some skill in it and was at least proceding satisfactorily for that stage of the placement... We ran into difficulties straight away because he had a lot of difficulties separating what was relevant from what was not relevant, you'd just get a mass of material... I'm different here with this student, it's usually just an hour a week, but with this lad, I spent an hour and a half a week and other occasions as well - so he demanded a lot of time. He couldn't understand why he was a demanding student..."

"So we had difficulties with the writing, I had to rewrite two Social Enquiry Reports, and I was quite prepared to do that because I thought that it is from this that he quite hopefully is learning, and I was interested to see what he did learn... He produced a quite impressive list - of ten points - of what he did learn. He had other reports to do, and those began to need less correction... so the writing work was improving. Aha, this was relevant here. He couldn't write in a legible way, at least I couldn't read it, it really was very poor. So he used to type, but because that was disturbing to the social worker with whom he used to share (an office), he used to type at home at nights."

"That was a real difficulty, but as he settled down, his writing improved, became quite legible, but that wasn't until after the first three months..." (and as an aside, almost confidentially) "I think that was a measure of his disturbance."

"So in the first three months, we really dealt with the initial stage on which I was assessing him... the recording,

the assessment, and began on the planning... At the end of the first three months, I was saying I really don't think the standard was very high, and that I would have doubts as to whether the student would be able to reach the required standard for a qualified social worker after a further three months, but I did not think that we could stop the placement because he had done such good work. My final comment on the interim report was that his energy and enthusiasm might just carry him through..."

"The senior in the team (where the student is placed) comes into the meetings with the tutor, and (beforehand) checks round with the team members, (to get feed-back from the team)... we also routinely - it wasn't special in this case - we get the student to present a case to the team... (There was) some rather interesting feedback... (in one case) where he had gone to the pub with a client afterwards. He was quite surprised to learn that at least the majority of the members of the team didn't see that as totally appropriate..."

"Then I went on holiday, we thought it was also an advantage, to have someone else... (as supervisor) although the senior (in the team where the student was placed) was busy, and did only see him once a week, and that's fair enough... the student himself saw that the senior was under pressure, so there wasn't really a lot going on in the two weeks I was away..."

"Then when I came back, the student said he was terribly tired, and I mean it really was an unhappy situation, because he hadn't got a course he could relate to, he was living in the University Halls, pretty much on his own, he didn't have friends here. He said I've got to go back to (his home town). Well that was alright, but it meant we were 4 weeks on from the (interim) report, and one month on into the final three months..."

"(To see how he worked under pressure) I asked him to take on two more reports, he refused. I said if you don't, you'll fail the placement. He said that was an inappropriate comment after all the work he'd done. I did admit that... we got (the tutor) in to try to sort it all out, but I think from that stage, anger began to build up... (He did) two more reports, of these the first was not too bad, the next one was quite unacceptable, and I checked it out with three other seniors... so that I wasn't being arbitrary, so we had a consensus. So I rewrote it."

"It was around this time he started to call me (his surname) not (his first name). This was behind my back, not to my face - I only learnt about it later. Before that I went on a joint interview with him... (The previous one) had been conducted on a very amateurish level, and the second one, which was for this social enquiry report, he really dried up, he couldn't see where he was going, and when I drove him away in the car, he said that had really set him back. Then there was the unacceptable Social Enquiry Report."

"Then there was negative feedback from the team (about his disorganisation), and they felt everything he did was in a

learning stage, that there was no evidence of his applying the learning and knowledge that he had. They felt his contributions in the team had been inappropriate... (for example) he wrote up his views on a case that two other social workers had been discussing in the office. It made them very, very angry.

"During another car trip, the next day, he said 'I think I'm failing this placement, aren't I?' and I hadn't really wanted it like that. I had wanted to put it all down so he'd see on paper how those different eight stages had been assessed, so he could see himself that it's not up to standard... But when he said that, 'I said that it does look that way'. He decided to pack up the placement straight away... he stayed only fifteen minutes at the final meeting with the tutor, and so it finished there amidst a lot of unhappiness and depression for him and really a lot of sadness for myself, and the tutor."

(Interviewer) "It sounds from what you have told me that you felt he wasn't able to use what was being offered to him... I was wondering why he came into social work?" (This was only the second intervention by the researcher, to this point).

"He had careers guidance, and they told him he needed a job where he could use his questioning ability, where he could solve puzzles. He said that was why he was in social work. He didn't say he was in social work to care for clients. I felt he was demonstrating caring (in his work)... I believe he was learning to care."

(Interviewer) "It seems from what you say that he was still operating in a way... that might be expected of someone quite new to social work?"

"I think that if the first three months had been in a first placement, he would have passed... we were trying to cram so much into those six months."

(Interviewer) "One wonders why he'd never done that when he was a trainee, or in his other social work posts, and then in the other social work placements?"

"He was blocked particularly by the religious bit which made inappropriate comments come from him (sic). He had learnt some self-awareness, he was moving, and beginning to change, even at the age of 36. So he was in a place to let those things happen to him in a first placement... In a sense, I wanted him to prove to himself that he couldn't do it."

(Interviewer) "What do you think **you** learnt from the placement?"

"Mmm, mmm, yes, I think quite a lot... one bit was that nothing should be new to the student at the end of the placement... But what I didn't count on was the very negative feedback from the team, (it) was a bit of a surprise to me and a bit of a surprise to him... part of the practical learning was to provide opportunities for that kind of information, and so it could be dealt with..."

"The other thing was more personal, I was trying to show unfailing goodwill, but he was expressing a good deal of anger, to team members, but it wasn't relayed back to me... The team leader didn't provide this, I felt that almost I needed a social worker there, to use that anger, and see why the student was so angry... He was trying to copy from previous reports, trying to get it right, but he hadn't got the imagination..."

(Interviewer) "Did you like him... and was that why you stuck with it for quite a long time?"

"I kept saying to him, I can't help liking you, in order to tell him what I was feeling, really, and that I wasn't bearing grudges - the enthusiasm, the nervous energy... (his) sense of humour, his poetry, his interest in steam trains...(which happened to be an interest of the supervisor)."

(Interviewer) "If you had another student like that, again, what do you think you would do differently?"

"Link into the team more... as a general practice, I'd want to be more in touch with the team, not so they were spying on him, just helping me with the assessment... (I'd) make more use of the previous reports, his were so bad... when he was failing, I realised that things were similar... I need to be more involved in the team, they only learn about me at team meetings, or through the student."

(Interviewer) "Do you think that if they have been involved, at least to some extent, in the assessment bit of the process, there might also be a way that you could involve them in the teaching process, from time to time - then you'd be more involved with them, and they wouldn't just be 'spies' giving feedback. That might get you round part of the 'informers' element because they'd be part of the teaching range of resources there, not just part of the assessment... They'd be seen as positive by the student, and you and your activity might be more integrated in the team..." (throughout this extended comment by the interviewer, the supervisor said "mmm", and "yes, mmm" but did not sound convinced - it seemed as though it was a novel idea to him).

"Yes, yes in theory that is right. Yes. We have had that one a bit. We do have a Divisional training budget, and I was involved in how we spend that, and... (was asked) could I as a supervisor make any direct input into the teams. It's tied up with credibility, and I'm not sure that I would have anything to offer. The area we spoke about was social enquiry reports, related to this team here, but they felt they'd had input recently, from (someone involved in the judicial system), so there wasn't really much I could offer in a teaching capacity."

(Interviewer) "mmm, Yes. I was wondering what **they** could offer as a **teacher** to the student, as **co-teachers** with you to the student".

"Yes, yes, right (dubiously)."

(Interviewer) "If one of them had a special piece of work, which the student went and did with them, they could be providing some teaching input to the student, and get a sense of what the student was like, other than just ´informing´ on how he was in the office."

"Yes, yes, I think that is relevant. I take that as a helpful comment really. Some of that is done... (gives an example) but really that´s as an observer."

(Interviewer) "There must be some scope, in some of the areas, with bits of work for the student to get involved... (long pause) or it may be that that pattern of working is not very well-established in the team. I just wondered whether, if one of them ran a group or something in the evening, a student might get involved in that - you know, some bit of extra work, something a bit different or a bit special."

"Yes, mmm, it is something we have spoken about, it is something that has happened in the past, one or two social workers were running groups... (but not now)"

(Interviewer) "(I resisted pushing this further by saying) ...that the group was only an example... I wondered - were there things we haven´t covered? Or anything else you want to ask me?"

"I´d like to take down, on a piece of paper, I would value the kind of things you would look for... (in a family), just the headings... (which I had referred to in a recent workshop attended by the supervisor)." I was reluctant to offer them - they seemed to be seen as a kind of right answer which was going to be included in his notes for students next year - but the sense of giving the supervisor something back, for his involvement in the study meant, in the end, some of these ideas were discussed.

He returned to the failed student, and it seemed that the supervisor was asking for some reassurance, perhaps prompted by the interpretations and comments offered. The reassurance was given, and triggered the response:

"The bit I haven´t mentioned (was) he couldn´t talk about himself - the one time he did, he said he was telling me things about his background he hadn´t told anyone else, he sat and rocked from side to side, it was bizarre. One or two times his tutor had said ´Is he mad?´..."

The interview finished shortly afterwards with the interviewer thanking him for agreeing to take part in the study, and the tape-recorder was turned off before we chatted briefly about supervision in social work in more general terms.