

Reflective supervision with educational drama in nursing education - DRACAR : Drama - Caring - Reflection

Abstract

The educational problem area

The gap between theory and praxis is a well-known problem within nursing education. Several studies and evaluations show that students experience difficulties in incorporating theoretical knowledge in practical situations. It is therefore difficult for them to gain knowledge in the clinical situation that is conscious and reflective. The span between theory and praxis has consequences for learning, as well as it affects the student's ability to develop a meaningful comprehensive understanding and professional knowledge, that stems both from theory and praxis.

The knowledge obtained in theory must be modulated in the complex clinical situation in order to be of full use. There is therefore a need for mutual encounters between theory and praxis, as it is not desirable for theory to be forced on praxis. The embryo must come from the concrete caring reality, in other words, how nursing students experience the caring reality, in order for the students to experience a rich interaction between theory and praxis. This will increase the knowledge of patient centred care and a meaningful comprehensive understanding of the care. A starting point is therefore, that experience-based knowledge of praxis, which often has both depth and width, must be made explicit.

An educational method to support a learning situation that intends to unite the best of theory and praxis is a form of supervision that encourages a reflecting attitude within the student. We mean that a method to achieve this would be supervision incorporated with educational drama. This form of supervision makes the patient perspective as well as the caring science knowledge visible. The theoretical knowledge is thereby developed and worked in a concrete caring situation and the conditions will be more favourable for the knowledge to become alive and comprise a comprehensive healthcare perspective. Our objective is therefore, for the duration of three years, to develop and evaluate this kind of reflecting supervision with drama within the frame of the nursing education.

An idea for supervision

Educational drama is to be understood as a method that can be used within the

frame of supervision where the students mostly work with role-play and improvisations. It is a method that allows for teaching where the students can reflect, and have discussion in-group, as well as to try their knowledge in different settings. The students test nursing theory in relation to nursing experience in this process. It is thereby more likely, that they are capable of reaching a concrete understanding of the theoretically abstract. The most emphasised parts of supervision are reflection and distancing. Self-reflection, which predisposes a kind of distancing, is the core of supervision and the ground for development of experience based knowledge.

The substance in educational drama comes from the life world experience. The life world in this case would be the nursing students in caring situations with the patients and their perspective in focus. These situations can, for example, be made fictive for learning, reflection and cultivation as well as to be related to caring concepts and theories in education, all depending on the context of care. The learning-process consists of the teaching substance and the students' life world perspective, which are brought together and developed with process drama.

Goal of the project

The goal of the project is to improve nursing students' learning and possibility to integrate theoretical and practical knowledge, in order for them to be prepared to work as nurses in the complex and technological advanced healthcare of today. It is demanded that these nurses are able to integrate a vast theoretical knowledge, which emphasises a patient perspective, in the concrete caring practice, where caring often is embedded in "doing" and a conscious knowledge is less articulated. The fundamental idea with the present project is therefore to develop a model for reflective supervision with educational drama, as well as to apply this model in the nursing education. We therefore, intend to find, practice and evaluate an educational approach that does not polarise, but helps the students to integrate theoretical and practical knowledge.

The realisation of the project

The realisation of the project starts with a phase of planning, to developing a preliminary supervision model with a detailed plan of structure, content and how to realise the supervision. At the same time starts a preparation of the supervisors in the project. They receive an education in drama and supervision.

The supervision model will then be tried within three different contexts in nursing education.

1. Initial test of reflective supervision with educational drama

We will initially try a preliminary model for reflective supervision by way of educational drama in a theoretical teaching setting, which is less complex than the clinical teaching setting. The students bring experiences from clinical situations to supervision sessions, since the starting point is the students' experience of care with focus on caring relationships. The concrete experienced situation in relation to human caring theory is revised in-group, by way of

drama. When this test is evaluated and an initial model is before us, we will proceed with supervision in two different contexts of care.

2. Reflective supervision with educational drama during clinical studies in an acute care setting.

The emergency care unit places specific demands on caring and caring relations. Nursing students meet patients and relatives for a short period of time in an environment that is characterised by stress and high working pace. Furthermore, a medical view dominates this area of care, which also marks the presence of high technology. This contributes to ethical questions being raised, relating to the patients, their life worlds and their suffering. The students need special support in developing an ethical position in this context of care, as well as to incorporate knowledge of care derived from praxis. This can be achieved by way of caring science tools in supervision, which also in this context consists of educational drama.

3. Reflective supervision with educational drama on an educational ward

Specific favourable conditions for education exist on an educational ward. It would therefore be valuable to practice the supervision model in this context, in order to optimise the connection between theory and practice, and thereby improve the learning model.

Timeframe

The project will be in progress for three academic years. The preliminary supervision model will be developed and tried in the theoretical educational setting during the first academic year (no. 1 above). Second to this, an evaluation will take place, which will set the grounds for revising and further developing the supervision model. The revised model will continually be tried in the theoretical educational setting during all three academic years. The model will be tried in the two clinical contexts during the second academic year (no. 2 and 3 above). The three parts will be evaluated separately after the second academic year. A joint analysis will be performed thereafter, where experience from all three contexts contribute to a common description.

The result of the joint analysis after two academic years will carefully be cultivated. This will hopefully lead to a modulated and clear model that can be practised in all three contexts during the third academic year. The project will, as evident, be characterised by process. A major evaluation and final report will be written after the project is finished, where experiences from the project and future plans will be described.

Update

First year report

This report describes the results of the project Reflective supervision with educational drama in nursing education achieved during its first year. This document is only a summary of the results from the first year while the final and more detailed outline of the project will be presented in May 2002.

The project was launched in July 2000 and a detailed plan of the implementation, content and evaluation of the project was elaborated. The working title of the project is DRACAR (Drama, caring and reflection). Three student representatives were also engaged in the project group that held meetings every third week during the autumn 2000 and once a week during the spring 2001.

In the autumn 2000, six lecturers who had applied for participation in the project, were offered a course of study in Supervision with focus on Drama Pedagogy. In parallel with the course, these lecturers pursued yet another university course in Creative Pedagogy (5 credits = 7.5 ETSC). Some of them also participated a few times in supervision orientated towards Caring science during the autumn. To sum up, all these courses have prepared the teachers for their future role as supervisors.

During the autumn, the project group planned to carry out supervision with focus on drama pedagogy in student groups. The supervision was to be held in a theoretical context, i.e. in school. According to the study plan, the students' experience in care with focus on various caring situations was the starting point of the supervision. Therefore the students were requested to prepare events/cases or caring situations that they have experienced. During the supervision session, the students were supposed to study and discuss these different situations and events in groups, relating to the frame of reference of caring science and drama pedagogy.

Six random groups were formed with eight participants per group. The students were well informed about the project, the aim of the supervision, its structure/study plan and implementation. If they didn't wish to participate in this kind of supervision, they were offered to change to another supervision group (University College of Borås offers supervision in personal and professional development for all students according to the school curriculum).

In January 2001 six student groups were formed.

During the spring 2000, five sessions in supervision in drama pedagogy were provided for the supervisors in the project who supervise the student groups mentioned above. In addition, the supervisors have participated in supervision orientated towards caring science at four occasions.

Evaluation and follow-up of the first project year:

- After achieving the autumn course of study for supervisors, an evaluation of the study plan and the content of the course was elaborated.

- The supervision in each student group has been evaluated continuously after each supervision occasion.

The results from the evaluation of these supervision sessions were very positive among the supervisors. Some suggestions concerning the study plan were made, which provides valuable information for the further work.

The continuous evaluation of the supervision in the student groups has been collected and put together in order to get a preliminary idea of, as well as estimate the students' opinion about the supervision. This preliminary estimation shows very positive experience among the students even though there are different opinions among different students and groups.

The project group has worked hard to gain support from the Head of Department's office, the teachers and students at School of Health Sciences. The Head of Department has received regularly oral reports about the project work. Moreover, specific questions about the support from the School of Health Sciences have been treated. A booklet in Swedish/or English about the project has been created. Information about the project has been given at national conferences and in connection with nursing education.

Other planning work in the project group during the first year:

- Preparation for the presentation of the project at the conference "Fourth Annual Summer Institute" at Chicago Institute for Nursing Education, and preparation for participation at Advance Institute for Nursing Education in Madison. Moreover, plans have been made for a study visit of Professor Benner, at School of Nursing, University of California in San Francisco. The main objective of these activities is to establish a network for the future development of the caring pedagogy

- Plans for the equipping of a "drama room" at School of Health Sciences, University College of Borås.

Project group:

Project leader: Margaretha Ekebergh, Nursing Instructor, University Lecturer, Master of Science. Karin Dahlberg, Senior lecturer, Associate Professor of Caring Sciences, PhD in pedagogy. Margret Lepp, Senior lecturer, PhD in pedagogy.

Final report

The present pedagogical project, accomplished at the School of Health Sciences University College of Borås, has been financed by the Council for the Renewal of Higher Education. The objective of the project was to develop and evaluate a model for reflecting supervision with drama within the frame of our nursing education. Our ambition was to improve the students' learning as well as to promote the integration of theoretical and practical knowledge which is a major issue within the nursing education. Furthermore, our aim was to develop a supervision model through an innovative project, which was to be tried in three different educational contexts within the nursing education: a theoretical

teaching setting at the School of Health Sciences, clinical studies in an emergency care setting and finally an educational ward setting. Regular evaluation and follow-up were planned throughout the course of the project. Upon the completion of the project a final evaluation was to be made.

The realisation of the project

The project has had an innovative approach with an open and flexible realisation compared to the process development. The project started in the autumn 2000 and has been carried on for two years, i.e. four terms; it was accomplished in the summer 2002. During the first term was developed the supervision model, which was to be tried and evaluated within the three different nursing contexts described above. In addition, the model was tried within the study programme in midwifery. Regular evaluation and follow-up contributed to the model's revising in order to develop and refine the supervision model as a didactic method for caring science knowledge.

Moreover, a course in drama supervision for six teachers who participated in the project was planned and accomplished during the first project term. The course was also available for the rest of the teaching staff that were interested in deepening their knowledge in supervision with drama. Eleven teachers in total followed the course in supervision with educational drama from a caring science perspective.

In the spring 2001 supervision with drama was introduced to the nursing and midwife students. Five groups with eight participants in each group were built within the nursing study programme and one group of eight participants was built within the study programme in midwifery. The supervision of the nursing students was carried out in the college campus while the supervision of the midwife students was carried out in premises adjacent to their clinical training site; 2.5 hours each third week. The method was evaluated regularly during the spring term, which resulted in revising the project content and structure, e.g. the supervision structure was adjusted to the students' needs and became more flexible.

The supervision, which had started in the spring term 2001, continued during the autumn 2001 with the exception of a group of nursing students which was dissolved due to absenteeism. The few students left in the group were offered places in the other supervision groups. At the end of the autumn term the supervision of the midwife students was accomplished after the students' graduation.

In addition to the supervision in a theoretical setting, a supervision of students in a clinical emergency care setting was launched. The supervision which was included in the students' timetable was accomplished at the hospital by two of the teachers participating in the project.

The supervision mentioned above (in theoretical context and within the emergency care) continued during the spring 2002. The number of groups

within the nursing education was reduced – yet another group was dissolved due to too few students. A new group was built within the study programme in midwifery. During this term was also introduced the supervision with drama for students at an educational ward. The supervision was carried out by one of the teachers participating in the project that was also a clinical teacher at the educational ward. This teacher was also involved in the supervision in emergency care setting. Furthermore, another teacher carried out supervision with drama for some students in the out-patient care, which gave a more patient-oriented approach to the project.

As from the spring 2001, the supervision has been evaluated regularly with the help of a questionnaire that the students had to fill in after each supervision. The final evaluation of the project took place at the end of spring 2002. Data were gathered through interviewing 19 students and 6 teachers about their experience of the supervision model. The material based on the interviews was analysed regarding its content. The analysis can be considered a transformation of the concrete data material into an abstract explanation. The analysis aimed at describing the different aspects of the present supervision model, as well as its content and meaning as experienced by students and teachers.

The project followed the original plan except in two cases. First, the model was tried within a specialist study programme i.e. the study programme in midwifery. The reason for this change can be found in the initial phase of the establishment of the model in which the importance of introducing the supervision model within different educational levels and contexts was claimed to be essential. Thus, the model would stand on a firm ground.

Second, the project timeframe was shortened from the original three years to two years due to lack of funding during the third year. Consequently, the final evaluation of the supervision model was performed earlier than planned, which may have affected the result. Nevertheless, we believe we succeeded finding the essential factors affecting the form of the supervision model, which is of great importance for the further introduction of the model within the educational contexts.

International contacts

The project has been presented on an international nursing education conference, "Fourth Annual Summer Institute, 2001" at Chicago Institute for Nursing Education. The presentation of the supervision model was received with attention and interest at the conference, because this didactic idea has not previously been used in nursing education. Owing to the visit in Chicago, contacts were established with Professor Nancy Diekelmann and Professor Pamela Ironside at Advanced Institute for Nursing Education in Madison, Wisconsin and Professor CeCelia Zorn at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. We also visited Professor Patricia Benner at School of Nursing, University of California in San Francisco, a visit which included interesting presentations and discussions about teaching, learning and reflection in relation to the integration process of caring theory and practice. All these contacts have

together created a foundation of pedagogic and didactic development, which has provided positive input to the project and will provide positive development in the future.

Final reflections and conclusions

Supervision with drama appears to be a successful way of students' comprehending caring science and its signification in order to develop valuable knowledge needed in the encounter of patients' life world in which the understanding of the patients' suffering is promoted. This supervision model makes possible for the students to understand how care can reduce suffering and increase patients' well being. Thus, supervision with drama appears to be a successful method for decreasing the gap between caring science theory and praxis.

Supervision with drama can also be considered an efficient method for personal and professional development of students and teachers'. According to our experience from the project, the drama elements within the supervision affect the students and teachers involved so that they "must" experience unexpected feelings and thoughts. The drama activities enable them to concretise and act these feelings and thoughts out. Processes such as thinking, feeling and acting contribute to their insightful experience and professional development.

Supervision is, to a great extent, characterised by its environment. During the interviews the teachers claim the importance of the surroundings when trying something new such as drama pedagogy, which is seen by most people as a positive method. On the other hand, drama pedagogy can cause astonishment, curiosity and even some negative reactions. Unfortunately, the teachers involved in the project have not always been supported in their work.

First, the teachers were not helped with the supply of suitable rooms. They all agree on the importance of rooms adapted to supervision with drama. Otherwise the room becomes an obstacle, a fact that is brought up in the interviews.

Second, the teachers involved in the project were not given enough time within the frame of their duties. The school management has promised to support the supervision project, which implies assigning certain time for the teachers' supervision of students as well as their own supervision. Unfortunately, the teachers have not experienced this kind of support from the school management.

Third, the teachers and the students have been hindered by the attitude towards supervision at the School of Health Sciences. The question of whether or not the supervision is "compulsory" was brought up throughout the course of the project. A negative attitude towards supervision began spreading, which seemed to affect our students in a negative way. On the one hand, the students who are negative to the study programme in general and the supervision, in particular, can affect their fellow students, which is a threat to "optional" moments in the

education. On the other hand, the rest of the teachers do not give priority to the students' supervision when scheduling their classes. It is obvious that students who do not live in the town of their studies skip supervision unless it is scheduled in connection with other classes.

In other words the support from the department is of great importance for the realisation of the supervision. However, it is difficult to decide how to provide this kind of support. In spite of the fact that both sides had reached an agreement within the present project, it failed on some points. The school management might have to discuss more thoroughly such an agreement than what has been the case with this project and, if necessary, further emphasise the consequences of a major development project on an organisation such as ours. To mention some examples - dissatisfaction can easily spread among the non-participating staff since they might suspect that their colleagues draw certain advantages from their participation in the project; there might be a lack of understanding of the aim and importance of the project and its results for the work at the entire department.

It might be important to let the education affect the supervision and thus the project. The evaluation results show the importance of connecting the method to caring science substance and life world. The students might also have other reasons for claiming that sometimes they prefer to talk rather than work with drama exercises. Does this mean that our present education does not offer our students enough time for discussions and reflections on their learning and experience? Moreover, are there needs that can be satisfied by "talk" and not by "motion"? Could it be that the students are not trained enough in reflecting on their knowledge so that they rather give up?

The supervisors' competence

The evaluation results show several intriguing paradoxes. The students have both expressed a positive attitude towards supervision in the interviews, questionnaires and during their supervision sessions and complained about it in a way that does not usually apply in other educational forms. On the surface it appears to be a negative attitude to this particular kind of supervision, but a more thorough analysis proves the opposite. We interpret the students' statements as an example of how our supervision model with drama pedagogy develops apparent self-reliance among our students.

Both students and teachers claim that the students involved in this supervision model tend to come closer to "themselves" than the rest of the students. The "effect" of the supervision on our students has been made clear in many ways in the course of the project, which is definitely an important fact. Besides, "unaffected" students would run a clear risk for superficial learning and using the caring science related theories and terms without understanding their essence, which is not a satisfactory pedagogical model when preparing students for nursing people in pain. Our students must obtain deeper understanding of the effect of their knowledge on nursing. Future nurses and midwives must

possess tools to encounter patients' life world in order to relieve their suffering and promote their well-being.

Therefore, a spontaneous reaction would be to increase the teachers' competence within drama pedagogy, which is not a bad idea. On the other hand, the result from the interviews with students and teachers gives a different picture, namely the teachers need to increase their caring science related competence. Above all, drama exercises with another purpose than introducing the subject caring science seem to annoy our students while the "drama" phenomenon loses its strength in exercises emphasising life world and caring science. However, establishing a caring science approach in supervision appears complicated to the teaching staff. Often the teachers do not understand the connection to caring science.

Consequently, this kind of open and flexible supervision makes great demands on the supervisors and their competence. They must be able to face the caring science questions included in the education as well as discuss how this education should be carried out in its best way.

Reflections on further development

It is important to use the didactic effects of the supervision with drama pedagogy brought out in the present project for further development of the nursing education. This form of supervision ought to be developed and used in both theoretical and clinical contexts as a support to the learning process. In the theoretical teaching context, the supervision with drama is an excellent method to bring caring science terminology to life among our students and make its content clear and concrete. Concepts such as patient perspective, care relation, suffering, well-being, subjective body must be treated in a cognitive verbal way as well as in a practical way, i.e. the student must be given the chance to experience a concept through thinking, feeling and acting. Thus, teaching caring science should rest on students' life world. Drama supervision based on life world perspective is an efficient tool for developing the students' understanding of caring science substance.

Furthermore, applying supervision with drama in a patient-oriented context should be developed. In caring praxis the students need to reflect on their experience in order to achieve deeper understanding of caring phenomena using theoretical concepts.

Considering the conclusions made in the present project, the idea of supervision with drama should take a central place in the pedagogical perspective of current nursing programmes and other similar programmes. This form of supervision can be applied in all possible educational contexts if the model is used in a wise and flexible way based on life world perspective and caring science substance. Apart from facilitating the learning in complex care situations the supervision can also be a valuable complement when teaching certain medico-technical moments such as injection and infusion. Supervision with drama used in the cases mentioned above creates meaningful context, which implies a deeper

understanding of the patient perspective. In order to spread supervision within nursing education, more teachers, obvious adherents of a caring science approach, ought to be educated in supervision with drama.

The supervision model described in the project will live on in the study programmes in nursing and midwifery at the School of Health Sciences, University College of Borås. The teachers who have studied the supervision model will carry on supervision of student groups taking into consideration the results of the project. In addition, courses in the supervision model are planned for more teachers and in the long run the model will also be applied to the specialist education at our school. The experience from the present project will be taken into account in our broad innovative pedagogical work at our school and provide the base for a transformed pedagogy.

Student participation in the project

Three students have participated in the creating of the supervision model. These students have also been active in informing and introducing the supervision model to the rest of the students involved in the project. They have been the link between the participating students and the project group and together with the frequent evaluation have contributed to the constructive feedback on the development of the project. Therefore, we consider all students involved in the project to have been given the chance to communicate their points of view and consequently influence the creating of the supervision model.