Establishing and Advancing Solution-Focused Supervision with School Counselors in Taiwan

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Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) has a brief and recent history in the Chinese societies, but it has an exhilarating development thus far. In this essay, we intend to describe and chronicle the ways in which a Solution-focused Supervision (SFS) model took roots and evolved in Taiwan through the training of school counselors. This model of SFS is established based on the training and clinical experiences of the first author, Dr. Wei Su Hsu. I (Wei Su) am a counseling psychology faculty teaching at the National Normal University in Taiwan. I wish to share and describe the key elements of SFS supervision evolved out of my work with a small group of school counselors over the last 7-8 years. I also wish to offer some insights into what I think why this SFS model and various techniques adopted have worked well in the Chinese/Taiwanese societal and cultural context. To accomplish this task, I solicited the assistance and collaboration of my colleague and close friend, Dr. Ben C.H. Kuo, the second author of this chapter to help me organize, consolidate and articulate these cumulative learning experiences as a solution-focus (SF) supervisor and trainer in Taiwan. Dr. Kuo contributes to this chapter by helping me to contextualize and interpret my gained experiences in SFS from a unique Chinese and Taiwanese cultural perspective. Dr. Kuo is a Taiwanese-born and Canada- and US- educated clinical psychology faculty teaching at the University of Windsor in Ontario, Canada. He is a scholar, trainer, and clinician in multicultural counseling and an educator and researcher in cross-cultural psychology. Dr. Kuo has lectured, supervised, and conducted many training workshops with mental health professionals across Taiwan, including school counselors.

The Context

The need for a group model of supervision was originated by a group of high school counselors working with the school board of the Tau Yuan District in Taiwan in 2006. The format of group supervision was deemed ideal for school counselors because it provided a forum of mutual support and learning among the participants for their professional growth.
and development. I (Wei-Su) was privileged to be invited by the group to act as the supervisor to facilitate such a group supervision process, for I am known in Taiwan as an active advocate for adopting SF approach in training and supervising counselors both in schools as well as in community. Having taught in middle and senior high schools in Taiwan, I firmly believe that the fundamental philosophy of SFBT blends well with Chinese cultural values system and is hence a suitable counseling and helping tool to be used in schools within the Chinese society. Consequently, this group of school counselors began receiving supervision grounded in the solution-focused principles and subsequently came to acquire counseling training and skills in SFBT. They began to realize that SFBT was helpful to them, and their desire to learn more about the approach grew. This promoted them to invite me to continue my clinical supervision work with this group. SFS is well received and supported by the participants as an effective and fitting model to help facilitate their professional development as school counselors. This supervision group began in 2006; it is currently on-going and is now in the seventh year of its existence.

This group of school counselors meets for a 3-hour group supervision monthly (with the exception of the summer and the winter vacations). This resulted in a total of eight supervision sessions over a period of one full year. The monthly group process begun initially with participants dropping in for group supervision on occasionally basis and then towards the end it became a more consistent group consisted of 12 to 15 regular participants. This increased regularity in attendance is attributable to the effect of SFS in promoting group cohesion and in enhancing the growth and the development of individual participants. The group includes 3-5 directors from the office of school guidance and counseling. The professional experiences working within the field of school counseling for these individuals ranged from 4 to 10 years.

Having a consistent and cohesive group grounded in the principles of the SFS, the members of this group grew closer to each other and proactively offered mutual support to
each other, even in areas outside of their professional lives. As a case in point, in 2009 this
group of school counselors independently founded "The Solution-Focused Brief Therapy
Center of Taiwan". I was the invited honorary consultant for this center. The center is housed
the center in the basement of the Chung-Li Senior High School; it serves as a critical resource
for other middle school counselors within the same district.

As such, this chapter will delineate and summarize these cumulative SFS experiences by
describing the historical development of this supervision group of school counselors in
Taiwan, presenting the content, the structure and the process of SFS being adopted and
applied within this context, and to elucidate and interpret these learned experiences with the
support of some preliminary research findings. To this end, this chapter will include the
following three sections: (a) implementation of SFS: Its process and outcome; (b) basic
training of SFS and application to school consultation; and (c) team case conference as a peer
supervision approach
Implementation of SFS: Its Process and Outcome

Format of Case Report in SF Group Supervision

The case report approach of supervision adopted for the above described group
devotees to use a supervision framework that is most familiar and most accessible to these
school counselors. It focuses on an individual school counselor during the group supervision
session who is assigned to present a selected client from her/his existing caseload. These
selected cases unusually involve highly difficult, involuntary clients or clients who are in
immediate crisis. In Taiwan, as well as in most countries worldwide, this type of cases
represents the most common students who are being referred to school counselors for
intervention. It is also the kind of casework that school counselors find most stressful to work
with and in dire need of support and supervision. Incorporating the SFS principles with the
feedback from members of the supervision group, I aim to carefully facilitate and maintain
the group process in the following manner.
• Briefly describing the client’s background, identifying interventions that the supervisee has tried previously and the difficulty he or she has encountered, and then establishing positive supervisory goals of the supervisee (10 to 15 minutes).

• Clarifying the presented information and soliciting supplementary information/data about the identified client by all participants (10 to 15 minutes).

• Opening up a discussion among all participants, using SFBT skills to explore further about the goals, the strengths, the exceptions, and the extent of improvement of the client; identifying successful interventions and strengths of the supervisee; and brainstorming with group members about possible interventions for future sessions with the client with SFBT (30 minutes).

• Concluding with positive feedback and clinical education (in a SF consistent fashion) to the supervisee by the supervisor (15 to 20 minutes).

• Making final conclusion, discussion, and wrapping up (10 minutes).

Using the ‘open-coding’ method suggested by Strass and Corbin (1998), a qualitative study was conducted to explore the merits of the current Solution-focused group supervision from the perspective of those who had completed the case report group supervision (Hsu & Tsai, 2008 & 2011). The participants identified three levels of benefits associated with this Solution-focused group supervision. First, the participants noted that this model enhanced their ability to utilize and apply SFBT skills. More conspicuously, their professional ability and efficacy in providing counseling to their difficult, involuntary clients or clients who are in crisis with SFBT have significantly increased. Second, the participants’ sense of self efficacy in promoting school counseling and crisis management more broadly speaking within the larger school system has also been enhanced. They were more able to utilize available resources and to facilitate the cooperation and communication among diverse parties involved in a particular case or within a particular operational unit. Finally, their sense of positive, personal development and growth, in terms of becoming more in tuned with their
own emotions and well-being, holding a more positive attitude toward life and their social interpersonal relationship, has also increased as result of involving in this group supervision.

Of particular interest is the fact that after receiving this Solution-focused group supervision, these participants grew to become more accepting and respectful of individual differences and cultural diversity. It is partly credited to the SFBT's effort to minimize the tendency for counselors to view themselves as the 'experts'. For instance, it allows the clients to believe that they themselves are the expert on the solutions to their problems. By so doing, this further prevents the clients from being unknowingly affected by the subjectivity of their school counselors. Culturally speaking, from the clients' perspective, the combined qualities of 'authority', 'respect', and 'humility' in their counselors fit perfectly with the Chinese ideal characteristics of a 'benevolent healer'(Kuo, Hsu, & Lai, 2011). This indirectly further enhances the counselor's credibility in the eyes of the clients with whom they work with.

Review of Videotaped Role-Play Session in Solution-Focused Group Supervision

After nearly three years of directing this Solution-focused group supervision using the case report approach, the participants initiated a study group that met regularly to study and discuss SFBT-related books and materials on their own. During these study group meetings, I took a back seat and responded to questions raised by the participants only when absolutely necessary. Subsequent to this development, the format of the group supervision was modified to align it more closely with the structure and the process of SFBT and to focus more specifically on the learning needs of the participants. Based on the feedback and the suggestion of the participants, the group supervision was then transformed from a primarily case presentation oriented session to one that involved more active role plays and observation and analysis of counseling sessions at the microprocess level.

Part I of this Videotaped Role-Play Session in Solution-focused Group Supervision involves a mock role play. Each supervision meeting involves one participant role-playing the student client and the other role-playing the school counselor. The two engage in a 30-minute
counseling interaction. While the counseling role-play session is being video-recorded, other members of the group watch the entire session via a TV monitor in a separate conference room. These observers also constitute the team that offer peer feedback and supervision to the counselor in focus.

Following the role play session and the structure of SFBT, the target counselor enters the conference room to receive peer feedback based on their brainstorming discussion about the role play. This process lasts for about 10 minutes. The counselor then return back to the counseling session and to his/her client. During which time the counselor provides feedback to the student client based on the principles of SFBT and the suggestions offered by the peers.

Part II of the supervision is consisted of reviewing the videotaped role-play session taken during Part I. Both the mock student client and the counselor in this role-play exercise rejoin their peers and me (the principal supervisor) in the conference room. Initially the primary focus is placed on identifying the strengths of the counselor. This is followed by examining the videotaped session by the while group. Then, all the participants offer praises, affirmations, and constructive suggestions to the counselor in focus. Next, the video is paused for discussion whenever any participant has questions or comments. The process provided a forum for all the participants to exchange ideas and opinions. The supervision process finally ends with group sharing by the participants to summarize their learning.

This type of moment-by-moment approach to examine and analyze counseling process has a number of benefits. Not only does it enhance the supervisees’ learning gains, but also the approach helps the supervisees to internalize and master the principles and skills of SFBT. For example, they learn skills such as not-knowing posture or leading from one step behind. These supervisees also acquire a critical ability to engage in retrospective reflection and self-awareness. I have found these learning to be valuable assets to these school counselors.

On a different note, I was particularly surprised to find that it was difficult for the participants to offer feedback to the target counselor and the client. This is because offering
feedback involves the participants' knowledge and abilities of conceptualizing the client's information from the perspective of SFBT. Effective feedbacks of SFBT need to be presented in a readily understandable, meaningful, and convincing manner to the recipient. For this reason, it prompted me to work extensively with the participants to cultivate their ability on how to capture critical information from a counseling process and then integrate this information into the formulation of a SFBT feedback.

After involving school counselors in the mock role plays for a while, we started to play different characters including parents and teachers, and discovered something significant. School counselors in Taiwan are hired as ‘teachers’ and are often considered as almost equal ‘peers’ (in terms of generational status) to other teachers in the same school and the parents whom they work with. Unlike counselors working in community-based agencies or organizations, school counselors must rely heavily on other resources within the school systems to enable them to offer counseling to students and consultation for adults. Likewise at times school counselors must take the active initiative to invite teachers and parents to engage in the counseling and/or the consultation process – a practice quite different from counselors working in the community. Due to variability in the specific organizational culture of the schools and the operational structure of school counseling, it poses difficulty for the participants to assume various roles during the role-play exercise with playing the role of teachers and parents. Despite this, the participants shared in common the challenges they all faced associated with consult parents and other teachers in the schools. The participants found themselves feeling inadequate in responding to these challenges only with SFBT.

It was at this point that I decided to teach and share with this group of school counselors the components of SFS with the aim to enhance their consultation work in their schools, for the process of SFS resemble and parallel that of Solution-focused consultation.

Basic Training of SF Supervision and Application to School Consultation

Consultation for Parents and Teachers
In 2007, I conducted a study with six participants consisted of community counselors with the aim to identify the functional components of SFS (Hsu, 2009). A total of 24 supervisory sessions were transcribed and analyzed using the open-coding method (Strass & Corbin, 1998) to explore the qualitative data. Seven critical components of SFS emerged from the analysis of the transcription: (a) starting supervision sessions with a positive opening and a brief but clear problem description and focusing attention on the interaction between supervisees and their presenting concerns; (b) identifying concrete and constructive supervisory goals; (c) exploring the exceptions for supervisees and clients; (d) exploring alternative explanations, perspectives, and solutions to a problem; (e) receiving clear feedback and timely teaching from the supervisor; (f) conceptualizing counseling progresses and successes in small steps; and (g) evaluating and identifying supervisees’ growth and changes over time.

On the basis of these findings of the study, I supplemented additional training accordingly. Particularly, current literature suggests that school counselors who are rich in work experiences in the school settings are ideal candidates to become supervisors for other school counselors. On this basis, I integrated the principles and the components of SFS, the basic theories of supervision, and the concepts associated with the professional role and supervision of school counselors to help enhance the supervisory competency of this group of school counselors (Hsu, 2010, 2012). In total, I offered 50 hours of SFS training for this group of school counselors.

The primary training methods about the components of SFS include the following. The process is divided into various segments which correspond to the seven critical components of SFS identified above. At the outset of each segment, I introduce and describe the key components of SFS and present concrete examples as illustration. I also provide direct demonstration of these components. Furthermore, the trainees were divided into a group consisted of 3 or 4 people. In these groups, one individual plays the role of the supervisee,
one plays the role of the supervisor, and one or two other takes on the role of the observer. The person role-playing the supervisee identify difficulty he or she has in counseling work the client with his or her mock supervisor. The latter apply the principles of SFS to offer guidance to the former. This process takes place while the observers take note on their observations. At the end of this process, the group share and process what they learned and experienced collectively. In these small training groups, members of the group also practice the specific skills embedded within each of these components of SFS and then they process their learning experiences with each other as a group. The entire process is then concluded with a concluding discussion, feedback, and a question-and-answer period led by me.

Then, the participants are encouraged to apply this SFS model of training and their learned experiences in their consultation work with parents and teachers. They practice ways to manage a three-way relationship/interaction (student-teacher-school counselor or student-parent-school counselor) as they did during the supervision (client-counselor-supervisor). These school counselors often report not having sufficient time to implement all seven components of SFS in providing consultation to parents and teachers. However, for those who had attempted to adhere to these SFS principles, these school counselors found that so long as at least one of these components was adopted in the consulting process the increased effectiveness of their intervention was observed. For example, offering compliment to teachers (or parents) and engaging teachers in exception-exploration with their students have been found to empower teachers and to inspire them to use these strategies more regularly. Formulation and framing of positive goals with parents and teachers were found to minimize the complaints by these individuals. This, in turn, orients parents and teachers toward action to work toward the goals. In addition, establishing small steps in reaching a goal encourages clients to continuously engage in concrete actions and maintain and persist in these efforts.

In particular, exploring possibilities, communicating positive feedback, and engaging in
clinical education with SFS principles afford an individual who seeks with tangible and workable ideas or suggestions. This is because help-seeking parents and teachers in Taiwan still view the school counselor as an expert or an authority figure in this professional area. Therefore, the capacity to render clear and concrete recommendations for parents and teachers in distress along with offering them appropriate and timely psychoeducation is deemed as a highly desirable quality in a successful school counselor in Taiwan.

School Case Management Conference

Based on the situations I had encountered while promoting SFS and Solution-focused consultation in various schools in Taiwan and the critical questions being posed to me by school counselors that I had worked with, I began to realize that school counselors must discern the differences between ‘professional case conference’ and ‘school case management conference’. The former is typically comprised of school counselors from same or different schools. The latter is usually consisted of an interdisciplinary team of diverse professionals, including school principal, school administrator, homeroom teacher, academic subject teacher (e.g., math teacher, physical education teacher, etc.), parent, physician, social worker, community-based counselor/therapist, and school counselor. The main objective of the latter entity, the school case management conference, is to provide consultation to the staff of the school and to identify concrete and useful methods to help the problem student improve his/her current condition immediately.

Given that these two types of conferences differ in the composition of their participants, the participants attend these meetings also come with divergent interests, expectations, and expertise. Being cognizant of this fact is especially critical and relevant in the context of Chinese culture and school systems, because Chinese culture places a strong emphasis on interpersonal relationship and on respecting individuals situated within the pre-established social hierarchy (Kuo et al., 2011; Kuo, 2004). Hence, the divergent nature of these two conferences calls for different a process and a different set of responses on the part of school
counselors involved.

On the basis of my discussion with this group of school counselors and school counselors from elsewhere, we see the school case management conferences as a consultative tool or resource within the schools. We believe that this school case management conference can benefit from incorporating some of the SFS strategies listed below.

a) Structuring and Preparing for the Conference

Given that the composition of the participants in the group will likely lead to different group dynamics and varying degrees of contributions among its participants, consideration should first be given to the question: “Who should be invited to participate in the school case management conference?” What are the purposes, the objectives, and the expectations associated with this conference and its participants? ”

Ideally, in this conference the case-presenting counselor need to clearly select and provide crucial information/data related to the case being discussed by adhering to the structure and the organization of the case report method of solution-focused approach. The student/client’s perspective and recollection of helpful exceptions from significant others in his/her past and his/ her own goal for change should be solicited and identified before the conference to be incorporated into the process.

b) Focusing on Common Goal to Avoid Conflicts among Participants

In Taiwan, both parents and teachers are entrusted with enormous responsibility of educating and disciplining a child/student. In this society, adults, especially teachers and parents, are expected to teach, educate, and discipline a child as the role of an educator. Consequently, when a student/client is being identified as having serious behavioral problems, there is high tendency for blaming and finger pointing among the various adults or parties involved. The chair of the conference must firmly and persistently remind all participants to strive for a common goal - that is, to work towards improving the welfare of the student in question by findings ways to assist and support him/her. That can be achieved to maintain a
clear direction in conducting the conference and preserving an order in this process.

At the same time, it is equally important for the chair to constantly prompt and keep all participants on track by focusing squarely on the student’s needs and goal. Culturally speaking, this is a direction Taiwanese teachers and parents find difficult to accept because of their ascribed status within the Chinese society as the authority figures and the “superiors” To increase their receptiveness for focusing on the student, as a chair I (Wei Su) often quote the Chinese saying: “Victory arrives at those who know themselves and their opponents well.”

c) Reframing Clients’ Problems in Terms of Learning Goals

In order to steer the conference away from potential conflicts and squabbling, the chair conference must also be sensitive to the “face-saving” and the dignity of the parents and all the other participants involved in the conference. This face-saving process is a critical dimension in the Chinese culture (Kuo et al., 2011). To do so, it is helpful for the chair to re-direct the focus of the discussion towards: “What does this student need to learn in this stage?” a notion based on Ben Furman’s concept of “Kids’ skills” (2003). With this approach, it avoids implicating any faults on the part of significant adults in the life of the student and in turn would make the discussion more productive.

d) Motivating Conference Participants to Take on a Teaching Role for the Student/Client

Bearing the question “What does this student/client need to learn?” clearly in mind, participants of the conference should be lead to focus their discussion on “How do we teach or lead him/her?” This strategy is especially relevant in the Chinese cultural context according the role of being an “educator” of the student. From this “teaching” perspective, each participant discusses and shares his/her “exceptions” based the individual’s past interactions with the student which are useful in bringing about positive behaviors or outcomes with the student. The chair should offer a lot of praises and appreciation to those who have shares their valuable experiences at the same time, and then proceeds to integrate and summarize what has been presented. The school counselor at the conference can interject
by highlighting and reminding participants about the client’s own perception of the exceptions when he/she received help from these significant adults.

e) Forming an Action Plan as an Experimentation and Delegating Participant Responsibilities

Next, the conference focuses on exploring possibilities that could help the student/client in the future, and on identifying a concrete, contingency action plan based on the opinions of the various participants and the discussion described above. According, the chair begins to delegate responsibilities among these participants, depending on each participant’s role, ability, and degree of willingness. With that, participants discuss ways to collaborate and cooperate with each other.

It is important for the chair of the conference to normalize the possible ups-anddowns in the client’s change and progress over time. Participants are also encouraged to view the action plan as an experiment in small steps, and be open to any outcome from this attempt. Doing so will present participants from feeling disappointed or frustrated should there be a lack of progress on the part of the student.

The chair will set out the regular meeting time and schedule with the members of the conference. Participants are further asked to monitor the progresses of the student/client closely and to document effective strategies or interventions found to be helpful for working with the student.

f) Empowering Participants by Identifying the Student’s/Client’s Progresses and Useful Intervention Strategies

At every meeting the issue concerning the student’s progress is carefully addressed and particular a focus is placed on identifying any small behavioral changes observed in the student. Using a scale measure with a continuum to assess the progress of the student has been found to be informative and useful in this process. We also found the continuum can include negative scores; this works well in a culture that places emphasis on moderation and
modesty. For instance, in evaluating the changes in the client, the client’s condition at the onset of the intervention might be assigned a score of -9 initially. After the implementation of interventions by the group, with improvement the client might then be represented by a score of -2. While this score still falls below that of an average and well-functioning student, the improvement is still clearly evident with a jump of 7 points on the scale.

The credit for any success is given to all the members of this conference with the intention to empower them and their works. This will serve to encourage all the team members by affirming the important roles they play in helping to support the student. Furthermore, the participants are asked to carefully engage in a self-reflection and examination to identify effective interventions and strategies that would work well with the student. They are asked to document their ideas in detail and discuss ways to maintain these efforts.

$g$) Dealing with Impasse and Client Relapse

The SFBT’s principles concerning therapy impasses and client relapses are further addressed in the conference. Under impasses or relapses, the fact that the student’s condition is not getting worse and any past evidence of positive changes of the student are emphasized. An effective plan to re-stabilize the student’s condition is to be clearly identified and articulated based on the successful interventions of these participants has been working with this student in the past. At this point the conference team can change or modify their objectives and the action plan based on the SF principles to deal with the lack of progress in the student.

Many school counselors, teachers, parents and administrators of school have expressed positive responses to this school case management conference, which indirectly enhances the importance and promotes the professional reputation of school counselors.

Team Case Conference as a Peer Supervision Approach

*Development of Team Case Conference*

After I received training from Lance Taylor (SFBTA President, 2010) in 2010, I also
introduced the ‘Team Case Conference’ approach [i.e., a model similar to the solution-focused reflection teams first introduced by Norman (2003)] to the same group of school counselors in this supervisors’ training program of school counselors described above (Hsu, 2010, 2012). The consensus among this group of school counselors was that they did not yet feel fully competent in applying SFS to conduct group supervision themselves due to many uncontrollable factors during the process of supervision. However, the team case conference approach was very appealing to these school counselors due to the straightforward nature of the model and its proven effectiveness. They responded to this approach extremely well, so well that it exceeded my initial expectation.

These school counselors appreciated the fact that the Team Case Conference was grounded in a peer supervision framework. This approach can be easily adapted in the participants’ respective schools and used with their colleagues in the school’s guidance and counseling office. Reportedly, this approach creates a collaborative atmosphere and environment that diminishes competition among colleagues and also promotes a sense of team unity and group cooperation among colleagues. Team Case Conference provides school counselors a common language to work with as a collective entity and allows counselors of SFBT and non-SFBT orientations to work together in assisting clients despite coming from divergent theoretical backgrounds.

Based on these observations, I kept consulting with Lance and received further guidance on this model of supervision. Building on our experiment and Lance’s generous, wonderful, and practical inputs, I identified and summarized the principal elements of a successful Team Case Conference with Taiwanese school counselors.

a) Preparation

A team is formed with one director, one case presenter, and four to five other team members. The director plays a critical role, as he or she must monitor team process and also keep the team on track in ways consistent with the spirit, the values, and the techniques of the
SF principles at every stage. In our experiement, the team case conference is 40 to 60 minutes in length, a little longer than 30 minutes that Lance introduced.

The director opens the conference with a few words of encouragement and affirmation to the participants. For example, the director might state his or her appreciation to the team, in terms of the team members' willingness to participate in this supervision exercise and their contributions through offering ideas and suggestions to their teammates.

b) **Presentation**

The target case presenter briefly describes information related to the client and updates on the client's response to the counseling interventions thus far. This can be done either with or without a written summary of the information on the client. The case presenter must prioritize and decide on the most relevant and critical information to be shared with his or her teammate to enable them to conceptualize the client with a short time. Finally, the case presenter states his or her expectations to the Team Case Conference, and the director verifies the goals of this conference with the presenter before proceeding. This segment lasts about 10 minutes.

c) **Clarification**

For the next 15 minutes, members of the team sitting around a circle take turns posing questions to the presenter with the aim to gain further data on the client, in terms of the client's background and the nature/quality of the client-counselor interaction in counseling. The presenter is asked to address one question at a time. Each member of the team is permitted to ask only one question, going around the circle from one to the next. Of course, one can choose to skip their turn if they wish. All team members are given approximately equal number of chances and length of time to take turn raising questions. This process repeats for three or four rounds.

The teammates are encouraged, though not required, to pose questions in a manner consistent with the SFBT approach. When posing the questions the emphasis is on being
inquisitive as opposed to evaluative, opinionated, or judgmental. So the director needs to inform the members to focus their questions on soliciting factual information about the client as opposed to offering subjective opinions.

d) **Affirmation**

In this next segment, for about five to ten minutes, team members are asked to *directly* take turn offering compliments and affirming feedback to the case presenter. This might include highlighting the presenter’s efforts, unique strengths, or identifying any positive counseling intervention and outcomes. Meanwhile, the case presenter is asked simply to listen to these comments without giving any verbal responses.

Interestingly, through trials and errors we discovered that this affirmation process also worked well when the case presenter was asked to sit outside of the team circle but in a close proximity so he or she could hear the praises offered by the peers. In the case of presenter who refuses to receive direct verbal praise from others, the team members can convey their comments by using words to indicate their appreciation, admiration, respect or honor to the presenters. From a cultural standpoint, having others lavish direct compliments on an individual is both awkward and unfamiliar to the recipient because Chinese culture’s supreme emphasis on personal humility and modesty. Hence, receiving compliments from peers in this indirect fashion works especially well for participants in Team Case Conference.

In another situation, when the case presenter and other members of the team are both involved in the same case being presented, other members of the team will pretend that they do not know the case and pose questions with curiosity.

e) **Reflection**

Following the process of affirmation, the team then engages in a period of reflection for the next 15 to 20 minutes. The case presenter is asked to stay a step behind and stay out of the group discussion circle. Every member in this case conference is expected to exercise critical self-reflection by asking himself or herself: “If I were the counselor under the given
circumstance, what would I likely do next (e.g., what is my next small step)? The presenter is purposively asked not to respond to these comments but instead simply listens and takes in the on-going discussion offered by the team members.

The director encourages members to take into account the presenter's perspective and emotional reaction in pondering this question and to resist the temptation to give critical and evaluative comments to the presenter, for people have the tendency to teach and support others by criticizing their performance in Chinese culture. Using tentative expressions with words or phrases such as "perhaps," "maybe," or "it seems that..." are recommended. While members are allowed to openly share their thoughts and opinions, it is ensured that each member is given equal opportunity to speak up in the group, both in terms how often and how long each person speaks. Participants freely engage in the reflection process at the same time help each other brainstorm further. However, each person only presents one brief point at a time. Those without any comment to offer can skip their turn. The same process goes one for three to four rounds.

f) Integration

For the last five minutes of Team Case Conference, the case presenter is invited back into the team circle and to offer a summary or synthesis of what he or she has received from the teammates overall. The presenter identifies and comments on helpful insights, ideas, and strategies that emerged from the previous processes. No additional comments or discussions are solicited from the team members at this point, so as to ensure that the focus of this integration process is squarely on the presenter and his/her learning gains.

The emphasis here is to give utmost respect to the case presenter's thinking and learning processes and to allow him/her to fully integrate the learning experiences emerged from the case conference. Other matters are addressed only at the conclusion of this segment of the conference.

This group of school counselors undergoing this model of supervision later introduced
this case conference framework to their colleagues working in the same guidance and counseling office in their schools. Many hold regular peer supervision meetings on a weekly basis using a similar format that following the same procedure described above. In such a weekly meeting, all school counselors of the same school begin the meeting by first reviewing all the clients currently on their caseloads. Some schools then engage in a confidential evaluation of the safety level of each client. Clients whose safety score is below four, implying high risks, are identified at the meeting for an urgent and immediate consultation. In the absence of any urgent cases, the members of the team would begin Team Case conference as usual. After the conference, members of the team may engage in social activities such as having an afternoon tea together or doing a brief fitness exercise to help them build a stronger team spirit and collegial relationship.

Promotion of Team Case Conference

This group of school counselors are convinced that promoting and implementing the team case conference approach in the middle school would be profitable; they believe that it is a highly valuable and workable model to be used with supervising and training school counselors no matter they are within the same school or not. Based on these beliefs, this group of counselors begun to challenge themselves and boldly took on the role of supervisor for other middle school counselors working in the same or nearby district. After careful experiment, discussion and examination of the best ways to increase the effectiveness and to resolve problems associated with introducing this team case conference to other school counselors in other middle schools, we had reached a number of conclusions A successful team case conference can be led and introduced by two to three new supervisors but adheres to the following three steps/ guidelines.

- At the outset of supervision, the leaders/supervisors must clearly inform and instruct the middle school counselors on the fundamental principles of SFBT and SFS and the procedures of team case conference within 20 minutes. This is necessary to ensure
that all participants are open to and possess the basic knowledge about these concepts and methods.

- The leaders/supervisors run the team case conference directly. One of the middle school counselors should act as the case presenter, while other school counselors in the same school should act as the peer members of this team in this process.
- For the next 20 minutes, if necessary, the participating middle school counselors can raise questions concerning the client being presented by the case presenter after finishing the stages of the team case conference. At this juncture, the leaders/supervisors will offer supervisory feedback in the mode of SFBT and SFS, and remind the presenter in regards to potential ethical issues related to the case and highlight effective ways to mobilize resources within the school systems.

Over time we discovered that those middle school counselors who had prior knowledge and understanding of SFBT were able to advance through step 1 and step 3 noted above very quickly. In some cases, they even skipped these steps. Additionally, these individuals were able to offer concise and relevant questions/comments and during the clarification and reflection segment of the team case conference. On the other hand, middle school counselors who encountered SFBT and SFS for the first time during these conferences tended to expect more direction from the supervisor. They expected more of a greater top-down approach to supervision and wanted more directives and information from the supervisor to satisfy their learning and practice needs. Such a desire for guidance from authority by novice counselors is especially salient in Chinese society.

Conclusion

The opportunity and journey to work with and learn from this group of school counselors in Taiwan has been an extremely valuable and rewarding experience for us over the years. The experience of establishing and advancing SFS in Taiwan, as described in this essay, is a culmination of many humbling years of learning and adaptation of SF principles in
this cultural context through countless trials and errors. Owing to these participants’ generous dialogues, exchanges, sharing, and feedback and the persistent effort on our part to seek adjustment and refinement on the supervision and training strategies, SFBT and SFS have finally taken root and started to flourish in Taiwan. This has led to a rise in SFBT’s popularity across the school campuses in Taiwan in recent years. Consequently, the SF approach is now being recognized as one of the most (even the most) effective model in Taiwan that serves to promote the professional development and competency of school counselors in this country. On this encouraging note, we continue to work diligently, and dream and hope for a brighter future for SFBT and SFS in Taiwan for the many decades to come.
References


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