Developing as a practitioner: How supervision supports the learning and development of trainee educational psychologists in three-year doctoral training

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Aim: In the UK the change from a one-year Master’s to a three-year doctoral training programme has provided extended opportunities and challenges for trainee educational psychologists in developing their practitioner skills and professional role. Supervision is a key foundation for supporting trainees in this process. This paper provides an analysis of the supervision experiences of trainee educational psychologists informed by developmental theories of supervision.

Method: In order to explore the developmental experiences of trainee educational psychologists across the three years of training, focus groups were undertaken with each year group of trainee educational psychologists at four initial educational psychology training programme sites. These 12 focus groups were analysed using thematic analysis.

Findings: Five key themes relating to the development of practitioner skills were identified; developing professional learning and professional role; responsiveness to developmental learning needs; sensitive management of emotional aspects of learning; developing critical analysis of professional work and meta-analysis of professional activity and professional role.

Limitations: There is a need for longitudinal research into developmental models of supervision and their application to EP training specifically.

Conclusions: The five themes provide some support for the utility of developmental models of supervision in informing the future development of UK educational psychology training.

Keywords: supervision; trainee educational psychologists; development; professional learning.
30 minutes per day to support placement learning. Programmes are also required to have mechanisms in place to support students’ professional development and their developing identity as practitioner psychologists, in a way that is appropriate to their level of training (Standard 5, BPS, 2012).

The task of integrating academic knowledge and skills with practice presents challenges for trainee psychologists (Woods et al., 2015). Good supervision of trainees is critical in enabling this process. However, changes in the context of EP work (Woods, 2014) can potentially reduce the time available for supervision and the extent to which it is prioritised within the overall culture of the placement. The different functions of supervision may also limit the time available to focus on developmental aspects.

The training and subsequent role for which trainee EPs are prepared, may differ from that of school psychologists working in other countries in a number of ways. Firstly, UK training is almost entirely at doctoral level. Secondly, unlike many school psychologists (National Association of School Psychologists, n.d.) educational psychologists are usually employed to work across larger groups of schools and with a range of organisations, and other professionals working with children and families. However, despite these differences the current research benefits from US work relating to models of supervision. This paper aims to explore the extent to which these models may be applicable within the UK context and support trainees in their development as practitioners.

Before focusing specifically on the supervision of trainee EPs it is helpful to locate trainee supervision within the broader literature relating to supervision of practitioner psychologists.

Defining supervision

Supervision is a complex process which varies according to the work context and focus for different practitioner psychologist groups. The broad functions of supervision have been labelled differently but can generally be described as, ‘normative’, ‘formative’ and ‘restorative’ (Milne, 2007). The normative function relates to public protection and is concerned with ensuring that the supervisee’s work complies with governance requirements so that work is of appropriate quality. The formative function is concerned with learning specific skills and competencies and the development of confidence as a practitioner. The restorative function is concerned with enabling the supervisee to have sufficient emotional resources to be able to manage the demands of their role. These three functions often overlap in supervision; for instance, having clear organisational procedures can provide structure and help to reduce stress. Although there is a degree of consensus on the core functions of supervision, a range of definitions have emerged which reflect differences in the balance of these core functions. The following definition is suggested, as it is comprehensive in identifying key domains of supervision whilst emphasising the collaborative learning and development aspects that are the focus of this paper.

‘Supervision is what happens when people who work in the helping professions make a formal arrangement to think with one another... about their work with a view to providing the best possible service to clients, enhancing their own personal and professional development and gaining support in relation to the emotional demands of work.’

(Scaife, 2001, p.4)

Supervision is crucially underpinned by the supervisor-supervisee relationship (Beinart, 2012) that can provide a secure base through which the functions of supervision can be openly and honestly addressed. However, given the competing functions of the supervisory process there is debate regarding the extent to which it can provide a creative space for development and collaborative learning. In order to maintain the relationship and fulfil the different functions implicit in the process it is important for
supervisors to be clear with trainees about their different roles (Hughes, 2012), for instance, making explicit when an observation will be used to inform evaluation of the trainee’s progress or when quality control of report writing needs to be a focus.

**Models of learning and development within supervision**

Models of learning and development can provide useful insights to assist the education and advancement of supervisees within supervision. For instance, Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning cycle can be a helpful framework for supporting planning of professional learning experiences and enabling trainees to integrate theory and practice. This model can be drawn on explicitly to help trainees, for instance, in cases where they might focus predominantly on one aspect of the learning cycle, such as actively engaging in casework but be reluctant to spend time reflecting on what they have found. However, there is limited evidence to support models of learning and development in EP training, as these have not considered the differing needs of trainees over time.

Models of supervision within educational psychology have tended to be more function and competency based and has focused on the supervision of EPs generally, rather than the specific needs of trainees (BPS, 2010). Atkinson and Woods (2007) offer a model of supervision specifically related to trainees, however, this research was undertaken when EP training was a one-year Master’s, rather than three-year doctoral training. Although the potential for development over time was acknowledged, the main finding from this study was the importance of trainees being part of a supervisory ‘system’. The current study provides an opportunity to revisit this model now that three-year doctoral training of EPs is established.

The Integrative Developmental Model (Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2010) evolved within counselling practice and considers the process of professional growth, and emphasises the uneven and non-linear aspects of skill, knowledge and attitude progression over time. This model proposes three main phases of development and an integration phase, all of which are characterised by different needs in relation to awareness of self and others, motivation and autonomy.

At ‘Level 1’ supervisees typically focus on their own behaviour, thoughts and feelings and are also likely to focus on discrete elements of assessment, rather than a global understanding of the client’s needs. They tend to be highly motivated but dependent upon their supervisor for guidance and structure. Trainees are also likely to need support with managing anxiety, particularly in relation to the supervisor’s role as evaluator.

At ‘Level 2’ supervisees become less internally focused upon their own learning and become more able to focus on the client’s needs as they develop more sophisticated conceptualisations. Motivation and autonomy can vary as the trainee develops in confidence, whilst also discovering the complexity of their role. This can lead to a sense of disequilibrium at times, requiring the supervisor to provide confidence-building or challenge.

At ‘Level 3’ supervisees are able to shift between awareness of client and self, with increased ability to reflect on their own thoughts, emotions and behaviour towards the client. Increased confidence also results in more stable motivation and higher levels of autonomy. Supervision focuses on challenging events and becomes more supervisee-directed and collegial, with less dependence upon the supervisor. Peer and group supervision are also likely to be sought.

The final phase is ‘Level 3 integrated’ which is characterised by integration across professional domains, for instance, when taking on a new area of multi-agency work supervision may focus on adjusting the focus of the EP role and applying practitioner skills to new or less familiar situations.
The process is consolidated when the supervisee becomes a supervisor, and articulates their practice.

Trainees are likely to be at different levels within different domains of practice and will return to earlier levels when changing placements or learning new skills. Supervisors need to be sensitive to this and adapt their interventions accordingly (Stoltenberg, 2005). For example, at Level 1 supervisees are likely to need more prescriptive interventions to provide structure, while catalytic interventions, which encourage reflection on broader aspects of casework such as the client’s perspective, may be particularly useful at Level 2 and 3 for expanding the supervisee’s awareness. However, as Hawkins and Shohet (2007) point out, it is important to use the model flexibly and adapt strategies, taking account of the trainee educational psychologist’s prior learning and experience, their learning preferences and the supervisor-supervisee relationship. The above levels of development are also likely to be reflected in the supervisor’s own development within the role (Hawkins & Shohet, 2007), which can limit or facilitate what they are able to bring to the supervisory relationship.

Empirical research to evaluate the Integrative Developmental Model has been limited and has been mainly undertaken in the US and has focused on counselling supervision (Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2010). Within the counselling research some studies provide support for aspects of the model such as beginning and advanced trainee’s preference for greater structure when discussing more anxiety provoking cases (Tracey, Ellickson & Sherry, 1989). Ellis and Ladany (1996) argue that a tentative reading of the research evidence does attest to the development of autonomy over time and the need for greater structure when learning new skills or dealing with crisis situations. However, longitudinal research is needed to provide empirical evidence for progression over time. Due to the Integrative Developmental Model’s focus on counselling practice, some aspects of supervisee development that are important for educational psychology have been neglected, such as the need to integrate and accommodate systemic factors.

Simon et al. (2014) have developed a supervision model, which is more specific to the needs of US school psychologists. They argue that general supervision models drawn from counselling often neglect key dimensions of the school psychologist’s role. The Developmental/Ecological/Problem Solving Model aims to fill this gap by providing a comprehensive framework for the diverse tasks undertaken by school psychologists. In relation to the developmental aspect they combine insights from the Integrative Developmental Model with Holloway’s (1995) Systems Approach to Supervision (SAS) Model, which focuses on systemic aspects such as organisational structure and climate as well as individual factors specific to the supervisor, supervisee and client. The SAS Model emphasises the complexity of the interaction of these different factors. Simon et al. (2014) argue that the combination of these two models enables explicit consideration of development needs over time, and greater focus on planning for the development of trainee skills in working with increasingly complex systems. There are two other aspects of the Developmental/Ecological/Problem Solving Model. ‘Ecological factors’, which relate to how contextual and cultural factors are considered when formulating interventions, and ‘problem solving’ which relates to the development of collaborative problem solving skills. Furthermore, Simon et al. (2014) suggest the Developmental/Ecological/Problem Solving Model is a helpful collaborative training approach for universities and supervisors; however, as a comparatively new conceptual framework it will require empirical research to validate this paradigm.

Although the developmental models and learning theories outlined offer some helpful insights, the extent to which they are applicable to UK educational psychology has yet to be fully explored. The current
research aims to evaluate the extent to which developmental theories may provide a useful framework for understanding the experiences of UK trainee EPs.

**Methodology**

The data for the current study were collected as part of a long-term collaborative project involving four universities providing initial educational psychology training, reflecting approximately 30 per cent of trainee EPs in England in 2013. As described by Woods et al. (2015), the project aimed to identify factors contributing to effective trainee supervision from multiple perspectives. The first stage of inquiry involved surveying the perspectives of trainee educational psychologists in each year group, across the four universities. All trainee educational psychologists from the four universities were invited to participate, with a separate focus group taking place for each year group in each university. This resulted in a total of 12 focus groups being conducted with between three and 15 participants in each group. A total of 106 trainees, reflecting 82 per cent of potential participants, took part in the study. The gender profile of the participants indicates that 78 per cent were female and 22 per cent were male. This is consistent with the gender balance within the profession. The moderators of the focus groups were members of staff at each university attended by the trainees. They ensured trainees were aware that there was no obligation to participate and they could opt out if they wished.

A focus group was selected as it allows for interactive development and elaboration of ideas and themes between participants (Barbour, 2007). The schedule for the focus group (Appendix 1) explored seven general areas relating to effective supervision such as facilitators and barriers, with an eighth theme for year 2 and year 3 students which explicitly focused on developmental progression of placement supervision and experiences across the different years of initial professional training. All focus groups were audio-recorded and transcribed.

Data from this first stage identified seven key themes that were common to all year groups (Woods et al., 2015). These themes were identified through a cross HEI moderation and coding process using inductive-deductive thematic analysis (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). This involved identifying themes, which were informed by the author’s knowledge of existing literature whilst simultaneously using inductive analysis to identify any new or novel themes emerging from the data. Identified themes were checked with participants. However, a strong developmental theme running through the data was also evident.

The current study, therefore, aimed to provide a more in-depth analysis of the data, focusing particularly on developmental progression between the first and third year of the programmes. Two members of the team from different HEIs processed the data further, by initially identifying developmental aspects within each theme and cross-checking. Data within each identified theme were then analysed in detail using an inductive-deductive approach (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006) as outlined previously. Five distinct developmental themes emerged.

**Results**

The data were analysed by year group with a common set of five overlapping main themes emerging across the three year groups. For each theme illustrative quotations from each year group are presented, followed by a discussion of key findings and implications for the professional supervision for trainee EPs.

**Theme 1: Developing professional learning and professional role**

For all cohorts of trainees there was recognition that supervision was an important vehicle for professional learning. There was a sense of supervision providing a conduit between formal academic learning and practical placement activities. Supervision helps to synthesise these elements into a more holistic sense of how to develop as a profes-
sional, and highlights the importance of professional learning throughout one’s career.

For many year 1 trainee educational psychologists the focus of early supervision is rooted in the pragmatics of service delivery and mastering foundation skills, ‘you know, things like report writing, …where do you store confidential materials… how the office is run’.

For many trainees this is their first exposure to professional supervision, which some felt would focus on ‘meeting deadlines, and administration’. Whilst these elements of supervision are present towards the end of year 1 there is a clear sense of how trainees have experienced supervision and their understanding of the role it plays within the profession. ‘I’ve learned so much about learning through the process of supervision. I hadn’t had supervision before so found it hard at first but now… it is just the heart of good professional learning for me.’

By year 2 the focus of supervision has progressed from an emphasis on foundation skills for those entering the profession, to helping trainees develop their own professional learning goals: ‘I think it’s less directive than in year 1, possibly because we are not working with discrete tasks anymore, it is more about me developing and learning as a professional.’ There is a clear sense of confidence that emerges from the increased exposure to the professional role, particularly where the trainee is supported to develop their skills alongside their supervisor: ‘I think it’s been quite helpful working on the same patch as my supervisor and then gradually taking over more schools, because she is very familiar with the context.’ Throughout year 2 the trainee is taking more responsibility for managing their work and they begin to welcome being challenged.

The year 3 groups commented on their greater security in terms of professional identity and having progressed to the point where professional learning has become a collaborative process within supervision: ‘In your third year when you have a little bit more experience… it’s two people learning together almost… equal might be the wrong word but it’s valued by the other person… (the) whole process feels different.’ The year 3 trainees valued the way that supervision helped them to develop
the full range of competencies necessary to develop their professional role. ‘What supervision… helped was… integrating different models of psychology… initially I used to think about them as stand-alone… but I found supervision quite helpful just to try to integrate everything… using different perspectives to think about the problem.’

**Theme 2: Responsiveness to developmental learning needs**

All cohorts of trainees highlighted the importance of supervisors being sensitive to their developmental learning needs. Furthermore they acknowledged the challenges this can present to their supervisors, since they require varying degrees of support at different times. They acknowledge that professional learning does not follow a linear progression.

Year 2 trainees provided helpful insights into the process of their learning and the type of supervision that they require:

‘It reflects my development as an EP in training so… in year 1 I had my hand held a lot and in year 2 I’ve had my hand held much less. In year 1 my expectations of me were much lower and now… you know, I’m pretty much working as an EP and… and that’s reflected in the supervision that I’m receiving.’

Another year 2 trainee highlighted that at this stage in their learning trainees welcome their supervisors becoming more challenging, ‘Now you are coming up with your own ideas more… I think in year 1 maybe you see your supervisor as the expert, somebody who is going to have all the answers. Whereas now it’s kind of sharing thoughts and your supervisor challenges you.’

Whilst trainees are keen to increase their autonomy and independence they need their supervisors to be carefully attuned to their vacillating needs:

‘I think of developmental stages, that early on… you’re new to the service and you’re trying to find out what to do and how to do it, but later on when you’ve got that more comfortably under control you can move onto another level. It’s your supervisor moving into that new level as well and so we need to be developing in a sort of similar way.’

An important message for supervisors was a request that they recognise that not all skills and abilities develop in the same way, and that learning experiences typically associated with early stage learning can enrich later learning. As a year 2 trainee explained, ‘I think the assumption is made that you’ve had all this observation in previous years and that it’s not necessary, but I think that’s a really important point… at different developmental stages you’ll get different learning experiences from it.’ This point was developed by another year 2 trainee in relation to developing consultation skills:

‘In the first year I did observe quite a lot but I really didn’t know what I was looking for and I thought well they just have this really effective conversation, I can do that, but actually now that I know what I know, I know it wasn’t just a conversation, I kind of wish I could replay them, so that I could pick out the effective part and apply them to my practice.’

There was also acknowledgement that a skilled supervisor will recognise, when it might help a trainee to revert to a more directive approach. As a year 3 trainee explained:

‘I don’t feel as empowered when I get that direct advice, I feel more empowered being facilitated but then, other times I want it and I think it’s… it’s got to be… a very… good skill on the supervisor’s part to understand when I want facilitating to get to the answer myself and when I actually want the answer from them.’

Another year 3 trainee acknowledged the challenges for both parties in getting this balance right:

‘I suppose it’s a fine line isn’t it, between needing support and being supported… in some instances being told what to do if that’s the question that you’re bringing… but then there is a fine line between that and developing your own understanding and not necessarily just doing.’

**Theme 3: Sensitive management of emotional and motivational aspects of learning**

The second theme (above) is also strongly associated with the third theme, which relates to the management of the fluctuating
emotional and motivational aspects of learning. There was universal recognition that the quality of the relationship with the supervisor is crucial in assisting the trainee in managing these emotional aspects in order to facilitate learning.

The emotional needs of trainees, as they acquire a new professional identity can waver as their confidence levels fluctuate, and this serves to highlight the value and importance of a secure and positive relationship with the supervisor. Year 1 trainees noted:

‘My relationship with my supervisor, it had a much bigger impact on my placement experience than the provider itself,’ another year 1 trainee observed ‘supervision sessions were used to develop my confidence... and nurture me in my role as an EP.’

It was clear that the supervisory relationship and shared experiences were crucial to developing trainees confidence and securing a positive transition to their new role, ‘I guess it was that kind of scaffolding... at the start we were very, very supported and then gradually she felt I was more confident and made my links and she let me go off.’

For year 2 trainees the quality of the supervisory relationship was central to effective learning: ‘It’s that like unbiased, non-judgemental space to bring something and not feel worried or conscious that you’re going to say or do anything wrong or that you should know something,’ Many trainees stressed the importance of trust. For example, ‘I could actually be very honest, I didn’t feel... that I couldn’t say something or I couldn’t say where I was finding something more challenging.’ Trainees also valued supervisors who were open to different styles and approaches to applied psychology: ‘Having permission to develop in your own way and in your own style as a new generation psychologist as opposed to more of what’s been before.’ They recognised:

‘The... importance of the personal as well as the professional skills of the person who’s being identified... that it’s not just something you earn by years in the field, that you actually have to have particular qualities in somebody to make it an effective relationship’.

If the relationship is working well then trainees felt, ‘it’s easy and good for the supervisors to challenge you, why you got there... and force you to defend and articulate what it was. Because I don’t think you do that necessarily on your own.’

When reflecting on positive experiences of supervision trainees explained:

‘I’ve felt surges of confidence because she’ll write back to me and say ‘excellent report, well done... at the beginning it was less positive, so... actually I now feel more confident in my job and that I’m doing the right thing... and I wouldn’t get that if I didn’t have a good relationship with my supervisor, who I trust.’

Year 3 trainees described how supervisors were able to help them manage the competing demands of the placement and their programme:

‘My current supervisor has placed much more emphasis... on understanding the personal... the strains of the course and understanding when... our deadlines are and even at the beginning of the year, she noted all these down and made sure that my diary... reflected the needs of the university course.’

Another year 3 trainee described how essential trust and security is to effective learning:

‘It is about your relationship with your supervisor, if you’ve got a good relationship with your supervisor... there’s almost like a safety net underneath, where you feel like they’re approachable, whereas I think when you don’t have that relationship everything becomes much more difficult.’

All of the trainees recognised the dual role of evaluation and teaching within the supervisory role and acknowledged that this can create tensions where the supervisor is a manager. For a small but significant number of trainees the quality of the relationship did not promote a climate of security and trust, ‘I just always felt I had to be seen to be coping, to share worries and anxieties didn’t feel safe’ often this was because ‘a lot of people want to stay in the Local Authority they’re in when they finish the course.’

For some the power imbalance in the supervisory relationship led them to
conclude, ‘Supervision was more to do with what the Local Authority or the service wanted from me rather than what I needed from supervision.’

**Theme 4: Developing a critical analysis of professional work**

Trainees at progressive stages of their training reported that their increasing experience of supervision enabled them to develop greater critical awareness. Thus they were increasingly able to reflect on multiple perspectives and were more likely to want to be challenged by their supervisors, to be increasingly self-critical, and to have developed greater skills in personal reflection.

A year 1 trainee commented, ‘I think what I found really useful was… that my tutor would come to observe me and then we’d brought that observation to supervision and I had a chance to reflect first.’

By year 2 trainees commented, ‘Actually I need to talk about the psychology and what’s going on to understanding my practice’ another trainee commented, ‘being the reflective practitioner has very much come through supervision, the critiquing, being your own biggest critic and looking at yourself and looking at what you have done and what you could have done to improve that situation.’

These quotations demonstrate the progression of trainees’ thinking about a ‘meta’ perspective of learning and professional development that includes careful reflection about many dimensions of practice including, ‘the way I write reports, just the… language I’m using and thinking about that, it has been developed through talking to my supervisor.’

Year 3 trainees were able to reflect on many dimensions of the professional role and were able to synthesise diverse theories and models to gain a more holistic view of their professional activity and to approach situations from different perspectives:

> What supervision… helped with was… integrating different models of psychology… initially I used to think about them as stand-alone… but I found supervision quite helpful just to try to integrate everything… using different perspectives to think about the problem.’

The trainees are also better able to regulate their emotional reactions, ‘My supervisor has really helped me to gain perspective… you know look at all the things that are going on and… you’re coping really well and reflecting that back.’

At this stage supervision often helps develop skills through challenges that make them consider alternative models and different ways of working ‘I am not looking for him to validate that, what I’m looking for are other ways that they might… bring my thinking… to expand the way I might work.’ Access to specialist EPs was also thought to promote greater confidence and expertise:

> I undertook some therapeutic work and I had a supervisor who was a specialist in that kind of field and I think that really brought on the things we learned in university but the supervision was like… it was absolutely fabulous, it really helped me and it was challenging in that way that… I was being asked to think through things and think about how that would fit and what I might do next time.’

By this stage supervision is more collegial, ‘She’s really enjoyed being a supervisor… and she likes to hear about what we’ve done at university and how we’re applying that in our work and she’s taken on some things from me and she’s often reflected back that she’s finding supervision really interesting.’

**Theme 5: Meta-analysis of professional activity and professional role**

The fifth theme relates to how supervision has facilitated the development of the ability to think and reflect beyond concrete case related activity and to consider wider systemic influences on practice. By year 2 this includes consideration of the service culture and the local context, including reflecting on how these are influencing the development of their professional style and identity.

By year 3 the focus had extended to include systemic perspectives. One year three trainee described the desire ‘to use my psychology to make a difference for this community, to work on strategy, use my research skills.’ Others were able to reflect on the changing culture...
and contexts of some educational psychology services, as trading has become more prevalent, ‘Ethics, especially when you’re working in a business model and that’s something that we reflect on… you know, how do you work ethically.’ Some welcomed the opportunity ‘to talk about ethical dilemmas or conflict… between parents and teachers’ whilst others were thinking about working systemically to support schools ‘with the challenges of raising standards and promoting inclusion.’ One year 3 trainee welcomed the chance to gain perspective, ‘It’s really kind of finding out what my role is as an EP and actually the limits of what I… should be doing, and that I don’t have to change the world with a piece of work.’

Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the potential of Stoltenberg and McNeill’s Integrative Developmental Model (2010) as a framework for supporting the development of trainee EPs over time. There was clear evidence of non-linear learning, development and knowledge acquisition. Trainees provided interesting accounts of how the development of some skills and experiences facilitated deeper understanding of prior knowledge and experience, suggesting a reciprocal and interactive process of professional learning. The differing accounts from the three cohorts of trainees provided support for the three phases of development described in the Integrative Developmental Model. This included evidence from the year 1 cohort of an initial focus on their own behaviour, feelings and level of skill acquisition. The narratives of the year 2 cohort described an increasing focus on client needs, their developing professional abilities in formulations and technical skills and consequent increased confidence in their own abilities, mediated by the challenges and complexities of their role. The year 3 cohort demonstrated the development of reflective practice, greater autonomy and emotional stability, and a more collegial approach to supervision. However, as Hawkins and Shohet (2007) point out, these patterns of skill development will vary between trainees and according to task.

The implications for supervisors focus on the challenges that the trainees identified. These particularly related to the supervisory skills needed in matching the degree of support offered flexibly and responsively as trainees navigate different aspects of their professional development (Stoltenberg, 2005). Acknowledging that progression is non-linear and influenced by vacillating emotional responses and experiences requires sensitive monitoring and adaptive responses (Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2010). This makes the application of developmental models to supervision a complex and dynamic process (Hawkins & Shohet, 2007). As highlighted in the literature review there is a need for longitudinal research into developmental models generally and their application to EP training specifically.

As described previously, a critique of the Integrative Developmental Model comes from Simon et al. (2014) who have challenged the applicability of a model developed for counselling psychologists, as they consider it unable to take account of the complex context-based work of American school psychologists. Their alternative model, the Developmental/Ecological/Problem-solving Model aims to take account of the diversity of the EP role by integrating organisational culture and contextual variables when considering the supervisory needs of school psychologists.

Within the data analysis, this study sought to explore how useful the Integrative Developmental Model and Developmental/Ecological/Problem Solving Model might be for understanding the supervisory experiences of trainee educational psychologists in the UK context. Whilst there appears to be evidence for the Integrative Developmental Model, the data provides some, albeit limited evidence in support of the Developmental/Ecological/Problem Solving Model within the theme ‘meta analysis of professional activity and professional role’. This theme indicates that the Developmental/
Ecological/Problem Solving Model includes pertinent and highly relevant enhancements to current models of supervision employed in the UK. Trainees in this study were thinking about wider implications for their developing role, including consideration of ethical issues emerging as a consequence of the changing sources and mechanisms for funding educational psychologists’ services in England. Some were thinking about working more strategically at whole school or local authority level. What is clear is that this wider contextual dimension of supervision is of considerable importance. The changing legislative landscape of children and young people’s services (DfE, 2014) makes context a crucial variable in trainee EPs’ supervisory needs. It is likely that if context were an established domain in professional supervision it would have featured more prominently in trainee EPs’ accounts of their supervisory experiences. Furthermore, when considering the HCPC standards of education and training (HCPC, 2012a), and standards of proficiency (HCPC, 2012b) alongside the BPS accreditation criteria (BPS, 2012) these reflect the comprehensive, systemic orientation of the EP role. The importance of contextual factors appears to be a promising addition to supervision models, which warrants further research. Comparative study of the ways in which wider legislative contexts such as federally mandated use of evidence based practice in the US and current developments in UK legislation influence context and problem solving processes would also inform further development of the model.

Conclusions
The findings suggest that both Stoltenberg and McNeill’s (2014) Integrative Developmental Model and the Simon et al. (2014) Developmental/Ecological/Problem Solving Model have relevance for use in the supervision of trainee educational psychologists in the UK. They capture additional dimensions of the EP role that are absent in the supervision models currently in use, that have their origins in counselling psychology. The evidence of this study indicates that these models are worth trialling in the UK, and that a developmental and context focus to trainee EP supervision may prove to be a timely development.

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References


Appendix 1: Trainee educational psychologist focus group schedule.

Year 1

Introductory information:

a. Context for practice placement (e.g. bursary/post; local authority/private provider;
   size of service; brief demographic information; main areas of work);
b. Current role of supervisor; supervision from one/different supervisors;
c. Supervisor’s previous experience of supervision (if known).

1. What organisational arrangements are made for supervision (e.g. allocation of time;
   supervisory contract; informal/formal contact arrangements; arrangements for meetings)?
2. What have been the most useful aspects of the supervision you have received?
   What factors have enabled you to access effective supervision?
3. Are there any developments in your practice that you would identify as having been brought
   about, largely or in part, through the effective supervision you have received?
4. Were there any aspects of supervision you felt were missing or insufficient? What would you
   have liked more of in supervision? What factors have inhibited effective supervision?
5. Have you had experience of particular theoretical models of professional supervision?
   If so, what has been the contribution of these to effective supervision?
6. Are there ways in which the university and/or the fieldwork placement could better support
   trainees in accessing effective supervision?
7. What recommendations would you make for an accreditation framework for placement
   providers?

Year 2

Questions/activities as for Year 1, plus:

8. How has your experience of supervision in year 2 been different from your experience in year 1?
   How have your supervisory needs changed between years 1 and 2 of the programme?

Year 3

Questions/activities as for Year 1, plus:

8. How have your supervisory needs and experiences changed over the course of the three years of
   the programme?