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Creative Processes and Creative Media in Integrative Supervision. Inspiring Moments in Supervision¹

A lecture given at the Summer University in Stavanger 8 - 12. Aug. 2011 on
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Creative Processes and Creative Media in Integrative Supervision. Inspiring Moments in Supervision

Ilse Orth, Erkrath, Germany

Meine Damen und Herren, Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Colleagues,

You have come to Stavanger from all over Europe – a rather northern place of Europe, though still quite distant from the pole – to seek some inspiration, to be inspired for some moments and to inspire a multilingual host of colleagues, supervisors, to promote change: change as professionals, change in your fields of practice, change in your perspectives on supervision and eventually change in your view on life – who knows? You never step into the same river, the dark Heraclitus of Ephesos said 2600 years ago, and you may never step into the same sea in Stavanger. Life can be fresh every moment if you are open to its freshness. It's fresh and exiting if you are ready to make a next step, "THE" NEXT STEP into novelty which is lying right before you. I am sure you have come to Stavanger out of c u r i o s i t y , this basic drive Freud had overlooked in his dual instinct theory of sex and crime, libido and aggression, but that has made us survive the hardships, dangers and challenges in our caravan through evolution. Curiosity is an excellent motivator for coming to a congress in Stavanger and for gaining some SUPER – vision on supervision. At least for me it was a motivation: I wish to be inspired, I want to inspire, I want to invite you to join the creative flow

that can emerge when creative people such as you, gathered here, when they meet, encounter, ready to exchange, to challenge, to create, synchronizing their brains to jointly bring forth “inspiration”. Particularly in the hard times your country is currently going through, collective creativity is needed to restore and to develop “integrity” (7).

1. Mutual inspiration – I boldly proclaim – is a core quality of supervision!

That’s a first guide line concept for this congress and its topic that I want to propose to you:

1. SUPERVISION IS MUTUAL INSPIRATION

I am lecturing here as a supervisor, a psycho- and body therapist, and as a specialist of creative art therapies that I am teaching as one of the directors at the European Academy for Psychosocial Health in Hückeswagen, Germany, and at other European universities for nearly the. I have been practicing Integrative Therapy and its bio-psycho-social approach (6) for the past forty years at my own psychotherapy practice with my patients and supervisees. I speak here from the theoretical and praxeological position of Integrative Therapy and Integrative Supervision, a modern, research based BIO-PSYCHO-SOCIAL APPROACH that is bringing together science, the humanities, e. g. philosophy and the arts (8). Moreover, we strongly advocate that clinical and psychosocial practice has to include

sociocultural and political perspectives because we work with people in a societal reality (1).

Top supervisors, that's my experience, are people gifted and skilled to promote and foster inspiration, to create this atmosphere of mutual inspiration leading to co-creative activities on the cognitive, emotional, volitive levels and resulting in efficacy and agency (3, 13). So, get in contact with your creative Self, with your inventive sides, get inspired and get ready to inspire NOW!

Now I would like to suggest that you turn to some neighbouring people, forming small groups of three or four, and share some of your creative qualities, some of your exiting sides – don't you say there aren't any! Take seven minutes to affect your colleagues with your personality and to be affected, to infect them with some glimpses of your creativity, and be open to be infected by their creative flavours collecting some of their sparkling fire of creative brightness. Make room for all participants of your small group to speak out freely, sending and receiving verbal and nonverbal messages in the concert of spontaneous self expression (5, 9).

... Seven minutes for your creative sides!

...

Come back to me – I have to interrupt your dialogues You have to stop your discourses now, your polylogues. You have become involved in polylogic interaction, a network of utterances, words, sentences. But the seven minutes are over now – I hope they were worth half an hour, for that's a

phenomenon of “condensed time”, of time in which seven minutes can be extended to much more than just 420 seconds. Condensed time is “creative time”, “flow time”, bringing forth a multitude of stimulating impulses by mutual exchange, a “conflux” of information (5). You just have experienced a little bit of a creative conflux in your small group. In these type of groups – we call them “conflux groups” – discourse is stirring up new information again and again, triggering memories, associations, ideas, fantasies, eventually inspiring dreams and visions. This material is shared, brought into co-responding exchange through discourse in which many speakers can interconnect their interests, wishes and desires. Joint concepts and ideas may emerge from such a “polyphonic dialogue”, as Michail Michailowitsch Bakhtin called it, or from such a “polylogue”, as we call it in Integrative Supervision, because we want to include everyone present in our exchange, not to miss a bit of the creative potential of the group in discourse (4). Polylogues – extending the dialogical situation to a multivoiced forum can give birth to “CO-CREATIVE” plans and projects that could be elaborated, permanently enriched and realized in co-creative interaction and co-operation.

<p>2. Fostering informational exchange through discourse in POLYLOGUES is a central goal of Supervision.</p>

That’s my second guideline concept for our Congress, being a European gathering of Supervisors eager to learn from each

other, curious to learn in inspiring moments that will emerge in mutual, cocreative interaction.

2. SUPERVISION IS FOSTERING MULTIVOICED INFORMATION EXCHANGE IN POLYLOGUES

If you just take a look at the situation that was created by my intervention and your cooperation with me in this intervention, you will notice that some connectivity was established between you and the other people, after all strangers to you, and that in spite of this even an interpersonal climate came up by showing a personal side, your creative side, evoking a promising quality of co-operation. If we reflect this brief process with some “excentricity”, looking at it from a certain distance, we see how in a big group like this audience small zones of spontaneous interaction are emerging, wells of creative exchange that begin to flow and that are emanating micro impulses of inspiration to the surrounding groups contributing to a growing ATMOSPHERE of heightened attention, to a fascinating creative breeze springing up which may take hold of the whole group and even of a large audience.

Reflecting these phenomena, we will be fascinated how important the factor of fascination is for supervisory processes and how important it will be that supervisors are able to ignite the fire of fascination in subjects, topics, tasks “under supervision” that need to be studied in order to find new, innovative ways of dealing with them (10).

3. Supervision is a method of providing “EXCENTRICITY” by being able to generate fascination through reflexive and metareflexive processes

That’s my third guiding principle:

3. SUPERVISION HAS TO PROVIDE EXCZENTRICITY AND TO INITIATE REFLEXIVE AND METAREFELXIVE PROCESES

Very often supervision is concerned with problem solving, with unravelling messy situations, with finding new solutions for sometimes very old questions that seem to be answerless. Supervision is seeking perspectives in hazy landscapes of human interrelations where all too often pathways are disappearing in the mist of misunderstandings and intrigues which is becoming more and more a thick fog of plots woven. Here overview is utterly needed. Reflexivity and metareflexivity are strategies to provide a clarity of mind necessary to create transparency and to fight obscurantism. This is a basis for solving the multitude of problems and attacking ingeniously the multitude of tasks which we encounter wherever human beings are living, working, playing, competing, fighting with each other.

4. Supervision is hence an instrument of co-creative problem solving and ingenious task processing.

How is this accomplished? How is this creativity tackled, for it isn't just a bottle of whiskey to be uncorked? It is unleashed through joint activity, by mutual inspiration resulting in spontaneous COCREATION or by thoroughly planned and realized co-creative initiatives (5). This is my fourth strategy.

4. MAKE SUPERVISION A STRATEGY OF STIMULATING CO-CREATIVE PROCESSES

There are two possibilities that we know from creativity research and that can become particularly effective in co-creative processes of group supervision, team or staff supervision, where mutual encouragement and reinforcement accumulates until once in a while the lively freshness of sudden inventive inspiration is dashing up in the group with that flow of ideas *d i v e r g e n t* from the old patterns and preconceived concepts – the famous divergent thinking. But also the laborious perseverance and tenacity can be creative as a kind of patient and continuous but ingenious striving for new solutions as a joint effort and common project.

Supervision can stimulate *d i v e r g e n t* thinking and *c o n v e r g e n t* thinking and the beautiful mixture of the two which is the trademark of true creativity (8).

A supervisor can encourage a supervisee or coachee or a team under supervision to do something differently or even more: to be different.

I invite you to take up this challenge and to experiment with it on the congress!

I now want you to participate in another small experiment. Please relax for a minute and then put on a curious face and lift your index finger. Raise your eyebrows in a facial expression of curiosity. Feel the curious attentiveness that is now coming up through the mime and become aware of the brightness flowing through your head now: Pure curiosity evoked in the brain by "movement produced information" (9, 11), the information, the forehead muscle, the occipito-frontalis has produced. And if you feel the tingling of curiosity, just meditate for a minute the following thought:

"I am curious about myself ... I am indeed curious about myself ... Do I give myself a chance to be different these days – a bit at least, a noticeable bit, or even a considerable bit ... tangible for me and for others?"

Stay with this thought for a while and try to get an experiment or a project clear for yourself how becoming different!

And now turn to your neighbour, telling him with two sentences about your project of being different.

.....

Okay ... I want to go on. Let's proceed.

Being different, being experimental is a challenge. Challenges are sometimes necessary to stimulate innovation needed.

Supervision should not only be seen as a device for trouble shooting and crisis intervention – which it has to be often enough. It should not only be a method of quality assurance and quality maintenance, it should also serve as a strategy to

foster CREATIVE QUALITY DEVELOPMENT, EXCELLENCE and INNOVATION.

“Make yourself a project! Be your own project!” That’s our favourite strategy in Integrative Therapy and Integrative Counselling and of course in Integrative Supervision that can be applied to individuals and to groups and teams. With J. L. Moreno, the inventor of psychodrama, we deeply believe that the human species is basically creative. The homo sapiens sapiens has always been a homo creator. We see that from stone age artistry, craftsmanship and even industry throughout the history of cultures up to the present day. In the Integrative Approach we therefore have formulated an “ANTHROPOLOGY OF THE CREATIVE MAN AND WOMAN” (1, 7). It advocates the following positions:

- The human being is a creator and a co-creator, an inventor and co-inventor. He/she is a co-creative problem solver. Culture is co-creation.

- The human being is driven by multiple “evolutionary narratives”, that is by interactive motivational programs developed in the course of evolution. Among these, I want to highlight two:

At first – as mentioned right at the beginning of the lecture:

“EXPLORATIVE CURIOSITY” – a top survival program that makes us search and find all that we have needed and need to get along in the course of the history of mankind.

And secondly “POIETIC PRODUCTION” (14), forming and constructing, because what we have found we have creatively transformed: fur into cloth, stones and wood into tools and weapons, clay into sculptures, natural colours into cave paintings most beautiful.

- Human creativity and co-creativity is based on the capacities of the human being's body which is a multi-sensoric body (3) – we perceive the world through all our senses – and which is a multi-expressive body: we express our selves, we create and we communicate through a multitude of means and ways: by verbal talk and nonverbal pantomime, by dancing and acting, by singing and by playing instruments, by painting and sculpting. There is a wealth of expressive means – as we see in children's play, with primitive tribes all over the world and in the different arts of all cultures: from theatre to poetry and from drawing to instrumental virtuosity.

With this anthropological position we vigorously affirm in the integrative approach to therapy and supervision that we have to use this creative potential of the human nature. We therefore use to work with CREATIVE MEDIA – such as colours, clay, masks, costumes etc. – and CREATIVE METHODS – such as role playing, pantomime, poetry, music etc. We started this in the middle of the Sixties of the last century when we, the founding protagonists of the integrative paradigm, Hilarion Petzold, Johanna Sieper and me, started to work systematically with an

“intermedial” approach of these creative means in therapy and counselling ... INTERMEDIAL, not MULTIMEDIAL, for we have developed a fine grained, elaborated theory of “media” based on sensory-physiology, perceptual and developmental psychology (15). From the middle of the Seventies on we began to apply working with media as clinical and psychosocial supervisors, focussing on non-verbal communication (2) which is - as several of our research projects are showing - of paramount importance in supervisory practice. However, non-verbal elements have thoroughly to be interlinked with verbal strategies (2, 9, 14). In brain functioning the verbal and nonverbal systems are insolubly connected, as recent findings of neuroscience are showing. By mirror neuron effects the client’s behaviour is transported to the supervisory situation and can here be used if supervisors are equipped to utilize the information. Unfortunately, as recent studies have shown, the nonverbal competence of the average supervisor is poor. Here the integrative approach is an exception. Investments in the training and education of supervisors for nonverbality have to be made.

Furthermore, we use mapping and charting instruments to explore topics relevant for supervisory diagnostics, assessment and interventions (10). Over the past 30 years we have developed a broad arsenal of so called “semi-projective” methods and techniques utilizing colours, collages and other creative material for theme-centered tasks through which clients and supervisees express their ideas and views on “resources” – with a so called “resource map” – or on “conflicts”

or on "power" ... "conflict-" and "power-maps". With colours, forms, symbols, drawn scenes, written words the participants of supervision group produce maps concerning the topic – rich material, which documents memorized real events from their team history (5), or their professional career, or sometimes from their personal biographies – while always being aware of gender differences (1, 7). These are facts, however the colours and symbols transport emotional content, hidden values and inner convictions which often have been brought to the paper without the author of the picture being aware of this aspect of his/her creation. Projective material – verbal and non-verbal – becomes manifest (9, 11). The facts reveal that very often they have a concealed side, a reality beneath the surface which becomes decipherable by the creative representation. Personal dynamics as well as group dynamics are accessible and can be worked through (4). Just to give you some more examples of this type of semi-projective methods: There are the social network diagrams, representing networks from the past, from present time and as they are anticipated for the future, that means the "convoy" of a person over the time, for we are not travelling alone on the street of life. The networks of the family, of friends, of the colleagues are becoming visible by their emotional valency and eventual hidden agendas – highly important for supervision in social casework and in psychosocial or clinical case management respectively.

Another approach developed by us is the so called "panorama technique" (12), depicting by way of colours or collage material a stretch of time lived through as a relevant period of

someone's personal or professional life. A "work panorama", a recollection of someone's working experience, beginning, for example, with a boy's memory of his carpenter grandfather's workshop, his mother's office work, continuing through his apprenticeship as a retail business person, finally studying social work after evening classes – such a panorama provides access to and understanding of an important line in a person's identity development. Identity Charts, Ego Diagrams, Self Portraits are other creative process techniques using creative media based on of the elaborated, research based theories of the integrative approach to supervision with its references to social and developmental psychology and neuroscience. All these creative possibilities that we use as interventions are possible because the human subject's brain and its neuroplasticity is an ultimate place of creativity (8). This potential can become fruitful because the joining of "subjects and brains" in creative group processes (4) is a permanent source of co-creativity. On this theoretical and praxeological basis I want to finish this lecture with the conclusion:

Supervision by the integrative approach is a BIO-PSYCHO-SOCIAL methodology of creative intervention that has the chance to permanently generate innovation if it is applied knowledgeably and with sophistication to inspire co-creative processes.

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