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Exploring strategies for developing doctorateness: a diagnostic theory-based tool for supervisors’ self-evaluation

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Overview of presentation

• Our work with doctoral supervisors at Lund University
• Exploring strategies for supervision and doctoral education
• Four emerging strategies
• A tool to evaluate and develop supervision and doctoral education

Our work with doctoral supervisors at Lund University

• Training for doctoral supervisors is mandatory in Sweden since 2002
• Current activities at Lund University:
  – a 7.5-day study module (university-wide)
  – a 7.5-day study module (engineering)
  – a 2-day workshop (medicine)
• Grounded in SoTL
• Beginning in 2010/2011 (university-wide)
  – two more study modules for supervisors
  – a meta-program for doctoral students

Workshops and study modules for supervisors

• Participants:
  – 0 – 30 doctoral students supervised
  – come from engineering, science, medicine, economics, social sciences, arts, law, humanities or engineering
  – value the collegial discussions on supervision and doctoral student learning
Exploring strategies for supervision and doctoral education

- Discussions and assignments in workshops and programs on e.g.:
  - doctoral student learning and intended learning outcomes
  - supervisor roles and strategies
  - practices and traditions for doctoral education
  - problems with student learning and progress
- => Doctoral education and supervision done in different ways, with different outcomes in mind, for different reasons
- Variation is used to develop supervisors’ and departments’ strategies and to generate knowledge
- As a tool for exploration we have used Ann Lee’s (2008) framework

Approaches to supervision (Lee, 2008)

- From our discussions with supervisors:
  - Accounts of supervision strategies and intentions fit one or more of Lee’s categories
  - Experienced supervisors claim to change approach as their students progress, e.g. from functional to emancipation

Four emerging strategies

- The strategies have emerged from supervisors’ accounts and from theories of learning (e.g. Wenger 1998, Dall’Alba & Sandberg 2006)
- We find qualitative differences in how doctoral education and supervision is enacted that expand Lee’s framework:
  - Participation
  - Reflection on practice
  - Extended understanding for doctorateness
  - Strategic reflexiveness

Participation

- **Participation** – to take part of a social enterprise and to belong to a community
- The strategy of supervisor or department is to make the student take part in the academic practices and in an academic community, e.g. by:
  - giving tasks and instruction
  - discussing results and interpretations
  - suggesting reading in the field
  - giving feedback on written work
  - co-authoring
  - introducing the student to colleagues and groups
  - opening doors
  - encourage writing (or co-writing) of applications
  - encourage participation in conferences
  - arranging project meetings etc.
Participation (cont’d)

• The role of the supervisor can be
  – a more experienced colleague
  – a project leader, or
  – a manager

• The student’s role can be
  – a junior researcher/academic
  – an apprentice
  – an assistant, or
  – an employee

Reflection on practice

• To help the student to reflect on the practices he or she is engaged in
• Reflection in relation to skills, attitudes, artefacts, and the social platform associated with the doctorate
• Reflection on experiences within the social context of doctoral education
• Examples:
  – discussing actions, deadlines and milestones in relation to the thesis and dissertation;
  – discussing and exemplifying what is understood to be good, or bad, research (or teaching, or conduct etc);
  – helping the student find and correct inconsistencies within his or her work and to understand standards;
  – explaining who is who within the field;
  – discussing the meaning of academic practices (e.g. the seminar) and giving feedback on the student’s performance in such practices;
  – discussing the goals and intended outcomes of the doctorate;
  – discussing communication, roles, responsibilities, intentions, perceptions etc. within the supervisor-student relationship
• The supervisor needs to be not only a competent researcher but also a competent teacher of research

Extended understanding for doctorateness

• To help the student deepen his or her understanding of aspects of doctoral education important for developing doctorateness, e.g.
  – theory of science
  – academic writing
  – rhetoric
  – ethics
  – academic conduct and virtues
  – rights and regulations for doctoral education
  – funding
  – the organisation and politics of institutions
  – teaching and learning

Strategic reflexiveness

• To help the student identify goals in the close or distant future related to personal and professional development and to develop the student’s strategies in relation to these goals
• Reflexiveness means that the student develops strategies through negotiation of relevance and ambitions and understanding of self, and considers implications for professional and private life
• Here independence, self-efficacy, and life-long learning is in focus.
• A strong element of mentorship
A tool to evaluate and develop supervision

For supervisors to evaluate and develop:
- their supervision
- the context and practices for doctoral education

For developers of doctoral education:
- to help supervisors develop
- to develop doctoral education on departmental and institutional level
  - e.g. a university-wide meta-program for doctoral students

A tool to evaluate and develop supervision (cont’d)

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