

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter aims to show how the findings of the analysis in Chapter Five relate to the initial hypotheses of this dissertation, and how they relate to the review of the literature in Chapter Three.

The discourse analysis in Chapter Five revealed, in the text of many of the interviews, an implicit discourse of training based on hierarchy and power relations between trainers and trainees. It was found that there was an additional implicit discourse operating in these texts which commented on the inconsistency between explicit and implicit training contexts, and on how this inconsistency sometimes constituted a double bind experience for trainees.

Discussion of Findings

The initial hypotheses of this dissertation were that trainees experience inconsistency between explicit and implicit contexts of learning, and that this inconsistency contributes to an experience of confusion and powerlessness, which can be explained as a double bind experience. The findings of the analysis concur with these hypotheses.

The research done by Prentice (2001) echoes the findings of this research paper. Prentice found that trainees experience double bind situations through an inconsistency between explicit and implicit contexts of learning in the training context.

For the purposes of this dissertation, experiences of double bind, which include feelings of confusion and powerlessness, are assumed to lead to an overall negative experience of supervision and training in general. It was because of this assumption that the literature examining positive and negative experiences of trainees was reviewed.

Although the findings on general experiences of trainees in the literature review are broader than the focus of this dissertation, and refer to more general positive and negative experiences of trainees, there are some aspects which do relate to the findings of this paper more directly. These are now discussed.

Ladany and Friedlander (1995) and Olk and Friedlander (1992) found that trainees experienced role difficulties such as role ambiguity and role conflict in their training contexts. This is similar to the findings in this research paper. Role ambiguity refers to trainees' uncertainty about supervisory expectations of them in terms of their behaviour, which could include feelings of confusion and powerlessness because of a lack of clarity about what their supervisors expect of them. This lack of clarity could be created by an inconsistency between what is said (explicit context), and what is done (implicit context) by supervisors in relation to trainees. Role conflict occurs when trainees experience opposing expectations regarding their behaviour, which could include the idea of trainees receiving messages from their supervisors whose explicit and implicit levels are not consistent.

In addition, Anderson and Price (2001) found that dual relationships impacted on trainees' experiences when supervisors acted both as facilitators of trainees' self-awareness and as evaluators. In this case, trainees were found to have diminished power in the supervisory relationship. This relates to the findings of the research in this

dissertation, that trainees experienced an inconsistency in messages and roles in the supervisory relationship, which contributed to feelings of powerlessness and confusion for trainees.

Snyders (1985) states that the “results of the present study may be interpreted in terms of the individual or collective inadequacies, pathologies, shortcomings, or power struggles within the supervisory system” (p. 229). Specifically, in this research paper, there has been a focus on trainees’ experiences of the perceived inadequacies and shortcomings of their supervisors, and on power struggles between trainees and trainers. This view is limited, however, and in order to avoid a linear, blaming mode of discussion around trainees’ experiences of double bind, the training system at Unisa should be viewed in context. This contextual view is consistent with the ecosystemic stance adopted in this text. Accordingly, the wider institutional and social contexts within which the Unisa psychotherapy training system is located should be considered in order to get a fuller picture of the situation. Thus it can be noted that there is an inconsistency in the messages that are conveyed by the university institution to the psychotherapy training system. Explicitly, the university gives the message that the psychotherapy training system is tolerated. Implicitly, however, the message conveyed by the university is that this training is not valued because the university does not receive sufficient subsidies from the government for trainees (F. J. A. Snyders, personal communication, June, 2003). Because of these mixed or inconsistent messages that the trainers receive from the university, they may feel confused and powerless, and may feel that they themselves experience a double bind situation.

Suggestions for Further Research

In the process of this study, some questions have been raised that could point to areas for future research on training systems and the relationship between trainer and trainee. Some questions that could guide future research endeavours are:

- Are double bind situations and feelings of confusion and powerlessness a generic feature of training systems?
- What is the experience of trainers with regard to inconsistency between explicit and implicit contexts of training and double bind situations?
- Do trainees from other training institutions experience double bind situations in which there is an inconsistency between explicit and implicit contexts of learning?
- In what ways will a consideration of double bind experiences in training be useful in the supervision of trainee therapists?
- What are the impacts on the supervisory relationship if supervisor and trainee co-deconstruct their double bind experiences?
- Are there differences in the perceptions and meaning trainees and supervisors give to similar events?
- How does the inconsistency between explicit and implicit psychological discourses of training impact on our constructions of power relations and therapeutic positioning as therapists?
- Are feelings of confusion and powerlessness necessary precursors of growth?

Conclusion

This chapter explored similarities between the findings of this study and the initial hypotheses of this dissertation, and similarities with the findings in the literature. The wider context in which the Unisa training system is located was highlighted, and suggestions for further areas of research were offered. A conclusion may now be drawn, and is presented in the next and final chapter.